

BETWEEN MONTAIGNE AND GOETHE:
THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN INDIVIDUAL IN THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL
WORK OF DIEGO DE TORRES VILLARROEL

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian
Literatures and Languages in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2009

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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by

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This dissertation is a study on the overwhelmingly autobiographical work of Diego de Torres Villarroel (1694-1770), and has as its main objective to demonstrate that contrary to the time-honored and almost universally held belief, the history of modern autobiography has its origin in *Vida*, his autobiography, and not in *Les Confessions*, the autobiography of Jan-Jacques Rousseau. Herein is shown the unprecedented break that *Vida* brings about respective to the traditional confessional mode of autobiography, as bequeathed by Saint Augustine, a canonical mode that Rousseau, despite his claims to the contrary, continues and reinvigorates, and how that is carried out. At the same time, since this main thesis is posited on the ground that to break with this canonical tradition presupposes assuming a worldview that makes individual self-determination, autonomy and freedom central to it, by implication, herein *Vida* is proposed as one of the literary birthplace of the historical Enlightenment in Europe, and as the most original contribution

of Spain to this movement. Taking into account that in dealing with the problematic he is confronted by in his resolve to render a truthful story of his selfhood Torres takes as his departing point the question of the phenomenology of his Being as a manifestation of the ontology of Existence, this study moves forward through a consistent discussion of the question of the concept of the Self, to probe into the fundamental way in which he faces, and solves, some of the most incandescent problems of self-representational discourse.

Dedication:

For Laura Wynn Montgomery, who has always loved me more and in more ways than any mortal deserves.

And to Jovine Doriane Mitsche, who will one day refuse to read this, and for good reason.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to Professor Muñoz-Millanes for pointing me out in the right direction whenever I seemed to be losing focus of what was essential to this project, nudging me straight without me sometimes realizing it until I got there, and for his accessibility and friendliness. My gratitude also to Professor Isaias Learner, whom I have always admired and recognized as the prototype educator, and whom I have sought to emulate in more ways than he realizes, although always with disastrous results. My especial gratitude is for Professor DiCamillo, who has always been generous with his advices and his time, always willing to assist in whatever possible, and never failing show genuine sympathy—even for me! To Shelley Worrell, in the Office of Financial Aids, who always encouraged me to keep going, even when I did not need encouragement; and always had a kind word for me, even if she had no funding to dispense. Thank you to Professor Lia Schwartz, whose diligence was instrumental to my success at a critical time; and to Ana Santiago, who throughout all my years at the department competently and friendly assisted me in all administrative matters. And last but no way least, I would like to express my profoundest gratitude to Matthew G. Schoengood, Vice President for Student Affairs, who had no reason to believe in me, and yet did. I remain infinitely grateful to him.

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Part One

“[...] y que antes de muerto, y muchas centurias después de difunto, he de ser citado por hombre insigne, y como quien no dice nada, por autor de libros [...]. Tengan fin venturosos mis papeles, repitiendo gracias a las comunidades que han honrado mi humildad y han concurrido a este bien apreciable del público, pues entre todos hemos abierto en España una puerta por donde los aplicados a los libros y los autores entren, sin tanta perdida de sus intereses y del tiempo, para recoger la ciencia, la doctrina, el gusto y el premio de sus tareas y trabajos.”

Torres de Villarroel.

Chapter 1.1

Torres Villarroel: Modern Autobiography and the Emergence of the Enlightened Individuality

An observation not too often made, perhaps because we are permanently confronted by the cold facts, is that whenever it comes to establishing the fundamental philosophical or scientific, technological or industrial paradigms that brought about that form conceiving and determining our relation to objective reality, and to ourselves as individuals, known as modernity—Spain is the last place in Continental Europe, where one would go to find them. And things get even direr if, in an attempt to finding examples of unquestionable affiliation to historical or philosophical modernity the scholar of the history of European thought were pressed to defend what in his view has been the significant contribution Spain has made to the Enlightenment— if any. As it has historically been the case, major discoveries of philosophic or scientific inquiry tend to affect the way individuals see and experience the world in which they live, and the new perception of their reality in turn translates into new forms of consciousness and self-consciousness¹. That Spain never was the site for excavation in search for the foundations that ushered in the form of modern consciousness that until very recently and for over three centuries has prevailed in Western societies and that still dominates large parts of the world, is easily explained by the historical fact that it was not there where the major discoveries in philosophy and the sciences of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

¹ A point made by Georges Gusdorf also makes. See “Conditions and Limits of Autobiography,” in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, 29-48, ed. James Olney, Princeton University Press, 1980.

took place². And yet, if it is true that the paradigmatic shifts in philosophy and the sciences, for example in France, England and Germany during the seventeenth century—the temporal site of modernity and of the Enlightenment—are responsible for ushering in the modern era and its unquestionable faith in technological progress and social advancement, and in its cult of reason and pragmatic utilitarianism, it is not less true that none of this would have obtained without it being anteceded by an event that took place not in the laboratory or in any place “in” society but in the dimed room of a single individual, Descartes’. As it is well known, Descartes’ rationalist philosophy rests on the possibility of a belief in the indubitable existence of his own “self.” Because in order for him to gain any reliable knowledge about the empirical reality Descartes must first arrive at the certainty of the knowledge that only the introspective study of his own existence could yield, and insofar as the foundations of Cartesian philosophy has a precondition the knowledge of this self as an unquestionable certainty, we can see how what at first appears to be a cause later reveals itself as an effect. The emergence of the modern form of consciousness then can be attributed to the shift in the philosophical, scientific and technological paradigms of the seventeenth century only inasmuch as this shift can ultimately only be explained by the chain of effects set in motion once Descartes has

² I say “still” to account for the fact that according to some trends of contemporary thought Western societies have moved beyond modernity and have reached a new form of historical consciousness and, one would assume, new way of perceiving historical time and therefore of relating to history, both social and personal. This new historical era is, of course, “post-modernity;” we are not in complete agreement with these trends. In my consideration of the discourse of modernity and my criticism of post-modernity I come ever closer to Jürgen Habermas’ analysis of modern philosophical discourse, but I do not depart from him, even if, like him, I believe, that what is called post-modernity is simply the unfolding and further developments of trends already contained and covered by the concept of modernity, as this concept and the history it aims to address as worked out by Baudelaire and Benjamin, among others. See Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1993.

gained *autobiographical* awareness of his own self-consciousness³. However logically shaky the cogito as the ground on which Descartes erected the edifice of modern philosophical thought has turned out to be, and independently of the implications and of how deeply the “cogito revolution” has affected the myriads political discourses that have traversed and given shape to Western societies, the unpredictable practical and theoretical consequences of the autographical act in which for the first time in the history of Western society the “I” recognizes itself as its own foundation, represents an unique moment in the history of modernity. It is one of the greatest paradoxes that modern philosophical discourse has yet to provide an ultimate, conclusive account on itself. It is worth of note that while Descartes’ ground-breaking philosophical thoughts, with all the implications that it will later have in fostering a new scientific *Organum*, his cogitation of the thinking “I” constitutes only an autobiographical act: the autobiographical moment of a philosopher at work. For *The Discourse of Method* that contains this act is not an autobiography as this genre will come to be known in our days⁴. It is therefore fitting to emphasize that modern autobiography does not come to life with Descartes, even if it remains true that it is with him that for the first time what we will be discussing under the name of the human “Self”

³ Although later this initial claim put into question, it is important to keep in mind that here we are trying only to emphasize the importance of the autobiographical undertaking, for the history of thought; for, as we will argue, Descartes did not actually write an autobiography in the sense we take the concept here. The concept of self-consciousness, since it will come up often in this study, calls for some clarification. But we will for the present leave it as is. Our references will be from Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method: Meditations and Principles*. John Veitch, translation, Everyman Library. Scotland. 1994.

⁴ We are here adopting with more or less some flexibility the definition of autobiography provided by Lejeune: “retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality.” According to this thesis-definition, Descartes’ *Meditations* are not, strictly speaking, an autobiography, since nothing therein corresponds either to the “individual life” of the author, and neither there is there anything amounting to the narrative of a “personality,” with its complexities arising from the interaction of infinite individualities acting in a world where none sets the rules of engagement. Put another way, anybody who gets to realize that, can posit the *cogito ergo sum* as his own; individual life, with its myriad intricate contingencies, is of no value to the cogito. Lejeune, Philippe, “The Autobiographical Pact,” 4, in *On Autobiography*, 3 Chapter One, 3-30, trans. Katherine Leary, University of Minnesota Press. 1989.

becomes the foundation of anything at all, whereas in the previous history of the Western world only a divinity was thought of as capable of guaranteeing reliability to any human undertaking. After all the Cartesian “self” is an “inferred self,” not an experienced self⁵. This difference is decisive, for individuals do not infer their existence; they experience it; they reflect on it and through reflecting on this experience, they relate to themselves in their existence. since We will have to come back to this point, to consider to what extent the Cartesian cogito rests on a tautology, in that in it the self-reflective subjective consciousness the philosopher discovers its existence twice but takes note of it only once: first in the “I think,” since there cannot be thinking without being, and then as “I am,” which cannot logically be said to be a consequence of the cogito, since being per se does not presuppose thinking; many entities have an existence not guaranteed by thinking. But, since “I am” only enters my consciousness *while* it is being thought, “I think” is not a sufficient condition for “I am,” *ergo*, the “I am” and the “I think” are not necessarily contemporaneous with each other⁶.

In a retrospective consideration, the fact that an autobiographical act and the new form of consciousness that accompanied it punctuates the self-reflective moment of Cartesian self-inquiry at the same time serving as the pillar for the developments in the realm of scientific knowledge brought about by it should have led to Spain having an

⁵ Levin, Jerome D. “Historical Preludes,” in *Theories of the Self*, 8, Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1992.

⁶ Descartes’ “Ergo cogito sum” could only be the product of a, in the words of Nietzsche a “harmless self-scrutinizer” who thinks he has found “immediate certainty” in what in actuality is a *contradictio in adjecto*. F. Nietzsche, “On the Prejudices of Philosophers,” in *Beyond Good and Evil*, I, 16, 16, trans. Marion Faber, Oxford World’s Classics, Oxford, 1998; Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, I, 13, trans. Walter Kaufmann, Vintage Books, New York, 1967. The philosophical critique of the “subject” unquestionably begins with Nietzsche; but he is generally misunderstood as proposing that the “subject” does not exist at all when what he in truth believes is that it cannot be separated from, or that it has to be considered as something that “stands” behind its effects but as something that cannot be conceived as different from its effects, drives or will. For example, it according to him the “will to power” is the primordial manifestation of existence and if existence itself is will to power, then “will to power” can be considered the “substratum” of everything that is, and therefore as the “subject” *in* and *of* everything.

important role to play in the advent of the modern conceptualization of the individual. It should by the same token had led to Spain having a remarkable role to pay in the experience of a new self-reflective consciousness that makes “individual” a privileged object of reflection, being it so of the essence to the structure of modern society⁷. For, it is in Spain where almost right from the beginning of the eighteenth century, the problematic confronted by the man or woman that takes him or herself as the object of self-reflection is with was more intensively and extensively grappled with, and where the experience of the empirical, historical conditions for the emergence of the modern notion of selfhood obtains more decisively. It was also there that the danger of defacement and distortion and therefore of autobiographical misrepresentation faced by the man or woman who attempts to produce an authentic autobiographical account of his or her experience of selfhood was first experienced. That thus far the contribution of Spain to the emergence of our modern consciousness has not been acknowledged can be explained by the collusion of factors and circumstances already summarized. Here we are just going to insist in that the methodological ideology that has prevailed in the study of the history of thought, whether

⁷ I would like from the start to specify how the concept of “self-reflection” will be used here. By that I will not mean that the “subject” or the “individual” or the “self” in autobiography either “reflects” upon him or herself by way of saying that “one takes oneself” as the object of one’s thinking;” nor do I want to be understood as saying that the self “reflects” itself in autobiography upon and through language. The first meaning assigned to the concept of self-reflection corresponds to the traditional, Cartesian and Kantian notion of self-consciousness as self-perceiving “innerness” and which posits self-consciousness as a “subject-object relation” that never gets resolved in one way or another. The second mode of understanding corresponds to the post-structuralism, psycho-linguistic conceptualization of self-consciousness promoted by Lacan and propagated in autobiographical studies by scholars like Paul Eakin who proceeds from an almost literal interpretation of the metaphoric notion of “self-writing.” Both trends forget that one does not thinking “oneself” as oneself; one does that, but as one’s thinking, feelings, actions, volitions and decisions in existence and toward existence. And neither does one “writes” oneself in writing on or about oneself; one does not bring oneself into existence through one’s writing; only metaphorically can one say that that is the case. With this in view, whenever I speak of “self-reflection” something closer to “self-examination” should be understood. This the concept employed by Torres, which reappears in Goethe and in Franklin in different terms. This theme will be revisited as we move along in this study. On the concept of linguistic self-reflectivity in autobiography, see Paul Eakin, *Fiction in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1985.

social or political, faithful to its origins in the materialistic philosophies of the nineteenth century, while good at providing an account of public sphere, of what happens “in” society, had until relatively recent shown almost total indifference to the developments that takes place in the private sphere of the single individual⁸. In this methodology, only that which has the potential of transformational effects in the large body of society and that whose effects can be quantifiable and measurable in terms of material gains or losses can become its object of study, since, according to it, epochal transformations start at the “base” of society, in its system of production of means of social exchange, fueled by the need for material goods⁹. It is not by chance that for example the study of autobiography had to wait until the end of the last century to blow life into itself, probably as a result of technological developments that have made easier for the private sphere to collapse into the public bringing about the subsequent death of private and “the personal” .

Paradoxically and contrary to this, one thing the Cartesian “cogito revolution” we have discussed above shows is that what happens in the sphere of the private individual can have as much a social impact as what belongs naturally in the public sphere, which

⁸ For example, one of the first considerations given to autobiography by any authoritative pen, has this to say:

Pure autobiography are written either by neurotics who are fascinated by their own ego, as in Rousseau’s case; or by authors of a robust artistic or adventurous self-love, such as Benvenuto Cellini; or by born historians who regard themselves only as material for historic facts; or by women who also coquette with posterity; or by pedantic minds who want to bring even the most minute things in order before they die and cannot let themselves leave the world without commentaries. They can also be regarded as mere pleaders before the public. Another great group of among the autobiographers is formed by the autopsuists.” It is to be noticed that in these summary, dismissing judgment by Schlegel, Torres’s name does not appear, despite his being the first to publish his autobiography to the wider public and to wider acclaim. Bu then again, Spain has always been the great absent already *there* in European affairs. Now, this summary by Schlegel leaves out precisely what would be constitutive of Torres’s case; and this points out to his originality and how his new attitude towards autobiography, which as we will show, is later taken on in America, by Franklin, and in Germany, by Goethe, does not fall within none of these categories. See Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeum* , 1798. See also Robert Folkenflik, introduction to his edition of *The Culture of Autobiography: Construction of Self-Representation*, 3, Stanford University Press, 1993.

⁹ This is of course a primary manifestation of the bourgeois values brought about precisely by the application of mathematical models to human doings, which as such is one of the consequences of the instrumental reason set in motion by Cartesian rationalism.

underlies the import of the studies of autobiography for a deeper understanding of society, for there are individuals whose personal lives are the embodiment of the time they live in and of the time they help usher in; and the names of these individuals can be Descartes or Petrarch¹⁰, or in his own way and in a not so smaller scale, as we will have time to show, Diego de Torres Villarroel.

In our understanding, rather than in France and in Descartes¹¹, or as it is more commonly argued, in Rousseau, it is in the autobiographical works of Diego de Torres Villarroel, and specifically in *Vida*, his full autobiography, where we can find the first truly modern autobiographical discourse ever written, or at any rate, known by the public in any country in Continental Europe¹². Never before Torres in the recorded European

¹⁰ In the same way that Descartes is key for the advent of modernity, Petrarch is key for the birth of the Italian Renaissance; this they have in common, but they also have in common that their thrust into the larger human affairs begin at the level of their individuality and their impact does not depend on a larger movement, at least not at the start.

¹¹ Reflecting on Montaigne Karl Joachim Weintraub has opined that, “Ironically, Descartes [not Montaigne] wrote the ‘truer’ autobiography in his *Discours de la Méthode*, which by title hardly qualifies as a vehicle for an autobiographical account.” Yet, this author seems to have his own doubt as to the veracity of his own statement: notice the ambiguous quotation marks around “truer” and then consider that, although his book deals about the “value” of the “individual,” Descartes’ account is precisely the one not accounted for therein, a great lacunae in a work dedicated to understanding “the self;” this lapse is due perhaps because there is nothing in the *Meditations* that authorizes speaking about “individuality” and therefore neither of the “individual,” categories without which speaking of *life* makes no sense whatsoever. And so, we have to wonder how “truer” to real life Descartes’ can be taken to be. Yet again, in our opinion Montaigne’s *Essays*, though they are autobiographical to boot, are not properly what can be called an autobiography; there is here a conceptual difference that a theoretical account must be given of. Karl Joachim Weintraub, “Montaigne’s *Essays*: The Model Fails,” in *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography*, 167, University of Chicago Press 1978.

¹² Torres had the habit of producing an annual “report” about himself in the form of an “Almanaque” or a “Kalendario,” which were only ambiguously autobiographical. Therein he let out many actual facts about himself while at the same time he planted distorting self-depictions and made *intentionally* misleading claims about himself that made his publications more appealing to the public. *Vida* can obviously be read as the history of the claims and disclaims of Torres about his life *and* himself, which of course implies making new claims and new disclaims about the same subject. We could safely propose that precisely, it is on the background of the misinterpretations given rise to by Torres’s *pragmatic* attitude towards the tasks of an essentially autobiographical writer as himself that *Vida* comes into being, to sort things out once and for all. The extent to which he is successful is the core of the present study. It is troublesome and at the same time disappointing that at up till now, Spanish scholarship has not been able to overcome the obstacles that the methodological ideology and theoretical orientation it has traditionally favored, which has prevented it seeing that in Torres we have not only “la primera autobiografía burguesa Española y pieza original y precocísima en la configuración de la autobiografía moderna europea,” as Mercadier says and others uncritically accept, but that Torres is the *modern* inventor of this type of autobiographical discourse in its

history had any man, or for that matter, any woman submitted his or her whole life so willingly, without being compelled by any recognized divine or human power or authority, to so *sincere* scrutiny of his or her life, his self and his notion of selfhood *to be offered to the public in order to claim his independence from outside forces*. Never before Diego de Torres Villarroel had any European man, or for that matter any woman, produced such an encompassing account of his life as we find in *Vida* and in the rest of his autobiographical texts, exposing his life, his feelings and thoughts about his life to public eyes, inviting this public to take stock and conduct its own evaluation of what allegedly should remain within the realm of the privately personal, and to do so to paradoxically defend his right to privacy. And never before had any private or public person in Europe or elsewhere accomplished the feat of making a living out of making public his private life, which he did for almost the whole length of a lifetime, a lifetime that lasted seventy-four years, while accumulating enough material wealth to donate the proceeds from the narrative of his life to the charity of others, and so causing other writers to attempt to *become* him, to appropriate the narrative of his life for themselves, and to literally and practically dispossess him of his own life, either through pirating his *Vida*, or through seeking to pass themselves off as the Diego de Torres they were not¹³. Torres's

own right and without need of qualification. The traditionalist methodological approach to the study of literature favored by many Spanish scholars is the main culprit of the relative isolation of Spanish studies and its continued dialogue with other European literary traditions, and with the historical present, that is, with our contemporaneity; it has greatly contributed to depriving the Spanish world of more than one glory: Torres is only an example among many. In this concrete case, this traditionalist approach has been the first obstacle for a modern approach to understanding the modernity of eighteenth century Spain, and of its contribution to it, as the present case illustrates. One could say that a traditionalist methodology and manner of thinking cannot recognize what is truly modern. See Mecardier, "El Ciclo onírico y originalidad literaria de Correo del otro mundo: Introducción," in *Correo del otro mundo*, 64, (note 85), ed. Manuel María Pérez López, Cátedra, Madrid. See also, Angel Loureiro, "Autobiografía del Otro: Rousseau, Torres Villarroel, Juan Goytisolo."

¹³ Torres, in possibly the only known instance in what concerns autobiographical writing, published several partial versions of his *Vida*, by chapters and "trozos," while still alive. At some point, in 1734, up to five different editions of his autobiography could be found in circulation between April and June of the same

autobiography, *Vida*, constitutes the most resolute claim of a radical individualism of the kind that will later be echoed by a diversity of political and literary institutions representatives of the mode of self-consciousness that would be the hallmark of the modern men and women in centuries yet to come. Indeed, Torres's radical self-assertion and uncompromising sense of individuality makes him more a man of our time than of his own, for, since his claim to his individualism and the claim over his right to live his life on his own terms and to derive from it an autobiographical narrative that responds only to his own self-perception, has become inherent to our condition of being moderns, or if you will, post-moderns. For that very reason, we are in a better position to understand what he means to convey about the nature of the new notion of selfhood he was putting forward, than the reader of his days for whom and *against* whom he wrote. A self-made man *avant la lettre*, the meaning of this expression in Torres's case extends even to the self that emerges from the pages of his autobiographical writing, for he was the autobiographer *par excellence*¹⁴. Torres's "self" was at the center of everything he wrote and everything he

year; two of those editions were pirated editions, one in Zaragoza and another in Pamplona. The first he filed a law-suit to stop, and recovered a great sum from the proceeds; the other, printed on the printing house owned by a widow, he bought back at a price set by her, as he says, "giving up his intellectual rights" due to her civil state, her impoverished conditions, and her sex. Sometime before somebody else had also tried to pass himself off as "Torres," selling under his name a collection of satires and "coplas" that Torres himself would have repudiated. See Torres, *Vida*, 188-189.

¹⁴ The notion of the self-made man that commonly goes associated with Benjamin Franklin also applies to Torres with equal justice; and indeed, it would apply to Torres first, given that Torres's *Vida* was written and published decades before Franklin's. However this might be, the important fact is that between these two men there was much in common that would recommend them one to the other; they both took up writing and at a very early age; both made their fortune by their pens and had periodic publications on which their main income depended; both had families with a background in the printing business and, while Franklin set up the first library by subscription system, Torres is the first writer on record to sell his own work by subscription only; both cultivated the "Almanak" as their preferred genre; both drew on their lives for materials and both published by installments their autobiography; while Franklin dispatched his in four parts, Torres dispatched his in five "chunks;" both had a fondness for charitable and philanthropic work; both had a deeply ingrained sense of their personal self-worth and little false modesty, yet incurred in self-disparaging behavior, and both had a humorous, sardonic bent, though here Torres outdid Franklin. And what is of an even greater import, they both became self-made men through their own pragmatic individualism, which they exerted on the business of writing. Through their writing they both got to "stand among kings," literally speaking, as they both each in their way acknowledge. Although Franklin's life

wrote emanated from his “self;” thus he clearly was the first modern man to make a *text* of his self and about whom it can be said that, accordingly with “post-modernist” thinking, nothing about his self stood “outside the text¹⁵.” The most unquestionable example of the modernity of Torres’s autobiographical undertaking resides on the ample sovereignty he claims for the self; this sovereignty is the central reason underlying his decision to commit himself to writing his life. For he wrote his *Vida* simply because he felt he had an unalienable right to do so; and in doing so he was neither pursuing an ulterior purpose, alien to a deeply felt need of self-portrayal, as Descartes did, nor in response to the demand of the market for purchasing personal stories, or to assuage a feeling of guilt, and therefore in response to the internalized authority of the Christian faith— as in Rousseau’s case¹⁶. In both these cases, the autonomy that is being claimed for the “Self” is

account now goes under the title of Autobiography, when it first appeared in English in 1793, it was called *Life*, just like Torres’s own. One much deeper understanding and far better evaluation than what has been made of Torres’s writing, personality and pragmatic individuality can be obtained by reading him alongside Weintraub’s work on autobiography and individuality; see for example “Buyan, Baxter, and Franklin: The Puritan Unification of Personality,” in *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography*, 228-260. Far more useful for the purpose of evaluating Torres’s achievement and contribution to the idea of the modern individuality can be found in John D. Barbour’s very important work on the conscience and ethics of the autobiographer. Of great interest is chapter five of his book; see “Franklin and the Critics of Individualism,” *The Conscience of the Autobiographer*, 85-119, St. Martin’s Press: New York, 1992. Paul Ilie develops a very productive theoretical framework of the historical context that would facilitate the comparative study of Torres in connection with Franklin. See his “Franklin and Villarroel: Social Consciousness in Two Autobiographies,” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 7 (Spring 1974), pp. 321-342.

¹⁵ Derrida is the source to which this now commonplace dictum is universally attributed to. In reality, the dictum is a version of a certain philosophical position within Deconstructionism, not necessarily shared by all its practitioners. In the original French the phrase reads: “il n’y a pas de hors-texte,” which according to Derrida himself was coined for *propagandistic* purpose, and really means “il n’y a pas de hors-contexte.” In the original version the meaning is incontestable; why did Derrida feel he needed to “shock” the reader to have an effect on him is beyond the ken of this writer to delve into. However, if by “text” we were to understand “language,” after Nietzsche, then saying that there is nothing outside the text is perfectly acceptable, since *there is nothing outside language*, it being the only way we have to derive and assign meaning, and to have access to the world beyond us, which means to say, to “interpret” that world, creating it in the process. Concerning Derrida’s clarification, see Timothy Chappell’s notes to “The Problems of the Self,” in *The Inescapable Self*, 223.

¹⁶ In true, although Rousseau leaves it out of his account, the idea of his writing his autobiography was first suggested to him by his editor, M. Rey. As for guilt as the main motive for penning his account, see the *Confessions*, Book VIII, *Oeuvre Complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, CX. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond Ed. Gallimard, France, 1959. Save where indicated, all references and citations are from this edition; all translations from Rousseau, save where indicated, are mine.

undermined from the very start. Unlike them, from the very start Torres clings fast to his individuality and proclaims his freedom to define and model his autobiographical undertaking in accordance with his individualism. We will come back to this topic in due time.

Endowed with an unconventional, irreverent but *joyful* personality that borders on sardonic and sarcastic, and above all, with a thirst for life and a naturally skeptical mind, for over fifty years of writing about his self and life, Torres hit on a rich, unorthodox and highly complex conceptualization of the self that has posed a real challenge to the very few scholars in the field of Spanish studies who have dealt with him. But this is not altogether surprising. As we will see, such is the richness and complexity of his conceptualization of the “Self” and of his own sense of selfhood in particular that no one among the major philosophers who concerned themselves from the eighteenth and nineteenth century onward with the problematic of the “Self,” the *subjectum* and the modern manifestation of this existential phenomenon—namely, Locke, Hume or Kant, but more importantly, Heidegger in the last century—said much on the topic that cannot be read in relation to *Vida*, or that cannot be *autobiographically* interpreted or illustrated by it. In point of facts, in *Vida* Torres already answered to his satisfaction many of the problems some of these Enlightenment and modern philosophers posed for themselves, albeit it should go without saying, he arrived to his answers employing a method that draws on his lived experiences and that necessarily must do away with the method of philosophical inquiry, resorting instead to the language best suited for weaving the narrative of this experience. Where Descartes’ *Discourse* gives pace to the concept of the “modern self” as the product of a specific method of scientific inquiry, Torres elaborates a

concept that is the product of taking himself, that is, his *existence* as the “subject” of autobiographical reflection for its own sake. Furthermore, because one salient attribute of Torres’s conceptualization of the self is that he posits a critical self that takes a questioning distance from any definitive, conclusive discourse about the nature of the “Self,” in him his self asserts itself almost at the same time that it raises serious doubts about its very existence. And thus, Torres not only contributes to the understanding of the modern self, but he at the same time anticipates the on-going debate about the “death” or “loss” of the self/subject, a debate very much alive in “post-modern” philosophy and society¹⁷. In other words, in *Vida* Torres gives birth to a notion of the self that already implies the possibility of its hypothetical death, or of the theorization of its “death.”

Henceforth, the present study will substantiate the thesis that:

1) When considered in conjunction with the rest of the autobiographical texts of Diego de Torres Villarreal, *Vida* constitutes the first truly modern European autobiography. This claim is supported *not only* by the important, but in the end irrelevant fact that as the narrative of the life of an individual whose personal empirical history can be independently verified, *Vida* chronologically antedates the one autobiography that has been proposed as the initiation of this tradition¹⁸. Rather, and more of the essence, this

¹⁷The number of publications on this theme is almost endless, making it difficult to choose among the many authoritative titles. But one can gain a fair understanding of how the meme of the “death of the subject” has come about from a reading of the very influential books by Foucault, especially *Madness and Civilization*; *Vigilance and Punishment*, and *The History of Sexuality*. Other books among others derived or directly influenced by Foucault, and in general, by exponents of Deconstructionism which provide a good understanding of this problematic: *Who Comes after the Subject?* ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor and Jean-Luc Nancy, Routledge, New York, 1991; *The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions of Self-Representation*, ed. Robert Folkenflik, University of California Press, 1993; *Construction of the Self*, ed. George Levine, Rutgers University Press, 1992; Paul Smith, *Discerning the Subject*, University of Minnesota Press, 1988; *The Truth about the Truth: De-Confusing and Re-Constructing the Postmodern World*, ed. Walter Truett Anderson, Penguin/Putman, New York, 1995.

¹⁸ According to some sources, this honor goes to a W.P Scargill, whose *The Autobiography of a Dissenting Minister* appeared in 1834. See “Autobiography and the cultural Moment,” in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, 5, ed. James Olney, Princeton University Press, 1980.

claim is supported by the fact that, as the autobiography in which Torres's autobiographical texts culminate, while reflecting on his life and self (actually, his life *as* his self), in his *Vida* Torres at the same time expounds many of the fundamental notions and precepts that have come to define modernity as we know it, like the notions of individual freedom, individual rights, and individual responsibilities. On this ground and against the scholarly tradition that has canonized Rousseau as pioneering autobiographical modernity I will contend that in his hands autobiography is a *continuation* of the confessional model of self-portrayal inherited from earlier ages, namely, from Saint Augustine, and that his *Confessions* represents a *relapse* into forms of representing the modern subjectivity that *Vida* has already overcome; in consequence, I propose that Rousseau's *Confessions* ought be regarded as backtracking the development already achieved by *Vida* in dealing with modern subjectivity. I submit that the confessional mode or model is not necessarily defining of autobiography; on the contrary, I purport to demonstrate that "confession" responds to a structure of authority and power over which the confessant (the "I" of autobiography) has no say, and is therefore the exact opposite of what autobiography takes as its particular aim.

2) Given that the set of philosophical and political values that have come to define modernity center around the individual, and given that everything about Torres bespeaks of a staunch individualism and uncompromising individuality, I submit that *Vida* offers itself as an attempt to make a radical break with traditionalist views on human life and human existence. Diego's unquestionable individualism, which expresses itself precisely in the right he claims to portray himself in any manner he pleases, presupposes and inevitably leads him towards this break. The formal structure of *Vida*, the style in which is

written, and its language, constitutes an attestation to this inevitability precisely because it gives expression to his individuality.

3) Because breaking with political, philosophical and scientific practices and conceptions endorsed by tradition is precisely the direction of the Enlightenment, I purport that Torres is legitimately entitled to be considered an exponent of the program of this movement, independently of whether he ever claimed himself part of it. Taken into consideration that the contributions and accomplishments of Diego have proven more enduring and therefore more *vital* than whatever might be attributable to say, Benito Feijoo, from the advantage point of what modernity has turned out to be, Torres comes out as a more original, and the values he embraced more productive and more representative of the ideals of the Enlightenment. Indeed, because Torres de Villarroel's contributions towards these ideals issue from a discourse that takes his individual self as its subject of reflection, it can be safely said that, literally speaking, his writing is the *literary embodiment* of the European Enlightenment— more or less to the same extent that Benjamin Franklin's, with whom he has much in common, is to America's.

4) Finally, I will also contend that the significance and meaning, and the manner in which Torres partakes of enlightened modernity is occluded by the rhetoric that gives shape to his thinking and writing style, and that this style is inherent to a well-tuned practical social strategy. The implication here is that up to a point, by to a high degree, Diego de Torres de Villarroel was keenly aware of the importance of his enterprise and of the historical context to which it belonged.

In Part One of this study we will strive to conduct an exhaustive analysis of what will be called Torres's phenomenological understanding of the concept of the "Self" and

will try to establish what is distinctively new in it relative to the conceptualization of the “Self” as it appears in Descartes’ cogito, as to make patent Torres’s originality and contribution to the modern theorization of personal selfhood in Spain and elsewhere in Europe. This will allow us to step by step chart Torres’s affiliation with the Enlightenment as we claim a legitimate place for him in it. All in all, in deepening the understanding of Torres’s autobiographical accomplishments, we will attempt to show, albeit obliquely at times, that contrary to what is traditionally held, Torres is a conscious and proactive expounder of Enlightened views concerning the values of the modern individuality and individual rights, and that as such, even though his self-acknowledged limitations, *which he intentionally exaggerates for rhetorical purpose*—he is a legitimate proponent of modernity. I will also have the opportunity to say something about the relevance that a correct evaluation of Torres’s fashioning of his writing style has in the original notion of the “Self” and of his own personal selfhood he puts forward in *Vida* and elsewhere. I believe that a new, innovative reinterpretation of Torres’s writing will bring about a reevaluation of Eighteenth century Spanish literature, and of its place in the context of the history of European thought. This reevaluation should be easy to conduct once the part played by Spain in the emergence of the modern self is duly established.

Chapter 1.2

Torres's Vida: the Determination of Selfhood in Modern Autobiography

In order to make apparent Torres's importance in the history of modern autobiographical narrative and to understand how in this narrative a cardinal conceptualization of the "modern self" is advanced, I will first devote some time to coming as close as possible to a definition of what should be understood by that term in the context of this study. To carry this out it will be necessary to conduct a discussion, even if brief, of the concept of the "Self" in relation to the history of modernity and more specifically, of the place the "Self" is given in contemporary philosophical discourse in connection with the practice of autobiographical writing. In this discussion I will try to establish a distinction between an "autobiographical act"¹⁹ as an aspect of a discourse that

¹⁹ It is quite common to find that most writers on the topic make no difference between the concept of "autobiography" and what is merely "autobiographical" but which however is not and has not been intended by its author as his or her autobiography. This oversight is one of the main causes of the confusion still prevalent on the field of autobiographical study, as illustrated by statements like the following, by James Olney: "On the other hand, if autobiography fails to entice the critic into the folly of doubting or denying its very existence, then there arises the opposite temptation (or perhaps it is the same temptation in a different guise) to argue not only that autobiography exists but that it *alone* exists—that all writing that aspires to be literature is autobiography and nothing else (sic.)" In this study I will always distinguish between what is proposed as an autobiography *and* constitutes such, and what is just autobiographical in nature, that is, what necessarily refers to the life of its author and implicitly or explicitly refers to his or her life, but which however is not this author's autobiography. Correcting the view by Olney expressed above, I shall say that a piece of writing, or otherwise, *any manifestation of human existence* is only an "autobiographical act" or moment if it expresses the personal life of a subject or individual but it does not *content* the narrative of that life; for life is a series of interconnected relations; literally, a "relatedness" and as such, it is something that is given in the form of a narrative. In proceeding this way we are also taking into account that many things not given in writing are autobiographical, but not necessarily autobiography. In this way, the field and object of study are narrowed down, and confusion is avoided; for example, according to our view on this, a photographic self-portrayal is autobiographical, but it is not an autobiography, and should not be confused one with the other if for no other reason that they are the result of clearly different *medium*. See James Olney, "Autobiography and Cultural Moment," in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, 4. All essays in this collection suffer from this same inattention to this conceptual difference. Even Paul de Man, who has for the last twenty years had a formidable influence in contemporary studies of autobiography, owes his astounding success to the failure to establish a clear conceptual differentiation between an autobiography proper, and what is merely "autobiographical." Rather, as I will have time to demonstrate towards the end of this study, de Man perpetuates this confusion by making unrecognizable what was only

is not necessarily conceived of as an autobiography per se and in which the “self” of the author in this act has only an oblique relation to the “subject” of said act, and that of “autobiographical discourse” or “autobiographical narrative” as the genre of writing that aims to produce a narrative account of the life of the “subject²⁰” of that narrative; which in

foggy. In this sense we can say that his essay “Autobiography as De-Facement” is in a fundamental way the defacement of autobiography

²⁰ The question of what constitutes the “subject,” how it is constituted and whether there is anything at all that can be conceived as the “subject” of metaphysics, is the all-important problematic of modern philosophy since Descartes. Due to the complexity of this theme and of the different conceptualizations of the “subject” that populate philosophical modern discourses, confusion about the meaning of the concept is inevitable and almost inherent to it. A very illustrative example of this confusion is offered contemporarily, for example by Agnes Heller. In an essay significantly entitled “The Death of the Subject” she identifies fifteen different uses of the term as it appears in various interdisciplinary academic and scientific practices. One of the reasons for this confusions, however, it that “subject” translates both the Latin *subjectum* and *subjetus*, which in themselves are different derivations and usages of the Greek *hupokeimenon*. While *subjectum* more or less corresponds to the Greek meaning as “material” or “stuff” out of which things are made, and therefore as “essence,” *subjetus* is a metaphor for the first, as its meaning of “that which lies under” suggests, which is also contained by “essence” as “what is,” or more clearly and directly related, “substance,” “that which stands firm” and which therefore is essential. So, in English, as in all Romance languages, the “subject” is both what is essential because it stands firmly under, and also and paradoxically, also that which, because it is “under” is not or might be considered non-essential, since *subjectus* means exactly that something is “thrown-under.” When this problem, which concerns the history of language, etymology and linguistics is not taken into account confusion ensues and get perpetuated by the usage. Because “subject” conflates two different conceptualizations of *hupokeimenon*, when speaking about the “death of the subject” one unintentionally conflates the “subject” of metaphysical philosophy that post-Aristotelic and post-Cartesian critical philosophy that begins with Nietzsche seeks to overcome—since it is opposed to all forms of “essentialism”—with the *subjectus* as the “thrown-under,” after the original meaning has initially suffered a political transformation, and has passed from meaning “essential or substantive material things are made of” to the individual thrown-under that is therefore “subjected” by and to a power “above” it. And things become even more confused when the language of rational philosophical “overcoming of the subject” gets replaced by the bio-language of dying. In all talk of the “death of the subject,” if one must talk about this at all, attention must be paid to the fact that an overcoming of the “subject” of metaphysical thought does not extent to the “subject” of society, or for that matter, of autobiography, which in both cases is the “individual,” the “person,” and taken strictly within this context—the “self,” with an small S. In German, for example, this confusion is avoided by sticking to the Latin *subjectum*, or by resorting to a coinage like *Dasein*, as Heidegger does. It should be noticed here that I try to show awareness of this problematic by preserving the capital S for the “metaphysical subject” and reserve the small S for the individual subject. Even if we should desire the “death” of the subject of metaphysics, we certainly do not wish the death of the “subject” as the “individual self.” But this clarification does not take care of the fact that, “subject,” in English like in all Romance languages also translates for “theme,” “topic” and the like. So, another conceptual or terminological conflation takes place in writing about autobiography, in which there is a “subject” (individual self) which takes itself as the “subject” (theme) of his or her writing and which in turn gives pace to an interpretation, obviously mistaken in light of all this, of autobiography being a form writing in which a “subject” takes himself as his “object,” since a “subject” who takes himself as his subject objectifies himself, according to certain way of construing this situation. For an example of the scurrilous ways of using the word “subject” see Agnes Heller, “The Death of the Subject,” 269-284; for an example of how the concept of the “subject” of metaphysics and the autobiographical subject get interchanged, see George Levin, “Introduction: Constructivism and the Reemerging Self,” in the same publication given as above, 1-12; for an example of how “subject” and “Self” get substituted for each other,

our view is related to but should not be reduced to the “*subjectum*” of metaphysical philosophy, which so much has been made of in postmodern thought. Only then will we move on towards an analysis of Torres’s writing within the context of a theorization of modernity.

As it is well-known, Descartes is universally credited in the history of Western thought with transforming the history of philosophy, adumbrating a new human *époque* through the birth a new method of philosophical inquiry that places the certainty of the existence of the human “Self” at the guaranty of a rational truth indispensable to the way we relate to the world and to ourselves qua individuals. But, because this certainty of the existence of the cogito, the thinking Self, is grounded on its own logical impossibility of doubting its existence, for Descartes the self that appears under the guise of his cogito is a mutilated Self in the sense that its being does not report any data from the world of experience, and therefore does not tell us anything about life as experienced by the empirical individual man or woman who knows he or herself as a the product of *lived*, not just thought, life experiences. And thus, Descartes’ is a Self “whose nature is *only* to think²¹.” Although this Cartesian Self and the “immediate certainty” on which its existence is grounded would later come up for criticism and altogether dismissal in the nineteenth and twentieth century, notably starting with Nietzsche, who saw the “Cogito, ergo sum” as a falsification of the facts involved in the process of thinking, its influence still endures even in our days²². For, however logically shaky it has been proven to be, the rationalist, deterministic and mechanistic Cartesian Self marks an *inwardness* in the

see Irving Howe, *The Self in Literature*, 249-266. All three essays appear in *The Constructions of the Self*, ed. George Levin, Rutgers, 1992.

²¹ Descartes, *A Discourse on Method*, 26.

²² F. Nietzsche, “On the Prejudices of Philosophers,” *Beyond Good and Evil*, 16, (16), “Belief in the ‘Ego.’ The Subject,” *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, Vintage Books, New York: 1968.

philosophical determination of that entity to put in Charles Taylor's terms²³, an internalization of the moral sources of our selfhood that tie our existence to the world at large, which earlier systems of thought, from Plato down to Augustine, placed either in God's hands, cosmic design, or nature's will. The "radical reflexivity" of the Cartesian self, that provides modern individuals with the blueprint for a methodic, rationalist introspection in search of their "inner truth" and that makes them mistrustful of outside-above powers, accounts for epoch-making potential of this inferred self. It signaled the possibility of freedom in times to come, and signaled that this freedom could be the product of individual agency; therefore the appeal of Cartesian self-reflectivity to an enlightening age²⁴.

But here we must call attention to the fact that the *Discourse on Method* where the Cartesian Self first appears is not what can properly be called an autobiography, as the concept is today understood²⁵. The divinely-inspired, outward-looking Augustinian self

²³The notions "inwardness," as well as "inward turn" occurs in various moments of Taylor discussion of modern self-consciousness, and will be made use of in throughout this study. However, it must be clarified that, why Taylor seems to speak of a "turn" inward in a literal sense, here this terms will be used metaphorically: for I do not believe, and neither does Torres, that self-knowledge really attains by looking "inside" oneself; to understand this "turn" in this way, as Taylor seems to do, is to still cling to the same traditional understanding of self-consciousness fostered by Descartes and furthered by German Idealism, consisting in a supposed ability of the individual to "see" inside himself. So, when here I speak of "inwardness" I mean something closer to "downwardness" to differentiate the modern epistemic movement from the traditional, Augustinian conceptualization that tends not to look "upward," toward God for the Truth that determines human notions of selfhood. "Downward" and "downwardness" will often substitute for the equivalent terms in Taylor. See Charles Taylor, "Locke's Punctual Self," in *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, 174.

²⁴ Although we have here employed the concept of "individual agency," the "agency" of the Self/individual is not directly or immediately suggested or indicated in the philosophy of the cogito, for obvious reasons. As a matter of fact, this concept, as it will recur throughout this study always implies a critical position relative to the Cartesian determination of the Self.

²⁵ In our view, the *Discourse*, inasmuch as it is also a "meditation," offers a highly exemplary, if controversial proof of the conceptual difference that we attempted to make earlier; for even if it has been almost universally treated as an "autobiography" in its own right, and not just as "autobiographical," it is patent that in it Descartes limits himself to providing a very "tight" account of his intellectual development that culminates in his philosophical method. In other words, the *Discourse* is more or less a philosophical "resumé" in almost a literal sense: only his educational background, and where it has led him up to then is accounted for; "life" as experience given in narrative, is left out. This interpretation is confirmed, of all

the Cartesian “self” seeks to replace is an entity without a history based on the empirical experience of its proponent; it simply is an *object* of the mind. Of course, the *Discourse* certainly constitutes a highly seminal, consequential *autobiographical act* which, being the construction of a powerful mind, was destined to project its powers beyond the stage and time of the performance of that act, given the historic-cultural context in which this performance took place. But the peculiarities of a “self” whose nature is constituted by its own self-reflective powers, precisely because it is not the result of the autobiographical thrust of the empirical self of the author of the *Discourse* and therefore does not draw on the author’s life experience, can hardly be conceived of as the self-reflective construct we find in Saint Augustine’s or Rousseau’s *Confessions*, and neither is Descartes’ self anything like the protagonist of Torres’s *Vida*. Furthermore, because the Cartesian “I” that speaks in the *Discourse* subordinates the search for the truth about itself to the certainty of a method that could yield philosophical truth about everything else, Descartes can but arrive at the notion of the self as cogito (a reductive notion if ever there was one, as Pascal did not hesitate to notice in his celebrated saying that the heart has reasons that Reason does not understand). But consequently, this is only made possible by objectifying his self, by arriving at a point in his meditation upon himself in which the cogito takes itself for an object that has the capability to “reflect” itself *upon* itself, as if on a flat surface. In other

authorities, by Foucault. For, Foucault straightforwardly establishes that Descartes’ *Meditations* responds to a very ancient practice of the self that consists in a sort of game. This game should not be regarded, he says, as one in which “the subject plays with his thoughts, but as the game thought plays on the subject.” And so, continues Foucault, “Descartes puts himself in the position of the subject who doubts everything, without even wondering about everything that could be doubtful or what could be doubted.” The function of this meditation, Foucault says, and this is the important part, is that “through thought “*the subject places himself in a fictional situation in which he tests himself;*” and this to us means exactly what it says: the *Discourse* is not an autobiography because it is a *premeditated fiction* from which the “Self” emerges as the “Subject” of the rules that are to be followed to achieve the goal of the meditation: to probe the “Subject’s” capacity for doubting and to test the limits of his doubts. See Foucault, “Eighteenth Lecture,” in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège of France*, 358, Ed. Frédéric Gros, Picador, 2001.

words, the Cartesian Self is the product of what Taylor paradoxically calls a process of “disengagement from the self.” During this process of “radical reflectivity” he speaks of, the self learns to take a new stance with respect to itself, to take of itself an *objectifying* view, and to see itself as something “neutral” in relation to itself²⁶. But this situation of disengagement from oneself can only take place during and within the performance of an autobiographical act as we have already defined; for this is not how it plays out in autobiography. Something altogether contrary goes on there; in autobiography, as we will go to show later on, the “engagement” of the self with itself is fundamental to the activity of “self-reflectivity” and self-consciousness²⁷.

Now, the fact that Descartes’ conceptualization of the “subject” as cogito appears as subordinated to a method of philosophical inquiry, on the one hand means that this rationalist creature whose only function is to think has no truth of its own, for “its” truth can only be asserted as the truth-value of the method that brings it forth; on the other hand, and for the same reason, this Cartesian self is brought forth as a “subject” in a philosophical inquiry that is itself the subject of a method, or, as you will, of Reason²⁸. Thus, the Cartesian self implies the logical absurdity of an entity that “*subjectifies*” itself in the same process of its self-objectification. Because Descartes’ self is the result of an

²⁶ Taylor, “Downwardness,” in *Sources of the Self*, 160.

²⁷ Although working from a different perspective and working on a theme altogether different than autobiography, Dalia Judovitz also makes the same point. She writes that “The subject constructed by means of Descartes’ self-portraiture is a special kind of self defined by virtue of mathematical principles, not for its own sake, but the sake of a new way of knowing the world.” “From Self to Subject: Montaigne to Descartes,” in *Subjectivity and representation in Descartes: The Origins of Modernity*, 8, Cambridge University Press, 1988. More peremptory and of more import here, is what Ricoeur has to say about the Cartesian subject, the cogito: “But what is this ‘I’ who doubts, so uprooted with respect to the spatiotemporal bearings of my body? Displaced with respect to the autobiographical subject of the *Discourse on Method*—whose trace remains in the opening lines of the *Meditations*—The ‘I’ who does the doubting and who reflects upon itself in the cogito is just as metaphysical and symbolic as is doubt itself with respect to all knowledge. It is, in truth, no one.” Paul Ricoeur, “Introduction: The Question of Selfhood,” *Oneself as Another*, 6, trans. Kathleen Blamey, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1992.

²⁸ Here is an instance of “subject” in one of its two main meanings; but that we have to talk of *two* main meanings underlies the complexity of this concept.

undertaking that has the character of the *autobiographical but which however is not an autobiography* in that therein no selfhood appears, with him *the subject of modern philosophy is born as the individual human "Self"*; what this means is that this metaphysical "subject," which in reality corresponds to the Aristotelic *hupokeimenon*, that is, to the *subjectum* as the *substratum* of everything that is, has been granted the status of universal human Self one expects to know of in autobiography. Then, since the human "Self" is always the subject of all human undertakings, the *subjectum*, as the substantive matter becomes the *subjectus* as that which is "thrown-under," the literally *subjected* to something else²⁹. In other words, what heretofore has been known and addressed in modern and contemporary philosophical discourses as the "Self" or the "Subject" is nothing other than the "Cartesian Self" or the "Cartesian cogito" or "Cartesian I"³⁰. But, that the "cogito" is not "Self" as it would show itself to be in autobiography can only be grasped once and for all if we also grasp the *Discourse* and the *Meditations* for what they really are: efforts to find a principle on which to build a philosophical edifice that shows to owe nothing to anyone else but to the self in which this principle makes itself manifest. By doing so, the self in which this principle makes itself manifest, namely Descartes', makes *the historical attempt to cut himself off from the philosophical history that precedes it*, and in order to do that it must posit itself as the "substance whose only essence consists on thinking," since it is through *thinking* that it has arrived to the conclusion of itself as substance, therefore producing a self that in conceiving of itself as "fundamental

²⁹ See note above.

³⁰ About this Cartesian subject, the cogito, Ricoeur says that it is no one at all: "But what is this 'I' who doubts; so uprooted with respect to the spatiotemporal bearings of my body? Displaced with respect to the autobiographical subject of the *Discourse on Method*—whose trace remains in the opening lines of the *Meditations*—The 'I' who does the doubting and who reflects upon itself in the cogito is just as metaphysical and symbolic as is doubt itself with respect to all knowledge. It is, in truth, no one." Paul Ricoeur, "Introduction: The Question of Selfhood," *Oneself as Another*, 6, trans. Kathleen Blamey, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1992.

substratum,” becomes *the* “Self³¹.” Failing to understand what Descartes had set out to do in proceeding as he did is the source of all the subsequent confusion about the Self and the Subject that has both plagued and fueled modern philosophy, and as its collateral, the study of autobiography, and writing in general, as well as the arts. Consequently, this confusion directly connects to the autobiographical act that contains it; indeed, it is the corollary of that act being its birthplace. For only *autobiographical narrative*, as opposed to a simple autobiographical act, move, or gesture— yields knowledge of a self whose ontological situation is not derivative and aleatory³². That error, which has for so long gone undetected in the study of the history of modernity, is by and large also responsible for the confusion that bedevils modernity, preventing it from attaining clear consciousness of itself. It is precisely because the problematic of the Cartesian cogito-cum-subject has not been given a correct account of in modern discourses that the “subject” as the “self” has met the same destiny that visited on the “soul” before it, and that it has been critiqued,

³¹ The “circular logic” involved here makes itself apparent in the very language Descartes must employ; so he sees himself forced of speaking of a “substance” that has an “essence,” as if essence were not already a substance, both in French as in English. Although he did not attack Descartes from the perspective opened by this critic, Giambattista Vico more or less “saw” what Descartes was up to, and denounced his autobiographical claims as farcical by accusing him of feigning to tell the story of his life through the method of autobiography “simply in order to exalt his own philosophy and mathematics and degrade all other studies included in divine and human erudition.” Vico’s reaction to Descartes is reminiscent of Torres’s; where the Italian speaks of Descartes’ “feigning” it, the Spaniard speaks of Descartes’ “nonsense;” their dismissive tones, however, is inescapable. There is no indication that Torres had read Vico. See Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, 133, trans. Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1944.

³² Here I call attention to Taylor’s insight, which he derives from Heidegger, that the self can only make sense of itself if it grasps itself “in a narrative,” since only narrative can answer the questions that existing in the “moral space” from which questions about life are posed, but more fundamentally, because the concept and structure of narrative inherently relates to how we experience and place ourselves both in space and in time. Taylor, “The Moral Space,” in *Sources of the Self*, 47. As I have been trying to show, the *Discourse* and the *Meditations* “should not be read as history or as autobiography at all.” See Margaret D. Wilson, “Descartes,” referenced by Patrick Riley, in “Fables of the Self and the Subject: On Cartesian Autobiography with and against Augustine.” *Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature* 31, no. 60 (2004): 151-74. I do not know how to reconcile Reley’s apparent endorsement of the thesis he himself refers that holds that Descartes’ works do not constitute autobiography, with his statement early in the same study, that “The birth of modern philosophy with Descartes is also what makes the birth of modern autobiography possible;” these two positions seems to me to be in opposition to each other. As we will argue, the study of autobiography does not have to be made dependent on Cartesian philosophy.

dismissed and declared and celebrated as “dead,” and that on the graveyard of the “dead” self/subject a new epoch, “post-modernity” has been proclaimed³³. The history of modernity begins as a case of mistaken identity: that of the “subject” for the “self.”³⁴

We have to ask then, to what extent can we still say that the Cartesian cogito or as you will, the Cartesian subject is the bedrock of the modern self? For starters, we have seen that Descartes is unable to generate a conceptualization of selfhood that is ontologically self-sustaining and independent from that “complex system of power and control” on the basis of which contemporary critical discourse argues for the rejection of the subject/self, since Cartesian thinking introduces modernity to a self-representative category that comes to light as the subject of a need for knowledge not necessarily about itself³⁵. Descartes, who has rightly been said to be “profoundly Augustinian,³⁶” from the strict point of view of a theory of autobiography as the one we are expounding in this study represents a *step backward* in the development of autobiographical self-representation and autobiographical self-consciousness³⁷. Even if by the standards of an enlightened modernity that looks “downward” into itself where the Middle Ages looked

³³This would be respectively the case in the writings of Foucault, Vattimo, Horkheimer et al. Nietzsche does not proclaim the “death” of the subject; he simply shows this subject as a fiction, as a superstition of logicians, as the error of grammar that gets infiltrated in logic by language.

³⁴ As George Levin has noticed, the “death of the self” is proclaimed from a constructivist perspective conceptualizes everything as being the construction of discourse and language. But while the death of the “Self” is being proclaimed, Levin also notices, it gets resuscitated as the “subject;” this situation makes obvious the confusion I have striving to shed some light on. See Levin, “Introduction: Constructivism and the Re-emergent Subject,” in *Constructions of the Self*, 1-13.

³⁵ “There are, says Foucault, two meanings of the word *subject*: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.” By this rationale, one would stop being subject at least in one of the meanings of the word, if one just gave up having a *conscience* or renounce *self-knowledge*. It is from this kind of reasoning put forward by Foucault from where the contemporary theorizations of the death of the subject emanate. It is important to make a note of the fact that Foucault not always makes it clear which of the two meanings he is referring or privileging whenever he speaks of the subject. See 19 Hubert L. Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow “Afterword: Foucault. Subject and Power,” in *Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 208-212, second edition, The University of Chicago Press, 1983.

³⁶ Taylor, “Descartes’ Disengaged Reason,” in *Sources of the Self*, 143.

³⁷ The same holds true for Rousseau, as we will have time to see, although for an altogether different reason.

upward, in Augustine's *Confessions* we at least meet the self of a man of flesh and blood, a self that has not been dispossessed of the worldliness of its life experience. Again, from the strict point of view of autobiographical narrative, we had to wait until Torres's *Vida* to encounter an authentic representation of the modern self of the individual who would come to *feel* and model his or her conduct on the firm belief that since "thus far my life is still *mine* alone, I can therefore do with *my* life whatever I choose to,"³⁸ and who lived to prove with his life, both *lived* and *written*, that "mankind is whatever it *chooses* to be"³⁹. (Emphasis added).

We will in due time undertake a close analysis of *Vida* and other autobiographical texts of Torres that are crucial to establishing the Spanish as the one writer in whom the modern concept of the individual self in autobiography originates. For it is in him that the Augustinian appeal to God as the source of knowledge of the individuated self gets definitively overturned; in his decision not to follow the Saint's model, the "downward" movement of a will to self-knowledge as a search "downward" that is grounded in human reality starts, since in him the undertaking of the autobiographical search and the self-reflectivity consciousness that determines it is carried out in response to an *irrepressible impulse* of the self to question the conditions under which this knowledge is made possible. And it is so too because this self-knowledge is neither obtained to satisfy the imperious need of Faith, Reason or the Passions in order to serve their particular ends. To

³⁸ "[...] que mi vida hasta ahora es mía, y puedo hacer con ella los visajes y transformaciones que me hagan el gusto y la comodidad." Torres, "Introducción," *Vida: Ascendencia, Nacimiento, Crianza y Aventuras de Diego de Torres Villarroel*, 58, ed. Guy Mercadier, Clásicos Castalia, Madrid, 1990. All translations from the Spanish are mine. As a caveat on this claim, the reader should take into consideration that what I offer here is not a "word-by-word" translation of the work of Torres; I do translate the *meaning* of his work in Spanish into English, but since this is not an English edition of this work, I further translate his meaning into the *language* of existential ontology. Implicit in this caveat is that, to avoid any charge of "betrayal," my translations only apply and are justified only in the *context* of this of studies of the type I practice here.

³⁹ "El hombre es lo que quiere ser." Torres, "Respuesta de Torres al Conde Fiscal," in *Sacudimiento de Mentecatos*, 217, ed. Manuel Marian Pérez López, Catedra, Madrid, 2000.

put it in a nutshell, contrary to Descartes' Self, in Torres for the first time we encounter a self that needs no proof of its existence that it is not provided by the reflective working on its individual mode of being, which is to say, in its empirical existence in the world. And this further means that in Torres "faith," "reason" and "passions" lose the capital letter, since all three are accorded more or less an equal role in forging an individual's sense of his own self-worth that cannot be determined from the exclusive perspective of any of these power structures. Entailed in this way of understanding autobiographical representation is the idea that the conceptualization of the self elicited by any self-reflective activity depends on which one of the faculties of the individual self, i.e. the autobiographer, takes predominance in the process. Hence, in Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, Christian Faith sets the *rules* his introspection must observe in the same way that in Rousseau's *Confessions* this place is taken by Society and in Descartes' *Discourse* this role is under the dictates of Reason. After Saint Augustine and *before* Rousseau, in *enlightened*⁴⁰ Europe only in Torres is any single one of these faculties denied predominance over the others; partly for this reason in our view he represents the truly modern shift in the conception of the self, since in comparison to Descartes, first to certainly make the human being the source and "first principle," the *substratum*, that is, Torres is first to show that the self can be put to a mode of examination that does not

⁴⁰ From this perspective one begins to immediately see how right one would be in according Torres enlightened status; for in striving for a way of representing oneself that per se implies taking a position before these structures of power, Torres is proceeding in accordance with the conceptualization put forward by Kant: he is making use of his "understanding" independently of the regulative and normative functions of these power structures; moreover, because in this case we are dealing with the way the individual understands himself, the conceptualization of the self being developed already entails an enlightened attitude in the face of the tendency of Faith and Reason to deny the freedom of the individual to engage in *unsanctioned*, not monitored self-understanding activities. See Emmanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Ernst Behler, German Library: Continuum, New York, 1993.

presupposes submitting it to a new mode of subjection or “subjectification,” and therefore in him the “Self” does not become *objectified*⁴¹.

That the above is generally the case in autobiography is explained by the fact that, as we have been contending, in autobiographical narrative as opposed to what of necessity happens in an autobiographical moment or act, no possibility and therefore no need exists for the self to disengage from reflective activity. For, there are no human actions or activities that are not autobiographical acts in and by themselves, paramount among which are the activities of the intellect. An autobiography then would have to be thought of as a narrative complex of autobiographical acts or autobiographical moments. Every single act and action of the individual being autobiographical in nature, it is a potential component, an episode or “gag” in the autobiography of a said individual. As it has often been remarked in the modern philosophy of the subject which is conterminous with the philosophy of self-identity, it is integral with being human that we can make sense of what

⁴¹ The notion of autobiography being a mode of “objectification,” although never called it by its name, to my knowledge originates with Foucault. According to him, since it is the practice that more directly and explicitly deals with the problem of self-understanding, as are other forms practices that he identifies as that of the “talking subject” — autobiography would have to be conceived as being constitutive of what Foucault calls “dividing practices.” As such, autobiography, always according to this theory, would be placed in the same category, and would have to be conceived as, a form of submitting to the authority of an external power, as happens during the individual’s visit to the psychoanalyst or to the confessor, or in general, by attempting self-understanding, since self-understanding as Foucault thinks of it is always pursued from the perspective of one or another structure of power, be it scientific, political or religious. Thus, and always according to Foucault, if the human subject is the product of these dividing practices through the individual gets objectified by the ‘mode of inquiry’ of the human sciences in which the individual becomes the talking subject, the individual can also turn him or herself into a subject by talking about self, that is, by responding to an imperative of producing discourses about self. According to this point of view, then, having a “self-[identity], a conscience or self-knowledge” is conterminous with being a subject, merely because, as Foucault puts it, both meanings of “subject” suggests “a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to.” This position is completely absurd and untenable; besides hiding the traditional conceptualization of self-consciousness as a subject-object relation as opposed to a relation of oneself with oneself it does not make clear how “objectification” leads to “subjectification.” Besides, in conceiving self-identity, conscience and self-knowledge as source of a power that subjugates the individual, Foucault leaves no room for the possibility of individual freedom. See Hubert L. Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow “Afterword: Foucault, Subject and Power,” in *Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 208-212, second edition, The University of Chicago Press, 1983. Also see, Paul Rabinow, “Introduction,” in *The Foucault Reader*, 3-11; see also in this same publication “On the genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress,” 240-380, ed. Paul Rabinow, Pantheons Books, New York, 1983.

we are only through allowing the “self” the structure of an continually evolving narrative, whether this narrative appears in a written form or not. In our relation to ourselves and to the external world of objects, we need to see things as part of an *unfolding story* in order to provide for ourselves a reference point respect to that world, and to frame the stages of our *development* as individuals⁴².

Autobiography, which for us is the systematization and serialization of isolated autobiographical acts, is defined by a need to enact an account *in toto* in all the moments and movements of the self in all its stages of being and becoming. Grasping itself “autobiographically” *in* narrative and *as* narrative does not however imply the subjection of the self. The individual self, even as an object of knowledge remains essentially different from all other objects of epistemic interest; indeed, it is not an “object” at all⁴³. For, as Torres was aware of, in order for an individual to attain autobiographical self-knowledge, he must come as close to, and must get as deep as possible “inside” himself⁴⁴.

⁴² Taylor, “The Self in Moral Space,” in *Sources of the Self*, 47. See also Paul Stern’s “Introduction,” to Ernst Tugendhat, *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, xxix, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press: Massachusetts, 1986. Although I have dealt directly with Heidegger’s and George Herbert Mead’s philosophies, I have throughout this study benefited much from the connection between these different but interdependent approaches to the problematic of the relation of self-relation and in general of the philosophy of the “Self” as it appears established by Tugendhat’s study on these two indispensable modern philosophers. I am greatly indebted to him and will make more than occasional reference to him.

⁴³ As the single one form of discourse that makes of the life of the individual its subject is in a position similar to that of existential philosophy as fostered by Heidegger’s elaboration of the relation of oneself to oneself, or self-relation—is not a relation of a subject to an object, as it has been traditionally understood through the philosophies that begin with Fichte and Descartes. In dealing with how and individual has dealt with his or her life, which is his form of participating in Existence, in autobiographical the self-reflective activity the individual relates to self as an Existent; and in relating to himself through relating to his existence, to his “to-be,” he is not relating to anything that has the epistemic structure of an “object. We will be drawing mainly on Heidegger’s elaboration of the problematic of self-relation, and through Tugendhat’s interpretation of him, also on the philosophy of George Herbert Mead. See Tugendhat, “Introduction: Formulation of the Problem and the program,” in *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, 29.

⁴⁴ “Inside” is here of course used metaphorically and should therefore not be taken to mean that the individual or self takes an actual look inside himself to explore or introspect his self-consciousness, as it has been traditionally understood in metaphysical philosophy, and which something perhaps not physically possible. Perhaps “closer” would be a better word, but it does not take us very far. In any case, we mean to

Since the autobiographer cannot stand “outside” nor can he or she “stand back” to have a “better” look, that is, an *objectifying* view of him or herself— the view of the self afforded by autobiography remains *subjective* in the literal sense that it does not aspire to *objectivity* but to *authenticity*. But more accurately, *authenticity is how objectivity is attained in autobiography*; that this is so sets autobiographical discourse apart from other types of discursive activities, like “literature” for instance, and is therefore something constitutive of characteristics of the genre. Objectivity as authenticity then helps to explain the need some but by no means all autobiographer feel to resort or appeal to witnesses, whether divine, as in the obvious case of Saint Augustine and the less obvious case of Descartes— or to both human and divine, as is the case with Rousseau. Torres, for his part has a more idiosyncratic, by way of saying more radically modern way of dealing with this problem. We shall come back to this point when discussing the problematic of autobiographical identity, authenticity and truth. Because for the autobiographer it is materially and methodologically impossible to approach his or her experiences as if they were somebody else’s and to “disengage” from these experiences, in autobiography the self is then the “subject” that in relating to itself does not at the same time goes through a process of self-objectification. In *relating* his experiences, in both the literal and figurative senses of the word, the individual does not become the “object” on which self-reflectivity is affected. Thus, in autobiographical narrative is “relation” contains an implicit dissolution of the dichotomy subject/object. In turn, this suggests that autobiographical discourse does not of necessity create division within the self, as it has been argued, and neither does it of necessity bring out a division already present in the autobiographer’s

say that the individual, in order to gain self-knowledge, must not “disengage” himself from his experiences, which are given in actions and interactions in and with the world. We will have time to say more on this.

self⁴⁵. Rather and to the contrary, through autobiography, precisely because to narrate is to *relate*, to “bring back” the autobiographical moments of a life, the self is “offered” an opportunity to bring closure to any internal division created by its exposure to the empirical world. Actually, because Torres sees “Life” as “Self” and vice versa, something that goes implied in the name he gives his autobiography, the presumed division between subject and object does not even insinuate itself in his narrative⁴⁶. Since life is existence, and since the self is necessarily life, then in existence the self encounters nothing but itself⁴⁷. But this further suggests that modern autobiography discourse as practiced by Torres does not constitute a “technology of the self” whereby the self is discursively

⁴⁵ As discussed in the note above, according to Foucault, because autobiography would be constitutive of the “dividing practices” through which the individual is objectified and turned into a subject by a given form of power, in it “the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others (sic.)” This is not however what we learn from Saint Augustine, who wrote his confessions precisely in order to regain the inner unity that he had originally been endowed with by the “other,” which in his case is God. In this case, inner unity is only guaranteed by the other, even if, as we will contend later, this implies the renunciation to independence and individual freedom.

⁴⁶ It has been argued that “autobiography” has the same structure as what was known as “confessions,” “memoirs” and *journaux intimes*.” This contention takes place in the context of a theorization of the “death of the author” which originates with Foucault and that which incidentally is another version of the “death of the subject. This is not historically accurate in that it obviously does not take into account the existence of *Vida* from way before the end of the eighteenth century. It is also arguable whether those other forms of life-writing carry the formal structure of autobiography as we know it or whether meaning is there structured in the same way. We will later show what essentially differentiates a confession from an autobiography. If it is at all possible to speak of the “end” of autobiography, Torres would be the one to provide grounds for this position, as we will see, albeit for an altogether different reason. See Michael Sprinker “The End of Autobiography,” in James Olney’s *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, 325.

⁴⁷ Effectively, Tugendhat proves that in Heidegger the opposition of traditional metaphysics between a “subject” and “object” is dissolved once and for all. “Self-consciousness,” he says, cannot be understood in such a way that something is simply related to itself, that the subject itself becomes an object.” According to this, the relation of oneself to oneself, which is the problematic of subjective reflectivity as it often appears in autobiography, in Heidegger is construed as a relation of the self, i.e. the individuated human subject, to his *existence*. Relating to himself to his existence in relating himself to his existence means that the individual presupposes his own existence as existing ontologically and not only ontically. Then, since we cannot say that our existence is an “object,” and yet being unquestionable that our existence is something that *belongs* to us but which however cannot be conceived of as *not* us, and neither can it be conceived of as separate from us ourselves, we cannot therefore say that it is an object. We are our existence, and our existence is at the same time something to which relate in a relation of property. Autobiography, as the discourse who task is to deal directly and solely with ourselves as existential entities, as human subjects, is for this reason the locus where the opposition subject/object does not manifest itself as such. To this extent, we would like to suggest, autobiography and existential philosophy, are comparable to each other. Ernest Tugendhat. “Introduction II: Formulation of the Problem and Program.” In *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, 29, trans. Paul Stern, MIT Press, Cambridge: 1986.

invented; for the “Self,” modern or not is not a construction of the discourse, since in it the self conceives of itself as pre-existing its own narrative⁴⁸.

That the autobiographer cannot “stand back” or outside him or herself to give a third-person account of his or her experience is something Torres recognizes. As a question of the methodological approach more readily available to an autobiographer, Torres sees in this impossibility the guaranty of producing the knowledge self that the objectifying look of the third-person approach cannot attain. Because he exists “inside himself,” says Torres⁴⁹, he knows himself better than others do, and therefore he knows what the most constant mode of his being-in-the-world is. Obviously, Torres suggests, subjective self-reflection can yield truth about oneself; but that self-reflection has to remain subjective does not make it objectifying, while at the same time serving as the leverage for the preservation of his self-identity, since what is at stake is preserving his identity as individual from getting decided from outside powers. Placing the locus of the self and therefore the source of self-knowledge “inside” himself does much more for Torres than just assert his place in the fostering the modern ideal of the self and burnishing his credentials as one of the harbingers of modern self-consciousness. In doing so, he also gives us a glimpse about what the concept or sense of selfhood is for him. We will therefore turn to an analysis of this concept as it is worked out in *Vida*. A caveat is here necessary. Discussing Torres’s understanding of this issue entails dealing with some philosophical difficulties, for the reason that Torres places his treatment of the problematic

⁴⁸ The idea that the ‘Self’ is a construction of discourse is more commonly associated with Foucault, as we have already indicated. Accordingly, before the “discursive practices” that gives birth to the “Self” there was nothing there to begin with, since no notion of the “Self” would have any meaning if it does not at the same time mean the individual, as it is posited by Heidegger and Mead. In any case, given that autobiography is the narration of a self that apprehends itself in its existence, it is debatable whether modern autobiography can be said to respond to the practice of the “care of the self” or to a technology aimed at constructing the “Self.”

⁴⁹ Torres, *Vida*, 198

of the self as the subject of autobiography within the thematic of the “Self” as the subject of metaphysics; indeed, it is through his understanding of the autobiographical subject as the metaphysical “Self” that he arrives at a consideration of himself as an individual. But what this really means is that Torres poses the question of the “Self,” the “subject” and the “individual” in a fundamental way.

To be sure, Torres’s philosophical assessment of the existential condition under which human affairs are given is consubstantial with his understanding of what the “Self” consists of, and the “faculties” that constitute it. This assessment gives way to what can properly be called the undeclared, sketched-out metaphysics that permeates his writing and governs his thinking in matters personal, religious or political. In this connection, Torres says that:

All men are just one and the same Man. We all are made of the same flesh and our lives are under the same powers of nature; the same soul blows life into all men; we are all prey to the same ailments; we all feel the same needs and are taken away from this world by the same death⁵⁰.

It is against this background of existentiality where the “I” discovers itself as a *Being-with-Others* and as undistinguishable from the Others inasmuch as an “I” that Torres’s sense of his own selfhood and what he understands as the “Self” has to be

⁵⁰ “Los hombres todos somos uno: a todos nos rodea una misma carne, nos cubren unos mismos elementos, nos alienta una misma alma, nos afligen unas mismas enfermedades y nos arranca del mundo la muerte.” Torres, *Vida*, 67. Contemporarily, this same concept is expressed by Paul Ricoeur as the phenomenological condition of our human existence being of “oneself as another,” which in his philosophy accounts for the Hegelian condition of intersubjectivity that determines consciousness. “Todos somos uno” exactly expresses that one self is *for* another and *in* another. See. Paul Ricoeur, “Introduction: The Question of Selfhood,” *Oneself As Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

considered⁵¹. Here I will merely indicate the adequacy of an ontological interpretation as that conducted by Heidegger on the problem of Existence since, as it will become clear, in *Vida* Torres confronts the question of the “Self” as an “existent.” In other words, Torres always comports himself towards the fundamental problematic of his individual existence on the explicit or implicit understanding that it concerns the fundamental problematic of his self as his specific mode of being in the world. So, the quotation above seems to me to require a “Heideggerian” approach. Its originality resides in that in taking on this problem Torres immediately defines himself against the Cartesian manner of understanding self-relation, that is, self-consciousness. In grounding the sameness of the universal individual subject—the Hegelian spirit—on the fact that Existence is given to it as “Being-towards-death,” anticipating Heidegger in this, Torres envisages the human subject “men” as the Being whose essential condition of “thrownness⁵²,” as the Being that conceives of itself as an entity that finds itself “thrown” into existence, since nobody asks to be born, that is, to be. This ontological condition of experiencing existence as being “thrown” into it, we would remember, is what characterizes the *subjectum* as this entity appears represented in

⁵¹ Compare for instance Torres’s statement with this one by Heidegger: “These entities are neither present-at-hand nor ready-to-hand; on the contrary, they are like the very Dasein [“I”] which frees them, in that *they are too, and there with*. So if one should want to identify the world in general with entities within the world, one would have to say that Dasein too is “world’ (sic).” In German phenomenological philosophy ‘Dasein’ generally means the “I,” the human entity, which is existentially conceptualized as a “Being-there” in the objective world, “Being-there” being a literal translation of “Da-sein.” In other words, the “I,” or the “Self” is that ontological entity whose being consists in being in the world, and in being in the world (“there”) together and at the same time and under the same existential conditions as all other entities of its own kind. If according to Torres, “los hombres todos somos uno,” then each “I” presupposes all the other “I’s” that there are in the world. “Being-there” (Da-sein) is being-in-the-world. See Heidegger, ‘The Dasein-with of Others and Everyday Being-with,’ *Being and Time*, 154-155.

