

UNDOING THE BODY: ASEXUALITY AS A SUBVERSIVE MEANS TO
RETHINK SEXUALITY

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- 1) Asexuality
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- 5) Phenomenology

ABSTRACT

This study examines asexuality with its linguistic, philosophical, and social aspects. If one takes into consideration that sexual freedom movements have come a long way until now, one could easily notice that the acknowledgement and the social, academic consideration of asexuality is recent and has therefore occurred quite late in time. This study focuses on this *delayed acceptance*, and aims to provide a discussion about the construction of the sexual body through the asexual body. In my view, asexuality, with regard to Aristotle's concept of *negative potentiality*, could set up a new viewpoint on the freedom of *not-doing*. In this regard, asexuality offers to linguistic, philosophy and social movements a chance to rethink negativity.

ÖZET

Bu çalışma linguistik, felsefi ve sosyal boyutlarıyla aoseksüeliteni incelemektedir. Cinsel özgürlük hareketlerinin uzun bir süredir gündemde olduğu göz önünde bulundurulursa, son yıllarda tartışılmaya başlanan aoseksüelitenin gündeme gelişi oldukça geç olmuştur. Çalışma bu geç kalışa odaklanmakta ve seksüel bedenin aoseksüel bedenin görünmezliği aracılığıyla kurgulanışını tartışmaktadır. Böylece aoseksüelite, Aristoteles'in negatif potansiyel kavramı üzerinden yapmanın özgürlüğünü tartışmaya açabilir. Bu yanıyları aoseksüelite hem dile, hem felsefeye hem de sosyal hareketlere negativiteyi tekrar düşünme imkânı sağlar.

Kusurlarımı bir lütuf gibi karşılayan anneme....

(To my mother, who regards my faults as grace...)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
2. The Invisible Visible : Asexual.....	5
2.1. The Asexual Movement.....	6
2.2. Asexual Body as a “Not Yet Subject”.....	10
2.3. Bodies That Do Not Matter.....	13
2.4 The Word “Asexual”.....	19
2.5. A-sexual, Non-libidoist- Non-sexual, Anti-sexual.....	22
3. Subject Without <i>Object</i>	31
3.1. Subject and Sexual Desire.....	32
3.2. Plato and Desire as a Sign of Inner Lack.....	32
3.3. Deleuze and Guattari, Productive Desire and the “Body Without Organs”	36
3.4. Bodies of Thought.....	41
3.5. Towards a Queer Phenomenology.....	49
4. Asexual Bartleby And Antisexual Hungerartist.....	56
4.1. The Hunger Artist or Anti-sexuality: To Refuse To Do Something.....	58
4.2. Asexual Bartleby: To Prefer Not To Do Something.....	64
4.2.1. Giorgio Agamben: <i>On Potentiality; Bartleby, or On Contingency-</i> Thinking. About Impotentiality.....	66
4.2.2. Gilles Deleuze: <i>Bartleby; or The Formula: A Community of Celibates: An Unlimited Becoming</i>	69
4.2.3. Jean-Luc Nancy: <i>The Inoperative Community: Human Beings as Producers</i>	71
5. Conclusion	76
Bibliography	79

1. INTRODUCTION

I was tired. I was tired of desiring. I was tired of having to desire. I was tired of being the object of a *sexual* desire. And I was not sure whether I really wanted to continue desiring. This very question - do I really have a desire ?- was at first in the *blind spot*. As a *blind person*, someday, I realized that touching, namely *having sex* is not the only way to perceive the world, to connect to people, by reserving a right not to perceive the world, not to connect to people.

After a very GAY party, in the morning face, I came home, exhausted, I opened my computer, then I googled something like “asexual, anti-sexual, non-sexual”... As a LGBTQ activist, I have attended a lot of parties, and by and by I have started to think and realize that it is commonly assumed that sex is the only way of connecting to people. As far as I could see, being GAY implied the performance of the same practices in a closed community and being Queer was perceived by this community only as another way to recognize other identity movements but not to subvert them. Needless to say that I am not against the *freedom of sexuality*; but I started to suspect that we are becoming the subjects and objects of a capitalist desiring production which presents sexual desire as if it were innate/ natural. Even LGBTQ movement has seized this argument and argued that homosexuality is an innate orientation and that just because of this reason it should be regarded as an “unchangeable” way of being which deserves respect. These arguments have challenged my thoughts as they assume the inherent presence of sexual desire. I have decided to search for the absence of desire and this way of searching has provided my freedom: the *freedom of not doing!* I have realized that we do not have to, and consequently that we neither need to have sex.