⁵² “Thrownness” a Heideggerian concept, expresses the recognition that human existence, Dasein, did not freely decide whether to come into existence: “In thrownness is revealed that in each case Dasein, as my Dasein and this Dasein, is already in a definite world and alongside a definite range of definite entities within-the-world.” Torres’s statement that “all men are the same Man” roughly expresses the same situation of the way in which one finds oneself in the world alongside entities which also find themselves alongside other entities among which “one” belongs. See Heidegger, “The traditional Conception of Truth and its Ontological Foundations,” in *Being and Time*, 264-271.

the history of philosophy up to Kant, and which becomes object of criticism with Nietzsche and later continued and deepened with Heidegger. For, self-consciousness here is envisaged not as something attained in self-contemplation or in meditative introspection, that is, “esthetically” as Heidegger would say, but as the result of a relation of subjectivities that always presuppose each other even as they are set up against each other, as it is for Hegel. To say that self-consciousness is here envisaged as a relation of subjectivities is the same as to say that it is being encountered and dealt with *practically*, as something that shows itself and that is experienced in its showing in everydayness, and not as something that happens under extraordinary conditions. It is something encountered as life and in Existence. Vis-à-vis the existential determinants of a human condition that excludes any possibility of individual differentiation *before* this condition as such, and which to say it in the manner of Heidegger, can be characterized as the thrownness into existence of something that in its wholeness is also the “Being-towards-death,” in that death is always anticipated in the being of the “Self.” In existing toward-the-end, all men are just one man, since the conditions under which human existence has been given make them all the same man⁵³. Existence, as far as it is a “being-toward-death” deals with us as if we all were but one. But men do not, because of this, deal with each other in the same way Existence does with them, since it seems that inherent to the humanness of men is their ability of perceiving themselves as singularities, probably because the same death that strips off all of our existence prevents us from experiencing the essential unity of our being, an inescapable condition which Torres expresses in saying that each of us has a

⁵³ Heidegger, “Being-towards-death and the Everydayness of Dasein,” *Being and Time*, 296-299, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Harper: San Francisco, 1962.

death to die alone⁵⁴.” In positing that “All men are one and the same Man” Torres discovers *before* Hegel that Hegelian Spirit as universal self-consciousness, which is as much an “object” as it is also an “I” and that in attention to this and at the same time is the “I” that is “We,” and the “We” that is “I.”⁵⁵ With this Torres is clearly pointing toward the problem of identity and difference that is constitutive of individual self-consciousness and therefore of the “subject” or “Self.”⁵⁶ This is the problematic that has been and still is of central interest to German and French existential and phenomenological philosophy, as it appears in the works of some majors nineteenth and twentieth century philosophers, from Hegel to Nietzsche to Heidegger and Sartre⁵⁷. Namely, what Torres is actually

⁵⁴ “[...] y viva cada uno para sí, pues para sí sólo muere uno cuando muere.” Torres, *Vida*, 54. It is not to be left without a comment the great significance of this statement as it occurs in the context of a discourse concerned in an especial way with Existence, since the existential solitude of the living is one of the most sobering insights of phenomenological existentialism. Thus, Heidegger would say that “No one can take the other’s dying away from him” and that “dying is something that every Dasein itself must take upon itself at the time [when it comes].” Anticipating Heidegger, Torres, we will point out later, makes a point of writing his *Vida* towards-death almost three centuries before Heidegger and Sartre. See Heidegger, “The Possibility of experiencing the Death of Others, and the Possibility of Getting a Whole Dasein into our Grasp,” *Being and Time*, 281-282.

⁵⁵ Hegel, “Self-Consciousness,” *Phenomenology*, 101.

⁵⁶ Since I will later speak of the synthetic quality of Torres’s mode of thinking, I will offer here an example of what that is supposed to mean. The worldview from which Torres departs in his efforts for self-understanding, during the development of which he introduces in an abbreviated form a philosophy of the subject or self, coincides to an almost alarming point with the “ontology of life” as conceived by Wilhelm Dilthey in Germany during the nineteenth century. And what is more revealing, both of them start off from a consideration of Life as experience that is thought over, reflected upon, that is, even if it is true that Torres is doing so autobiographically, which means *from* Life itself, as it were, while Dilthey is doing it from the perspective of a *lebensphilosophie*. Just compare what Torres states about the sameness of all men to this reference from Dilthey: “Reflection on life shapes our life experience. [...] *As human nature is always the same, so are the fundamental features of life’s experience common to all men.* [...] Thus life’s experience takes different forms in all individuals. But its common ground in all men covers the views of the power of destiny, of the corruptibility of all that we own, cherish or even hate and fear, and of *ever present death* which, all powerful for everyone of us, determines the significance and meaning of life.” Therefore Torres: “All men are but just one and the same man.” See Dilthey, “Life and World View,” *Philosophy of Existence*, 22-30, trans. William Kluback, Marin Weinbaum, Bookman Associates, New York, 1957.

⁵⁷ Although these statements have gone unnoticed and without the slighted comments from any of the scholars who have over time occupied themselves with Torres, they are of utmost importance to conduct a fair evaluation of the history of thought in eighteenth century Spain. For here Diego is dealing head-on with the fundamental question of the existential conditions that make possible the emergence of individual self-consciousness. As it is well-known, the question of self-consciousness is in essence the problematic of the subject as the individual human “Self” and as such it is the main difficulty that modern philosophy, from Descartes on, has been wrestling with. So, in dealing with it, Torres willy-nilly inserts himself in the debate that has come to define the philosophical and discursive identity of modernity itself. We will immediately

encountering as the not-yet the Hegelian notion of *Spirit* is this “absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, *in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence.*”⁵⁸ In Torres, then, this Hegelian universal spirit is encountered in a stage of its development, which is distinguished from previous Hegelian stages in that now, the different independent consciousnesses that oppose each other in it have *already* recognized themselves as spirit and have acquired their self-identity as universal human spirit. To hold that all men are but one single Man, since it is something that any man from the “all” has the same possibility of affirming means that these different independent self-consciousnesses have *already* reached the point in their *spiritual* development in which they mutually recognize each other as *having* mutually recognized each other. To say that all men are but the same Man then amounts to an expression of an individual in which this recognition is explicitly stated; as such it offers itself as a *proof* of the stage of development in which the universal human spirit, which is the same as saying the universal subject, now finds itself and is encountered in self-reflection. As the statement of the individual known as “Diego de Torres,” in making this statement of recognition, the individual recognizes himself as an independent self-consciousness that has already “emerged in the being[immediacy]of Life,” of Existence,

call attention to the fact that, although he comes to this problem in a different way and faces it from a different perspective, the answer he provides to the question about the determination of self-consciousness is on accordance with a theorization of the problem that places its origin in an existential situation defined by intersubjectivity, or if you prefer, inter-consciousness: as it appears in Hegel, “a self-consciousness only exists in an for itself when, and by the fact that, it exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged.” That Torres confronts this problem *practically* instead of theoretically, as Hegel does, does not in any way imply less clarity or a failure in apprehending the problem. On the other hand, given the nature of the autobiographical discourse through which he comes to face this problem, Torres can only proceed practically, for life always poses only practical problems to the individual as it does to autobiography. See Hegel, “Self-Consciousness: The Truth of Self-Certainty,” in *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, 104-119, trans. A.v. Miller, Oxford University Press, 1978.

⁵⁸ Hegel, *Ibid.* 177, 110. Emphasis added.

that is, and which has superseded its “being-for-self” in its “being-for-other.”⁵⁹ That “all men are but *one and the same* Man” then expresses that moment in the dialectic of *the universal subject as the manifold relation of subjectivities* in which, all independent self-consciousnesses not longer oppose one to another and, having mutually recognized each other, each acknowledges to the other their reciprocal dependence on each other. But then, because this is the statement of recognition of the situation in which he as an individuated self, as one of those manifold subjectivities, stands in relation to the rest, it becomes the statement in which the conscience of this self is manifested. As the consciences of the individual “Diego de Torres,” to proclaim that all men are but just one and the same Man and to make this proclaim dependent on the possibility intrinsic to Being of reaching the state of non-Being in death, is Torres’s idiosyncratic way of postulating the *universal constancy* of the “Self.” This universal constancy consists on the “Self” being that which, as defined by Heidegger, “is what maintains itself as something identical through changes and ways in its Experiences and ways of behaviour, and which relates itself to this changing multiplicity in so doing (sic).”⁶⁰

To apprehend from the uncanny reality that we all have a death to die alone the fact that that which “lies at the basis,” the subjectum, and which in accordance with Heidegger because of the “manifold otherness” of its selfsameness “has the character of the “Self,” is also anticipatory of the ontological manner in which Heidegger elucidates this phenomenon. In doing so, Torres not only gives a correct account of an important omission taken note of by philosophers like Dilthey, who occupies himself with the “ontology of life” as such, but it again anticipates Heidegger himself in his efforts for

⁵⁹ Hegel, “Self-Consciousness,” *Phenomenology*, 133, 186.

⁶⁰ Heidegger, “An Existential Approach to the ‘Who’ of Dasein,” in *Being and Time*, 150.

accounting for death as that which forms part of the ‘structural ontology’ of the “Self” which, failing to give an account of, would make it impossible to account for the individual⁶¹.

That all men are but the same one Man, then also means: “I am because others are;” and since this is the basis for a mutual recognition, it conversely also means: “others are because I am.” With this, self-consciousness is postulated as intersubjectivity, and, as *it portrays Torres as a Hegelian before Hegel*, he places himself directly within the field of the philosophy of the Enlightenment. From the conceptualization of self-consciousness as attained through a relation of manifold subjectivities, *I no longer am because I think; I am because I act, or rather I am because I interact*. From now on, every one of my actions presupposes the actions of others with whom mine interact. In Torres, it has already been revealed previous to Hegel that individual consciousness is only possible in a situation where every individual also can, at the manner of Hegel, attain to the truth of his own “self-certainty.⁶²” Taken in the historical context in which Torres arrives to this philosophical insight, it being the manifestation of the conscience of an individual self taking hold of himself ontologically, regardless of whether he is *theoretically* aware or not, “all men are but one single same Man” stands as the signpost of an enlightened way of perceiving the relation in which the individual stands respective to the world. Torres then does not only anticipate Hegel’s determination of self-consciousness; he makes inroad into the existential understanding of the “Self” as not only Being-in-the-world, but

⁶¹ Wilhelm Dilthey is the most outstanding of modern philosophers concerned with the “ontology of life.” He was not oblivious to the “existential” relation of life and death, as Torres gives proofs a having been. See reference given from his *Das Erlebnis und Dichtung* in “Notes” to *Being and Time* in sharing of this awareness with Heidegger. PP.495.

⁶² Hegel, “Independence and Dependence of the Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage,” *Phenomenology*, 111.

also as a being in the world that is a Being-with-Others in Heidegger's phenomenology. Now, since Torres's determination of the universal "Self" can be interpreted as the foundation of a new political ontology, he not only anticipates Hegel's phenomenology of self-consciousness and theoretical philosophy in general; it also contains the principles and philosophical rationale of the political and social changes heralded by the Enlightenment⁶³.

If we were to turn this statement around in order to fathom its significance by bringing out all its possible meanings, we would then see that to posit that all men are but one single Man also necessarily implies that every single man is all the other men that the notion of universal spirit comprehends. This turning-around then allows us to see that Torres's statement, which arises from his awareness of a foundational human sameness, also contemplates the possibility of difference as something constitutive of sameness. Sameness and difference here are presented as a totality made out of single entities that each one in itself contains the totality that contains it. For, it is true that as Torres sees it, we all are in the *same* way made of the same *substance*; we are all in the same way prey to the same diseases; we are all in the same way at the mercy of the same natural contingencies; we are all in the same way related to nature; we are all in the same way afflicted with the same anxiety before Existence, and in the end, to confirm our condition of being Beings-towards-the-end, we are all in the same way uprooted from our existence by the same phenomenon of death. But on the other hand, since, as Torres also says, "we all have a death to die alone," the fact that we all die our own death designates our

⁶³ Concerning the historical context that makes possible this insight one should notice that in its essence, that "all men are but just one Man" shows many years in advance a philosophical awareness of what would become the opening statement of the Declaration of Independence of America, as to the essential equality of all men. Torres's version, one daresay, is more profound.

existence as a *temporally* being-toward-end, as anchored in time; for even though we all “die the same death,” we all do not die at the same time, and this establishes a primordial difference between “totality” and “singleness” that allows that in the first place the sameness of all men be posited. It is this essential, primordial difference, which once it has established itself as the primordial state of self-consciousness, opens up for the possibility of recognition of both sameness and difference as constitutive of individual conscience. Thus, Torres is aware that, all men being but one Man, there is room for difference to emerge among them without this however doing away with the essential sameness of them. He is obviously departing from a similarly dialectical view of the relation of sameness and difference as Hegel. In being a *relation of differences*, self-consciousness is the manifestation of a subject-object relation; but in being so and *while* being so, self-consciousness is a relation of sameness in that “subject” and “object” are reciprocally the same to one another.

In confronting the problematic of self-identity, Torres avails himself of this enlightened understanding of the constitution of self-consciousness. Inserting the question of his personal self-identity within the much larger theme of the metaphysical subject is what allows him to exhibit a mode of autobiographical self-understanding that is methodologically connected with his efforts to shed light on the problematic of the status of the “subject” as the subject-matter of metaphysical inquiry. By doing so, Torres makes sure that the questions he explicitly asks about his self and his self-identity—which in the last analysis is what autobiographical discourse does— is done in a fundamental way. Because of this, much of what Torres has to say about the “subject” as the “Self” is intended to have universal validity. We immediately call attention to how in confronting

this problem, Torres departs from an original consideration of self-consciousness defined as “the knowledge that one has of oneself inasmuch as knowledge of one’s conscious states,” also called *epistemic consciousness*, and immediately proceeds to an evaluation of the *practical* concept of self-consciousness which is not immediate and which directly corresponds to the “Know thyself” of the Delphic motto, and which is what autobiographical discourse attempts to address. As epistemic self-consciousness, whether immediate (of which only the individual whose state it is has an *immediate* knowledge) or non-immediate (someone else other than the individual whose state or property can have a direct knowledge of), Torres is already dealing with what up to our days is of capital interest to modern philosophical inquiry, which has been taken over and become the ken of contemporary research in neuroscience. So, we can postulate that Torres outfits his autobiography to pose the question of self-consciousness, self-identity and selfhood from both a theoretical and a practical perspective, and that he does so without establishing any artificial division between both approaches⁶⁴. We should, to begin charting this theme, move on to that moment of *Vida* where Torres starts unpacking the psychological structure underlying our conscious states and establishing the connection with the broader interrogation about the nature of the constitution of the metaphysical subject. Thus he says:

[...] because all men are but one and the same Man, and although *there are varying degrees of difference* [between them], *one man is as evil [same] as the other*⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ Tugendhat, “Introduction: Formulation of the Problem and the Program,” in *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, 19-38.

⁶⁵ “[...] porque todos somos unos y, con corta diferencia, tan malos los unos como los otros.” Torres, *Vida*, 55.

Despite postulating the essential similarity (sameness) of all men, the practical manner in which he takes hold of his singularity as individuated selfhood allows Torres to assert a form of difference that however does not exclude sameness, or the other way around; a form of selfhood that *presupposes* difference. That is how he can feel free to declare that,

I pass by for a Guzman of Alfarache, a Gregorio Guadaña and a Lazaro de Tormes among those who think they know me and among those who do not, and equally among those who have but hatred for me and among those who barely acknowledge my existence. But I am neither this one or that one or the other. And I swear on my life to make my known for who I really am⁶⁶.

In order to establish the “am” of his “I,” that is, to establish his mode of being in the world and alongside the other that are, Torres resorts to an elaboration of the way in which he perceives the phenomenological problematic of sameness and difference. In doing so, a sketch for a theory of affectivity will emerge. According to Torres, that essential sameness gives way to difference is a consequence of the dialectical relation among the “affects,” our drives and instincts as they make themselves manifest in our low or high “exaltation of spirit,” (ánimo) as he makes it patent in his sketch for a *philosophy of the affects*, as it appears in *Vida*⁶⁷. It is then worth to note the dynamic relation that

⁶⁶ “Paso, entre los que me conocen y me ignoran, me abominan y me saludan, por un Guzmán de Alfarache, un Gregoria Guadaña y un Lazáro de Tormes; y ni soy este, ni aquel, ni el otro; y por vida mia que se ha de saber quién soy.” Torres, “Prólogo Al Lector,” *Vida*, 57.

⁶⁷ Although Torres never says it explicitly, he knew he was engaging in theorizing on this and many others themes. He makes this apparent in his admission that, although he did not tried to defend or persuade with his “doctrine,” he nonetheless enjoyed and limited himself to “working some notations on philosophy,” *Sacudimiento de Mentecatos*, 220-221. Like Hume, though, and like Nietzsche after him, Torres is wary of

Torres perceives between sameness and difference, and between unity and multiplicity, since the conceptual axis around which his dialectical understanding of the Self will revolve is formed by this dyad. In his dialectical understanding of the Self, that all men are but one in the face of the existential determinants, means that all men are born “equipped” with a selfhood; but since they have no power over those existential determinants, the *sense* of self, the relation that each individual man or woman establishes with the conditions that both determine human existence and the abolition and therefore with him or herself is different, since as remarked above, these conditions are given *as* temporality and *in* time. The essential sameness of men in the face of existence endows them all equally with a selfhood. Yet, since we can but perceive ourselves as unity and not as multiplicity, we do not relate to our selfhood in the same exact manner, and this explains the varying degree of difference from one individual to another, for our relation to existence is a relation of oneself to oneself, a self-relation. For, in a word, *we ourselves are our existence*. This implies a subtle distinction between the self, which we all share in, and a *sense* of selfhood, which separates a man from another and which allows ground for individual identity. Of course, these philosophical differentiations are not manifest in Torres’s self-reflections, but they percolates all throughout all his writings; for while he acknowledges the sameness of all man, he at the same time does not tire of stating those

philosophers and philosophies, and like them he mistrusts non-empirical knowledge. Thus he declares that his yearly “discourses,” which he published under the name of either “prólogos” or “pronósticos,” are not “loaded with *dreamed up* syllogisms.” The reason for this is that, almost in the same way that Kant would declare that he was awoken up from his “metaphysical dreams” by Hume, Torres says that he had been “desengañado” (disillusioned) and therefore laughs at a philosophy that is “more entertaining than persuading.” Torres overtly makes Descartes the target of his mistrust in philosophies and philosophers: “Lo que siento es que no puedo engendrar, por más que me *destemple* el cerebro, un *desatino* que no se le haya puesto a otro mucho días ha en el calendario de su *imaginación*. Pues si yo acertara a producirlo de tal calibre, tuviera la gloria de inventor de sistema nuevo y de escritor original, no menos que Renato Descartes y el portugués Gómez Pereira.” *Textos Autobiográficos*, No. 29 and 65, in *Repertorio Bibliográfico*, Guy Mercadier, ed. 1978.

things that single him out from the rest of his contemporaneous and make of him and individual⁶⁸. If he proclaims that, like that of all men, his self is made of matters from everywhere,” he on the other hand denounces those who would fail to acknowledge this in their individual cases⁶⁹. And, again, although for him all men are but the same one, in that we all have a self, his sense of selfhood is different, for not everybody has “the *same* undaunted heart, the *same* becalmed spirit and the *same* impassibility, these being all attributes of his inborn nature that should elicit the envy of others⁷⁰. In them his individuality resides, since these qualities set him apart from others.

Although we all are naturally constituted as “selves,” we develop differing *sense of selfhood* because the Self, according with Torres, is a complex construct made of two basic parts, each one equally dynamic and each one being the source from which our different faculties and abilities emanate. Thus, we all have a “genius” and an “ingenious,” and the relation between these two components is what conditions and constitutes the

⁶⁸ The use I will be making of the concept of “self-reflection” calls for clarification. This concept, which will frequently occur throughout this study, should not be taken in the same exact way in which it is often employed in writing on autobiography as meaning that a person either in a manner of speaking “sits down” to reflect about her or himself during the act of writing and therefore to give him or herself to introspective reflection. And neither should it be taken to mean that in so doing, the act of writing itself constitutes “a reflection” of the self in the writing. These two ways of dealing with this concept are contrary with a manner of understanding the “Self” not as a self-consciousness” that can be accessed through looking inside oneself, as one it assumingly doing in meditation or in confession, and which responds to a traditional conceptualization of self-consciousness; but that is not how I understand it here. Here we are departing from Tugendhat’s interpretation of the relation of oneself to oneself as it derives from Heidegger and Mead’s conceptualization of the “Self.” Here “self-reflection” implies a *practical* relation of the self to itself; since one relates to oneself practically through one’s action, and since one is what one does, given that what one does is what determines one’s mode of being in the world, “self-reflection” in the way I will use will imply reflection on one’s existence as it is apprehended in one’s conscience through one’s action. In other words, self-reflection will suggest the process in which one makes deliberation as to the best course of action in relation to one’s mode of being. See Tugendhat, “Heidegger on the Relation of Oneself to Oneself III,” in *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, 201-218. Specifically, see page 210 and FF.

⁶⁹ “Yo tengo de todo, y en todas partes, como todos los demás hombres.” Although taken in a limited context this declaration could be taken as simply meaning that he acknowledges the socially and economically diverse ingredients that partake of his personal background, taken in the “arch-context” of his autobiography as a whole as I here do this declaration acquires a different significance. This point will be discussed extensively in later chapters. Torres, *Vida*, 67.

⁷⁰ “La valentía del corazón, la quietud del espíritu y la serenidad de ánimo, que gozo muchos años ha, es la única parte que se le puede envidiar a mi naturaleza, mi genio o mi crianza.” Torres, *Vida*, 105.

ontological structure of the “Self” as individual⁷¹. Further, the “genius,” corresponding to our psychological traits, is internal to us; it is not exactly the equivalent of the soul itself but like in phenomenological philosophy, it is the *appearance* of the “soul” of men, where the passions reside and through which we get a glimpse of the soul which is correlative to

⁷¹ In general, Torres’s use of “genio” could be taken as in accordance with its Latin root in *genius* and which retains the meaning of “a person characteristics disposition,” which it already had in all Romance languages and in English by the end of the sixteenth century. If “disposition” is interpreted as “disposed by birth” to acquire such and such characteristics, then “genio” alternatively takes on the meaning of the “mind,” or the “ego” or the “soul,” and carries the meaning these terms have had for philosophy, psychology and theology, respectively. However, when we give a closer consideration to the *function* Torres assigns this term in his discourse, some complexities arise. For starter, Torres speaks not only of “genio” but also of “ingenio” and posits them as equally constitutive of his being, or as we would more often say, of his self. Unlike “genio,” “ingenio alludes not necessarily to something that can be understood as a set of characteristics to which the self is disposed by birth to be and which as such always manifests itself as what is. More commonly, “ingenio,” from Latin *ingenium*, carries the meaning of “cleverness,” “mental acuity,” “intellectual fitness” and the like, also “original,” or “creative.” In other words, while “genio” alludes to *Being*, “ingenio” alludes to a specific *mode of being* and thus the way Torres uses both terms exhibits the ontic-ontological structure of their meanings. For, while “genio” seems to only *register* the fact that he is an undifferentiated entity that, like any other entity simply is, “ingenio” seems to take into account this entity as a Being that is in such and such way. But Torres does not just posit either one of the other as the “Self” ; rather, for him what he himself is he conceives of as a determination of both the “genio” and the “ingenio” and therefore the implication is that, in Heidegger’s words, he envisages his self as “an entity that just does not occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it (sic.)” For Torres, through its “ingenio” the “Self” takes issue with its “genio” as Being; his self’s mode of being consists in a taking-issue-with itself. For a discussion on the traditional meaning of “genius,” see Kant, “On Genius,” in *Philosophical Writings*, 224-237, ed. Ernst Behler, Continuum: New York, 1993. See Heidegger, “The Ontological Priority and The Question of Being,” in *Being and Time*, 28-35 about the phenomenological distinction between “ontic” and “ontological,” see Heidegger, “The Ontological Priority and The Question of Being,” in *Being and Time*, 28-35. Although one would be tempted to think otherwise, the documental evidence would not support attributing Torres’s taxonomy of the “Self” to the influence on him of anybody in particular. Neither Balthasar Gracián’s aesthetic philosophy on “agudeza” or wit, nor Huarte de San Juan’s study on the nature of the intellective faculties seems to have attracted especial interest for Torres. Concerning the documental evidence, while Torres acknowledges the influence on him of Santo Thomas, Kempis, Crosset and Quevedo, for instance, he makes no mention of either Gracián or Huarte de San Juan; it is more likely that it was in Aristotle that Torres first read about the philosophy of nature, since he was acquainted with his philosophy and makes explicit references to him, although these references do not show him always in agreement with the Greek on some points. I call attention to the fact that while Gracián considers the intellective faculties only as “acumen” and “acuity” revealed in communicative expressions, Huarte de San Juan, who derives his philosophy on the subject from Galen, considers them only inasmuch as manifestation of “Being” or “Self” or, more properly, “Soul,” but not as constituting these entities in their own right, as it is in Torres. In any event, Torres’s position in this topic shows him as going far beyond than Huarte or Galen; for he rejects that the “soul” or the “genio” or “ingenio” resides in any specific anatomical organ or in all the organs put together, an so he arrives early at a conception of the “Self” or “Being” or “Soul” as something relational, which is how it would be conceptualized in German philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth century with Nietzsche and then with Heidegger. On “ingenio” as wit, see Gracián, *Agudeza y arte de ingenio*, ed. Evaristo Correa Calderón, Editorial Castalia: Madrid, 1969; for a consideration of the concept of “ingenio” from the perspective of natural philosophy, see especially chapter first and second of Huarte de San Juan’s *Examen de ingenio para las ciencias*, ed. Esteban Torre, Promociones Universitarias: Barcelona, 1988; for Torres’s account of writers who had an influence on him, see *Vida*, specifically pp. 72; for an example of his reference to Aristotle, see specifically page 159.

our identity *as* humans. The “genius” is the *primordial* character taken on by the “Self” in its appearance, but it is not *alone* constitutive of our individuality⁷². It marks the difference between humans and the empirical world of objects and things, but it is at the same time what allows for men to be construed as “genus” of belonging to the *same* species. As the dwelling of the passions, the “genius” makes one man undistinguishable from another at their most basic level of existence; as a consequence of this complex inner structure, Torres knows himself to be capable of feeling:

[I] feel ire and fear and mercy; and joy and sadness; and greed and generosity and humility, like all men judged all together or one by one⁷³.

Because of the bewildering way in which they arrange themselves and the unpredictable way in which they seize upon us one cannot gain reliable self-knowledge through our passions, for we all seem to respond accordingly to their whims and, as Torres’s own experience and his observation of others has taught him, just like any of them, he also has the inclination to “crying and laughing; giving and hoarding; rejoicing and suffering, *without ever knowing what sets in motion the contrariety of emotions* we are seized by⁷⁴.” (Emphasis added).

However, one can obtain self-knowledge through the assessment of the high or low frequency with which our passions made themselves present in us, and through the assessment of their “exaltation,” that is, the drives and force with which they seize upon us

⁷² See the translators’ “Notes” to *Being and Time* concerning the phenomenological meanings of the notion of “appearance,” pp. 51-52.

⁷³ [...] yo tengo ira, miedo, piedad, alegría, codicia, largueza, mansedumbre y todos los buenos y malos afectos, loables y reprehensibles ejercicios, que se pueden encontrar en todos los hombres juntos y separados.” *Vida*, 101

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 101

specifically. This means that even though all men are at the mercy of the same gamut of passions, these passions introduce difference among them, since their drives vary from one to the other, making room for individual identity to emerge. Because of the dialectic in operation inside the self itself, between sameness and difference, we cannot gain knowledge of how it comes to be that a passion makes itself prevalent, but we can know which one is prevalent at a given moment, and how often the drive of a passion overpowers the other passions' drives⁷⁵. But this assessment cannot be conducted by the passions themselves *qua* passions; this is a job for the "ingenious," which represents the self-reflective activity of the self⁷⁶. As Torres indicates, for us to acquire a consciousness as expressed in our capacity to conduct an examination of the self, it is necessary for the passions to *assume* the authority, or rather, as Nietzsche also came to see it, the passions must be constitutive of the self-reflective part of our selfhood in their own right. This abstract motion of "assuming" describes a dialectical process in which the passions are eventually conceived as transforming themselves into the "ingenious." In a later chapter we will discuss this process; but for the sake of clarity, for now we will be restrictive in this discussion. This is how he goes about it:

The most intense or mild expressions of the passions most people attribute to *genius, nature or nurture* [the self] of an individual (to which they also attribute the lower or higher frequency of feelings). If my genius should be known on the ground of the most common state and drive of my passions, here I am writing down the truth, as my self-reflection

⁷⁵In this Torres approximates the view Nietzsche will later sketch in his book of notes *Will to Power*, and which will find its way more or less modified in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

⁷⁶Torres, *Vida*, 101

reveals them to be. I must, however, shake off the blush from my face, while I do this⁷⁷. (Emphasis added).

While the “ingenious,” the intellectual side of selfhood reflects upon itself, the passion prevailing at *that* moment gets subsumed to the reflective actuation of Torres’s selfhood, that he should be known by others and by himself. But this does not imply that either of these passions or any “parts” or aspects of the self are more important than the other. If one of them might take predominance over the other, depending on their agency in our interactions with ourselves and the world of objective reality, they are both equally “indispensable pieces in experiencing life⁷⁸.” It is however through the “ingenious” that the self that is allowed knowledge of itself and of the world of objects and things, given that only the “ingenious” has that which is lacking in the passions. Torres says that his self (his “genius”) has:

[A]n acceptable discerning capacity, much malice, exceeding memory, lucidity, insightfulness, and a general aptitude inclined to intellectual and practical knowledge⁷⁹.

As we see it, in Torres the self is conceived within a dynamic framework that presupposes sameness and difference at the same time. Through their own agency, each of our passions possesses the same freedom as the other for exerting their drives upon us. And it is this freedom that makes possible for them to allot the necessary contingent space for multiplicity to come out of unity, and vice versa, for multiplicity to cohere into

⁷⁷ “A la mayor o menor altura de los afectos y a la más furiosa o sosegada expresión de las pasiones, llaman genio, natural o crianza la mayor parte de la comunidad de las gentes; y si el mío se ha de conocer por las más repetidas exaltaciones de ánimo, aquí las pondré con la verdad que las examino [...]” Torres, *Vida*, 10.

⁷⁸ “Ahora hablare del ingenio, que también es pieza indispensable en esta vida.” Ibid. 108.

⁷⁹ “Mi ingenio no es malo, porque tiene un mediano discernimiento, mucha malicia, sobrada copia, bastante claridad, mañosa penetración y una aptitud generalmente proporcionada al conocimiento liberal y mecánico.” Torres, Ibid. 108.

the unity of a selfhood. And this dialectic is replicated also between the “seat” of the passions, the “genius,” and the “ingenious,” through whose agency the self turns its awareness of its passions into the possibility of consciousness of itself. If here we must speak of “unity” and “multiplicity,” it is because Torres’s conceptualization of his own sense of selfhood is dependent on a theory of the “frequency” of affects or passions and feelings, which are ever changing. This dynamic in turn gives way to a consciousness of self as a unity that houses a plurality of selves, and reciprocally, to a *sense* of multiplicity forming a single, unique and only self. Thus, the two “pieces” of his selfhood, as Torres recognizes them, in their interaction and reaction to each other can at times and under a given situation overtake each other, but it is clear that the “genius” is what is transcendental, that is, immanent to selfhood inasmuch as it is a given, something that is always already there in its objectivity, and that the “ingenious,” as the reflective, intellectual side of the self has the potential for falsifying the “deep” identity of an individual through misrepresenting the drives or state of high or low “frequency” of the passions as they actuate themselves in the “genius⁸⁰.” The dialectic dynamism between “genius” and “ingenious” poses certain risks to selfhood, for thanks to the potential for falsification that lays in the self-reflective, intellectual “side” of it, the self can convey a

⁸⁰ We must, however, warn against inferring from this taxonomy of selfhood represented by a “genio” and an “ingenio” that Torres conceives of his own sense of selfhood as in the grip of an inherent inner division. We will have time to see that rather than inherent inner division, Torres’s “genio” and “ingenio” are but the basic concepts of a self-differentiating complex structure. By “self-differentiating” here we mean that in order to get mental hold of itself the self must posit difference within itself, based on the distinct and *differing* functions of its component “parts.” The self establishes differences “within” itself as it experiences the functions of its parts in its relation with the world and with itself; Torres’s genius and ingenious can then be said to constitute the *functional difference* of the self. Despite establishing this constitutive inner differentiation, through all its “functions” the self recognizes itself as that which is not other. In a later chapter we will see how the dialectic of this functional difference paves the way for Torres’s consciousness of self as unity.

misleading image of an individual, as it was the case with Torres himself, which is what creates the need for his enactment of an autobiographical narrative:

With so many publications to my name, I could have provided the public a more faithful image of my own self [my *ingenious*] and in a light that would have reflected more truthfully how coarse or discreet, how gracious or retched I am. But almost none of those publications give reliable picture of the integrity, goodness, misery or human abundance I have in my [*genius*], for they are all written without dedication, with little zeal and with much resentment and haste and carelessness. I know quite well that my intellectual capabilities could have given the reader much and better things than what I have managed so far. And if had in myself [my *genius*] more greed for material well-being and more esteem for worldly fame [...] my writing would have been more lucid, more circumspect and more *ingenious* and *intellectually* alluring⁸¹. (Emphasis added.)

Leaving aside for the present the insight offered here into the psychology of the intellectual and scholarly type of personality that anticipates some important moments in

⁸¹ “Aunque han salido al tantas obras que pudieran haber demostrado con más fidelidad lo rudo o discreto, lo gracioso o lo infeliz de mi ingenio, es rara la que puede dar verdaderas y cumplidas señales de su entereza, de su bondad, de su miseria o de su abundancia, porque todas están escritas sin gusto, con poco asiento, con algún enfado y con precipitación desaliñada. Yo bien se que alcanzo más y discurro mejor que lo que dejo escrito, y que si mi genio hubiera tenido más codicia a los intereses, más estimación a la fama o a lo que se dice aura popular [...] serían mis papeles más limpios, más doctrinales, más ingeniosos y más apetecibles....” Ibid. 108-109.

German philosophy⁸², we should call attention to how, if Torres speaks of “pieces” (*partes*) to mean “selfhood,” it is because he conceives of it metonymically, that is, *his perception of what the “Self” is, is modeled on the rhetorical concept of synecdoche*, a common rhetorical operation that spontaneously takes place in our thought-processes without our always becoming aware of it⁸³. In Torres’s case, whether because in his experience the drives of his passions and the needs of his intellectual faculties do not always and in all instances coincide with each other; whether because the drives of the passions are not translated or authentically conveyed by his “ingenious,” in part because of the striving of one passion to express itself in a higher or lower “frequency” respective to another— he experiences both the passions and his intellectual faculties as cause and effects of either one of these “parts” or another. In either case, he then *takes* for an effect what would be a “cause,” while taking as cause what would be an “effect.” This is made very apparent in that he sees the misrepresentation of his “self” before the public perpetrated by his “ingenious” as the effect of his “genius” not being under the permanent control of the “right” passions. This rhetoric of synecdoche, it is worth taking note of, is produced, but we might say provoked in Torres’s thought-process by his being aware of

⁸² For example, the psychology of the “scholar type” which Nietzsche so insightfully addresses in “We Scholars,” in *Beyond Good and Evil*, 93-108, and in “Schopenhauer as Educator,” in *Untimely Meditations*, 169-174, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Cambridge University Press, 1983. I should remark how, in general, and making allowance for the difference in the historical times they both lived, and for other factors like culture and pursuits, there are many points of contact between Torres’s temperament and Nietzsche’s. Nietzsche probably would have considered Torres a practitioner or even a proponent of “la gaya scienza” (joyful wisdom or knowledge, which is a rendition of the German “fröhliche Wissenschaft,” or as Kaufman translates it, “Gay Science”), the attitude Nietzsche himself exhibited towards knowledge, and which according to him, a North European, was more readily and more often encountered in the southern countries: Greece, Italy, France, and with Torres, in Spain. In any case, they both would have agreed with their respective criticism of the “scholarly type” and with their choosing real life to the solemnity and ceremonies of the scholar. See Kaufman introduction to his edition of Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science*, 4-7. In our days, in the face of the rise of the “Gay Theory,” Kaufman’s translation of the Italian regional “gaya scienza” lends itself to unnecessary confusion; I for my part prefer “joyful wisdom.”

⁸³ On the structural rhetorical pervading the whole of a language, see Paul de Man essays “Rhetoric of Tropes” on Nietzsche’s theory of rhetoric, in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche and Proust*, 103-118, New Heaven University Press, 1979.

the predicament in which the “Self” often finds itself and that produces in us the sensation of not being whole, of having a “split” inside ourselves⁸⁴. The synecdochical rhetoric in place here is Torres’s way of accounting for his own predicament. We know that what is going on here is a rhetorical operation, albeit without his ever having consciousness of it, because Torres states how his notion of his own self is the consequence of the actuation of internal mechanisms or forces moving in *contrary* directions inside him, and how the intellectual, self-reflective actions of his self get curtailed by drives his self-consciousness cannot account for:

Be it because therein I have intentionally stated my weaknesses, or *because my weaknesses have given themselves away in spite of myself*, my self [“genio’] nature, or *whatever the name* we give to that internal halo by whose signs, actions or movements we become aware of our souls is more truthfully depicted in my writing. In my hasty and sophomoric writing and in the unguarded expressions of my thoughts there is much that has uncovered the inclinations and fixations of my will. The *body of my spirit* can be found *dismembered* and unevenly *scattered* in my writing [...] ⁸⁵.

(Emphasis added).

⁸⁴ I have already made the point that “genio” and “ingenio” actually alludes to one and the same entity seen simultaneously from the perspective of its ontic and ontological constitution; so that, in this conceptual differentiation we are not confronted with two different phenomenological entities. The differentiation made by Torres is justified on the ground of the different activities and functions in which the “Self” encounters its Existence; on the other hand, it is owed to the nature of language that something experience as being simultaneous and inseparable has to be addressed as if though it were not. See note 71 above.

⁸⁵ “El genio, el natural o este duende invisible (llámese como quisieren), por cuyas burlas, acciones y movimientos rastreamos algún poco de las almas, anda copiado con más verdad en mis papeles, ya porque cuidadosamente he declarado mis defectos, ya porque a hurtadilla de mi vigilancia se han salido, arrebuados

Torres's taking of whole for parts, and conversely, his taking parts for whole but in any case, this picking of the self into "parts" and "pieces" constitutes a synecdochical rhetoric that not only motivates self-misrepresentation; it also does violence to his self-consciousness in that it allows for a painful experience of the self as "dismembered" and "scattered." Later on our analysis will grapple with how Torres's writing is always in the grip of a kind of rhetoric or other that is responsible for the disfiguration and defacement perpetrated on the "body" of Torres's "spirit" by the mode of reading it gets subjected to. For indeed, is it Torres's self-reflective activity that in the end caused his literary self to foster a "rhetoric of roguery" that evinces historical and literary misunderstanding about the empirical man behind the writing, causing him to be mislabeled a real "pícaro" from the Spanish novelistic tradition and to be misinterpreted as if though he *really* was a *picaresque* character⁸⁶, the first consequence of this being that he had not been recognized in his role as a frontrunner of the modern individualistic self-consciousness that today more than ever before characterizes Western societies, as we have been arguing. Presently, however, it is momentous to take note of how this rhetoric of synecdoche which, again,

entre las expresiones, las bachillerías y las incontinencias, muchos pensamientos y palabras que han descubierto las manías de mi propensión y los delirios de mi voluntad. *Desmembrado y escasamente repartido se encuentra en algunas planas el cuerpo de mi espíritu [...]*" Torres, *Vida*, 100. Guy Mercadier, alone in this among the traditional approach to Torres's work, gets credit for being first in calling attention to this phenomenon. But then, his is not an ontological approach, and this prevents him from seeing the epistemic significance of this phenomenon, preferring instead to refer it to psychoanalysis, without however committing to the psychoanalytical task, which by and in itself would have represented a progress on the critical study of Torres. Mercadier, "Vers la transparence du masque," *Diego de Torres Villarroel: Masques et miroirs*, 318, Editions Hispaniques, Paris, France.

⁸⁶ In general, the misconception of Torres as a *picaresque* character and by extension of *Vida* as a picaresque novel has been perpetuated through history by a failure on the part of some scholars to grasp the rhetorical strategy that governs Torres's self-portrayal and which is manifestation at the level of discourse of his relation to language. This rhetorical strategy, of whose complexity and repercussion he himself was not always aware, can only be discerned on the basis of a consideration of the tropes and figures, many of them recurrent in his discourse and through meaning attains. "Pícaro," for instance, in the way he makes use of it, is decidedly metaphoric and the sarcastic and sardonic meaning that it produces in Torres's discourse can be misleading, sometimes intentionally so, but often also unintentionally. The rhetorical consideration of an author who expressed himself overly and always dismissively on "rhetoric" has been neglected by the students of his works.

should here and elsewhere in this study be understood as a linguistic modeling of the perception or mental representation of something after the concept of a given rhetorical figure or trope—reveals Torres’s conceptualization of the “Self” to be a complex structure whose ontic and ontological character is ever made manifest. So that, as an ontic entity, the “Self” would possess an “inner” side to itself and, like any other ontic entity “ready-at-hand,” a river, a tree or a stone the “innerness” of the “Self” would be the site of different and differentiating drives and forces that do not always push in the same direction but which however always have the same goal of fostering and furthering a consciousness of selfhood as that which is not the “other,” as that which through the varying frequency of emotions, and betraying thoughts and passions remains the same. This experience of self as that which is not the “other” is Torres’s version of what Hegel identifies as the “being-for-itself” of our selfhood; if we recall that in Torres self-consciousness is born out of his recognition and acceptance of himself being one of the “children of Adam” (or the man who is all the men), then we can see how, as in Hegel, in the “being-for-itself” of Torres’s sense of selfhood is a way of acknowledging the simultaneous identity of the individual self and the Hegelian “universal ‘Self,’” as we have striven to explain above. And thus, Torres recognizes the self as consciousness of self-sameness, as that which makes it possible for us to experience our individuality in setting us apart from others, while guaranteeing others their own individuality: in the acts of his individualism, says Torres, his [the] self makes readable [its] his design⁸⁷. Admittedly, in the Cartesian “thinking self” an almost similar rhetoric of synecdoche is at work; to arrive at his concept of the self as a thinking substance, Descartes must rhetorically break himself into parts, one called

⁸⁷ “Con estas individualidades, y las que dejo descubiertas en los sucesos pasados, y las que ocurrirán en adelante, me parece que *hago visible el plan de mi ingenio*.” Torres, *Vida*, 108.

“Body” and the other called “Mind” or “Reason” and negate any epistemic connectivity between them, based on the assumption that bodily experience has no weight on the acts of the mind, or in other words, that bodily experience cannot provide any immediate evidence of existence or either itself of the “I think.” It is then by seeing “parts” and by privileging one of those parts over the other and dealing with it as if though it were the whole that the Cogito gets to be postulated as the unshakeable foundation of the “am.” Hence the limitations of Cartesian rationalism for the tasks of autobiographical narrative; at the same time and by the same token, since discounting bodily experience as source of consciousness means that our passions, feelings and emotions cannot be ground for certainty and reliable knowledge of our existence, the Cartesian philosophy of the self incidentally tests the limits of the uses of synecdochic rhetoric for the tasks of autobiographical act *as* philosophy, as we find it in the *Discourse*. It has to be said, however, that unlike in Descartes, in Torres the talk of “parts” is the expression of the “Self” to furnish an account of itself as that *unity of diversity* that forms the basis of its own consciousness. Hence Torres’s attempt to dissuade any possible interpretation of the “Self” as a mental, fragmentary entity in trying not to disassociate the “body” from the “spirit,” in which he again seems to anticipate Nietzsche⁸⁸.

Torres, *independently* from the achievements of Locke, and far *before* Hume, is in all this reacting against Descartes’ rationalism, which he puts down as being Cartesian

⁸⁸ “Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown sage—whose name is self. In your body he dwells; he is your body.” Independently of the fact that in many other places Nietzsche seems to deny the “Self” as the metaphysical subject, in reality and as can be inferred from this reference, what he opposes is the subject as substratum, as the substance that in thinking itself, as Descartes wanted it, posits itself as the essence of everything that is. Here, as in Torres, the “Self” is the composite result of *thoughts and feelings*, of something “uncertain,” that is. Nietzsche, “On the Despisers of the Body,” *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the Portable Nietzsche, 146, trans. Walter Kaufmann, Penguin Books, 1954.

“nonsense⁸⁹.” For someone like Torres, always busy with his self-narrative, the Cartesian reduction of the “Self” to something that exists outside from all other consideration of existence and which paradoxically is endowed with the power to guaranty the existence of everything else on itself could but be scandalous⁹⁰. Like Locke, Torres perceives that whatever the self might be, it is continuous with, and even the result of our bodily experiences and that we cannot develop consciousness independently of the bodily functions in which the anatomical organization of our organisms manifest themselves. Our sensations, our feelings and emotions cannot be severed from our capacity for acquiring consciousness. Therefore, we cannot conceive of our existence without at the same time accounting for our emotions⁹¹. In Torres, the existence of the self, if it does indeed exist, presupposes the existence of those emotions, feelings and passions, and therefore our sensations are constitutive of our sense of self. In an a mocking outburst that in this particular case we would be justified to interpret it as a contemptuous of Cartesian rationalistic self, Torres makes the point of the interconnectedness of anatomical structure, bodily functions and consciousness of existence:

I, like all of Adam’s children, have a liver, a spleen, a heart, innards, hypochondria, a gallbladder and all other nooks and crooks recognized by the anatomic sciences, where natural philosophy assures us our unrelenting desires, undeclared affections and our stubborn and recalcitrant passions are housed [...] Although this picture is no doubt attractive and

⁸⁹ Torres, *Vida*, 159.

⁹⁰ Torres, *Vida*, 159.

⁹¹ The way Torres regards our relation to the senses and to the objective world in general is always in accordance with the philosophy of Locke, as it appears in his *Essay Concerning Human understanding*, a work Torres had no access to.

maybe possible, I do not know whether there is truth in it; but what I know is truth, is that whether they can be found in the liver, the pancreas or the heart, I experience [...] all the good and bad affects and passions that all men experience, collectively or individually⁹².

Clearly, for Torres it is because we cannot exist without consciousness of our “affects” that we can acquire self-consciousness; self-consciousness then implies consciousness of our affects and passions. As Heidegger will discover two centuries later, the “moods,” the “affects” can constitute ground for self-knowledge, since we always find ourselves in one mood or another⁹³. Therefore, Torres claim to self-knowledge is predicated on his knowledge of the fluid states of moods or affects that he is aware of being host to even though he always ignores the “cause and impulse” of a given mood⁹⁴. In an early recognition that human actions and behavior are determined by irrational processes of which we remain unconscious for the most part, Torres might not know where those affects come from, but he knows he can never perceive himself without at the

⁹² “Tengo, como todos los hijos de Adán, hígado, bazo, corazón, tripas, hipocondrios, mesenterio y toda la caterva de rincones y escondrijos que asegura y demuestra la docta anatomía. Estos son (según aseguran los filósofos naturales) los nidos y las chozas donde se esconden y retiran los apetitos revoltosos, los afectos inescrutables y las pasiones altaneras y porfiadas [...] La pintura es galana, vistosa y posible; pero yo no sé si es verdadera. Lo cierto es que, salga del hígado, el bazo o del corazón, yo tengo [...] todos los buenos y malos afectos, y loables y reprehensibles ejercicios que se pueden encontrar en todos los hombres juntos y separados.” Torres, *Vida*, 100-101.

⁹³ For Heidegger, a mood, and passions in general, is a “fundamental existentielle” in that it is through them that our state-of-minds are exhibited; are always in a given state of mind. So, our passions are manifestations of “how one is, and how one is faring,” which means to say, our being-in-the-world appears under the guise of passions. The implication is that as Torres is proposing, knowledge of the passions predominant in our state of mind is to come face to face with what we are. See Heidegger, “Being there as State-of-mind,” *Being and Time*, 174-179.

⁹⁴ Torres, *Vida*, 101. Here again our author anticipates Heidegger in deciding that we can hardly if ever establish with certainty what causes us to be overcome by a certain mood. “The fact that moods can deteriorate and change over means simply that in every case Dasein always has some mood [...] Why that should be, one does not *know(sic.)*” For Heidegger, as it is also the assessment of Torres, moods inasmuch as passions come “neither from ‘outside’ nor from ‘inside,’ but arise from our being in the world.” Heidegger, *Ibid.* 176.

same time taking stock of his affects and passions; to that extent, they are not to be distinguished from the “Self”. As a matter of fact, it is “through” those affects as it were, that he can also take stock of his personal existence. It is safe to hold that in this the “Self” is encountered *practically* because all affects, moods and passions are *for something*, and that something, whatever it is, always refers the “Self” to our relation to the objective world, which is a practical relation, instead a contemplative one. This cluster of affects and passions of which Torres gives an inventory as being present *in* him is what Hume will call the “bundle of perceptions” that he finds whenever he goes inside himself looking for his own self. And yet, if Hume concludes differently from Torres, in that he proclaims the self “an illusion” or nonexistent, it is because in looking for the “Self” inside himself Hume loses awareness that the precondition for getting “inside” oneself is that there be a “self” in the first place. Hume’s “bundle of perceptions” of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, and pain or pleasure⁹⁵ is, like Torres’s passions and affects, substantive to the “Self” *not* because this is what is always “there” when we look “inside” ourselves, for this is not feasible, but because there is no way to have experience of consciousness apart from experiencing its contents. Consciousness, it has been said, is always consciousness of something, even if we do not know what this “something” is⁹⁶. It is clear that for Torres, the “self-in-itself,” as if though it were the Kantian *Ding-an-sich*, does not exist; therefore

⁹⁵ Although Hume denies the existence of the self as a substance accessible through self-reflectivity, and although he attributes our sense of stable selfhood to the works of memory, we cannot escape noticing that, as he puts it, whenever he “enters” most intimately into what he calls [him] self he *always* stumbles on the same particular “perceptions,” suggesting that there is a stable, permanent entity that *constantly* meets the same phenomena. This personal identity that keeps getting “into” and “stumbling” on the same thing cannot be the works of memory, since it is a chief attribute of memory to recall things not always in their exact shape or state. Hume, “On Personal Identity,” *A Treatise on Human Nature*, 252, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge, second edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978.

⁹⁶ Consciousness, in the way Torres would have seen it would be more or less close to an “intentional experience” as studied by Husserl in “Consciousness as the Phenomenological Subsistence of the Ego and Consciousness as Inner Perception,” the second part of his *Logical Investigations*, 535 and ff. trans. J.N. Findlay, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Humanities Press, New Jersey, 1970.

he does not “look” for it. Whereas Hume is working with the traditional notion of consciousness as “inner perception,” as something that lies “inside” us and something that therefore we can have access to by “looking” into it during the moments of “self-reflection,” it is obvious that for Torres this possibility is not available, and to that extent he was already ahead of Hume on this point. Even though Torres will talk about being “inside himself” and posits this self-perception as guaranty of self-knowledge, we will see that for him “inside,” alludes to a correspondence which he is conscious of between his actions and the ideological presuppositions and rationales that govern his actions, in a word, he means his *conscience*, inside which he does not look, but simply looks at, and *questions himself*, that is, his actions and his volition to act⁹⁷. In Torres then we see that “self-reflection” would mean not introspecting inner perceptions but examining his actions in relation to what is allowed by his conscience and in relation to the set of beliefs moral or otherwise that orient his being in the world with others. And so he very early in the history of modernity provides examples illustrative of how the connection between, on the one hand “consciousness” and “conscience,” and in the other, “self-reflection” and “self-determination” have been worked out in the most influential philosophical theories in Europe⁹⁸.

From Torres’s understanding of the Self *as perceptions of the state of our being at any given moment* emanates his idiosyncratic attitude towards himself, marked by unrelenting irreverence and self-deprecation and self-belittlement. This attitude in the face of the uncertainty of the “Self” as the Kantian “in-it-self” is what Borges following Hume

⁹⁷ Torres, *Vida*, 54 and 196.

⁹⁸ Tugendhat, *Ib.* 22.

more or less inaccurately calls the “nothingness of personality”⁹⁹” Hence, too, Torres’s “rogue” writing style and his fundamentally skeptical stance towards life and the world. We will come back to this theme as we move on and will deal directly with it in a separate chapter. Presently, though, it is worth noticing how Torres marks his dismissive posture vis-à-vis the self by not caring much about the name we might give to the Being-with-in-the world that we ultimately are, as he dismissively, almost contemptuously states¹⁰⁰.

Torres encounters the self as immanent dynamic of passions and emotions, moods and affects in which he takes hold of himself, but he does not enshrine the self, or for that matter, the “soul;” his attitude towards the “Self” places him as farther from Saint Augustine as we should have expected him to be, and brings him closer to Montaigne, who adopted an ironically self-detached, another way of saying skeptical position towards himself. In Torres, however, irony becomes overt self-mockery and self-detachment becomes self-derision. Therefore *Vida* is not a paean to an ego that takes itself as substance:

And, if there in France your Excellency hear about anybody who would like to write *against my habits or against my writing*, please, send him over to me; for I can inform him better about myself than others could; *for since I live inside my own self for a while now*, I have been dealing with

⁹⁹Torres is not proposing that personality, or the “Self” is “nothingness” as Borges understands after a not too careful consideration of Hume’s theory of the “Self” as illusory. What Torres proposes is that a) he only has access to his selfhood through his actions, b) that in this he is not any different from any other man, and c) that in view of these attestable facts, self-aggrandizing, exaggerated self-worth, and in two words, egotistic Narcissism is not warranted by the application of reason to the fact that we are “there” in the world. See Jorge Luis Borges, “Torres Villarreal,” in *Inquisiciones*, 7-14, Proa: Buenos Aires, 1925.

¹⁰⁰“(llámesele como quiera),” Torres, *Vida*, 100.

myself for a long time, and know myself better than anybody else¹⁰¹.

At the same time, because his consciousness of self-sameness is obtained by synecdochical apprehension of the operations in his “innerness,” the self is also experienced as endangered wholeness, and in the end, Torres’s consciousness of self boils down to uncertainty as to what exactly and precisely the “Self” is, except something that he has to be and confront in his existence. If, for instance he declares, as already indicated above that he knows himself better than he is known by others because he dwells inside himself and, assumingly, has firsthand knowledge of the passions his self is inhabited by, he on the other hand declares his doubt as to the claim to truth of natural philosophy about what this interiority is made of. He is not sure, he declares, where the passions in the end, come from. For although the human “Self” in its anatomic objectivity does seem to have “interior caves,” he does not know whether the knowledge we have of these “caves” is accurate¹⁰². This uncertainty as to the inner working of the innerness where his self “is” is in no way accidental in Torres; rather, his non-Cartesian self-uncertainty is epistemic and constitutes a philosophical stance that traverses the whole of Torres’s manner of thinking; but we will have time to expound on it later. For now, we should remark that Torres does not seem to take a definite, definitive stance on whether the “self,” which in Spanish translates easily as “ser” but that never occurs in his discourse—results from conceptually assembling both the “genio” and the “ingenio,” or if it is constituted by only one of either these existential categories. He does not, because he does not care in the end what the

¹⁰¹ “Y si en Francia tuviese vuestra merced noticia de alguno que quisiera *escribir contra mis costumbres o mis obras*, envíelo para acá, que yo lo informare mejor que otro lo que soy, *porque vivo dentro de mí mismo* y ha días que me conozco de trato.” Torres, “Respuesta de Torres al Conde Fiscal,” in *Sacudimiento de mentecatos*, 202.

¹⁰² Torres, *Vida*, 101.

“self” is as long as *it is*, as long as it ontically exists as the precondition for raising the ontological question of its existence. Therefore he refuses to settle for either, as well as for “soul” (*alma*), “nature,” “nurture” (“*crianza*”) or “spirit” as the “proper” name of the self¹⁰³.

For Torres, the “self” can be called by many names or by no name at all; but whatever we call it carries interpretative, that is, heuristic consequences for the evaluation of his autobiographical discourse; for it entails conceiving of it in the traditional way as substance, substratum or subjectum, or ontologically as the product of interactive subjectivities that codetermine their existence. This is a point we will emphasize by briefly turning to consider the relevance of this procedure to the postmodern debate of the “death of the subject,” which Torres seems both to anticipate and to reject at the same time. For, although as already noted above Torres states that he lives inside his own self and therefore knows himself better than anybody else ever could, he is aware that this self-consciousness is not yielded by passions and affects alone; he is aware that what reports to him the “contrary movement” of his passions and affects is something more than these impulses themselves, but he also knows that whatever that is he cannot give an ultimate account of. It is this fundamental existential uncertainty, which anticipates Nietzsche’s, that feeds his self-derision, his unrelenting self-mockery and self-belittlement, and which,

¹⁰³ This calls for further clarification. Although “ser” can certainly translate the meaning of the English “self,” this is only possible if the phenomenological structure contained in the verb, and not only its grammar, is taken into consideration. “Ser” literally translates to “to be” in English, but since this infinitive carries the structure of “being,” and since the “Self” is “Being” in its ontological manifestation, it follows that “to be” is the essence of “Being.” (*Dasein*). In other words, the “Self” is the being of the “to be,” which is the “Ser” in Spanish. Of course, “the Spanish “*siendo*” literally translates the meaning of “being” as a gerund, but it does not carry the ontological meaning, that is, it is not constituted as an existential category, as an *Existent*, as Heidegger would put it. That shows in that, the grammar of “*siendo*” does not, under any circumstance, take the structure of a singular noun. Now, this raises a different kind of problem. “Self” carries the grammar structure of the reflexive; it is a reflexive category, while “Ser” is not, and so the “Ser” (“*el ser*”) is only the “Self” as the “to be” or the “Being.” Simply put, the phenomenological-ontological structure of to which “ser,” “*siendo*” (“*Siende*,” in German), “self,” and “Being” point out is not immediately apparent in the grammar of said nouns.

by the same token, constitutes his critical, questioning position before the Self. *In Torres the modern self is born as self-critical, as self-questioning and self-doubting in that it cannot assert itself without at the same time providing the means for its own critique*¹⁰⁴.

And yet, it must be stressed that if Torres can proceed in this manner is because unlike Descartes', his is an autobiographical, and not a philosophical, rationalistic and therefore subordinated "Self." In turn this suggests that it is in autobiography where modern philosophical discourse should look for the modern self, for only in autobiographical narrative can the self presents itself in all its richness and complexity. On the one hand, because Torres's self is displayed in its "natural" habitat, auto, or as it was originally called, self-biography¹⁰⁵, collapsing the "subject" as a metaphysical substance into the "self" as the empirical individual and vice versa, is avoided. For instance, whereas in Descartes the mind must of necessity be apprehended as separate from the body; in Torres, although dismembered and scattered, the self is proclaimed to be "the body of [the] spirit" avoiding the conceptual inconsistencies that have beset the Cartesian Self. Torres shows the "problem of the metaphysical subject" to be a false problem in connection to autobiography. On the other hand, because the richness and complexity of the self only appears in self-biography, it makes apparent that self-reflective activity does not make of the self a subject. Torres takes hold of his self, but because he does this from "inside himself," that is, from a practical relation to himself that is based in a ability to raise pertinent questions as to the reasonability of his actions and to the rationality of the

¹⁰⁴ See for example Nietzsche's deconstruction of the concept of "Self" in his "On Truth and Lie in a Non-moral Sense," in *Philosophy and Truth*, 79-91, ed. trans. Daniel Breazeale, Humanities Press, New Jersey, 1990.

¹⁰⁵ On the origin of the term "autobiography" and its use in the eighteenth century and thereafter, see Robert Folkenflick, "Introduction: The Institution of Autobiography," in *The Culture of Autobiography*, 1-20. The adoption of the term in Spanish is from very recent; it certainly was unavailable during Torres's times and entered Spanish probably from French, which adopted it from English. "Self-biography" is originally coined in German as "selbstbiographie."

presuppositions on which his actions and his decisions to act are predicated on— the traditional dichotomy subject/self gets dissolved even before it appears in his discourse. This is the direct result of his dealing with his autobiographical representation existentially and practically, as something that he has to be, *as something that he is in his actions* and that, actions being the product of volitions and deliberations, he has the freedom to choose to be or not. It is his conscience of this freedom that will assert itself on him, while he is busy deriding himself, and while withdrawing and altogether dismissing his own self-assertions. Thence that he constantly invites criticism and rejection of his self-assertion, as indicated above. In Torres, self-deriding and self-denying are conscious modes of being in the world, or if you will, of being “himself,” and therefore exhibiting such behavior is his paradoxical mode of asserting himself in his freedom to be in the world, so reclaiming the autonomy of his existence with the others; and of contributing to the political history of modernity. We will have time to elaborate further on this point.

Chapter 1.3

Alternative Selfhood: Against Descartes' Cogito to Torres contra Rousseau

In the preceding section we attempted to show that in comparison with the notion of the self advanced by the rationalist Cartesian "I," the autobiographical notion of the self developed by Torres in *Vida* is more complex and more rich, and that, since it comes closer to how most individuals in our own time relate to their experience of their own sense of selfhood, the self we find in Torres's autobiography is therefore more "modern," that is, more representative of what is known as the modern individual. We reasoned that, because Torres's idea of the self takes lived life, existential experience as its grounding, it incorporates not only its self-reflective capability but also the unpredictable and often inaccessible range of passions and affects as constitutive of itself, while granting the affective, the non-rational stuff a role in the tasks of self-reflective activities, and therefore enabling them with a capacity for self-understanding as the individual self struggles with making sense of the human experience of existence. We were able to conclude thusly by locating the textual locus in which the Cartesian mode of selfhood is posited and we saw that, since it is not the product of an autobiographical narrative, but of what to contrast it to Torres's undertaking we called an "autobiographical act," this mode of encountering the Self has the limitations imposed on it by the philosophic-scientific enterprise to which the Cartesian cogito makes itself dependent on, and to which it remains beholden all throughout Descartes' disquisition. Because of this, we said, in Descartes the Self is conceived of as something subordinated to the needs for knowledge of something other than itself, conferring on it a derivative status. That this is indeed the

case is indicated at the very inception of Descartes' undertaking, since as we know it, a *meditation*, the name he gives his undertaking, is a spiritual practice carried out by the meditative mind on something *else*, usually a phenomenal or ethereal force or authority located above or at any rate, *outside* the meditative entity. For the Self rarely meditates upon itself, since according to the spiritual *askesis* to which meditation is the preferred form of action, what it hopes to *reach out* to lays elsewhere. Because *Vida* is the work of an author endeavoring to confront the materiality of the historical circumstances that determines the identity of his empirical self, and since in order to achieve this he had but to make recourse to the relation he established with himself in the course of his life, he couldn't but understand his life and the modes in which this life was experienced as the specific form or figure embodied by his self; in other words, in Torres life and self are in dialectical relation to each other and in endeavoring to understand his empirical life the identity of his self as a historical individual gets thereby specified. Through this strategy, we also saw, the traditional dichotomy between self and subject was avoided, and this means that the notion of selfhood elicited by Torres's life narrative stands as an alternative to the Cartesian mode. This means that the Cartesian concept of selfhood was not the only model available to modernity from its early beginning, even if the instrumental rationalism that it embodied turned out to have dominated modern life and the social, political and philosophical consciousness of modernity¹⁰⁶. Why this turned out to be the way it did is beyond the scope of this study to explain; but it could safely be suggested in passing that

¹⁰⁶ If is true that Descartes can rightly be recognized as he universally is with bringing about a paradigmatic shift in philosophy and the sciences in making the innerness of the individual the center of gravity and the primary source of knowledge of the outer world, in a way his "cogito revolution" as we have called here amounts to not more than discovering God as the being that always already dwells inside us. This is another way of interpreting Taylor's charge that, for all his philosophical accomplishments, Descartes remains "profoundly Augustinian." Taylor, "Descartes' Disengaged Self," in *Sources of the Self*, 143.

the cultural history of the respective countries in which these two modes of selfhood, namely, the theoretical of Descartes and the practical of Torres are given, France and Spain, is only one of the reasons. More momentous in a provisional explanation are the different types of discourses in which these two distinct modes of conceiving of the Self are elaborated. For, while Descartes privileges a philosophical discourse in which the autobiographical account is only partial and ancillary, Torres's privileges a type of autobiographical discourse in which the self is postulated as the Hegelian being-for-itself which, while implicated in the emergence of the enlightened conscience of the modern individualism propounded by *Vida*, it is also constitutive of the object that at the same time is the subject of the discourse per se. Torres's times, we should keep in mind, were those when his brand of individualism was yet to take hold in society in the way it has since and when, on the other hand, philosophy had yet to renounce its own truth and proclaim its end. On the contrary, at that time metaphysics still held sway in scientific inquiry¹⁰⁷. In this connection it is also true that the respective modes of social being of Descartes' and of Torres's acquire particular importance when it comes to explaining the different destinies of each distinctive representations of the "modern Self"¹⁰⁸. Finally,

¹⁰⁷ The "end of philosophy" happens to be the most productive chapter of philosophy; since Nietzsche first demonstrated the extent to which philosophical thinking has at its basis an "epistemic error" which in turn is based on the rhetorical structure of language, and that that is an error that our thoughts cannot "shed off," many "ends of philosophy" have been proclaimed. It seems as if every great period of the history of philosophy concludes proclaiming its impossibility, only to go on. For an example on the theme of the end of philosophy as the continuing chapter of philosophy, see, among many other writers who have brushed on the topic, Angnes Heller, "Death of the Subject," in *Constructions of the Self*, 269-282, ed. George Levin, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1992.

¹⁰⁸ As for the cultural history of both countries, it suffices to consider the place the Inquisition had in Spanish society while the Enlightenment had begun to dawn in France, hampering any progress in the sciences and the humanities, and in the free-thinking needs necessary for creative writing, with all the attending consequences for the intellectual and artistic life of Spaniards. Another factor decisive in the distinctively autobiographical writing of Torres not to be evaluated on its merit is that, while Descartes, for example, was a scientist and a mathematician, besides being a philosopher; Torres, although a mathematician too, by the Spanish standard of mathematics in the Spain of his age, was also and better known as an astrologist at a time when astrology had already been denounced as fraudulent and

because Torres allots the affects a say in what is the fundamental problematic of autobiography, which is finding access to the question not of whether “I” exists, since the autobiographer takes his or her existence as the essential universal given, but what am I and what is the mode of being of the “I” that I am— his modernity reveals itself to be more developed, advanced and therefore more radical than any modern break we encounter in Descartes respective to the past¹⁰⁹.

Precisely, as we previously intimated, the critique and rejection of the rationalist “I” embodied in the Cartesian cogito that begins in Hume during the first half of the eighteenth century, and which continued throughout the nineteenth by Nietzsche, and which is furthered by Heidegger and existential philosophy in the twentieth century, is based on assigning the affects, passions, moods and perceptions a role in the individual attaining to consciousness of selfhood and of the surrounding world of objects and ideas¹¹⁰. In showing as we attempted above how in Torres self-knowledge only obtains through and inasmuch as it is mediated by the agency of his passions and affects, we have

condemned as retrograde. It did not help him that he had publicly acknowledge mistrust of scholars, and that like Hume, he had a special mistrust of philosophers, for he charges that philosophy is ill-suited for knowing the truth, *Vida*, 184. It is also true that the contrasting personalities and temperaments of both Descartes and Torres as manifested in their respective writing, placed the former at advantage; Torres purposely wrote to be *dismissed*; Descartes to be taken seriously. They both got from posterity the treatment and attention they sought for themselves in their work. About the limits of the Enlightenment in Spain, see Eduardo Subirats, *La ilustración insuficiente*, Taurus, Madrid, 1981. About Torres and the Spanish Enlightenment, see Guy Mercadier, “Introduction,” in *El correo del otro mundo*, ed. Manuel María Pérez López, Letras Hispánicas, Cátedra: Madrid, 2000. I do not endorse the limiting view that each of these studies share about the Spanish Enlightenment; their limitations reside in that, according to the present study, while Subirats leaves Torres out of any consideration as an enlightened writer of the utmost importance and therefore makes not even a passing allusion to him, Mercadier presents Torres as somehow insufficiently enlightened, and assigns him to a time when the Enlightenment properly said had yet to take flight. His dating of the Enlightenment as movement is certainly wrong, and this explains his assigning Torres to a period of Spanish history that would correspond to the “dawn” of the Enlightenment.

¹⁰⁹ Generally speaking, the problematic faced by the autobiographer and that of the philosopher differ in that while the former asks himself “what I am” and then proceeds to an argument to substantiate his answer, the latter asks himself if “I” really exists and then attempt to justify his response through and inquiry on the meaning of his “I.”

¹¹⁰ There is no evidence that Hume’s *Enquiries* and *Treatise* were known in Spain during Torres’s time. Indeed, Torres’s main works, including his autobiography, which he published in installments, were already completed by 1743; the works of Hume were published in England, in 1739-40.

also shown that his rejection of the Cartesian model for determining his own mode of selfhood, which as we he saw, he considers to be “nonsensical,” underlies how his modernity becomes more radical the more it seems to point toward a future not yet in view from his standpoint history. Therefore, we observed above, in apprehending the mode of being of his self on the basis of the “high” or “low” frequency of the “un-thought,” that is, as the unconscious and irrational “constant alterity” of the relation of drives and passions, Torres reveals himself to us as more the contemporaneous to our own present than he was to his own; for this is more or less how we experience our own conscience of being moderns, or if you will, post-moderns, according to the assessment conducted by some recent critical trends¹¹¹. These set of conclusions, we will see, will have a tremendous import for the thesis to be expounded in the present section.

As it is more than apparent, thus far we have purposely left out of this analysis any mention consideration of Rousseau in relation to Torres, and since Rousseau’s autobiographical is of monumental importance for conducting a satisfactory evaluation of the question of the modern self and the autobiographical portrayal of this self, getting involved with him must happen as a matter of course in the kind of study we are carrying out here. But we have sound methodological reasons for proceeding in this way. Firstly, since Torres’s *Vida* and several others of his texts register the first *autobiographical* reaction to the model of selfhood propounded by Descartes in *The Discourse on Method*,

¹¹¹ The “post-modern” identity of contemporary individual has been variously characterized as signifying or aiming to an “ironic self-detachment,” or playful self-assertiveness; in general, the “post-modern” individual is the relativistic individual that proclaims a right to define himself on his own terms and based on his own experience. Some have called this type the “Protean Man,” in command of a “Protean Style.” Whatever the merits of this characterization, there is little doubt that Torres’s life and writing are the epitome of precisely self-detachment and irony, which feeds on his relativistic conception of culture and society. This point will be stressed in later chapters. On the idea of a “post-modern” ‘Protean Man,’ See Robert Jay Lifton, “The Protean Style,” in *The Truth about the Truth: De-Confusing and Re-Constructing the Post-Modern World*, 130-153, ed. Walter Truett Anderson, Penguin Putman, Inc. New York: 1995.

in reacting negatively to it, besides showing originality and independence of mind, Torres was by the same token asserting his fundamental individuality both as a person and as an author, an achievement all the more remarkable and compelling if we bear in mind that the work of Locke, the first *systematic* philosophical reaction against some fundamental aspects of Cartesian philosophy was not amply known in Spain during the Torres's lifetime¹¹². And, secondly, Torres is not only chronologically first in writing an autobiography that proclaims itself independent from both the Augustinian and the Cartesian models; his autobiographical accounts departs from a personal theorization of the notion of self and from an evaluation of selfhood that is set up against both the Self as an immediate determination of a divine power and as determined through depersonalizing the human experience and by subtracting from this experience any relation the self establishes with objective reality as reported by the senses, which is in direct affiliation with the empiricism of Locke. For, Torres is above all else empiric in his dealing with his self and with his mode of being, that is, in his social practices, as he recognizes them, "Regardless my urgent and pressing needs, and despite my emboldening ignorance, I was *empirical* [...] ¹¹³."

¹¹² There is neither testimonial nor documental evidence that Torres would have Locke as a direct source for the tendency toward the skeptical empiricism observed in his manner of thinking as reflected, more specifically, in his theorization on the passions and feelings. One would suppose that Torres would come into contact with Locke's philosophy during his exile in Portugal through the publications of Luis Antonio Verney on research methodology, but there is no available proof of this, since Torres makes no mention of it even though he makes reference to his trades with Portuguese scholars or intellectuals over that period of his life. In any case, the concrete timing of the presence of Locke in Spain is yet to be clearly demarcated, and the history of his influence on specific authors is yet to be written; none of the historians of the Enlightenment in Spain has much to say on this important subject. Locke was banned by the Inquisition toward the end of the eighteenth century. See Francisco Sanchez-Blanco, "Feijoo y sus contemporáneos," *La Mentalidad Ilustrada*, 63-96, Taurus, Spain, 1999; see also Olga Victoria Quiroz-Martínez, *La Introducción de la filosofía moderna en España: EL eclecticismo de los siglos XVI y XVIII*.

¹¹³ "Fuí, no obstante mi necesidad, mi arrojo e ignorancia, un empírico considerado y más prudente de lo que se podría esperar de mi cabeza y pocos años [...]" Torres, *Vida*, 92.

Only now, after establishing on solid grounds the claims to modernity of Torres's autobiographical project in the manner shown above are we able to proceed to effectuate a *theoretical* comparison of Torres's autobiographical narrative, namely, *Vida*, with Rousseau's *Confessions* and to carry out an examination of the claims that the latter has a legitimate right to be regarded as the inventor of modern autobiography. By a "theoretical comparison" we mean not a literal episode-by-episode comparison of the accounts each Torres and Rousseau gives about their respective lives, which would take us not very far and would in any way be useless to our purpose. By that we basically mean to identify and conduct a methodic evaluation of the concepts and categories in these respective discourses which would define and justify their claims to modernity for the notion of selfhood that emerges from them, viewed in relation to the historical gulf opened up that both separates and connects their self-portrayals to examples from the past, on the basis of which an identity is obtained with respect to the inherited models. Through this examination we intent to question and altogether dismiss the thesis that has thus far remained unchallenged for so long and which is therefore often accepted as if by default, that attributes the *Confessions* primacy in developing the autobiographical model *par excellence* of a modern individual, and by extension considers Rousseau to be *primus inter pares* as representative of *the* modern Self, and his self as archetypical of modernity.

To be sure, the autobiographical works of Torres—the autobiographic portrayal of the self that authored *Vida*, is a long enterprise that encompasses exactly forty-seven years. Beginning in 1718, Torres brought it to a closing in 1765, five years before his death at the age of seventy-six. *Vida*, which appeared in 1743, obviously did not satisfy the need for autobiographical self-portraying Torres felt. Although for quite different

reasons, the same can be said of Rousseau, who went on writing about himself after having confessed “all” in *Confessions*. Since according to some historians, the Enlightenment spanned over one hundred years, beginning in Britain around the years of the 1680s, till around 1790, Torres life and works would squarely fall within the historical frame of the Enlightenment. Therefore, it is not true as some scholars of Spanish intellectual history believe that Torres belongs outside the time-frame of this intellectual movement, having come of age before it¹¹⁴. As it turns out, this is a very important historical fact to bear in mind as we progress in this study, for it will have weight in the kind of phenomenological approach we are employing in our interpretative efforts. Placing itself within the historical framework of the Enlightenment, without at the same time inscribing itself against the program that propelled it forward, *but on the contrary making his own contribution to it and doing that in an original way*, reinforces the legitimacy of our efforts for establishing Torre’s work as frontrunner of the European modernity, not just in relation to Descartes, but even more unquestionably in relation to Rousseau. Moreover, establishing Torres’s place within the framework of the Enlightenment per se implies indirectly challenging the universally held belief that the

¹¹⁴ A very practical way to date the beginning of the enlightening notions and intellectual spirit that would later incarnate in a *movement* and determine where Torres fits in it from a chronological perspective, is to account for the dates on which the major works in which those ideas appeared were published. If for example Francis Bacon’s *Novum Organum* was published in 1620; Descartes’ *Discourse on Method* in 1637; Locke’s three major works all appeared around 1690, and so on and so forth, it is then unwarranted to hold as Mercadier does that Torres lies outside the Enlightenment because he *precedes* it. This position seems more untenable if we take into account that Voltaire’s *Lettres Philosophiques*, published in 1734, became available to the public at a time when Torres was *already* publishing and *while* he was publishing most of the autobiographical material contained in *Vida*. Guy Mercadier is one of the major Torres scholars who write him off as belonging within the Enlightenment. See, for example, his “Introduction” to his edition of *Vida*, 14, and more recently his “Introduction” to Torres’s *Correo del otro Mundo*; also in *Sacudimiento de mentecatos*, 20. See Peter Gay, “Overture: The Enlightenment and Its World,” in *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 3-27, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1967; especial attention should be paid to pages 16-19. See also *The Britannica Guide to The Ideas that Made the modern World*, Runnino Press, Book Publisher, New York, 2008. For an instance on the revisionist history of the Enlightenment, see Issack Kranmnick, “Introduction,” in *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, x-xx, Penguin Books, 1995.