This realization has made my life more spontaneous, yet I remained confused: somehow, I could not explain the meaning of being neglected of asexuality for such a long time. This research focuses on this issue in order to bring to the agenda our assumptions about *sexuality* by using the term *asexuality*.

After having presented the main motivation of this study, I would like to make an outline of this research.

In order to reveal the construction of the sexual oriented body through asexuality, the first chapter attempts to open a discussion about the invisible character of the term “asexuality”. By emphasizing its *lateness* I aimed to show its *hereness* which means, in reference to Judith Butler’s thinking, that asexuality is the “constitutive outside” of the sexual subject –whether it is heterosexual or not-. In this chapter, it is intended to make a short comparison between the negative prefixes in English language, to be able to understand the difference of meaning between words that distance themselves from sexuality like asexuality, nonlibidoism and antisexuality.

In the second chapter, I have tried to draw attention to the major arguments about desire and about the relation to the body throughout the history of philosophy by focusing on the thinking of certain philosophers. Beginning with Plato’s argument which perceives and defines desire as a lack, and continuing with Deleuze’s concept of productive desire, I have attempted to show that desire has for a long time been construed as a lack. Further on, I have investigated the conception of a subject without object by analysing the conception and the construction of the subject in phenomenology. Within the framework of phenomenology, I have aimed to discuss the intentionality of the body.

The third chapter attempts to differentiate the word “asexuality” from the one of “antisexuality” by arguing that antisexuality is a clear opposition to the common understanding of sexuality whereas asexuality still remains ambiguous. In the light of this ambiguity, it is sought to think the probable input of the asexual community to the established political discussions. In order to look for this possibility I have investigated the question of singularity in this chapter.

This study could be considered as an introduction to the researches on asexuality as there is only a restricted literature about this issue. This situation provides the freedom to think about this quite “virgin” issue but implies also the responsibility of “sticking your neck out”.

I have aimed to investigate the possible meaning of the word asexuality in the context of philosophy. As a concept and as a way of being Asexuality has a subversive *potential* for it shows the construction of a sexually desiring subject body from a different aspect. By transcending acceptance and rejection at once, it gives an opportunity to rethink not only sexuality but also current discussions about identity politics.

At this point, I would like to express the fact that at the beginning of this study, I intended to discuss psychoanalysis but that after a while I found myself in the core of a choice to make: I either should have to write an overlooking analysis of psychoanalysis or to avoid it and eventually spare it for a further study. I am aware of the insufficiency of a research and analysis which question desire without referring to psychoanalysis but, taking into consideration, that this is only a master thesis and there

is a limited space, it would make allowances for this *lack*. As I did not want to realize a careless work, *I preferred not to* mention psychoanalysis.

I hope this study will give an opportunity to discuss the binaries in another context which seeks to go beyond them.

2. THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE: ASEXUAL

Construction must mean more than such

a simple reversal of terms.

Judith Butler

If one considers the discussions about gender/sex issues which have been going on since the last forty years, it will clearly appear that the perception of *gender binaries* is constructed on the *heterosexuality-homosexuality* dilemma: We have got used to referring to the word *homosexual* as the one and only opposite to the word *heterosexual*. Before finding the ways to subvert those established binaries, it is also very important to understand the construction and perception of them. In this case, I would like to argue that it should be pointed out that there has not been any other alternative antonym to the word *heterosexual* except *homosexual*. It is obvious that this opposition is constructed on *sexuality*. To my view, this examination reveals a mindset which is dispersed not only to the discourse of the constitutive language, but also the discourse of those who are seen as abjected. Considering this mindset as a form of *sex-positivism*, this calls for a new discussion about the invisibility of *asexuality* as a term which overlaps its existence as a movement.