Confessions inaugurates the modern constructive impulse of autobiographical narrative and self, since it is patent that *Vida* antedates *Confessions* by almost more than two decades, if we count from the dates the works got finished, and by almost four if we count from the date of their respective publications¹¹⁵. Further, Torres, born at a later date than Rousseau, began his career as an autobiographer at a much younger age than him, and ended it practically on his deathbed¹¹⁶. From the cold data of historical time, there is no doubt then that even though they both operated within the *same* historical period, Rousseau comes *chronologically* after Torres and that Torres's works, published to national acclaim and to royal celebration, in the most literal meaning of these words, since it was purchased by subscription and read and talked-about at court¹¹⁷, his autobiographical enterprise could have posited itself as a model for the *Confessions*, even if this can be proven not to have been the case at all. But since it is logically and materially possible that this could have been we are justified to at the very least contemplate it as a possibility and therefore have legitimate grounds to put under questioning any claims as to the primacy of Rousseau as the setter of the modern model autobiographical a self-reflection, until further inquiry. Indeed, some moments in the *Confessions* carry evocations of *Vida*, and many things held about the former could very well be applied to the latter, as we will have time to show.

¹¹⁵ Most recently this view has been embraced by Patrick Riley's "The Inversion of Conversion: Rousseau's Autobiography," in *Character and Conversion in Autobiography: Augustine, Montaigne, Descartes, Rousseau and Sartre*, 89 and ff. Previous to him, Roy Pascal had done so too. See Roy Pascal's *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, 1960. See also Karl Joachim Weintraub in *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography*, 1978. A similar view is held by Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, 1989, as does James Goodin, in *Autobiography: The Self Made Text*, 1994.

¹¹⁶ Rousseau was born in 1712 and died in 1778. His *Confessions*, published in 1782, began to be written in 1765 and were started in 1770. Rousseau's project began the same year in which Torres was closing his autobiographical project. Torres lived ten years longer than Rousseau.

¹¹⁷ *Vida*, 248-249.

Of course, we are aware that when viewed from a phenomenological perspective as we are trying to do here any historical reference works only as a *frame* for an object or event and that as such it stands *outside* of the object in view. But since what stands outside is also what *stands out* in relation to that object we therefore must ask why something that makes itself “self-evident,” namely, that Rousseau comes after Torres and that within the context of Spanish history Torres is as much as Rousseau an exponent of the same values and considers as his the same program propounded by the Enlightenment (even if he does not call it by that name) has been ignored or neglected for almost three hundred years? Again, as we said above apropos of Descartes, the answer to this line of questioning lay somewhere else than in the respective works at hand; but again we must submit that it falls outside the scope of this study to shed light on it; for we are not concerned here directly with cultural or intellectual history as such. It must however be said and again in passing that the position occupied by Rousseau as an outstanding member of the *Encyclopédie* and *philosophe* of the Enlightenment *when it was already at its zenith* and his contribution to its success accounts for the reception his autobiography have rightly received. It could very well be that this is another historical fact that *stands out by standing outside* the problematic under investigation and that much that is said in the *Confessions* has been taken at face value because the public persona of the author has been allowed to determine the kind of interpretation to which it *must* be submitted.

Thus, the predominant tradition in the study of the “modern self” in autobiography has for the most part allowed Rousseau’s claims in the *Preface* to his confessions to go unquestioned, as if it was true that nobody before him had ever rendered a portrait of self and as if he was the first man and his the only available example, and *the only example to*

be available in the future of someone painting him or herself “exactly according to nature and in all its truth¹¹⁸.” Not only has it not been adequately questioned whether it is possible to maintain that nobody before Rousseau had rendered his self-portrait according to his true nature, least of all by Rousseau himself, who shows to have been so deeply influenced by Saint Augustine and that in some respects remains imprisoned in the Augustinian project. But neither has it ever been questioned whether what Rousseau proposes to do is factually possible at all, since the nature of the medium through which his autobiographical project is to be materialized, language, does not reciprocate the nature according to which (d’après) he intends to carry out his self-portraiture. It has also been left to stand without any critical consideration that an autobiography that posits itself as the example for all times to come places under questioning its own claim to universality and “uniqueness,” for it allows that others could mould their own selves to match Rousseau’s, relegating his autobiography to be only the *first* in an infinite series of more or less connected self-portrayals¹¹⁹. And finally, it has also been taken at face value that in penning his autobiography Rousseau was inaugurating the “comparative study of men,” as if the *Confessions* were not *only* and exclusively the study of Jean-Jacques Rousseau by himself, that it, a self-study, but instead were the study of every man and woman to come

¹¹⁸ Rousseau, “Preface,” in *Confessions*.

¹¹⁹ On Rousseau as the inventor of the modern concept of the self, see Michael Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction*. Translation, Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1989). See also Huck Gutman, “Rousseau’s Confessions: A Technology of the Self,” In *Technologies of the Self*. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton, Ed. 1988, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst. Also see Ann Hartle. *The Modern Self in Rousseau’s Confessions: a Reply to Saint Augustine*, 1983. In the theme on how Rousseau’s prolongs the Augustinian autobiographical undertaking, see, for example, Ann Hartle’s “Augustine and Rousseau: Narrative and Self-Knowledge in the Two Confessions” in *The Augustinian Tradition*, 1999, cited by Riley, 89. For further reading see *The Modern Self in Rousseau’s Confessions: a Reply to Saint Augustine*, 1983, also by Ann Hartle.

after him¹²⁰. Similarly, Rousseau's postulation at the inception of book one of the *Confessions* as a clean-slate start in the history of autobiographical self-understanding and as a task that will never have "imitators" has been left to go unchecked. Rather, it has been implicitly taken as a given that self-understanding is not attainable for anybody else who came after him, since the only way to achieve self-knowledge has already beforehand been condemned to end in utter failure¹²¹. In truth, to the extent that the autobiographical undertaking aims at revealing the particularity of the individual who makes of the self his or herself the subject of their own reflections, any true autobiography is literally "without precedent," and whoever undertakes the autobiographical representation of his or herself has a right to lay claim to Rousseau's postulation as his or her own¹²².

For the purpose of the present study, we consider crucial to gain understanding of what kind of consequences the grandiose and self-aggrandizing statements of Rousseau's *Confessions* have had in how his autobiographical writing has been evaluated and interpreted. For the preeminent role the *Confessions* has been assigned in the history of the autobiographical development and in the philosophy of the modern subject/self has been decided largely on the basis of taking him at his word, or at the very least, on giving him

¹²⁰ In his many ways incomparable study, Jean Starobinski is of all Rousseau scholars the only one who comes closer to questioning these claims; he does not however, draw any conclusion about the philosophical implications these claims might carry for any one concerning with "painting" him or herself after the Rousseau model, or whether it would be possible at all to do so and how this might reflect back on the proposed universal model. It is truth, though, that in the analysis Starobinski carries out, many of the Rousseau's claims in the *Preface* and in the corpus of the *Confessions* that directly or indirectly relate to these claims get obliquely, an one is tempted to say, unwittingly undermined. "Solitude" and "The Problem of Autobiography" are particularly damaging to the theory of the *Confessions* as a universal model of autobiography and to its being the birthplace of the modern concept of selfhood. See Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, 33-63 and 180-200.

¹²¹ The *Confessions*, 5, in *Oeuvres Complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*.

¹²² This must have been what Friedrich Schlegel had in mind when commenting on the new genre of autobiography, for he dismissively said that since everybody could write their own autobiography, then everybody can write at least one good novel. Schlegel, "Athenaeum," Wissenschaftlich Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, Germany, 1960. Also, *The Culture of Autobiography: Construction of Self-Representation*, 3, Ed. Robert Folkenflik, Stamford University Press, 1993. See Agnes Heller, "Death of the Subject?" 276, in *The Constructions of the Self*, Ed. George Levin, Rutgers University Press, 1992.

the benefit of the doubt when doing otherwise would seem unfair. The superb interpretative work of Jean Starobinski on Rousseau will not disappoint as an illustration of the point we are trying to get across. For, Starobinski not only demonstrates to the satisfaction of his well-honed methodic approach that the *Confessions* is a *failed autobiographical project*, since it is the narrative of a self grappling with an internal division that has no closure, with a self that no matter how hard Rousseau tries to hide this painful reality from the reader not only remains internally divided. But he also demonstrates that Rousseau's unrelenting efforts *deepen* the division the more he resorts to changing discursive strategies and narrative structures. Yet Starobinski sees no problem in extending to the "modern self" the inner conflict, typically of Rousseau's own making, which he exhibits throughout his never-ending autobiographical undertaking. Conversely, he deals with Rousseau's sense of selfhood as if though in the *Confessions* the consciousness of modernity as a whole was being examined. In other words, Starobinski proceeds in his study of Rousseau as if Rousseau's empirical self were identical to the *abstract concept* of the modern self as such. And so, we are supposed to make universal Rousseau's autobiographical experience and to trace the birth of the modern consciousness back to it; and then conclude that "modern self" correlates with Rousseau's sense of his own selfhood¹²³. (Emphasis added).

¹²³ This procedure seems to be implied in Irving Howe's reading of Starobinski; see "The Self in Literature," 255, in *The Construction of the Self*. For the quotation from Starobinski appears in "The Discourse on the Sciences and Arts." *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, 7. A very poignant instance of how Rousseau has been catapulted as the chief representative of the "modern self" is more readily provided by Anna Hartle, even if she does so on very shaky logic. For she has no hesitation in concluding that in the *Confessions* "there is to be found the uncovering of the 'inner self' as the latent presupposition of contemporary thinking about ourselves." According to this interpretation, all we have to do, to gain consciousness of ourselves insofar as modern individuals, is to understand, by means of saying accept, Rousseau's interpretation of himself. Ann Hartle, "Conclusions" in *The Modern Self in Rousseau's Confessions: A reply to Saint Augustine*, 157.

Conversely, because Rousseau experiences his own sense of selfhood as irreconcilably divided, and since he resorts to self-fictionalization as the only recourse in his attempt to overcome his internal division we must infer from this that, as a rule, the “‘natural self’ is a fleeing image,” that “‘myself [my sense of my own selfhood] is something that I lack, something that constantly eludes my grasp,” and that “‘I am always someone else, someone without a stable identity’”¹²⁴. Even though the life experience and the mode of being of the former and that of the latter lack reciprocity, the “‘I” of the autobiographer has become the “‘I” of the reader of his autobiography. To postulate the *Confessions* as the cradle of modernity’s consciousness of itself, as do the most influential interpretations offered on his autobiographical works, Rousseau’s autobiographical “‘Je” becomes *the* self, and Rousseau’s method for obtaining knowledge of himself becomes *the* method of gaining knowledge of the “‘Self” as it is conceived in Western philosophy. In this way, Rousseau’s self-perception is given *universal validity*, and the obvious contradiction between, on the one hand, Rousseau’s assertion that he is not made like anybody else he ever met, and on the other, his claim that he is facilitating the first reliable method for the knowledge of men simply gets brushed aside. Thereby, Rousseau’s acknowledged inner self-contradictions are reflected by the mode of interpretation to which his work has been submitted. Thereby, the contradictions inherent to Rousseau’s divided selfhood have been read into the consciousness of modernity and the modern self. In this way modern consciousness turns out to be not more than the incarnation of Rousseau’s individual sense of selfhood *in* modern history.

Thus, Starobinski’s exhaustive analysis of the impossibility Rousseau is faced with in trying to stabilize his sense of self by staying “‘true” to the empirical history of his

¹²⁴ So Starobinski, “Solitude,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 57.

life. In this analysis the search for unity is shown to always results in Rousseau's self being taken "away from his true nature" forcing him to "distort the reality" and to make a "myth of his life" by fictionalizing it. Fictionalization here means abandoning the language of independently verifiable (historical) truth and resorting to a language that is itself constitutive of an "authentic" truth that paradoxically can only be "verified" in the act of reading. Though Starobinski has not problem in crediting Rousseau with being the "discover" of a "new attitude in literature" in which the language employed itself *is* the embodiment of the "authentic self" of the writer. But this conclusion is based on Starobinski taking for granted, that is, in his *reading into the Confessions*' discourse a "truth" that might not be there; for it is far from a sure thing that as Starobinski would like it, in "singling himself out through his work," Rousseau "elicits the assent" of the reader to "the truth of his personal experience"¹²⁵. This manner of interpretation forgets that autobiography is not ordinary "literature" and that there are "laws" to be observed therein, laws to be more or less understood as the implicit autobiographical "pact" Lejeune speaks of as a genre marking¹²⁶. In autobiographical narrative, precisely because it is the work of the private subjectivity of an empirical author with a *verifiable* personal history, the supposed truth elicited by it cannot be taken for granted on its exclusive right to a mythical "unverifiability." And this cannot be done if for no other reason, because in

¹²⁵ Starobinski, "The Problem of Autobiography," in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 200.

¹²⁶ Although I do not always endorse Lejeune's schematic, "legalistic" understanding of autobiography, or his taxonomic classification, I grant that in autobiography the possibility must be allowed for independent verification of the truth of its subject. After all, this "subject" is the better of a self-consciousness that has been agreed is brought about in a field where others self-consciousnesses "operate;" if so, then as we have been arguing, the "subjectivity" of the subject is actually and basically intersubjectivity. The other subjectivity involved should be allowed "access" to the private "truth" of a self. I cannot know "exactly" how you relate to your own feelings; but the truth of self cannot be allowed to be entirely defined by feelings, which in any way are in constant flux. On the theory of the need of an "autobiographical pact" that would guarantee the "truth" of the autobiographer in relation to his or her own story, see Philippe Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact," in *On Autobiography*, 3-30, trans. Katherine Leary, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1998.

accordance with the existential-phenomenological analysis Starobinski is implicitly conducting subjectivity presupposes inter-subjectivity.¹²⁷ In other words, if self-consciousness only attains as the consciousness of the *being-in-the-world* of the “I,” then the subjectivity of the “I” (the self) cannot claim the right to a truth about itself that cannot be verified anywhere “in” the world in which it exists. It is worth noticing that the “unverifiable” truth of which Starobinski speaks about only appears in the discourse of the *Confessions* as the product of Rousseau’s failure to give a reliable account of his life precisely because for him his self appears to be something one could have access apart from one’s empirical life. Or put another way, the “unverifiability” of Rousseau’s confessional truth comes about as the consequence of his failure to make his sense of selfhood harmonize with the history of his life and of bringing *narrative closure* to the inner division of his self. But, and this is of crucial importance, we should bear in mind that not all autobiographical accounts end in an impasse, in an impossibility of the autobiographical subject to “stabilize” the self, nor in the necessity forced upon it to “dissolve” his selfhood into the language *through* which it expresses itself. For, as we will demonstrate, this is certainly not what the analysis reveals about Torres’s *Vida*.

¹²⁷ “He [Rousseau] shows himself searching for a truth and making errors; the search and the vaguely define object of the self are simultaneously his subjects. Together these constitute a more complete truth, but one that escapes the usual laws of verification. We have moved from the realm of (historical) *truth* to that of *authenticity* the authenticity of *discourse* (sic).” Starobinski, *Ibid.* 198. Although Starobinski does not declare himself partial to a specific philosophical ideology, phenomenological approach it is evident from his references to Hegel. In any case, he is on record as acknowledging the indirect influence of Dilthey and Heidegger on him through the work of Eric Weil and Ernst Cassirer. See “Notes” to Robert J. Morrissey’s introduction of *Transparence and Obstruction*.

Chapter 1.4

Torres: Modernity, Sincerity and the Transparent Self

We concede that the commentary offered above is not exhaustive; and neither does it go far enough as a demonstration of how a certain mode of interpretation of the *Confessions* is responsible for singling Rousseau out as the originator of the modern manner of life narrative. Doing that, we realize, would take us far afield from our purpose here, as it would require a study of the history of the reception of Rousseau in the modern tradition of literary criticism and philosophy. But we wanted only to offer an illustration of the procedure and the protocol involved in the process of claiming and establishing authority in a literary tradition. This, however, have prepared us to continue our analysis by challenging head-on the long held belief that modern autobiography, as the narrative discourse wherein the subject of his own narration bases his claim to self-knowledge on his *affective experience* and processes, as opposed to something based on faith on a higher authority that both mediates and determines the relation of oneself to oneself as happens with Saint Augustine—begins with Rousseau. In point of facts, some of the most oft-cited moments from the *Confessions* upon which Rousseau has been proposed as the embodiment of a new autobiographical model are already present in *Vida* decades before they showed up in the *Confessions*; those moments bare so close a resemblance in their formulations, that in Rousseau they read as if citations or variations of statements by Torres. Thus, and by way of an example: if in order to confer authority to his life-narration Rousseau feels the need to appeal to his feelings as the guarantors of the essential truth of the self about which the *Confessions* will “tell all,” Torres, although keenly aware that our

innerness is the sole repository of a kind of knowledge which only we have access to, he abstains from making that type of promise, since he believes that nothing is ultimately gained by engaging in this kind of bare-all confessions; his autobiographical undertaking is useless, he overtly declares¹²⁸. But if Rousseau promises to tell all, which he actually does not do¹²⁹, Torres simply states that, as the transparent and truthful man that he is, he will say whatever he knows about himself to be true, as it is his habit¹³⁰. Like Goethe, Torres also was cognizant that when it comes to the life of any individual what matters is not necessarily and without qualification what is “true;” what is true is what has a specific meaning in the totality of the selfhood under examination¹³¹. That does not mean that Torres does not tell all; but for him “all” is just what is of significance to his undertaking; in this sense *Vida*, like Montaigne’s *Essays* and Goethe’s *Poetry and Truth* reveals more about their respective subject because it tells us more that is more of the essence for

¹²⁸ “Yo estoy bien seguro que es una culpable majadería poner en crónica las sandeces de un sujeto tan vulgar, tan ruin y tan desgraciado, que por extremo alguno puede servir a la complacencia, al ejemplo o a la risa.” Torres, *Vida*, 56.

¹²⁹ Possibly the best example of Rousseau’s cunning strategy of saying too much to reveal too little, can be found in that he never confesses the true causes that led him to forsake his children. Although this is a point on which most of his apologists rarely if ever stop to think over, Rousseau’s silence, and the reasons he offers for his silence are all the more revealing of not really wanting to “tell all,” since it was the outcome of his decision to give away his children what definitively prompted him to pen his *Confessions* in the first place. Telling all about it therefore should be the core of his autobiography; but instead, Rousseau offers us this: “Si je disois mes raisons, j’en dirois trop. Puisqu’elles ont pu me séduire elles jeunes gens qui pourroient me lire à se laisser abuser par la même erreur.” How can we believe this, coming from a man who has been making his confession on all sorts of moral trespasses and legerdemains? When we arrive at these passages of the *Confessions* we can’t help thinking whatever other revelations it contains have been made to hide this crucial moment in Rousseau’s life. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, 357, Book VIII.

¹³⁰ “Soy hombre claro y verdadero, y diré lo que sepa de mi con la ingenuidad que acostumbro.” Torres, *Vida*, 59. Some scholars, like Sebolt for example, have taken issue with Torres’s employment of the subjunctive “sepa” and have imputed him some devious intentions as to the veracity of his biographical account and the truthfulness of the individual portrayed. But in point of fact, Torres is only employing good Spanish grammar in resorting to the subjunctive after the future infinitive; as it occurs in the introductory part of *Vida*, it simply means that, whenever truth is called forth, it will be said and that nothing about the subject-matter will be held. Also, since the sentence entails a statement of promise, it calls forth the subjunctive, whose structure comprises the meaning of so-called “speech acts.” See Russel P. Sebald. “El género picaresco y la estructura moral de la *Vida* de Torres Villarroel,” 55, Taurus, 1985.

¹³¹ A fact of our life is valuable not in so far as it is true, but in so far as it has significance.” Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann*, trans. John Oxenford, North Point Press, 1984. Also cited by Weintraub, in *The Value of the Individual*, 347

gaining “firsthand” knowledge of the true man it portrays, than about the *stage* on which his portraiture is displayed and the brushes with which it has been execute¹³². Previous to writing *Vida*, in one of the “prologues,” acknowledging the autobiographical character this genre takes in his hands, he sardonically as per usual “apologizes” to his reader thusly:

Dear reader, forgive me for *always telling you everything about me*, as though you were my confidant. Even right now *I have the need to let you in* on some little travails going on in my life. But I’ll leave it for another occasion when I am in a less complaining mood; because it is not good that I constantly come to tire you with my *little stories*, since I want your friendship to last me for days and days to come.¹³³ (Emphasis added).

And again:

¹³² For all the claims to transparency based on the immediacy of feelings that we find in Rousseau, the *Confessions* suffers of being a rehashed and hatched and worst, a rehearsed autobiography in which even feelings are filtered through the reflections of his author. Accordingly, here we find Rousseau preparing himself for an outstanding performance: “Si je veux faire un ouvrage écrit avec soin comme les autres, je ne me peindrai pas, je me farderai. C’est ici de mon portrait qu’il s’agit et non pas d’un livre. Je vais travailler pour ainsi dire dans la chambre obscure ; il n’y faut point d’autre art qui de suivre exactement les traits que je vois marqués. Je prends donc mon parti sur le style comme sur les choses. Je ne m’attacherai point à le rendre uniforme; j’aurai toujours celui qui me viendra, j’en changerai selon mon humeur sans scrupule, je dirai chaque chose comme je les sens, comme je le vois, sans recherche, sans gêne, sans m’embarrasser de la bigarrure. En me livrant à la fois au souvenir de l’impression reçue et au sentiment présent je peindrai doublement l’état de mon ame, savoir au moment ou l’évenement m’est arrivé et au moment où j’ai d décrit ; mon style inégal et naturel, tantôt rapide et tantôt diffus, tantôt sage et tantôt fou, tantôt grave et tantôt gai fera lui-même partie de mon histoire. Enfin quoiqu’il en soit de la manière dont cet ouvrage peut être écrit, ce sera toujours par son objet un livre précieux pour les philosophes : c’est je le répète, une pièce de comparaison pour l’étude du cœur humain, et c’est la seule qui existe.” The *Confessions* are then the product of a deliberate effort to deceive. “Ebauches des Confessions” in *Oeuvres Complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 1154, Marcel Raymond. Ed. Also in Starobinski, “The Problem of Autobiography,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, 194. The *Confessions* are then the product of a deliberate effort to deceive.

¹³³ “Perdona también, lector mío, que te trate como a tía (porque todo te lo cuento), y aun ahora tengo la cortedad de contarte otro trabajito que me sucede, pero lo dejaré para ocasión en que este mi ánimo menos medroso, porque no es justo cansarte tan repetidas veces, cuando yo quiero tu amistad por muchos días.” Torres, “Prólogo a mis Amigos Lectores, in *Correo del otro Mundo*, in *Textos Autobiográficos*, Guy Mercadier, ed. 1978.

The integrity of the work [*Vida*] and my appreciation of the plaudits I got from some respected quarters make me to want to describe in details the most outstanding events. But since *I have determined to say nothing* about some of these incidents, I will only make brief mention here of the most pressing and painful events of this story. The mandatory examination of the habilitation in math sciences was missing from the schedule of the examining jury. I know exactly why this was so; but *I also know how important it is not to reveal the reason.*¹³⁴ (Emphasis added).

Torres, he avers, feels that very modern impulse to tell everything and to “bare it all” about one’s life; but he defers doing so. Like Montaigne and Goethe, and for reason more or less similar to the one adduced by them, he abstains from incurring in such indiscretion. Since, for both Montaigne and Goethe the self, the subject, the soul or the same entity by whatever other name does not call for getting self-involved with:

I am quite sure that that it is loathsome foolishness for anyone to sit down to chronicle the trivialities of a *subject* like me, of so little consequence, and so craven and disgraceful as I am. For that, nobody could possibly be self-complacent in doing something that cannot be either

¹³⁴ “[...] la integridad de la obra y la disculpable ambición a los decentes aplausos me empujan también a describir con alguna distinción la multitud de sus mayores circunstancias; pero pues he determinado callar algunas, concluiré las que pertenecen a este asunto con mas aceleración y con más miseria. Faltó, pues, el examen de las facultades matemáticas en el claustro pleno, para hacer cabal la función. Yo sé el motivo de este defecto, y sé también que es importante no decirlo.” Torres, *Vida*, 139. This is said apropos of the qualifying examination as full professor of the chair of mathematics at Salamanca University.

exemplary or entertaining. *The time one puts in writing and reading [about self] is not amusing; rather it is frustrating.* And yet, *despite* its having no use, I am determined to put in writing the wretched passages that I have gone through in my life¹³⁵.

The particular personal reason Torres has for seeing no inherent value in self-reflection as an introspective search that leads to a confessional practice in the way of Rousseau's will be amply addressed below. For the moment, however, let us just point out that it is not by sheer chance that in determining to do so in spite of themselves, the self in both Montaigne and Torres is not dealt with in the self-centered fashion, punctuated by narcissistic paranoia that prevails in Rousseau's *Confessions*¹³⁶. Yet, as has been referred

¹³⁵ "Yo estoy bien seguro que es una culpable majadería poner en crónica las sandeces de un sujeto tan vulgar, tan ruin y tan desgraciado, que por extremo alguno puede servir a la complacencia, al ejemplo, ni a la risa. El tiempo que se gaste en escribir y en leer, no se entretiene ni se aprovecha; que todo se malogra; y no obstante estas inutilidades y perdiciones estoy determinado a escribir los desgraciados pasajes que han corrido en todo lo que dejo atrás de mi vida." Torres, *Vida*, 56.

¹³⁶ There are in Rousseau's *Confessions* many instances which can easily be construed as stemming from a paranoid state or constitution. There is, for example, that oft-cited reference in which he sees himself as *under the constant gaze* of his enemies and which he takes as a prompter to bare himself naked to that gaze. In other words, the indications are that Rousseau is feeling *persecuted* while writing his *Confessions* and indeed that it is this feeling that prompts him to write it in the first place. This is the reference in question: "Dans l'entreprise que je faite de me montrer tout entier au public, il faut que rien de moi ne lui reste obscur ou cache ; il faut que je tiene incessamment sous ses yeux, qu'il me suive dans tous les égaremens de mon coeur dans tous les recoins de ma vie ; qu'il ne me perde pas de vue un seul instant, de peur que, trouvant dans mon recit la moindre lacune, le moindre vide, et se demandant, qu'a-t-t-il fait durant ce tems-la, il ne m'accuse de n'avoir pas tous dire. *Les Confessions*, 59-60. Reading this passage bearing the reference above in mind, we would have to concede that, if it is truth that there exists a historical connection between paranoia and modernity, as an author has recently argued, Rousseau would definitely qualify as a *first* modern, even when it is true that, by the definition of paranoid by the author whom we are referring to, not only men but even God himself can be said to be paranoid—so wide and encompassing the definition offered is. See the introduction to John Farrell, *Paranoia and Modernity: Cervantes to Rousseau*, 1-2. See also the two chapters on Rousseau in the same book, where the charge of paranoia is not consistently borne out by the analysis. The failures of this author does not, however, clear Rousseau of suspicion: one of the first to offer a comment on the *Confessions*, (1798) Friedrich Schlegel, had no hesitation in seeing in Rousseau one of those moderns "neurotics who are fascinated by their own ego," and it was Goethe who called Rousseau's habit of unrestrained exposure to the gaze of the other the "heautognosy" of the "modern hypochondriac." About Schlegel, see Robert Folkenflick's introduction to *The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions and Self-Representation*, 3. About Goethe on Rousseau, see Karl Joachim Weintraub, *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography*, 375. The more authoritative work on the

above and will continued to be argued throughout, since Torres does not base his claim to self-knowledge on introspective search in the mode of either Saint Augustine or Rousseau, he therefore does not claim special status either for his method of self-searching or for any knowledge of self yielded by his autobiographical enterprise. In point of fact, Torres does not even lay claim to having a “method,” which would necessarily imply active self-involvement. Having no specific method, he does not claim to have a profound or more accurate knowledge of himself than others have of themselves, even if, as a matter of course, he thereby derives a better knowledge of “Torres,” than others could. In other words, when Torres “enters” inside himself he is aware he is actuating a practice of self-inquiry that is in the same measure and extent available to everybody else, since all men, “children of Adam” that they all are, have an “interiority” to “enter” into. Conversely, Torres is aware that his ability for the enactment of self-reflective practice determines him as just a man among all others. And yet, he is equally aware that what makes him like all other men opens up for him the possibility of discovering that he is not those others, and that those others are not him. Torres “enters” his consciousness persuaded that, in the words of Montaigne, “every man carries in himself the complete pattern of human nature¹³⁷.” Examining his conscience, his preferred way of “seeing” inside himself, Torres finds that pattern confirmed; but he also thereby becomes even more aware of his singularity, of what separates him from the number of men:

Examining my conscience I conclude that I am evil;
 examining those witnesses of my evil deeds, I see that I am

psychological complexity and diagnosis of Rousseau’s condition remains Starobinski’s “Guilty Reflections,” chapter 8 of his *Transparency and Obstruction*.

¹³⁷ Michel de Montaigne, “On Repentance.” In *Essays*, Book Three, Chapter II, 236, trans. J.M. Cohen, Penguin Books, 1958.

not especially so, and I finally conclude that I am just bad to the point of being bearable¹³⁸. (Emphasis added).

Examining his life, which for Torres is not more than the totality of the relations in which the self enters with the world and with itself, he discovers both individuality and universality as coexistent¹³⁹. Indeed, he discovers that individuality is universal to the extent that the universal is present in the individual:

I concede that in my life I have incurred in so much that stands out for being preposterous; but not so unseeingly unique that has not been done by the infinite number of men who came before me¹⁴⁰.

For Torres, our “interiority,” our individual consciousness of the totality of relations we establish throughout our life is then the dimension of our selfhood where the individuated self and the world meet. Nowhere Torres’s awareness of his own interiority shows itself most overtly than in the survey of the inner geography of the anatomy of the empirical individual that *Vida* offers its readers. To be sure, this anatomic geography is but a spatial metaphor of our inner states. As such it is a rhetorical representation of our consciousness, which in itself is a representation of ourselves and of the world; it is meant to provide a graphic image of the inner space where the effects of our awareness of our existence are *felt* and where, through the rationalization of these “effects” become, in

¹³⁸ “Mirando a mi conciencia, soy facineroso; mirando a los testigos, soy regular, pasadero y tolerable.” Torres, *Vida*, 54.

¹³⁹ That for Torres life is but the “totality of relations” the self establishes with what is, and that therefore in him “self” and “life” are interchangeable, since one cannot be posited without the other, is made self-evident in that in *Vida* we can only take stock of the “self” through the acts and actuations of the empirical author. In Torres, the self is apprehended as historicity; as the history of a personal life. Hence, *Vida*, which is divided in “trozos,” attempts to capture the progress, development and transformation of the “self.”

¹⁴⁰ “Muchos disparates de marca mayor y desconciertos plenarios tengo hecho en esta vida, pero no tan únicos que no los hayan ejecutados otros antes que yo.” Torres, *Ibid.* 54.

Torres's insightful formulation (supra) the "body of the spirit," the residence that allows for the self to experience itself "objectively." And so, in Torres the Self is discovered as the range of all possible reactions to real or imaginary events and entities which we enter in relation with; in Torres awareness of feelings gets constituted into objective experience. That "objectivity" of the self is always present to our consciousness in the manner of our feelings; on the other hand, just as it is for Heidegger, our feelings are in *Vida* understood as manifestations of the materiality and physicality of our existence. It is through our feelings, as manifestations and representations of the materiality of the inner world the self inhabits that we engage the substantive world; the world inhabited by other selves not our own¹⁴¹. To that extent, to know oneself for Torres means to know the range and scope of our feelings and to know the alterative, that is, the changing relationship in which they exist respective to each other. But because for Torres the structure of our affective objectivity is accessible only to us, knowledge of self depends on a specific kind of relation it establishes with itself. However, since the range and scope of feelings, their "depths," in our engagement with and in reaction to the world of facts that exist independent of ourselves make us experience the self as "alterative," as something permanently in motion and as *recurring*, as in constant alterity, to understand the kind of relationship in which one stands respective to oneself is of cardinal importance to obtain self-knowledge. This kind of relation appears in Torres as a capability of "being inside oneself." At the same time, this very capacity to reach into our inner affective objectivity is a guaranty of self-knowledge as *state-of-mind* (supra). In Torres the self knows itself because it exists in an inner, inextricable relationship with itself: "I exist inside myself,"

¹⁴¹ Tugendhat, "Heidegger on the Relation of Oneself to Oneself," in *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, 169 and ff.

he says. If he knows himself deeper than others know him, it is because his relationship with his affective self, although recognized as in recurring alteration and in flux, it is itself stable and permanent in that it always recur; the Self, as Torres experience it, is ever “present” to all alterations in mood and feelings¹⁴². He can inform us better about himself, he says, because besides existing inside himself, he had been “dealing” with himself, that is, *thinking* himself, examining himself in continuous relationship with the constant but discontinuous manifestations of his self inasmuch as feelings.

[...] I can tell more accurately about myself because I live inside me, and have been in relation with my own self for quite a long time¹⁴³.

And again:

From the harms done onto me I recognized how ignorant and how daring and vain they are too, those who pretend to know me better than I know myself; *I, who handle and take care of myself on a regular basis*¹⁴⁴. (Emphasis added).

To exist inside his self as he understands it, as *constancy in flux*, is therefore for Torres a fundamental condition for self-knowledge because he recognizes that our feelings are the force that more *directly* structures the relationship of oneself to oneself. This is

¹⁴² Here Torres comes the closest any other writer of his time ever got to Hume’s theory of “personal identity.” “If any impression gives rise to the idea of the self, that idea must continue invariably the same through the whole course of our lives; since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensation succeed each other, and all never exist at the same time.” Hume, “of Personal Identity,” in *A Treatise of Human Understanding*, 251-252.

¹⁴³ “Yo me conozco, señor eminentísimo, que estoy dentro de mí y sé que no soy bueno para nada bueno...” Vida, 198; “[...] que yo lo informaré mejor que otro lo que soy, porque vivo dentro de mí mismo y ha días que me conozco de trato.” In “Sacudimiento de Mentecatos,” 220.

¹⁴⁴ “Por mis males empecé a conocer la ignorancia, el atrevimiento y la vanidad de los que presumen saber más de mí que yo, que me manoseo y me trato a mí mismo [...]” (sic.). Torres, *Vida natural y católica*: prólogo,” in *Textos Autobiográficos*, 60.

why in surveying the “interior caves” of the anatomic objectivity of his self he seeks to connect feelings, passions and moods to the “organs” said to be where our affective structure is localized: the organs are a constant that reflect fluidity. Our organs are the “regulators” of our affective structure and thus participate in the relation we each establish with ourselves and with each other. Whether or not to a specific organ corresponds a specific feeling, Torres suggests, we can only know ourselves as entities that register “anger,” “fear,” “pity,” “sadness,” “avarice,” “generosity,” “ire,” and all other affects and emotions, whether “good” but “bad”¹⁴⁵. For Torres, inevitably we are both and at the same time *how* and *what* we feel in our relation to ourselves and to others. Torres not only feels that he feels; he *also makes of the relation to his sensorial structure the foundation of knowledge of self*. This means that for Torres the relation in which we exist with ourselves is dictated by a constitutive *irrationality*; the Self, contrary to the Cartesian model, is essentially irrational to the extent that it is structured by feelings, emotions and moods. One relates to one’s self not rationally but *affectively*. Consciousness, then, implies *affective irrationality*:

I have heard that these alternating contradictory movements [of the spirit] are said to be irrational. Well, then, if that is so we are all in varying degrees irrational (*locos*), for I have noticed this *unconscious, recurrent alteration in everybody*¹⁴⁶. (Emphasis added).

¹⁴⁵ Torres, *Vida*, 101.

¹⁴⁶ “A esta alternativa de movimientos contrarios he oído llamar locura; y si lo es, todos somos locos, grado más o menos; *porque en todos he advertido esta impensada y repetida alteración.*” Torres, *Ibid.* 101. I have rendered the Spanish “locura” for “irrational” though I am aware that a more literal translation would call for “craziness” or “mental derangement;” but I am not offering here a literal translation of Torres but a *version* of his writing, while making sure that the meaning of what he says is preserved. In this sense, (notice

To be sure, and as we remarked earlier in this study, the cause of this altering and alternating movements of the self, Torres states, never enters consciousness, “yo siempre ignoro la causa y el impulso de estas contrariedades¹⁴⁷.” Nowhere is the link Torres discerns between the self and consciousness of more import than in the relation that he discovers between these and language. It is not in the power of our consciousness to exercise control at all times over the self; language, our linguistic capabilities to which both consciousness and unconsciousness can have equal recourse, can also claim a right to influence and to determine our notion of selfhood by attempting “to fixate” a portraiture of the self that might or might not correspond to what is essential to our existential modes of being. Therefore, in the same way that Torres declares that he always ignores the causes of the contradictions of the modes of being of his self, he also recognizes that in his writing, which in the end must be understood as the linguistic mode of being of the empirical writer we know as “Torres”—the forces driving these “contrary impulses” also operate. To be sure, and for the reason offered above, because our *immediate* relation to ourselves happens affectively rather than rationally, statements of this sort should be taken to apply generally and strictly to the autobiographical, self-reflective movements of his discourse. Thus, in Torres, consciousness, under the guise of affective irrationality, establishes a kind of relation with language in which the self can be portrayed as able to escape the vigilance of his own reflectivity. In those writings, then, Torres’s self is more truthful to itself the less vigilance he exerts over himself and the less conscious autobiographical self-reflectivity is “reflected” therein: his self, he says “is copied [reflected] with more truth” in his writing. And is as it is, he continues to say, either because in his writing, more than

the pun) since a “crazy” (loco) person is said to be irrational, in the context of this study “irrational” conveys Torres’s meaning more accurately than “craziness” or “mental derangement.”

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 101

in his *praxis* he had “intentionally disclosed” more about himself, or because the truth about his self has come out of its own, despite his reluctance to do so; the affective, as opposed to the reflective and therefore rational relation of self to language overcomes the vigilance of the empirical self of the author¹⁴⁸. Here we reencounter the same conceptual division Torres sees between a conscious, *reflective self* that knows itself as such and which is of one piece with the empirical self of the author, and an *affective self*, that posits itself in opposition to the former and which claims for itself the relation Torres has with language, a relation that Torres himself recognizes as not under the authority of any recognizable power.

I write randomly whatever comes out, be that whatever it may be. [...] The rules of good writing, if they are those prescribed by rhetoric, I have enough vanity to say I know them; but damned be I if I ever resorted to them. Rhetorical subtlety does not sit well with our century¹⁴⁹. (Emphasis added).

This very distinctively outlined structure of Torres’s concept of selfhood straightforwardly points to the problematic of truth, sincerity and authenticity that arises in

¹⁴⁸ We are not sure, though, nor can we ever be sure if by the intentionally unassuming “mis papeles” Torres means only and solely his “prólogos” and “pronósticos” where he deals with his self-portrayal. However, we infer his meaning is in agreement with an interpretation that opposes discourse to social praxis or mode of social being rather than *Vida* to previously published accounts of his life. This inference is based not only on the fact that he uses without major editing materials already published in his “prólogos” and “pronósticos,” but also based on his clear reference to his linguistic mode of being, of self-expression, that is. This is the citation *in extenso* from the original. His self, he says “anda copiado con más verdad en mis papeles, ya porque cuidadosamente he declarado mis defectos, ya porque a *huradillas de mi vigilancia* se han salido, arrubujados entre las *expresiones*, las *bachillerías* y las *incontinencias*, muchos pensamientos y palabras que han descubierto las manías de mi propensión y los delirios de mi voluntad,” Torres, *Vida*, 100. (Emphasis added).

¹⁴⁹ “Escribo a lo que sale, y salga lo que saliere. [...] Las reglas de escribir bien (si son las que enseña la retorica), tengo vanidad que las conozco; pero malo año para el puto que las usara: no está el siglo para estas delicadezas,” *Sacudimiento de mentecato*, 218.

Torres's account, and which as we have seen, is directly connected to the way Torres anchors consciousness of self on affectivity, and on his unemotional by means of saying *objective* attitude toward feelings. We also call attention to how the analysis of consciousness anchored on such an attitude toward affectivity is in Torres inherent to the peculiarities exhibited by the style of his writing, and to the problematic of the meaning conveyed therein, which we have also seen, points toward an outright rejection of formal or classical rhetoric, or at least a rejection of the way rhetoric was received from the tradition and practiced in his lifetime. This is all very important, none the less, because at the center of it all stands the paradox of an endorsement of moods, emotions, passions by what is supposed to negate them. In other word, here we are dealing with the paradox of an affectivity that gets to be endorsed by what supposedly is opposite to it: an *intellective reflectivity*. We will have to come back to these themes later in this chapter. For the moment, it suffices to remark how Torres seems to be quite aware of this situation, since he acknowledges that he relates to himself through his affections. That it is through this relation that Torres can take stock of his selfhood is made patent to the extent that in doing so a very cogent theory of affections is engendered—even if concludes revealing the concrete construct of these affections, the self, as a something that tends to diversity and multiplicity and which, as I will make use of this notion, is not necessarily conterminous with internal division¹⁵⁰. Moreover, that in Torres, writing—the very practice that defines

¹⁵⁰ The idea of the self (subject) as “multiplicity” first appears in Nietzsche within the context of his polemic against Descartes' notion of “immediate certainty;” Nietzsche's strategy proceeds by raising fundamental methodological-theoretical objections to the belief that “absolute” certainty is possible at all, since to conceive of something to possess “absolute certainty” logical-metaphysical philosophy always must depart from a “true a priori,” in this particular case, “thinking” has to be decided as the activity the philosopher is engaged in before taking that as the proof of the existence of a “thinking subject.” Nietzsche's objection is that we have no way of knowing with absolute certainty that what we call “thinking” cannot correspond to what we call “feeling” in the myriad bio-psychological processes that becomes consciousness. Although this objection has merit, Nietzsche's idea of a “multiplicity” of subjects whose “interaction and struggle is the

his social identity while at the same time being the medium through which his self-identity is reflected upon is not at the service of any preconceived discursive end— means that as earlier stated, in him self-identity bears an immediate relation to his affective self rather than to his intellectual, reflective capabilities. To adopt as the approach to writing a method that allows him to write “a lo que sale y salga lo que saliere¹⁵¹” by necessity carries this implication; and necessarily so. That is a necessity because Torres, as a primordially autobiographer writer has the fundamentally existential need of a form of expression that leaves the least possible room for “reflectivity” understood in the traditional way as introspective examination separate from actual life. Expressing the mode of being of his self requires *immediate immediacy*, given that his being consists in being made of an unconstrained outpouring of moods, passions, feelings and the like which are not only *registered* in his writing but which at the same time signal this writing as his being, for according to Torres and Heidegger, the self is what it does and what it seems to want to be through its doings; therefore, he is what he writes and writes what he

basis of our thoughts and our consciousness in general” interesting as it is scientifically sound, loses its place within his own philosophy of the “subject,” since he had previously convincingly shown that we could be wrong to presuppose a “doer” as the cause of every “deed.” However, we must insist that it is in Torres where the self as duality is first posited in the history of the philosophy of the “subject” precisely as a rejection of the Cartesian cogito; besides, it is in Torres that, as we are trying to demonstrate this duality is given a name and a taxonomy; the “genio” and the “ingenio” is Torres’s name for it. Perhaps Nietzsche is right after all, and from the struggle inside this duality derives our conscious thoughts. Nietzsche, “On the Prejudice of Philosophers,” in *Beyond Good and Evil*, 16, Ap. 16-19, trans. Marion Faber, Oxford World’s Classics, 1998. Also, Nietzsche’s “Principles of a New Evaluation,” in *The Will to Power*, 268-269, Book 3, trans. Walter Kaufmann, Vintage Books, 1967.

¹⁵¹ In a passage reproduced above (118) in which Rousseau is caught rehearsing his *Confessions*, this declaration occurs: “[...] I shall take whatever style comes my way and not hesitate to change styles as the mood strikes me [...]” The resemblance between this *declaration of intent* by Rousseau, and the *executorial statement* by Torres to the effect that “salga lo que saliere” actually is his method of writing, is starkly clear. Evaluating the significance of Rousseau’s declaration, Starobinski says: “Here we witness the emergence of a new conception of language (whose influence would continue to make itself felt as late as the surrealists”). We, however are so sure that Torres’s “salga lo que saliere,” which is indirectly echoed in Miguel de Unamuno’s novel *Niebla* (“nivola”), of 1914, is not closer to the “automatic writing” of Andre Breton and his surrealists companions. One thing we are sure about, though, is that Torres’s approach to writing predates Rousseau’s by decades. See Starobinski, “The Problems of Autobiography,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, 195.

is¹⁵². Affectivity demands above all urgency and straightforwardness. This of course means that in Torres, selfhood recognizes itself in language but also *as* language; therefore Torres's self claims language for feelings and for affects and passions; for it self—that is, which goes a long way to explaining Torres's style of writing, at once humorously provocative, taunting and irreverent. But this is a point we shall come back to.

Nowhere is this fundamental condition of Torres's mode of being made as evident as in his declaration that, in keeping with his promise to show that “ni soy éste, ni aquél ni el otro,” in writing his life he recounts “only what goes on through my being¹⁵³.” Furthermore, this promise is being proffered on his being a “transparent man of truth;” in turn, his being transparent and *therefore* truthful has as its basis his customary “ingenuity¹⁵⁴.” In “ingenuity,” from Latin *ingenuitās*, we have the key for understanding that in Torres the self recognizes itself as language. For “ingenuity” is the condition that defines someone as being free from reserve or artfulness, of being candid, frank and so on and so forth. Ingenuity is the language of feelings not because feelings are always expressed without reserve but because whenever a feeling is expressed it leaves no reservation as to its meaning. In other words, feelings do not need to be first “interpreted,” need not be reflected upon for us to be enabled by our “reflections” to understand their meanings; indeed, feelings have no meaning that must be first “analyzed,” literally “broken apart,” that is, in order to then extract a meaning that might be “contained” in the expression that “carries” it. To “*express*” a feeling is to *feel* it; a feeling then is an

¹⁵² “Yo no puedo fundirme la humanidad ni formarme otro espíritu, ni sé dónde comprar otra cabeza; lo que discurre, lo que cavila y lo que contiene la que Dios me ha puesto en los hombros es lo que doy al público [...]” Torres, *Vida*, 183. Here Torres is obviously raising the question of his antic-ontological authenticity, of which we will learn more as we move on.

¹⁵³ “yo digo sólo lo que pasa por mí, que es lo que he prometido, y lo demás revuelvanlo los críticos como les parezca.” Torres, *Vida*, 105.

¹⁵⁴ “Soy hombre claro y verdadero, y diré de mí lo que sepa con la ingenuidad que acostumbro.” Torres, *Vida*, 59.

emotion that wants to “communicate” itself unmediated, first and more powerfully to him who feels it, to him in whom the feeling appears. *What this all means is that emotions, passions, moods, in a word, affectivity, resists all our effort at rationalization.* Because of this, “ingenuity” is considered in Latin as a state of “purity” of being. Insofar as this is so then to talk about oneself with ingenuity amounts to making oneself transparent; to be transparent on the other hand means to show that one is an *ingenuus*, “freeborn,” “virtuous” and that therefore has no need for wanting not to show one’s self as it is, as one ‘feels’ it—that is. “Ingenuity,” then, is the basic condition for Torres’s self-knowledge since it is what is *ethically* essential to his selfhood; because he is sincere above all with himself he can render a transparent and truthful account of his life. On the other hand, because transparence is the condition under which he relates to himself through language, or otherwise said, because in him language *is* transparence, he can but be always truthful. In Torres, being truthful and being sincere are the fundamental ethical modes of being which are present in him and represented in his own self-perception *in* transparence. To perceive oneself in transparence in the context of a life-narrative, presupposes a certain style of writing that produces its effects and depends on an “unguarded” language, a language in which thoughts are expressed that represent the *natural* “incontinencia” (unrestrained boldness; lack of circumspection; uncontrived thinking style) and the “bachillería” (sophomoric spontaneity, “unprocessed” mode of being) of the self that can be truthful only in *linguistic transparence*. Linguistic transparence, if at all attainable, must be spoken in “ingenuity,” which is the natural language of affectivity and emotivity. On a later chapter we will have to revisit this theme to show how from “ingenuity” Torres develops the *ethics of authenticity* that governs his relation to his readers, and how this

ethics is the more salient manifestation of the uncompromising individualism that ties him to the Enlightenment and his undisputable contribution to it; and through it, to the formation of a modern consciousness. Now, however, on the strength of what we have already discussed we would like to return to a consideration to the theme of autobiography and the place Torres occupies in these developments, to deepen our critique of the prevalent opinions on what determines the “modernity” of an autobiographical undertaking and to the resulting notion of selfhood. In so doing, we will bring home the critique of the theory that upholds the author of the *Confessions* as the pioneer of the modern autobiographical evaluation of the self, as we come closer to debunking it for good.

Chapter 1.5

Affectivity and the Passions in the Autobiographical

Determination of Modern Selfhood

We concluded the previous chapter by making provision towards debunking the long-held belief that Rousseau's *Confessions* is the autobiographical originator of modern selfhood. But before we are in an adequate position to carry that out, we would need to delve a bit deeper into the role that Torres's manner of thinking accords to affectivity in his autobiographical undertaking, and therefore we see the need to stress two important points directly connected to the problematic raised by Torres's awareness of the relation between affectivity and self-consciousness. This problematic, it should go without saying, does not exclusively belong to Torres's own autobiographical project, but is something faced by whoever undertakes the task of rendering a cogent and coherent interpretation of his or her autobiographical project, and so by delving deeper into it I attempt to do justice to its significance for a way of evaluating autobiography that is somewhat different from what we have received from tradition. The universal application of Torres's insight into this problematic will be made clear in its own right. But I also would like to stress how Torres's awareness of the role of affectivity in fostering a consciousness of self in turn reflects on the original approach he brings to the execution of his autobiographical self-portrayal; this necessarily I will carry out by deepening the critique of Rousseau already set into motion.

As we already pointed out, at the center of all works of autobiographical reflection on modern selfhood stands the paradox of a need to let the non-rational, affective

dimension of ourselves stake its righteous claim to its agonistic place in the structuring of self-consciousness, while at the same time acknowledging that the material impossibility of affectivity itself actually being capable of laying claim to this right, as long as it is distinguishable from rationality and reason. This paradox is of an insidious kind because, as Torres realizes, whenever the self—as that dimension of selfhood where the source of our “unthought” (“impesadas”) processes, our drives and passions can be metaphorically *and* physically located—whenever this self seeks to produce reliable statements about itself, it has no recourse but to resort to that other dimension of selfhood that posits itself— as its exact opposite. Putting it in another way, the self just does not “feel”; it also has a need of *stating* its feelings, while *concomitantly* realizing that *making statements is something that lies beyond the power of its affectivity*. We often come across this paradox whenever we have the need to express *how* we feel; for we often realize that our explanations always fall short of actually capturing our feelings; to express our feelings, we further realize, is to submit it to *falsification*. From the bad conscience of a need to falsify emotions in order to express authenticity, or in Torres’s terminology, *ingenuidad*, the problematic of an *apparently* split self arises; this apparently split self forces the autobiographer to postulate and to proceed as if he—as the empirical author and the “entity” in which the awareness of a seemingly divided self coheres— were the “carrier” of two distinct, opposed selves that he must reconcile with each other in order to be “himself.” Ever since Saint Augustine admits to a division of his self that only confessing to his God could do away with, it has been assumed that autobiographical account either exposes the self as a *naturally* divided entity, or conversely, that autobiographical account, given the conditions under which it comes into being, it itself *fosters* the internal division

of the self. Later I will return to this theme to show that this broad interpretation does not bear in mind that not all autobiographical accounts respond to the confessional mode practice by Saint Augustine and Rousseau and which makes a perceived division on the self a precondition for its coming into being. Then we will also show that authentically modern autobiographical narrative as contained in *Vida* does not of necessity expose or give rise to inner division, and will trace the origin of this manner of interpretation. For now, and to further elucidates the role that the affects, moods and in general, the “irrational” has in Torres’s self-understanding, I will now call attention to the fact that, apart from our affects as such not being capable of laying claim to a place in the structure of our self-consciousness, there is also the more complex problem of the nature of the affects themselves; for feeling change; and, as Torres overtly recognizes, they can change as often one way or the other without us always being able to know what brings these changes about. If we wanted to summarize what the problem we are dealing here is all about, then we will simply say that it consists of the fact that emotions, moods, passions and in a word, affectivity, do not *theorize*, and therefore cannot “lay claim” to anything; something other than our feelings has to do that on their behalf. This is the paradox¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵⁵ Ever since Nietzsche took a step further Hume’s position that declares the self an illusion, it has become commonplace in the contemporary academic philosophy to posit either that the self does not exist, or that it does, but not as a unity, by which it is meant that the “natural” state of the self is characterized by inner division. Leaving aside the obvious contradiction between these two positions, since what does not exist cannot exist as divided, and what is internally divided still exists, there is much that should be pointed out to correct the misconceptions infiltrated in the manner the question of the status of the self, or of its existence, has been posed, especially as it is commonly found in autobiographical studies. To begin with, references to Nietzsche concerning this matter are more often than not taken from his *Will to Power*, a book of *notes* that not intended for publication, for the obvious reason that those were only notes, ideas on the working that would not necessarily pan out exactly as they appear in that collection. So, here we detect an *error in methodology* on the part of Nietzsche’s epigones. As a rule and as a question of sound methodology, only those passages from the *Will to Power* that found its way into published works or works intended for publication should be taken on the authority of its author. If we do this then we will be surprised to find that, as I tried to illustrate earlier with quotation from *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche does not altogether dispose of the concept of the “Self.” (See note supra). But then, there remains the more serious question of what is that Nietzsche denies in relation to that concept. Simply put, what Nietzsche objects in this connection is that, a)

This situation poses the problem not only of finding a way to produce an autobiographical representation whose reliability and claim to truth will depend on a narrative of the self as *constancy*, as a fixated and stable entity exhibiting fundamental agreement with itself. And this problematic gets confounded and connects at a deeper level with a scenario in which the *actions* of the subject of which the autobiography is an account appears as in basic disagreement with the claims to truth staked by the narrative. And this is the nodus of all autobiographical accounts to which *Vida* strives to find adequate solution. Fail at one level, and you fail all the way.

That is how, for instance, even though Rousseau's autobiographical project succeeds *historically*, from a *phenomenological* standpoint it can be declared a failure. Since Rousseau makes the knowledge of his self dependent on an "affective" or emotional "truth;" and since our emotions and affections in turn are dependent on the *falsifying potential* inherent to our rationalizations of our feelings, affective "self" and rational, reflective "self" can hardly ever coincide or come into agreement with each other. And this situation is made even more precarious by the fact that emotivity and rational reflectivity do not correspond to each other *in time*; we *first* have feelings, *next*, we must strive to explain them; this, put in a nutshell, is the dynamic at work in modern

it is not constitutive of the "subject" of metaphysics; so that, what he is rejecting is the idea of the "Self" as substratum, as something that does not change, that it is always the same and that has the capacity for "bearing" on itself or of being subjacent to all other forms of existence; and b) as I also indicated earlier, Nietzsche is opposed to the artificial separation of the "subject" or "self" from his effects; therefore he wants that we do not posit a subject behind the acts but suggests that the actions in themselves are constitutive of the subject; in other word, the subject actuates its being in its effects. This incidentally is how the ideas sketched out in the *Will to Power* are finally worked out in, besides *Zarathustra*, *The Genealogy of Morals* and in *The Twilight of the Idols*, which is recapitulated by Heidegger in positing the self as the ontically "present-at-hand" that lies at the basis as the subjectum; being selfsame, says Heidegger, through its manifold "otherness;" the subjectum is that which has the *character* of the self (*Being and Time*, 150). My emphasis. On the inner contradictoriness of the self between desires, actions, emotions and thoughts, see Alexander Nehamas' important interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy of the self, where much concerning this theme is satisfactorily elucidated. Nehamas, "How One becomes what One is: The Self," Nietzsche: life as Literature, 171-199, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1985.

autobiography. For in autobiography, to make knowledge of the self rely on affectivity implies that the narrative account strives to make sense of something no longer there, of a self that does not longer exist; and it does not longer exist precisely because the self gets changed into another by the mere fact of having experienced, that is, *felt* a given emotion, passion or affect. We know that this is the case because we in our daily experience are our own witness to a continuously shifting, morphing *sense of self* that becomes constitutive of our selfhood. We might remain the same; but we remain the same as another¹⁵⁶. It does not matter then that Rousseau appeals to the supposed purity and infallibility of an “affective memory¹⁵⁷” in repeated attempts to circumvent this problem, for feelings can be remembered but never *recalled*, in the sense that we cannot feel the exact same feelings in the exact same way as the previous time; and they cannot be recalled because we are not the exact same self now than before. At any rate, since the self becomes other through feelings, we have no reliable way of either to ascertain that *this* one is the same feeling as before, nor that the first time around we experienced the *same* feeling in the exact same way. Even when Rousseau might be right that he *remembers* what he had felt on a given situation, being his feelings as dear to his heart as he concedes, his memories of his affects is obtained through falsification by the intellect, to the point that in recounting them this falsification leads him to substitute the thoughts *of* his feelings for the feelings themselves:

¹⁵⁶ To my knowledge, the concept “oneself as another” first occurred in Ricoeur. He employs this concept to express the condition of intersubjectivity that has been recognized since Hegel as the condition for the emergence of self-consciousness in the manner that I have been discussing it throughout; in this sense, for Ricoeur the concept simply means that “one cannot be thought of without the other” and that “one passes into the other.” I am here using the concept to allude to the more subtle situation in which we are overtaken by a feeling of otherness, as a manifestation of the changes the self itself goes through as a natural result of Being. We are positing that the selfsameness of the self consists in actually changing, as it is constantly revealed to us by our loss of, or acquisition of new feelings, of feeling “different,” “changed” by existence. This is a phenomenological situation that we experience as psychological reality. See Paul Ricoeur, “The Question of Selfhood,” in *Oneself as Another*, 3-25, trans. Kathleen Blamey, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1990.

¹⁵⁷ Jean Starobinski, “The Problem of Autobiography,” in *Transparence and Obstruction*, 197.

The memory of them is too dear ever to be effaced from my heart. I may omit or transpose facts, or make mistakes in dates; but *I cannot go wrong about what I have felt* (sic) or about what my feelings have led me to do; and *these are the main subjects* of my story. *The true object of my confessions is to reveal my inner thoughts* exactly in all situations of my life. It is the history of my soul that I have promised to recount, and to write it faithfully I have need of no other memories; it is enough if I enter again into my inner self, as I have done till now ¹⁵⁸.

Here, the thoughts (the reflective, rationalizing “self”) and feelings (the affective “self”) get substituted one for the other in Rousseau’s recount. Thus he finds himself in the odd, paradoxical situation of needing to “reenter” his *inner thoughts* in a desperate attempt to reenact and recall his same feelings of old, which amounts to an oblique admission that the feelings he would like to recall belongs to an affective self not longer his. That Rousseau is in despair and that he is secretly aware of his state is explicitly confirmed by Rousseau himself. For, when he is done “telling all” in the *Confessions* he still has the pressing need to continue to attempt to extricate his thoughts from his feelings, and his feelings from his memories, a necessary move if he ever should find the

¹⁵⁸ “Je puis faire des omissions dans les faits, des transpositions, de erreurs de dates ; mais ne me puis de tromper sur ce que j’ai senti, ni sur ce que mes sentiments m’ont fait faire ; et voila dequoi principalement il s’agit, (a). L’objet propre de mes confessions est de fair connoitre exactement mon interieur dans toutes les situations de ma vie. C’est l’histoire de mon ame que j’ai promise (b), et pour l’écrire fidellement je n’ai pas besoin d’autres mémoires : il me suffit, comme j’ai fait jusqu’ici, de rentrer au-dedans de moi.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, 278, Book VII. Although here I am providing the text in the original French, but I am going by the English translation of this passage by Arthur Goldhammer, as it appears in that Starobinski’s study on Rousseau that we have been giving as reference throughout. The English version appears on page 197 of that book.

way to reconcile his affective self with his reflective self, on the one hand, and on the other hand, his “amour propre,” his consciousness of his sense of selfhood with the historical facts of his life. It does not matter that he assures us that: “En me disant, j’ai jouï, je jouïs encore” (“When I tell myself: I felt pleasure, I feel the same pleasure once again”)¹⁵⁹; for in needing to *tell* himself in a vain attempt to recall what he has once felt entails not an act of remembrance but a reflective act through which one “self” seeks to communicate its experience to another “self.” What is going on here becomes plain if we bear in mind that feelings cannot be “told;” they can only be expressed. Then, to confess to a need to tell (myself) in order to feel, or at any rate, to need to remember in order to have access to past feelings— is to bring to the fore the inner division between a self with a capability for “telling,” and “recounting,” and a self with a capability for “feeling;” were this not the case, then there would be no distinction possible between feeling and remembering. This is almost always the case in modern *confessional* autobiographical narrative modeled after Rousseau, even if the self-identity of the “I,” the self-sameness of an “I” under which both selves operate, hides this inner division from the autobiographer’s view. It is no wonder then if Rousseau seems to never gain an understanding, let alone control, over this subjective structure. This is the reason that he would write the *Confessions*, and then the *Dialogues*, and failing there again, the *Rêveries*, where the search for self-knowledge starts anew as if for the first time, a fact already noticed by Starobinski¹⁶⁰. It is as if Rousseau has lost memory of *how he felt* while making his confessions the first time around. Failing to overcome the cleft between

¹⁵⁹ “En me disant, j’ai jouï, je jouïs encore.” Rousseau, *Art de Jouir et autres Fragments*, in *Ouvres Complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Translation by this author; also cited in Starobinski, “The Problem of Autobiography,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, 197.

¹⁶⁰ Starobinski, “The Problem of Autobiography,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, 180.

the two modes of his selfhood and between this and his empirically mode of being, the autobiographical model Rousseau bequeathed to modernity is predicated on a concept of the “Self” as something lost in its own introspective search, which looking attentively and ceaselessly into itself, loses awareness of the empirical world out there.

In comparison, because Torres instinctively avoids the pitfalls to which endless introspective search for old feelings leads, given the structural instability of the affections and emotions, he is careful not to confer epistemic authority on his own capability for feelings. In his understanding, to do that would be to risk never being able to get a firm hold of his self and would amount to thwarting beforehand any possibility of answering the question of the who of the “I am” which is implicit in any autobiographical enterprise, even when this situation is not overtly framed as a question. If Rousseau can declare that knowledge of his self rests on his capability for feeling his heart and if from this he moves to making his knowledge of men dependent on the knowledge of himself *qua* himself¹⁶¹, Torres *already* knows that he knows himself because he feels *all* his organs, his interiority— that is. But he does not make knowledge of his self dependent on it; for Torres’s taking note of his interiority is just a premeditated rhetorical ruse by which he suggests the *practical* way in which he relates to his self; this shows in that he is quick to express his doubts as to any direct, stable relation between feelings his organs and knowledge of his feelings: “the painting is attractive, and colorful and possible, but I know not if it is true¹⁶².” Next, knowing himself as a man who has epistemological access to his interiority, he knows that in this he is like all men “juntos o separados,” therefore everybody knows themselves in the same way; in reality, *outside* autobiography, the

¹⁶¹ “Je sens mon cœur et je connois les hommes” *The Confessions*, book 1, 5.

¹⁶² “La pintura es galana, vistosa y posible, pero yo no sé si verdadera.” Torres, *Vida*, 100.

human self relates to itself practically and existentially. This does not mean a negation of the “uniqueness” of the individuated self; paradoxically, it means only that for Torres, having epistemological access to his interiority does not yield any definitive concrete knowledge of the self as long as, and inasmuch as feelings, affects, moods and passions are what is more essential to our selfhood; for these are drives whose ultimate causes we cannot know. Torres is clear on this:

I have *experienced* all vices and all virtues, and in one single day I feel the propensity to cry and to laugh, and to give and to take, to enjoy and to suffer, and I always *ignore* the *cause* and the impulse behind this contrariety ¹⁶³. (Emphasis added).

The self portrayed in *Vida* is one that exists in an ontologically relation with feelings; a given, because feelings are the immediate, direct consequence of the self’s reaction to the world; that is how Torres can affirm that he has “*experienced* all the vices and all the virtues” and that he knows that he has in himself “all the good and bad emotions and all the commendable and reprehensible leanings” found in all men¹⁶⁴. Since feelings are for Torres always already given ways of reacting to the world and of being-in-the-world, knowledge of the self can be attained, but only as the knowledge of knowing *how* we feel, of knowing *what* kind of reaction our relation with the world elicits from us.

¹⁶³ “*Yo he probado todos los vicios y todas las virtudes, y en un mismo día me siento con inclinación a llorar y a reír, a dar y a retener, a holgar y a padecer, y siempre ignoro la causa y el impulso de estas contrariedades.*” Torres, *Vida*, 101. Although the Spanish “probado” also translates in English as “tasted,” here I have rendered it as “experienced” not only because of the epistemological connection between “to experience,” “to cause” and “to ignore” but also because it makes more syntactical sense, since vices and virtues cannot be literally “tasted.” The suggested meaning then is that Torres has tried to get to the roots of his affective contradictoriness, but doing so has not made him any wiser on the constitution of his selfhood.

¹⁶⁴ “yo tengo [...] todos los buenos y malos afectos, y loables y reprehensibles ejercicios, que se pueden encontrar en todos los hombres juntos y separados.” Torres, *Ibid.* 101.

But since we cannot know why this one feeling and not another is elicited by our relation to the world, to gain more reliable knowledge of the self, one should look outward to the *kind* of relation and to our mode of being in the world in our relation to it. Because, as we have been insisting, feelings cannot explain themselves and neither can they be “communicated,” by way of saying they cannot be made felt to others as the autobiographer senses them, Torres limits himself to acknowledging them as constitutive of his notion of self *because it is in them that awareness of existence originally obtains* and because existential awareness is a foundational movement of consciousness. That is what is at stake in Torres’s directly connecting his affective capability to the inner organs; even if he must do so with a mocking undertone. Since our affects cannot explain themselves, Torres surmises, there is always the danger that the “ingenio” might even decide what our affects are even if at the same time it can say nothing about where they come from and what ultimately governs them: “yo siempre ignoro la causa y el impulso de estas contrariedades.” But, conversely, the “ingenio’s” power to establish what passions, emotions, affects and other expressions of our affectivity are can also be conditioned by the “genio,” that is, by the structure of the affects, a common happenstance, since consciousness is vulnerable to moods¹⁶⁵. At the risk of having to resort to this quotation one more time, given its significance for our present purpose, here we will reproduce it in its original Spanish:

A la mayor o menor altura de los afectos y a la más furiosa o
sosegada expresión de las *pasiones*, llaman genio, natural o

¹⁶⁵“ This is for example, what essentially Heidegger means by saying that [...] ontologically mood [that is, all that in the self constitutes the “irrational,” and therefore the passions] is a primordial kind of Being for Dasein, in which Dasein [Self] is disclosed to itself prior to all cognition and volition, and beyond their range of disclosure.” Heidegger, “Being-in-as-Such,” *Being and Time*, 173.

crianza la mayor parte de la comunidad de las gentes; y si el
 mío se ha de *conocer* por *las más repetidas exaltaciones* del
ánimo, aquí las pondré con la verdad que las *examino* [...]¹⁶⁶

(Emphasis added).

We should make a note that the Spanish *ánimo*, besides the more common meanings of “courage” and “valor,” also carries the meaning of “spirit,” “mind,” and “mood.” Thus, the Spanish etymology of *ánimo* contains in its semantic structure the phenomenological connection to other categories commonly used to refer to “soul” and to “self,” or as Torres would prefer it, to “genio” and “ingenio.” By including “mood” among its range of meanings, a meaning which in the passage above is made all the more specific by the proposition “expresión de las pasiones,” the affective structure is brought to bear on the conditions that make knowledge of self possible. The truth of the self, in Torres’s understanding, is to be a more permanent, constant (“más repetidas”) and therefore a *stable* state of being of the affects. But this truth is only brought to light in self-reflectivity. Self-reflectivity, for its part, although it has the power to bring out the truth of the self, it does so only and inasmuch as it itself is but a passion that has become “stabilized” and constant¹⁶⁷. This situation describes the dialectical relationship that Torres perceives as essential to any conceptualization of selfhood. While in Rousseau selfhood is perceived as internally divided to the point that it can be said to be characterized by the

¹⁶⁶ Torres, *Vida*, 101.

¹⁶⁷ While Reason and passion have traditionally been regarded in the history of thought as total opposite, it is very much to Torres’s distinction that at least one of the greatest thinkers of modernity and one of the most influential philosophers in our own time contradicts this misunderstanding. According to Nietzsche, Reason is not independent from passion; rather, Reason, he believes, is a “system of relations between various passions and desires.” He contends that “every passion” poses a “quantum of reason.” We submit that this proximity between the German and the Spaniard warrants a total revision on almost everything that has been written on Torres so far. See Nietzsche. “Critique of Higher Values,” *Will to Power*, 188. Walter Kaufmann, trans. ed. Vintage Books, 1968.

condition of inner irreconcilability that defines it, in Torres the affective and the reflective manifestations of selfhood coexist in what we would call a *state of self-differentiated reciprocity*. This state could further be described as one in which there is oppositional complementarity between the “selves,” but never outright contradictions that cannot be resolved through the empirical verification of whatever truths about himself the autobiographer in which these selves cohere, lays claims to.

As we stated in chapter 2 (note 63), the propensity of the self to multiplicity should not be interpreted as an inherent inner division representing a challenge to the claim of the fundamental unity of the self. For “multiplicity” only points out that tendency to alterity, to “alteration” and change that Torres himself discovers at the center of his sense of selfhood that makes it possible for consciousness to arise *while* at the same time posing a challenge to any attempts at fixating a self-identity¹⁶⁸. As Torres recognizes it, the immanent contradiction that paves the way for the tendency to a multiplicity of selves does not challenge the basic unity of selfhood; it does not, *since the self remains ontologically self-same through its changes*. In other words, the self always recognizes itself as *such* and not as the “other” through its changes, given that the self always

¹⁶⁸ “The ‘subject,’ says Nietzsche, “is the fiction that many similar states in us are the effect of *one* substratum: but it is we who first created the ‘similarity’ of these states; our adjusting them and making them similar is the fact, not their similarity (—which ought rather be denied—)” I have inserted this quotation here in connection with what was said in note 151 above to illustrate the common mistake spoken of then. Here, what is being denied is not the self, but instead the *plurality of selves* is being posited. So, we have moved from the non-existence of the self to the over-population of selves in us, since every state is regarded as constituting a “self” in its own right. However, since here it is also being recognized that *similarity always occurs*, and we should assume, it always occurs in the *same* way, for otherwise we would not be able to decide that one state is similar or not to another, one condition must be met and must be met constantly in order for it to take place: that *something must remain at the basis* of all the states to recognize the change from one to another. That which remains at the basis, and that has the capacity to posit similarity, is the self. This is the underlying reason that I have been here throughout admitting the multiplicity of “selves” in Torres, while at the same time moving away from envisaging the self as internally divided, which by the way, is how Torres also seems to understand the problem of his selfhood. This ontological differentiation is cardinal to take hold of what distinguishes Torres from Saint Augustine and Rousseau. Nahamas, in “How One Becomes What One Is,” in *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* approaches this problem in a slightly different manner than I do here.

recognizes itself in the “I.”¹⁶⁹ But in positing a contradiction immanent at the center of the self, the “I” is revealed as a synthetic grammatical construct; and it is so whether the autobiographer’s name is “Montaigne,” “Rousseau” or “Torres.”¹⁷⁰ And, since our individual self always appears to us in the form of an “I,” we cannot do away with this contradiction through self-reflection; for *self-reflectivity* understood in the traditional way as contemplative self-examination, for self-reflectivity *is precisely what brings to the fore the immanence of this alterative contradiction*. In so doing, this inner contradiction reaffirms its centrality to the self. *Vida, wherein this problematic is first grappled with, and implicitly recognized as cardinal to autobiographical reflectivity, can be read as an attempt to overcome this contradiction, or at least as an effort to restrict its power, to keep it from turning the autobiographical portrayal into a narrative that mirrors this contradiction*. This, it seems obvious to us, is in substance what derails Rousseau’s *Confessions*, and what makes him move from one autobiographical project to another, only to always come to the realization that the self he seeks to portray increasingly and ceaselessly becomes the embodiment of this contradiction, and that it morphs into an internal division of the self that has no closure. Every time Rousseau asks himself “What am I?” the answer is always already awaiting him: a man internally divided.

¹⁶⁹ Or, at any rate, as Heidegger would want it: The question of the “who” answers itself in terms of the ‘I’ itself, the ‘subject,’ the ‘Self.’ The ‘who’ is what maintains itself as something identical throughout changes in its Experiences and ways of behavior, and which relates itself to this changing multiplicity in doing so.” Martin Heidegger, “An Approach to the Existential Question of the ‘Who’ in Dasein.” *Being and Time*, 150.

¹⁷⁰ The “I” as a synthetic concept is a notion first advanced by Nietzsche. He contends that the “I” is synthetic because expressions of the sort of “I think,” as occurs in Descartes, or “I will,” as occurs in Schopenhauer do not take into consideration many various epistemic events that are posited as a priori in these expressions. For example, in “I think” hides that a decision has been made beforehand that the expression does not account for: we have to first decide that “I think” does not mean “I feel;” so that, we do not really know, nor do we have a way of knowing with *absolute certainty* what is it we are doing when we use that expression. For its part, “I will” hides that in willing we are commanding *and* obeying a will, at the same time; but since obeying presupposes an absence of willing, “I will” does not give an account of this dual process. We are borrowing this concept, but giving it a slightly different meaning, which can be decided from the context. See Nietzsche, “On the prejudices of philosophers.” In *Beyond Good and Evil*, 18, section 19, trans. Marion Faber, Oxford World’s Classics: 1998.

In *Vida*, the struggle to restrict the alterative power of a contradiction immanent to the self, which is the power to produce incessant *alteraciones* in an individual's perception of him or herself, at times reaches moments of dramatization that expose the dialectic at play in the autobiographer's need to bring to closure the clefts in his self-representation brought to view by self-reflectivity. For example:

[...] *If* my [genio] is to be *known from the most frequent* expressions of my being, here I will state the *truth* about it, as it is revealed to me by my own examination [...]¹⁷¹.

(Emphasis added).

As the conditional *if* clause here suggests, self-knowledge attains *only if and only if*—the self is conceived of as one *affect that has become stabilized* and which therefore has gained the power to engage in self-reflective activity. For obviously, for Torres *stability is the condition on which any authority to evaluate the least frequent* (menos repetidas) *manifestations of affectivity is founded; that this is so is clear in that only stability allows for his “examinación” (his self-reflection) to take place*. At the same time, this development is a precondition for self-reflectivity as Torres practices to be possible at all. For since in him reflective self-relation takes not the mode of introspective search but of active questioning of his actions in relation to the presuppositions that orient them, an affect that has become stabilized means that it has overtime become *reason*. Only so can affectivity raise questions to the self, be the self's conscience, that is. Here, then, the unity of the self is recovered and preserved, and the separation between thinking and feeling, passion and examination, and reflectivity and affectivity get erased and confirms

¹⁷¹ “[...] y si el mío se ha de conocer por las más repetidas exaltaciones del ánimo, aquí las pondré con la verdad que las examino [...]” Torres, *Vida*, 101.

Heidegger in saying that every understanding has its mood. Torres's insight above represents a dialectical move in his self-understanding that replicates the dialectic structure intrinsic to the very concept of selfhood as we have been interpreting here throughout.

Now, since in the theory we have put forward above, our affects, passions, moods and the like are born out of our irrational, direct and unmediated reaction to the world of objective facts, the mode of self-understanding that Torres makes evident here contains a kind of hands-on pragmatic wisdom in the way the individual appears before the world that Rousseau, for all his philosophical trials and applications, never reaches, let alone surpasses. For, implicit in this mode of self-understanding is that the internal division that the self experiences, or better put, that what the self experiences as internal division—is the result of an *internalization* of the conflictive relation in which we are placed or “thrown” as individuals relative to the world in which we exist. As a matter of course, “world” here includes and indeed presupposes all other subjectivities that are not “I.” What places the “I” in a relation of conflict with the world, whether this conflict is real or perceived as real, we shall here call *existential determinants*, over which we not always have any control; these include personal, family and/or social history, but also race, gender and nationality and others social and political categorizations on which our individual identities are built. Concerning these existential determinants, Torres himself continually offers proofs of how the identity he acquired before his readers has been foisted on him by forces over which he has no influence whatsoever:

My poverty; my misguided youth; my faulty intellect; my
interest in ridicule subject-matters; my almanacs; my

limericks (“coplas”), *and my enemies*: this all has made me a character out of some novel, a flunky weirdo scholar half-and-half between a he-witch and an astrologer with devil-like looks, and the manners of a sorcerer¹⁷². Emphasis added.

This survey of the existential determinants that have placed Torres in a conflictive relation with the world is certainly compelling. We must make a note of how this survey contains both facts that have their origin in the individual, and those that originate and are grounded on the objective world. But we must also notice that there is *continuity* between ones and the others, since what characterizes them all is the inability of the individual to exert but scant control over them, if any at all. The individual self, even when in conflict with it, remains grounded in the world and his self-identity is acquired out of this being-in-the-world:

To my understanding, I am averagely *irrational* (loco), and a bit liberal, irreverent and apathetic. I am also more or less pretentious, and an incorrigibly dissolute. Because of my being this way, I have always been *loath* to material possessions and to titles and honorifics, and to public recognitions, to ambitions and positions as well as to the

¹⁷² “La pobreza, la mocedad, lo desentonado de mi aprehensión, lo ridículo de mi estudio, mis almanaques, mis coplas y mis enemigos me han hecho hombre de novela, un estudiantón extravagante y un escolar entre brujo y astrólogo, con visos de diablo y perspectivas de hechicero.” Torres, *Vida*, 56.

ceremonies and the flattery of the world¹⁷³. (Emphasis added).

Here, the “irrational” man is not the man who is not able to understand the ways of the world; is he who *chooses himself from understanding*. His self-understanding makes him to reject the ways of the world, since the ways of the world elicit from him only a strong, negative feeling: loathing. On the other hand, the “irrational” rejection of the world confirms him to himself as a man of self-understanding who, to the extent that he is capable of understanding himself, is *the* man of Reason. In this self-portraiture, loathing, the feeling or passion that causes Torres to reject the way of the world is integral with Torres’s mode of being-in-the-world; rejection of the “ways of the world” then is of the essence to his consciousness of being “Torres.” This rejection does not in any way mean retiring from or disengaging the world; it means that as far as possible, since *resolving the conflict in which we are placed in relation to the world is the fundamental task of our lives at the same time that it is what endows with significance to all we do*, engaging the world should be done on one’s own terms. On this depends whether or not we will internalize that outer conflict, and consequently, whether our sense of selfhood will register that internalized conflict as inner division. The difference implied in the selfsameness of the self we encountered at the start reappears and reasserts itself here. Torres does not ignore that mastery of self is possible only when and if this inner division is either overcome or never allowed into being; this is indicated in his recognition of the “genio” as of the same hierarchy than the “ingenio,” and vice versa, both being central to the structure of his selfhood and both being one and the same entity perceived as different from their

¹⁷³ “A mi parecer soy medianamente loco, un mucho libre y un poco burlón, un mucho horgazán, un si es no es presumido y un perdulario incorregible, porque siempre he conservado un aborrecimiento espantoso a los intereses, honras, aplausos, pretensiones, puestos, ceremonias y zalamerías del mundo.” Torres, Vida, 55.

changing functions, as we already noticed in chapter two. And, as Torres declares elsewhere: “My inner self was never deaf to the shouts of Reason¹⁷⁴.” Mastery of self, not surprisingly, is in turn the basis for mastery of our relation with the world. The man who can master himself holds the potential for mastering the world:

[...] and if I have to be frank, I should say that taking into account my upbringing, my poverty and the life of scandalous freedoms I have led, I never believed I could, and neither did I expect me turning out to be so shrewd and so well-read. I am often at a loss to explain to myself how I came to be so learned, and how and why did I end up being *so celebrated by the public*¹⁷⁵. (Emphasis added).

And furthermore:

For twenty eight years I hear my name being bandied about across Europe; people of means come to meet me *and go away believing I am different make than other rational beings*, I am sought after by people of good station and taste [...]. I am honored and invited to thirty or forty tables any given day while in Madrid; wherever I go or stop by I am hosted by priests, barbers, sacristans, and by all sorts of county authorities. At court, I am introduced to foreign dignitaries and pointed out to them as if I were an exotic

¹⁷⁴ “A los gritos de la razón nunca estuvieron sordos los oídos de mi ingenio.” Torres, “*Vida natural y católica: prólogo*” in *Textos Autobiográficos*, 60, ed. Guy Mercadier.

¹⁷⁵ “[...] y si he de decirlo todo, aseguro que nunca creí ni esperé salir tan discreto y tan letrado, pues en acordándome de mi crianza, de mi pobreza y de la libertad escandalosa con que he vivido, me aturdo cómo he llegado a saber tanto, y cómo por qué me he hecho memorable entre las gentes [...]” Torres, *Vida*, 184.

animal or a sacred object, or the Escorial or a historic room.

All over the kingdom I get invited to all kinds of parties, to music and dance halls and luncheons. *I am known all over, and celebrated everywhere*¹⁷⁶. (Emphasis added).

The argument is compelling that the individual who does not internalize his conflictive position with relative to the world gets to be recognized by the world as a self-differentiated part of the world; or as you will, to be a self-differentiated part of the world is what means to be an individual. Thus, unlike Rousseau, by rejecting the ways of the world without however severing his ties with the world, Torres stands out, but not apart; and in this way, he stands as *a* part. We concede that what or how, or which psychological factors intervene in the processes of stabilization of an affect that through gaining reflective capability, is thereby enabled to evaluate and pass judgments on the movements of the self can never become clear and that therefore we cannot learn that from this autobiographical context. At any rate, these are processes that no autobiographical discourse as such can address. But what is of relevance here is that in postulating a sense of selfhood in the making of which affectivity and reflectivity are allotted equal participation, the ordinary opposition between them are dialectically overcome, since we cannot any longer tell one from the other as long as stability (the higher frequency of repetition) is not lacking in an individual's mode of being. For Torres, then, affectivity presupposes reflectivity, and vice versa. For him, the man who reflects upon himself need

¹⁷⁶ “Logro de veinte y ocho años oír por Europa un universal cacareo a mi nombre. Desean ver mi figura las gentes de buena condición y gusto, y creen que soy hombre de otra casta que los racionales [...]” “Tengo en Madrid treinta o cuarenta ollas honradas todos los días, y sus dueños me esperan y reciben con deleite en sus mesas. Por los lugares donde paso o me detengo, me buscan para huésped regalado todos los curas, baberos, sacristanes y los demás senadores de campiñas. En la corte, me enseñan a los forasteros como si fuera animal de Africa, cuerpo santo, Escorial o Sala de Embajadores. Soy convidado a todas las fiestas, músicas, danzas y comilonas de las más vastas ciudades del reino. Y en todas partes soy conocido y requebrajado.” (sic) Torres, “Soplo a la justicia,” in *Textos Autobiográficos*, 107, Guy Mercadier, ed.

not sacrifice either his affects or emotions; but neither must he sacrifice his reflectivity to his emotivity. In this way, the basic inner unity of the self is preserved, while its tendency to multiplicity is left unaltered.

This position is of one piece with Torres's proposition of the basic, indissoluble unity of the *body of spirit*, in his own formulation, and with the equal hierarchy of *genio* and *ingenio* in the structuration of selfhood, as we have already showed. To the extent and degree that the basic unity is preserved thereof, the early contention that in Torres "genio" and "ingenio" were not more than a way for him to gain a conceptually rhetorical grasp on his selfhood is further validated. The striving we detect in *Vida* to overcome the ordinary opposition between affectivity and reflectivity, to the point that we could envision the existence of an *affective reflectivity*, shows the tendency in Torres's manner of thinking in terms of dialectic synthesis, something that we find present in his work, albeit in different guises and performing different tasks the consideration of which fall outside the aims of this study. We cannot stress enough the importance of remarking that in envisioning the possibility of an affective reflectivity operating in some autobiographical accounts, Torres moves farther from Descartes, coming ever closer to a the pragmatic sensualist philosophy of Hobbes and Locke. In establishing that the intellect can apprehends nothing that has not previously existed as sensation, and in placing our sensations at the source of our capacity for self-understanding, for example, these philosophers anticipate the feasibility of a theory of affectivity as we find it sketched in *Vida*¹⁷⁷. Moreover, the dialectical synthesis of reflectivity and affectivity into what we

¹⁷⁷ "There is no conception in a man's mind which hath not, at first, totally, or by parts, been begotten upon the organs of the Sense." Hobbes. "Of Man," *Leviathan*, 85, Part I, Chapter I. C.B. Macpherson, ed. Pelican Classics, 1979. This great Source, of most of the *ideas* we have, depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by them to the Understanding, I call SENSATION." (Sic.) Locke. "Of *Ideas* in general, and their

have called an affective reflectivity suggests that Torres gravitates toward Montaigne as decisively as he moves away from Descartes. For in Montaigne, even as he overly proclaims and celebrates the changing nature of a self whose mode of being in the world is characterized by diversity and multiplicity, he also strives to overcome internal division in order to preserve the basic unity of his sense of selfhood. To need “to suite the story to the hour,” before he “changes” and become “another self” while at the same time asserting that he *habitually* fully partakes in all his doings and makings, that is, that his *whole being is always involved in the wholeness of his being-in-the-world*, as Montaigne avers, even if playfully at times, is to do no differently from Torres himself. Furthermore, to affirm that he does nothing without the concurrence of *all his faculties*, while at the same time conceding that to constantly apply oneself to one’s inclinations, or in other words, that to be always oneself by unbrokenly keeping up to one’s mode of being is tantamount to being a slave to one’s self— is to conceive of his sense of selfhood in equivalent terms to those of Torres’s¹⁷⁸. In view of what this discussion has thus far brought to light, it warrants concluding, if preliminarily, that in Torres, for the first time in our modernity, the self is revealed as immanent complexity.

Original,” *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 105, Book II, chapter I. Peter H. Nidditch, ed. Clarendon Press, 1975.

¹⁷⁸ Michel de Montaigne. “On repentance,” *Essays*, Chapter 2, Book III, 235-244; “On three kinds of relationships,” *Essays*, 250, Chapter 3, Book III, J.M. Cohen, trans. Penguin Books, 1958.

Chapter 1.6

Between Montaigne and Goethe:

Self-Reflectivity and Self-Determination

I believe to have demonstrated above to satisfaction how in Torres awareness of the condition of existentiality of his selfhood culminates in a well-delineated theory of affectivity and how, through an intuitive move of self-understanding, both the unity of his sense of selfhood is maintained in a dialectical synthesis of affectivity and reflectivity. In itself this represents a *novel* element of great consequence in the history of autobiography, since it has the significance of being an example of the level to which the consciousness of the autobiographical subject can be heightened by his own self-reflectivity. And yet and more importantly, it also antes up to levels never before encountered the terms in which self-consciousness both as immediate epistemic self-consciousness that refers to the conscious states of the self, and which is of a theoretical kind, and self-consciousness as *conscience*, as practical knowledge of where one stands in relation to one's actions, can be accounted for in *autobiography*. Understanding this has now enabled us to maintain on even more solid grounds that the *autobiographical* downward turn of the individual that posits his practical relation to himself as the "space" where the truth about his existential mode of being resides, begins with Torres, and not with Rousseau¹⁷⁹. Consistent with the thesis introduced in the first chapter, we are underlining "autobiography" to insist on the

¹⁷⁹ I am aware that, for someone like Foucault, this place should be assigned to Descartes. But hardly so, since Descartes is not really trying to gain self-understanding or truth about his self for its own sake; he finds "truth," but he does it like Columbus discovering America while looking for India. I will insist ad nauseam that only the autobiographer qua autobiographer is ever in search of self-knowledge for its own sake, and this defines the destiny of his or her undertaking. Michel Foucault, "6 January, 1982: first hour," 16-17, in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France-1981-1982*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Frédéric Gros, Picator, 2001.

distinction between, *autobiography* as the name of the narrative of the life of its “subject,” and therefore as a *discourse* that cannot be subsumed by or be dealt with as an appendage to another project, and an *autobiographical act* as the autobiographical *form* any discourse, be it of a philosophical or another nature, can take¹⁸⁰. Consequently, and precisely because this modern downward turn toward the self, toward *that perception of inner centrality reacting to itself and to the world* discovers self-reflective consciousness as affectivity, it is in Torres where we find it treated with the most cogency.

Because, as we have been arguing throughout and as it is largely accepted, the downward turning of the autobiographical subject signals a new shift with respect to previous autobiographical models, and a new, “modern” relation with the truth of the self is thereby sought, it seems to us that the constitution and degree in which the elements and expressions of modernity is achieved in an author should be decided through an analysis of how this turn is arrived at by considering the forces and factors that collude to cause this turn downward. For “downwardness” is not equally attained by all modern autobiographers; or rather, no all downward turns are “modern” in the same way and degree. And so, we should ask whether an autobiographer “turns” downward motivated by

¹⁸⁰ In his oft-cited study on autobiography Willian C. Spengemann also speaks of *forms*; but because for him a “form” has to do with either how the subject approaches his autobiographical account, whether religiously or philosophically, and so on and so forth, or with the treatment that accounts gets from the subject, his use of the concept leads to inconsistency. For instance, while Rousseau’s *Confessions* and Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, a poem, are said to be “philosophical,” *The Scarlet Letters*, clearly a novel, is said to be “poetic;” and, on the other hand, St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, of an unapologetic religious nature, is considered to be simply *the* “formal paradigm.” This is all the more confusing if we remember that Descartes’ *Meditation*, truly an account with a philosophical form, is left out of Spengemann’s considerations, and that Rousseau’s *Confessions*, which together with *Prelude* is classed as “philosophical” is actually critiqued as bringing to a “logical conclusion” the “development of *historical* autobiography,” 62-72. Emphasis added). In our view, the account of the life of an individual can assume an autobiographical form without for that being an autobiography. Despite the subtitle of his book, Spengemann thinks of *treatment*, albeit he does so inconsistently, whereas we think of genre, whatever the approach or treatment brought to an autobiography, *on the condition that it gives the account of the life of an individual in which an effort or intent of self-knowledge is shown*. See Spengemann, (Spengermann), Yale University Press, 1980.

facts *intrinsic* to his self and in response to a personal need for self-knowledge, or he does so in response to *extrinsic* facts or situations, to facts and situations that have nothing directly to do with that typically modern *impulse*, resoluteness, that is, for reflecting on the self which previous to Torres and Rousseau, is already manifested in Montaigne and Descartes, albeit in markedly different modes and to differing purposes. In our view, whether one turns downward for either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation would assumingly come to bear on the epistemic status of the truth obtained thereof and consequently on how the autobiographical undertaking itself will be carried out and subsequently evaluated. To be sure, to the extent that it responds to an acknowledged need of grounding on human reality the narrative that every human life is, this impulse does not have the same meaning nor does it express itself in the same way in Descartes as it does in Montaigne, for example. As we have often said in this study, in Descartes this impulse does not materialize in the *narrative of a life*; rather, what the *Meditations* offers us is the *delineation* or *outline* of the path a man has followed in the pursuit of *reason* and *truth*. And despite the promise of offering a “picture” of a life, the *Meditations* limits its narrative thrust to telling us not more and not less than the *method* of philosophical enquiry to which it responds, calls forth in order to persuade the reader of its cogency, and of the truth expounded thereof. Because no *life as narrative* is offered us thereby, we have said that the *Meditations*, though autobiographical as it is, it is not an autobiography.

The “Self” that the *Meditations* “meditates” on is not Descartes’; for that would have certainly implied getting down to the messy business of narrating a human life, from which Reason’s tidiness is often absent¹⁸¹. It is Montaigne, though, in whom before Torres

¹⁸¹ As we will show latter on this chapter, the fact that Rousseau is always *reacting*, that is, setting himself up as a counter-example to previous autobiographical models be it Descartes’ or Montaigne’s makes more

the impulse to self-reflection and the search for truth of the self expresses itself in its most primordial and pristine form. However, just as in Descartes, only more so, the *Essays* do not offer a cogent narrative of a life, with his beginning, middle and motions *toward* an end as we will find it in Torres, Rousseau and Goethe¹⁸². Indeed, Montaigne does not offer life as in motion even as he more than anybody else who came after or before is precise and punctilious in registering and following the movements of the self with an almost clinical eye. If in Montaigne, in comparison with Descartes, the “Self” is truly the *only* object and subject under consideration primarily for the sake of knowledge of self as such, lacking any narrative thrust whatever, the *Essays* is pure “self-graph-y” or, as you will, “auto-graph;” at any rate it is a profoundly remarkable self-reflection in the traditional conceptualization of this term from where the *bio* is absent. This situation stresses even more than already argued the importance of Torres in the history of modern autobiography. In him alone, we saw above, from a very early age the autobiographical impulse is espoused to a life conceived of as a *progressive narrative*. While in Descartes the “Self” is Reason; while in Montaigne the “Self” exists but only as that which is in constant *passing* and therefore it is something about which, strictly speaking, a “painting” cannot be rendered of, as he says he is doing— in Torres the “Self” can only be taken hold of in a narrative which it itself enact, and that reciprocally is enacted by it, and whose

compelling the argument that his autobiographical outpouring does not respond to a genuinely modern impulse of claiming sovereignty over his life by exercising his right to fashion it through his writing. Hence the originality and authentic modernity we find in Torres’s position.

¹⁸² According to Taylor, one of the outstanding features of what he calls the “culture of modernity,” is the situation in which the modern human subject can “find and identity only in self-narration.” Since identities are to be conceived as continuum through their progressive changes and developments, they should also be conceived as unbroken narratives. Charles Taylor, “The Culture of Modernity,” in *The Sources of the Self: The Making of Modernity*, 289.

meaning it articulates¹⁸³. It is no irrelevant then that of all four authors being considered here only Torres does not compromise the feasibility of his undertaking with a promise that cannot be delivered on, as that of a “painting” of his self is. This does not mean that Torres does not “paint” himself; he indeed does. But he does not allow the truth of his project to hinge either on the finished product or on the promise of rendering a finished product; especially since *the picture that his painting yields is a mockery of the promise of self-portraiture*. But we will get to this in time.

While Torres is comparable to Montaigne in that the autobiographical impulse in him for self-knowledge has no extrinsic motivations, they differ from each other in that while for Montaigne this knowledge does not respond to that modern need of grounding account of human life on human reality, this is how it is for Torres. Montaigne, we have already said, offers strictly philosophical self-reflections instead of an autobiographical “account” in the form of a narrative. Put another way, while in Montaigne the “Self” is Life; in Torres Life is the “Self.” We are quick to point out that Torres’s envisioning of *Self as Life* is exactly how Benjamin Franklin and Goethe would later on understand and undertake the problematic of autobiographical self-representation, as reflected in the names they both give to their respective autobiographies: “Life.” For all the talk about Rousseau being the paramount representative of the modern self, it is worthy of note that both Franklyn and Goethe reject the approach to the study of the self the *Confessions* purports as exemplary with universal validity. This, it goes without saying, has historical

¹⁸³ In other words, because in Torres the “Self” is Life; and “Life” is the “Self” in him autobiographical modernity expresses itself as the impulsive consciousness that, as Taylor puts it, life, “to be lived has also to be *told*” (sic.). And so, Torres captures better, and before others did, the double structure of life as something that “unfolds through events” taking place as life is lived and therefore told, but which at the same time are a crystallization of past events. *Vida*, therefore is, in the most literal and metaphorical sense, a *present*-ation of the passing of the self. Taylor, “The Culture of Modernity,” *Ibid.* 289.

and interpretative attendant consequences, which I hope to address as we move on. In the meantime, it is safe to affirm that Torres's autobiographical project is historically and epistemically situated between Montaigne and Goethe.

Implied in the elucidations above is that before becoming a historical event *in* autobiography, the movement "downward" of the self first appears as *the* philosophical problem *of* the modern autobiographer since this is the first problem to be addressed even *before* the autobiographical undertaken gets on its way— whether he is aware of it or not. Not that it would make any difference one way or another. But we can hardly stress its importance, as the question we posed above concerning the intrinsic or extrinsic motivations for the autobiographical undertaking makes it obvious. In this connection, we should notice how this problem makes itself present in conditioning, whether by expansion or by limitation, the right that either Rousseau's *Confessions* or Torres's *Vida* will have to lay claim to primacy relative to the status of their respective affiliation to modernity, and how this happens even before either autobiographies is enacted. For, *if it is true that the impulse to seek truth and knowledge of the "Self," and the downward movement that corresponds to it in response to that need to ground both knowledge and truth in the facts of human life is a distinctly modern event, then an autobiographical project would be more modern the more it embodies this impulse.* It follows then that the more, that is, the deeper an autobiographer succeeds in materializing this impulse to self-knowledge, the more he expands the conditions under which his claim to modernity can be made and, conversely, the worst he fares in this test, the more limited his conditions are to make this claim. What this modern autobiographical impulse entails and how the

consciousness of a private, individual downwardness gets reflected thereby is most powerfully typified by Torres rather by Rousseau.

As we saw in chapter three, this impulse expresses itself with such a power in Torres that even though he sees no use in writing his autobiography that is intrinsic to the self itself, he cannot but go on and write it; writing about the self, he is saying, is a modern thrust, a feeling or passion that often takes place *against* the self. Writing, reflecting and engaging oneself with one's self is a major feature of the "modern self" and of our modern life. Since subjectivity has become so central to our modern consciousness, both as individuals and as *subjects* in the political connotation of this concept, we cannot but give in to the impulse of getting consciously involved with it. But the power of this impulse is so in Torres that he engages the self even if only to *put into question its importance and centrality* in our social lives by impugning autobiography itself, the genre where reflection of the self is realized, thus announcing the "end" of autobiography right at its very beginning. We already said something about how Torres's attitude towards his own selfhood fits perfectly with the contemporary tendency to dislodge the self from the center of our social cares, and I will have more to say on this. But I now would like to add that in Torres this impulse relates to the problematic of the aims or purpose of autobiography and of the personal aspiration of the autobiographer, as set down by the tradition that starts with Montaigne. In this respect, the question as to why has he written *Vida* is answered by Torres in so many diverse and reciprocally excluding manners, that the answers cancel each other out and he goes so far in resisting to provide an univocal answer, that it is to the reader to choose the answer to this question that best suits him or her. Thus in Torres the question itself is rendered nugatory. Characteristically dismissive

of his reader, Torres starts his autobiography by contemptibly but derisively assuming as valid and good whatever reasons might be attributed to him for fashioning his self into writing, even if, and above all if these hypothetical reasons are in contradiction with each other¹⁸⁴. This manner of going about a justification for his autobiography ends up in no justification at all, not only because too many answers are offered as justification, but because Torres leaves open the possibility that many more could still be added to the list, which is his derisory way of saying that he has no particular purpose in mind and neither does he need a justification for writing about himself. The refusal to provide the reader with a straight, univocal and unequivocal answer to this question points in an essential way to the inherently down-dwelling motivations for bringing *Vida* into life— as opposed to any talks of being “exemplary” in any way, or of proposing itself as a “model,” or even to assisting his significant others in recalling him back to memory when he departs from among the living, as Saint Augustine and Montaigne respectively do before Torres, and as Rousseau will do after their manner. Down-dwelling, or as you will, “indwelling,” I am quick to qualify for the sake of clarity, means that in Torres all autobiographical rationales lead back to the self, whether we understand this notion as the “subject” metaphysically or politically defined, or socially, as the “individual.” In whichever way, his motivations remain intrinsic to himself. In his own evaluation of the reception which the “dismembered body of [his] spirit” got from the public, that is, his evaluation of how his autobiographical outputting, which included his annual “prólogos” and “pronósticos,” but more importantly, the previous installments of his *Vida* —had been interpreted, Torres emphasizes the point of a selfhood that stands as the only, unquestionable ruling principle of his autobiographical undertaking:

¹⁸⁴ Torres, *Vida*, 49 and FF.

Some called despair my decision [of fashioning his life into writing]; others found it to be motivated by my extreme lack of moderation. Still, because in it nobody else but me came out the losing party, belittled as well as vilified, some thought it a shameful scheme aimed to making easy money. But the majority of the people agreed that the whole thing was a stunt calibrated to pretend innocence concerning some shady dealings of my life made out by disaffected chronicles. According to them, I supposedly took advantage of the fact that both accused and defendant were still around to spread confusion among them and, so reduced to silence, they would seem to be the bad guys, while I would be deemed to be reasonable. *As for myself, I could not stop laughing, considering that each and every one of them was so right on the money.* Because, in truth, there was a bit of everything in the bag! If they had taken more time to look closer they would have found other tricks and traps. For, *the truth is, I wrote [Vida] because of all the reasons above and for still many more!*¹⁸⁵ (Emphasis added).

¹⁸⁵ “Algunos capitularon a mi determinación, ya de necesidad urgente, ya de codicia rebozada; and otros decían que era gana pura de coger cien doblones por los ardidés de una trampa incurable, porque en ella era yo solo el facineroso, el ofendido y el robado; y los demás discurrieron que fue una mana cautelosa para demostrar la inocencia de algunos pasos y acciones de mi vida, que andaba historiados por cronistas desafectos y mentirosos, y que quise aprovecharme del tiempo en que estábamos vivos los acusadores y el acusado, para que, a la vista de su confusión y su silencio, quedase aprobada my moderación y su abominable ligereza. Yo me reía de ver que todos acertaban, porque, si he de decir la verdad, de todo tobo la viña; y si se han detenido a buscar (sic.) hubieran encontrado con otras intenciones y cautelas (sic.), porque es cierto que yo la escribí por eso, por esotro y por lo de más allá.” *Vida*, 109.

So we see that while the reasons offered by Rousseau points *outward and away from himself*, in Torres the exact contrary occurs. And while in Rousseau the autobiographical rationale is straightforward, almost academic, and to some degree depersonalized, in Torres the justification for the autobiographical enterprise becomes a proclamation of radical individuality, in that he feels he need no justification at all, and owes no one an explanation for committing himself to writing his life. This is not to say that he refuses to justify his actions, something that he does not, if it comes to it. But he feels that he relates to his life in the manner of personal ownership as “my-life” and “myself,” he is free to do with it as he likes and to portray it as he pleases. We will come back to this problem later. Writing his autobiography is for Torres the best proof he could offer that for him Life is “Self;” and that “Self” is Life: because he *is* his self, in writing about himself he takes possession of his life; and conversely, because he is in possession of himself he can do with his life as he pleases. In the end, he says, he wrote *Vida* because “[...] to my knowledge, my life is mine,” and therefore he can depict it “according to my liking and wishes [...]”¹⁸⁶. The same autonomy he would exercise in his mode of living his empirical life, which is the same as saying freedom of agency to his being in the world and toward the world is replicated, or if you will, extended to the endeavors of self-life-writing¹⁸⁷. Because *autobiography* is for Torres an attribute of his individuality, in *Vida*

¹⁸⁶ “[...] que hasta ahora mi vida es mía, y puedo hacer con ella los visajes y transformaciones que me hagan el gusto y la comodidad [...]” Torres, “Introducción,” *Vida*, 58.

¹⁸⁷ The question of individual autonomy is one of the leading themes of this study, as it could only be; it will therefore occupy us throughout as there is much of importance to be said about it in relation to Torres. In the meantime, we should hold fast to the insight that, although autonomy arguably is an essentially political concept, in order for it to be self-sustaining in the empirical world it must either give way or be made possible by material forces that are not in themselves political but material, that is, by economic forces. That is to say, in order by individual autonomy to be possible and self-sustaining, the individual must be in a position to be materially independent from those forces that would pose a threat to his autonomy; otherwise he can only *aspire* to it. With this in mind, one could safely say that *Torres invents the modern concept of autonomy*, since he not only provides for himself the material basis on which his private autonomy will be

the literal meaning of the term is wholly realized. Torres's position before the autobiographical enterprise then stands in stark contrast with a situation where elements foreign to the task of self-reflectivity are recognized as *decisive*, which amounts to saying, as directly and indirectly determinant of its outcome. That is the conclusion to which some of the most uncontested authorities on Rousseau arrive to with a tinge of hesitation, validated as they are by historical truth. Both Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond agree that:

The *Confessions* has a prehistory that goes back much farther than it is commonly believed. One should stop to consider two events that not without reason have been held to be *decisive*: [Rousseau's] crisis of toward the end of 1761 and which gave way to his four *Letters to Malesherbes* (sic.). It was then that Rey, Rousseau's editor in Holland, wrote to him that "One thing that *I have been contemplating having for a long time now...* would be your

sustained, but *he himself is the source of that material possibility*; first among modern writers in making himself the center of his *authorship*, his life and his writing are precisely what opens up the material possibility of his individual autonomy. His life, and his writing, which in actuality is *that* life, are then in him coterminous with individual autonomy. His life, his Being-in-the-world and his mode of being in it are defined by the fact that he makes his living out of it. This interpretation is the more compelling and is duly backed up by the consciousness exhibited in many key moments of Torres's work where he overly and unabashedly declares the material motivations for his writing activities and in his denunciation of the code of silence—the "ethics"—of most writers about their own material need to write, which according to the ethics of their profession they are not supposed to admit, but defer and deny. This denunciation must be said in passing, is the unacknowledged source of the criticism, gossips, put-downs and dismissals he suffered and against which he struggled, as Goethe would have to do after him; it is also one of the many reasons, one would guess, that even today he is held in not so much esteem among some scholars. See for example Torres, *Vida*, pp. 71; 72; 143; 183 and 190 and 224, among others. For a rich discussion of the place of material productivity in the agency of individual autonomy in the eighteenth century, see Jürgen Habermas, "Social Structures of the Public Sphere: The Basis Blueprint," see also 'Civil Society as the Sphere of Private Economy: Private Law and Liberalized Market,' in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 27-51 and 73-79 respectively. See also Peter Gay, "The Politics of Decency: Toleration, a Pragmatic Campaign," *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 398-401.

autobiography.” [...] The other event was the all the hearsays and rumors caused by Voltaire’s anonymous publication of *Sentiment Citoyens*, his injurious libel against Rousseau¹⁸⁸.

(Emphasis added).

It is not surprising then if the autobiographer who finds justifications outside himself and away from himself for telling the history of his life were to be found out to make the meaning of his narration and the truth of his selfhood *dependent* on extrinsic factors, as it is the case with Rousseau, and that by contrast, Torres, who allows forces independent of himself little if any place in his narrative, were to be found out to offer an account of his life and to produce an account of selfhood that is accountable to no one but himself. This is what, for example, Starobinski oftentimes also finds to be the decisive mechanist at work in the *Confessions*, as illustrated by Rousseau’s habit of always allowing extraneous and exogenous reality to interpose between his *sense* of selfhood and himself, and for discharging himself of responsibility for his failure to make subjective “truth” correspond to objective reality. Indeed, much of the Starobinski writing on Rousseau can be interpreted as a highly coherent but unintended oblique undermining of any claim or proclaim to the modernity of Rousseau’s elaboration of his sense of selfhood. Accordingly, Starobinski cannot but take note of how Rousseau’s mode of being is characterized by both a permanent feeling of being hostage to foreign powers that compel him to “betray his true self,” and by a readiness to surrender his identity to those powers, and to adopt as his own an “alienating” identity, in the most rigorous meaning of the

¹⁸⁸ Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, “Les Confessions,” In *Oeuvres Complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, xvi. Bernard Gagnebin, Marcel Raymond.

word¹⁸⁹. In the end, the initial promise Rousseau makes of embarking himself on the unprecedented task of producing the likeness of a man in all the truth of his nature, on which the chance of success of his whole autobiographical project depends, collapses, and one is forced to acknowledge that Rousseau cannot “elucidate his nature,” and that it is to his “others,” to those who according to Rousseau allegedly do not know themselves as he himself does—to whom the responsibility is relegated to determine, and therefore to *render* the portrait of him Rousseau himself cannot¹⁹⁰. Here the autobiographical primacy easily accorded to Rousseau is revealed to be historically untruth not only in that others had *twice* already attempted that before him, as already shown, but because of something far more damaging altogether: the truth of Rousseau’s self turns out to be something only the Other can definitively assert¹⁹¹. Moreover, this manner of proceeding has incalculable consequences for both the philosophy of the “modern subject” envisaged as the modern “Self,” and for the politics of the modern subject envisaged as the “modern individual.” For what is at stake here is not only the relinquishing of the quest for individual freedom, but also the curtailing of the agency that autobiographical self-reflection has for the individual sovereignty and philosophical self-determination; the two pillars on which the aims of the Enlightenment rest and which also happens to be the two major points on which Torres never makes any concessions to powers not originating in himself.

¹⁸⁹ Starobinski, “Solitude.” In *Jean-Jaques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, 49-61.

¹⁹⁰ Starobinski, “The Problem of Autobiography,” *Jean-Jaques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, 188.

¹⁹¹ “Rousseau thus ascribes to his readers the task of making a unity of multiplicity,” Starobinski, “The Problem of Autobiography,” 189. And also: “Change [in Rousseau] is experienced as the imposition of a new law by an outside authority. The self is not in control of its metamorphoses.” Starobinski, “Solitude.” *Jean-Jaques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction* 53.

Chapter 1.7

The Enlightened Self:

The Outward Look for Self-Determination

By the measurements set down in the preceding chapter, because of his efforts at autobiographical self-knowledge by and large are far more independent from any extrinsic factors than Rousseau's, it has seem to us Torres better represents the modern attitude concerning the question of selfhood. This would mean that Torres is to himself a more decisive agent of self-determination of his individual through the types of relationships into which he enters, be they political, social, religious or cultural; he is more and more decisive a fighter for personal independence than Rousseau. Not only does he struggle for maintaining himself independent from any institutions and party and ideology, the Church included; he goes to the extreme of making his own life the source of his main income to continue to live. As he proudly proclaims, he "makes a living out of his Life," something more than a symbolism of his personal independence; it is the factual statement of the prototypical self-made man¹⁹².

This, of course, is a crucial marking of the characteristics of modern autobiography not to be glossed over. For, since Torres autobiographical self-determination stands more independently than Saint Augustine's, and for that matter, Rousseau's, relative to external factors in the account he gives of his life his self reports no inner division. Having no imperatives and demands coming from outside that he must submit to in order to satisfy, his life accounts stands accountable only to himself in an essential way. This is the

¹⁹² "[...] y si te parece mal que yo me gane la vida con mi Vida, ahórcate, que a mí se me da muy poco lo de la tuya." Torres, *Vida*, 50

position, unique to Torres, which forms the basis of the politics and the ethics of *Vida* whose problematic will occupy us in parts of this chapter, and which will be subsequently taken over again as we continue our research. I will continue then by remarking that, concerning what I would tentatively call the politics of the modern self implied in the position that both Torres and Rousseau respectively assumes towards the phenomenology of interiority, or as you will, of the turn “downward” to the human self— Torres and Rousseau appear to move in geometrically opposite direction from each other. This is made obvious in that, whereas the author of the *Confessions* attempts to solve the inner contradictions of a divided self by turning inside in search of explanations for his experience of a fundamental discordance between his own sense of selfhood and his mode of being in the world, between what he perceives as his true self and how it is actuated through and *in* his interrelation with the other—the author of *Vida* tends to *look outwards* to verify the nature of the fundamental agreement he experiences between his mode of being in the world and his sense of self. Here we must point out that whereas in Rousseau autobiographical examination seeks to find closure to his inner division and is therefore impelled by this very task to probe into his innermost over and over again in search for a terra firma on which to reaffirm to himself the truth of his own self, in Torres it is just a question of ascertaining and asserting the essential unity of this selfhood as experienced in, and in spite of, the natural tendency that he recognize in the self to changes and to multiplicity.

But here we are obviously confronting on the one hand the double paradox involving a self that, like Rousseau’s, is compelled into introspective activities by external events that *reveal him to others* as lacking in inner unity, to find ways to successfully

grapple with its inner dispersion and fragmentation, and in the other hand, the paradox of another self, Torres's, whose introspective gaze *reveals him to himself* as fundamentally predisposed to alterations and changes and which in a manner of speaking, directs him to look outward for evidence and ways of verifying that the fundamental unity of self was preserved. That explains why, whereas Rousseau *must* sever his relation with friends and enemies, and *must* fleet the world, and *must* withdraws inside himself to make of the *search* of the self into his only connection with those forces compelling him to explain himself *to* them, Torres even while opposing the ways of the world, as we showed earlier, he never cuts himself off from the world as such¹⁹³. He affirms his difference and individuality before the world but does not withdraw from it because he needs the world in order to continually reassert his individuality on the basis of the differences that he recognizes in his mode of being in the world, that is, in his sense of selfhood. And so, for Torres, the world—friends, relatives, readers, antagonists, institutions, i.e. university of Salamanca, and the establishment of academic knowledge—constitutes the background against which his individuality can be displayed, continually evaluated and taken stock of.

¹⁹³ Previous to committing himself to writing the *Confessions* Rousseau wrote his four *Letters to Malesherbes*; it is in these letters where he already began to produce his account for putting distance between himself and his friends and society at large. His main argument in these letters is a specious: that he cannot be himself when among others. We call this argument specious because under most normal circumstances it is precisely among others that we would know if we are being “ourselves.” These letters, of course, anteceded his giving away his five children, and the subsequent libel Voltaire published against him denouncing his action. Now, this already indicates a tendency in Rousseau to cut himself off from the world, a tendency that most likely was always with him and that did not just happened as the result of the shame to which the Voltaire libel no doubt puts him to. See, “Lettres à Malesherbes,” in *Oeuvres Complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 1131-1147. It is worth noticing that the interpretation we are offering here goes contrariwise to an interpretation in which the separation and division of a man, or for that matter, a woman from the world or the “totality of the social body” is seen as a prerequisite for their constitution as “subjects,” from where the notion arrives that the self is preceded by division of one form or another. This is the interpretation offered, for example, by some who uncritically accept Foucault theorization of the process of “subjectivation” of the self through autobiographical confession. But, if the self is beforehand separated from the world, it is hard to see to what is the self *subjected* to; and neither does this manner of interpretation makes patent wherefrom does the thrust toward division come, from the not-constituted subject, or from the world?. See Huck Gutman's “Rousseau's Confessions,” in *Technologies of the Self: Seminar with Michel Foucault*, 106.

Thus for him, losing the world would be akin to losing his sense of self, for in *Vida* the self is inherently linked to the world.

There is no doubt that Torres, being less responsive and less *subjected* to exogenous alienating powers than previous or posterior autobiographical models, namely, the Rousseau model—accounts for what perhaps is the predominant feature of *Vida*. For, compared to *Confessions*, *Vida* is nothing if not *poor* in introspective interrogation; in it the self is not submitted to the torturous, painfully never-ending kind of examination and analysis that we find in the *Confessions* precisely because his is not beholden to outside powers. For it is exactly in this respect that Rousseau's *Confessions* stands in the same relation to the authority of the world over him that Saint Augustine's is to a divine authority above him. Further, this explains too that, compared to both *Confessions*, *Vida* is also sparse in *discursive self-reflectivity*; the suggestion is that *the need to engage in intensive narrative of self-reflection is an imposition on autobiography*, or rather, on the autobiographer, whose account is *accountable* to the powers he or she is beholden to. This is another point in which Torres anticipates both Goethe's *From my Life: Poetry and Truth*, and Benjamin Franklin's *Life*. It is because autobiographical self-reflectivity as it is practiced by Rousseau involves the problematic of the relationship of the autobiographer to the power of recognizable—albeit not necessarily *recognized*—authority that we have called this the politics of the modern self. As such, the strategies resorted to deal with this problematic are political in nature, even if they do not appear to be so at first. What determines the modernity of an autobiographical project then, in our view, has as much political as it does philosophical and historical implications. From this perspective too, *Vida* can be regarded as a more genuine representative of modernity than Rousseau's

Confessions. A preliminary conclusion from this seems to be that indulging in self-reflective subjectivity is the price the autobiographer pays for failing to radicalize his or her individuality and for failing to defend the right to this radicalization in the face of the forces that threaten the *impulse toward self-assertiveness* characteristic of the modern self. And this is a price paid willy-nilly by practically all autobiographers who came after Torres and who unlike him do not move away from the confessional model of autobiography. We will come back to this theme later on.

We gather then that self-reflectivity inasmuch as it is *introspectively subjective*, which is the Christian model set down by Saint Augustine and practiced by Rousseau—does not by itself defines what is truly modern in an autobiographical project, and this for the very reason offered above: because it takes place under compulsion. Since in introspection of this kind we meet an internalized authority that might not be recognized as such, it is only in this sense that one would *not be absolutely wrong* to hold, as some do, that autobiographical self-reflectivity participates in the construction of the self and that autobiography, to the extent that it is a form of confession, constitutes a “technology” of the self.¹⁹⁴ As already indicated, in introspective subjectivity self-reflectivity happens as

¹⁹⁴ As it is well-known, this is a philosophical interpretation that originates in Foucault and which has largely dominated autobiographical studies in America, and almost everything else in the humanities for the last decades. The present study on Torres rejects this manner of viewing the relationship that the autobiographer establishes with himself in writing his life because Torres is nothing if not adamant in his rejection of any outside authority that it can be said he internalizes. But we reject it also because we realize that the trend represented by Foucault and uncritically received by many, does not distinguish between the “self” as phenomenological representation of the actual individual, and the “self” as a concept of thinking the individual phenomenologically. For, the “actual individual” is *anterior* to any autobiographical, “technology” for the construction of the self. Something else altogether would be to say that the *concept* of the “Self,” that is, our understanding of what the Self can be autobiographically constructed, as it, in effect is. Because this distinction is missing or is not insisted enough on, autobiography is commonly read as a text in which the “subject” makes himself into the “object” in the processes of his self-reflectivity. But as we have seen elsewhere in this study, this corresponds to a traditional manner of viewing the subject-object relation and misses the point that, as we said above in the case of existential philosophy of the brand purported by Heidegger, autobiography can also be interpreted as an effort, often successful, of overcoming this opposition. For an outstanding example of the Foucault reception on this topic, see Huck Gutman’s

if though in the name of something other than the “Self.” Under this political situation — political, since it is the problematic of power and authority that is at play here—no knowledge of the self obtains; or rather, the knowledge of the self that obtains under this situation cannot be reliable knowledge, since the self lacks the *freedom to know itself*. And so, introspective subjectivity facilitates knowledge, but as if under *duress*. So, it is not in how much about him or herself an autobiographer tells that autobiographical truth resides but on the condition under which this truth is produced. Here, the epistemic nature of autobiography is overly made manifest and we can see that, as with all epistemic activity, our knowledge of entities, whatever their kinds, is conditioned by the situation that made possible this activity in the first place. The refusal to engage in endless, excruciating excavation into the innermost of the self, and the refusal to “bare it all” observable in Torres and later in Franklin and Goethe no doubts takes these considerations as its basis. But, if these considerations appear in Torres *unstated* and as a matter of fact, that is, as something that need not reflecting upon, this is not the case with Goethe; for Goethe minced no words in his rejection of subjectivity, and therefore of introspection as belonging to a tendency to “decline and dissolution;” and neither does him mince words in attributing the fixation of modernity on its own subjectivity to a decadent undertow running through modernity¹⁹⁵. It is within the perspective that Goethe’s uncompromising

“Rousseau’s Confessions,” 99-120, in *Technology of the Self: Seminar with Michael Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin e.al. 1988. See also Linda Anderson, *Autobiography*, Routledge, 2007.

¹⁹⁵ Goethe. *Conversations with Eckermann*, 101, trans. John Oxenford, North Point Press, 1984. Also, in Karl Joachim Weintraub, *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography*, 375. An observation is de rigueur here. Ortega y Gasset is certainly wrong when in *What is Philosophy* (pp. 149) he says the Spaniards (and accordingly, all Mediterranean peoples) had not reached “complete” modernity, whatever this means, because they had neglected the problem of “subjectivity,” which he says, as an idea is “the basic principle of the entire modern era.” Obviously, this is not how Goethe saw into this problem; but all to the contrary. Ortega is clearly confusing modern philosophical *discourse* on modernity with *historical* modernity; self-consciousness of being a modern “subject” with the “subject” itself. In any case, it is odd that in a time when the “death” of the philosophical subject was already sought and celebrated by

rejection of subjectivity opens up that we must read Torres's abstention from engaging in a narrative that does not spare any details of his private or public interaction with the world, or from submitting his self to the almost molecular dissection preferred by Rousseau, so reminiscent of the Christian methods of purging the soul. And in Torres's declaration that his life, that is— his self, is something that “neither living nor dead” deserves to be remembered we should read an even more radical rejection of subjectivity than we would encounter after him. The fact that as he declares, *Vida* is written *towards* his death, that is, for that time when his *self has lost its subjectivity* and he is not longer a subject in any of the many connotations of this concept, is the most clear and outright out-of-hand rejection of subjectivity ever uttered from the realm of autobiography¹⁹⁶. And Torres is nothing if not intuitively prescient when, even as he rejects introspective subjectivity, he at the same time is steadfast in his position of maintaining his engagement with the world, as we indicated in our earlier discussion of this theme. For, again according to Goethe, the progressive man, that is, the man produced by progressive ages, involves himself with “objective tasks;” therefore, to exist as if trapped inside one's own introspective subjectivity, which is both result *and* consequence of shutting the world out from ourselves, as Rousseau does, is for Goethe a hypochondriac inclination in the typically “modern” individual¹⁹⁷.

Since introspective subjectivity yields no reliable knowledge of self for the reason that autobiographical introspection is dictated by outside powers that have been internalized, to turn away from it is tantamount to a rejection of these powers; in itself,

philosophy, after Nietzsche and Heidegger, there would be someone proposing a deeper involvement with the “dead.” This is another *negative proof* in favor of Torres's modernity.

¹⁹⁶ *Vida*, 54-56.

¹⁹⁷ Goethe. Karl Joachim Weintaub, “Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,” 375. *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography*.

moving away from it constitutes a thrust for the preservation of one's individuality. As an alternative, the need arises to implement what we could call an "outrospective" move: a move *toward oneself as the Being-in-the-world who understands itself as Being-with-Others*; this the *looking outward* strategy we spoke of above that more or less allows for an objective and as it were, "tridimensional" inspection of the self. Through this strategy, the truth of the self acquires the status of observable facts, paving the way for more or less *controllable* methods of verification of the truth of one's self. Looking outward is then an interactional strategy in that it opens up possibilities of seeing oneself *as* others might see us, but also and more importantly, looking at oneself is something done as if the self were constitutive of the third-person point of view. This is the presupposition on which Torres operates:

Habitually, I am easy-going and approachable; I am humble before my superiors and accessible to my inferiors, and more often than not, outspoken with those of my same social rank. I am a man of few words, careful and moderate [...] I find myself perfectly at home among all sorts of people, regardless of sex and personal destiny [...] ¹⁹⁸. (Emphasis added).

Following this strategy of looking outward toward his mode of being in the world a fundamental truth of his self is immediately brought forth: his self remains self-same through his changes, that is, through his experiences in its relation to the world, and this self-sameness is apprehended as *constancy* in the mode of engaging the world, as the

¹⁹⁸ "Soy regularmente apacible, de trato sosegado, humilde con los superiores, afable con los pequeños, y las más veces, desahogado con los iguales. En las conversaciones hablo poco, quedo y moderado [...]. Hállome felizmente gustoso entre toda especie, sexo y destino personal [...]" Torres, *Vida*. 101.

adverb that opens up this clause states. Consciousness of inner unity then is not produced by means of a self-reassurance of a permanent state of feeling through constant, incessant introspection, as in Rousseau; rather, any given state of feeling needs to be reassured as being constant in action, or rather, interaction, with something other than the reflective subjectivity of the self. Perceived inner unity, then, since it must be verified in interaction with the subjectivity of others, makes itself open to inspection from *outside*; actually, through this relation *inspection* gets revealed as also another way of looking *in* as much or to the same extent that introspection can be “*outrospective*,” looking out towards oneself in the world, that is, and the inner truth of the self can thereby somehow aspire to be objective truth. But, because he is cognizant that *feeling changes* the self, in Torres, unlike in Rousseau, perceived inner unity is not guaranteed by a mythical affective memory that pretends not to have been affected by its own recollection of emotions, or that, were this possible, the mere act of recalling the *content* of those emotions would not change the self. For Torres, if perceived unity of self should aspire to something even vaguely resembling objective truth; if it should not be just an empty act of self-willing, it must make itself available to independent verification, to verification from *outside* the self; and his has a method for it. When in doubt as to the status of the truth of inner unity, Torres “*sonsaca*” his consciousness; that is, not only does he leave his interiority (feelings and emotions and thoughts) open for *inspection*, for looking *into* it; he lures it *out*, he makes his consciousness *come out*, makes it *show itself to him*. But this showing itself to him is of course only possible by proceeding as if though Torres has placed himself *outside his consciousness*, so that he can better *extract* its content. To extract, lure, force out: the gamut of meanings of “*sonsacar*” in the manner employed here describes an “I” that, for

the sake of impartiality and objectivity, momentarily adopts the third-person viewpoint in an effort to access its content, that is, what is kept “inside” its own consciousness. But, the data yielded by extracting the content of consciousness with the self must be put to further examination by the “I” from its temporary third-person viewpoint; in that examination the meaning of the content of the consciousness must be replicated, must be *falsified* by the meanings of the *actions* of the “I” in the world in its relation to others, which amounts to saying by the materialization of consciousness in the realm of the spatiotemporal. Torres, he declares, at the same time that he “sonsaca” his consciousness, also “pregunta,” that is, he examines, questions, interrogates and analyses his actions in relation to his thoughts, emotions and feelings:

I forced my consciousness out and interrogated my actions.

But I *did not perceive in either* the slightest indication that could deface *the truth that I have held before those I care about [...]*¹⁹⁹. (Emphasis added).

So we see that the truth of the self, to the extent that it is verifiable, that is, capable of rationalization, is not attained in the insulated precinct of solitary introspection; the self-reflective operation in which Torres finds himself involved, and in which the “I” must assume the third-person viewpoint, illustrates the extent to which practical self-relations presuppose a relation to others; here, what we call the “Self” then is rediscovered as a structure of complex relations, as we have been arguing. Self-reflectivity, Torres shows, is an intersubjectivity operation, a point missed in the assumption that all autobiographical undertaking must be construed as introspective subjectivity; and he also shows that

¹⁹⁹ “Sonsaqué a mi conciencia y pregunté a mis acciones, y no percibí en ellas la más leve nota que pudiese afeár el semblante de la verdadera ley que he profesado con todos los míos...” Torres, *Vida*, 196.

introspection as practiced by Rousseau must be discarded if a way to the closure of inner division should be found, or if its underlying cause will be pinpointed. At the very least, *Vida* suggests that introspection does not guarantee healing from the perception of internal division of the self; instead it shows that it is in the correspondence between self-consciousness and self-realization, the *practical* way of being in the world, which is the condition for intersubjectivity, where unity of self can reside. For, *only then can the "I" have a glimpse of what is going on "inside" itself; for only the correspondence between the content of consciousness and the meaning of the actions of the "I" gives a clue into the mode of being of the self and only so does the status of its truth become apparent.* In this self-reflective movement, how the self relates to itself and how does it relate to the world is also revealed, first of all, to the self itself. It is precisely in the status that his truth attains through this structure that the self becomes an individual inserted in the totality of individualities and that it can be recognized as such. So, that the self can be perceived as possessing inner unity is the *effect* of the experience of constancy and stability in the relation of the individual with the totality of individualities, oneself included.

Since we can only relate to the world socially, that is, we can only concretely relate to a world conceived as a web of infinite human makings, like Goethe, who believed that knowledge of self means knowing how one stands "towards your equal and towards the world"²⁰⁰," Torres is also aware that his self is more accessible, and that therefore can best be known to himself from his reactions while interacting with a worldly, socially construed reality:

²⁰⁰ Goethe, "Maximen und Reflexionen, 586, quoted in Karl Joachim Weintraub, "Johann Wolfgang von Goethe," *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography*, 375.

I treat all my servants as personal companions and friends, and since my esteem for them is sincere, I lament that luck has assigned them the unpleasant job of being under my service. (...) We all eat the same meals; we are all sheltered under the same roof, and their clothing, neither in the quality nor in the design is of a better make than my own²⁰¹.

Thus, in Torres the self, conceived a being-with, is ultimately understood as a subjectivity that knows itself only in relation with other subjectivities and consequently as an intersubjectivity that, as both Hegel and Heidegger saw it, and as it was reported as *lived* by Goethe, can take hold of itself only while and through interacting with the world. Since in Torres consciousness of self obtains through being in the world, he perceives himself as an aggregate of everything the self enters in relation with, and can therefore say that, “Like all men that ever were, I have bits of everything in myself and I come from everywhere²⁰².” The consequences that such a realization has for a theorization of the “I” as *linguistic synthesis* of a web of social, interpersonal and historical structures is enormous; for indeed, it points out toward a reworking of the problematic of the origin of the self as subject in which no self-reflectivity is uniquely or directly involved. Since the *I* is whoever says “I,” as it oft-said, *I* is me and also everybody²⁰³. In Torres, what began as self-consciousness perceived as affectivity develops into social consciousness, and further,

²⁰¹ “Trato a mis criados como a compañeros y amigos, y, al paso que los quiero, me estoy lastimado que los haya hecho la fortuna la mala obra de tener que servirme. [...] Todos comemos de un mismo guisado y de un mismo pan, nos arropamos de una misma tienda, y mi vestido, ni en la figura ni en la materia se distingue de los que yo les doy.” Ibid. 104.

²⁰² “Yo tengo de todo, y en todas partes, como todos los demás hombres [...]” Ibid. 67.

²⁰³ For a critical approach to Lacan’s influence in the postmodernist treatment of the question of the emergence of the “Self,” see Paul K. Kugler, “Jacques Lacan: Postmodern Depth Psychology and the Birth of the Self-Reflective Subject,” in *The Book of the Self: Person, Pretext, and Process*, 173-184, eds. Polly Young-Eisendrath, James A. Hall, New York University Press, 1987.

into *social conscience*, as we have just seen. But it does so without relinquishing the individuality of his self to the world: “*I feel* much better and more comfortable on my own and looking after myself than *I feel with anybody else*²⁰⁴.”

Now, the specular movement we just discussed, where the “I” is said to momentarily assume the third-person viewpoint to, as it were, have access to the innards of the self, does not necessarily reintroduce into autobiography the traditional subject-object division that we have early said is ipso facto overcome in autobiographical discourse. For, the assumption of the third-person point of view by the “I,” as long as it can be verified only linguistically, is a rhetorical figure, namely, a spatiotemporal metaphor, as all specular instances of language are: the self does not have an “inside” and an “outside” that the self itself can come in and out of. That we are dealing with a rhetorical instance is made clear by the fact that the operation under discussion could only be formulated in propositions such as “the ‘I’ examines the ‘I;’ “the ‘I’ moves out of the ‘I;’ “the ‘I’ sees the ‘I,’ and so on and so forth. But these formulations do not have place in ordinary language precisely because they are nonsensical. It is for this reason that reflective subjectivity can only be correctly understood existentially, which is something that takes place in autobiographical discourse whether one knows it or not and which precisely delimits at a linguistic level, the boundaries between itself and any other forms of self-writing. From this perspective, the problematic of self-reflectivity is not envisaged as one in which, on the one hand, we have the “Self,” and in the other hand, we have its actions —the self-reflective moment itself assumedly being one of those actions— from which the self would be separated by an imaginary distance. That in autobiographical discourse the traditional subject-object is canceled out means precisely that autobiography

²⁰⁴ “...yo me siento mejor y más acomodado conmigo que con otro.” Ibid. 104.

is a unique type discourse in which the “Self” is conceived and dealt with as an Existent, *as living being that exists in ontological, self-reflective relation with itself, for the reason that for an individual his Life is his Self, and his Self is his Life*, as expressed in a capacity to seek correspondence, i.e. *truth*, between self-reflectivity itself, and the actions of the self. There is no other way around this. The self, the subject, the individual—is its actions, and it is constituted by them, for there are no actions apart from a self-reflective entity; and conversely, there are not self-reflective entities without actions, “self-reflection” being first among all its actions. And, since the self is at every moment involved with a type of action or another, it is at every moment involved with itself in one capacity or another, even when its actions involve the other. If Torres can say that he knows himself downwardly, or if you will, “inwardly,” it is because he knows himself outwardly, toward-the-world; both state of affairs are in him implicitly related and dependent on one another. Thus, Torres’s averment we discussed in chapter 3, as to the effect that he knows himself because he lives inside himself, in addition to what was established there, must also be taken to mean that he exists in self-relation with himself and that this relation is punctuated by self-reflectivity not only because he understands himself through his actions but because his self-reflectivity allows him to reflect on his actions all at once²⁰⁵. This position acquires its full philosophical thrust if we concede that *existence can but be the total summation of infinite actions of the self*, both as the “subject” and as the “individual.”

In this respect, Torres was already more advanced than some modern Spanish

²⁰⁵ “Concédame la piedad de V. Exc. hacer la siguiente y brevísima pintura de mis trabajos y mis divertimientos, *que yo estoy más cerca de mí que mis contrarios, y podré formar más verdadera la relación [...]*.” Here see the true meaning that Torres’s statement as to his existing inside himself has. He relates to himself in such a way that the truth about himself is revealed to him more truthfully than to others; but this relation to himself is envisioned as a relation to his mode of being, to his actions and to the results of his actions: his work, and everything else in which he encounters himself as being-in-the-world. Torres, “Los Sopones de Salamanca: Almanaque para 1734,” in *Textos Autobiográficos*, 76.

philosophers, namely, Ortega y Gasset, who in his treatment of subjectivity remains a prisoner of the Cartesian subject, from which he never manages to break free²⁰⁶.

We can submit then that Torres's affiliation with the European Enlightenment resides in this conception of a sense of selfhood that contains the world while recognizing its own conflictive position relative to it and most importantly in his struggle to preserve his individual freedom through his overt assertion of an over-the-top individualism in the face of the demands of authorities external and often opposed to his manner of conceiving of himself and the world. Torres's individualism, which in his empirical life manifests itself as a consistently mischievous, playfully roguish, that is, as an assumingly "pícaro" attitude characterized by mistrust, skepticism and detachment toward established power of all sorts, gets replicated in an autobiographical self-reflectivity that asserts a subjectivity that in turning *downward towards himself in the world* in search of fundamental truths about itself and the world, does so without, an as a gesture of rejection of— those powers. As we will immediately see in the following chapter, this rejection is made self-evident in that in it a rejection of the "confessional" mode of autobiography is by default implied. Precisely because *Vida*, in its style, language and structure replicates and reiterates the mode of being in the world of his author, which is predicated in a regulative ethics of mistrust, skepticism and ironic contradictoriness and contrarianism vis-à-vis all earthly authorities, its enlightened credentials are beyond question. If we should put this in other words, Torres's *enlightened consciousness of the social whole* is where his radical

²⁰⁶ In Ortega y Gasset the self/subject is still a solipsistic entity that exists as if trapped inside its own subjectivity and to whom only a capacity for thinking is accorded, and from where affectivity and the role it plays in practical relation to self and the world is not recognized. As a matter of fact, Ortega thinks this whole theme as if three centuries of criticism of the Cartesian subject had made no a detention on it, which means to say, his writing proceeds as if neither Hume, nor Nietzsche or Heidegger stood between Descartes and himself. For example, see the whole chapter 8 in *What is Philosophy?* Trans. Mildred Adams, Norton and Company, 1960. New York.

individualism, heretofore so ill-understood by the critical tradition, stems from. Better still, his individualism, which here we will define as awareness of the political dimensions of one's individuality, and his idiosyncratic sense of his selfhood, are both of a piece with each other.

Chapter 1.8

Torres Contra Rousseau: Confessional Autobiography, Inner Division
and the Enlightened Individuality

As we had just seen, the turn downward toward the self that characterizes modernity and which epistemologically and historically marks the beginning of the age that in the long run came to be known as *of* Enlightenment, appears in Torres as a something that if at first seems to be merely a personal stance and a question of individualized manner of self-understanding, in last analysis turned out to be a motion displaying a complex existential structure, with clear political and social significations. We could say then after Dilthey that concerning this aspect in Torres's autobiographical undertaking, reflection on *his* life shapes his life experience and that this experience serves in him as the ground for worldview²⁰⁷. As we saw, Torres's refusal to conduct the search for truth of the self in isolation from his being-in-the-world and his promotion of a conception of selfhood as being-with, as intersubjectivity, led him to a method for self-understanding in which this truth, which however it is expressed, if it is dealt with in a fundamental way as he does always concerns the problematic of the unity of the self, the individual's sense of selfhood, and the part the other and the world of objective reality play in either our perception of inner division or of unity²⁰⁸. At bottom, and this we take for granted, is the question of whether perceived unity or division of the self, which we

²⁰⁷ Dilthey, *Philosophy of Existence*, pp. 21 and ff.

²⁰⁸What it has been said of Goethe can in all justification also be said of Torres: "His rejection of the confessional mode and confessional mood had deeper roots than personal aversion. For Goethe was deeply convinced that intense staring into the soul to recall and register all its moods and twitters would not make us wiser about the self. Introspection was not the road to self-knowledge." Weintraub. "Johann Wolfgang von Goethe," in *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography*, 346.

here and throughout do not make interchangeable with “multiplicity” and “changes of,” the self—is the result of the conflictive relation in which someone might find him or self placed toward the world; or the other way around, whether an individual perceives his or her relation with the world as conflictive, as result of an inherent inner division in his or her self.

Nevertheless, it became clear from our analysis that in Torres, downward, or if you will, the “inward” turning of the self does not stand for either isolation from the world as would be the case with Rousseau, and which could be said to be the autobiographical equivalent of a situation in which knowledge of the self emanates from solipsistic estimations—as would be the case with Descartes²⁰⁹. If Torres resists being prisoner to an excruciating dissection and, as if were, desiccation of his interiority and if in doing so he moves away from introspective subjectivity, from a subjectivity that can only be known essentially by itself *as* itself, and that denies the possibility of an independent verification of the truth to which it arrives in its self- reflections—it is because his search for inner truth takes place in full awareness that the self is being-with *because* it is being-in-the-world. The search for inner truth is then in him construed as a motion *outward towards oneself*, as a motion towards the way the self stands in relation to the world. That the understanding of the self as central to his interiority is not thereby abandoned is made self-evident from the fact that only him who stands “inside” can look at to the “outside” to apprehend himself *objectively*, that is, as agent of actions and interactions. Through this objectification of the self-reflective moment, we also saw, his consciousness of self is eventually revealed as social consciousness and by implication, as *enlightened* social

²⁰⁹ “Although this science is as certain as the cogito for my understanding, it has certainty only within it; that is, for *myself enclosed within itself*.” Descartes, *Second Meditation*. Emphasis added.

conscience. But because this social conscience attains through a negation of the authority of powers from outside his subjectivity, we held that his conscience was the direct product of an implicit, which means to say, intuitive political will to preserve the freedom of the self to gain a self-knowledge that in its mode of expression and structure is registered as in opposition to distinctive forms of established power. In this very restricted sense Torres's autobiographical undertaking stands shoulder to shoulder as the *autobiographically ontological equivalent of the Cartesian philosophy of selfhood*. For, *autobiographically*, which is always an existential involvement of the individual with his own self to the extent that it is a conscious involvement with his life—we can say of Torres's encountering of the autobiographical self what Hegel says of the Cartesian philosophy of the cogito in its historical determination of modernity²¹⁰. This freedom from “dead externality and authority,” that Hegel identifies as materializing in the shift toward the *inner sphere* is precisely what is sought and defended in Torres's attempts at self-determination, and it is by necessity what serves his politics and ethics of individuality, which I characterized as skeptical and ironically contrarian, consistently taking the guise of a “pícaro” attitude. I called that the manifestation of a radicalized individuality, issuing from the advantage point of a self enlightened by its struggle for independence and for self-knowledge, and for the preservation of a specific mode of practical self-relation in his being towards the world²¹¹. Bearing in mind that what we are summarizing here are all moments and

²¹⁰ “Actually we now first come to the philosophy of the modern world, and we begin this with Descartes. With him we truly enter upon an independent philosophy, which knows it emerges independently out of reason... [...] The universal principle is now to *grasp the inner sphere* as such, and to *set aside the claims of dead externality and authority*; the latter is to be viewed as out of place here.” Hegel, “Descartes,” *Lecture on the History of Philosophy*, vol. III, 217, ed. trans. Robert F. Brown, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995. (Emphasis added.)

²¹¹ For the concept of practical self-relation as a kind of reflective self-relation “in which the presuppositions of one's own actions are placed into questioning,” and which stands for how the individual relates to himself

instances of one and the same process, or otherwise said— bearing in mind that Torres’s rejection of introspective subjectivity is the manifestation of a well-defined individuality, or as you will, of a selfhood *reflecting* on its empirical, objective and experiential mode of existence through an autobiographical construction—this summarization should be taken as stating that this entire process is put in motion and is controlled, from beginning to end, by Torres’s individuating, individualizing enlightened conscience.

With that in mind, in the present chapter we will turn our attention to a consideration of the confessional model of autobiography to offer a critique of the concept of confession, which should allow us to take a closer look at the power relation at work therein, and to establish the role that confessional practices play in the determination of subjectivity and in defining the extent to which they are or are not constitutive of modern autobiographical self-reflection. This analysis will eventually go to show that Torres’s individualism, which we early defined as political awareness of one’s individuality, is the main cause that leads him to avoid the confessional model altogether, since he envisages confession, and confessing as such, as impinging on the privacy of his person and as submitting to the intermediation and the ruling of the other. Torres’s approach to autobiography would then, from this perspective as well, turn out to be envisaged as being closer than Rousseau’s to the ideal of modern individuality. For, in embracing the confessional model he abandons his project of autobiographical self-representation as the product of a knowledge of self that has as its basis a special relation with his affectivity, that is, with his proclaimed “strong passions” which is “exemplary” in the history of men and on which he had staked his claim to an independent individuality and mode of being-

in the practical process of making decisions (deliberating) concerning his own self, see Tugendhat, “Formulation of the Problem and Program,” in *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, 18-38.

in-the-world²¹². Only after I have conducted this analysis will I then be able to also show how, free from the constraints of confessional protocols and procedurals, Torres's individualism then gets radicalized, and we will gain insights in the ways this radicalization manifests itself in the gestural, that is, rhetorical form of the "pícaro" he consciously assumes. This line of analysis will depend on a critical consideration of the language, style and structure of *Vida*, as what is made explicit by the discourse per se is already implicitly contained therein. The problematic of the relationship that his discourse establishes between truth and falsehood will also be mentioned, but both these themes will receive more detailed attention in subsequent chapters, as will the question of the rhetoric of the roguery, of which this set of problems appertains.

Let us start by observing that one of the most generally, and we must also say, easily accepted conventions in the study of autobiography, is that of the prominent role the reader is assigned as arbiter between the reflective subjectivity of the self, subject or individual narrating his or her life therein, and the inner and/or empirical truth the autobiographer is attempting to bring forth before us through the reenactment of life *as* and *through* a narrative. In appearance and in a first consideration, the role that the reader is assigned by some, but by all means not by all historians and theoreticians of the phenomenology of the interiority of the individual that self-writing, especially in its modern manifestations, ultimately is, seems to be quite justified²¹³. For, after all in

²¹² Throughout his *Confessions* Rousseau presents himself as a man driven by his feelings, which we should not forget, form him is the ground for his epistemology of the self. The statement a man of "strong passions," as a description of himself and as the validation of his commitment to truth occurs at least once. And yet, we have to make a note of the fact that, the same man who declares that his passions had made him live, then moves to declare that the truth object of his confessions is to reveal his inner thoughts, not his feelings.

²¹³ Most recently, Angel G. Loureiro has offered an insightful evaluation of the different positions most commonly taken concerning autobiography and the role of the reader in deciding its meaning. Loureiro himself, since he attributes autobiography an altruistic origin, would have to be classed within the trends that

autobiography the self *seems* to actually appear *before* the reader in more or less the same guise that the accused appears *before* the judge. But in reality, these two “befores” are of two different orders and have diverging structures; for while one “before” corresponds to what *appears to be* but which not necessary is, and therefore has a phenomenological structure, the other “before” corresponds to presence in the manner of what *must* show up, and therefore has the structure of the correctional, juridical and penitential. In other words, the “Self” does not always appear what it is or *as* it is when it comes before the reader, but the accused is always the accused in his or her appearance before the judge. So, it is only in appearance that the “Self” always appears before the reader to be passed judgment on in the same way that the accused appears before the judge to be judged. Thus, it could be shown that, on the one hand, in not making this distinction the assumption is made that all kinds of life-writing, and the individual whose *literary* but by no means *literally* re-presentation that writing is, does so as if though he or she were making a *formal legal appeal* to the reader, and not just *telling* the reader about him or herself. On the other hand, it could also be shown that in the assumption that in life-writing an appeal for judgment is being made an authority status is conferred by the historian of autobiography upon the reader that the autobiographer himself might resist to recognize—as is the case with Torres. For in this, it could further be proven, autobiography generally behaves more alike literary writing, in that in a literary work whether fictional or poetical, neither an *implicit nor an explicit plead for judgment is necessarily contained*. In autobiography as we have conceptualized it here throughout, only the reader’s *consideration* seems to be what is being *solicited*, and this suggests that telling, unless done under compulsion, as

consider the reader as the judge of the subject in the autobiography. Loureiro, “Preface” and “Before Reference” in *The Ethics of Autobiography: Replacing the Subject in Modern Spain*, I-XVI, and 1-31.

happens under the instruction of a court of law or for example, the *church*— does not by necessity calls for judgment to be passed on.

In our view, the assumption that lives are written to be submitted before a judge, or otherwise said, that the reader of autobiography acquires the status and authority of a judge in the act of reading, rests on the naïve belief that all autobiographies are confessions in the strict sense of the concept, and that the impulse and commitment to autobiographical self-reflection spring from an urgency to confess, which further implies that every inner revelation, admission or simply put— that every effort to establish a correspondence between the facts of empirical life with the facts of inner self-perception is per se a confession.²¹⁴ It seems obvious to me that this set of interrelated assumptions does not take into account that only in those forms of life-writing that respond to an *urgency* to confess and which consequently conform themselves to the structure, and which conversely resort to the language of the confessional mode, can be said to be confessions in the sense that for example, Saint Augustine's and Rousseau's are. From our discussion in the previous chapter it follows that at the center of the concept of confession and in the notion of the confessional lays a question of power and authority, since by extension what is at stake therein is the possibility of impossibility of freedom for individual self-representation and self-knowledge. For this freedom is precisely what is put into question whenever an individual must respond through life-writing as if under

²¹⁴ This unwarranted assumption is the tenet on which studies and criticism on autobiography have been founded, and one would search in vain for studies where the conceptual difference between confession and autobiography is made. This holds true for foundational studies like George Gusdorf's "The Limits of Autobiography," where terms like "memoirs" and "memories" are used alongside terms like "confessions" and "autobiography," and for studies like Stephen Spender's "Confessions and Autobiography," where one would be misled to look for any difference in the concepts. Indeed, the very important studies contained in the indispensable collection edited by James Olney have in common among them the lack of attention received by this theme, of crucial importance to this writer, as will be demonstrated shortly. This omission, in our opinion, calls for a revision of much of what has been written on the topic of autobiography. See James Olney, *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, Princeton University Press, 1980.

interrogation, as if it is his or her self itself that is being put under questioning.

Existentially expressed, the situation created by the confessional mode of self-reflection involves a disruption of the relation of oneself to oneself.

Moreover, the confessional model hides a built-in contradiction that hardly applies to all autobiographies: since autobiographical writing is predicated on the ability of its subject to know himself better than anybody else ever could, it is a contradiction to dissect one's self-consciousness and then offer it up to the reader to ascertain the true of a self that has beforehand posited itself as unknowable by the other. It follows then that the autobiographical cannot be reduced to the confessional and that the confessional is but an instance of the autobiographical, a form of autobiography, not its paradigm²¹⁵. Put in other words, from the perspective of the politics involved in the striving for the freedom of self-representation in accordance with the individual's perception of his or her own self, which presupposes the rejection of any attempt from outside to being foisted an identity upon, the execution and concept of autobiography can be said to be modern to the same extent to which the confessional mode is not. Incidentally, this dynamic bespeaks in favor of modernity as a characteristic more readily found in Torres than in Rousseau, as we have demonstrated above. Of course, it is because both Saint Augustine's and Rousseau's *Confessions* have been promoted and enshrined by generations of scholars as the two paradigms of autobiography, that it has been taken as a truism that the structure of the confessional is ever present in the structure of the concept of the "Self" whether as the "subject" or as the individual, and that by extension "autobiography" is synonymous with

²¹⁵ The notion of the confession as paradigmatic to autobiography was advanced by William C. Spengemann in his often-quoted *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of Literary Genre*, Yale University Press, 1980.

“confession.”²¹⁶ As a result, in the concept of autobiography the idea of turning-inside-out our interiority to expose to the *judging other* not only the dwelling of the self but the self itself has become embedded. However clear it is to us that this is only a conceptual extrapolation that in last analysis originates in a traditional understanding of the concept of the “Self” and its relation with the “Other,” it is nonetheless surprising how steadfastly this way of thinking is embraced in the contemporary theorization of autobiography²¹⁷.

If we are correct here, then there is much about autobiography that is yet to be understood. For, in the brand of autobiographical self-writing that Torres’s minor works inaugurate and which he furthered in *Vida* the confessional mode, and therefore the

²¹⁶ We find this view confirmed by Loureiro, to refer to a recent example of this enshrining: “Christianity had the sagacity to institutionalize and deepen this unavoidable responsibility as confession, and it is not by chance that the two most prominent examples of the autobiographical canon bear the title of ‘confessions.’” It is Christian authority, enforced by Christian that has brought on this confusion. Loureiro, “Preface,” in *The Ethics of autobiography*, XIII.

²¹⁷ One of the most recent examples of this extrapolation of concepts is offered by Loureiro. Working from the standpoint of Levinas’ philosophy of ethics that seeks to remove the “I” from the primacy that German Idealism, starting with Fichte, assigns to in discourse and discursive practices, Loureiro works out a very important and highly productive conceptualization of autobiography that, for all its virtues, remains hostage to the tradition that sees a “confession” in all expressions of “letting-it-out” coming from the autobiographer, and then makes the motion to call a confession to any and all autobiographical texts even when the *structure* of the confessional is absent from it. Because according to Levinas-Loureiro, confessions are testaments of an ethical responsibility of the “Self” to the “Other” (which to some extent is true), then it is assumed that autobiographies are written as an ethical response from the “I” to a third-person entity who *demand*s a response. We could however ask, as we have already noted, whether demands, unless they are themselves reactions seeking to *assign* and *enforce* responsibility for an ethical infraction, can be said to be ethical per se. An indication of the correctness of our opinion seems to be the fact Saint Augustine, in rejecting the demand of his brotherly fellows for him to confess, confess to them nonetheless, but only through God, whose demand he cannot deny. Now, the relation between men and God is not ethical; it is a relation of *subordination to authority*. But then there is also the problem of the unacknowledged conceptual difference between “responsibility” and “responsiveness;” to be responsive toward one’s fellow man does not necessarily imply an ethical responsibility towards him; in responding I am being ethical, but not necessarily towards him but towards myself: I owe it to myself to live and act ethically by responding to the other, but in doing it I am not necessarily satisfying a demand put before me. From this perspective then it is at least questionable to affirm, as Loureiro does, that “in a way all autobiographies are confessions in that they render accounts to another although invisible, unacknowledged, or even negated, leaves its unquestionable imprint in autobiography (sic).” Again, what characterizes a confession is not that the addressee leaves its address in it, but that it determines the direction, that is, the meaning and significance both of the confessional act and of the confessant himself through judgment, by assigning true-values and exacting penance and penalty on the basis of these values. See Loureiro, “Preface,” in *The Ethics of autobiography: Replacing the Subject in Modern Spain*, XII-XIII.

concept of confession are categories not to be spoken of²¹⁸. This new of attitude toward autobiography that Torres inaugurates will later be transformed and developed in the life accounts of Goethe's and, more particularly in Franklin's, with whom Torres's bears a closer resemblance. Among other shared important characteristics, these three autobiographers have in common with each other that in them the meaning of "autobiography" is contained whole in the literal notion of "life-account;" for they move away from the confessional mode in that none of them engages in "confessions" of any sorts. For, no "dark matter of the soul" is poured by them on the reader; in them there is no agonizing soul-searching and during the act of reading, the reader is not thereof converted into a confessor; the autobiographer does not face the reader or placed himself *before* the reader as the confessional structure demands²¹⁹. This is made evident by the fact that for none of these autobiographers is there a subjectivity striving to "introspect" its own interiority; in other words, because for them autobiography cannot be reduced to a confession or be said to participate of the confessional, therefore they all move away from introspection. While this is put neatly in Torres's statement that he only tells of what "goes on *through*" his being ("yo digo lo que pasa por mí"²²⁰), his "being" being his mode of being-in-the-world, which means to say that his being-in-the-world is his *actions as the*

²¹⁸ Besides the similarities already made notice of and related to them, both Torres and Franklin declare that they wrote their autobiography motivated by a "mischievous arrogance," in the Spaniard, and by "vanity" in the American. About Torres's declaration of his description of his motivation as the "altivez más pícaro," *Vida*, 190 and elsewhere throughout; about Franklin, his declaration that he is gratifying his own vanity by writing his *Life*, the original title of his autobiography, 9.

²¹⁹ It has been noticed concerning the case of Franklin that he "mentions in passing certain 'errata,' but records no confession of sin, and very little guilt, shame, or contrition." See John D. Barbour, "Franklin and the Critics of Individualism," in *The Conscience of the Autobiographer: Ethical and Religious Dimensions in Autobiography*, 96. And Borges would without doubt be more than justified in saying that *Vida* is a document "ajeno de franqueza espiritual," although at the same time he would be missing the point in saying that it is devoid of "intimidad de corazón" if by this he means that Torres is not being sincere. One thing is to give in to "confessions;" another quite different is to refuse to confess out of sincerity. See Borges, *Revista Proa*, I, p. 52, Buenos Aires, 1942. Also referenced by Mercadier, *Masques et miroirs*, 317.

²²⁰ Torres, *Vida*, 194.

actuation of his self, in Franklin the same is equally neatly put in stating that in his *Life* he is mainly concerned with writing of the “circumstances of my life” and therefore of what is *external*, which however contains his interiority, since like in Torres and Goethe, for Franklin “Life” is “Self” and the “Self” is always given *in* and *under* specific circumstances²²¹. For, literally speaking and as it is implicit in the Latin etymology of the word, the “Self” in Franklin’s *Life* is also constancy like it is in Torres: the *stance* that is *encircled*, *encompassed* and *contained* by its many and diverse experiences²²². For his part Goethe’s understanding of autobiography seems to synthesize both Torres’s and Franklin’s attitude respective to introspective subjectivity, and therefore to autobiography as introspection. So, Goethe overly says that the objective of [auto]biography is simply to present its subject in its *temporal circumstances*; something he considers an almost *impossible task*, since it entails not only a profound knowledge of the empirical history in which the subject of autobiography is inserted, but also because for this to be carried out it is required that:

The individual knows himself and his century—himself, as a *constant* entity in the midst of all the circumstances, and his century as a force pulling him away willy-nilly, *directing* and developing him to such an extent that one may well say *he would have been quite a different person of born ten years before or after*, as far as his own cultural development

²²¹ When Franklin’s autobiography was originally published in 1789, forty-plus years after Torres’s, it appeared as the “Life of Franklin Benjamin;” later publishers then changed it to “Autobiography.”

²²² Franklin, *Autobiography*, 8.

and his effects on others are concerned²²³. (Emphasis added).

We then here see how in the attitude towards autobiography that Torres inaugurates the account given of the self is inextricable from an account of external reality; it should be understood that here “externality” stands for the history and world onto which the interiority of the individual is projected through his or her actions. The discarding of the introspective practice in autobiography then presupposes a disavowal of confession and of the confessional mode precisely because in them the self tends to be considered and handled as if in isolation from objective reality; therein, the self is the product and the inhabitant of an interiority from where all the causes that make confessing into an urge stem. The philosophical consequence of making autobiography synonymous with confession has been that, since *one must first introspect oneself in order to confess*, the introspecting subjectivity has been construed in the prevalent theories of autobiography as involved in self-reflective activity that results in its own objectification; hence the subject-object dichotomy that has been postulated as controlling the structure of autobiography²²⁴. But at the same time, *because confession is the consequence of*

²²³ Goethe. “Preface,” in *From my Life: Poetry and Truth*, 17, trans. Roberts R. Heitner, Princeton, 1994.

²²⁴ An outstanding example of how this error has been perpetuated is the thesis by Starobinski that, “conversion, entry into a new life, the operation of Grace,” is constitutive of the *sufficient* reason for autobiography. But this way of seeing this problem is inadequate: there are many ways to arrive to conversion and, for example in Rousseau, conversion in the literal sense is not directly linked to his decision of writing his *Confessions*. We should bear in mind that the idea of his autobiographical undertaking is suggested to Rousseau by his editor; it does not spring out of his own head. Moreover, *culpability*, not conversion, is what has historically paved the way to confession, as we have been explaining and will continue to explain; the *mea culpa* of the confession is there for some reason. Neither Montaigne nor Torres, and certainly not Goethe or Franklin when through a process of “conversion” into a “new” individual that then prompt in them the need for autobiography; and *Torres openly calls for the destruction of the autobiographical enterprise*. From our view, Starobinski is certainly mistaken when he says that: “It is the internal transformation of the individual—and the exemplary character of this transformation—that furnishes a subject for a narrative discourse in which the ‘I’ is both subject and object.” As we have been insisting, if it might be interpreted that through introspective subjectivity the “I” becomes both subject and object in self-reflection, that is not the case when the “Self” is construed as “Life” or existence; in this case,

introspection and something that takes place before the imaginary presence of a confessor, autobiography tends to be interpreted as a means of subjectivation of the “Self” by the “Other” before whom the confession is made; and so the reader becomes *the modern confessor*, as it were. I have, however shown that as illustrated by the cases above, when autobiography is not reduced to confession the subject-object dichotomy disappears because the self stops being considered as something that exists independently of, or that can be known separated from, *its practical actuation of itself in the world* and therefore as a subjective entity that engages in self-reflection in order to practice confession, as something that introspects in order to confess, taking itself as its own object in the first instance, and converting or getting converted to a “subject” during the confessional session, the second instance.

To elucidate this problem further, it suffices to examine closer what the concept of confession entails; such examination should albeit indirectly, also shed light on what goes on during introspection. To facilitate this examination, we will resort to a definition and a subsequent critique of the structure of confession, and will then continue with an analysis of Torres’s *Vida* to see how the text comports itself concerning the matter at hand²²⁵.

Strictly defined,

Confession is a verbal act by which the subject, in an
affirmation about what he is, binds himself to this truth,
places himself in a relationship of dependence with regard

one relates oneself not to his “I” but to his mode of being in the world in self-reflection, which is how things happen in autobiography. In other words, if in confession the relation of oneself to oneself has an “introspective” character, in autobiography this type of relation has a *practical* character: therein one relates to oneself practically. See Starobinski, “The Style in Autobiography,” in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, 78, ed. James Olney, Princeton University Press.

²²⁵ . Since this definition is by Foucault, and therefore most authoritative, and perhaps even the primary source for the misunderstanding that has, in our opinion, fostered the subject-object dichotomy that has for long derailed a correct theoretical assessment of autobiography.

*to the other person and at the same time modifies the relationship he has with himself*²²⁶. (Emphasis added).

Although in this definition it is not absolutely clear whether what the subject affirms in the verbal act is that he is a subject *previous* to the act— in which case we have to speak of *reaffirmation* of his status as subject—or whether he becomes a subject *through* binding himself to the truth elicited from him during the confession, which is how this is more commonly understood in interpretations departing from Foucault— but however that may be, the nature of the politics and ethics involved in this process is hereby made transparent²²⁷. This definition confirms that as we have been contending, introspective subjectivity in autobiography is supported by a relation of power where the self of the subject *of* the autobiography and its truth get determined from the outside by somebody else who, whatever we name it, reader, confessor or judge— is the “Other.” Since the self therein enters into a relation of dependence to this other, it is through this other that the self, understood as the subject or the individual—relates itself to itself from now on. This is what is meant in that definition in saying that in placing himself in a position of dependence, the subject modifies his self-relation. To be in a relation of dependence to other means that, firstly, the “subject” does not confess for his or her own sake, but for the sake of the other, the institution of confession itself being of course constitutive of that other; and secondly, it also means that the truth about one’s self elicited in confession at some point ceases to belong to the confessant and passes to be

²²⁶ Michel Foucault, “Notes,” *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 370.

²²⁷ For example, Huck Gutman cites precisely Foucault in his interpretation that in Rousseau’s *Confessions* and through the act of subjection to the other entailed in confessing, men are *constituted* (sic.) as “subjects in both senses of the word.” And so, accordingly, Rousseau, says Gutman, create “a ‘self’ that can serve to define himself, to himself and to others, in the face of a hostile social order (sic.)” Whatever he means by this we cannot decide here. See Huck Gutman, “Rousseau’s Confessions,” in *Technologies of the Self: A seminar with Michel Foucault*, 103.

owned by the confessor through the same mechanism that the “subject” is *subjected* to tell the truth. This no doubt accounts for the new, *modified* relation of oneself to one’s self in which one enters through confessing; but this modification can only mean that through confession the confessant *renounces* his or her self; for example, in having no possibility of choosing what to confess and what to leave out of the verbal act, and in giving up the freedom to participate in the *interpretation* of the truths told, and so in producing one’s own truth.

But this further means that, as already discussed, the *discourse* on self elicited during confession does not of necessity represent knowledge of the self, since this discourse is produced under pre-established conditions which the confessant has no power or authority to alter, and therefore cannot be reliable, since this presupposes that the individual is put under duress to confess²²⁸. As a matter of course, in confession the individual is put under the danger of losing his or her individuality. Let us not forget that what is at stake in confession is not merely truth-telling for the sake of not withholding anything about oneself, but instead what is at stake in confession are matters of the most seriousness that there can be: absolution from guilt and soul-salvation, that is—absolution for the sake of salvation of the soul so that one’s self should be spared from damnation. Consequently, in confession the individual walks into a stage in which he or she has played no part in setting up and in which the truth to be told is factually decided as such on the basis of values and rationalizations that had been internalized and which *initially belonged already to the other*. This situation, in which the “other” actually has the structure of what Heidegger calls the “they” implies further that in confession the

²²⁸ This is the reason that courts appoint or allow a legal representative to present during interrogations, so that the confessant does not incriminate him or herself due to unwarranted, that is, illegal duress. This is a privilege that the defendant in the Christian confessional is stripped off.

individual, as far as we still can call him that under this circumstance, has thereby entered into a relation of *inauthenticity* to his own self; otherwise said, through confessing the *inauthentic* character of the self an existential entity in permanent relation of subjectivation by the other as the “they” of everyday existence is revealed. The practice and concept of confession like no other instance encapsulate an articulation of the situation in which the self—the individual, the subject—finds itself in most everyday situations²²⁹. *Disburdened* of “its” truth during the session of confession and at *all time* by the confessional structure that characterizes the relation of the self to the other, and which thus destines it to exist to confess, in whatever it does the self is continually confessing in *anticipation*, and therefore it is *never* itself; the “Self” actually is the “Other” or the “they” in its everyday existence. In a situation in which the individual in his everydayness must regulate himself in accordance with the confessional duty levied on him by the other, the “Self,” the subject, the individual—confession showcases the condition of inauthenticity of the everyday “thrownness” under which existence is given²³⁰.

But this then suggests that confession *negates* autobiography in an essential way. For, for starters, in autobiography as I understand it and as has been practiced by Torres, Goethe, Franklin, and to some degree and with some reservations, Montaigne, among others—the individual is under no protocol, pact or obligation of laying the soul bare before the reader to incessantly produce truth about the self and, as if were, to turn inside

²²⁹ This is the situation in which, in Heidegger’s words: “Thus the particular Dasein [Self, Subject, Being, the “I”] is *disburdened* by the ‘they’. Not only that; by thus disburdening it of its Being, the ‘they’ accommodates Dasein if Dasein has any tendency to take things easily and make them easy. And because ‘they’ constantly accommodates the particular Dasein by disburdening it of its Being, the ‘they’ retains and enhances its stubborn dominion.” Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 163-165.

²³⁰ “If Dasein[the Self, the subject, the individual, the *I*] is familiar with itself as they-self, this means at the same time that the ‘they’ itself *prescribes* that way of interpreting the world as Being-in-the-world which lies closest. Dasein *is* for the sake of the ‘they’ in an everyday manner, and *the ‘they’ itself articulates the referential context of significance.*” Ibid. 167, (Emphasis added).

out his or her interiority to be inspected by the other. The ethics of autobiography, here again, as I understand it from the practice of the autobiographers that I have been considering—consists precisely in that *the individual binds himself to telling the truth while preserving the freedom not to tell*. And this freedom must be preserved not only because for the individual *telling* is itself an act of freedom, but also and more importantly because, as Goethe puts it, knowing oneself is an almost *impossible task*, since in autobiography the self is conceived as intersubjectivity, and therefore as knowable only insofar and inasmuch as it recognizes itself in the social relation in which this intersubjectivity is given, as we have seen in Torres's case. Through this freedom, the self asserts itself in autobiography, and through the observance of its ethics towards the truth in the act of telling, the possibility arises for the creation and recreation of oneself and indeed, for one being one's authentic self, since this freedom is in fact an allowance to present oneself to oneself and to others according to one's self-perception, something that does not attain in confession²³¹. Because it is this freedom that the autobiographer readily identifies as in danger, we see that for example, Torres, as well as Montaigne and Goethe, abstains himself from a wall-to-wall disclosure of every minor detail about his life and that, as we have shown in chapter 3, he goes as far as to deny autobiography any practical use for the other; inventing in the process a *different* function for the practice of self-writing, as we will show in a later chapter. For his part, Goethe's attacks on subjectivity and Franklin's abstention from disclosing all the possible reasons he may

²³¹ This is a possibility which of course can only be materialized through an ethics of truth in which, as Goethe believes, makes the facts of one's life count as autobiographical on the basis of their *significance*, and not on the basis of their *factuality*, for in the possibility determine this significance resides the self-assertive of the self. Torres, for his part would claim this same right by simply upholding his prerogative to perform in his life-writing "los visajes y transformaciones que me hagan el gusto y la comodidad," while at the same time stating that to write his life as he perceives of it he needs no a license, that is, an authorization, from anybody. On Goethe, see Weintraub, *Ibid.* 374; on Torres, see *Vida*, 58-178

have for putting his life in letters depart from the same ethics towards the truth, which in last analysis is a well-defined stance towards the freedom of the self²³². In a later chapter we will also see that the ethics towards truth as ethics toward the self in the act of telling demands that Torres design a personal strategy toward the preservation of his individual freedom, and that, as the direct result of his determination to preserve this freedom, he choose a form and style of self-representation that stands as the *metaphor* of his practical mode of being in the world, even at the risk of getting taken as what he is not. In the meantime, we must insist here that in contrast to what goes on in confession, autobiography comes into being and is justified precisely in that it is constitutive of the possibility of restoring to the Self the authenticity that it is disburdened of by the other (or the ‘they’) in most everydayness situations. To give an idea of what this existential condition of inauthenticity is in which the “Self” is kept by the “Other” as the ‘they’ and from which it seeks to recover itself in autobiography, we will refer to Heidegger one more time, since in him this is put as straightforwardly as it can be put:

We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they* take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as *they* see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the ‘great mass’ as *they* shrink back; we find shocking what *they* find shocking. The ‘they’, which is nothing definite, and which are all, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness (sic.)²³³.

²³² In explaining his motives for writing his *Life*, besides his desires to give his descendants reliable information about their origins, Franklin certainly has others, but he limits himself simply to say that he has others, “besides” what he disclose, 8.

²³³ Heidegger, “Being-in-the-World as Being-with and Being One’s-Self: The They,” *Being and Time*, 164.

Autobiography then, as Heidegger would probably see it, offers the individual what confession could never offer: the possibility to “Articulate the referential context of significance,” about his or her life without the interference of the other. And this possibility of a free articulation of what one means to signify in what one does, in one’s mode of being, that is—is the only way that, as we said above, the self can aspire to recreate itself *in* freedom. What this means is: only in autobiography, because in it I am concerned with myself as myself, am I able to be *as* I am without feeling forced to be myself in the way the “other” (the “they”) is “*they-self*”²³⁴. Assuming this is correct, we could then say that, as Mead holds about the state of affairs of oneself to oneself in which, as happens in confession, the organized set of attitudes of the others would be represented by the “me,” in autobiography the autobiographer’s “I” constitutes itself into “the answer which the individual makes to the attitude which others take toward him when he assumes an attitude toward them”²³⁵. If this is so, then in confession the “me” substitutes for the “I;” and this would support saying that in confession the “me” is a marking of the state of affairs of the unauthentic self in the way Heidegger understands this situation²³⁶. The answer to the other in which the individual constitutes him or herself in the “I” then corresponds to the self-assertive character that defines autobiography; it follows that autobiographical self-assertion is for the self an attempt, in the form of a *desire*, to find the way out of the state of inauthenticity in which it is kept by the other in its everydayness.

²³⁴ “The Self from everyday Dasein is the *they-self*, we which distinguish from the *authentic Self*— that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way (sic.)” Ibid. 167.

²³⁵ George Herbert Mead, “The Self” in *Mind, Self, & Society from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist*, 177, I, ed. Charles W. Morris, University of Chicago Press, 1934. For the connection between Mead’s and Heidegger’s approach to the problematic of the self and self-consciousness, see Ernst Tugendhat, “Mead II: The Self,” in *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, 201.

²³⁶ Pushing it a bit further, this interpretation would allow for a meaningful pun: the “*mea culpa*” of the confession would stand for the substitution of the “I” by the “me,” representing the act in which the “Self” makes its what it has been given by the other previous to the act: culpa, guilt and remorse as predication of “truth.”

Because the self that cannot assert itself in the “I” recognizes its condition in either the “they-self” or the “me,” or actually in both, since these are only two different ways of accounting the same phenomena in the problematic of self-representation, autobiography seems to propose itself as a *hypothesis* of the practice in which the self, to put it after Heidegger’s formulation, would attempt to empirically *take hold of itself in its own way*. And this is tantamount to saying that, as Mead says of the self that recovers itself in his answer from the social attitude of the other represented in the “me” —the “I” gives the self its “*sense of freedom*,” a sense of freedom that as we know, is not allowable in confession²³⁷.

We see then that autobiography is not necessarily contained in confession or by the confessional mode, but that the contrary seems to be the case; the confessional is an autobiographical moment or instance in the structure of life narrative that can occur or not in an autobiography. That this seems to be the case is implied in a definition of confession that as we have seen, recognizes the relation of dependence to the other in which one places oneself thereof and in which, as a result, one sees oneself forced to modify one’s self-relation. To fully grasp why this must be so, we just have to conduct a brief enquiry into the character of this new modified relation in which one has entered with oneself, by asking what it is and where does it come from, that urgency that overcomes the self to submit itself to the *inspectorial* authority of the other, the “spiritual director,” the “confessor” or the “master of penance”? These roles, in accordance with a theorization of

²³⁷ Mead, *Ibid.* 177. (Emphasis added). Here we have called autobiography a hypothesis of a situation in which the “Self,” subject or individual, would take hold itself in freedom in its own manner, because autobiography is only a *discursive* practice and this taking-hold-of only can take place at the level of discourse. This manner of understanding autobiography is supported by the insight that, although autobiography itself is an empirical entity present-at-hand, it attempts “to take hold,” meaning “accounting-for” another entity, the “Self,” or mode of being, or life that, although themselves empirical cannot be accounted for therein empirically but only discursively.

autobiography as confession, assumingly are all three rolled into one in the role of the reader of autobiography²³⁸. In answering this question we can gain an understanding of why some autobiographers, as the cases of Torres, Goethe and Benjamin Franklin illustrate, seem to get by without giving themselves to tortuous introspective examinations, while others, like the cases of Saint Augustine and Rousseau illustrate, cannot.

From Saint Augustine's predicament in his relation to God, as well as from Rousseau's in his relation to his friend and contemporaries, and in last analysis, to God through them—it would seem safe to assume that the urge to confess, of making of autobiography the verbal equivalent of a *confessionary*, corresponds in certain individuals to the feeling of being *burdened* by shamefulness and guilt. And Saint Augustine is unambiguous in what the source of this guilt and shamefulness is: the bad conscience of an individual who perceives himself as *internally divided from the other* and thus in state of existential *anxiety* in confronting the authority of the other:

*The recalling of my wicked ways is bitter in my memory, but I do it so that you may be sweet to me, a sweetness touched by no deception; a sweetness serene and content. You gathered me together from the state of disintegration in which I had been fruitlessly divided. I turned from you to be lost in multiplicity*²³⁹. (Emphasis added).

²³⁸ About these roles and their differentiation, see Foucault's lecture of March 3, 1982, in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 363.

²³⁹ Saint Augustine, "Adolescence," *Confessions*, 24, II, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford World's Classics, 1991, Oxford University Press.

This situation in which an individual is so burdened results from having *transgressed* in the eyes of the other. But this actually means that the true transgression resides in not actuating one sense of selfhood in accordance with the precepts or expectations from the other that divides the self *from* inside itself. That in Saint Augustine's *Confessions* this other is God, who is the maker but also the *judge*, and as such is the entity *through* which knowledge of oneself attains, does not alter the fact that in his everyday reality the individual stands before the other, variously defined as "society," "education," "religion," "family," "state" and so on and so forth—in almost the same relation of power, that is, of dependence than Saint Augustine is relative to God. Accordingly, in all types of relations of dependence that have the same authoritative thrust than Augustine's with *his* other, the individual does not need to know himself qua himself; in knowledge of the other, the self knows itself²⁴⁰. But this means that the possibility is always there for the individual to act, that is, to adopt a mode of being that goes contrariwise to the knowledge of his self the other has of it, and so to incur in sin, whence the burden comes. The implication here is that, since the individual finds himself in a position he cannot extricate himself from, in which all he can know about himself with certainty is that *the other knows him better*, the consequence is the experience of an internal division in one's sense of selfhood, for unity can only be guaranteed by one's submission to the authority of the other, by not *turning oneself away from* the other, as Saint Augustine says. So, we see that the modification of the relation of oneself to oneself that ensues from confession is that the individual now cannot do otherwise but to adopt

²⁴⁰ "To hear you speaking about oneself is to know oneself (sic)." Even though it true that the saint will latter say that "I nevertheless know something about you which I do not know about myself," in the end his knowledge boils down to knowing that God knows him better than he knows himself. Saint Augustine, "Memory," X, *Ibid.* 180.

being internally divided as *its* “natural” mode of being, since he cannot assert himself apart from the knowledge the other (God) has of him, which he himself lacks. This, of course, is an exact description of existential inauthenticity. Guilt and shame then do not arise from “wicked” actions alone but from the belief that these actions are not sanctioned by the other who is there to judge the self and not the actions in themselves, since these actions are the direct consequence of the “turning away” from the other, whose expectations have failed to be fulfilled by the confessant. But however this may be, the point is that confession makes transparent the division at the center of the self, and that this division, that should be interpreted as a fundamental disagreement between the professed inner truth of the self and the actuation of the self in the world—perceived phenomenal self versus empirical self—is what is constitutive of a “case” to be judged in confession. To save his soul, the individual must bring to closure his inner division, and this closure must be decided on the side of the other, since the self has proved incapable, as shown in the individual’s feeling of guilt and shame²⁴¹. Thus, in confession the individual is faced with the unfathomable paradox that to rid himself of the feeling of inhabiting an inner division and of not being himself he must leave himself open to being inhabited by the other, or in other word, inner unity resides in recognizing and accepting the authority of the other over the self that is already there. Confession then imposes on the individual the abdication of his individual freedom and so of his individuality, something which does not of necessity occurs as a defining characteristic of autobiography.

²⁴¹ If it were true that, as de Man believes, “to confess is to overcome guilt and shame in the name of truth,” then this truth can but be that the individual who confesses necessarily has a divided self, since only this condition makes possible guilty and shameful, and therefore the need to confess, arise in his conscience. See Paul de Man, “Excuses (confessions),” in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust*, 279, Yale University Press, 1979.

A similar relation to the other, albeit expressed in different terms but nonetheless, as a result of which the state of inner division of the self, and of agony in the face of the need for closure are necessary conditions for fashioning autobiography as confession— is also unambiguously revealed in Rousseau. So Rousseau, like Saint Augustine, reflecting on the facts of his empirical life that precipitated his *Confessions*, gives plenty evidence that his experience of inner division results from a persistent inability to make his actions in his relation to the other correspond to his own perception of inner selfhood:

I considered that nothing could be grander or finer than to be free and virtuous, *above considerations of fortune and the opinion of mankind*, and completely independent. Although *false shame and fear of public disapproval prevented me from living in accordance with my principles* [...] from that moment on my mind was made up [...]. *Too honest to desire to belie my principles by my actions*, I began to consider the destination of my children and my connection with their mother [...] ²⁴².

It does not matter that in this account Rousseau produces the picture of an individual struggling to bring under agreement his inner self (principles) with the realization of this self in the world (actions), and that this is attempted by setting itself up *against* the other, by in a word, *dislodge* the other from inside himself. What is of importance here is that, just as in Saint Augustine this situation will give way to a need for *autobiographical confession*, which is the self's acknowledgment both of its overt failure and of its need to resort to the assistance and dependence of the other from which it had

²⁴² Rousseau, *Confessions*, 338, trans. Maurice Leloir, Barnes & Noble, 2005, New York.

attempted to escape. So, we see how Rousseau relives *beforehand* in his empirical life the same predicaments later to be reenacted in his *Confessions*, which seen from this perspective is just a little bit more than the confessions of a profound need to confess, and of how this need came to be²⁴³:

The only one of my friends to whom I had any interest in *unbosoming myself* [of having given his children up to foster care] was M. Thierry, the physician who attended my poor “aunt” in a dangerous confinement. In a word, I made no mystery of what I did, not only because I have never known how to keep a secret from my friends, but because I really saw no harm in it²⁴⁴.

That the self has failed in its attempt to settle the essential disagreement with itself is made transparent in that the *Confessions* concedes that the confidences Rousseau took his friends in about his empirical life did nothing to assuage his inner division and that indeed, because this failure made this division even more dangerous to his inner peace, the need to confess has become more unbearable and therefore the efforts at confessing and the authority of the other before whom to confess and to grand absolution must correspond

²⁴³ This, Rousseau himself gives it a snapshot of his statement that “Tandis que je faisais mes confidences, M. le Vasseur les faisoit aussi de son côté, mais dans des vues moins desintéressées.» *Les Confessions*, 358, *Œuvres Complètes*. The *Confessions* are then the confessions of a need *to confess that its author had done something that remanded confessing*, and that he must confess in writing to disavow somebody else’s confessions involving him.

²⁴⁴ Rousseau, *Ibid.* 340. Of course, this passage is plagued by inconsistencies, for, for example, if Rousseau has no problem letting his friends in his secrets M. Thierry would not be the only one of his friends he would have an “interest” in confessing to, and if he sees nothing wrong in giving away his children, why the need to “unbosoming” to. We can get a clue of what is really going here if we pay attention the verb in the original: “m’ouvrir,” which suggests that something is kept hidden and out of prying eyes. As a matter of fact, Rousseau confirms this doubt by his admission that his secret “could have only have been disclosed by those very people to whom I had confided it [...]” See *Les Confessions*, 357-358, in *Œuvres Complètes of Jean-Jacques* already referenced. But then, this is a work in which logical inconsistencies abound.

to the existential anxiety of feeling divided between the reasons of the heart, and the heartlessness of reason; and this means that an appeal to the heavens must be made:

More than once since then, the regrets of *my heart* have told me that I was wrong; but far from *my reason* having given me the same information, I have often blessed *Heaven* for having preserved them from their father's lot, and from the lot that threatened them as soon as I should have been obliged to abandon them²⁴⁵. (Emphasis added).

What we are witnessing here are *the circumstances under in which the gravity of an individual's transgression in the eyes of the other makes his inner division visible to himself*, forcing him to offer himself up for judgment by the other as if to a higher authority than himself, since he himself has failed to see it. Under these circumstances it is that what is initially autobiographical takes the solemnity of the confessional, and that as a consequence the concept of confession gets *superimposed* over the concept of autobiography. This is demonstrated by the historical fact that before Saint Augustine and before Christianity "self-writing," "life-writing" or in general, the autobiographical self-reflections that Foucault studies under the label of the "technology" or "care of the self," did not verge or converge with the confessional, for it had not yet been "converted to it."²⁴⁶ The confessional structure in autobiography, about which we will be saying more in the next chapter and which is significantly absent from Torres's *Vida*, is the conversion of autobiography to Christianity. And this explains that in confession it is *paradigmatic* that the subject of his own narration be judged by the addressee, since autobiographical

²⁴⁵ Rousseau, *Confessions*, 339.

²⁴⁶ Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982*, 362.

confession is the recreation and dramatization through writing of the verbal process by which the individual is turned into a *subject of faith*, there to be judged on this basis.

Thus, if for Saint Augustine God is *the judge*²⁴⁷, for Rousseau the judge is the reader and the reader is God, before whom he not only lays himself bare, but to whose mercy he entrusts his fate:

I have promised my confession, not my *justification*;
therefore I say no more on this point. *It is my duty to be true; the reader's to be just.* I shall never ask more from him than that. (Emphasis added)²⁴⁸.

Of course we know that here we are dealing with nothing but a rhetorical strategy of an apostrophic discourse aimed at the exoneration from guilt and shame of the *self subjected to the other by the act of confessing*²⁴⁹. But what is worth of note for our

²⁴⁷ “You, Lord, are my judge.” Saint Augustine, *Ibid.* 182.

²⁴⁸ Rousseau, *Ibid.* 341. It is not correct to say, as he does, that in confessing Rousseau does not seek to justify himself; in true, to justify himself is the real, albeit hidden, aim of the confessions. But self-justification is exactly what he fails to do; and it is only natural that he should fail, since confessing is by definition a renouncing of self-justification, or moreover, it is admitting beforehand that self-justification is unavailable for lack of reasons to do so. So, more than to justify himself, Rousseau aims at *excusing his actions*, giving way to the *rhetorical tension* that de Man so aptly discusses, in the process diluting the case the reader has on Rousseau. De Man, “Excuses (confessions),” in *Allegories of Reading*, 278-391. We will return to this problem later in this chapter.

²⁴⁹ For, in the same way that in addressing himself directly to God Saint Augustine is otherwise using his address as a discursive platform to appeal to his audience of brotherly men, in addressing himself to his readers Rousseau is really appealing to an *empirical*, concrete other from whom absolution in the form of sympathetic understanding would come. We have already had time to see that, as we take as an indication of the gravity of the trespass and transgression that leads him to confession, Rousseau in the end is really addressing God in appealing to his reader, as he leaves no room for doubts in the *Preface* to his *Confessions*. In this sense, one would be correct in saying that in apostrophe and apostrophic discourse involves not “two parties, but three.” Angel G. Loureiro, “Preface,” *The ethics of Autobiography: Replacing the Subject in Modern Spain*, xii, Vanderbilt University Press, 2000. About the double appeal contained in Rousseau’s address, see Starobinski, “The two Tribunals,” in *The Transparency and the Obstruction*, 251-251. *Malgré* Starobinski, we must insist on the rhetorical nature of the structure present in the form of address/appeal employed by Saint Augustine, which, embedded in the language itself and pertaining to what the discourse is set to accomplish, it is present in it whether a specific rhetorical effect is sought or not. Another way of saying this is, the rhetorical figure that allows a discourse to address and appeal to two different audiences at the same time, apostrophe, does its work independently of the intentions of the author, and this “work” is always rhetorical. Starobinski seems to deny that this is the case. See Starobinski, “The Style of Autobiography,” in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, 77-78, ed. James Olney.

purpose is that precisely it is because Rousseau endows the reader with the power to pass judgment on the self as Saint Augustine does to God that his autobiography *becomes* a confession, for as Torres proves in *Vida*, it does not need to be so. That the reader is envisioned as authoritative to pass judgment on the individual is tantamount to the abdication of the right to self-determination because to judge is to pass verdict, and, as the Latin etymology gives a glimpse into what goes on in real life, to pass *verdict* is to establish and determine the truth on behalf or against somebody. The grave implication here is that in confession as in court, not matter what the individual *says*, the “Self” does not get to tell the truth about itself; rather, the truth is what the individual gets to be *told* by the sitting judge— by the reader, in this case. As we will see, Torres knows this way in advance of Rousseau, and consequently he discards it and, typically in him, disparages any attempt to do so²⁵⁰. One should then be careful not to hold, as de Man does, that “to confess is to overcome guilt and shame in the name of truth²⁵¹,” rather, it seems that guilt and shame is what is constitutive of truth in confession, and this truth emerges not necessarily in confessing as such but in the *verdict* from the judge that follows it, by whom “truth-telling” is in the end defined: shame and guilt then would be *the proof* that truth has been established. Because confessions showcase the existential anxiety of the self whose truth, whatever it says about itself, will ultimately be decided by the confessor, the individual who makes of confessing his preferred means of reenactment of his life proceeds on the illusion of a ministration of justice that is all but guaranteed. That the truth in confession comes from the other gives renew importance to Torres and Goethe’s awareness that the truth in life-narration is not reached by providing a detailed and as it

²⁵⁰ “A todo el mundo lo dejo gárlar y decir sobre lo que sabe o lo que ignora, *sobre mi* o sobre quien le agarra al vuelo su voluntad, *su rabia* y su costumbre.” Torres, *Vida*, 57.

²⁵¹ Paul de Man, see note above.

were, minute-by-minute account of a life, but by *freely* establishing the significance of the facts and therefore *selecting* what is worth to account for. Thus, Torres dismisses out-of-hand that justice can come from the other:

From a very young age I learned that more *justice* or more sympathy than what they esteem necessary for *their own measure of personal self-worth cannot be expected from others*. I learned that in whatever concerns small or great matters everybody seeks their own accommodation, and follows their own notions of things²⁵². (Emphasis added).

Since it is during the defining moment of his autobiographical enterprise that these statements occur, Torres is from the outset denying the “Other” any authority to place any *demands* on the “Self.” Since the truth will be determined on the basis of values that have always already been agreed upon by the other, justice cannot be coming from that side. And, from the moment an individual realizes that justice cannot be expected from the other, he will either restrain from confessing, or will have to be *compelled*, or in the language of penal justice, *subpoenaed*, by the other. And this is all of the utmost importance, for in taking this firm stance Torres is not only vouching for individual freedom and staking a fundamental claim to the exercise of his individuality; he is also defining autobiography from the very beginning as the space and the means to do that. Against Saint Augustine and as he take on Saint Augustine’s steps, *beforehand* against Rousseau, Torres defines his relationship with the other on an ethics predicated on the freedom of the individual to make of this freedom constitutive of his truth; he therefore

²⁵² Desde muy niño conocí que de las gentes no se puede pretender ni esperar más justicia ni más misericordia que la que le haga falta a su amor propio. En los asuntos de poca o mucha importancia, cada uno sigue su comodidad y sus ideas.” Torres, *Vida*, 57.

does not give in to demands²⁵³. We will have to come back to the question of the demand from the other that is supposed to be met in autobiography and to the question of whether ethical relation between the self and the other can develop on the basis of this demand, as it has been claimed²⁵⁴. In the meantime, we would like to remark that if the “Self,” whether understood as the individual or the “subject” must be arraigned for the confession to take place this explains the existential anxiety that takes over the confessant during, after and even *before* the process gets on its way; and this anxiety gets registered at the level of discourse in the rhetorical strategies the confessant must have recourse to, to placate the effects of getting stripped of its freedom to *discursive* self-determination²⁵⁵. That this existential anxiety precedes the verbal act of confession can be explicated by the fact that, as Saint Augustine is unambiguous on this point, and Rousseau only less so, the “Self” that confesses, because it does so from the ontological condition of perceiving itself as internally divided by the “Other” even before the process begins knows that its truth does not really belong to it and, that as a matter of fact, it has *no* truth at all to tell other than it is burdened with the remorse, shame and the guilt stemming from its transgressions²⁵⁶. It is so, for in confessing to the other the “Self,” or as you will, the

²⁵³ “Why do they demand to hear from me what I am when they refuse to hear from you what they are? And they hear me talking about myself, how can they know if I am telling the truth?” Saint Augustine, “Memory,” in *Confessions*, 180, Book X. He raises the question, but anyway gives in to their demand, which is tacit admission that he feels compelled by them

²⁵⁴ This the position defended by Loureiro, who in adopting Levinas’ theorization of the determination of the self by the other recovers the concept of demand as containing an ethical call from the other to the self to account for its truth. We will in time question whether the proposition of an ethical relation based on a demand that must be satisfied does not presuppose a contradiction in terms. See Loureiro, *The Ethics of Autobiography: replacing the Subject in Modern Spain*.

²⁵⁵ Among these strategies, typically of confessing, is of course typified by both Saint Augustine and Rousseau in their propensity to address one entity to appeal to another, or the other way around, to make an appeal in order to address another entity through the consistent employment of a language controlled by apostrophe.

²⁵⁶ “When *I am evil*, making confession to you is simply to be displeased with myself. When *I am good*, making confession to you is simply to make no claim on my own behalf” [...]. Saint Augustine, “Memory,” *Confessions*, 180.

individual or the “subject” is thereby admitting that it has no way of proving its truth: telling the truth does not suffice for the truth to be *established*; and establishing the truth, on the other hand, hangs on factors which the confessant himself cannot account for²⁵⁷. It does not matter that, as Saint Augustine does, in addressing himself to God he is actually making an appeal to human justice in the other, or that as is the case with Rousseau, his address is directed to men to actually make an appeal to divine justice. For, accepting that one can know oneself only *through* the other is tantamount to renouncing before the other the power for the determination of the “Self,” with all the consequences, above all political, implied thereof²⁵⁸. On the issue involved here Rousseau is as self-indulgent and explanatory as Saint Augustine is *allegoric* by virtue of being *apostrophic*; for he *seems* to sincerely believe that if the reader is provided with a day-by-day-minute-by-minute detail of his doings, feelings and thoughts, his soul would be made transparent, so that he can be *judged* by the reader on the basis of this transparence²⁵⁹. Accordingly, it is in the act of judging that the self-identity of the autobiographical subject will ultimately be determined; and so and always accordingly to the only reasonable interpretation that can be offered of the statements below, in Rousseau all the efforts at self-representation end up being of no avail to the “Self.” Thus Rousseau:

It is up to the reader to assemble the [autobiographical] elements and so *to determine* what kind of being they compose; *he must responsible for the results*, and if he makes mistakes, he will be the one to blame. To this end, *it*

²⁵⁷ “I also, Lord, so make my confession to you that I may be heard by people to whom *I cannot prove that my confession is true*. But those whose *ears are opened by love* believe me.” Saint Augustine, *Ibid*.

²⁵⁸ “To hear you speaking about oneself is *to know oneself* (sic.)” *Ibid*.

²⁵⁹ Rousseau, *Confessions*, 175, Book IV.

*does not suffice that my account be true; they must also be exact. It is not up to me to judge the significance of the facts, my duty is to recount them all and let him choose*²⁶⁰.

(Emphasis added).

Since, ontologically understood, autobiography is a verbal construction in which the “Self” relates to itself in relating to its existence, as such it is constitutive at the level of language of the struggle for affirmation of the “Self” vis-à-vis the “Other” that characterizes human existence²⁶¹. Thus, to feel the need as Rousseau does of laying oneself bare to exclusively allow oneself to be judged by the other is equivalent to a tacit admission of a basic failure to attain self-consciousness²⁶². And this is so because, again ontologically understood, regardless of how much details there might be given in a life account, in the last analysis what one is accounting for is how and to what degree, in relating oneself to one’s existence self-consciousness as knowledge of one’s mode of being in the world has been attained. From this standpoint, an autobiography that, as Rousseau’s, *confesses* to ceding the authority to decide the terms in which self-understanding takes place to something other than the “Self” that therein takes its existence as the object of its understanding, is a contradiction in terms. Now, because in autobiography the *practical* character of the relation of oneself to oneself is revealed, since

²⁶⁰ Rousseau, *Confessions*, 175, Book IV.

²⁶¹ Autobiography, one would like to say, like no other form of discursive self-understanding, best captures the notion of “struggle for recognition” that existence is and that makes self-consciousness possible, since it in essence this struggle for recognition is given therein in narrative form, with the added advantage that it at the same time represents this struggle as one for self-recognition. “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged.” See Hegel, “Independence and dependence of Self-Consciousness,” in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, 111, 178.

²⁶² On this specific interpretation of consciousness, see Hegel: Self-consciousness is, to begin with, simple being-for-self, self-equal through the exclusion from itself of everything else. For it, its essence and absolute object is ‘I’; and in this immediacy, or in this being, of its being-for-self, it is *an individual* (sic.)” Hegel, “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage,” in *Hegel’s Phenomenology of the Spirit*, 113, 186.

one relates to one's existence through one's *actions*, and actions entail making decisions, the question of *individual freedom and individual responsibility* is always at the bottom of the account that one gives of one's life. In consequence, because as Rousseau prefers it, it is the other on whom the responsibility falls to decide the significance and the truth of his account, in confession the individual relinquishes his responsibility both towards himself and towards the other; and in bailing himself out of his responsibility, the individual freedom that being both "the author of the autobiography and the author *in the* autobiography²⁶³" is renounced.

The situation we are dealing with here is crucial; for, since it deals exclusively with the mode of self-understanding of a person, in autobiography as well as in life, individual freedom is the *freedom of choosing oneself before the other* from among the Self's "range of potentiality-for-being,²⁶⁴" that is, possibilities of actions and decisions, and therefore it entails the question of the extent to which the individual retains his right to self-determination, and again and as we discussed earlier, the *political* determination of not allowing one's identity to be defined by forces external to oneself. On the other hand, in the question of individual responsibility and individual freedom, since it concerns the choice one makes (made) about what kind of person one is or has become, a further question about the *rationality* and *justifiability* of the choice made or of the mode of choosing arises. For, self-determination means above all that one can *rationally* justify *before the other* the choices made concerning *who one is* or *who one has become*, which really means what one has *done*, since *one authentically is through and in his actions*²⁶⁵.

²⁶³ The phrasing is de Man's. See "Autobiography as De-Facement," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 72.

²⁶⁴ Heidegger, "Being as Understanding," in *Being and Time*, 184.

²⁶⁵ For a better understanding of the concept of self-determination in connection the concepts of rationality and responsibility, see Tungendhat's study on Heidegger's conceptualization of the relation of "oneself to

To be able, but in the case at hand, willing to provide this justification is a responsibility that autobiography cannot shirk if at the same time the self in it seeks to assert itself in asserting the truthfulness of the account. Thus, to refuse to justify himself, as Rousseau does, stands in opposition to what defines autobiography as “accountability,” since an account is a call or commitment to justification²⁶⁶. It is something altogether different in confession and the confessional mode²⁶⁷.

Now, when this refusal to self-justification—which as we have seen, in fact is a fleeing from individual responsibility and which is therefore tantamount to a renunciation to the possibility of self-determination—is taken within the historical context in which it has taken place, we can see that the way Rousseau chooses to confront this problem is not modern at all. For the renunciation of the possibility of self-determination by abdicating the individual responsibility to justify oneself *in the manner Rousseau does it*, that is, because in his mind justifying one’s actions would be counterproductive to the outcome of the judgment the “Other” will pass on the “Self,” or because of a direct or indirect acknowledgement that the “Self” has no right whatever to self-justification—*stands in opposition to the fundamental individualist values that are inherent to modernity and the Enlightenment, which precisely begin as a call for the inalienable right of the individual*

oneself” in relation to Mead’s. Tugendhat, “Mead: Symbolic Interaction,” in *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, 219-236.

²⁶⁶ “For one says that someone acts or lives *responsibly if he can provide a final or definitive account* of his actions; and this implies that he can justify his action to the full extent of its justifiability, and then bears the rest of the burden on himself (sic).” (Emphasis added), Tugendhat, “Concluding with Hegel, I,” in *Ibid.* 265.

²⁶⁷ In this refusal to justify himself, we can read a reproduction at the level of discourse of Rousseau’s irresponsibility toward himself in his empirical life, which, as he tells of it in his *Confessions*, brims with episodes where he shows an inability to choose for himself and a tendency to adopt other people’s identity; and to fail to account to self for his actions. It is more than ironic that one of the few instances from his empirical life where Rousseau “chose choosing” from the range of possibilities available to him was precisely when he decided to give up his children, which in turn prompted his *Confessions*, in which he now confesses to his inability to justify himself. About these distinguishing traits in Rousseau’s character, see Starobinski, “Magic,” in *Transparency and Obstruction*, 58-64.

*before the other*²⁶⁸. If we give this further consideration, we realize that what is truly modern in Rousseau's *Confessions* is that, whereas Saint Augustine appoints God as the confessor and judge to whom he will surrender his individual freedom, Rousseau assigns the reader, or what is the same, society this role. But we have already seen what the *intended* audience of each of Rousseau really is; in addressing himself to men to ultimately appeal to God Rousseau shows that what in him is truly novel and modern is the *form* of his *appeal*; if so, autobiographical confession would not have changed much from antiquity to "modernity."

Except that this picture changes with Torres. For in Torres, from its very beginning modern autobiography defines itself against the tradition of autobiographical writing in that it declines to entertain that *policing* of the soul that confession is. As we will be discussing in the following chapter, in its form of addressing its audience; in its formal structure and language; and in its style and strategy *Vida* presents itself as a consciously moving away and as a disavowal of the confessional mode. When the origin of confession in the history of Christianity as an effective and preferred mechanism of subjecting the individual to its power and authority is taken into account, then we realize that in defining himself against the tradition of confession, compared to Rousseau, and on his own merit, the author of *Vida* appears as a truer representative of the *enlightened individual* who takes in his own hands the business of his life and who refuses to submit to self-appointed authority. In this sense, Torres's *Vida* gives shape to that very modern tendency to "create

²⁶⁸ To avoid charge of self-contradiction, this calls for further specification. As we will make clear later, Torres also refuses to justify himself before his reader; but he does it for exactly the opposite reason than Rousseau's and then again, as a position of defiance and irreverence toward the reader, to whom he feels he owns no explanation of his actions. So, in Torres, the refusal to self-justification is indeed his way of defining himself in the most decisive and independent manner; in proceeding this way he makes no concession to the reader, as he defends his right not to give in to any demand for self-justification.

oneself” materialized in Goethe, whose autobiography is there to justify; for Torres, like Franklin and Goethe, also created himself, and *Vida* bears witness to his own creation. Historically ahead of Franklin, Torres is first in representing the enlightened modern individuality who struggles to be his own self-made man, in more ways than one²⁶⁹. This is what rides in his taking position against the practice of the confessional autobiography that distinguishes Saint Augustine and Rousseau. But as we will see, this position is at once the result of, and one of the many expressions, of a radicalized individuality.

²⁶⁹ Here, the concept of self-creation is being used in the same way that Nietzsche applies it to Goethe: as given “style” to one’s character. This of course does not mean that Torres created himself to the same degree that Goethe did; and neither to the same aims. See Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 290; *Twilight of the Idols*, IX.

Part Two

Chapter 2.1

Vida as an Autobiographical Approach to the Ontology of the Self (Recapitulation)

In Part One I advanced the thesis that in attempting to produce a truthful autobiographical representation of his self, or of what amounts to the same—to establish an ontologically valid account of the “am” of his “I,” his mode of being in the world, that is, Torres addresses the question of existence, or at any his own existence, in a fundamental way. But there is more than one way in which we could say that Torres deals with this problem fundamentally. First and foremost, in attempting to autobiographically define the existential mode of his being in the world, Torres discovers himself in the Heideggerian manner as a Being-in-the-world that is a Being-in-with-Others. As it was explained then, this means that in autobiographically encountering his self Torres encounters the “Self” as the metaphysical subject, or if one prefers to rephrase this, one could say that in encountering the autobiographical self, Torres comes face to face with the subject of metaphysical philosophy. In any case, this is the first instance of Torres’s dealing with the problematic of self-representation fundamentally. For, in encountering himself as individuated subjectivity he discovers the larger phenomenon of intersubjectivity as that on which his self-consciousness of his being an individuated subjectivity depends on. That, I submitted, introduces Torres to us as a Hegelian before Hegel, even if as it was then noticed, he captures the phenomenon of the Self (consciousness itself) as the Hegelian universal Spirit, at a more advanced phase of

development than Hegel does, as it should be understood from the fact that in Torres the difference subjectivities present in consciousness are encountered as *already* recognizing mutually their existence. This possibility of mutual recognition, which also happens reciprocally, allows for a situation in existence where sameness (or identity) paves the way for difference to arise, at the same time that difference refers back to sameness. Since he has awareness that all men are just one Man, with which the universality and existential constancy of the Self as the subjectum of metaphysics is posited, each self has a death to die alone, that is, we all die *individually*, and this realization allows Torres to further posit difference as arising from sameness; for death does not come to all of us at the same time. Death then, in Torres's manner of seeing, is the first factor of differentiation encountered by universal consciousness. As I duly noticed before I also do here that in the same way that Torres *sketches* an anticipation of Hegel, in this he now also *sketches* an anticipation of Heidegger's ontology of Existence and Dilthey's ontology of Life. For, by positing the fact that we all have the same death to die alone, which in point of fact implies positing the temporal essentiality of the human Self as the universal spirit, Torres also includes death as constitutive of and *as allowing existence*; and this is the *second* meaning that saying that he deals with the question of autobiographical self-representation in a fundamental way has. Proceeding in this way, Torres manages to bring autobiographical account and ontological foundation of the Self together; or, if one prefers to rephrase here too, one would say that he manages to show that autobiographical undertaking, when it is carried out in a fundamental way reveals the Self in almost the same light as existential ontology does.

But I also introduced the thesis that, since Torres arrives at his understanding of his mode of being in the world from an initial consideration of his own conscious states of mind, in him the “passions,” our moods and feelings, are posited not as manifestations or expressions of the Self among others, but as constitutive of the selfhood of the Self, since it is in them an *as* they that the Self enters in relation with Existence. Because Torres is aware that the Self can never take hold of its existence apart from a given mood, or rather, because the Self is always in one mood or another, in the grip of one passion or another and exhibiting one feeling or another and moods, passions and feelings are in constant change, I also said that with him the Self is for the first time encountered *autobiographically* as states-of-mind in a state of permanent and yet recurring changes. Here the tendency of the Self to multiplicity and diversity is then taken note of. This tendency to multiplicity and diversity in the Self however does not entail an inner division; for even if as Torres recognizes, we can never attain definitive knowledge as to the causes of those changes and alterations brought on us by moods and feelings, the Self is always selfsame; the “I” is always the “I” through its changes. In this, one more time we come *practically* face to face with the character of the *subjectum* in the Self; the Self, as the entity that is thrown into existence and into its manifold moods which however remains selfsame all throughout, has the character of what is *sub-ject*, “thrown under,” and therefore is that which “lies below.” As such, then the Self as the subject is a substratum, an essentially metaphysical entity. And this is yet another (*third*) way in which Torres approaches the question of self-identity fundamentally.

For Torres, then the basic challenge of his autobiographical undertaking becomes how to produce a faithful account of the self-sameness of his self that also and at the same

time accounts for its changing and altering nature. As we already suggested above and thoroughly discussed in Part One, unlike philosophical inquiry, in autobiography we must meet the question of existence practically. For therein, that we are existential entities reflecting on the fact that we exist and on the condition in which existence has been given us, is given to us more *immediately* to understand. And in the same way that Torres shows that we cannot ontologically take hold of the Self unless we at the same time take stock of our moods and passions, we can only autobiographically account for our life if we, in *one single motion* of our understanding, a) conceive of Life as the Self; and b) conceive of the “Self” as constituted by our volitions, activities and actions. This is precisely and neatly what is contained in Torres’s reflection upon himself as autobiographical reflection upon his life. *Vida*, as the name of his autobiography, both metaphorically and existentially factors in this very complex ontological phenomenon. To conceive of the Self as constituted by our volitions, activities and actions is to meet the question of existence practically because these are the modes in which we empirically and permanently relate to ourselves. Since we relate to ourselves *in* our volitions and actions and these are always effected on the basis of deliberations in the form of decisions whether overtly stated or not, we always relate to ourselves in a practical mode in that our deliberative processes affect us practically in our existence; in Life, that is. In every deliberation the question of existence is being posed, whether in a general or restrictive scope. Thus, in Torres’s conceptualization of *his* life as *his* self a *fourth* and most decisive way of dealing with the question of self-representation fundamentally is revealed, for every deliberation made and every decision taken in his life must be considered as having a practical consequence for his self, and this means for his existence, restrictively considered or otherwise. Put in other

words, once the Self is conceived of as Life every decision taken is an answer to the question of the existential “to be or not to be,” and this answer is given either positively or negatively as a response to a question that has been implicitly or explicitly posed in a general or restrictive way. For the “I” always is or not, but always in a practical way.

In Torres then, I submitted, one discovers a way of *autobiographically* understanding the relation of the self to itself which is different from either the solipsistic, self-referential Cartesian cogito that exists only as self-certainty and that does away with any possibility of intersubjective relations, and from the intersubjective subject-object relation of the Hegelian idealistic philosophy, according to which the Self is reported as relating to itself both as the *subject* of knowledge and at the same time as the *object* of knowledge, *while* retaining consciousness of an individuated self involved in this dynamic relation. Directly depending on his approaching the problem of self-relation autobiographically, as I also argued, in Torres one relates oneself to oneself in relating to one’s existence and one’s mode of being, which always already takes place *in the world*. Now, I then remarked, this is how this phenomenological-ontological situation is encountered in the philosophy of the subject put forth by Nietzsche, and which climaxes in the existential philosophy of Heidegger, and the philosophical psychology of Mead. In both of them, but more pointedly so in the former, we relate to ourselves in relating ourselves to our existence. In Heidegger, though, just as in Torres, to each of us both together and individually, existence, Life, that is, and Self appear as one and the same phenomenon in that neither can be conceived of independently from the other.

And this impinges ponderously on any theorization of autobiography, which from now on cannot any longer be spoken of as the product of a self-reflection in which this

concept is understood either as the Self introspectively “reflecting” upon itself; nor can we anymore say that in autobiography, in the factual act of writing and in the writing itself the Self produces its own reflection. For, the first is just another way of reenacting the Hegelian subject-object concept of self-consciousness, according to which the Self would be a subject “reflecting” itself on itself as object through an act of inner self-perception, and which obviously rests on allowing for the Self an inner/outer dimension through a spatiotemporal metaphor that can neither factually nor empirically be grasped. On the other hand, to conceive of autobiography as an act of linguistic self-reflection in which the Self reflects itself on “writing” itself, as it has been derived from the post-structuralism, psycho-linguistic approaches to the Self advanced by Lacan and others, is something that neither factually nor factually ever takes place in writing. I already called attention to the impossibility of the Self “reflecting” itself; for we cannot relate to ourselves *as* ourselves; we can only relate to ourselves by relating to our moods, thinking, feelings and the like, and these are only revealed to us in the actions, deliberations and decisions *in* which and *as* which existence is given to us. In the end, the notion that “self-writing” equates to “self-reflection” is another version of the Hegelian, idealistic notion of self-consciousness and as such it is a concept that rests on the spectacular metaphor of writing as the “mirror” on which the Self gets “reflected.” To that extent, it is a metaphor too literally understood.

Given that it is *autobiographically* that in Diego de Torres the relation of the Self to itself are discovered as a practical relation to existence, introspective self-reflection in the mode of “looking-in” or self-reflection in the mode of a “mirroring” of the Self by its writing get superseded in favor of immanently self-examination in the mode of questioning and interrogation of one’s actions in cross-examination with the sets of beliefs

on which such actions are predicated. In this way the possibilities open up for better grasping the role that immediate epistemic self-consciousness plays in the *emergence* of the Self as the individuated subject of metaphysics, and then too of the Self inasmuch as the political individual, the “subject.” This is so because, as I already argued after Heidegger’s manner, every mood has its understanding; every action exhibits the Self in one mood or another, to which it *belongs* in the mode of a not-knowing where a given mood arises from to overtake the Self, as Torres states. He never knows where they come from, those changes in mood that constantly alter his self, he says.

On the other hand, since in self-examination not only our actions but also the presuppositions that serve as their basis are questioned and the decisions and deliberations that antecede our actions are evaluated and reevaluated, possibilities open up for better grasping the role played by the individual in the ontological *determination* of the Self as the subject. This is so because in self-examination the Self must justify to itself its decisions and deliberations, and assume *practical* responsibility for its actions before the Other. Thus, in relating to oneself by questioning one’s actions and the motivations behind them allows for intersubjective verification of whatever claim the Self might raise about itself. Self-examination, then, contrary to what takes place in “self-reflection,” regardless of how it gets defined, opens up possibilities for the Self to determine itself by explicitly or implicitly posing the fundamental question concerning its mode of being in the world and of being with others, question which in actuality is one and the same: whether to be or not; and *how* to be, and what is the best mode of being—that is. Self-examination—which now we can see is Torres’s name for “reflective self-relation” as it is known in contemporary analytic philosophy— is the work of one’s conscience, as he

straightforwardly indicates. As the call that is given to us to hear individually and which designates it as the foundation of the autonomous individuality of the Self, conscience does not get confused in Torres or rather, gets distinguished in him from both immediate epistemic “self-consciousness” as our knowledge of the state of mind we are in, and from “consciousness” as one of those states we can be in. By providing a life account on the basis of an examination of his actions by his autonomous conscience, which I already said is how the Self assumes responsibility in its self-determination, in Torres autobiography is revealed as the medium par excellence to proclaim and to attempt to preserve the individual freedom and the right of the individual to, above all, freely express his individuality, so characteristic of modernity; and this movement marks a departure from outdated conceptualization of the Self, and constitutes a break with traditional forms of autobiographical representation. Further, I also argued that because of the very fact that it enacts a mode of self-relation in which the Self freely chooses itself in choosing to behave in accordance with its conscience and to thereby claim its right to partake on establishing the truth about itself, in *Vida* the possibilities for the authenticity of Self are shown, authenticity defined in the Heideggerian manner as the Self recalling itself back from the alienation in which it is kept by the Other in its everydayness. This, I previously contended, is the ground on which the thesis of *Vida* as the truly first modern autobiography is purported.

For, precisely because it posits a relation of the Self to itself viewed as reflective self-relation which is necessarily practical, given that it is the call of the autonomous conscience of an individual that corresponds to the Delphic call to “Know thyself,” *Vida* constitutes a most radical break with the traditional confessional model bequeathed by

Saint Augustine and uncritically adopted by Rousseau, which paradoxically and to all evidences, has heretofore mistakenly been thought of as the inventor of the modern paradigm of self-representation. Because in confession the freedom of the Self is curtailed, in that by and in itself confession is a compulsion to talk and in talking the confessing Self *must* tell “all” about itself, the confessional model stands in contradiction to the aspirations and program of modernity. For this very reason I have maintained that in introducing a different way and different precepts on which a truthful account of the Self can be rendered, *Vida* proposes itself as authentically the first modern autobiography, a fact that, as I demonstrated in Part One, is also supported at the most elementary level by chronological data. As I insisted on earlier, the modernity of *Vida* and its heretofore unrecognized preeminent place in the history of autobiographical representation is obliquely confirmed by Goethe, Franklin and others unquestioned champions of modern consciousness, who in fashioning their autobiographies also move away from the confessional model of Saint Augustine and Rousseau, and are to be classed with Torres, but *after* him, as expounding similar ways of conceiving of the relation of oneself to oneself spawned by *Vida*.

I must insist that it is the self-determinative possibility presupposed in understanding the relation of the Self to itself as reflective self-relation that in the end allows Diego de Torres to bypass the confessional model and to *hit upon a new type* of autobiographical account that does not rely on an introspective, soul-searching canvassing of his interiority as practiced by Saint Augustine and Rousseau. For, contrary to a self-relation in which knowledge of the Self supposedly attains in a self-consciousness that postulates itself *twice*, first as a subject and then as an object, as this problematic is

understood in traditional metaphysics—self-examination of conscience, because it requires that one justify one’s actions to oneself, introduces into this equation the element of *reasonability*. Reason, by necessity is intersubjective, and so it implies that, unless the Self does not want or care to be deemed *irrational* and dealt with on this basis, in justifying one’s actions to oneself the Other is ipso facto taken into account; for the Self wants to be counted in as *able subjectivity*. That is how I could maintain that in Diego de Torres individual conscience paves the way for *social conscience*. As far as this is so, since the content of this conscience exhibits the same preoccupations and the same political values and philosophical pursuits of social, gender and racial equality, and of individual freedom and social solidarity as the Enlightenment, Diego’s conscience reveals itself to us as *enlightened conscience*. And this straightforwardly suggests that his social practices are those of the enlightened Self. That practical, that is, deliberative self-determination in the mode of “justifying-to-oneself” in Torres equates to enlightened conscience is demonstrated in that, when his practical relation with the Other (his servants, relatives, friends and enemies, and authorities) is examined, he feels justified in his conscience that his actions accord with his norms and beliefs, and are therefore correct. For his part, because the content of his conscience is corroborated by his actions, that is, because he feels he can vouch for his actions with reasonability, he constantly challenges, defies and taunts those who might doubt him to come out and confront him to his face. But here I am already touching upon the ontological interpretation of his pugilistic rhetoric and provocative writing style, to be analyzed in this second part.

This recapitulation roughly comprises the degree of understanding that I have thus far been able to acquire concerning the subject-matter under consideration in this study. In

it I have sought to bring to the fore the many philosophical uses of Diego de Torres autobiographical project to underline the extent to which his approach to the problematic of self-representation competes with at some level and to some degree with a certain kind of ontological philosophy, namely, existential phenomenology in the German and, by extension, French tradition. I am not in any way attempting to make of Diego de Torres into the philosopher that he certainly was not and that he never claimed seriously to be²⁷⁰. But I am otherwise calling attention to the surprising way in which his autobiographical undertaking turns out to be, to say the least, ancillary to philosophy in its efforts to elucidate fundamental questions concerning the selfhood of the self. I will now return to the point where we left off this study in the last chapter of Part One.

²⁷⁰ Torres, “Noticias alegres y festivas de las ráfagas de luz que se vieron la noche 16 de diciembre de 1737 sobre el horizonte de Madrid: Prologo sesenta y seis,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 89.

Chapter 2.2

Ethical Attitude: Authenticity, Rhetoric and Style

The discussion conducted in the last chapter of Part One has enabled us to see that the distinction I introduced there between the concept of confession and the concept of autobiography far from responding to a superficial preoccupation with forms brings out important elements belonging to the task of autobiographical self-representation that would otherwise remain hidden²⁷¹. Doing that has allowed me to show on what philosophical grounds the unquestionable modernity of Diego de Torres and his work can be maintained, what it consists of and how, by the parameters set down from the present analysis, his priority vis-à-vis Rousseau as a precursor of an ideal of modern individuality that is still with us in our own days can be defended. Independently of how this thesis might stand at the end, I take it as a matter of course that I have succeeded in establishing beyond any doubt that autobiography and confession are in a very significant way two very different kinds of self-portraying discourses.

And yet, it is nonetheless the case that an analysis of *Vida* that accounts for its formal structure and for the style of the writing that both contains it and holds it together is still missing here. To such an analysis I now turn. It should further confirm the thesis of Torres preeminence as a modern autobiographer by demonstrating a), that the formal structure of *Vida*, while adapting poorly to the concept and function of confession responds to Torres's coherent strategy to reclaim for the modern individual a kind of

²⁷¹The one only writer that to my knowledge comes closer to insinuating a difference between confession and what he calls the "public articulation of conscience" is John D. Barbour. But he does not extend this insight to autobiography in relation to confession both as differing concepts and as practices. See Barbour, "Conscience and Truthfulness," in *The Conscience of the Autobiographer: Ethical and Religious Dimensions of Autobiography*, 10.

discursive freedom that for being decisively political makes the self-determination of the modern individuality possible; and b) that his style responds to a premeditated anti-rhetorical stance to acquire and preserve, at the most basic, material level, individual independence from established powers and to exhibit the Self as existing in a state of hard-won authenticity (ingenuity).

2.2.1 Authenticity of the Self: Structure and Style in *Vida*

The first thing to be noticed is that the formal structure of *Vida*, like most other Torres's books, besides the corpus of the work, is composed of a "Dedicatory," followed by an "Prologue to the Reader" and finally, by an "Introduction." Another thing to be noticed is that this formal structure, which in itself is made of divisions, is further divided by the different styles of the writing that makes of it a whole. One notices that while the writing style in the "Dedicatory" prefers a form of address that favors a protocol of reverence and deference toward the addressee that contrasts with a representation of the addresser as humbling to the point of being self-effacing, the style in the "Prologue to the Reader" reverses all this. In the "Prólogo al Lector" the addresser reverts to a confrontational tone, and where humility was in place now arrogance, contempt and derisiveness are the order of the day and, whereas in the "Dedicatory" the dedicatee had to necessarily be kowtowed to, in the prologue nobody is spared, including the addresser himself, who appears in a no more favorable light than the reader to whom it may concern. In appearance, from one page to the next a tone and affectation of reverence and submission has been overtaken by a tone and a language of pugilistic provocation. But it is

only *apparently* that this change takes place with the turn of page; more is certainly at stake which has much to do with the politics of the strategy of the discourse Torres is displaying here, and of which I will say more shortly. By the time the page turns again, one cannot but admit to a sense of having been thrown off, as tone and language change yet again. In the “Introduction” both the pugilistic and the self-defacing tones have shifted and in their place we get a more reposed and obliging manner of address characterized by the apparent willingness of the addresser to take us into his confidence, presenting himself as more closer to us, and yet more distant. For while not being self-effacing in that he himself inasmuch as addresser becomes the center of his own address, he has turned self-deriding and belittling to the point of seeming abusive towards himself, and all at the same time, both stresses difference and sameness respective to the addressee, which now has been rendered indistinguishable, and therefore has been rendered capable of exchanging places with him.

Since the addressee in the “Dedicatory” is identified therein as the Duchess of Alba, and through her the aristocratic milieu that she belongs in, she is addressed in the style of the courts and the tone employed is therefore reverential in acknowledgement of her authority, but also in recognition of the relation of the friendship that unites the addresser to the addressee, which happens to be also to whom *Vida* is dedicated. Here, authority and friendship fold into each other and no evidence is given that one type of relation takes predominance over the other, indicating that for Diego de Torres friendship takes on the character of authority for him; this of course does not necessarily mean that the other way around is also true; authority does not always take on the character of friendship. Thus, the “Prologue al Lector,” makes it evident that the addresser has nothing

to hold him back before the “reader,” on whom neither friendship nor authority status is conferred or recognized, and which is defined by a different type of relation toward him. Although “to the reader” as an indexical marking suggests the addressee of the “Prologue” is of a miscellaneous sort, it is evident from the context that Torres has in mind other writers and scholars, sworn enemies who question and dismiss him as an irrelevant writer and scholar, partially but also precisely because they cannot see clearly, or resist believing, what he is up to with his writing²⁷². This of course explains the sudden shift from humility to arrogance and from submission and self-renunciation to self-affirmation; the poison and insults can here run freely and the belligerence of Torres style of writing, often expressed in his corrosive and sardonic humor that spares no one finds in its “prologues” his natural habitat. It is not without significance that the word “pícaro” occurs first in the ‘Prologue’ and afterwards many times in the corpus but no once in the “Dedicatory” or in the “Introduction,” whose tone and language are in tandem with each other. In itself this data indicates that Torres knows exactly what he is doing; the “Prologue,” as worked out by him, has a picaresque tradition and much of the misunderstanding in the classing of *Vida* as a “picaresque” novel takes as its only basis this fact. For the “Prólogo al Lector” as almost all other prologues Torres wrote is the only component properly picaresque in his works, and since to the picaroon character

²⁷² See Mercadier, Diego de Torres Villarroel: *Masques et Miroirs*, Editions Hispaniques, Paris, 1981. See also Ivy I. L. McClelland, *Diego de Torres Villarroel*, Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1976. But more to the point, see page 23 and following in Damaso Chicharro’s introduction to his edition of *Vida*. In any case, Torres makes it clear who he has in mind when penning his prologue: “Y yo te diré, con mucha cachaza, que no hay que hacer ascos, porque no es más limpio el que escucho salir de tu boca, y casi tan hediondo y pestilente el que, después de muy fregado y relamido, pone tu vanidad *en las imprentas*. Puedes que digas (por meterte a *doctor* como acostumbras)” [...]. Torres, “Prólogo al lector,” *Vida*, 49.

*everything is allowed to say it easy to see how this is just a mask*²⁷³. Obviously, attention has never been paid to how the “real” picaresque character never considers himself a “pícaro” and that on the contrary, he endeavors to hide and dissimulate what he really is; and therefore *hiding* that he is a pícaro is what in the first place *reveals* his real nature. And neither has it been noticed before that whenever Torres calls himself “pícaro” he does it on the assumption that that is what his enemies take him for and he therefore is attributing to *them* calling him that. But I will get back to this point later. In the same way that the ‘Dedicatory’ keeps itself to the formality of the courts, the “Introduction” literally introduces the reader to the formality of the morally edifying discourse in which the tone and language of the “offended” provocateur found in the prologue is abandoned, and a somber, ceremonial and resigned tone carried by a language evocative of both a *requiem* and a *dirge*, sets in, and predominates. Here, as in the case of the dedicatory and the prologue, the addressee is very clearly recognizable too; except that the addressees of this introduction are many; as are its functions. For the introduction, just like the body of the work and which will stand as a symbol of the “body of the spirit” of its author, as we saw earlier, is addressed to “friends” and “enemies” alike, and it is aimed to both the reader contemporaneous with the addresser and to his posterity, on the one hand; on the other hand, it is also addressed to *this* world and to the *otherworld*. And just as we also saw earlier, the introduction is the first indicator and at the same time best example of the thesis I put forward in Part One of *Vida* as being *written towards death*, with all the attendant consequences this interpretation has for the unique kind of autobiographical discourse *Vida* constitutes, about which we will be hearing more in this Part Two. As for

²⁷³ Joseph L. Laurenti, *Los Prólogos en las Novelas Picarescas Españolas*, Artes Gráficas, España, 1971. Repeating the mistake of A. Valbuena Prat, he catalogues the “Prologue to the Reader” from *Vida* under the rubric “picaresque,” and concludes from here that Torres’s autobiography is a picaresque novel.

the body of the work itself, it is logically not only addressed to all and sundry who care reading it; elements from the dedicatory, the prologue and the introduction can there be found as forming the stuff of Torres's writing style; and this is made more obviously so since there they are overly reiterated, reworked and referred back to.

We might want to ask at this point: why does Torres need to keep shifting and re-shifting between forms, tones, moods and language? The first and simple answer is that he needs to keep one audience separated from the other, as not to alienate and contaminate them all at once. Once the Duchess of Alba, and as her name is a social protocol or marking of class, the aristocracy among which Torres had many friends are duly addressed to form, they get insulated from the more disheveled, no-holds-barred verbal barrage that follows in the next discursive units. Thus, these units are conceived accordingly to the teachings of classical rhetoric and modern advertising: to know your audience and to address it *directly*, that is, to tailor each address to suit your audience specifically. For all Torres's often disparaging of rhetoric, *Vida* roughly, and as far and close as it is possible for the kind of discourse that it is, follows classical rhetorical up to this point. Because each of these divisions are conceived with a specific audience in mind, the call to be read each separately from the other, and at the same time, as one aiding the other to come into being. For, each one is justified *by* the other. While the "Dedicatory" works to guaranty the truthfulness of the account, since it is addressed to an identified friend, the "Prólogo al Lector" confirms that the addresser intents to be truthful in his account precisely because it is addressed to identifiable enemies; that is precisely the *form* of address itself that renders both entities identifiable in relation to the addresser, lends more force to the truthfulness of the account that will follow. And the "Introduction" not

only works as the evidence that friends and foes have previously been separately addressed by *bringing them together* as a “to-whom-it-may-concern” kind of entity; it also works to define the manner in which the body of the work should be interpreted, since in it the ontological-existential context in which the autobiographical discourse will be placed is engendered. If one does not take into consideration the *subtle rhetorical articulation* present in this discourse, and the strategy to which it serves, which almost seems to be the *subtle cunning of an over-conscious and conscientious* Self one is bound to get thrown off and will either believe that Torres is a picaroon enmeshed in his own self-contradictions, as was the case for the longest of time until recent among his critics. Or else one will be caught saying as it has been even more recently done, that one cannot expect the truth about Diego de Torres to be revealed by Diego de Torres himself, which amounts to saying that *Vida* is not what it purports to be²⁷⁴.

And yet, this formal rhetorical organization of discourse, which as I suggested above is apparently composed of divisions, or segments and units, is welded together into a compact whole by the style of writing that informs them and in which tones, moods and language, and even the very act of the switching back and forth between them are basic ingredients. Therefore we see that whether the dedicatory, the prologue, the introduction of the body of the work itself is under consideration, we meet a simple, direct, take-no-prisoner and point-blank approach to writing in which the most confounding, or as the case may be, simplistic, or equally confrontational or celebratory statements are issued.

²⁷⁴ See for example Angel G. Loureiro, “Autobiografía del Otro (Rousseau, Torres de Villarroel, Juan Goytisolo),” *Siglo XX/20th Century*, IX, 1-2, 1991-1992, pp. 71-94. Loureiro credits Berenguer Carisomo with being the first to reject the long held theory of *Vida* as a picaresque novel; according to Mercadier, however, Alberto del Monte was first in calling that position into question in the Italian publication of his *Itinerario de la novela picaresca*, the title under which it was later published in Spain, in 1971. But in my view this is a point far from being definitively settled. One must not only reject a theory; one must to prove it wrong by showing how, on what ungrounded presuppositions it could have originated. This, obviously, is what the present study attempts to do.

Seem from this perspective, structure and style support each other. While the formal structure allows the type of discourse that best fits a targeted audience and that best addresses the subject-matter at hand to freely flow without giving rise to self-contradictions or absurdities sure to sabotage or limit its effects, it also protects the designated audience from the corrosive effects of its meaning. In other words, with this motion, Torres can let poison to freely flow, as well as engage all audiences at once in the game of praising and blaming the other and blaming and praising himself, which he often performs concomitantly, through adding an ironic turn of word to a sarcastic statement. On the other hand, whatever he is doing, blaming or praising or both, Torres's style, as the element that more properly belongs to the discourse itself, in that it produces its meaning by giving expression to the Self speaking therein, or better yet, *speaking itself through it*— functions to justify the structural whole, which would have otherwise remained disjointed and would for the same reason disallow an interpretation of it as coming from the same ontological-existential “source.”

If it true that the dedicatory stands for a symbolic guaranty of truthfulness of the account to follow, since it is addressed to a friend and which in a manner of speaking, gets *certified* by the same authorial, and therefore *authoritative authenticity* of expression in which the prologue, addressed to a foe, is written, *the style is the means through which and as which authenticity manifests itself in its most unmediated way*. If, on the one hand, the subject of the dedicatory must be rightly assumed to know beforehand the truthfulness of the account, if only because the addressee is a social and political entity invested with the *power* to know the truth about the addresser, on the other hand, and this is specific to the autobiographical context of the corpus of Diego's writing out of which meaning

arises— *his writing style is the embodiment of his self*, and necessarily so. If, as we have discussed earlier autobiographical truth presupposes a “pact,” the addressee in the dedicatory, and *by opposition* to it, in the prologue, function as oversight to see that the pact is kept. Then, to the extent that he is writing about his life, since life and self can neither “factually” nor factually be told apart— his writing style appears as a way of styling his self; the style of writing shapes the Self as it shows itself to be in writing. The simplicity, directness, frankness and naturalness are all of them characteristics of the self that appears in Torres’s self-writing; and the concept of ingenuity on the basis of which Torres himself claims the truth of his being, is the mode of being of the truth that finds expression in his writing. But this also suggests that in Torres truth, style and self are inseparable one from the other; indeed, it can be demonstrated in analysis that he consciously cultivates a style of writing that stands as a figural signpost, namely, as a metonymy of selfhood. Since Torres makes of ingenuity the mode in which his self gets authentically expressed and since one can only expressed oneself authentically if one disregards “the ways of the others,” in writing about himself he can but do it in all “naturalness;” for in doing so he seeks to communicate *himself* to the other. And this can best be done if one is frank and direct, and represents oneself to the others without the dissimulation or dissembling or false pretense, that is, without the embellishing and the garnishing to which writing lends itself. That is why he has not hesitation or affectation in declaring himself to “un hombre claro y verdadero,” a clear and truthful man, as I tried to elucidate in a previous chapter. To him clarity, that is, frankness, is *inherent to his self*. Since frankness can be defined as a *genuine* disposition to telling the *truth in a truthful way*, in a way that admits no question as to what it’s being said, what he says about

himself is therefore truth. And truth about oneself only attains in ingenuity, that is, if one has gained or preserved oneself in an ontological condition of authenticity. Authenticity, on the other hand, makes it itself manifest in sincerity; one is sincere only if ingenuity is one's mode of being in the world, toward oneself as Being-with and the others without whom one is not; in accordance with what have already been brought to light, Being-with is the others in one's self. If we wanted to restate what was just said we would have to paraphrase nobody else but Torres himself to hold that, always according to this interpretation, authenticity is preserved *in ingenuity* in the truthful man who says exactly what goes on through his being-in-the-world and who, for this very reason, can represent himself in the nonchalant free style of "salga lo que saliere." One can already see here how Diego de Torres's style can only be conceived of and cultivated by the individual for whom freedom is consubstantial with his mode of being.

This interpretation seems to be justified by Diego's own quasi-obsessive reflection on his style of writing and by his proactive defense of his freedom to practice a *free* style of writing. Because he is who he is, or rather, *because he is what he has become*, he needs to cultivate his style in order to be; here the existential link between style and Self becomes manifest if we bear in mind that from the perspective of the ontological-existential interpretation I have been conducting here the Self is thrown into its Being. The possibility of becoming one way or the other inherent to existence is then a defining characteristic of the Self. Thus, early on in his writing career Torres already has to give an account of his style before he has even had the time to give an account of his life. By way of an example among many, he tells a friend who inquires, that:

I expected that you of all people would excuse my disheveled style of my writing and the shortcomings of my compositional skills. I am assaulted so often by my fantasies; I am so reckless in my natural inclinations; I have led so restless a life away from my country, and I have so deep *disliking to formal schooling* that whenever I tried to acquire a more circumspect style the whole thing made my head spin around [...]. I will not deny that I gave to print some *shabbily dressed* ideas. But since I wrote them *knowingly*, I also regarded them with misgiving, and assumed them to be apocryphal. If I had any other gig somewhere I would maybe let reason guide my pen, and no one single line by truly yours would see paper unless castigated by understanding, instead of by the shouting of critics. But *I care only about filling up the blank page*, and so, *although my prologues might contain one or two uncouth words against Apollo's scholars*, you my friend must dissimulate, since I say them with *ingenuity*, and they are nothing but words²⁷⁵. (Emphasis added).

²⁷⁵ “Ninguno como tú debiera disculpar en mí estas faltas del estilo y errores de la composición, pues la velocidad de mi fantasía, lo travieso de mi inclinación, la corta estancia en mi patria y el odio continuado a la universidad, cuando la empezaba a tener, me traían al retortero la razón. [...] No niego que eché a la calle algunas ideas mal vestidas. Pero como trabajaba con precisión, las miraba con asco, sin valerlas la recomendación de propias; que si yo tuviera otra capellanía, sujetara la pluma a la razón, y no saliera de mi fantasía idea que no la castigara el entendimiento, antes que la vocería de los críticos. Pero yo, amigo, sólo voy a llenar el papel, y así, aunque mis prólogos contengan algunas menos decentes voces contra los profesores de Apolo, Vmd. debe disimularlas, por la ingenuidad con que las digo que no son más que voces.” Torres, “Prólogo a mis amigos lectores,” *Correo del otro mundo, Textos Autobiográficos*, 33.

It would be easy to dismiss these statements as nothing more than a humble acknowledgement of the shortcomings of a style of which this passage is itself a good example. Written in a self-deprecating tone and in the straightforward anodyne language of the everydayness, in *appearance* not much has been said in it and very little has been accomplished. But, as much that belongs to Torres, this is only apparently so. In true, like all other Torres's prologues, the one from which this quotation has been extracted is a rhetorical bobby-trap that contains a minefield of meanings which, now as it happened in Torres's time, makes it easy for critics to walk into²⁷⁶. For here Diego is cunningly displaying his shrewdness in handling everyday language to produce a *mockingly humbling mood* that allows him to fabricate a devastating discourse directed frontally against those he *pretends* to dislike and who, either really dislike him or *whom he makes appear as disliking him*, as to make it fair game to *express* disliking them in defending his style. To this end, he makes recourse to a tactic of blaming in order to praise; and of praising in order to blame. His style, he is saying, might be calamitous, but he does not want to change or improve it not only because it is not in him to have a "better," more cultivated style but especially because his "lowly" style is what serves him best for his *prologues*; for only in that style can he manage to *pretend* while at the same time preserve himself in ingenuity even if to do so he risks appearing disingenuous. To

²⁷⁶ The detailed analytical study of how rhetoric works in Torres, and of the rhetorical strategies his style makes manifest has never been undertaken, although much could be gained from it in terms of understanding the *rhetorical structure present in the everyday modern Spanish*, which, except for lexical changes that might have taken place in modern Spanish, remains semantically and syntactically almost unaltered respective to the eighteenth century Spanish Torres in which he writes. There is of course the study by Emilio Martínez Mata dealing strictly with the "expressive recourses" of this author, but he limits himself to making a catalogue of such recourses, which, important as it can be useful, does not provide an analysis of how these recourse work in Torres to produce *meaning* and to give any specific significance, (literary, historical, philosophical or rhetorical) to his work. Indeed, this author dismisses rhetorical analysis as something of a "mere" interest. See "Los Procedimientos expresivos," in *Los "Sueños" de Torres de Villarroel*, 99, Actas Salmantinas, 228, first ed. Universidad de Salamanca, 1990.

that effect, firstly, he *pretends* to apologize for his “disheveled” style; secondly, he *pretends* that the arguments he submits suffice as justification for his style by further *pretending* that there is a cause-effect connection between life experience and style; thirdly, he *pretends to himself* that his style is not really his; fourthly, he asks that others pretend not to notice what he is aiming at with his style of writing, and finally, fifthly, he *pretends to pretend* he does not know what he is really doing, since to himself he is only being “ingenious,” that is, clear, direct, frank and, in another word, righteous. But this tells us that he is not really apologizing either, only pretending to so. The point is, his style of writing allows him the necessary freedom to preserve his individual right to express himself without giving insult to those he does not necessarily intend to. Precisely because it is this freedom what is at stake is his selfhood, he does not see the need for sincerely apologizing to those who might take offense *through misunderstanding the intentionally playfully reversible rhetoric implicit in his style*; on the contrary, *to maintain his sincerity, he must feign to apologize* to them:

With God as my witness, I apologize for my *unpolished style* and for my poor creativity. I tell you, this is the way my style works; once my imagination gets a writing idea it only seeks to carry out and through with it, caring not a bit about the finishing touches. *Although I recognize that it is inexcusable to give to print one’s works without carefully perusing them first, my material needs having with me more weight than my taste, I trample over the errors I only notice, without really reading.* From the ways of men I have learn

that *there is no single rhetorical approach to writing good enough to satisfy them all equally*. Mistrustful as I am, that emboldens me to *let my natural style flow, without doing my pen more violence than what is necessary to preserve the natural dress of my imagination, letting their dearth be my guide. For, maybe an unpolished style is the only guaranty of truth*²⁷⁷. (Emphasis added).

Inasmuch as to express oneself necessarily presupposes preserving oneself in authenticity; and inasmuch as authenticity is prerequisite for the freedom to choose choosing oneself before the other from among all the possibilities of being, for Torres, the teachings of rhetoric about the best way to express oneself must be rejected; for in rejecting these teachings he is rejecting the ways of the others. Or rather, those teachings must be appropriated to make it possible for him to give birth to a kind of *rhetoric of the Self* that authentically and without mediation can express in ingenuity its truth. Torres's style then springs forth from the condition of "naturalness," that is, of the self-authenticity that he seeks to make manifest. Put another way, he strives to represent himself as he is in truth, and any interference or mediation be it from teachings coming from the other, or from any rationalizing of the immediacy and spontaneity in expression attempts against that. We are back then to the problem of affectivity already analyzed. To that extent his style is the rhetorical mode in which his authentic self makes itself manifest. This rhetoric

²⁷⁷“Disculpa, por Dios, lo mal limado del estilo en lo Tosco de la invención, porque, en agarrando la fantasía idea por delante, solo discurre en acabarla, sin detenerse en las prolijidades de pulirla. Y aunque no tiene disculpa el que da al público sus obras sin el provechoso castigo de las voces, como manda más en mí la necesidad que el gusto, por ésta atropello los reparos (que yo sospecho notados antes que leído). Demás me han dado a entender los prolijos gestos de los hombres que no tiene la retórica modo de escribir que generalmente les agrada, y esta desconfianza me anima a correr sin miedo mi natural estilo, sin violentar la pluma a más reparo que el traje natural con que salieron de la fantasía, aconsejándome el cuidado a su pobreza, que tal vez el desaliño de las voces es más crédito de las verdades.” Torres, *Ibid.* 30.

of the Self that makes itself present in his style also functions as the ethical precepts that regulates his relation to his readers, whether friends or foes. Torres's position of a style of writing that always involves his self opens up a newer and deeper understanding of the degree to which his sense of a radical individuality, which will be latter considered from up close, inherently relates to authenticity and truth and reveals itself as something primordial, that is, to something that literally stands before everything else. If the ontological primordality of Torres's individuality is to be made manifest authentically, then the first step is to repudiate the way (the rhetorical forms) in which others make manifest their otherness respective to the Self. Therefore we see that in Diego de Torres consciousness of himself practically coincides with consciousness of his writing style to a degree that it warrants to hold that in him the Self strives to make itself into the metaphor of that style. Concerning that consciousness of style, Torres shows what it means for him. "I," he says, will write without hassle or fastidiousness, in a clear, natural Romance, without much fussing about it." Having declared that he writes without a previous stylistic design, and therefore also his subject-matters are not decided beforehand, he then establishes that he writes not to court fame or to educate, and not even to entertain his readers; but since he writes only *because he needs to make a living and also whenever he feels like writing, his style comes out of himself*. If his is a simple, unadorned and direct style, it is because it is "natural," by which he means to say authentic style, *by and in itself* the guarantor of truth, as he says above²⁷⁸. That it is authenticity of style as authenticity of self resides in that it is "natural y corriente, sin sombra de afectación," which is what, despite Torres's intent, makes it amenable. With authenticity of style, says Torres, he had only sought "to make *patent* his thoughts," "patent" standing for "open to inspection" and

²⁷⁸ Torres, "Sacudimiento de mentecatos habidos y por haber," in *Textos autobiográficos*, 47-48.

by extension, for “transparent.” Only that allows the truth to be accessed; and without that, Torres says, he would have “quemado todos mis papeles.” (Emphasis added).²⁷⁹

I would now like to go back one more time to the problem of the difference between autobiography and confession in connection with what I have been trying to elucidate in this chapter concerning Torres’s style and form in relation to the question of the authenticity and ingenuity of the Self. This will necessary bring us back to the thesis of the form and style of *Vida* as unsuitable for the aims of the confessional model, and to how this corresponds to an anti-rhetorical stance that aims to acquiring and preserving individual freedom. The best way to do so is by delving into why, for Torres, writing in the simple, direct “naked” style of self-authenticity entails a necessary repudiation of rhetoric as the way of the others. The obvious answer to this is that rhetoric, understood in the classical Platonic interpretation Torres seems to follow, is a sophistic bag of tricks that lends itself to the manipulation of the truth, thus preventing the Self from preserving itself in ingenuity, therefore remaining under the spell of the other in inauthenticity²⁸⁰. For this condition is per se a doing away with the possibility of exhibiting oneself

²⁷⁹ Torres, “Diálogo en la biblioteca del hermitaño,” in *El hermitaño y Torres*, Textos Autobiográficos, 103.

²⁸⁰ What this means is that according to classical literature from Aristotle and Plato, to Quintilian and Horace, and from Seneca to Epictetus down to our days, rhetoric has always been considered mainly as the art of persuasive eloquence, and the figures and tropes of rhetoric has been mainly regarded by scholars of rhetoric as the verbal or linguistics “tools” or “means” through which the suasive potentials of rhetoric materialized. Parallel to this classical theory of rhetoric there has been a critical undercurrent that traces whose origins can be traced to the philosophy of language developed by Nietzsche and adopted in many guises and with various degrees of success by several modern and “post-modern” literary and philosophical trends. This understanding of rhetoric is more distinctively found in the school of thought on rhetoric more influential in our days and which is best represented by some of the exponents of Deconstructionism, like de Man and Derrida and others, philosophy, rhetoric is viewed as system of tropes an figures whose aims is not necessarily to persuade but to produce meaning; not as eloquence but as a quality inherent to language and inseparable from any linguistic utterance or structure. See for an evaluation of the two conceptions on rhetoric, the classical and the contemporary, Stanley Fish, “Rhetoric,” *Doing what comes naturally*, 471-502. For a firsthand example of Nietzsche philosophy of language, see his *The Will to Power, The Philosopher Book*. For an example of studies representatives of this analytical rhetoric springing from Nietzsche, see also *Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust*; see also *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* and *Blindness and Insight*, by this same author; see Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, among others.

autobiographically in self-knowledge. Another not so obvious answer but which however brings us closer to settling this question can be had by considering even briefly the complex and uneasy relation that Diego has with rhetoric, so that from there we can move on to a reflection on what is it that he opposes to it, which of course cannot be to be his style as such but something that serves as ontic realm and ground to it. That his relation to rhetoric is a complex one is evident in that on one hand, he both claims his style is not rhetorical, and thereby repudiates it, but on the other hand he claims to have a deep knowledge of it, and at times seems to reclaim it for himself, always depending on whom he is addressing. “Of poetic and rhetoric, the varieties of uses I have made of them, my works are there to show,” he says at one point²⁸¹. “The rules of good writing” he also says, “if those are the ones rhetoric teaches us, I can brag of knowing; but I should have a bad year if I resorted to them.”²⁸² And yet, in the same context of his repudiation of rhetoric Torres avers that even though he does not know how to write, whatever the way he does it, he must to do it well enough since his writing finds so great a reception with the public; whereas none those other writers, “experienced doctors” who according to Torres pretend to do it better because they claim to follow compositional rhetoric, does as well as he does with the public²⁸³.

There seems then to be an apparent contradiction between Torres’s postulation of a writing style so well structured and honed that succeeds in so effectively getting across the readers, which otherwise said means persuading them *to keep reading*, but which at the same time inscribes itself against the compositional techniques of the rhetorical arts. But

²⁸¹ Torres, “The sopones de Salamanca: Almanaque para 1734,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 71. (Dedicated to the Marquise de la Paz).

²⁸² Torres, “Sacudimiento de mentecatos habidos y por haber,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 47.

²⁸³ Torres, *Ibid.* 47.

this contradiction proves to be only apparent when one realizes that what Torres is opposing to rhetoric is not the style of his writing itself but the *ethical dimension* from which it arises and that it incarnates after a fashion. That ethical dimension that is opposed to rhetoric and which Torres gives evidence to have paid careful attention to is the Greek *parrhēsia*, an ethical approach to discursive truth which Quintilian, Seneca, Horace and Epictetus among others grammatologists and philosophers of antiquity set up against rhetoric, and with whom in view of his claims to knowledge of antiquity Diego de Torres would have been familiar with. *Parrhēsia*, or “libertad de lenguaje” as Diego would call it, as opposed to rhetoric, is not considered to be an art of speaking or writing but a moral attitude, an *ethos*²⁸⁴. It basically means the moral quality or virtue or inclination a person possess for speaking freely, and has been amply researched by Foucault precisely within the context of the problematic of truth-telling and the constitution of the subject, and autobiography and rhetoric in antiquity. According to Foucault:

parrhēsia refers both to the moral quality, the moral attitude or the ethos [...] which are necessary, which are necessary for conveying truth discourse to the person who needs it to constitute himself as subject of sovereignty over himself and as a subject of veridiction on his own account²⁸⁵. (Emphasis added).

Literally translated, Foucault says, *parrhēsia* would mean “telling all” but, he qualifies, “telling all” does not really mean talking about “everything” one knows on the subject under consideration:

²⁸⁴ Torres, “Dedicatoria,” *Desahuciado del mundo y de la gloria*, in *Textos Autobiográficos*, 82.

²⁸⁵ Foucault, “Nineteenth Lecture,” *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège of France, 1981-1982*, 372.

What is basically at stake in *parrhēsia* is what could be called, somewhat impressionistically, the *frankness*, *freedom*, and the *openness* that leads one *to say what one has to say, as one wishes to say it, when one wishes to say it, and in the form one thinks is necessary for saying it*. The term *parrhēsia* is so bound up with the choice, decision, and attitude of the person speaking that the Latins translated it by, *libertas* (sic)²⁸⁶. (Emphasis added).

We can see from these references that the basic definition of *parrhēsia* is exactly the same ethical attitude exhibited by Torres's writing style, and which as I indicated, also regulates his ethical relation to his readers. But more importantly, we can also see that, because of the defining virtues or quality of "freedom to say," or of "speaking frankly" and directly, the person who relates himself to himself to and to others governed by *parrhēsia*, constitutes himself as an individual *through the exercise of a sovereignty built on a capacity and disposition toward ontological truth*, since his truth always already involves him primordially. According to Foucault's interpretation of the distinction Quintilian makes between rhetoric and *parrhēsia*, while the former is an art, and therefore something that can be learned and that does not belong to the person who has learned it authentically, the latter, in being an ethos and in opposition to being an art, says Foucault what is specific of *parrhēsia*:

is that it is a specific practice of *true discourse* defined by rules of prudence, skills, and the conditions that require one to say the truth at this moment, in this form, under these

²⁸⁶ Foucault, *Ibid.* 384.

conditions, and to this individual inasmuch, and only inasmuch as he is capable of receiving it, and receiving it best, at this moment in time²⁸⁷. (Emphasis added).

Parrhēsia then seems to explain that it is because Diego de Torres seeks to constitute himself as a “subject of truth” through his writing that he speaks so freely; for as Foucault demonstrates in his interpretation of Quintilian, Epictetus and Seneca, “there can only be truth in *parrhēsia*.” At the same time, only where there is truth can there be speaking freely²⁸⁸. It is this interpretation that cushioned my saying that Torres’s style is the embodiment of his self: what he seeks to show in the end is that the individual who strives to constitute himself into a subject of truth by means of truth-telling about himself aims at, or conceives of himself as the “naked” transmitter of “truth itself.”²⁸⁹ As for the form in which the style of frankly speaking the truth, always according to Foucault’s interpretation:

It is precisely *according to the person to whom one speaks* and the moment one speaks to him that parrhēsia must inflect, not the content of the true discourse, but the *form* in which this discourse is delivered.²⁹⁰

This clearly explains that Torres does not resort always to the same form in speaking freely, and that as I have attempted to show he can be found constantly adjusting the style to the form, something *Vida* illustrates best. Since *parrhēsia* presupposes a capability to shift forms of address depending on the addressee, hence that Torres’s

²⁸⁷ Foucault, *Ibid.* 372.

²⁸⁸ Foucault, *Ibid.* 382.

²⁸⁹ Foucault, *Ibid.* 382.

²⁹⁰ Foucault, *Ibid.* 384.

writing constantly gives the appearance of proceeding through self-contradiction; hence too that some of his readers admit feeling thrown off; for Torres has a *perverse*, calculated tendency to render his readers unable to keep their bearings, unless they know beforehand where he is coming from, and where he is heading off. For in him style is what creates the form in which it will be freely speaking “itself.” In this respect, Foucault’s own conclusion from his interpretation of the ancients seems to me to neatly apply to the case I have been making about Torres, his:

[I]s free speech released from the rules, freed from rhetorical procedures in that it must, in one respect of course, *adapt itself to the situation*, to the occasion and to the particularities of the auditor²⁹¹. (Emphasis added).

This ethical attitude, which in Torres amounts to an ethical relation to the truth of his self and to the truth of the relation of himself to others is what we find manifesting itself in his writing style. The ethical attitude disclosed in *parrhēsia*, and of which Foucault following Quintilian says is peculiar to philosophical discourse, brings us back face to face with the relation of difference between autobiography and confession which we have been pursuing, and with the question of *Vida* as a non-confessional autobiography that must be so, if it will allow us at all to speak of individual freedom and individual self-determination in connection to it. For the qualities that we have seen are inherent to the ethical attitude disclosed through the analysis of *parrhēsia*: speaking freely (*libertas*), frankness and openness, indicates that the individual far from surrendering to the other in speaking *when* and *where* he is told and in the *specific* manner he is *directed* to talk, which places him thereof in a situation in which he must submit to what results

²⁹¹ Foucault, *Ibid.* 406.

from his *obedience* to the other—is what is constitutive of the confessional model; not more not less. And that as Torres states, the freedom (*libertad*) of his language always gets him in trouble, since he says what he has to say to whom he has to say it in the way and when and how he thinks he has to say it, further substantiates that the true discourse, that is, the discourse that *in itself is the truth being said*, the thesis of a style that arises from a radicalized individuality. Thus, in Torres, not only both his writing style and the form that showcases it—“Dedicatory,” “Introduction,” or “Prólogo—stand in a relation of “genetic reciprocity,” each determining the other respective to either the addressee or the addresser; they are both equally the manifestation and the objectification of the same phenomenon of the Self that struggles to preserve itself in authenticity. To this extent, they too equally take place within that ethical attitude disclosed in anti-rhetorical *parrhēsia* which, contrary to lending itself to the manipulation of the truth, upholds truth-telling as constitutive of individual freedom.

And that, on the other hand, the ethical attitude contained in *parrhēsia* is what in antiquity constitutes the individual as the subject of true-telling or as the *subject of truth* proves that autobiography becomes confessional only after it has been converted to Christianity in the hands of Saint Augustine; for in antiquity the truth was not something the individual was compelled to confess²⁹². Incidentally, it was precisely from antiquity that Diego de Torres learned that speaking freely requires a simple, direct and unembellished style of writing. Namely, in this as in his radical individuality and the relativist perspective of his worldview Epictetus is his acknowledged master. For a man who shows his independence and individuality in the pride he takes declaring that he

²⁹² Foucault, “Twelve Lecture,” *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 229-246; “Eighteenth Conference,” 355-370.

“took on the mania of reading in the most ancient books,” would prove himself in becoming a disciple of sorts of Epictetus²⁹³. Significantly, Epictetus, whom Torres prefers to Aristotle, for example, is the only other writer who next to Quevedo, Góngora and Cervantes he mentions approvingly, he often declares him his master; and each time in connection with his radical position on individual freedom²⁹⁴. So much affinity finds Diego between him and his master, that he even celebrates him in a sonnet which, as many others by him is also celebratory of *his* freedom as an individual²⁹⁵. Lastly, because speaking freely and in a direct style presupposes not caring what the other makes out of what one says in the way one says it, in doing so the Self sets an impassable boundary between itself and the other, in decisively embracing the ethical attitude of the Stoic philosopher and in openly averring that that is indeed the case, Torres assures his readers of his firm disinclination to confess. I will end this chapter here observing that the ethical attitude disclosed by *parrhēsia*, in favor of which rhetoric must be discarded if the truth is not to be manipulated and if the Self should be allowed to show itself in authenticity as preserved by the ingenuity of style, has as its basis the ontological-existential determination toward individual freedom and self-determination. For, the ethical attitude that, as we already discussed it from Foucault’s interpretation of the Stoic philosophers expresses itself *practically* as the *natural propensity* of an individual *to say what he has to*

²⁹³ Louis Dumont sees a direct connection between Christianity and the Stoics philosophers in the determination of the modern individual. Torres, we should not need to point out, would be re-elaborating and trying to reconcile Epictetus through his Christian beliefs. See Dumont, “The Modern Conception of the Individual: Notes on its genesis and that of concomitant institutions” in *Contribution to Indian Sociology*, No. (October 1965) VIII, pp. 29.30. Cited in Stevens Lukes, “The Abstract Individual,” *Individualism*, 74.

²⁹⁴ “Nada me enoja; si el vecino es soberbio, que se muera; se envidioso, que se pudra; si murmurador, que muerda en más blando. [...] Si viviera Epicteto, le buscaría para darle mil abrazos, porque me dejó en su escuela el estudio de las seguridades.” Torres, “Sacudimiento de mentecatos habidos y por haber,” in *Textos Autobiográficos*, 43. “Como Epicteto pedía a Dios: Plue Jupiter super me calamitates, digo yo: lluevan papeles sobre mí.” Torres, *Ibid.* 49. In Latin in the original.

²⁹⁵ Torres, *Ibid.* 43.

say, as he wishes to say it, when he wishes to say it, and in the form he thinks is necessary for saying it, provides the only ground possible to proclaim freedom as the most elementary matter for individuality to emerge. And this is so because as it must be defined in this context, radically, that is, *at its roots*, besides being the permanent state of being an individual, individuality is the ontological condition that allows the *individual* as the entity that *cannot be divided* to come into existence. For the *individuus* is that human entity that must exist integrally; to exist integrally is to be able to be “there” wholly in the world as oneself; this in turn requires that one be able to *act* at all times in accordance with what one thinks and wishes, and this further rests on the assumption that one’s thoughts and one’s wishes and feelings are in agreement with each other. This is what is disclosed in the ethical attitude which Diego de Torres seems every time to be striving for.

Assuming as I do this assessment to be correct, then it is warranted to say that Torres’s writing evinces an ethical attitude through which the Self aspires to a freedom in which the individual can exercise direct control over what kind of relations he enters with; when to enter in a given kind of relation; the basis on which this relation—or what is the same—what ends should this relation serve, and with whom should he enter into that relation. It is a matter of course that this presupposes the individual to have well-established the terms of the relation of oneself to oneself, since it is to a given self-relation that under most normal conditions the relation to the other is subordinated. It goes without saying that it is in the possibility of freely choosing our relations with the others that self-determination materialize practically in the political and social spheres. Hence we see that Diego de Torres marks this choice in labeling his relations to the other as relations to “friends,” “readers,” “friendly or dear reader,” “to whom it may concern,” and to diverse

authority figures by their names, and finally to “Torres” or to the “I” as such; but we also see that concomitantly his choice-relations impose of him different forms of discursive address. And here we are back to the question of style and formal structure in his writing²⁹⁶. Since this is not the space for a detailed analysis of what each of these different relations entails, it should suffice to say that as argued in Part one, it is always the question of power, of intrinsic or extrinsic forces in the process of self-determination that is always at stake. But I will come back to this in subsequent chapters.

²⁹⁶ This being an integral feature of almost all Torres’s publications, is more often found in *Almanaks*, for the obvious reason that they were more frequent, but are regularly to be found in his publications in book-format, and is more fully carried out in *Vida*.

Chapter 2.3

Radical Individuality:

The Beginning and the End of Autobiographical Self-Representation

Assuming that I have been able to show that Diego's straightforwardly simple writing style hides a set of rhetorical complexities that, to the extent that they give rise to issues concerning an ethical mode of being and its attendant question of truth, and of the authenticity of this mode of being—is philosophical in nature, now we should be in a better position to tackle head-on the daunting task of interpreting Torres's representation of his selfhood in light of what the discussion of this set of complexities has brought into the open. For, we have seen how, in the effort to unravel the genetic reciprocity of the relation between style and formal structure in Torres's writing we have had to confront a host of interrelated questions that never failed to refer us back to the ontological problematic of the authenticity of the empirical self embodied in that writing style and exhibiting itself in that structure. That forced upon us the conclusion that in Diego these rhetorical categories are inseparable from his empirical mode of being in that they point out to his way of relating to the others he-is-with in the world, and that to that extent, they are in their own right those categories manifestations of his selfhood. Put another way, his writing style and by the same token the structure that exhibits is "self-reflective," both in the sense that it proceeds by reflecting upon itself in claiming its independence from rhetoric, and because in doing so it never fails to reflect the character of the entity that it has come into being to be the manifestation of. This conclusion led us to further hold that in Torres consciousness of style and self-consciousness coincides every time with each

other and this necessarily means that his self is ever-present to his writing style. By understanding this situation as inherent to the condition of self-authenticity in which Torres's self aspires to remain, and which makes a necessity for him to assume a conscious anti-rhetorical stance, we have also managed to dispel the appearance of intrinsic contradictoriness in his writing. This apparent contradictoriness, it has also be shown, is dispelled by understanding this stance as the result of a well-calibrated strategy to acquire a capability for speaking freely; and if so, we also concluded, it is then the unstated statement of a political position and social before the other.

Nonetheless, showing that contradictoriness to be only apparent that throws off the reader by giving off the impression that either *one than more Torres* speaks therein and that therefore *Vida* is the portrait of the Self as split, or that the Self speaking therein purposely seeks to remain unknown still leaves in place a contradiction I have barely brushed off and one that is central to the meaning of this portrait by and in itself. To attempt a description of it, this contradiction would be that of an individual who promises to definitively establish *what* he is not by showing *who* he is, *but who however proceeds as if he were not what he purports to portrait himself as*. For, this essentially is the situation the reader of *Vida* and all other Torres autobiographical texts must confront and at the time be confronted by in the most confounding manner. And this situation can become desperate since it is undeniable that the *appearance* of contradiction we initially encountered gets reinforced, and in a disturbing way, confirmed in its character of something that *appears to be but that is not necessarily there* by the conundrum contained in this description. In other words, it is undeniable too that Torres consistently *appears* to produce the *appearance* of being precisely that which he endeavors to portrait himself

against. Namely, it seems that for instance the more he endeavors to establish his self-identity as the opposite of a “Guzmán de Alfarache” or a Gregorio Guadaña, or a Lazarillo de Tormes, the more ineffective his chosen method for doing so proves to be; and the more intent he seems to us he is in fixating his self-identity, the more it seems to be shifting; and in short, the more he tries to reveal his own self, the more the self his endeavor reveals seems to us to be the other’s²⁹⁷. If we wanted to rephrase this problematic in the language of phenomenology, then we would say that the more Diego’s chosen method produces the *appearance* of what he claims *not* to be, the more the self he believes he is resists *appearing*. Thus, perceiving that this self fails to appear, the reader is not anymore thrown off; now instead the reader is *taken* by the phenomenology of appearance underlying the text²⁹⁸. Faced with this seemingly intractable situation one is tempted to believe that *the more Diego de Torres tells us about his life, the least we know his self*. This of course is only so if we disregard what his autobiography makes all too evident: that in autobiographical discourse life is self, and conversely, self is life, as I have demonstrated in previous chapters. Holding oneself steadfast to this insight, then one avoids the conclusions that the traditional critical approaches to this problem have consistently arrived at over time. According to these approaches, Torres is either a) a pícaro, or what is the same, that *Vida* is a picaresque novel whose antihero character exhibits all or some or most of the traits of “pícaro,” or that he is not— both contrary positions held on the basis of a comparative methodology that entirely depends on first

²⁹⁷ Torres, *Vida*, 57.

²⁹⁸ This would simply mean that the term “appearance” is here been used in its double meaning as that which “appears” to be but it is not what it appears, and that which allows what would show itself in *appearing* to show itself, but which not necessarily does. Thus, in the first instance, by creating the appearance—by Torres’s self appearing as what it is not, say a “pícaro,” the reader ceases to be “thrown off,” for now the reader “has his man,” as it were. The reader has been taken as much as he was earlier thrown, in both cases failing to see that in neither situation has the self Torres knows himself to be appeared—that is, shown itself as it is. See Heidegger, “The Concept of Phenomenon,” 51-55.

being able to ascertain the theoretical adequacy of the comparison²⁹⁹. In other words, to be able to decide whether Torres is a “pícaro” and his autobiography a novel that corresponds to its character, in this traditional approach one must first decide whether the concepts “pícaro” and of “picaresque” one is using are adequate to the literary facts these concepts are supposed to refer to³⁰⁰. Or b), one questions the possibility that Diego de Torres Villarroel can be factually known from his autobiography³⁰¹. Although seemingly different, these positions collapse into each other, since to take for a “pícaro” someone who obviously is not is tantamount to stating albeit in topsy-turvy manner that Diego de Torres Villarroel cannot be known from his autobiography. And to come full circle, to hold that someone cannot factually be known from his autobiography is to imply, albeit obliquely, that such an autobiography is a fictional fabrication. Accordingly, in the specific case of the author and subject of *Vida* this of course would mean that he is a “pícaro.” Nonetheless, strictly for methodological reason, I will deal with these two seemingly different interpretations as if they were not one and the same in essence.

²⁹⁹ This approach to literary studies, which for the most part and broadly speaking have been the prevalent tradition in Spanish literary studies, one could classify as comparative-argumentative, as opposed to a critical- analytical approach, more often employed in contemporary studies of other literatures, namely English, French, and German, in America and the English speaking world. In the specific case of Torres, this suggests that those who heretofore have occupied themselves with his work, have failed in bringing to it a methodological approach that might do justice to him by being as complex as his writing, and the significance of his writing, can prove to be.

³⁰⁰ Mercadier chronologically traces the history of this approach, from Juan Valera in 1888 to the more contemporary study by E. Suárez Galbán; see “Autobiographie, roman et picaresque,” in *Masques et Mirrors*, 268-281.

³⁰¹ While Mercadier explicitly asks the question of whether it is possible to know Torres in the same way he knows himself: “[...] si Torres est sûr de se connaître, est-il aussi certain de pouvoir se faire connaître?” Even though in this question he is taken for granted that Torres can attain self-knowledge, according to Mercadier main thesis, there is in *Vida* nothing else but “masque et miroirs,” and this suggests that even self-knowledge is readily denied. Mercadier, “Vers la transparence du masque,” *Masque et miroirs*, 317. Loureiro, for his part, charges that “la disparidad” of styles in *Vida* works as a warning that “revela que no podemos esperar que se nos desvele la ‘verdad’ de Torres.” And he goes on to say that this suspicion is “confirmed” by the reasons Torres adduces for writing his *Vida*. Loureiro, “La Autobiografía del otro: Rousseau, Torres Villarroel, Juan Goytisolo,” *Siglo XX/20th Century*, 83.

But before I get to it the observation should be made that in the Self that under the *questionable promise* of establishing who he is represents itself as *what* he is not we are facing neither an ontological-existential entity that *cannot* either be known, nor an entity that *wants* not to be known. Rather, what we have here to wrestle with and which for almost three hundred years now has been staring at us in the face is *an ontological-existential entity who cares neither to be known or not, nor to be unknown, or not*. In this neither caring nor not caring one way or the other a phenomenon can be identified that manifests itself for the first time in the history of European autobiography. In other words, what has been staring at us in the face for so long now is the phenomenon of a *radicalized individuality*, that is, *an individuality that has become radicalized in the face of public opinion, reclaiming and proclaiming its independence from it*. Significant as that is by and in itself, the full weight of this phenomenon attains when the historical context in which it inserts itself is dully taken into account. For in *Vida* and his other autobiographical texts Torres presents before us an individuated self involved in an unrelenting process of radicalization precisely at the time when both the concepts of the individual and individuality, and the concept of public opinion prevalent in our days had yet to gain currency as they were yet to be fully formed³⁰². In this connection, his radicalization represents a precious contribution unfortunately squandered like many others by him, given the social, political and cultural reality in which he operated, dominated by ultra-

³⁰² The best study on the concept of public opinion I know is by Habermas in his critical history of eighteenth century Europe; see especially "The Bourgeois Public sphere: Idea and Ideology," *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 90-117. More directly related to autobiographical writing, see Weintraub, introduction to *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography*, xi-xix; of especial interest is Stevens Luke, "The Semantic History of 'Individualism,'" *Individualism*, 3-39. Barbour offers a concise and very insightful discussion on the major conceptualization and history of individuality as applicable to autobiographical studies; see "Franklin and the Critics of Individualism," *Conscience of the Autobiographer*, 85-119.

religious conservatism and royal corruption³⁰³. On the other hand, and what is *radically* of even more import, it is precisely because this radicalization of individuality manifests itself as the ontological-existential phenomenon of a self that cares neither whether it is known nor known by public opinion that it ontically carries in itself the presuppositions on which basis the possible end of autobiography, and autobiographical representation as we understand it here, can be proclaimed. And this take place right at the inception of autobiography as literary self-determination of individuality; but then again, there could not be any other way. If we wanted to rephrase this last statement in the language of deconstructionist criticism, then we would say that literally, beginning of *Vida* represents the dramatization of the end of modern autobiography³⁰⁴.

I will then proceed to attempt to show that a), the radicalization of individuality in Diego de Torres is the result of a consistent and instinctive manifestation of his own personal self-worth in relation to the ethical categories of a) the dignity of man, of Christian origin; b) individual autonomy; c) right to privacy; and d) individual self-development, which have come to determine and that are contained in the notions of

³⁰³ Paul Elie, "Franklin and Villarroel: Social Consciousness in two Autobiographies," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*.

³⁰⁴ As I have called attention previously, the idea of an "end" of autobiography is first suggested by Michael Sprinker. Although it is not completely clear to me from his article how this end will come, it is however plain that according to him this would be the consequence of the "end of the author," a theory that originates in Foucault, whom he follows far too and takes far literally, one would say. For it is evident that, if Foucault is correct in pointing out how the concept of the "author" is born during the eighteenth century, the fact that modern autobiography also dates from that century would seem to suggest that the birth of the "author" it is historically and politically connected to the birth of the individual, and that, as long as there are individual subjects both author and autobiography have a chance. Autobiography, then, rather than to allow any talk of an "end" in this sense, would seem to prolong the life of the "author" both as a historical concept, and as the practice of a human entity that seeks to reflect *upon* the experience of being so. This should be born in mind when I speak of an "end" of autobiography in the case of Torres. In this case, it means neither the "death" of the author of autobiography or of any kind, nor do I speak of the "end" of autobiography as a "textual practice." Rather, what I suggest is that in Torres the possibilities of autobiography for self-knowledge get exhausted, since he reaches its limits by denouncing it as unsuitable for the task that has come to be assigned to it. In other words, in treating autobiography as both futile and useless both for the autobiographer and for the reader, Torres brings about the "destruction" of the genre. More will be said on this as we move on in the present chapter. See Prinker, "The End of Autobiography." in Olney's *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*.

modern individual and individuality. And, as it is inextricably from this, I will also show, b) that Torres's indifference toward public opinion does not prevent but actually facilitates knowing his self at the most deeper level possible, that is, authentically, and c) that his indifference to whether he is known or not, or as what he is known is constitutive of his radicalized defense of modern individuality.

Chapter 2.4

The Autonomy of the Individual: Autobiographical Ontology
and the Question of Self-Knowledge

One should start by noticing that the “Introduction” introduces us to an inescapable tension that sits at the center of *Vida* and which gives the narrative its pull, as it can be found spread out all throughout the text. This the tension between the *unambiguously* stated reasons Diego de Torres gives for writing his autobiography, and the *ambiguous promise* he seems to be making to once and for all establish his self-identity. This the tension between the *unambiguously* stated reasons Diego de Torres gives for writing his autobiography, and the *ambiguous promise* he seems to be making to once and for all establish his self-identity. If this tension proves to be acute and resilient, and if it has a lasting effect of perplexity in the reader, it is due to nothing else but to the context in which it first comes to our attention. For it is quite dumbfounding to a high degree that we are introduced to the autobiography of somebody whose first statements are to the effect of asserting the futility of autobiographical self-knowledge and therefore declaring the futility of autobiography as the privileged vehicle for transmitting knowledge of the Self to the Other, while at the same time undermining the usefulness to the Other—public opinion—of knowing the autobiographical Self—if that were at all possible. But if futility and uselessness are attributes intrinsic to the autobiographical undertaking, it is not only because it helps neither the self in it—since the Self does not necessarily depend on autobiography to acquire self-knowledge, *provided that autobiography can at all allow knowledge* of one’s self, but also because the acquisition of knowledge by the self that is

the subject of the autobiographical undertaking is of no practical use to other than “public opinion” is relative to the Self³⁰⁵. But it is also and more significantly, *because the other has no business in interesting itself with the details of the private life of the self-subject of autobiography*. And yet, Torres sees that it is in the mode of being of the “Other”—the “they-self,” to take an interest in the privacy of the Self; this mode of being of the they-self precisely giving origin to public opinion. That is why, despite the universally recognized uselessness of taking an interest in the private life of the Self is for the Other, this taking-an-interest paves the way for an opinion that is nobody’s specifically, and therefore is assigned to the they-self under the name of the “public.” Thus, the overt acknowledgement by Torres of the mode of being of the Other whom the Self is with-in-the-world, is the basis and the rationale that support the writing of his autobiography. Since that is the mode of being of the Other, the Self, which from the point of view of the public opinion is in actuality the “true” other, will of necessity be what ends up determining the Self, unless the Self in its self-awareness sees that it behooves to it and to no other entity to do that for itself. This is what Torres very clearly and precisely sees in establishing that it is the Other in the form of public opinion what “writes” the Self; but he also sees that the Self is completely defenseless in being “written,” that is, in having its self-identity determined and defined by the Other unless in its self-awareness it undertakes its autobiographical self-determination; for self-awareness is only possible while the self

³⁰⁵ Whenever the concept of “public opinion” occurs here throughout it must be understood in both its meanings in the Latin “*opinio*” as that which is uncertain or yet to be confirmed or demonstrated, and therefore of that which is believed or propagated or upheld by tradition, as reflected in the word “*uso*,” which Torres employs. But also the reader should keep in mind the Greek “*doxa*” preferred by philosophers but roughly of the same meaning as the above. But in Spanish and in other languages of Latin root the term also carries the meaning of “esteem,” “reputation” and generally, how one is held or regarded in the opinion of others, which comes more forcibly to the fore in Torres, as attested in the word, and this must also be borne in mind all throughout. See Habermas, “The Bourgeois Public Sphere: Idea and Ideology,” *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 43.

still exists as the Being-with of the Other. But on the other hand, only when the Self is a no-longer-being-in the world with the Other, when death overtakes existence, can the mode of being of the Self, its self-identity inasmuch as praxis given in existence, be so determined and made definitive. For the Self, which then in actuality is not longer cannot “write” itself. And so, according to Torres, what gives origin to autobiography is the danger, whose materialization is made possible by the cessation of existence, of the Self having its self-identity fixated by the Other. Thus he states:

The lives of common criminals as well as that of friars (before and when already dead) *get to be written by the opinion of others in accordance with the faith, the ways of life, need for entertainment and the fears of the living toward them.* [...] It is said that the autobiographies of those who have been famous can either serve as warning or as a model to imitate for those who read them. I will not deny that this could be so. But I also realize the danger [...] when reading them is *motivated by impertinent curiosity and by too much free time ill-employed.*³⁰⁶ (Emphasis added).

Definitively when one is dead, but also while one is alive, the Other, in the form of the opinion of the public most commonly and in most everyday situations will attempt to define one’s self, and will always aim at imposing on it an identity. It is from this realization—from the realization that for the most part the Self exists as the they-self—

³⁰⁶ “A los frailes y a los ahorcados (antes y después de calaveras) los escribe el uso, la devoción, o el entretenimiento de los vivientes, las vidas, los milagros y las temeridades. [...] A los que leen, dicen que les puede servir, al escarmiento o la imitación [...]. No niego algún provecho, pero también descubro en su lectura muchos daños, cuando no lee sino [por] el ocio impertinente y la curiosidad mal empleada.”

that the conscience of the individual arises. *Indeed, this realization is already that conscience. Diego is here then for the first time in modern European history establishing that an individual is something one becomes and that individuality is not given us, that that is something to be acquired and that this process of individualization begins as a thrust for wresting one's Self from the they-self, the self of the other that has been imposed on us as ours.* But we already know this, since we already encountered this phenomenon in Heidegger's philosophy of authenticity; for authenticity is exactly what Torres is holding steadfast too, as an *existentiale* that is not to be distinguished from the conscience of one being an individual seeking to gain possession of one's individuality. But, because it is the opinion of the public actuating itself in the they-self of the Other that will "write" us, autobiography emerges as the attestation of this individual conscience; it does not have of necessity to come into existence, for, for the process of individuation it is enough that the conscience is acquired of what the opinion of the public, the "*uso*," that is, what is usual and everyday and therefore to be expected to haven— does to the Self. But since what it is to be expected because that is usually "how it is" becomes the "writ" about whatever that is so written, autobiography emerges as the most direct response to counteract being consigned to inauthenticity by the Other, public opinion or the they-self. Since what is a stake in this procedure of what is to be expected from the Other is the existence or not in authenticity, having an individual conscience makes it peremptory understanding the danger that lies in it. So Torres reflects that:

I suspect that if there is anything at all to be gained in following this custom is for whoever does the writing. [...]
I will not dare to find faults in an absolute way with a

*something that has been the venerable custom of the people; but I will affirm that there is danger in digging into someone else's lives; for it is very hard to describe them without doing them harm. And thus, many are the lives that are made to be irrelevant, fictional and complete lies. For rarely are the lives of others written objectively and with sincerity, but more often than not it is adulation, personal gains or ignorance that writes them*³⁰⁷. (Emphasis added).

We should not underestimate the significance of these statements by limiting their scope to a simple juxtaposition of two genres— autobiography and biography— and draw the conclusion that a comparison is here being made in which the advantages of one are pitted against those of the other. If we do not do this, then autobiography will be understood as we have done so far, as the attestation of the autonomy of the individual to exhibit a conscience in self-reflection, and biography necessarily as a material exhibit of the they-self in which the Other plays at pretending to know the Self better or as well as it itself does, and so allowing no room for the possibility of self-authenticity to be preserved. That this is how Torres's statements are to be taken is suggested by his making clear that to be *objective* and *sincere* in “writing” a life, that is, a self, according to our previous conclusions, is something that only attains and that can only attain in self-writing. This is of course guaranteed by the type of relation the self exists in relation to itself, which as I have demonstrated, is always a practical relation, having as its basis our decisions, affects,

³⁰⁷ “Lo que yo sospecho es que si este estilo produce algún interés, lo lleva el que escribe [...]. Yo no me atreveré a culpar absolutamente esta costumbre, que ha sido loable entre las gentes, pero afirmo que es peligroso meterse en vidas ajenas, y que es difícil escribirlas sin lastimarlas. Rara vez las escribe la el desengaño y la sinceridad, sino la adulación, el interés y la ignorancia.” Torres, *Vida*, 54.

volitions and deliberations. And this is confirmed by Torres's understanding that sincerity, as a phenomenon that structures our relation with our own feelings in our manner of expressing them, is only possible in the unmediated relation of oneself to oneself³⁰⁸. For, we cannot fake what we feel; we can only fake how we express, that is, how we, etymologically speaking, *press out* our feelings from ourselves to communicate them to others. We can submit then that it is from that conscience of constituting an individuality that must protect and preserve itself from the danger to which the Self is exposed, given the lack in objectivity and sincerity of the they-self of the public opinion, what validates the efforts of the Self to produce an evaluation of itself that might be and that almost always is contrary to that done by what is the use and that therefore has to be expected.

If this is so, then, autobiography instead of being a "gift" from the other as some scholars have recently averred, is the most adequate way available to the Self to reclaim itself from the they-self in the Other whose operations are sanctioned by public opinion, as prescribed by what is customary and therefore to be expected³⁰⁹. All to the contrary, because Torres takes as his departure for his autobiographical self-portrayal a conscience of individuality that as we have just seen recognizes itself from first as in serious danger of not being able of coming into being, his autobiography poses itself as an enterprise that must be carried out *against* the other, if his individuality is to be recuperated. To the extent that this is the case, his autobiography makes patent that individual conscience

³⁰⁸ For similar reason, one would say, Samuel Johnson says in his *Idler* (1758-1760) that "every man's life is best written by himself," a principle that Boswell, biographer of Johnson and modern inventor of the genre, departs from. See, Donald Greene, "The Uses of Autobiography in the Eighteenth Century," in *Essays in Eighteenth-Century Biography*, ed. Philip B. Daghljan, 43-67, Indiana University Press, 1968, Bloomington.

³⁰⁹ The theory of Torres's autobiography being a gift from the other has been independently proposed by Amanda Beth Irving and by Loureiro. See Irving unpublished Dissertation *Autobiography as a Gift from the Other: Torres de Villarroel's Vida and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Les Confessions*, 1992, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. For Loureiro, see reference above.

begins as a confrontation with the they-self in the Other; autobiography then signals this moment of recuperation of the Self through the operations of conscience:

I know that the time that goes into writing my life cannot be of entertainment to me; for in doing that much time is wasted, and nothing comes of it. But despite the uselessness and the futility of doing it I am resolved to write down the unsavory passages of the life that I have so far lived. [...] and I want, before I die, to dispel with my confessions and with my truths the *lies and the gossips* that both my *adversaries and public rumors* have piled up on me³¹⁰.
(Emphasis added).

And this danger that comes from the Other and which public opinion sanctions and therefore is to be expected because that is the use, according to the they-self among which the unauthentic Self belongs, is constitutive of the fundamental reason for rebelling *against* the Other in its proclivity to define and shape the Self in its own likeness. His autobiography, Torres declares, is how he meets this danger head-on:

Two are the especial motives that have forced me to expose my life to public shame. The first in born of prudent *fear*, based on there being lots of hungry-emboldened broke writers [...] They write about whatever comes and goes and passes by in this world and the other, sparing nothing and no

³¹⁰ “El tiempo que se gaste en escribir y en leer, no se entretiene ni se aprovecha, que todo se malogra; y no obstante estas inutilidades y perdiciones, estoy determinado a escribir los desgraciados pasajes que han corrido por mí en todo lo que dejo atrás de mi vida. [...] y quiero, antes de morirme, desvanecer, con mis confesiones y verdades, los enredos y las mentiras que me han abultado los críticos y los embusteros.” Torres, Vida, 56.

one. I am afraid that driven by greed, one of them idiots will eventually dare to heap dirt and lies on my humors. I want to make his agony more bearable by inflicting on myself as much evil as I am capable of; for evil is more bearable that comes from one's own hands³¹¹. (Emphasis added).

It is then not surprising if in this first “motive” we come face to face with the first inkling of the radicalization of individuality that from now on, in *Vida*, will not abate or let off. For, so resolved is this individuated self in sticking to what its conscience has brought to light, namely, that the they-self of public opinion lacks objectivity and sincerity—that *it is prepared to harm itself, if that is what it takes establishing a self-identity on the basis of its conscience as guaranty of self-authenticity*. “Harming” itself, and being better at it (more sincere) than the Other could, this individuated self aspires to once and for all sever itself from the public opinion of the they-self and assume its autonomy respective to it³¹². To do oneself harm autobiographically, as Torres dramatically declares and unsparingly does to himself amounts to portraying oneself in a much darker light as one assumes the Other would do us. In doing so individual autonomy is being exercised primordially as the freedom to portrait oneself as a self that exists in freedom, that is, as the one entity that has attained individuality as an act of conscience. By doing oneself as much autobiographical harm as the Other possibly could limits are set on the Other's potentiality for inflicting harm, and the Self thereof expands its individual

³¹¹ “Dos son los especiales motivos que me están instado a sacar mi vida a la vergüenza. El primero nace de un prudente temor, fundado en el hambre y el atrevimiento de los escritores agonizantes y desfarrapados [...] Escriben de cuanto entra, pasa y sale de este mundo y del otro, sin reservar asunto mi persona; y temo que, por la codicia de ganar cuatro chavos, salga algún tonto, levantando nuevas maldiciones y embustes a mi sangre, a mi flema y a mi cólera. Quiero adelantarme a su agonía y hacer me el mal que pueda, que por las propias manos duelen menos los azotes.” Torres, *Vida*, 58.

³¹² [...] que mi vida hasta ahora es mía, y puedo hacer con ella los visajes y transformaciones que me hagan el gusto y la comodidad.” Torres, *Vida*, 58.

autonomy. But here we begin to see the direct effect of that central tension spoken of above revealing its centrality, its epistemic character. For, the freedom to do oneself more autobiographical harm than the Other ever could do us necessarily presupposes the possibility of misrepresentation of the Self as the effect of the radicalization of one's individuality. In any case, and since this is a point we shall come back to later, let us limit ourselves here only to note how this tension comes to the fore of an ontological-existential entity that, as the result of its relation to itself and to the other equally and by the same token shows both a fundamental indifference about whether it is known as it knows itself, and a disposition to enter into its death as a "muerto de montón," as an anonymous entity dead among the many. For surely, the declarations of a man who proclaims a resolve to make himself known to the other as he knows himself, as Torres does in vowing that : "[...] y por vida mía, que se ha de saber quién soy" is in stark contrast with the self-resigned attitude of one who declares that, "A mí sólo me toca morirme a oscuras, ser un difunto escondido y un muerto de montón, hacinado entre los demás que se desvanecen entre los podrideros," or who says that: "[...] pero a mí, por lado ninguno me viene bien ni vivo ni muerto, la memoria de mi vida [...]"³¹³. I have called this tension epistemic because it is within the vectors of its significance—of its capacity for producing meanings—that the conditions are set under which knowledge of self can be attained and communicated to others. Since this tension is a by-product of a radicalized individuality that manifests itself concomitantly with it, it neatly fits in the formulation I have already offered as the ontological situation of Torres's not *caring* to care *while* caring *not* to care to be known by others as he knows himself. From this situation a portrayal of his self emerges as the exercise of his freedom to make of his self-portrait *whatever* it turns out to be. And again,

³¹³ Torres, *Vida*. 54 -52.

from this position a portrayal of his self emerges that gives itself to our understanding as whatever we are *able* to understand that it is; if “pícaro” is what we are able to understand it is, so be it. This interpretation is supported by Torres’s consistent challenge to others to prove him wrong, and in his equally consistent disregard for whatever others might make out of what he lays out before them. It must at the same time be noticed that precisely because he cares not what others make out of what says about himself, his attitude, which is the attitude we already saw disclosed in *parrhesia*, is itself “pícaro,” and therefore not suited for confession³¹⁴.

This radical indifference before the opinion of the Other made public as the opinion of the they-self is then inherent, that is, constitutive and consubstantial with the mode of being of this self inasmuch as it is a Being-in-the-world-with others. And this indifference before public opinion in its turn rests on a relativist worldview that holds few things on matter of *doxa*, discourse or opinion, to be definitively settled. To this point I shall later come back. Presently, however, it should be noticed in passing that this relativist worldview is enlightened in that *it comes ahead of its time*. In considering this tension a by-product of a radicalization of the individuated self before the they-self of the Other manifesting itself concomitantly with it, we come to understand that both epistemic tension and radicalization of individuality are simply two different manifestations of the same phenomenon of a self in struggle for its autonomy. For, it is autonomy in all the meanings and significance of this concept what the Self is contending here for:

³¹⁴ “Sígase la conversación, y *crea después el mundo a quien quisiere*. “[...] porque mi espíritu no se altera con el aire de las alabanzas ni con el ruido de los vituperios.” Torres, *Ibid.* 55. “[...] yo digo sólo lo que pasa por mí, que es lo que he prometido, y *lo demás revuélvanlo los críticos come les parezca*.” Torres, *Ibid.* 105. “Deseo con ansia sacar a mi discurso de este atolladero; *crea el lector lo que gustare*, y vengase conmigo a saber (si le agrada) lo que ya puedo decir con verdad, con descanso y sin ofensa.” Torres, *Ibid.* 149. “Poco sentimiento tendré en que cada uno discurra lo se le antojare, ni de que arrempuje mis oraciones en el sentido que le diera la gana.” Torres, *Ibid.* 182. (Emphasis added). Statements of these sorts abound in *Vida* and throughout his writing.

And finally, if writing my life should yield any material gain, I should be the one to benefit from it; and not anybody else. For this life is mine [...] and, as long as my life is mine, no brigand out there shall benefit from it³¹⁵.

In denying the Other to the opportunity to write one's life, thereby foisting on the Self a self-identity in the likeness of the they-self of public opinion, what in this passage is phrased as having an *added* (“y finalmente”) economical function—to the first reason or motive for the inalienable right the Self to “write” its life in its own fashion—turns out to be essentially political, for the very reason of its being a question of individual autonomy³¹⁶. But, in so far as doing so reflects the specific mode of being in the world of a Being that *has* itself to be and who must therefore claim its life *for* itself and *as* itself, this passage shows the existential nature of the problem Torres is dealing with. The fundamental way in which I said in Part One Torres confronts the question of autobiographical self-representation is here reasserted in a rather surprising manner. This can further be verified in considering what he proposes as his second reason or motive for writing his *Vida*:

The second motive I have for making *patent* the insignificances of my life is that the orator who happens to say the on the occasion of my death at University *should have a reliable source of the truth about me*. My opinion

³¹⁵ “Y finalmente, si mi vida ha de valer dinero, más vale que lo tome yo y no otro; que mi vida hasta ahora es mía [...] y ningún bergante me la ha de vender mientras yo viva.” Torres, *Vida*, 58.

³¹⁶ As the truly first “self-made man,” for Torres writing is his “industry” and his “business;” in other words, writing is what he “does for a living” but, since what he writes about to making a living is himself, applied to him the expression “self-made man” acquires a deeper significance than when applied to say, Franklin. For he literally creates “Diego de Torres Villarroel” through his writing, which turns out to be himself; so he truly creates himself and the best evidence of this is that his creation materially supports his *material* existence.

shall be taken account to see that *the paeans to my name match my confessions; and the good opinion to be formed of him who should preach on me will depend on him preaching the truth*³¹⁷. (Emphasis added).

By setting down beforehand what the Other shall say about the Self, the Self not only imposes strict restrictions on the public opinion of the they-self even after it has become a no-longer-with-in-the world, when self-identity as a practical mode of being is not more an issue. By thus setting down how he would have to be evaluated, this individual pre-empties the opinion of the public and holds on to his right to self-determination even into death, taking with him to his grave his autonomous individuality, *in the meantime reclaiming death as belonging into the ontology of existence*³¹⁸. But in this the two apparently separate reasons get uncovered as being one and the same. Here again it is confirmed from a different perspective that autobiography is born of, and is *only* justified as—the most genuine struggle of the Self from the they-self of public opinion structured by the concept of the “other.” This is further shown in the provisions the Self takes to be ready to even renounce its hard-won freedom to set beforehand the criteria on which its evaluation into death should be made and its truth asserted beyond the grave.

Thus Diego de Torres makes an appeal to the Church via his university to dispose with the

³¹⁷ “El segundo motive que me provoca a poner patentes los disparatorios de mi vida, es para que de ellos coja noticias ciertas y asunto verdadero el orador que haya de predicar mis honras a los doctores del reverente claustro de mi Universidad. A mi opinión le tendrá cuenta que se arreglen las alabanzas a mis confesiones, y a la del predicador le convendrá no poco predicar verdades.” Torres, *Vida*, 58-59.

³¹⁸ Here Torres proves prescient in an unexpected way, as it is often with him; Mercadier, one of the most oft-cited sources of scholarly study on his work finds himself in the odd situation of opening one his major research of *Vida* with the open admission that the fact that *Vida* was written by Torres makes more difficult the work of the “biographer.” Honesty in criticism rarely ever went to this stretch. See Mercadier, “Introducción y biografía crítica,” *Vida: Ascendencia, nacimiento, crianza y aventuras de Diego de Torres Villarroel*, 9.

laurato funebris in his particular case, that the Self may do away with the Other, and thus assuring that he shall say the last word on the last words to be said about him:

If the University could do without the custom of the *apology for vita sua*, it is my wish that it starts with me and that it trade in my case for a mass and a requiem the sermon, the rites, the incense and the *epitaphs*.³¹⁹ (Emphasis added).

With this we have come full circle; but in coming full circle we have again come across the question of the futility and uselessness of autobiography, both as an ideal means for yielding self-knowledge, and as a reliable outlet for transmitting knowledge of self. Self-evidently, for the individual who cares not to be known, or who does not care to be unknown as it knows itself by the public opinion of the they-self— *that autobiography is a futility to write it is inscribed into his conscience. But precisely because of this futility for the Self, it is useless to the Other; for nothing can be learned from an autobiographical portrayal carried out under this ontological manner of self-understanding. But then, what Torres confronts us therein with is the end of autobiography*; for in exposing its futility and uselessness for the purposes that autobiography, confessional or not, has always been conceived and envisaged, an end has been posited. *Vida*, which according to the theoretical perspective worked out here throughout, I have demonstrated is the beginning of modern autobiography— paradoxically is also its end. That does not mean autobiographies will not, should not, and effectively, have not continued and will continue to be written, for they will. *But in each and every one of them the only certain knowledge one will always come across is that they are nothing but the reincarnation and*

³¹⁹ “Si mi Universidad puede suspender la costumbre de predicar nuestras honras, yo deseo que empiece por mí, y que me cambie a misas y responsos el sermón, el túmulo, las candelillas y los epitafios.” Torres, *Vida*, 60.

reenactment of this end. For what Torres clearly show is that, whether we want it or not and no matter how hard one tries, the Other, which has the structure of the opinion of the public because that is the use and therefore has to be expected—the they-self, can never get to know the Self as it knows itself. What distinguishes Torres’s position and what makes him hover above and sets him apart from people of the sorts of Rousseau, for instance, is that he takes this profound knowledge of the custom of the public opinion as the point of departure for his self-portrayal. If futility of autobiography as a guaranty of self-knowledge for the Self can be upheld on the basis that is neither a precondition nor indispensable for this to attain, its uselessness for the Other can be upheld on the basis that, even if it were possible for autobiography to tell us everything about it, no matter what therein is learned about an individual’s self, *we cannot learn or know how to be that self*. For, we do not all only have a death to die alone, as Torres puts it; we each individually also has a life to live alone³²⁰. To have a death and a life to live alone essentially means that since we each has a self, we each *is* a Being who has to be; and this “having-to-be” is essentially what our existence is; and this existence has death as its most assured potentiality-for-being. Now, if our being consists in having a life and a death to live and die alone, in the face of the epistemic futility and uselessness of autobiography, another function for it must be found that however should make transparent the existentiality of its nature. In that we literally have to make or gain our living in order to live this function is found (“ganarme la vida con mi Vida”). With this, the existential dimension of economic activities is brought to light in Torres. And the existentiality of these types of activities is also revealed to us in that “writing” one’s life to make a living

³²⁰ “Descansen en paz los difuntos, los vivos vean cómo viven, y viva cada uno para sí, pues para sí solo muera cuando se muere.” Torres, *Vida*, 54.

preserves death as a potentiality for being of the Self, and as such, as something that the Self has to be—whether or not self-knowledge is attained by so doing. And this altogether different and yet peremptory function Torres assigns to autobiography is nothing but the result of the exercise of an individual’s autonomy to make out of his life whatever he pleases:

[...] I want now to set down in writing the fifth chapter of my Life, without asking for their acquiescence to anybody. For *any poor devil is at liberty of tailoring their lives in whatever cut that fits them*; and more so when writing his life could result in *more fabric to cover their living*³²¹.
(Emphasis added).

Indeed, an autobiography that consciously enacts the *existentialle* phenomenon of writing a life to make a living is the materialization of this autonomy; that Torres overly and *against* the expectations of the Other over and over states what he is about in writing his life, constitutes the *factual* proof of this autonomy being exercised. But then this further means that, among other things, we have not wandered too far from where we began; and this shows that Torres’s handling of autobiography serves as an *ante datum validation* of Heidegger’s philosophy of existence, rather than the other way around³²².

From this elucidation facilitated by Torres’s fundamental way of handling the problematic of his own self-representation we arrive at a basic understanding of autobiography as ontologically founded on the dialectic relationship between two opposed

³²¹ “[...] quiero *escribir el quinto trozo de mi Vida, sin pedir licencia a ninguno, porque cada pobre puede hacer de su vida un sayo, y más cuando la diligencia puede acabar en hacer un sayo para su vida.*” Torres, *Ibid.* 178. (Emphasis added).

³²² Heidegger, “Dasein’s Possibility of Being-a-Whole and Being-Towards-Death,” in *Being and Time*, 280-285.

and yet identical modes of being which in its turn has its origin in the condition of existential “thrownness” that being-in-the-world is. Although advanced *philosophically* by Heidegger, it had already been *autobiographically hit upon* by Torres, as I have endeavored to demonstrate. These two opposed and yet identical modes of being, logically, belong on the one hand to the Other, and on the other, to the Self. For, the Other has as its nature a tendency to concern itself, and to encroach, in the private existentiality of the Self; but on the other hand, the Self has as its nature a tendency to remain self-same, thereby confronting the Other in its tendency to determine its self-identity. If I call this two basic tendencies opposed but identical, identical opposites—that is, is because, as it is to be understood after the manner of Hegel, the “Other” is only the other from the standpoint of the Self; but from the standpoint of the “Other” it itself is the “Self,” and what we have been calling the Self is actually the Other³²³. One can posit then that the ontological foundation of autobiography and that of individual autonomy coincide with each other.

From this dialectic relationship between the Self and the Other the notion and the praxis of the individual attain. In it, the fundamental ontology of the Universal human subject we dealt with in chapter 2 of Part One is further clarified. To wit, Torres’s metaphysical insight of all men being but just one Man is borne by the dialectical nature of the relationship between the Self and the Other— in the shifting and reshuffling of standpoints immanent to this relationship. And, since this insight is the most apt formulation we can come across of the Christian belief of the universal dignity of Man,

³²³ Hegel, “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage,” *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 186, 113.

Torres offers the practical, *autobiographical proof* that it is *in* and *as* individual autonomy that this universal condition can become the universal experience of all men.

Chapter 2.5

The Private Conscience: Autobiography and the Birth of Individuality

In our enquiry into the problem of individual autonomy and the question of self-knowledge conducted in the previous chapter, we were met by the radical resistance of the individuated self of Torres Villarroel to yield to the tendency of the they-self in the Other sanctioned by public opinion and tradition, to know him as he knows himself. And, precisely because this resistance concerns the question of self-knowledge that is grounded on the existentiality of a self-conscious Being, we called that resistance ontological, and formulated it as an ontological caring not to be known as he knows himself and conversely, as not-caring-to-be-unknown by the Other of the public opinion of the they-self. This ontological status, we went on to establish, although it came about not as the direct consequence of Torres “reflection” of himself in a writing that aims at producing self-knowledge but rather as the necessary consequence of the epistemic inadequacy of this type of writing, uncovered this status for us as belonging to the specific mode of being of an individuated self. By regarding this as an ontological status that *factually* belongs to Torres’s empirical mode of being, the implication was something that belongs essentially to Torres’s self had been revealed, and that therefore we have moved a step closer to knowing him more deeply, for the obvious reason that we have gained a better understanding of his being inasmuch as Being-in-the-world. Eventually, this *existentielle*, the conscious position of neither caring nor not caring to be known or unknown by the Other, came to be recognized as per se implying a radicalized position respective to autobiography as such, and in a way that exposes autobiography’s limitations for the task

of self-knowledge. But we also duly noted how, reaching these limits through an effort for autobiographical self-understanding, since self-knowledge is always at bottom in establishing the limits of autobiography—paradoxically amounted to *theoretically* reaching the end of autobiography. In showing the inadequacy of autobiography both for the Self and for the Other as Torres does—for the former, because it does not care, or need, or because it cares not; for the latter, because it is *existentially useless* for it to know the Self—in the rejection of an individuated self to know itself autobiographically and in the denial that who he is, or put another way, that the “Who” of his “I” can autobiographically be known by the Other, autobiography then would have been theoretically exhausted. And this would have happened right at the very beginning of its modern history.

All throughout, our enquiry made evident something else, too, and of an equal import as the above. For now it is understood that in the Self’s radical resistance to the tendency from the Other to know it as it knows itself which, should have also become clear, is really an attempt *to impose on the Self an identity that it cannot identify itself with*—even though it presents itself as having an epistemic structure, in that it concerns the problem of self-knowledge and of knowledge of the Self, this structure is political in its own right. For, what is at stake in it is not just knowledge for its own sake but as an implication of the possibility or not of individual autonomy; both “individual” and “autonomy” being above all political categories. And this on the other hand suggests that the “ontology” of the Self, since this entity cannot be conceived of without the Other from whom autonomy is sought, always and in every case presents a problem of political ontology. This was most closely pointed out to in our assertion that individual autonomy is

what makes the Christian proclamation of the belief of the universal dignity of all man become part of the *individual* experience in Western societies. The significance of this interpretation would prove to be enormous for an evaluation of the contribution Torres made to the culture of his time, and for reconsidering the place heretofore not accorded him in those cultural developments. For, as it happens, it is only from the perspective of a man who sets his own personal self-worth on his right to an allotment of individual autonomy that his realization that all men are but just one Man is made possible, since what this really means is that each man, and for that matter, each woman is equally deserving of an allotment of individual autonomy from the “all.” The dialectic relationship of identical opposite that we became aware of earlier between the Self and the Other is now reencountered as one between the single individual and the human totality that he represents. Then, in this realization, the Christian ideal that informs the tenet of Western societies gets realized; and in making this autonomy a praxis, a mode of being in the world and of being with others this ideal gets materialized, that is, it becomes possible to have “factual” understanding of it—. As a logical consequence, Torres would have then to be reevaluated as incarnating in his own mode of being a Being-in-the-world that essential value on which the Enlightenment prospered and was propelled by, inasmuch as, and as far as it remained a manifestation of the vitality of Western culture³²⁴. And this is all the most so since his reformulation of this enlightened ideal is depository of a social equalitarianism and a cultural relativism that he whole-heartedly embraced, both in his work and his social practices, as will be made transparent towards the end of this study.

³²⁴ About the Christian concept of individual, see Max Horkheimer, “Rise and Decline of the Individual,” *Eclipse of Reason*, 92-95.

This would then indicate that portraying him in a simplistic way as an exponent of the “ancient régime” is a bit more than inaccurate³²⁵.

None of this however means that the epistemic tension we posited as central to *Vida* between the *unambiguously* stated reasons Diego de Torres gives for putting his life “in” writing and the *ambiguous promise* he seems to be making to once and for all establish *who he is not* has either dissolved of its own accord, or has been superseded by posterior developments that we would have come across during our analysis. On the contrary and as a matter of necessity, we are still operating within its vectors of signification and will remain so for as long as we are concerned with Diego’s work, since this tension is an offshoot of both the practical nature of his self-relation, and of his relation to others. To reiterate, albeit briefly, Torres’s stated reasons for writing *Vida* unambiguously establish that a) he does not care to be known or not known by his readers and that it would have be just as good for him to leave this world without writing *Vida*; b) that he undertakes to write it because he knows himself better than anybody else would and therefore he is the sole guaranty of the truth about himself, since it is *inevitable* that someone will eventually undertake doing it; c) that he does not consider anybody else’s business to get involved in the incidences of another person’s life, since they could never be as sincere and objective as the subject being written about could; d) that no useful or needed lesson can be attained by anybody else from knowing about his life; and finally, e) that since there could be material gains in the enterprise, he himself should be the beneficiary, since after all it is his “life” that would have traded with therein.

³²⁵ Luis Fernández Cifuentes, “Torres Villarroel: Seducción y escándalo en la biblioteca,” *Confluencia*, 2.2 (Spring 1987): p 22-33, University of North Colorado 1987.

From this we can see how philosophical and ethical reasoning are brought together with an infallible logic that crystallizes in a pragmatic business decision that upsets the epistemic function that autobiography has been assigned by tradition and makes it serve an altogether different strategy. It is this logic and this pragmatism that orient Torres's position respective to autobiography and that signals its end, by its being shown to be futile and useless at once. Thus, there is no ambiguity here. But there is no doubt that it constitutes a puzzling self-contradiction to proclaim on the one hand the futility and uselessness of putting one's life "in" unless than for the new function assigned to it, and at the same time to propose that who one is not will be definitively established therein; hence the necessary ambiguity of the promise³²⁶. However, this is not to say that Torres does not mean to establish who he is; only that he is not the source of any perceived self-contradictions, but that the structure of the language itself is the source³²⁷. Far from this, in this tension, to which the expression "neither caring-to-be-known-nor-not-caring-to-be-unknown" attempts to capture something essential to Torres's Being has already been disclosed to us. For, therein we have been given access into the logical presuppositions underlying his *manner of thinking*. And the *content and structure* of his style of thinking immediately communicate to us that he is not like those he complains of being mistaken for; thus, the presuppositions on which the promise is made to establish who he is not

³²⁶ But, if we would reflect on the grammatical structure of a promise we would realize that all promises, in so far as they are nothing but performative speech acts, they necessarily have the structure of an ambiguity. Defined as statements that have themselves as their only referent, and which therefore what it is stated thereof is wholly accomplished by uttering them, no *pragmatic* meaning beyond the stated can be drawn from them. See Austin, Austin, J. L. *How to do things with Words*, 2nd ed. ed. J. O. Urmson, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1981. Ricoeur adds that this kind of promises play a very important role in the "ethical determination of the self." Ricoeur, "Utterance and the Speaking Subject," 42. See reference above.

³²⁷ This of course would constitute a classical example of the immanent rhetorical structure of language in general; for it is evident here that the meaning of the statement, or rather, what the speaker of the statement means to say cannot be decided from the grammar of the statement itself. These kinds of speech acts generally prove Nietzsche's theory of rhetoric to be on the dot. See Nietzsche "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense;" complete reference above.

already points to us to *what* he is. From this perspective, in his promise Torres is already standing open before us.

Building on these insights, in the present chapter I will contend that a) the radical ontological indifference to whether he is known or not known by the they-self of public opinion, besides containing an implicit claim to individual autonomy in the manner discussed earlier is also constitutive of an explicit claim to individual privacy, and thus incarnates the nascent spirit of enlightened modernity still with us; b) that despite and perhaps *because of* his radical indifference to the they-self of the Other to define his self-identity, which paves the way for the tension encountered above to become central to *Vida*, knowledge of Torres's self readily attains in an essential way, while he at the same time sketches out a practical way, that is, a method through which the "Self," universally understood, could be accessible to the Other, and as objectively as this is possible; and c) that it is Diego's practical relation to his conscience that allows him to accomplish the aforesaid, which in turn explains the radicalization of his individuality. In showing this it would be demonstrated the ontological relation uncovered by Torres's autobiographical enterprise between privacy, private conscience, and the emergence of individuality.

A most suitable way to carry this out is to start by bringing back to mind Diego's *autobiographical reticence* discussed in chapter four of Part One, and in subsequent chapters after that, as his proclivity to abstain from telling "everything" about his life, that is, about himself. I remarked then how this is a characteristic also exhibited by Montaigne, but treated differently by him, since in him it is not directly related to autobiographical truth. But it is all too important that this is a characteristic that both Goethe's and Franklin's autobiographies share with Torres. This historical fact becomes even more

revealing of Torres's place in European modernity, given that he is first in seeing the relation between autobiographical reticence and truth in autobiography, which means to say, he is first before Goethe and Franklin in not making autobiographical truth dependent on confession. And this further means that unlike Rousseau he does not commit the unethical indiscretion of laying himself bare and exposing the innermost aspects of his being, that he can be best judged—relinquishing thereof the right to privacy of the individual. Then, in this ethical discretionary abstention, which must in passing be said, is contrary the way of the “pícaro,” the privacy of the individual, the individual's right to keep from public eyes what belongs in the private realm is first autobiographically recognized in Torres as an attribute inherent to individuality³²⁸. In this sense, how centrally Diego belongs into modernity shows more decisively if we consider that his ontological indifference to the they-self of public opinion is what leads him to making an issue of the privacy of his life and to his denial of any use knowing has for the other. More succinctly put, the said ontological indifference, although inherent to his Being, amounts to a well-calibrated strategy to defend and preserve individual privacy. That this autobiographical reticence is an ethical position aimed to the preservation of individual privacy can be fathomed from these passages from *Vida*:

[...] the *integrity* of this work, and understandably, my vanity for getting recognized in some quarters of society incline me to write down in some details many important moments in the episodes of this story. *But since I have*

³²⁸ Stevens Lukes offers an insightful analysis of the role played by privacy in the development of modern individual consciousness. He references Hanna Arendt's important observation on the differing views on the private sphere among the Greeks in comparison with modern historical times. See Lukes, “Privacy,” *Individualism*, 59-66.

beforehand determined to be silent about some, I will delve only into those parts more indispensable and critical to the issue at hand.³²⁹ (Emphasis added).

That this reticence is ethical not only toward himself, as the individual-subject of his autobiographical enterprise who must above all preserve his own privacy, is confirmed by Torres's taking provision that the privacy of the Other is also preserved and respected. The "identical opposites" quality of the relation between the Self and the Other pointed out earlier is here recovered:

If I could write down here all the little tidbits and all the episodic *circumstances that I am holding back inside my pen without causing irritation and grievance to the actors and witnesses still among us*, these passages would be the only ones from the story of my life that could offer anything of interest, pleasure and worth from where any good lesson could be drawn³³⁰. (Emphasis added).

To further illustrate the extent to which this reticent ethical discretion is consciously cultivated and exhibited as the preserve of individual privacy, Torres, consistent with the already said above, writes:

I decline to set down here the anguishing moments we suffered while on the run, be it out of fear of ending up in

³²⁹ "[...] la integridad de la obra y la disculpable ambición a los decentes aplausos me empujan también a describir con alguna distinción la multitud de sus mayores circunstancias; pero pues he determinado callar algunas, concluiré las que pertenecen a este asunto con más aceleración y más miserias." Torres, *Vida*, 139.

³³⁰ "Si yo pudiera poner en esta escritura, sin irritar a los actores y testigos que todavía han quedado en el mundo, las particulares menudencias y circunstancias que estoy deteniendo en mi pluma, creo que sería este el pasaje único que pusiese alguna enseñanza, algún gusto and dilatada estimación en esta historia." Torres, *Ibid.* 146.

the slammers, or out of the remorse and sadness that the memories of the families and friends left behind produced in us. I do not want to bore my readers *narrating mundane events that even the most unimaginative among them can figure out*, and so I will spare them the annoying details³³¹.

(Emphasis added).

That this autobiographical reticence derives from Torres's ontological indifference towards public opinion is shown in that through it Torres's individuated self elicits the portrayal of its own radicalization, and in that it has the same epistemic status than passages from his writing where he is the most unrestrained in expressing this indifference, thus containing the potentials for posing the same interpretative pitfalls to which many of students of his work succumb³³². For example:

Whatever I write in my prognostics, you better believe it, I am delirious; but in the present prognostic my delirium has

³³¹ “No quiero poner aquí el montón de angustias que padecimos a ratos en nuestro viaje, ya producidas del miedo de no dar en una prisión, ya del cuidado que nos acosaba el espíritu con la memoria de nuestras casas y familias, porque no se me aburran los lectores con la vulgaridad de la relación de unos lances tan indefectibles, que los puede presumir el más rudo; imagínelos el que lea, y quedará menos enojado con su discurso que con las torpezas de mis enfadosas expresiones.” Torres, *Ibid.* 153.

³³² So it is that, failing to see in Torres's autobiographical reticence a manifestation of a conscious ethical attitude with a less pedestrian meaning than what they attribute him, most students of Torres's work either play the detectives, and set themselves out to “catch” up him red-handed, or fill up with their own speculations passages from Torres's life they wish he had devoted more time to; or more often than not, they limit themselves to rehashing and rephrasing what he already has punctually said in his writing. A case in point is Torres's relation with women and sex. For example, Sebold, finding that Torres has said not so much on the subject, following his own theory so evidently barren of a theoretically defined conceptual apparatus, he attributes Torres's silence on this issue to his being a “centaro mixto,” from where it follows that, “Torres habla de su vida sexual con cierta ambigüedad.” It goes without saying that I have been having difficulty grasping Sebold's interpretation of Torres, about which I will say more towards the end of this study. It would not have occurred to him to contemplate in this Torres's position respective to the question of privacy, for instance. But McClelland goes even farther than Sebold in practically reproaching Torres not getting down to the business of telling how he felt about sex, and letting us in into the chambers of his sexual life, if he had any, on which point she seems to be at loss. See Sebold, “Estudio preliminar,” *La Vida de Diego de Torres Villarreal*, 25-25. Concerning McClelland, see, “Life: The Version According to Torres: Autobiographical Silences,” 27-31.

reached its perfection. *Read it, but do not lose your head trying to figure out what these aphorisms mean; for I swear on my life that there are in them not more meaning than what you read into them*³³³. (Emphasis added).

And again, and more explicitly:

I am *completely indifferent* if each and everybody should infer whatever they would from what I say, or that they would turn around my statements to make them mean whatever they want them to³³⁴. (Emphasis added).

What should be taken from this is that according to Diego, *the reader is always at liberty to assign meaning to a text and therefore to decide the meaning a text has for him or her*³³⁵. In autobiography, then, the truth does not depend on how much or how little it is revealed. On the other hand, it follows that the fewer revelations are made, the more privacy is preserved; and the more privacy is preserved and protected, the more ethical the individual is. Moreover, to reveal less does not by necessity imply less truth, since

³³³ “Siempre que escribo pronósticos, puede creer que estoy delirando; pero el delirio de éste ha llevado mayor propiedad. Léelo, y no te descabeces en qué quieren decir los aforismos, pues te juro por mi vida que yo tampoco lo sé, y en ellos no encontraras más sentido que el que tú le quisieras dar.” Torres, “Delirios astrológicos,” *Textos autobiográficos*, 70.

³³⁴ “Poco sentimiento tendré en que cada uno discorra lo que se antojare, ni que arrempuje mis oraciones hacia el sentido que le diere la gana.” Torres, *Vida*, 182.

³³⁵ It should not escape us that in this observation, and in many others where he delineates his position respective to rhetoric and the reception of his writing in his days, Torres anticipates the many reader-response theories that flourished during the first and second decades of the twentieth century, like those put forward by Hans Robert Hauss, Roman Ingarden, Wolfgang Iser, North Frye and Gerard Genette, among others. And it should not escape us either, that his position on these matters can stand next to that of Laurence Stern’s his in *Tristram Shandy*, respective to the collaboration between writer and reader that is presupposed in the act of writing. Alone among Torres scholars, Mercadier also comes across this phenomenon in Diego’s work; but because he sees it as isolated from the totality of this work he of course fails to gauge the significance of this phenomenon and in establish the structural connection to Torres’s specific manner of thinking. On the different reader-response theories, see Wolfgang Iser, “The Rudiments of a Theory of aesthetic Response,” and “The Processing of the Literary Text,” *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, pp. 20-38 and pp. 107-118. See Mercadier, “Introducción,” *Diego de Torres Villarroel: Correo del otro mundo*, 40, ed. Manuel María Pérez López.

fictionalization of that truth, lies, that is, do not get substituted in the autobiographical discourse for what is “held back in the pen,” as Torres says. That Diego de Torres is conscious of his necessity to preserve his privacy is brought to light in his declaration that:

Whoever wishes to be instructed on the true motives that led to my disgrace and ignominy should *carefully read* some of my writings, easily found at any bookstore. In some of those pieces one should be able to find the reasons that I, *with studied confusion*, hid in them³³⁶. (Emphasis added).

In this admission of Torres consciously hiding himself he discloses much autobiographically about himself; and what he thus discloses about himself is that he means to keep what belongs to the individual sphere private. It is precisely because he means to preserve his privacy, but more peremptorily, *to keep his private self in privacy*—that he fashions a version of himself that does not correspond to who he is to himself and to those “authorized” by him to know him, that is, those he had let into the privacy of his individual sphere and who by definition form and take no part in the opinion of the public. He himself says so:

I assure you that I am as cold as an icicle for a buffoon. I will concede though that I from my desk give to the public some of what my enemies call buffooneries *but only for the sole consumption of curious people not authorized into myself*; for the price of a few laughs, I have been putting bread on the table, and winning the esteem of many. But

³³⁶ “El que quisiere quedar instruido, registre algunos papeles míos, que con facilidad se tropieza en las librerías, y hallará (aunque revueltos con estudiada confusión) los motivos de mi ignominia y desgracia.” Torres, Vida, 147-148.

while in the intimacy of people of character he would be laying who said that to have heard from my lips disrespectful expressions whatsoever, even when I given the liberty to talk freely³³⁷. (Emphasis added).

Interpreted phenomenologically, this means that ontological difference belongs intrinsically to the specific mode of being in the world and being with others of the individual who puts no much store in being or not being known accordingly as he could only be in the regard of public opinion. But if this quality belongs intrinsically to him, then knowledge of *what* and *who* he is begins in the ability to recognize this phenomenon, *for this phenomenon is already the first and most essential quality we shall know about him*. From this phenomenon it is that we have gathered that the position of neither caring nor not caring whether he is known by the others, instead of representing a hindrance of any sort indeed facilitates acquiring of Torres a deeper knowledge than we otherwise could, since in this we come to know him *as he authentically is to himself*, and this is tantamount to understanding him in his “own-most,” that is, in what most deeply and naturally belongs to his individuality. That explains that, in fulfilling his promise of settling down the account of his self-identity, Torres resorts neither to the easy but tricky strategy of making evident the obvious differences between those he complains of being mistaken with—the picaresque character and the common criminal—nor does he make his autobiography into an *apologia pro vita sua*, like Rousseau does, mounting a defense from

³³⁷ “Lo que aseguro es que soy para bufón patente más frío que un carámbano; lo que confieso es que, a mis solas y desde mi bufete, y para la gente desautorizada y ociosa, echo en la calle algunas de las que ellos llaman bufonadas, que a la vuelta de alguna risa me han traído el pan y la estimación; pero en las conversaciones de las personas de todo carácter, será un maldiciente el que diga que ha visto asomar a mis labios expresión que no sea severamente humilde; aun cuando me han dado permiso par a delirar.” Torres, *Vida*. 224.

these charges. In other words, Diego de Torres *seeks to define his self-identity not by establishing who he is or not, but through allowing us to see how he is*. If we wanted to rephrase these last statements in the terminology of existential-analytical philosophy, then we would say that Torres's approach to autobiography lets us see why in the *how* of our existence it is that the "who" and the "am" of our "I" is given to our understanding. Thus we see that instead of recurring to a systematic mnemonic dissection of his affectivity—or in other words, instead of offering us the story of his feelings to convey to us who he was under a given circumstance, as Rousseau does, *Torres simply tells us how he is under any given circumstances* by asserting what his conduct, thoughts and actions have been throughout his lifetime. No foggy or ethereal notion of a mnemonic affectivity to which only he has access to is to be found in Torres, and above all, no "meditation" or confession³³⁸. The thesis that it is in the how, in the mode of being in the world and toward others that an individuated self makes itself accessible to our understanding originates in Torres himself. A sound indication of the strength of this thesis is that Torres devotes the largest passages of his *Vida* to the detailed examination of his mode of being in-the-world -with-others. Although I would like to avoid repeating some passages already delved into in Part One, I have no other recourse than to revisit some of them for the sake of clarity. His self, Torres unambiguously says, can be discerned from his conduct and actions; in other words, from how he is. This is what we find illustrated in these passages:

³³⁸ [...] pero ahora *no me detendré en esta meditación ni solitud*, porque estando ya tan cerca el terrible día en que ha de salir a juicio lo más menudo de mis pensamientos, obras y palabras, entonces lo sabré todo [...].” Torres, *Vida*, 179. Emphasis added. It is true that in many passages in Torres's work the terms “confesiones,” “confieso” and “confesar” occur; but it would be a methodological mistake to infer from this that he engages in confession or that *Vida* is “confessional,” as Sebold has done and many after him, following the approach of traditional literary scholarship of not losing sleep over terminology and therefore not distinguishing ideas from notions, metaphors from concepts, and concepts from simple words that are employed in a text as categories of language, *but not as categories of thoughts*. I will come back briefly to this point in the last chapter of this study.

I am usually an easy-going man; humbling before my superiors; accessible to underlings, and most of the time, I am outspoken with those of my same social rank. In conversations, I listen more than I talk; although I often have in my head funny one-liners, and some expressions others used to induce laughs, I have never felt the inclination to be a joke-man. I am at home among all sorts of people, regardless of their sex and or social rank³³⁹. I am so such an obedient lad someone would even say I am meek, because I tend to always do what I am told without stopping to consider the possible danger to my person³⁴⁰. My bravery of heart, my undisturbed spirit, and my impassible conscience, both by nature and nurture, are the only virtues that deserve to be envied in me³⁴¹. I have always been a bit haughty, arrogant, apathetic, and frank to a fault³⁴².

From the fundamental agreement between conducts, thoughts and actions—or in the language of existential phenomenology, from the agreement between these *Existential*—and from the consistency with which they make themselves manifest the

³³⁹ “Soy regularmente apacible, de trato sosegado, humilde con los superiores, afable con los pequeños, y las más de las veces, desahogado con los iguales. En las conversaciones hablo poco, quedo y moderado, y nunca tuve valor para meterme a gracioso, aunque he sentido bullir en mi cabeza los equívocos, los apodos y otras sales con que sazonan los más políticos sus pláticas. Hállome felizmente gustoso entre todas especie, sexo y destino de personas...” Torres, *Vida*, 101.

³⁴⁰ “Soy dócil y manejable en grado vicioso y reprehensible, porque hago y concurro a cuanto me mandan, sin examinar los peligros ni las resultas infelices [...]” Torres, *Vida*, 102.

³⁴¹ La valentía de corazón, la quietud del espíritu y la serenidad de ánimo, que gozo muchos años ha, es la única parte que se le puede envidiar a mi naturaleza, mi genio o mi crianza.” Torres, *Ibid.* 105

³⁴² “He tenido hasta hoy un seso altanero, importuno, desidioso y culpablemente desahogado.” Torres, *Ibid.* 114.

ontology of a Being that is in the world, and that is in the world with others can be discerned. In offering to us for evaluation how he is, instead of who he is, Diego's individuated self opens itself up to be accessed objectively because conducts, thoughts and actions are objective entities which are factually encountered both by the individual in whom they arise or who experiences them in their immediacy, and by the others with whom he exists in the world and by whom they can also be if not factually, factually attested. Thus, the fundamental way in which Torres handles his self-representation offers the only conceivable possibility in autobiography of objectively coming face to the face with what is presupposed to be understood in the notion of the "Self." For, he shows that whatever belongs to the "own-most" of this entity always shows itself in one way or another, either as thought or as conduct and/or action; but more often than not it shows itself at once in any of these phenomena, since conducts and actions and thoughts *reflect* each other and often are at the same time a *reflection (a comment) upon* each other. But whatever way this "own-most" attribute of the "Self" stands before our understanding, it always does so practically, as the practical mode of a Being that must either be or not be, but that is always in the world with the Being of others.

Should we go on considering this problem any further, then it would become transparent to our understanding that the *Existenciales* just spoken of above—conducts, thoughts and actions, in which logically, our deliberations and decisions and the feelings that accompany these processes are equally presupposed and comprehended—constitute the ontological structure of what is called *conscience*. Otherwise put, since conducts, thoughts and actions are the factual manifestation of the mode of being of a given individual inasmuch as a Being-in-the-world and as a Being-in-the-world-with-others, *in*

them, and as they it is that we come across with the phenomenon of conscience; *more explicitly, these Existentials in themselves are our conscience*. But then this readily suggests that the phenomenon of conscience is in fact a relation of thoughts, feelings, deliberations and decisions that always find its expression in actions and conducts of a kind or another, or in the failure thereof, and which is ever open to being construed in a “positive” or “negative” way, as “good” or “bad,” that is. Now, if this is so, in delving into the *how* of his “I am” to produce a reliable portrayal of his self-identity Diego de Torres Villarroel allows us to understand conscience as what it truly is, as the “factual state” of Existence; for each and every one of our actions and conducts and thoughts involves an act, a movement in our conscience that can be objectively accessed and evaluated, whether we are conscious of it or not. Thus, the differentiation noted by existential-analytical philosophy between theoretical self-consciousness, immediate or otherwise, and practical self-consciousness discussed in chapter four of Part One following Tugendhat, is hereby confirmed.

On the basis of these insights we can now move on to posit that it is *as* conscience that Torres’s self gets a hold of its existence, and that it by necessity does so practically *as reflection of his thoughts upon his actions and conducts*, and concomitantly, as confirmation *in* his actions and conducts of the presuppositions of his thoughts. This is what Torres is found doing in *Vida* and elsewhere whenever the *how* of his being becomes the focus of his self-examination. For instance:

I can assure that, whenever I have the chance of showing humility, which happens many times in a single day, I always find that I can be both submissive and self-

deprecating without letting that make a dent on my natural self-worth. I easily and happily subject my opinions to those of others. I avoid the much arguing that often goes on in irascible conversations. In those conferences characterized by sectarian debate I want no part. I speak very little, because I am persuaded that my opinions can neither entertain nor edify anybody. Finally, in contested situations, I am rather cowardly; I prefer to keep silent, fearful and *questioning of my own thoughts and actions*. If this is just me strategizing, positioning or angling, or otherwise, *if in this I show myself as I am is for me to confess, and for the reader to decide*³⁴³. (Emphasis added).

And again:

To those who sing my praises I show no gratitude, because I know that they do it to satisfy their own sense of false modesty and to hide their hypocrisy; they can then demand from their virtues the gratitude that I do not owe them. Those who give me good advices I too listen attentively, and let them babble away, laughing to myself seeing how they presume of being such good counsels, so smug and self-

³⁴³ Lo que aseguro es que cuando se me ofrece ser humilde, que es muchas veces al día, siempre encuentro con las sumisiones y con el menosprecio de mi mismo, sin el más leve reparo ni retiro de mi natural orgullo. Sujeto con facilidad y con alegría mis dictámenes y sentimientos a cualquier parecer. Me escondo de las porfiadas conferencias, que son frecuentes en las conversaciones. Busco el asiento más obscuro y distante de los que presiden en ellas. Hablo poco, persuadido a que mis expresiones ni pueden entretener ni enseñar. Finalmente, estoy en los concursos cobarde, callado, con miedo y sospecha de mis palabras y mis acciones. Si esto es genio, política, negociación o soberbia, apúrelo el va leyendo, que yo no sé más que confesarlo.” Torres, *Vida*. 55-56.

satisfied with their own advices. *This is who I have always dealt with people and how I have been able to carry on with my life, without any noticeable spiritual loss, and without any more travails than the indispensable corruptions and lamentations that nature has reserved in her bosom and vitality for both for both the king and the lackeys, and for the bishop and the altar boy*³⁴⁴. (Emphasis added).

Two developments crucial to our analytical task have taken place in these passages. On the one hand, it has been made transparent that the acts or movements of conscience are consubstantial with Being-in-the-world with others; on the other, it has become transparent that awareness of this phenomenon involves an element of radicalization of the individual who is thus aware. Rephrased in more cogent terms, the latter statement means that the phenomenon of *the radicalization of individuality as we have seen in Torres is given to the individual whose empirical experience has made conscience into the foundation of his self-consciousness*:

I am absolutely sure that neither in the present part of my autobiographical writing nor in the previous ones will anybody find any episode cued, abridged or otherwise

³⁴⁴ “Al que me alaba, no se lo agradezco, porque, si me alaba, le conviene a su modestia o su hipocresía, y a ellas puede pedirle las gracias que yo no bebo darle. Al que me corrige, le oigo y lo dejo descabezar; rióme mucho de ver como presume de consejero my repotente (sic.) y gustoso con sus propias satisfacciones. Así me compongo con las gentes, y así he podido llegar con mi vida hasta hoy sin especial congoja de mi espíritu, y sin más trabajos que las indispensables corrupciones y lamentos que para el rey y el labrador, el pontífice y el sacristán, tiene la naturaleza reposados en su misma fábrica y vitalidad.” Torres, *Vida*, 56-57. The reader will no doubt notice how close Torres’s observations of the psychological motivations our human actions and moral stances resemble some of the observations by La Rochefoucauld on the same subject, an author who so deeply influenced Nietzsche’s dissection of the psychological motivations behind even those more “altruistic” human actions. This, one should not refrain from saying, is not mere coincidence, since these skeptical and mistrustful attitude has its origin in the same Greek and Roman sources. See Nietzsche, “On the History of Moral Feelings,” *Human, All too-Human*.

depicted in a way that darkens or distorts the truth that, with God as my witness, I always uphold. *I am also certain that there is in me rectitude of intention to uphold the truth*; but I also know that it is impossible to dissuade those who are ill-bent towards me of their intentions. *I am absolutely indifferent* to the conclusion that each one will reach about me, or if they read in what I say whatever they please. *I am satisfied to myself that I can speak with this admixture of humble arrogance because what I say is the pure and simple truth, as is everything I chance to write. I also know that thus far God has given me guidance that I should ever observe the corresponding fealty towards my fellow men. I know that I have been respectful of authority and affable and tractable in my dealings with people from all walks of life. I know that I have never calumniated anybody. I know that I have never knowingly affirmed any falsities. I know that I have never borrowed from anybody money, articles of clothing, horse, lodging or anything else, and neither have I ever inconvenienced anybody. Finally, I know that no Joe-Six-Pack can truthfully attest to any action on my part that would be in contradiction with my deference and honesty towards those I am obligated to serve and respect and trust and love.* And if there is anybody out there who has reason

to demand of me reparation for harms to their good names or property, come forward while I am still around. For I swear to God that I will make amends and will repay whatever losses they might incurred through my fault in whatever way they might demand from me³⁴⁵. (Emphasis added).

Clearly, the way Torres knows himself to be is based on a constant and detailed evaluation on how his actions and conducts toward those he exists in relation with stand in relation to the precepts he lives by, as reported by his self-examination, that is, his conscience, *which does not come about as something separate from those actions and conducts*, and which goes hand in hand with a radical indifference to a knowledge of him coming from “outside” himself that cannot be substantiated through the examination of his conscience. This is precisely what his radicalization of his individuality consists on. Since I earlier proposed the thesis of Torres’s approach to his autobiography as an ante-datum validation of Heidegger’s philosophy of Being and Existence, to leave no doubts lingering on this topic, as it is of the utmost import to the reevaluation of Torres’s place in European

³⁴⁵ “Estoy seguro de que no se hallará en estas planas, ni en las de los trozos antecedentes, suceso alguno ponderado, disminuido o puesto con otra figura que pueda asombrar o deslucir la verdad que gracias a Dios acostumbro. También estoy cierto que va delante de mis expresiones la rectitud de la intención, pero también sé que es imposible contener la furia de los comentarios maliciosos. Poco sentimiento tendré en que cada uno discurra lo que se le antojare, ni que arrempuje mis oraciones hacia el sentido que le diera la gana. Estoy satisfecho de que puedo hablar con esta especie de soberbia sencillez, porque es verdad pura lo que digo, y lo será cuanto ponga en los cuadernos que tengo ánimo de escribir. Sé también que hasta ahora me ha tenido por su mano la piedad de Dios, para que no haya dejado de ser hombre de leal correspondencia con todos. Sé que he venerado a mis superiores, y que he sido apacible y tratable con las demás diferencias de gentes. Sé que no he puesto la más leve sospecha en la opinión de persona alguna. Sé que no he hecho juicio falso, sino los de mis propios repertorios. Sé que a ninguno le pedí prestado su dinero, su vestido, su caballo, su casa ni otra cosa, ni le he procurado la más leve incomodidad; y, finalmente, sé que ningún bergante puede referir con verdad acción que se oponga al buen trato y honradez entre los hombres a quien debo servir, obedecer y tratar con respeto, cariño, llaneza o confianza; y si hubiese alguno que tenga que pedirme algún pedazo de su opinión o su caudal, hable o escriba, que aún vivimos, y juro por Dios de satisfacerle y de devolverle, del modo que me mande, cuanto por mi culpa haya perdido.” Torres, *Ibid.* 182-183.

history of thought I have been championing, it must be pointed out the extent to which the passage above punctually captures what are the working and definition of conscience as envisioned by Heidegger. For, as it is for with Heidegger, for Diego de Torres conscience also represents, or comes about as the result of a break with the “listening-away” to the Other of public opinion that characterizes the unauthentic Self. And it is this break with the habit of “listening-away” from oneself that in my view produces that radicalization in Torres’s individuality and from where his unfettered individualism arises, which he consciously pushes to its limits in deprecatorily representing himself as the picaroon that he is not. To break with the habit of “listening-away” of the unauthentic Self is expounded by Heidegger as discarding the “hubbub” and the “ambiguity” that characterizes the idle talk of the everydayness of public opinion in the Other as to leave no room for “curiosity,” that is, for empty preoccupation with “newness,” and to come and remain and dwell on what is closest to oneself³⁴⁶. When this happens, always accordingly to Heidegger but painstakingly and patiently detailed by Torres in the passages above and below, is it because our conscience is speaking to us and we have *stopped* listening-away from ourselves. These passages then prove that, effectively, when conscience calls on us, it gives *us* to understand³⁴⁷.

To give him to his own understanding is exactly what self-examination, which now we can recast after Heidegger as a “call” and as a “summoning” of the Self to itself from listening-away to the others—is what Diego’s autobiographical writing does:

The gossips of those ill-bent towards me; their dismissive
opinion about me; the blabbing of those who in adulating

³⁴⁶ Heidegger, “Curiosity,” *Being and Time*, 214-217.

³⁴⁷ Heidegger, “The Existential-Ontological Foundations of Conscience,” *Being and Time*, 316.

me spoil the earnings I could make, this is what to me means having bad luck. *I used to be misled by them all; but now I live and drink all to myself. [...]* *Nothing can upset me anymore; if my neighbor is irascible, let him die; if envious of me, let him rot; if he likes to spread rumors, let him bite me. I myself must moan my ailments; each must cry or not for their own sins; I must care only after my own heart; my neighbor, after his*³⁴⁸.

Bringing all the way home our enquiry and to offer the ultimate proof that Torres *contains* Heidegger and that he can be offered as a validation to the latter, let us have Heidegger himself say what Torres has already made possible for us to see:

When the they-self is appealed to, it gets called to the Self. *But it does not gets called to that Self that can become for itself an 'object' on which to pass judgment, not to that Self which inertly dissects its 'inner life' with fussy curiosity, nor to that Self which one has in mind when one gazes 'analytically' at psychical conditions and what lies behind them. The appeal to the Self in the they-self does not force it inwards upon itself so that it can close itself off from the 'external world'.* The call passes over everything like this

³⁴⁸ “[...] el eco del mal inclinado, la voz del soberbio, y el informe del adulator, que profanan el oído del que me ha de enriquecer, es la poca fortuna; yo conocí esa danza, y vivo y bebo para mí solo. [...] nada me enoja; si el vecino es soberbio, que se pudra; si murmurador, que muerda en lo más blando. A mí sólo me toca gemir mis males; el pecado ajeno, que lo llore su amo, o no lo llore; yo he de cuidar de mi alma, y el vecino de la suya.” Torres, “Sacudimiento de mentecatos habidos y por haber,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 44. These same sentiments find their place in *Vida*; only in not so many words: “[...] primero soy yo que su dictamen y su soberbia; púdranse ellos, y vamos al caso.” Torres, *Vida*, 183.

and disperses it, so as to appeal solely to that Self which, notwithstanding, is in no other way than Being-in-the-world³⁴⁹. (Emphasis added).

When the theoretical consequences that most immediately suggest themselves are drawn from this citation from Heidegger the realization cannot escape us that it portrays the fundamental way in which Diego de Torres works his own self-portrayal in the exact manner I interpret it here throughout. Namely, it is portrayed in this citation that dealing with one's self-representation in a practical way, meaning autobiographically, because in autobiography one relates to oneself through relating to one's actions, thoughts and conducts—and not to one's "self," as it is propounded by Deconstructionist theories that unwittingly attach themselves to an idealist, contemplative conceptualization of "self-consciousness"—the Self does not turn itself into an "object" in order to "analyze" itself; and autobiography does not metaphorically "mirror" the Self and therefore is not its "metaphor." Moreover and directly connected to this, the Self does not give itself to subjective introspection in search of an understanding of its "inner life," and neither does it give way to an "inward turn" or "inwardness" that might lead it to sever its relation to the objective world of the they-self and to close itself off from it.

Rather, what Torres makes possible for us to see is that the individual to whom his individuality is given radically, or if you like, that the radically individuated Self is the ontological-existential entity that exists in a permanent state of conscience. For, to him, existence is experienced as an endless series of self-questioning and interrogations about

³⁴⁹ Heidegger, "The Character of Conscience as a Call," in *Being and Time*, 318. In this citation, in the first line Heidegger expresses the condition of inauthenticity in which for the most part we exist before and while we still see ourselves as the others see us and before and while we are still listening-away to them, and not yet listening closer to us for self-understanding. In other words, the "they-self" is the Self that has not yet recovered its authenticity.

the decisions made and the decisions yet to be made, and as a practical, that is, actionable examination of the moral and ethical grounds on which this deliberative process is conducted. But then this means that the individual whose conscience compels him to assume his individuality radically makes of reason and reasonableness the basis of his relation to Life as existence. It follows, that a radicalized individuality by definition is the most outstanding characteristic of the individual authentically representative of the ideals of the Enlightenment. This therefore becomes the central thesis to be pursued in the following chapter.

Chapter 2.6

Enlightened Relativism and Social Conscience in Autobiography

Throughout the discussion that we have been conducting down to the last chapter, the existential-ontological methodological approach we have consistently employed throughout this study has disclosed to us the fundamental way in which Diego de Torres Villarroel deals with the task of his biographical self-representation. This fundamentality, which has once and again shown itself in our consideration of the problematic of the self-determinative character of the Self and of its manifestation in the phenomenon of individuation as a subjectivity that arises from a relation of intersubjectivity, and in the phenomenon of conscience understood as immanent practical self-examination and therefore as self-reflectivity—has also in its turn revealed Diego de Torres Villarroel's position respective to each one of these *existentiells* to be that of the modern enlightened individual who exhibits a consciousness of his being so³⁵⁰. That this can but be necessarily the case is logically inferred from the historical context within which the work of Diego de Torres appears and in which the phenomenology of the developments above is uncovered. Operating within this historical context, this should be taken as meaning that according to the present study, declaring oneself overly for or against the postulates of the

³⁵⁰ “Existentiell” is a Heidegger's coinage; he uses to speak about the phenomenon of the impossibility of understanding ourselves in any way of which it can be said that it lies *outside* of our existence; this means that we can only understand ourselves as existential entities *in* Existence, for we cannot step outside of it in order to gain self-understanding. If this is so, then to understand oneself autobiographically as Torres does means to understand one's individual mode of being as forming part of the ontology of Being in general. Whatever leads to self-understanding along this way, Heidegger calls an *existentiell*; by this token, an autobiography that takes as its point of departure a realization of the metaphysics of existence in which its subject exists, as I have shown Torres does, would be an *existentiell*, as would also be the methods and the presuppositions underlying its method. The plural form of this term which I employ elsewhere does not occur in Heidegger, and is therefore a further coining of a coinage for which I assume responsibility. It seeks to account not only for the “understanding of oneself” Heidegger speaks of, but also for the resources and activities and notions which are part and parcel of the process of autobiographical self-understanding. See Heidegger, “The Ontological Priority of the Question of Being,” *Being and Time*, 32-33.

Enlightenment as a historical event does not *in* itself decide belonging or not belonging in it. Rather, it is through the critical assessment of the values, proposals and ideals promoted by a given author or work within the timeframe of the historical period encompassed by it that this issue must be decided. Thus, whenever we have looked throughout this new interpretation of Torres's work we have found him to satisfy the basic prerequisites to require inclusion in the European-American historical event known as the Enlightenment. In this revisionist reworking of the concept of "Enlightenment" we would be keeping within the enlightened parameters set down by Voltaire, but even more neatly, by Kant. For, for Kant being "enlightened" was not necessarily a question of ideological *militancy* or of political *advocacy* whether discursive or empirical. For Kant, you are enlightened and belonged within the Enlightenment if your postulates and actions reflect an inclination to, or if there is a correspondence between those postulates and the credos of individual freedom, autonomy, self-determination, self-agency, religious and political tolerance and commitment to reasonability, which were the pillars of the movement³⁵¹. Taking this a basis and in view of what the present approach has over and again brought to light, there is but little room if any all for doubting the legitimacy of the claim to Torres being an early proponent of the European Enlightenment in Spain.

This interpretation is of course at odds with the views most commonly held about Diego de Torres. In these views, Torres is considered as either only partially connected to the Enlightenment and as occupying within it only a marginal, almost distant place³⁵²; or

³⁵¹ A.C. Grayling, "Introduction to the History of the Enlightenment: Enlightenment Values," *The Ideas that made the Modern World*, IX-XXVI, Running Press, Philadelphia, 2008.

³⁵² This would be, roughly speaking, the view held by Mercadier, for instance. For him Torres never touches the terrain of the Enlightenment proper. Even though he recognizes Torres's critical stance against superstition, for example, which brings him ever closer to Voltaire at times going beyond him, and also recognizes Torres's adherence to the empiricist principles in natural sciences, he never accords Torres more recognition than that of being a "singular compañero de viaje de los renovadores en la crítica de la

he is not recognized as having an unresolved self-contradictory relation to it³⁵³; or else he is cast as in opposition to it³⁵⁴. And yet, all these positions seem to be to be paradoxically

superstición.” In effect, Mercadier straightforwardly denies that Torres was in any way enlightened. See Mercadier, “La cosmografía Torrecéntrica: Las cinco esferas de un universo en rebeldía,” en “Introducción,” *Correo del otro mundo*, 34-64; see especially page 45.

³⁵³ This would be a fitting way of describing Fernández Cifuentes’ understanding of Torres and the Enlightenment. For him, Torres is at times occupying and intermediary space between the Baroque and modernity proper which space itself is however “anchored” in the past. Thus, here for him Torres’s work is only “cargado de indicios o premoniciones de la modernidad.” But sometimes he changes or evolves in view and now sees Torres’s work as being of a “conflictive character” that however places him at the “center of modernity” in Spain; and this “conflictive” character, according to him, is what confers on Torres “un excepcional valor representativo.” Since the contradiction between these two evaluations of Torres is apparent, as it is the self-contradiction embedded in each of these two evaluations, I will pass over them by noticing how the “conflict character” identified by the critique on Torres becomes an outstanding element of this same critique; I take this as a token of the vitality and complexity of Torres’s apparent irrelevant writing. Fernández Cifuentes, “Enfermedad y autobiografía: sobre la experiencia de la individualidad,” in *Revisión de Torres Villarroel*, 155-159, Estudios filológicos, ed. Manuel María Pérez-López, Universidad of Salamanca, first edition, 1998; see also Fernández Cifuentes, “Torres Villarroel: seducción y escándalo en la biblioteca,” in *Confluencia*, Vol. 2, 2, pp. 23. A similar situation can be found in other students of Torres. For another example, in his analysis of the possible contribution of Torres to the philosophies of science of the Enlightenment, Paul Ilie has no problem recognizing that concerning the *Barca de Aqueronte*, a book whose subject-matter is the formation of dreams is sufficient evidence to show that “Torres knew enough about quintessences (sic), spirits, and virtues from his alchemical reading to provide a bold explanation for the dream. By doing so, he would have also approached the problem of cognition by drawing alongside Newton’s aethereal (sic) concept of a divine sensorium. Aether constitutes the most rarified state of animal spirits traced upon the mind, according to followers of Condillac like Charles Bonnet.” According to this analysis, Torres is here in good enough company to be considered philosophically enlightened. And Ilie goes even further. Drawing on *El ermitaño y Torres*, Ilie again places Torres in almost equal footing with Newton, Bonnet and Martínez in his explanation of the universal totality or the “great chain of being” or “liaison universelle” and he find further agreement between Torres and Martínez in their taxonomy of dreams and even gives the former credit for putting forward together with Goya what Ilie terms *oneirophany*, which aims to explain the genesis and nature of dreams. This, says Ilie, singles Torres out from the rest of Spaniard interested in the philosophy of nature, putting his at the far front and not far behind the Diderot of *Le rêve de d’Alembert* when the conclusions of both different approaches, the alchemist of Torres and the materialist of Diderot are considered. Based on the premises followed by his own investigation into these matters, Ilie sees no problem in concluding that “Terminology varies in the eighteenth century, but the three levels contributing to cognition are everywhere the same: sensation of the external object (signifier), perception or impression upon the common sensorium (signal or sig), and idea or image in the mind (signified). This schematic simplification of what Derridan phenomenology has transformed into a sophisticated grammatology of the double-faced sign preserves the original set of cognitive implications of blindness. *And Torres shares this concern, which in the end shortens his distance from Diderot.* Beyond the written and spoken language are Torres’s listenable inscription and plastic dream-imager in mental space.” There is no doubt then here about Torres’s Enlightened credentials. For, he ends his articles by firmly placing Torres in the Enlightenment by stating in uncertain terms that “it is unnecessary to force Torres within the fabric of the Enlightenment’s discourse in order to recognize their interwoven concern with mental phenomena. There is little doubt that a century-long continuity brings Torres, Diderot and Goya with a common fascination with purely psychic experience and the cognitive potentials of dreaming.” There is no doubt then here about Torres’s Enlightened credentials. This represents a great leap forward in the evaluation of Torres and his relation with the Enlightenment; for earlier things looked quite different in Ilie’s eyes, whose analysis of Torres’s biographical representation in alongside to Franklin’s led him to conclude that besides literary merits, *Vida* played a “minimal role” as being a contribution to the “civic values of the Spanish Enlightenment,” since according to him, *Vida* perpetuated

correct when considered within the frame of reference they all take as departing point. For what these three apparently diverse theories have in common with each other although in varying degrees is the “scientificist” ideology that shapes them and which privileges the scientific rationalism championed by many, although by any means, not by all the protagonists of the historical Enlightenment. But “scientificism” is self-evidently a reductionist understanding of the Enlightenment that assumes, or rather, that forgets that, even if it is true that the Enlightenment would not be conceivable apart from the scientific revolution it brought about and that it certainly had a scientific revolution at base, it nonetheless was not only and exclusively a scientific movement; the *philosophes* of the Enlightened neither limited themselves nor can they retrospectively be reduced to the instrumental of reason much criticized by some of its posterior philosophical offshoots, as represented in the writings of Adorno and Horkheimer³⁵⁵. The best example that can be adduced against the scientism favored by some scholars of the Spanish Enlightenment is that Rousseau— with his casting of the I-identity and affectivity at the center-stage of modernity— is often associated in the history of modern thought with Romanticism which

the mentality of social dependence.” For my part, I can but detect a stark self-contradiction between an author who uncovers Torres’s originality and independence to think things on his own terms and departing from his own premises, and another analysis by the same author that fails to see that originality and independence of thoughts is pivotal to the Enlightenment and that in themselves originality and independence constitute the most fundamental value of civic life, for they are the ground on which the Kantian *sapere aude* can be proclaimed. Add to this critique the attested fact that *La Barca de Aqueronte* and *El ermitaño y Torres* are as *implicitly* autobiographical as *Vida* is *explicitly* so and the self-contradiction between these two evaluations becomes self-evident, especially since Elie does not offer a critical revision of his previous views on Torres. See Ilie, “Franklin and Villarroel: Social Consciousness in Two Autobiographies,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 7. No. 3, pp. 341. See also “Dream Cognition and the Spanish Enlightenment: Judging Torres Villarroel,” *MLN*, Vol. 101, No. 2, Hispanic Issue, 1986, pp. 270-297.

³⁵⁴ This would be the unsustainable view of Francisco Sánchez-Blanco, in whom the reductionist scientism long ago discarded from the considerations of the historical Enlightenment finds renewed vigor. See “Contra milagros y astrólogos como Diego de Torres Villarroel,” *La mentalidad ilustrada*, 78-97, Taurus: Madrid, Spain, 1999.

³⁵⁵ See Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*; Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason*.

as is well-known, is a reaction against fundamental aspects of the Enlightenment, of which he however is justly considered an arch-originateur³⁵⁶, *even when this distinction would do as much justice accorded to Torres before it is bestowed on Rousseau*³⁵⁷. By the narrow standards of the much vaunted philosophical scientism through which too often the Enlightenment is viewed but which is being increasingly abandoned, one would always fail doing Torres justice³⁵⁸. One should always bear in mind that historically, the Enlightenment was a much the making of scientific rationalism and rationalist philosophy, as it was of reasonability and reasonableness in the empirical reality of the political, cultural and moral spheres of society³⁵⁹. It is to bring to the fore this much more “enlightened” understanding of the historical Enlightenment that the previous chapters of this study has focused in demonstrating that, because he never comes up against but on the contrary, can always be found at the far-front of a defense of the values of personal independence, individual autonomy and individual freedom, and of freedom of expression and thought, pivotal to both to the then nascent human rights and the right of the

³⁵⁶ On this subject, see Thomas McFarland, *Romanticism and the Heritage of Rousseau*, Clarendon, Oxford University Press, 1995; William Huntington, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography*, Oxford University Press, 1983; Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, NY, AMS Press, 1979.

³⁵⁷ It is the Spaniard who, far before Rousseau, places the non-lyrical “I” as the *ursprung* of literary discourse. Mercadier makes a note of this element in Torres’s work, which he already detects in *Correo del otro mundo* (1726). Although he goes as far as to correctly term Torres’s placement of the discursive “I” a “radical self-refentiality” and sees it as being an “omnipresent I,” Mercadier again he fails to see the far-reaching implication of this feature for laying claim to a distinctive slot for Torres in the discourse of modernity and modern identity. Alejo Carpentier probably had in mind details like this one in acknowledging that many moments of Diego’s writing anticipate the work of Rousseau. See Mercadier, “Introducción: El Ciclo onírico y la originalidad literaria de ‘Correo del otro mundo,’” *Correo del otro mundo*, ed. Manuel María Pérez-Polanco. See also Mercadier, “Formes et significations de l’autodiscours,” *Masques et miroirs*, 269, (note 88).

³⁵⁸ Again, although here too Mercadier is along among Torres scholars in attempting to move away from this narrow conceptualization of the Enlightenment, he nonetheless, and as it is always the case with him, stops short of consigning Torres to the Enlightenment on his own merits. See Mercadier, “Introducción: El Ciclo onírico y la originalidad literaria de “*Correo del otro mundo*,” *Correo del otro mundo*, 61-62.

³⁵⁹ Peter Gay, “The Recovery of the Nerve: The Spirit of the Age,” *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 29.

individual to self-development— Torres is an earlier proponent of Enlightenment politics. Incidentally, that Torres himself explicitly rejects the rationalist orientation in the science of his time and that he shows a reluctance to subsume the spheres of morality, politics, religion and of “culture,” however this understood, to a rampant, hegemonic rationalism— favors an interpretation of moments of his writing as *potentially* containing the critique that has led to the rejection of many aspects of the Enlightenment more closely associated with its rationalist tendencies. Indeed, as an arch-representative, that is, as the radical believer of enlightened individuality that we have shown him to be, Torres already exemplifies the individuality claimed by Horkheimer as lost in contemporary capitalist society, the more acute consequence of the ulterior development of those rationalist tendencies that have come to predominate.

However, despite having thus far demonstrated to our satisfaction the legitimacy of the claim of Diego de Torres for the Enlightenment, we must concede that we have yet to shed some light on the fundamental character of Torres’s thought that would have made it possible in the first place for him to approximate the themes we have been discussing here throughout in the enlightened manner we have pointed out, while fostering a writing strategy and writing style that develop without ever making any specific reference to the proclamations of the Enlightenment and without claiming for himself Enlightenment credentials. Putting it in the language of existential phenomenology, we are yet to establish what is the ontological foundation on which Diego de Torres is being proclaimed as belonging into the Enlightenment proper, rather than consigning him to the fringes of this intellectual movement, as has been done still now, and that designates him as partaking in its definition in a way that makes him relevant to our time. By gaining

adequate understanding of the ontological structure of Torres's manner of thinking we would be coming ever closer to settling in no uncertain terms the ambivalence with which the question of his position and place relative to modernity has been thus far met. This would allow the specific mode in which he articulates the zeitgeist of his days as reflected in his writing to be utterly brought out, as the theoretical weight in his writing can then be grasped in its entirety.

Consequently, in the present chapter I will content that Torres's intellectual activities are guided by what I will call an "Enlightened relativism" that makes it possible for him to insert himself into the zeitgeist of the Enlightenment. This Enlightened relativism consists on a specific manner of thinking that is consubstantial to his mode of Being-in-the world, rather than acquired through academic enterprising or otherwise from intellectual or political positioning; his inclination towards "enlightening" ideals is then hereby envisaged as an *existentiell*, and as logical consequence of his historical Being and is therefore an ontic attribute in him, a "natural" offshoot of his existence in a given historical context. In other words, Torres's personality, marked by an inherent inclination to dissent, unbridled individualism and unconventionality *predisposes* him to uphold enlightened ideas. This relativistic manner of thinking primarily expresses itself as a capability for perceiving things in a relativistic perspective; or otherwise said, it expresses itself in Torres's *instinctively* adopting a relativistic point of view on everything that is the product of human activity or that falls in the realm of human knowledge that is not supported by objective facts, or that cannot be experimentally tested. Accordingly, for Torres nothing that remains a matter of opinion can acquire the character of unquestionable or absolute truth; anticipating Nietzsche in this, for him there is no

certainty in the realm of ideas and everything is open to debate. It is precisely because he does not believe in the certainties posited by the philosophical thinking prevalent in his days that he is almost alone in rejecting some aspects of Cartesian metaphysics, namely, the Cartesian positing of the “I” as the depository of the absolute certainty of a “rationalistic reason” on which knowledge of everything else depends. Thus, Torres’s enlightened relativism is what leads him to reject Cartesian metaphysics in favor of the empiricist philosophy of Bacon, alone among all philosophers to have over him as much authority as he bestow on Epictetus.

Therefore, in what follows I will attempt to demonstrate that: a) Torres’s enlightened relativism underlies the entire corpus of his work, and that it can very easily be recognized as the organizing principle of the approach he brings to his autobiographical portrayal, as well as in his position regarding scientific knowledge and intellectual culture; in his involvement with astrology, and in his theorization on the activity of writing itself; b) that this enlightened relativistic principle expresses itself more forcibly in his phenomenological apprehension of the concept of the Self, allowing him to break new grounds in the praxis of autobiographical representation, while paving the way for his acquiring an enlightened social consciousness that up holds the values of individual freedom and social equality , thus representing a far-advanced position on the European social-thought of his time; c) that Torres’s enlightened relativism is what makes it possible for him to bring about a clean break with the traditional forms of confessional autobiography as bequeathed by Saint Augustine , thus representing the advent of modern autobiographical writing. Similarly, the enlightened relativism that organizes and gives

significance to Torres's work is immediately responsible for his rhetorical self-fashioning as the "pícaro" character that paradoxically obstructs the way to its correct interpretation.

On the assumption that the objectives enunciated above are more easily met if we start by offering a clarification of what was meant by the statement that Diego de Torres's ontic constitution predisposes him to cultivate the values and ideas of the Enlightenment. This can no doubt be achieved by briefly reflecting on the ontological account he himself takes on his ontic existence. For in this account, Diego's "natural," that is, inherent propensity to break away from tradition, and to escape the oppressive strictures of societal institution entrenched in the customs, more and habits to which the average human subject submits to and capitulates are starkly made patent in key moments of his work that at times read, in the Spanish original at least, as if though it were *the manifesto of the modern individual*. For instance:

I, dear sir, dance any night *I feel like dancing*. The black humors of melancholy I drown in the strums of my guitar. A few times a year I go to make confessions, to sweep from my soul a few long-tailed sins and a couple of forgivable offenses incurred in not out of lickerish habits but out of the seduction of the flesh, *which is the only thing with more power on me than you, dear Sir, and which I fear more than I do the world of men, or the devil [...]*. I often have in mind the image of my death, and his looks do not scare me, for *I figure it to be less grotesque than as it painted in those sermons of mystical eschatology preached on me at church*

[...] *I am nobody's spouse, because I believe in trying before buying, and I have always go by the saying that you should be marry before getting married.* Although my pillow has many times assured me how good it would be to have a little woman to enjoy and a dory to depend on, I never saw the beauty of it all, *since I value my freedom above all* [...] concerning women, I believe in enjoying them all, but keeping none; and I say prayers for the married man as well as for the man who dies. *I do not court political power, for I prefer to be self-employed, and independent, except from Providence.* I reason that if all the expenses in our lives boil down to bread and bed, *I shall make my living on my own, without depending on others, and doing whatever I happen to be good at.* Only God being above me, *I shun all tittles and honors;* courting social distinctions is a devil's trick to lead us into corruption, adulation, and arrogance. Pursuing social distinctions through the Court is a sure way to suffering infamy [...] Why should be it considered shameful to find joy in making a living in a trade that because it leads to neither honors nor tittles, is put down as unimportant? *This is how I, persuaded by my own thinking* am completely indifferent to what others might opine about my occupation, *free from their beliefs,* I come

and go to Madrid whenever I want; I show up at the Prado any time I please, and I am free to escape the world of politics for the leisure of the countryside whenever it is my desire³⁶⁰. (Emphasis added).

What we come across with in this lengthy but necessary citation is the situation in which a *mere human subject* finds himself caught in the cauldron of becoming an individual, in the modern sense of the term. It is inescapable how in this process, almost all the most basic institutions sanctioned by habits and customs, and in a few words, *by the laws of the use*—are duly denounced and a proclamation of freedom from them that takes the mode of self-assertion of the individual against and in spite them, is issued. Thus we see how, a) *his* freedom to be happy and to enjoy and to dispose of one's life and private time is asserted. But also so is *his* freedom from the belief in the reverence towards death that feeds on our ignorance and fear of the world beyond, so well-used to their advantage by revealed religions; b) *his* freedom from traditional sexual rituals and mores that prescribe that *he* must marry, that people must marry one another; that they must procreate within the institution of marriage; that sexual intercourse is to be sanctioned by social tradition through this institution alone, and that people should first fulfill the requirements

³⁶⁰ “Yo, muy señor mío, bailo las noches que encuentro con quién. A las melancolías del humor negro las aburro con la guitarra. Me confieso algunas veces al año, y dejo barrido el interior de veinte pecados rabones y cuatro culpas de mala muerte, hechas más que por las costumbres del apetito, por los empujones de la carne, que la temo más que a Vm., al mundo y al demonio [...] Me acuerdo de la muerte muchos ratos, sin que me deba el menor asco su memoria; yo me la pinto menos horrible que me la dibujan los libros místicos y me la predicán los púlpitos [...] No soy marido, porque no me gusta la religión sin noviciado, y fui siempre medroso del refrán que dice: antes que te cases; y aunque la almohada me propuso muchas veces que sería bueno tener una moza que gastar y un dote con quien dormir, no me encarnó la memoria de lo hermoso, porque yo velaba mi libertad [...] danzar con todas, correr con ninguna, y a los que se mueren y se casan, encomendarlos a Dios. Torres, in “Sacudimientos de mentecatos habidos y por haber,” *Texto autobiográficos*, 42-44.

of these institutions before they fulfill their sexual desires. But, c) we also see that a proclamation of *his* right as an individual to choose how to make a living, and to procure his material independence and autonomy on needing no other resources than *his* own skills and abilities without waiting for others to decide *for* him; next we see how on the basis of these rights which he recognizes as *his* because this is *his* way, he then issues his independence from the center of political power but also from social honors and titles, which always come at the price of allowing no room for individual freedom, and that, demanding the submission and self-suppression of individual needs, stifles not only the possibility of him being *who* he is, but of being *where* he wants to be *when* he wishes to be. Thus, the proclamation of individual independence encompasses mores and customs, but reaches the social and the political; and thereby the individual claims not only freedom of thought, but also of action and movement. Indeed, the proclamation in *itself* is an exercise of individual freedom. But Diego de Torres does not limit himself to this. In a bold move to *disclaim any authority* for his way of thinking and writing, in order to *preempt* his critics, he takes a strong stance for intellectual independence:

In my shelves there is no one book worth three quarters
[....] this is something evident in my published writing,
which I release to the public naked of authoritative
references, and without citations or quotations, without
epigraphs to validate them, and without more authority than
what I could have, because for me, to leaf through and dust
books off is insufferable, besides being futile. *For, to me
adding footnotes, and taking citations and quotations, in*

*order to persuade the reader of the value of my opinion with the opinions of others is disconcerting is crazy; and is pretentious!*³⁶¹ (Emphasis added).

From here we learn that the process of individuation is indeed process radicalization; for the subject must at once turn against all the different aspects that will be constitutive of *his* individuality; but by the same token we also learn that the nature of individuality will be determined by the number of forces against which the subject must turn in order to emerge as individual, and by how decisive it is the determination of the subject to rebel against them—that is, against the laws of habits and customs petrified in given traditions. So, what we have come to know as the “modern individual” is the human subject that no longer is or that struggles for no longer being a subject to the all-powerful forces of “what-is-because-it-has-heretofore-been,” habits and customs, and blind obedience to them—that is. Because these institutions sanctioned by the use and imposed by the forces of customs precisely are most likely and most easily assimilated by the subject; since the subject uncritically accepts them and conform itself to them as written on stone, *an inherent disposition in the subject to rebel against them must have an important part to play that it should give birth to the individual*. According to this interpretation, the more decisively these institutions are *questioned*, empirically challenged by a given subject, the more vital the individuality to be born out of this

³⁶¹ “En mi armario no hay libro que valga treinta cuartos; [...] mis papeles lo pregonan, pues los arrojé desnudos, sin autoridad, sin citas, versos ni apoyos, sin más abrigo que el de mis pobres, bastos pañales, porque es insufrible tarea sacudir libros y hojear folios, y éste me ha parecido trabajo sin fruto; porque si el fin de citar y poner márgenes es para persuadir con otros el crédito de mis proposiciones, ¡que desatino! ¡que locura! ¡que desvanecimiento! Torres, “Sacudimientos de mentecatos habidos y por haber: prólogo para 1726,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 46.

struggle; and the harder it is for a subject to set itself free from the subtle oppression of instituted traditions so that he can become an individual, that is, *so that he can become that ontological entity no divided no divided between itself and the other*, the more decisive the tendencies to radicalization will be. Further, according to this interpretation, here resides the ontological *ursprung* of Torres's irreverence, unconventionality, provocative stance and eccentricity; but this is also the ontological source of his corrosive humor, the sarcastic overtones of his form of irony pervasive through his writing, and in a word, this is what ultimately explains his originality, for are all *existentialles* elements of his individuality.

This shows that, on the one hand, *the individual is not*, but that it *becomes*, or that as I have already explained, there is a process behind each individual, with the implication that individuality is not something which everybody equally attains³⁶². On the other hand, this also shows that individuality, that ontological phenomenon that constitutes the

³⁶² In his history of the Italian Renaissance Jacob Burckhardt has taught us that there is such process. But the account I am giving here of this process differs from his account in the case of the individual of the Renaissance in that he places external factors, i.e. the characteristics of the Italian state at that historical time, as the primary precipitant of Renaissance individuality, subordinating the "subjective" cause to the "objective" cause. I, on the contrary, apparently, emphasize the subjective cause at the expense of the objective. In truth, however, in my account objective and subjective precipitants are not differentiated, since the subject is conceived as already embodying the habits and customs against which he rebels in the process of individuation, which is the only correct way of conceiving it, from ontological perspective: individualization is a process that takes place "in" the subject, and it is the subject who turns himself into an individual. The problem I see in Burckhardt's account is that in him the individual is a reaction against a well-defined political organization, *the State*, while I conceive it as a turning on specific habits of thinking, of conceiving *life*, the world, society, and of the thinking the human subject has of himself. If in Burckhardt the determination of the individual is "political," in me is "cultural," the individual emerges as the reaction to a *Weltanschauung*, a specific way of conceiving the world at large. This is not necessarily to be read as a criticism to Burckhardt, but to the school of thoughts derived from his interpretation of Renaissance history that has failed to see that the "modern individual" and the "Renaissance individual" are not the same type animal; this school of thought starts with Nietzsche, but is brought to its extremes by Foucault. Namely, it has failed to see that the "modern individual" has its origin in a philosophic and scientific reaction not against a *form of the State*, but against the state of *all* cultural forms. This goes to explain why, what we today call "modernity" did not begin with the Renaissance, even if it prolongs as much as it *suppresses* some of its tendencies, and even if it finds its inspiration in it. See Burckhardt, "The Development of the Individual," *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 87-93, Phaidon: London, 1995.

individual as in opposition to “what-is-the-use,” to “what-goes-on-without-saying” and to what is “because-that-is-how-it-is” is immanently a struggle, and that it at the same time partakes in its own becoming. Now, *the capability of becoming an individual out of the struggle for recognition as an ontological singularity that stands out, although not necessarily apart from what is sanctioned by customs and traditions is here held up to be the hallmark of the Enlightenment*. As brought to light by Torres in the passages above, *the process of individualization is an act of ontological freedom*, an act of allowing oneself to be what one must become. The process of individualization then is one that presupposes a critical capability, independence of judgment, and *inborn disposition to be in a certain a social dissident*. And Torres’s self-portrayal here further discloses that *the process of individuation is in itself an act of enlightenment*. At the same time, his self-portrayal indirectly sheds light on the fact that the birth of the modern individual coincides with the rise of the historical Enlightenment. This lends more persuasive power to the thesis put forward in this analysis that Diego de Torres Villarroel is the *autobiographical embodiment* of the Age of Reason, which in view of what we have learned throughout cannot be reduced to an “Age of Rationality,” “rationality” being something already present in Western thought since Socrates and, even more so, since Plato. From this new perspective, the historical Enlightenment has its origin not in the “movement” that it became on which the *philosophes* presided, but on the act of ontological freedom antecedent to this moment, in which some human subjects, Bacon, Descartes, Locke, Newton, and so on and so forth, in a long list that no doubt includes Torres mustered their capability to call into question what had been bequeathed to them by traditions instituted and perpetuated in *habits of thinking and in habit of action*, rebelled against these, and

gave rise to modernity by becoming modern individuals. But this moreover shows that, as far as the process of individualization is an act of ontological freedom that rests on a certain critical capability and independence in judgment, the condition in which according to Kant a subject could be recognized as in a state of historical Enlightenment, is predicated on the subject's "*resolution and courage to use reason without direction from another,*" is the permanent state of Torres's state of self-consciousness³⁶³. Expressed in the language of existential phenomenology, the Being of Torres is being in a state of ontological enlightenment.

2.6.1 Enlightened Relativism as Autobiographical Worldview

Early on, during the first years of his long and prolific career as an intellectual and writer Torres arrived at the capital philosophical conclusion of the logical impossibility of absolute certainty on matters of opinions, beliefs or ideas. We are must justified in calling this a crucial conclusion because, as we saw during our discussion of the theme of the Subjected, the positing of the absolute certainty of the doubting subject became the center point of the epistemic shift brought about by the Cartesian philosophy that admittedly introduced modernity into the history of Western thought and so introduced a new age in human development. The challenge and altogether dismissal of the possibility of absolute truth or immediate certainty—proving that this tenet of Cartesian philosophy and therefore of modernity is a rhetorical delusion camouflaged by the apparently "objective" language

³⁶³ As my Italics make emphasis on, what is of import for Kant is not that you do not lack reason, but that your actions, where resolve and courage makes itself evident, show you as possessing empirical, objective critical capability and independence of judgment; that is what above all makes you "Enlightened." Kant, "What is the Enlightenment?"

of formal logic—similarly became the center point of the *perspectivistic* philosophy of Nietzsche, which has come up several times in our discussion and which to some represents a shakeup of the edifice of the philosophy of the Cogito on which the modern discourse of modernity was built, setting the groundwork for a “new” age, namely, “post-modernity” to emerge. Granting that Torres does not arrive at the conclusion of the impossibility of absolute certainty on matters concerning human affairs through a patient, painstaking deconstruction of the logical-rhetorical structure of philosophical thinking as Nietzsche and many after him have done, his position on this topic is not less crucial, and he can be rightly be counted together with those who like Locke were quick to react against the Cartesian doctrine. But however this may be, a correct evaluation of Torres’s rejection of the notion of immediate absolute certainty becomes crucial to the claim that he has right of place within the modern European tradition of enlightened philosophical thought. Given that Torres’s treatment of the question of truth is not explicitly “philosophical” in that his treatment of it is not technical, the originality and importance of what he has to say is not right away grasped by most readers, and so it can easily be dismissed as one more “pícaro” stance of his, or worst, it gets ignored, as it has largely been the case. And yet, if unlike Nietzsche Torres does not resort to a philosophical language, just like Nietzsche Torres brings to this theme a non-academic approach that incorporates in equal measure a critique of culture and a critical evaluation of the psychological motivations of human actions, as previously noticed; in other words, they both depart from a consideration of empirically observable “facts” as construed by the “ways and means” of human relation to each other “in” the world which is the result of these relations.

So, we could start by establishing, firstly, that rejecting the possibility of the existence of an absolute, immediate certainty in the realm of ideas, opinions and beliefs, or in short, in language, means that the truth-value of any proposition, be this cultural, philosophical or religious depends on the *worldview* from which such proposition arises; in this sense, it is to be understood that a culture, philosophy or religion or, in a word, an ideology is not more than a systematization of manifold points of view constitutive of a particular view on the “world” they create. The truth-value of any point of view therefore is *relative* to the truth-value of the other points of view *within* the same worldview. Secondly, given that the objective world is constituted so that every worldview coincides with the interests of a given political, economical, racial or national worldview, which it favors in detriment of opposite interests, the certainty of an ideology or system of beliefs can only be immediately discerned from the “standpoint,” that is, the interest that not only allows but that *requires* this view. From this perspective then the point of view would be representative of the interest that requires it, and its truth-value would be relative to it. This summarization roughly and loosely covers both the position of Nietzsche and that of Torres on the topic of the relative nature of truth, and the on the relation of discourse and truth. Again, it is worth to bear in mind that what in the former appears explicitly stated is appears only implicitly and barely hinted at in the latter. The task of the analysis is precisely to make this patent. Consequently, it is worth noticing that Torres, within the context of defining the independence of his point of view on life from tradition and from other points of view circulating in his time, of setting down his individual right to live his life in accordance with his manner of conceiving the world, defending the validity of his opinions and beliefs in relation to the validity that others might claim for theirs, he asserts

that in the realm of ideas there is no absolute certainty, given that the conviction of the certainty of an idea is the result of our “passions” about it, that is, of how “true” we believe they are:

One must not need to live one's life according to the ideas of others. What opinion is there that has not thousand of believers? There is no certainty. One only thing, certain among all, is our holy Christian faith; and yet this too has its detractors. Its truths being infallibles to us, they are however negated by Luther; have been criticized by Calvino; are rejected by the Muslims and repulsed the Jews. In the face of this all, I confide to your Excellence that I recognize as immediately certain only to dance, to laugh, to travel, to go to the theater and to spend time with friends; for I prefer this to the retiring life of monks, devoted to abstractions and to study, even though I know that this is what brings glory to genius³⁶⁴. (Emphasis added).

That the truth of the Christian Catholic point of view is immediately certain to someone who like has already accepted that faith as the only one valid to believe in, Torres says, does not make it absolute, for it is not recognized as such but it is rather denied and rejected by others who just like him have already accepted other truths as

³⁶⁴ “Vive sin cien defensores. ¿Qué opinión no tiene mil apasionados? No hay cosa cierta; y una que hay, que es nuestra Santa Fé, tampoco está libre de contrarios; pues siendo verdades infalibles, las negó Lutero, las maltrató Calvino, no la confiesan los moros y las aborrecen los judíos; y si he de hablar a Vmd. Con confianza, más me inclino a bailar, ver la comedia y acompañar a mis amigos, que al recogimiento, la abstracción, retiro y estudio, que son las partes que hacen gloriosos los genios.” Torres, “Sacudimiento de mentecatos habidos y por haber,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 46.

absolute and immediately certain to them. A truth, and the certainty about it that immediately reveals itself to someone who already believes in it, *depends on already beforehand discarding the possibility of its being untrue*. His Christian faith, he is saying, represents the absolute truth for those who believe in; but so also do the faiths for other people. The individual truths of religions—but this obviously also extends to cultures and races as much as to nations and ideologies— can then only be absolute and immediately relative to the truths of the others religions that discard and negate them. In other words, to each, their own truth is absolute for being immediately certain to them. To the extent that Torres becomes aware of the principle that governs the relation among cultures so early in our modern history he can easily be said to be one of the earlier expounders of the cultural relativistic notions that in our days have become predominant, and can even more so be classed in this respect with spirits like Montesquieu, Diderot, and Nietzsche.

2.6.2 The Relativistic Self

As already noticed, it is this within the framework of this basic relativistic outlook on the world that everything concerning Diego's intellectual practice constantly feeds on, as it gets constantly confirmed by everyday events. To affirm that there is no certainty is tantamount to getting oneself free— it is freeing oneself—from the metaphysical prejudice of absolute truth. Once the logical impossibility of absolute truth has been asserted, then one is in a viable position to design for oneself strategies about how best to live one's life; for freeing oneself from the belief in absolute truths, when applied to empirical mode of existence means that the ground has been eroded on which to conceive

of a way of life truer than another; the world, Torres dramatically observes, is made of a “turbulence of opinions.”³⁶⁵ Thus, *superseding the notion of the immediate certainty of a truth turns out to be the first philosophical obstacle that ought to be overcome towards the subject becoming a modern individual, as we understand this concept*. Torres, then, is among the first modern Europeans to expressly and effectively show us how *one creates oneself* in showing us how the individual is born; on this strength one could safely postulate him as *the first modern individual to be autobiographically portrayed*. For, tellingly enough, it is in the way Torres approaches the task of biographical self-representation that the relativistic principle that organizes his thought can more readily be discerned. In what would obviously seem to be an implicit rebuttal to the Cartesian understanding of the concept of the “Self,” Torres obliquely asserts that nobody knows with certainty what that is; this way of handling this problem is cushioned on the understanding that having or being a “Self” does not yield an immediate certainty about what it is, as it should be the case if the possibility existed. What the “Self” is, he implies, depends on the perspective from which this phenomenological manifestation is met. Hence he refuses to settle on a given name for it, as I have already indicated; apparently, for him even settling on a name is tantamount to imposing the concept embedded in that name as an absolute. In this connection it is worth noticing that though an out-and-out devout Christian as Torres never fails to present himself, he avoids reducing the “Self” to the “Soul,” so preserving his relativistic outlook³⁶⁶. What the “Self” is, accordingly, would be relative to the standpoint from which the question is asked. That this is what Torres thinks can be inferred from his doubting that the “Self” is some kind of device located inside us,

³⁶⁵ “[...] la turbulencia de opiniones [...]” Torres, *Vida*, 71

³⁶⁶ Torres, *Vida*, 100.

perhaps in any of our organs where “natural philosophy” as an epistemic “standpoint” constitutive of a point of view places it. Therefore Torres declares that although the picture yielded by the naturalistic or “anatomistic” perspective on the “Self” is definitively attractive, he nonetheless denies that it is a reliable depiction of the concept; it is not reliable, since the organs do not experience the immanence of changes and alterations that he experiences in his daily existence³⁶⁷. Accordingly, the only immediate certainty about the “Self” is that it is experienced as permanent change; the concept of “Self” then refers to an entity given us as a selfsame *existential experience*.

To be sure, the philosophical originality of the solution that Diego de Torres finds to this problem resides in that, instead of resorting to a rhetorical formulation of the immediate certainty of the doubting subject—a paradox—who does not even dare to ask if doubting is *actually* what he is doing, and if so, how does now beforehand what doubting is, the author of *Vida* instead turns to the examination of the objective concrete mode in which he individually experiences Existence as Being-in-the-world. By grounding his conceptualization of selfhood in a specific mode of being on the objective world possibilities are open for coming closer to a scientific understanding of what the “Self” is, since Being-in-the-world necessarily is ontic being with others, which presupposes encountering the “Self” objectively, rather than confronting it on the basis of an absolute subjectivity, as happens in Descartes. Precisely, in this Torres’s enlightened attitude towards the task of knowledge shows, objectivity being the trademark of the scientific program of the Enlightenment. We will come back to this later in this same chapter.

³⁶⁷ Torres, *Vida*. 101.

2.6.3 Enlightened by the Stars: Irony and Astrology

Similarly, if still less evident here than in what concerns the question of the “Self” or the “Subject,” but connected to it in a not immediately obvious way, Torres’s enlightened relativism worldview is also present in his practice of astrology and it is what sets the basis of his relation to it. Of course, in the manner Torres’s work is generally understood it at the very least be construed as preposterous to see any connection between such enlightened relativistic worldview to such practice, since it is taken at face value that “enlightenment” and “astrology” stand in opposite camps to each other. And so, in the predominant interpretations of Torres’s work, namely, that he is a throwback when it comes to scientific knowledge— would arguably be demonstrated by his astrological practice. Yet, the fact that many of the names who spearheaded modern sciences, to wit, Copernicus, Kepler, and closer to home, Bacon, shared their scientific pursuits with their astrological beliefs without seeing a serious contraction between both, suggests we should not on this score dismiss out-of-hand the seriousness of Torres’s interest in scientific matters³⁶⁸. Instead, closer attention should be paid to the specific kind of relationship Torres has with astrology; when this is done, then the ambivalent, ambiguous, mocking and denunciatory character of this relationship stands out as an expression of a relativistic understanding of the relation between truth and knowledge; for in the same way that for him truth lost its character of absolute, which means that there are many truths as there are worldviews, there are as well diverse and contrasting forms of knowledge, science being one among them, and astrology another, on which it can be conferred the same status bestowed upon poetic or pictorial arts, for instance. Indeed, according to Agamben,

³⁶⁸ Giorgio Agamben, “Two,” *Infancy and History: An essay on the Destruction of Experience*, 24.

establishing a connection “between the ‘heavens’ of pure intelligence with the ‘earth’ of individual experience” was the “great discovery of astrology,” making it not “an antagonist, but a necessary condition of modern science³⁶⁹. Astrology, then, makes a fundamental contribution in bringing together knowledge and experience to determine the Cartesian cogito, the modern “subject” of the new sciences; in other words, modern sciences is only made possible through the assimilation of that fundamental astrological principle. If this is so then we could add to Agamben’s insight that, since the unity of experience and knowledge operated by astrology got assimilated by modern sciences but not surpassed or overcome by it, from the perspective of the philosophy of science, the new knowledge has not really moved that far away or above astrology. We can then on this score turn to some passages containing some of Torres’s reflections on his astrological practice, to see from up close the kind of relationship he has with it. Here we have a denunciation of it as a bunch of lies and fairy-tales:

For twenty-four years Spaniards had lived convinced that the ability to make predictions, to draw maps, to discern astrological signs, and to establish astrological eras were impossible tasks that only Italy and other foreign lands had access to the secrets of these arcane artifices. Far before I came into this world, *this people had been governed by the lies told them by the Great Sarrabal*, whose verdicts, issued periodically from Milan, if though they were fashionable items, arrived here in *four folios full of fairy-tales*, they adoringly waited for on their knees; as if their good health

³⁶⁹ Agamben, *Ibid.* 23.

depended on it, and as if it was given them for free³⁷⁰.

(Emphasis added).

It is inescapable that, to the extent that Torres here denounces astrology *as practiced by Sarrabal* to be fraudulent, and to the extent that his involvement with it begins as an attempt to *shed light* on it and to open the eyes of the people as to the fraud to which they lend themselves as willing victims, by showing that it can be done by anybody who strived to acquire *that type of knowledge—his incursion in this field in itself already represents a historically enlightened move*. It would be easy to infer from this that by the same token that he denounces Sarrabal's practice of astrology as fraudulent and obscurantist, in conferring upon astrology the status of form of knowledge that can be acquired Torres is lending legitimacy to superstition and obscurantism. If astrology is a form of knowledge that can be learned as Torres strives to demonstrate, then in his hands astrological practice, and the astrologer himself loses the mysterious hollow of what is recondite and esoteric. Moreover, the kind of status he extends to astrology does not elevate it to being a science in its own right; rather, he places astrological knowledge within the developmental framework of the history of sciences. As such, having as its basis *observational experience*, it is helped by *speculative* natural philosophy; and it can be an auxiliary to the natural sciences while at the same time it re-elaborates and interprets

³⁷⁰ “Estaban, veinte y cuatro años ha, persuadidos los españoles que el hacer pronósticos, fabricar mapas, erigir figuras y plantar épocas, eran dificultades invencibles, y que sólo en Italia y en otras naciones extranjeras se reservaban las llaves con que se abrían los secretos arcones de estos graciosos artificios. Estaban, mucho antes de que yo viniera al mundo, gobernándose por las mentiras del Gran Sarrabal, adorando sus juicios, y, puestos de rodillas, esperaban los cuatro pliegos de embustes que se tejían en Milán (con más facilidad que los encajes) como si en ellos les viniera la salud de balde y las conveniencias regaladas.” Torres, *Vida*, 111.

accepted conclusions arrived at in these fields. Reflecting on the prediction of the death of Louis the First of France universally attributed to him, Torres recounts that:

[...] and having I prognosticated that year the never-enough lamented death of Louis the First, I was inducted by the public at large as an astrologer, by those who have had no notice about me as well as by those who had doubted and proffered calumnies against my almanacs. That year's *Prologue* was the object of criticism by many saps ignorant of the legitimacy of the empirical conjectures and prodigious artifices based on observations from philosophy, medicine and astrology. Some sought to render illicit making prognostics and pronouncing its author of ill-intention, wanted to condemn him to infamy. But others proclaimed that it was *simply a fluke what I knew was knowledge*, and yet others proclaimed that I have hit the mark in a whim, when *I knew it to have been the result of my suspicious judgment and reverent and loving fear of the Unknown*. Anyway, *those who came closer to guessing how I managed to make that prediction said that I could not have done it without the intervention of the devil*³⁷¹.

³⁷¹ “[...] y, habiendo puesto en el pronóstico de éste la nunca bien llorada muerte de Luis Primero, quedé acreditado de astrólogo de los que no me conocían y de los que no creyeron y blasfemaron mis almanaques. Padeció esta prolación la enemistad de muchos majaderos, ignorantes de las lícitas y prudentes conjeturas de estos prácticos y prodigiosos artificios y observaciones de la filosofía, la astrología y la medicina. Algunos quisieron hacer delincuente al pronóstico, e infame y mal intencionado al autor; otros voceaban que fue casualidad lo que era ciencia; y antojo voluntario lo que fue sospecha juiciosa y temor amoroso y reverente;

Even when the rhetorical irony that controls his involvement with astrology is more often than not given of this theme is hardly made a note of, here though Torres seems to be making a serious defense of his astrological practice he establishes an “epistemological distance” between himself and astrology, by mockingly accepting that in effect, the devil himself had his hand in his predictions, as some had allegedly charged. The self-detached attitude Torres exhibits about his own avowedly correct prediction is not by any means accidental. Decades before Diego comes to these reflections in *Vida* about how he ended up with what to him was a dubious reputation as astrologer he had already produced several accounts of his practice in which his ironic self-detachment from it shows him as consistently and cogently moving from denunciation to renunciation of astrology precisely *because in denouncing it he indeed renouncing to it*³⁷². Thus he “confesses” to his master, in a key moment from *Visiones y visitas de Torres con don Francisco Quevedo por la Corte*:

My mind inclined me to a kind of profession that shared in both manual and scholarly activities that were both pleasing and remunerated, so I could gain my living and depend on nobody. After much meditation, *reason directed me to make use of some patches of astrological knowledge I had long been storing in my memory not as a treasure, but as if though it were a story*. After much consideration, I concluded that applying my mathematical knowledge to

y el que mejor discurría, dijo que la predicción se había alcanzado por arte del demonio.” Torres, *Vida*, 130-131.

³⁷² “Yo quería esconder el hediondo nombre de astrólogo con el apreciable apellido de catedrático de otra cualquiera de las disciplinas liberales [...]” Torres, *Vida*, 135.

something whatever was less shameful than working as a tailor, and better than stealing or being a hanger-on or a swindler. Assured on my decision, I wrapped myself up entirely in the mantle of an astronomer and took to the streets with my divinations; and as though I was a statue, the blinds and the bums wound up hanging around me. [...] Being suspicious of people, I know that secretly they are raging maniacs, so I sought to inoculate myself against their rabies in advance by being patient and humble, and behaving so as to make myself more deserving their pity than their envy, and tried rather to be accommodating than unsettling. Since I knew I had around me only idiots and pretentious people, in the first prologues to my almanacs I overly disclosed that my aim was not to show off any intellectual baggage, and that I pretended neither to be an authority nor to become famous. I declared that I was only trying to placate my screaming hunger and to succor my aging parents in theirs [...] ³⁷³. (Emphasis added).

³⁷³ “Apetecían mis perezosos talentos unas tareas entre mecánicas y escolares, que al paso que me entretuviesen, me alimentasen, huyendo siempre de pedir a otras manos mis alivios. Con esta meditación y deseo, registré mi salud, reconocí mis miembros, visité mi cabeza; y después de haber recorrido la larga y estrecha choza de mi racionalidad, mendigando al cuerpo sus fuerzas y sus discursos al alma, sólo me socorrió la memoria con mostrarme unos retazos astrológicos, que como enredo y no como alhajas, había guardado en los primeros años de mi juventud. Examinada pues la opinión del oficio, me pareció menos vileza ponerme a matemático que a sastre, ladrón, lisonjero y embudista. Y firme en este propósito, me acabé de arropar en la tienda astronómica, y salí de estatua con mis adivinaciones por esas calles, gritado de ciegos y perdularios. [...] Debí a mi desengaño descubrí la oculta rabia del vulgo, y procuré curarme en salud de sus mordeduras con el antídoto de la paciencia y humildad, solicitando más la lástima que la envidia, y más los alivios que las exaltaciones. Y por redondearme de majaderos y presumidos, confesé en

The evidence is ample that Torres did not seriously believe in astrology, neither in the brand practiced by Sarrabal, whom he eventually displaced from the favor of the public, nor in his own. If in the passage above he denounces his own brand of astrology as being just stories (“enredos”) and as having no intrinsic value, earlier in his career he disclosed the contradictory nature of his relation to it, while stressing the scientific worthlessness of this form of knowledge. For the sake of methodological clarity, here we must revisit a passage already encountered in Part One:

Back then, I often implored the heavens for assistance, and through God’s goodness *one day I found myself conveniently turned into an astrologer. Though astrology is of little worth* I slowly got to master it, and without having to employ my hands, it eventually it brought me up to five hundred gold coins [...] *I will not deny that often I let out of my pen one or another crackpot idea; but, since I knew what I was up to, I pretended it did not come from me and, to myself, would not claimed it as mine. Had I had any other source of income I would have made my pen serve only Reason, and no idea would come from me without the endorsement of my intellect [...]*³⁷⁴. (Emphasis added).

los primeros prólogos de mis papeles que yo no salía al public a descubrir ingenio, a ganar fama ni a negociar aplausos, que sólo pretendía acallar los gritos de mi pobreza y socorrer la de mis viejos padres [...]” Torres, *Visiones y visitas de Torres con don Francisco por la corte*, in *Textos autobiográficos*, 55-56.
³⁷⁴ “Echaba memoriales al cielo, y por su bondad me hallé en la conveniencia de astrólogo; que aunque no vale mucho, al fin, amigo, iba cogiendo crédito, y con mis manos libres, había de subir hasta quinientos ducados [...] No niego que eché a la calle algunas ideas mal vestidas. Pero como trabajaba con precisión, las miraba con asco, sin valerles la recomendación de propias; que si yo tuviera otra capellanía, sujetara la pluma a la razón, y no saliera de mí fantasía idea que no la castigara el entendimiento [...]” Torres, “Prológo,” *Correo del otro mundo*, in *Textos autobiográficos*, 31.

Evidently, then, Torres's relation to astrology is predicated on an ironically self-detachment; he practices astrology as a literary performance and the astrologer in him relates to himself as an actor relates to the character he plays. And he does so without betraying his enlightening credentials, to this purpose, he is tireless in seeking to shield the public before whom he is performing of the misleading potentials entailed in what is being put before them. His trademark abusing and berating of the reader, the frontal assaults he constantly launches against their beliefs and habits is meant to insert a wedge between the material produced by him and avidly consumed by the reader. In other words, Torres never stops cautioning and giving the reader *guidance* about how to take what is being offered. That is the role his brand of acrid, corrosive take-no-prisoner humor is meant to accomplish. In being frank as to the *solely mercurial* motivations behind his almanacs and everything else he writes, as he does throughout *Vida* and almost everywhere else, should go a long way in this direction. Failing all other efforts, the fulminating attack he launches against himself should have sufficed:

There is nothing more sensible that can be said about how we are not supposed to believe an honest, frank man saying that he is a liar, even when he is being serious in saying so. *On what basis can you, my dear goosey readers, falsely accuse me of being a truthful man?* According to you, whenever a fire happens to break out, it was already predicted by Torres; if a some prince dies, Torres saw his death in advance; if there is war, Torres saw that coming; if some shipwrecks, it was in Torres prophecy. But know,

dummies you all, that in his long lifetime, Torres never recalls predicting fires or dead princes. Those wars, raids, overthrows, shipwrecks and all other kinds of general commotions from the world of politics have no room in his mind and are left out of his considerations. *When he sits down to write a prognostic he has only in mind all the dough soon to be coming his way. That is the one thing that always materializes from his prophesies*³⁷⁵. (Emphasis added).

Like in a revised version of the Cretan Paradox, the honest man, Torres says, is not he who tells no lies or who tells the lie about all Cretans being liars; rather, the honest man is him who does not lie about not telling truths. In resorting to a paradoxical language Torres is not only asserting the problematic nature of truth and the complex relation between truth and lie, that is, how relative to each other truth and lie are; he is also indicating the complex nature of all forms knowledge while at the same time attempting to point out where does astrology fit between truth and lie, and between science and superstition. This is made transparent in his admission that he had been, for eleven years already, “studying how to lie” in his writing, while also acknowledging that he has been doing so “hidden,” from reason, by means of saying that he has been *consciously*

³⁷⁵ “Ello es cosa sensible que a un hombre honrado no le han de creer que es embustero, cuando lo dice con seriedad. ¿Sobre qué, señores lectores mentecatos, me han de levantar ustedes el falso testimonio de que digo verdades? Si sucede un incendio, lo dijo Torres; si murió algún príncipe, Torres anunció su muerte en su pronóstico; si hay alguna guerra, Torres lo previno; si se pierden algunas naves, Torres lo había profetizado. Señore botarates, Torres no se acuerda en toda su vida de incendio ni de príncipes. Las guerras, las prisiones, las caídas, los naufragios, y todas las demás inquietudes y acaecimientos del mundo político están fuera de su memoria y su consideración. Cuando hace el pronóstico, sólo se acuerda de sus mamones que están esperando sus chanzonetas, como si fuera profecías.” Torres, “Los ciegos de Madrid,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 66.

suppressing reason, which confirms his writing on astrology as an artistic performance, “conscious suppression of reason” being precisely one fitting way to define the arts³⁷⁶. Astrology being for Diego a “practice that lies so close to superstitions,” it is obviously no science; but neither it is the obscurantist, anti-scientific form of interpreting the world that many contemporaneous students of his work would like it to be³⁷⁷. Torres’s relationship to that form of knowledge that it neither science nor superstition then is unquestionably enlightened to the extent that he makes it use of it in order to reject it, or better said— to make evident its limits. In this connection, his enlightened relativism is cushioned on the unstated understanding that if astrology succeeds in predicting the truth of an event—or rather, *in foreseeing an event that will become true*—this truth cannot be denied on the basis that astrological methods cannot be scientifically falsified, for this clearly would be a failure of the sciences, not of astrology. Put in other words, it would be anti-scientific to deny the methods by which astrology seems to predict an event just because science can neither explain nor make use of them. In the end, we could see in Torres’s involvement with astrology not more than the *economical occupation he ever insists it is for him*. And we would be justified in regarding it this way on the assurance that, as he never neglects to throw in our face, he does not take astrology per se seriously because for him astrology is not more than the activity than becomes closer to being “mechanical and scholarly” that would assist him in surviving the material conditions under which existence was given him in the empirical world, while providing him with the means for the self-sustainability necessary to being an autonomous individual, with a history to exist in.

³⁷⁶ Torres, “El mundi novi: *Almanaque para 1730*,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 59.

³⁷⁷ Torres, *Vida*, 109. For a consideration of this aspect of Torres’s work that runs in a complete opposite direction to the one offered here, see Francisco Sánchez-Blanco, “Contra milagrosos y astrólogos como Diego de Torres Villarreal,” *La mentalidad ilustrada*, 78-97.

2.6.4 The Enlightened Patient: Medical Maladies in Spain.

To further confirm the basic thesis put forward above of Torres as an “ironic astrologer enlightened by the stars” we would want to reflect, though briefly as it might be, on the correlation between Torres’s practice and thought concerning astrology, and his experience as practitioner of medicine, and even more with his experience as a *patient victim* of it. If, as we have seen, nothing Torres says about astrology constitutes grounds for writing him off as historically enlightened, everything he has to say about medicine and medical practice in Spain during his time confirms his status in this capacity. Indeed, once these two apparently opposed approaches to understanding and interacting with the empirical world are envisaged as coexisting in Torres as correlative to each other, one confirming and clarifying his thoughts and attitude before the other, his status as an enlightened intellectual grows relative to others figures from his days, be it Martínez or Feijoo. The first thing to be made a note of is that almost as matter of course, the position of Torres towards medicine is strikingly similar to his position respect to astrology. For he approaches them both with suspicion and mistrust, and, although a practitioner of both, his relation to medicine too can be characterized as ironic and self-detached, consistently exhibiting a thoroughly critical and questioning position towards it that expresses itself in the same kind of derisive and sardonic language to which he resorts in his comments about it. Since, during his time, among those authors whose credentials as enlighteners are never questioned it was understood that medicine basically was an applied natural science, what

Torres thinks about it must by necessity be taken as applying to and as standing for scientific undertaking in general.

Concerning the derisive acrid humor in which Torres defines himself as the kind of astrologer he was and the kind of physician that he *refused* to become, the correlation between medicine and astrology he seeks to establish is captured in this barb, issued in the rhetorical figure of a simile:

Whereas astrologers and lawyers survive on the lies they tell, hunters and physicians live on what they prey³⁷⁸.

Far from this being a cheap-shot on a discipline whose works Diego does not understand, he is indeed articulating in his idiosyncratic style a very serious and much needed criticism on the condition of scientific knowledge in the Spain of his days. If, as just pointed out medicine is applied natural sciences, what Torres is criticizing is that the medical knowledge possible under the prevalent conditions of scientific development does more harm than it does good; this is so because, as Torres will demonstrate literally *on* himself, the medical profession, and it goes without saying, the physician himself survives on the dead count it produces, like the hunter. If the pseudo-scientific presuppositions on which medicine operates necessarily translate in less healing and more killing, the ethical precepts under which medicine is practiced are founded on a lie, as is the practice of law, where factual truth has little value and therefore justice necessarily is not always the outcome.

³⁷⁸ “Los médicos y los cazadores viven de lo que matan; los astrólogos y los letrados viven de los que mienten,” Torres, “Juicio nacido en la casa de la locura: Almanaque para el año 1728,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 51.

Concerning the dismal conditions of scientific knowledge the Spain of his days, Diego provides the more alarming example of how little there was to learn, since it took him not more than thirty long days to receive his certificate as a doctor:

In this way, gaining hands-on experience either serving *bona fides* at the hospital, or just dropping by out of curiosity, going from bed to bed to draw blood and observing the gesticulations of the still-alive, I was a physician in about thirty days, which was the time it took me to store in my memory all the techniques taught by Cristobal³⁷⁹.

In the same way that as shown above Diego's relation to astrology moves from denunciation to renunciation, where the former already implies the latter, we are to infer from the passage just cited the reason that Torres would have preferred to shun making a living as a medical doctor, preferring instead to be an astrologer; for in the latter, even if all prophesies go terribly wrong, nobody dies. Effectively, in a motion that says much about his enlightened ethics and modern sensitivity, he gives up practicing medicine unless it is in an emergence:

That I know medicine, and therefore know of the little good that comes from it and how ineffective it can be scares me; and since I am bound by the obligations derived from this, I have sworn to God to practice it only when absolutely

³⁷⁹ “De este modo, y conduciendo, de caritativo o de curioso, el barreñón de sangrar de cama en cama, y observando los gestos de los dolientes, salí médico en treinta días, que tanto tardé en poner en mi memoria todo el arte del señor Cristóbal.” Torres, *Vida*, 123.

necessary, and under the conditions I was sworn to at the moment of receiving me degree³⁸⁰.

Accordingly, in the Spain of his days *one must not know medicine in order to want to be a practitioner*³⁸¹. It follows that *to want* to practice medicine under the unsatisfactory conditions prevalent then is not to be scientifically modern; for only he who knows the scientific principles on which medicine operates can be said to be truly modern; and only those who do not know what it is required to be modern in the sciences can give credit to those who call themselves so³⁸².

I think that I have thoroughly read the most recent system by Francisco Cypeio and think that I absolved it with less difficulty than those *physicians that call themselves moderns*; for in order to master his system a *practical knowledge* of Geometry and its figures is demanded, and no doctor in Spain knows a thing on this matter³⁸³. (Emphasis added).

In the same way that to master *the most recent findings* on medicine depends on having a practical knowledge of geometry (mathematics), to be a modern practitioner of medicine demands that one limit oneself to applying techniques and treatments that have undergone *experimental research*:

³⁸⁰ “EL saber yo la medicina y haberme hecho cargo de sus obligaciones, poco fruto y mucha falibilidad, me asustó tanto, que hice promesa a Dios de no practicarla, si no en los lances de necesidad, y en los casos que jure cuando recibí el grado y el examen.” Torres, *Vida*, 124.

³⁸¹ Torres, *Ibid.* 124.

³⁸² “Llámanse modernos entre los ignorantes, y han podido persuadir que conocen el semblante de esta ingeniosidad, sin más diligencia que trasladar el recetario de los autores nuevos.” Torres, *Ibid.*

³⁸³ “Leí por Francisco Cypeio el sistema reciente, y creo que lo penetré con más facilidad que los doctores que se llaman modernos, porque para la inteligencia de esta pintura es indispensable un conocimiento práctico de la Geometría y de sus figuras, y ésta la ignoran todos los médicos de España.” Torres, *Ibid.*

No other doctor can do more than what I used to do under the circumstance, which was to avail myself of the procedurals and the prescriptions that I myself translated. And if any physician says that his knowledge goes beyond this, he is certainly mistaken; but if it really does, then his advised not to exercise it, *because we must apply only what is endorsed by experience*³⁸⁴. (Emphasis added).

All in all, what is most outstanding in these passages is the tone of profound dissatisfaction about the state of affairs in the application of scientific knowledge Torres registers in his time. Consequently, the main charge that Torres levels against its colleagues is *that they are not modern enough, if at all*, and the charge takes as its basis the fact that, besides having no enough practical scientific foundation to assimilate the new advances in the sciences, they are not able to shake themselves up from traditional conceptions concerning the philosophy and methodology of science as applied in the field of medicine. In essence, what Torres is saying is that the medical knowledge current in his country during his time is as superstitious as astrology is reputed to be. He denounces medicine inasmuch as he denounces astrology; and he renounces medicine inasmuch as he denounces it; in this he is consistent to an alarming point and equally enlightened in both fields. No wonder he provoked so much controversy; no wonder that he was so persistently assailed and curtailed by the professional classes of his time. Here might also be the source of his soaring popularity and of the unchallenged success of his almanacs;

³⁸⁴ “Ninguno hace más que lo que yo hice, que era valerme del recetario y de las recetas que yo trasladaba. Y si algún médico dice que sabe más, se engaña; y si lo sabe, no es razón para que lo ejercite, porque debe curar con lo ya experimentado.” Torres, “Melodrama astrológica: Almanaque para el año 1726,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 42.

for he obviously represents the collective social consciousness of its time, and this allowed him to become the voice of the underclass, that more directly suffered the consequences of the unacknowledged scientific ignorance of the medical establishment. To the extent that he consciously assumed this role, judged by the standards of his time, Diego de Torres was truly revolutionary.

Ironically, in the same way that, as Torres jocosely admits and so to speak, he was “enlightened” by the stars on deciding to become an astrologer, it is in becoming a patient that he gets resolutely enlightening as to the dismal state of affairs of scientific knowledge as applied in the field of medicine in his time. His account of the progressive deterioration of his health at some point of his life and of the ordeal he had to go through at the hands of doctors, contrary to what some might say is not only a high point in the autobiographical discourse of *Vida*; in itself it is the most cogent and painful diagnosis on the poor health of medicine knowledge in eighteenth century Spain³⁸⁵.

If Torres’s relation to astrology is encapsulated in the irony of a man who renounces his own allegedly correct predictions into the future so that he can maintain an

³⁸⁵ Fernández Cifuentes, for instance, theorizes that the fifth “trozo” of *Vida* is an “enorme excrecencia,” by which means to say that it is redundant and superfluous. In accordance with this assessment, this chapter, which allegedly is the longest in *Vida*, stands in contradiction with the rest of the autobiographical account, since in Fernández Cifuentes’ opinion, Torres goes into the details of “una enfermedad larga y peligrosa, pero (sic.) que nunca acaba de revelarse (al menos no de una forma explícita) como avatar biográfico transcendental.” I am not sure I understand that autobiographies must contain something to be designated a “transcendent avatar” or what that might be. In any case and however this might be, the point of any type of analysis should be precisely to establish if that “transcendent avatar” is to be found therein, even if in an implicit manner. It seems that Fernández Cifuentes believes that just because other eighteenth century authors chose not to dwell in the narrative of their poor health makes it into a kind of defining prerequisite of the autobiographical “genre;” namely, he seems to believe that because Gibbon treats his personal case in “such-and- such a way,” Torres and everyone else should follow suit in recounting *their* own lives. This, in my opinion, is an indefensible interpretation of what the Enlightenment was all about; this interpretation is reflective of the mode of thought that have traditionally been brought to the study of the Enlightenment in Spain, and which I have been questioning here throughout. It misses the point Torres is trying to make: is not the disease that he is interested in discussing, *but the state of medical knowledge that he is trying to expose*. And that is in complete agreement with the preoccupations of the Enlightenment as experienced in Holland, England, France and Germany. See Fernández Cifuentes, “Enfermedad y autobiografía: sobre la ‘experiencia de la individualidad,’” in *Revisión de Torres Villarroel*, 155-171. See Gay, “Enlightenment: Medicine and Cure,” *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 12-26.

enlightened attitude towards it, in his relation to medicine we are confronted with the paradox of the enlightened physician who offers himself up as a guinea pig, that should illustrate the inefficacy of medical treatments on his medical condition:

It cannot be helped: I see fit to inform those who had got this far in reading about the development and the phases of my condition, which I will relate with simplicity and clarity. *This part in this account I consider the most useful from this narration, for here therein the reasons are given why I mock and distrust medicine, and then it will be seen why one is barely justified in believing in its assurances, and how hopeless it is to count on in its promises, which we should only have in God, in nature, and in having moderation in our lives. And so, what I have learned from my experience shall be a lesson to be learned by those who seek cure from not-yet known ailments; and also this should prevent those who trust the sayings, the sweets and the lies of the apothecary. But from this should also be ashamed those who make their living issuing prescriptions, instead of admitting their fraud and their arrogance, and accept their ignorance about what only God, all-knowing nature and a moderate lifestyle can heal*³⁸⁶. (Emphasis added).

³⁸⁶ “No tiene remedio: me parece que es preciso informar al que haya llegado hasta aquí con los ojos, de los pasos y estaciones de mis dolencia, lo que referiré con verdad y sencillez; y las planas que escriba, creo que serán las más útiles de este cuaderno, porque de ella constara la razón que tenemos para burlarnos de la medicina, y se mostrara el poco juicio con que nos fiamos de sus promesas, disposiciones y esperanzas, las

Obviously then, if Torres is expansive, if he lingers on the narration of his medical condition is not for the sake of telling us more than he would like about his life, about which we have seen he is restraint, avoiding giving in to confession; but he does it because he wants to educate, to enlighten his reader as to the lacking state of the applied sciences, which he accomplishes the better the most radical and acerbic his criticism is. That this is what he is up to is made transparent in that he makes *the whole medical establishment* the target of his criticism. One would hardly find in all the autobiographical writing in eighteenth century Europe a more articulate, poignant and in a word, enlightened criticism of medical practices as this one offered by Torres:

[...] my conscience tells me that I should warn the reader that whenever he notices the liberty I take whenever I speak about the seriousness of my medical condition and of the process of healing I do not intent to incur in gratuitous satire; but neither do I intent to hurt the feelings of the doctors who attended to me. So, whenever you see in these notes words like *mistakes, falsities, ignorance, lies*, and some others which carry the same meanings you should not take them as an allusion to the intentions, conduct or preparation of these doctors to whom I am grateful. But what I have in mind, rather, is how conjecturable, how tentative, and how disgraceful the practice of medicine is.

que solo se deben poner en Dios, la naturaleza y el aborrecimiento del apetito de gula. Mi cabeza servirá de escarmiento también a los quiera curar de males no conocidos, a los que se cura de prevenciones, de antojo, y de credulidad en los aforismos, y las golosinas y embustes de los boticarios; y humillense también los que viven de la recetas, y no quieran atribuir sus ignorancias, vanidades y astucias de su oficio lo que debe a Dios, a la sabiduría de la naturaleza y la moderaciones de las templanzas.” Torres, *Vida*, 205.

And, if the reader sees words like *greed, presumption, vanity*, and others that carry the same meanings, the reader must believe me when I say I am not hurling them to anybody in particular, for I mean them to apply to the whole medical establishment (sic.) [...] ³⁸⁷.

It is evident then that the fifth part of *Vida* is anything but redundant; all to the contrary, it is precisely *apropos of his disease* where the enlightened advanced understanding Torres possess of medicine is revealed. Not only he does not neglect emphasizing that *nature and lifestyle* have much to do both with the etiology of a medical condition, and therefore with its improvement; he also contributes a philosophy from where to derive appropriate methodological approaches for the diagnosis and treatment of some conditions, which were *pari pasus* with the medical knowledge of his time in England and the United States; but in its scope, they were far more advanced ³⁸⁸:

This is neither the place nor it is the purpose of this writing to chastise the methodology usually employed in the treatment of acute excrescence of fluids. But, even if just in passing, my advice is that medicine professors ought to pay more attention to the different varieties of temperaments,

³⁸⁷ [...] me insta la conciencia a prevenir al lector que siempre que lea las libres expresiones con que escribo, cuando trato de la curación y extravagancia de mis males, no bebe creer que mi ánimo es enviarlas a satirizar ni herir a alguno de los doctores que me curaban; de modo que siempre que vea en este carapacio las palabras de *errores, falsedades, ignorancia y embustes* y otras que valen lo mismo, no quiero que piense que las digo por la intención, conducta ni estudio de estos médicos, a quienes hoy vivo agradecido, si no por lo conjeturable, lo incierto y lo desgraciado de la facultad de la medicina; y cuando se tropiece con las voces *codicias, presunción, vanidad* y otras de esta casta, entonces debe creer que no la tiro a particular alguno, sino que la dirijo a todo el gremio (sic.) [...]” Torres, *Vida*, 212-213.

³⁸⁸ See for instance Roy Porter, “The Eighteenth Century,” in *Western Medical Tradition: 800 BC to AD 1800*, 416-419.

and to the different kinds of fluidities. They should never take for granted that the loss of blood affects all patients in the same way, for the nature of some of them makes it that, even if they might at first seem not to have been seriously affected by loosing blood, with time the harmful effects will show, and the patient's health will be give in to them. In brief: *the same treatment has no the same effect in all kinds of patients. Medicine works by taking into account the particularities without neglecting the generalities*³⁸⁹. (Emphasis added).

In his disavowal of the “one-size-fits-all” methodological approach to the diagnosis and treatment of diseases and conditions; in his insistence that no all patients would respond in the same exact way to the same exact treatment; in his conviction that the diagnosis of the condition of a particular case stands in relation to the general etiological knowledge of a given disease, or better yet, that general knowledge does not substitute for the knowledge specific to an individual case—in this Torres’s enlightened relativism resides. Like it is the case with his relationship to astrology in which irony morphs into the paradox of the astrologer who disavows his predictions, in his relation to medicine paradox morphs into the irony of the patient who confuses his doctors by providing them with the correct diagnosis of his own medical condition, when they could

³⁸⁹ “ No es ocasión ahora, ni es este el asunto de este papel, abominar de esta práctica en la curación de los flujos porfiados; lo que de paso encargaré a los profesores médicos es que atiendan con más cuidado a las variedades de los temperamentos y las diferencias de las destilaciones, y no se confíen en que la resistencia brutal de algunas naturalezas haya sufrido sin sensible daño la falta de sangre, pues hay otras que aunque al pronto aguantan, a pocos años se dan por agraviadas y rendidas: un mismo remedio no puede encajar a todos. La solicitud de la medicina de ser buscar las proporciones, pero sin perder de vista las generalidades.” Torres, *Vida*, 201.

not³⁹⁰. And not to lose it out of sight, since they both are a manifestation of the same ontological construction, Torres's practice of astrology in a time when doing so was considered of ill-repute among the elite of the academic and professional establishment, and his resistance to practice medicine when doing was considered the epitome of social and professional elitism, could only come about as the expression of the same radicalized modernity. And this bring us back to the theme of the modern "Self" Diego de Torres fostered, which in turn will move us forward to the question of his social equalitarianism, and finally, to the problematic of his pseudo picaresque of self-representation.

2.6.5 From Enlightened Relativism to Social Equalitarianism

To insist on this very important one last time and to drive home its historical and philosophical significance as we approximate the end of this study, as it is made apparent in *Vida*, since we will always arrive at a conceptualization of the "Self" depending on the standpoint from where the question is answered, a definitive, stable definition will attain. For, the most likely possible is that the question is posed from a standpoint that *already contains the answer in the form of a presupposition*; at bottom, this is the reason Descartes never goes as far as to doubt whether he is *actually* doubting, or what *doubting* actually is. Thus, the standpoint of the "doubter" always already presupposes the answer to the question of the cogito: the cogito is that entity which never doubts it doubts; and so the question as what the "Self," cogito or ego is answered beforehand. It follows that, if as Agamben avers, the enlightened Cartesian cogito is essentially a "mystical" construction, Torres's conceptualization of the "Self," or the "subject," or the "individual" is simply

³⁹⁰ Torres, *Vida*, 205, 209, 19.

enlightened because in it this entity appears as being relative to the antic conditions on which existence has been given us³⁹¹. And this existence, although we become aware of it insofar as we are individuated modes of being, from the point of view of Existence itself each individual “self” is a Being that only is relative to the modes of being of others. If this is so, from what we have uncovered in our study of Torres, it further follows that for him *the “Self” is an existential relation of Beings*. His awareness of this is what allows him to postulate the essential equality of all human beings, and insofar as this awareness has an ontic-ontological structure, his enlightened social consciousness paves the way for his adoption of an equalitarian social perspective anchored on his ontological self-perception—his self-consciousness. This explains that, more clearly in *Vida* but also elsewhere in Diego’s writing, the phenomenon of self-consciousness forms an imbrication with the phenomenon of the social conscience that evolves into equalitarian ideology. We have before dealt with the passage wherein Torres recognizes the ontic-ontological basic unity of human existence; but for methodological reason we must one more last time revisit it, not only for clarity’s sake, but also this time around to underlie the *equalitarianism* that derives from it:

All men are just but one Man [...]. I no doubt wear less fine clothing than what makes the Prince stand out; but he is not less just a man because of it, and all his finery does not take away his human frailties. But neither do the rags I wear

³⁹¹ Agamben, *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience*, 23.

make me more a beast than he is. We all belong to the same human race [...]”³⁹².

The man who started by discovering his subjectivity in the midst of a pool of multifarious subjectivities just like his, and who therefore becomes aware of the basic ontic-ontological unity that forms the universality of Being, moves to foster an individual conscience that in turn discovers the immediacy of existence as socially given:

I have bits of everything in me [...] and I find consolation in saying and have the vanity that being I neither a knight nor a hidalgo but an all-round bourgeois [...] have been lacking neither in poise nor in repute, and *those who have taken upon them to assign honors, wealth and fortunes in the world* have not yet spit on my face or on my name³⁹³.

(Emphasis added).

Confronted by the primordial contradiction of the basic ontological unity that on the one hand makes all men into just one Man but which on the other hand makes room for the Prince, who owns clothing of a better quality than the rest, Torres is quick to notice that existence, when experienced in its immediacy as socially given, is fundamental inequality, since power, wealth and honors are distributed by some, and denied to others. The basic ontological unity of the universal Being is then seen as primordially internally fractured, and this means that Existence as such is the realm of unsolvable contradictions:

³⁹² “Los hombres todos somos uno [...] El paño que me cubre es un poco más gordo de hiladura que el que engalana al príncipe; pero ni al él le desfigura de hombre lo delgado ni lo libra de achaque lo pulido, ni a mí me descarta del gremio de la racionalidad lo burdo del estambre. Nuestra raza no es más que una [...]” Torres, *Vida*, 67.

³⁹³ “Yo tengo de todo [...], y tengo el Consuelo y la vanidad que no siendo hidalgo ni caballero, sino villanchón redondo [...] hasta ahora no me ha desamparado la estimación, ni me han hecho dengues ni gestos la honra, ni me han escupido a la cara ni al nacimiento los que reparten en el mundo los honores, las abundancias y las fortunas [...]” Torres, *Vida*, 68.

Out-of-control greed, avarice, the contradiction between the claims staked by some and the opposition raised by others, *have made unequal the distribution of the common good found in nature to such a point that four monarchs, ten princes, twenty dukes and fourteen hidalgos have divvied up the wealth of the whole earth among themselves.* To the rest of us, inhabitants of a world politically arranged, they have left no soil to walk or wild fruits to feed on, forcing us to survive one way or another, stealing or lying, in order to secure some crumbs. For, *we would certainly die of hunger if we should depend on their charity, or if we subjected ourselves to their rationales*³⁹⁴. (Emphasis added).

With the enlightened critical evaluation of the *political fracturing of the communal pristine state of nature* Torres operates Existence, in its immediate social materialization is revealed as fundamentally *flawed*, since it makes room for injustice in the distribution of the Good in nature. The basic ontological unity of Existence Torres's insight brings to light is not abandoned, but it is further recast as an unity made of diverse singularities; as we saw in the first chapter of Part One, the basic ontological unity of Existence is made in the same proportion of self-sameness and difference. Torres's dialectical manner of thinking is here reaffirmed. First off, and more immediately relevant is that in the face of

³⁹⁴ “La ira de la ambición, la vanidad de las pandectas, el derecho de las gentes y el tuerto de los diablos, han hecho tan desigual partida de los bienes comunes naturales, que entre cuatro monarcas, diez príncipes, veinte duques y catorce hidalgos han partido toda la tierra, y los demás, que alentamos el mundo político, no han dejado suelo que pisar, ni fruto que comer; con que en algún modo estamos precisados a hurtar y mentir para sacarles algo, porque si nos confiamos de su caridad, o en el precepto que tienen, nos moriremos de hambre.” Torres, “El mundi novi: almanaque para el año 1730,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 60.

this fundamentally flawed social arrangement, Torres's response is not to take side with those responsible or who reap the benefits of the political fracturing of nature, but to side with the downtrodden, those who have been left out the social equation. Hence his equalitarianism, which as we already saw in chapter five of Part One, leads him to consider and behave towards his fellow men, *inasmuch as individual*, as essentially equal to each other, even while he is respectful of the class division and hierarchies that the immediate experience of Existence as social construction introduces into human relationship. Therefore, Torres declares, he treats his employees as his companions and friends; hence that since he loves them, it hurts him that "fortune," those events of our existentiality not yet accounted for, had put them in the position of having to serve him; hence that he shares his food and his table with them; hence that neither their race nor their gender makes a difference in the way he treats them.³⁹⁵ Next, it is worth noticing the idiosyncratic conclusion Torres arrives at from his insight into the political fracturing of the primordial state of nature. In his view, the resulting social construction also represents the *moral debasement* of the individual, who must lie and steal for his survival, and so his awareness of the basic ontological unity of human existence in which realm his subjectivity is given unfolds into an insight into the material condition of society. Lastly, it is also to be noticed how his equalitarianism is the expression of a revolutionary ideology that has as its tenets the belief that princes, dukes, monarchs, as the representatives of the Ancient Regime, are responsible for maintaining the social injustice against which the rest of society rebels in one way or another. The equalitarianism Torres advocates and practices is therefore revolutionary relative to the historical time in which it is promoted. Enlightened relativism, which here manifest itself as the conscience of the individual who

³⁹⁵ Torres, *Vida*, 101, 104.

knows that he exists in a world in which his social status is not a given him primordially as individual but that is relative to the status to the status of others, points Torres toward equalitarianism, as a social corrective, even if would fail in bringing back the original communal property of the goods in nature. That being impossible, Torres suggests that it is up to the single individual to find ways to subsist that allows him to neither abdicate his individual conscience, neither his consciousness of the condition under which Existence as such has been universally given by submitting to the power that be. His equalitarianism goes hand in hand with his individualism.

2.6.6 The Pícaro as an Enlightened Individual

In accepting the interpretation offered above, we come face to face with the social foundation of Torres's conscious fashioning of his autobiographical representation under the guise of the "pícaro." At the same time, understanding the sociological evaluations behind his well-reasoned decision to portray himself in the guise of the pseudo picaresque character confirms the thesis advanced in chapter one of Part Two during our discussion of the concept of *parrhēsia*, which to us encapsulates the ethical attitude of the "pícaro," and sheds new light on this phenomenon. On the basis of this social foundation the ironic and cynical tour de force that this represents can be fathomed at the deepest level. It is the need of subsisting, of making a living under the conditions on which he has been placed in society by those who have taken upon themselves to divvy up the communal Goods of uncorrupted nature, and it is a way of getting back at them by denouncing the political fracturing they have brought about; to this extent, his "pícaro" attitude is his idiosyncratic

way of “getting back” at those responsible for the political fracturing that brings social injustice:

To this end, I beg you as a good man to another that you let fall some of the goods your greed hides from me; in this way we would be only half dishonest. And if your greed runs away with you, you are responsible in your soul for my stealing and my lying; for I have found no other way more effective to dissuade you from stepping on me, and neither a more Christian way has been left me to placate my personal misery. I tell many lies, but I steal no as much, and so I do you less harm. But you are as much a liar as I am, and on top of this, you steal much more. Let some of your spoils drop on me and I promise you less of my lies, that you and I can be venial sinners, hovering between hell and purgatory³⁹⁶.

But this goes to show that, remotely far from being an expression among others of either a literary conceit or an out-of-date imitative contrivance as it has been basically written about, the picaresque self-fashioning Diego de Torres Villarroel does of “Torres” the “pícaro” is the product of a patient, cunning though *playful rationalization* of the all-encompassing social dynamic cemented on his consciousness of the ontological condition

³⁹⁶ “Para este fin te pido bueno a bueno me envíes algún fruto de los que me estas ocultando tu codicia, y enmendémonos a media. Y si tu ambición te tira de la mano, sobre tu alma vayan mis rapiñas y mis embustes, porque yo no he hallado medio más seguro para persuadir a tu tiranía, ni modo más cristiano para acallar mi miseria. Yo miento mucho y miento poco, y así considero que te hago menos daño; tu mientes lo mismo y hurtas mas; suéltame algo de lo que te robas, y te daré menos mentiras, y seremos tú y yo unos pecadores veniales, entre purgatorio e infierno.” Torres, “El mundo novi: almanaque para el año 1729,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 59-60.

of human existence. To the extent that this is true, *the “pícaro” into which Diego de Torres fashions himself then is a socially and politically enlightened character.* This is so because if Torres tells lies about himself and if he makes himself into the “pícaro” that he is not it is in order to make it possible to speak truth to power, and to denounce and renounce its unjust social construction without paying the consequences of doing so. On the other hand, in admitting that he tells lies, he asserts himself as he is to himself, preserving himself from moral debasement. The “pícaro,” to whom to say everything about everyone is allowed on the condition that he tells the paradoxical “truth” of him being a liar, and ironically *more* truthful, is by necessity the enlightened individual who neither cares nor cares not to be known or not known by others as he knows himself, as long as doing so allows him to gain the *material means* to exercise his autonomy and freedom. But he does so with a good conscience, because he knows he has been forced into doing so by those who distribute among themselves the wealth and riches of the earth; and he also knows that there being no certainty on matter of opinions, there is no an absolutely “true” way of living one’s life. But in consciously fashioning himself in the character of the “pícaro;” in portraying as a “pícaro” what in true is the manifestation of an authentically radicalized individuality, Torres inscribes himself against the traditional mode of self-writing; this, among many other things, is radically modern about him. In the next and final chapter we will take a last look at what this might mean for the contemporaneous theorization of autobiography.

Chapter 2.7

The Rogue's Rhetoric and the Foundation and
Deconstruction of Modern Autobiography

If nothing else, the inquiry I have pursued up to now should have conclusively established that the theme of the picaresque and the “pícaro,” whatever the meaning of these concepts and whatever the semantic and historical and literary derivations and associations of these terms is only marginal to *Vida*, and to the whole of Diego de Torres Villarroel writing. If this is so, and I am satisfied that this is the case, to say the least, it is comically disappointing that the kind of research and interpretations to which this work has been subjected for over two hundred years have almost unanimously centered on this theme, and that the study of Torres has been drastically limited to either probing on this theme, whether to affirm it or deny it; for indeed almost everything written on this work runs the short, narrow gamut of proving the supposed picaresque pedigree of “Torres,” when not of Diego de Torres Villarroel himself, or contrariwise proving that he is not. As I hope I have so far made exceedingly transparent, this is all very unfortunate, for thanks to the traditionalist approach to which the overwhelmingly autobiographical writing of this most idiosyncratic mind has been subjected the innovative, original and singular outlook on the world which it represents in the landscape of Spanish thought have remained hidden from sight. That this has been so has had no small consequence in the lopsided, impoverishing, and yet, *insufficient* knowledge that has been produced on the Spanish version of the European Enlightenment. Thanks to the inadequacy of the traditionalist approach to Torres's work, Spanish writing, and in particular, Spanish political and social thought has been deprived of perhaps the most vibrant and authentic expression of its

modernity, especially concerning the politics of the modern individual, the philosophy of the modern subject, and the discourse of the modern discourse of self-representation. In few words, by failing to deal in a critically adequate manner with Torres's work the traditionalist comparative-argumentative methodology has not made possible the assessment of the weight and value of the Spanish contribution to the philosophical discourse of modernity in its eighteenth century origin.

How the theoretically and critically unproductive thesis came about of the picaresque nature of *Vida* and for that matter, given its stylistic unity, the entire corpus of Torres's writing might be explainable, but hardly understandable, while is definitively untenable. For there is nothing in it that compels or validates interpreting it as "picaresque," let alone as a "novel" of any aesthetic denomination as it has often been done. For, even when it is not to be questioned that Torres makes constant recourse to almost all the meanings of "picaresque" and "picaro" and their derivations he not less constantly disavows and discourages precisely this very interpretation; and precisely, that he makes an *excessive*, that is, *hyperbolic* use of the picaresque semantics is already a telltale indication that he is up to something else, the ironic stance this represents making itself inescapable. Torres not only refers himself as "picaro;" he extends the meaning of the term to everything that relates to him, relatives and his own writing included. After all, the picaresque antihero did not write his own story, and neither *El buscón Don Pablos*, nor *Guzman de Alfarache* or *El Lazarillo de Tormes* ever considers himself anything else but decent, morally reputable and well-meaning subjects. It follows then that the mere realization of the rhetoric trust involved here renders moot what has consumed the studies on Torres since Juan Valera first put forth the preposterous picaresque affiliation of *Vida*,

way back in 1888. Of course, this situation only comes into view from the perspective of a critical methodology that moves away from the comparative-argumentative approach, which is what I have strived to do here throughout.

As I observed in chapter five of Part Two, the comparative-argumentative never manages to analytically overcome the supposed inner contradictions said to be detected at the heart of Diego's writing. Since it barely surpasses the plane of the merely descriptive, its tendency is to get stymied, in the run-up making its own this contradiction. Only that, whereas as I hope to have shown, an inner contradiction is nowhere to be found in Torres's work, the exact contrary takes place in some of the theories arising from the traditionalist method. In what is a highly representative example, unwilling to accept that "Torres" is no "pícaro," but undecided that he is not, one of the most authoritative scholars on Diego de Torres theorizes that he neither one nor the other but that he is allegedly hybrid, or a "centauro mixto," centaur-like, that is, him being "half-saint" and "half-pícaro;" "half-mystical" and "half-mundane;" "half-monk" and "half-criminal" ("ahorcado") all at once and at the same time and for not different reasons³⁹⁷. These sets of opposites, drawn up to illustrate the irreconcilable inner contradiction in Torres's thought would suggest that no coherently specific meaning can be established from it, since the same writing meant to convey this meaning acts to sabotage or undermine any efforts to do so. But this interpretation runs easily into trouble, for it can identify the supposed inner contradiction of this thought at the price of exposing the methodological inconsistency that paves the way for self-contradiction to arise within itself, in the first place, which then

³⁹⁷ Sebold. He also speaks of a supposed "contradicción mixtificadora" en Torres. See "El género picaresco en la estructura moral de la *Vida*," 52-67.

gets extrapolated and projected onto the *surface* of the work under study³⁹⁸. So, since according to the comparative-argumentative method that has oriented the studies on Torres he is made of irreconcilable inner contradictions, nothing definitive about him can be said, or known. I trust that, as discussed in chapter three of Part Two, this study has proved that defeatist interpretation to be baseless. In order to continue to show other aspects from Diego de Torres autobiographical work that have up to now remained hidden from view, and to bring to full completion the program of this study, in this last chapter I will attempt to show that a) the narrative we are offered in *Vida* is that of a man who has adopted as his method and philosophy doing himself as much autobiographical harm as possible, which causes that, while the descriptions in the personal historical setting are veridical, the depictions displayed therein is not necessarily so; b) that the resolution of doing autobiographical harm to oneself already contains, and is the expression of, a moral and ethical attitude towards the act, the tradition and the institution of self-writing *as such*, and is therefore equivalent to taking a stance against the Narcissistic entronement of the “I;” this attitude is encapsulated in the word “pícaro,” which loses its traditional meaning in the context in which it now employed; and c) that the option of the ethical attitude of the *antihero* of his own narrative implies putting the “I” on trial, and indeed, its rhetorical displacement from the center of autobiographical discourse; this rhetorical displacement has theoretical consequences for contemporary autobiographical theory.

³⁹⁸ So, Sebold goes: “Yo también uso la voz pícaro en relación con Torres; porque el mismo, con plena consciencia de todas sus acepciones literarias y extraliterarias, las usa en el humorismo bifronte que se aplica (sic.). Pero conste desde ahora que yo rechazo de plano la vieja tesis según la cual *Vida* es una novela picaresca. Torres nunca tuvo tal idea.” Yet, this rejection is promptly forgotten, for later on the same Sebold says: “En fin: *Torres es y no es pícaro*, y del mismo modo, en la *Vida*, él está, y a la vez no está, *escribiendo un relato picaresco, según veremos cada vez con mayor claridad.*” Emphasis added. Sebold, *Ibid.* 55.

In chapter three of Part Two we have already come across that ontological entity that Torres represents that, radically indifferent to the Other of public opinion exhibits the behavior of something that neither cares nor cares to be known or not as it knows itself; since that was and still is the case, that would amount to an undeclared resolution to *not* making itself known. While this must by logical necessity be so, not *making* itself known does not however preclude the possibility of some kind knowledge arising from that this situation creates; only that it is left up to us who come across this entity whether this possibility, that exists only potentially, materializes. But this possibility will no doubt materialize once we become aware that the ontological indifference towards the Other of public opinion by necessity implies an ontological disposition to do oneself biographical damage as the attestation of that fundamental indifference; in this disposition, the radical indifference to whether one is known or not known as one knows oneself finds its purest expression. It is not for nothing that Torres gives precisely this as the main reason for committing his life to writing, as we have already discussed.

But then we can say that Torres embodies an ontological disposition that reveals itself more unmistakably in a certain attitude that points out toward the dissolution of the very autobiographical project where this revelation takes place. And this is so because the disposition to harm oneself autobiographically demands that the protocols and conventions of autobiographical representation sanctioned and honored by the tradition that starts with Saint Augustine be abandoned; and the abandonment of the conventional norms of the genre, or if want does not prefer to speak of “genre” in connection to autobiography, discarding the norms of self-narrative can only lead to the

autobiographical undertaking being one of *purposive misrepresentation*³⁹⁹. Nothing more suitable than to undertake representing oneself as someone who has “gone rogue,” someone who has “turned against” and “on” the very institution and practice of autobiography by assigning to it a different role than its own conventions and protocols contemplate—that of reliably telling a life story in order to produce reliable self-knowledge, which really means presenting oneself therein as what one really “is,” practicing soul-searching and soul-policing as *the* method to this end; being “introspective” by attempting to turn oneself inside-out as to best expose to the world and God the real and naked “I” that lies inside us. This is what the tradition, from Saint Augustine down to Montaigne had been doing, a tradition that in Rousseau continues unchallenged; with Torres, all that is over. *And so, out of that certain attitude toward the conventions and protocols of the genre, the “picaro” in Torres is born. But in him the “picaro” is not born as the literary character whose defining attributes go against the moral and ethical principles of society, but as the “character” who assumes towards the very autobiographical undertaking the same skeptical, questioning, non-conformist and irreverent attitude that the picaro of literature is said to exhibit towards the codes, rules and ways by which society lives.* For, with its root in the Latin verb “piccāre” the “rogue,” the “prick” or the “picaro,” before entering the fictional world of literature, or better yet, what in that literature is the picaresque character is precisely that person or personality type that, like a thorn in the sides, “pricks” or “stings” or “pinches” or irritates or provokes

³⁹⁹ In contemporary writing on autobiography, especially in English and French departments in America, England and in France much has been said and a great deal has been made in deciding whether autobiography lends itself to genre classification. In my opinion, from the perspective of existential-ontological inquiry, this is hardly so pressing a question to be decided, compared with other questions more directly connected to the ontology, thought and attitude of the entity whose autobiography it is, and with the history and culture that produce it. In the end, the question of whether autobiography is a genre is a problem for the literary scholar alone, and concerns neither the autobiographer nor his readers, and has no place in ontological study of it.

us and is therefore an inconvenience to have or be with, and who gives us no conform. What becomes the picaresque character then is that personality that exists as a thorn in the sides of society, who survives and thrives by showing scorn and by going contrary to the established rules, flaunting the social codes, doing mischief to them without while stopping short of committing a crime, a situation that in literature is illustrated by the portrayal of Tormes, or Pablos or Alfarache as occupying a shady, uncertain space on the margins of society, but *still* belonging in society.

But this then means that *in Torres "pícaro" does not anymore mean the Pícaro, and that this word, because he devolves to it its Latin signification, has become an abstract term, a concept, and that this concept is what more adequately and synthetically communicates and materializes the determination to misrepresent himself by doing himself more autobiographical damage than others would who would not present him in this image.* But, at the same time, if misrepresenting himself through the image the concept of "pícaro," the "rogue" or the "prick" evokes is the worst harm Torres can conceive of doing to himself, no doubt this is because he sees in this evocation the exact opposite and the *negation* of what he considers himself to be, and therefore is what he is the farthest remote from. Over and over, throughout his life time, in Vida and elsewhere, he never ceases to state so:

[...] for *Torres has had no a more powerful enemy than his own pen; he has been has satirized himself in such way and has been so mordant in doing it, that he has gone from being humbling and down-to-earth to being a dumbass and a liar. For he has never had any reason to portray himself in such*

*dark light, as he always does; and he has written so reprovingly against his own writing that by now this has become to even him a boring commonplace. So, Reverent, you have added nothing, nor is there anything else you can add, hard as you might try, that can put a wrinkle on his vanity, simply because he has no vanities. And, even if he had any vanity, it would by now be so worn out and thinning that no other satirical person could anything from it*⁴⁰⁰.

(Emphasis added).

Since he has always made himself the object of his satires, he has always purposively produced of himself a distorted picture that is not faithful to the original; the image the concept “pícaro” evokes attests and condenses this intentional “de-defacement” which, as already proposed arises from Torres’s ontological indifference to the opinion of the Others, which he succinctly gathers in his sarcastic reply to “His Reverence” above. “Pícaro,” as the concept that it has now become in Torres articulates that resolution born out of his indifference and his subsequent determination to do himself *more* representational damage than others could do him, and that necessarily expresses as a questioning, skeptical and dismissive stance towards the conventions of a genre that allegedly are the guaranty for producing reliable self-knowledge. *This does not in any way mean that the knowledge of self Torres elicits is not reliable; for it is. What this means is*

⁴⁰⁰ “[...] porque Torres no ha tenido otro contrario más poderoso que su misma pluma, y ha sido tan satírico de sí mismo, y tan mordaz, que de humilde y desengañado se ha pasado a majadero y mentiroso, pues no ha tenido razón para hablar mal de sí, como siempre lo hace; y aun se ha declarado tan enemigo de sus mismos papeles, que ya le capitula la pesadez la repetición de sus desprecios, con que V. Reverencia no ha adelantado nada, ni puede conseguir (aunque se juste con cuanto ingenio tiene Liorna) ajar su vanidad, porque no la tiene, y aunque la tuviera, ya se la tiene tan revolcada y abatida que no le ha dejado qué decir a ningún satírico.” Torres, “La boda de aldeanos: almanaque para el 1743,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 114.

that to have access to this knowledge the traditional way of approaching the account he gives of his life has to be abandoned to the very same extent he does in writing it. In other words, one can never get to know Torres unless one takes into account that the account he gives of himself is written from the perspective of someone who has gone “rogue” against the rules of engagement of ordinary life-accounting, and that he does so in order to prick, provoke and upset his readers *and* the genre at once, since he does not believe in it as we have earlier shown. This of course is the perspective of the human entity we do not too often encounter in the everydayness of our existence who writes about himself neither caring nor not caring what we make of him. But, if this is so, then Torres is strongly suggesting how he must be taken, or in other words, how he must be *read* to be correctly understood. Precisely because Torres’s modernistic, forward-looking outlook on things have heretofore been met by a traditionalist mode of understanding, the cunningness, the complexity and in a word, the *sophistication* of the mind presenting itself in this writing has gone hidden for so long and his contribution to modern Spanish thought repressed for so long. As one can only be hopeful to have made clear so far, Torres not only creates a new mode of writing an autobiography; he concomitantly creates the mode for reading his autobiography and for gaining access to his selfhood. In doing so, *he is first among the moderns in showing how one creates oneself*, the way Goethe and Franklyn, and to an unsatisfactory degree, Rousseau will do after him.

Assuming that by “creating oneself” one understands what one does with what one has been given in the phenomenon of existing, and not the literary creation of “the self” derived from a metaphysical conceptualization of self-consciousness that *reflects itself* in language and that reproduces itself in autobiographical writing as if though an object on a

mirror prevalent in contemporary studies of this genre. We can say that Diego creates himself because he has become what he is by his own individual means applied on and divergently moving from what is normative in society, and against traditions. So it is that he can “confess” his disbelief at having achieved so much by his rogue ways, and at having reached so high a position in society coming from so down⁴⁰¹. This meaning of “creating oneself” is what we find replicated in *Vida*. In *Vida*, the socially self-made man also creates himself autobiographically through exhibiting towards the rules of the genre the same *dissenting logic* that orients his empirical life. In this sense, and only in this sense it is that it can be said that in general autobiography is a reflection not just on life but also *of* life.

In case this has not been put in all its clarity, Diego de Torres does not limit his narrative to an account of the principles he espoused in his life and by which he lived; rather, he makes these principles into the condition that enable him to recount that life. And in this, we discover another way of demonstrating the soundness of the thesis introduced in at the beginning of this study of the fundamental way in which Torres handles the task of autobiographical representation. Furthermore, this fundamentality is most conclusively proven by the theoretical consequences that writing an autobiography in which one depicts oneself in the darkest color so that nobody else can render of oneself a more unfaithful image of what one is has for the history of modern autobiography.

Because doing oneself autobiographical damage requires that the self whose portraiture that is misrepresent itself, autobiography is thereby transformed into an intentional, purposive evisceration of the “I” therein, since “I” is really never “myself,” and since “I” always means something or someone else who is not “there,” in the world

⁴⁰¹ Torres, *Vida*, 184, 222, 232.

and is therefore not a Dasein, a Being and has no empirical existentiality. As the necessary consequence of preserving the “Self” from the manipulations of the “Other” in the way already established in chapter four of Part Two, in Torres the linguistic representation of the “Self,” the “I” becomes absolute fiction because “I” never means or coincides with *I as myself.*” But if this is so, in Diego de Torres we are witnessing the premeditated banishment of the “Self” from autobiography, and this banishment is dramatized on the one hand in the discontinuity imposed between the “I” and “myself,” and in the other hand, in the substitution of the “Other” for the “Self,” since what previously has been identified as the “Self” now exhibits the conduct of what had also previously been identified as the “Other.” Thus, in doing oneself more autobiographical damage than anybody else would, the “Self” is acting as the “Other” even as it surpasses it, that is, overcomes it. The “Self” that banishes itself from autobiography also and by the same motion overcomes the “Others.” But if this is so, then what we are witnessing in *Vida* is truly the *literal* dismemberment, disfiguration and defacement of the ontological entity (the “Self,” the “Subject,” the “I”) whose autobiography it is supposed to be, which by the same token implies the literal dismemberment, disfiguration and defacement of autobiography per se. We call this situation literal because the subject of and in the autobiography *endeavors to literally make himself unrecognizable.* A sure sign that this is the case is the confusion, uncertainty and insecurity to which readers of *Vida*, and for that matter, of Torres *himself* have historically fallen prey to. For, they over and over again fail in recognizing what or who Torres is to the extent that they cannot without hesitancy say whether *Vida* is autobiography or novel, whether fiction or history, and a picaresque piece

or something in-between. In Torres, the disfiguration of the “I” presupposes, or inevitably leads to the disfiguration of the medium that produces this “I.” For example:

*I added ugliness to my figure and depicted myself in my writing more abominable than festive. I did damage to myself, incurring in self-belittlement. I spoke about myself with such obstinacy that I left my critics much to repeat, and nothing to say. I did it in such a way that my name, my family, my self-esteem and even my own face will always be resentful of my pen*⁴⁰². (Emphasis added).

What Torres here shows is that independently of whether autobiography can be considered a genre in its own right, this being solely an *academic* preoccupation⁴⁰³, one cannot go on saying with a good conscience, as de Man and many other authors after him do, that autobiography in general produces and determines the life of the autobiographer and that whatever he does is “governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture,” since this technical demands whatever they are must be necessarily discarded given that no “model” is being “copied” or “reproduced” with any degree of faithfulness to it. But neither can we go on saying, as de Man also says, that submitting to the technical demands of the genre invalidates any claims to a fundamental difference between autobiography and fiction or that fiction and autobiography are basically the same in that autobiography,

⁴⁰² “Yo añadí fealdad a mi figura, trasladándome al papel más abominable que festivo. Yo malquisté a mi alma, rebajándole el valor de sus potencias, y yo hable de mí mismo con tal obstinación, que solo le dejé a los satíricos mucho que trasladar y nada que decir, de tal modo que mi nombre, mi familia, mi persona y mi estimación vivirán eternamente quejas de mi pluma.” Torres, “Prólogo: Visiones y visitas de Torres con Don Francisco Quevedo por la corte,” in *Textos autobiográficos*, 56. Here I have rendered “persona” as “face,” which is justified in context, if one takes into account that in its Greek origin the “persona” actually meant “mask,” and therefore “personage” or “character.”

⁴⁰³ “Academic” in this context does not mean to be pejorative; here it is being used to mean that which can only be “apprehended and followed in obedience to rules,” as Kant defines it. See Kant, “On Genius,” *Critique of Judgment*, 227.

like fiction, also creates its own referent⁴⁰⁴. Indeed, “faithfulness” is the first concept that gets disposed of in the process, and against which the act of self-portraiture, which is not really this anymore but a macabre act of self-caricature, takes place:

[...] I put in my body and spirit the horrible defects and ridicule deformities that can be found in many pieces of my very vulgar writing. I have been truthful about some of my monstrous stupidity; especially the parts of me that I have exposed concerning my personality and my abilities. *But the*

⁴⁰⁴ This summary in its essence represents the Deconstruction theory of autobiography as advanced by de Man, which for the most parts has predominated for the last twenty years or so in English and French, and to a lesser extent, in Spanish departments in the United States. Almost universally embraced, this theory has had a paralyzing effect in the study of autobiography, to which some, although not too many of its adherents have conceded, as it the case with Loureiro in his preface to his otherwise relevant *The Ethics of Autobiography*. Based solely and exclusively on some of Wordsworth’s work, namely on *The Friend*, it has no problem arriving at the reductionist conclusion that autobiography as such, which means each and every autobiographies ever written and yet to be written, can be reduced to a single figure, *prosopopeia*. But this is a manifold reductionism that presupposes not only a reduction of Romanticism to just one author and Romantic autobiography the autobiography of just one author; he then moves to reduce rhetoric as a “system of tropes” to a single rhetorical figure: *prosopopeia* alone, since rhetorical figures hardly ever come into being by or on their own, and since their effects would more often than not depend on others figures and tropes to materialize. And it gets worse. De Man arrives at his reductionist position by *firstly*, failing to see the difference between “autobiography” and “autobiographical act” or what is autobiographical but which do not necessarily is an autobiography. If we do not make this conceptual difference we are bound to see everything, literary or not, as an “autobiography” for the simple reason that in everything the “Self” (auto) participates there will always be present an autobiographical component. That does not mean that, for example, a photograph, or better still, a curriculum vitae sent in for a job application is an “autobiography” of the applicant, just because it bears his or her name and provides information about his or her life solely in relation to her education and work experience. *Secondly*, de Man, derives his thesis of the “specular structure of language” from and based it on a belief in the concept of self-consciousness developed in German Idealism and adopted by post-structuralism, that leads to the theory of language as a mirror-like reflection of the “Self” or as language as the mirror-like reflection of the innerness of consciousness, a position that as we have seen, Torres had already overcome and made fun of in the eighteenth century. It is against this conceptualization of consciousness and the “Self” that Nietzsche, Heidegger and Mead among others turned. *Thirdly*, de Man, taking after Nietzsche, attempts to “deconstruct” the rhetoric of language by bringing to light the rhetorical figuration through language produces meaning; different from Nietzsche, though, de Man seeks to do so by continually producing his own brand of figuration, which he over-imposes on the process whose governing figure he is trying to expose. So he get his definition of autobiography as a “figure of reading or understanding” (a metaphor), and what autobiography produces, “a de-facement of the mind (sic.)” another metaphor, which contributes little to the understanding of what *prosopopeia* does. As a rule in the study I am here commenting on, whenever de Man is looking for a way out of a philosophical quandary, he invents a new metaphor, but almost never does he explains its meaning. Metaphors, according with Wittgenstein, should be ban from philosophical inquiries, unless one makes transparent their meaning. See, de Man, ‘Autobiography as De-Facement,’ *Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 67-81.

deformities, the facial protrusions and the smudges and the soot and eye wax that I have described myself as having are all superimposed fictions [...] ⁴⁰⁵. (Emphasis added).

As for de Man's almost universally accepted theory that autobiography is a rhetorical act governed by the figure of prosopopeia *in* which and therefore *through* which "a name is made as memorable as a face," it is exceedingly evident that Torres is not giving himself a face, or making his name to be as intelligible and memorable as a face; all to the contrary, since he makes his face unrecognizable, his face and his name get "detached" from each other, and no reference from one to the other can ever be possible. And, in the same way that Torres de Villarroel straightforwardly declares that he does not care and therefore is indifferent to whether he gets to be remembered in his death, inasmuch as he cares little to be remembered *as* he was in life, or even that he was once alive and had an existence⁴⁰⁶, here, instead of giving himself a face he is as straightforwardly showing himself taking away the face that he had ontically been given. Overly cognizant of the medium of autobiography and in brazen violation of the laws of the technical demands for similitude and verisimilitude to attain, Torres here shows himself as deviously engaged in producing a "portraiture" of himself by destroying the "model" on which the portrait would have to be based. So, what he produces is *the distortion of a self-portraiture*, or better yet, he produces self-portraiture itself *as* its own

⁴⁰⁵ "[...] puse en mi cuerpo y en mi espíritu las horrible tachas y ridículas deforminades que se pueden notar en varios trozos de mis vulgarísimos impresos. Muchas torpezas y monstruosidades están dichas con verdad, especialmente las que he declarado para manifestar el genio de mis humores y potencias; pero las corcovas, los chichones, tiznes, mugres y lagañas que he plantado en mi figura las mas son sobrepuestas y mentirosas [...]" Torres, *Vida*, 97.

⁴⁰⁶ "[...] para nada me importa que se sepa que yo he estado en el mundo." Torres, *Vida*, 52.

distortion⁴⁰⁷. This thesis is proven in that Torres, by producing himself as the distortion of his own self-portraiture, which indicates the dissolution is attempting to bring about of the rules of the traditional confessional autobiography, lies in that he is more often than not *misremembered* as the man who “es y no es pícaro,” and that more often than not *Vida* is dealt with as at once being and not being a “relato picaresco.” But this only points out to the highly unbelievable degree to which Torres succeeds in the way his ontological indifference towards the Other makes itself manifest. In its turn, the essentially ontological nature of this indifference, or better yet, that absolutely indifference to the Other belongs ontologically to the individual that consciously sets himself up against the public opinion of the they-self— is here further attested. For even when Torres attempts to reproduce the “model” in its ontically given makeup, just as he musters his descriptive skills to destroy the distorted picture he had furnished his reader, which itself was based on the destruction of its model, he cannot help reveling at carrying this destruction farther still:

And so that the truth of my story can be made visible, which
up to this day has as many witnesses as are alive, I will

⁴⁰⁷ It is worthy of note that de Man does a too literal translation of the figure of *prosopopeia*. For, while he would be right that in its Greek etymology *prosōpon* carries the meaning of “face,” “mask” and therefore of “dramatic character” we cannot be so sure that its meaning in Greek is figurative, that is, that *prosopopeia* is a rhetorical figure in that language, and that it can be extrapolated into another language to produce the exact rhetorical meaning. But this is not the real problem. The real problem is that the function or property of *prosopopeia* does not consist in that it “makes a name as memorable and intelligible as a face,” as de Man claims. According to Fontanier, *prosopopeia* “makes present the absent” from wherever it is, from death as well as from the past and regardless of the type of discourse or scenic situation, in order to “confer authority,” to serve as witness, as companion or defender or protector of he who makes the invocation. In other words, one cannot invoke oneself to make oneself present in a discourse that has oneself as its subject, for one is always present to that discourse even when one has to all appearance “disappeared” from it. If this is how it is, as long as name and face are the forms in which the author remains present in his or her autobiography, *prosopopeia* cannot be said to preside over this type of writing above all, for this would mean that, whenever a *prosopopeia* can be identified as operating in *any* type of discourse, then we are dealing with an autobiography, which would be absurd. Following Fontanier, other problems arise from de Man definition of *prosopopeia*, like when he says that it is “the fiction of an apostrophe,” since Fontanier warns against confusing these two related but different figures. See de Man, *Ibid.* 75-76; Pierre Fontanier, “Figure de pensées par imagination: Prosopopee,” *Les figure des discours*, 404-406.

furnish in this chapter of my *Vida* with a faithful description of my real face. Before I go on with the narrative of the happenstances of my life, and my failures and adventures, I will paint myself exactly as I am today, so that the readers who have seen me in real life can do their math, and arrive to their own conclusion as to my looks when I was twenty years old. I six foot and seven inches tall; my members are all proportional to each other; my face is fulsome, though by now one or two crow feet have found their place near the sockets of my eyes; but in my face there is yet no skin discoloring, or flaking. My hair, despite my forty six years is still quite blonde; one or two grey strands show that I am getting old, but I pluck them out as soon as I see them. My eyes are blue and small and droopy; my eyebrows and beard are filled up with a hair color vermillion, a bit wispiest than the hair in my head. *My nose is the only unattractive detail of my face, because it is canal-like and ends in a wide bell that connects on my top jaw like a pear-shaped figure; it is more like the chimney in a church or the tail of a turkey or a contraption to manipulate marionettes.* [...] those who see me as I see myself say that I am good looking; those who pay too much attention to my height say that I am gangly

and scrawny, a bit clumsy with and stooped and uneven
frame⁴⁰⁸. (Emphasis added).

The destruction of the model is brought to completion in that the *hyperbolic* language employed makes the new picture all too real, with the attendant result that the deformation it is meant to correct gets magnified: the nose, that in the classical five-point division of a portrait functions as the center, as the cynosure of the face, is made by Torres into the cynosure of his portrait as such, by accumulating details upon details and by choosing a hyperbolic mode of description that necessarily elicits laughter and is therefore sarcastic. The very act of self-portraiture is made a mockery of. It is highly suggestive that Torres uses the *solecismo* as the detail that sits at the center of his face; taken from the technical language of Spanish grammar and linguistic, this word indicates the destruction, alteration or disarray of the syntax or other element of a sentence or utterance, and so symbolizes the situation in which something is amiss or misplaced, or broken. The faithful depiction Torres's is attempting gets disrupted by an intended malapropism, so that, we have a caricature were a picture was expected. The "picaro" attitude that Torres exhibited towards the autobiographical tradition that was in place before him is now reasserted and reaffirmed, and as it were, painted over his own portrait. As we have been nothing but

⁴⁰⁸ "Pues para que sea verdad cuanto se vea en esta historia (que hoy tiene tantos testigos como vivientes), pondré en este pedazo de mi Vida la verdadera facha, antes de proseguir con las revelaciones de mis sucesos, acasos y aventuras. Pintaréme como aparezco hoy, para el que lea rebaje, añada y discurra como estaría a los veinte años de mi edad. Yo tengo dos varas y siete dedos de persona; los miembros que la abultan y componen tienen una simetría sin reprehensión; la piel del rostro está llena, aunque ya se me van asomando hacia los lagrimales de los ojos alunas patas de gallo, no hay en el colorido enfadoso, pecas ni otros manchones desmayados. El cabello (a pesar de mis cuarenta y seis años), todavía es rubio; algunas canas suele salir a acusarme lo viejo, pero yo la procuro echar fuera. Los ojos son azules, pequeños y tirados hacia el colodrillo. Las cejas y las barbas, bien rebutidas de un pelambre alazán, algo más pajizo que el bermejo de la cabeza. La nariz es el *solecismo* más reprehensible que tengo en mi rostro, porque es muy caudalosa y abierta de faldones: remata sobre la mandíbula superior en figura de coraza, apaga humo de iglesia, rabadilla de pavo o cubilete de tiritero [...] Para los bien hablados, soy buen parecido; pero los marcadores de estatura dicen que soy muy largo con demasía, algo tartamudo de movimientos y un si es no es derrengado de portante." Torres, *Vida*, 97-98.

insisting, what we are dealing here is with the question of individual conscience and self-consciousness; and with the question of individual autonomy and freedom, and in the end, with the ontological-existential problematic of the determination of the “Self” expressed in the Torres’s formulae that his life belongs to himself alone and it is for him to live, and that we all have a death to die alone, as we have already seen. Because this is so, he arrives at the resolution of taking charge of his autobiographical project to fashion the linguistic representation of his self accordingly, even if this leads to self-negation, self-belittlement, and in the end, to the ironic, that is, rhetorical displacement of the “Self” from his project. And:

To disarm the critics of our days, used to badmouth and smearing and nicknaming any writer who gives to the public anything new; to disguise my deep-seated arrogance with feigned contempt; to mock without scruples but with a good conscience some of my shoddy enemies; to get a laugh at the expense of those who stick their nose in what is none of their business; and finally, *to mock and laugh at myself*, I covered my own self with horrible distortions and deformities [...] ⁴⁰⁹. (Emphasis added).

Now, to hold that a hyperbolic language is operative in Torres’s rhetorical destruction of his own picture is to posit that his is a hyperbolic project of self-

⁴⁰⁹ “Por desarmar de las maldiciones, de los apodos y de las cuchufletas con que han acostumbrado morder los satíricos de estos tiempos cuantos ponen una obra al público; por encubrir con un desprecio fingido y negociante mi entonada soberbia; por burlarme sin escrúpulo y un sosiego descansado de la enemistad de algunos envidiosos carcomidos; y por reírme, finalmente, de mí propio y de los que regañan por lo que no les toca ni les atañe, puse en mi cuerpo y en mi espíritu las horribles tachas y ridículas deformidades (...).” Torres, *Vida*, 97.

representation and that his self-representation is carried out under the control of hyperboles, classed first among the rhetorical tropes and figures of reflection⁴¹⁰. From here, no conclusion universally applicable to autobiography as such should be inferred; for far from being a “figure of reading,” whatever this really means in the end, autobiography is the individual discourse assumedly grounded on the mode of being of a particular ontological-existential entity and as such each autobiography individually expresses at a linguistic level the relationship this entity maintains with its own existence. On this score, to define autobiography in general as a figure of reading or as any other kind of “figure” is a misreading of autobiography. That it does not easily lend itself to genre classification only indicates that it lies outside the dominion of literary criticism, or that it is not exclusively its.

In Diego de Torres’s case, this signifies that hyperbole is the rhetorical trope or figure that best expresses his relationship to his own existence, and to history and the world as a whole; this is best understood if one bears in mind that, following Fontanier, who in turn follows Dumarsais, hyperbole is a trope or figure that:

augment or diminishes things excessively, presenting them either in a much better or worst image as they are in reality, aiming not at misleading but of mocking truth itself, stressing what is not to be believed in order to establish what it should be inferred⁴¹¹.

Fontanier calls hyperbole a trope or reflective figure because what it says calls for to be reflected on, if one is to understand it— and because what is not said sort of

⁴¹⁰ Fontanier, “Des tropes, figures d’expression par réflexion,” *Les figures du discours*, 123.

⁴¹¹ Fontanier, *Ibid.* In French in the original; translation is mine.

“reflects” itself in what is said. It is not surprising then if this trope is ubiquitous in Torres’s writing, and that it appears either as withering frankness, utter directness or absolute freedom in language, in a word, as *parrhēsia*, as we have already encountered it. But then, there we finally come to a definitive elucidation of what “pícaro” truly means. “*Pícaro*” is a hyperbolic concept; in it what is considered in rhetorical theory to be contained in the concept of hyperbole is incorporated. It is then in this concept, in its role in challenging, dismissing mocking and dissolving traditional confessional autobiography where the beginning of modern forms of biographical self-representation is to be found, and not in the self-aggrandizing and grandiloquent proclamations of Rousseau⁴¹². Torres’s rhetoric then, would deservedly be said to be “hyperbolic,” since for the purpose of this study the “rhetoric” of an author consists precisely in the system of tropes and figures through which meaning is produced in his writing.

But, just as we reach this understanding we are reminded that to displace, or rather, to attempt to displace the “subject” from the center of discourse through ironic self-detachment, self-denial, self-mocking and self-questioning and the “folding” and “unfolding” of the “I” as is typical of Torres, is the trademark of the contemporary post-modernistic theorization of the problematic involved⁴¹³. That this is in effect the case do

⁴¹² Hyperbole, I would like to propose, functions as the “master trope” in Torres’s writing. Torres’s experience of his Being-in-the-world and his Being-with-others, when linguistically expressed, is “troped” or, literally put, is rhetorically “turned” into hyperbolic language; and so this trope is what produces and organizes meaning in his discourse. In other words, he perceives reality “hyperbolically.” As it is well known, the concept of “master tropes” is proposed by Kenneth Burke, and originally it does not include hyperbole, and means that the whole of rhetoric can be reduced to only four basic tropes, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, an irony. Although in itself it represents a reductionist understanding of rhetoric as a system of tropes, for Burke, this prominent role is limited to the part these tropes play in question concerning the structure and process of knowledge. Kenneth Burke, “Four Masters Tropes,” *Appendix D, A Grammar of Motives*, 503-517.

⁴¹³ “Yo arrojo la mía, quiebro mi zampoña, y me escondo a reírme a mis anchos de muchos y de muchas cosas; y los primeros gritos de la burla los echare encima de mí, pues la verdad, estoy persuadido que no hay, en todos los entremeses, sayos de bobo y cagalasollas del mundo, despertador más poderoso de mis carcajadas que yo mismo [...]” Torres, *Vida*, 233.

not necessarily amounts to an endorsement of post-modernistic theorizations on our part. But this certainly means that whatever post-modernism is said to be, it was already present in Torres's work; his work then illustrates that suspicion post-modernism is just a phase of development of modernity, as Habermas and other philosophers of contemporary society conceive of it⁴¹⁴. As it is, this represents an enormous contribution by Diego de Torres Villarroel to the self-consciousness of modernity. On this ground we can close here with the statement that, if there is no room for doubting that the Spanish Enlightenment was insufficient⁴¹⁵, Torres himself was sufficiently enlightened; and he was cognizant that he was so, as the references from *Vida* that open this study show. It is hardly his fault if his contributions to the understanding of modernity have thus far been squandered.

⁴¹⁴ Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernism," in *A Postmodern Reader*, 91-104, Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon, ed. See also Andreas Huyssen, "Mapping the Postmodern," in *A Postmodern Reader*, 105-156, Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon, eds.

⁴¹⁵ That the Spanish Enlightenment was "insufficient" is of course the main thesis of Eduardo Subirats, which we have made reference of already.

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