2.1. THE ASEXUAL MOVEMENT

While we are passing through a period that we have doubts about the necessity of identity politics by attempting to *subvert* the established sexual identities, a new *struggle for visibility* has begun to *attract* attention: Asexuality. Asexual community started in the 90s and has become increasingly visible during the last decade. While we are witnessing a new shooting struggle of the asexual community, the history that will be narrated here is therefore not loaded and has been recently formed.

For asexual, the process of organizing and becoming a community has been achieved by the means of the internet. This type of organization through internet certainly does not introduce a new form of being a community in terms of identity struggles either sexual or not. It is known that the identity movements are first organized on the streets and then use other means in order to organize, become visible and communicate. Yet, for asexuals it is crucial to gather on the internet as it has been raising a major awareness; therefore, it should be emphasized that such process of forming a community is different from the other common methods. Needless to say that the internet has enabled people to get closer to each other, made it easier to be informed and has also facilitated the spread of identity struggles around the world. As Marc Carrigan has remarked:

“The asexual community is a striking example of the Internet facilitating the articulation and affirmation of a personal difference (the absence of sexual attraction) which was previously silenced and largely invisible. Through the dissemination of concepts within the cultural system (i.e. articulating coherent understandings of asexuality which are available online and increasingly through the mass media and

academic research) and establishment of a cultural presence online, asexual identity becomes a socio-culturally available option for an increasing number of people who previously might have simply experienced themselves as different from their peer group and assumed this difference was a consequence of pathology. While the particular content of this process may be specific to asexual individuals, it is facilitated by processes which are not and furthermore it is only through an appreciation of the specificity of the former that we can begin to develop empirically adequate and theoretically rigorous accounts of the latter. In other words we can only understand ‘identity technologies’ through in depth analysis of the actual identities which ensue from them.”¹

As it can be inferred from this quotation, the internet has become a very useful tool for the organization of people who are identifying themselves as *asexual* since they started to interact each other through websites. In this case, we observe a process in which people have been trying to build a *discourse* in order to constitute their identity and their visibility first on the internet and afterwards on the streets. This *struggle for being visible* is similar to former identity struggles; it is a very ubiquitous way to *create subjectivity*. By trying to possess its own discourse, this identity struggle also forms its own *asexual subject* which gives to its *agents* an opportunity and a right *to exist* that emerged from this situation. On an internet search about asexuality, one can see that it is not a mere identity struggle which only tries to organize meetings but there is a growing number of websites which celebrate asexuality through literature, cinema, philosophy and so on. This may be a ‘starting from a scratch’ struggle in comparison to the LGBTTT struggle, which has been trying to challenge the established

¹ Marc Carrigan, “Homepage” accessed July 2, 2012. <http://markcarrigan.net/2012/01/02/the-cultural-transformation-driven-by-the-internet-the-case-study-of-asexuality/> (Carrigan, <http://sex.sagepub.com> n.d.)

prejudices against sexual minorities. However, it is not very common to come across to those established prejudices regarding asexuality. This is one of the fundamental reasons why this study provides a discussion about this fructiferous term *asexual*. Moreover, it will emphasize its distinction from the terms that refer to the other *ways of being* such as anti-sexual, non-sexual, non-libidoist, which do not imply any sex/sexual activity in the sense we commonly understand it.

One could easily argue that the intention of the speaker is not sufficient to establish a subject, when subjectification process of an individual is taken into consideration. Due to this fact the timing of the asexual movement will be discussed in the third chapter, but we may already assert that the organization of asexual people after such a long lasting silence was to be expected. So to say, it is now their turn *to tell the truth about themselves*.

One of the pioneering internet-based asexual organizations is AVEN, The Asexual Visibility and Education Network. Founded in 2001 by the American college student David Jay, AVEN claims to have two main goals: *creating public acceptance and discussion of asexuality and facilitating the growth of an asexual community*.² The members of the organization also claim that they provide the world's largest *asexual community as well as a large archive of resources on asexuality*.³ Researcher Mark Carrigan explains that "it started as a small page on his university account but has since grown rapidly, acting as a catalyst for a burgeoning and increasingly self-conscious asexual community which has begun to attract the attention of the popular media".⁴

² (AVEN 2001)

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Marc Carrigan, "Homepage" accessed July 2, 2012. <http://markcarrigan.net/2012/01/02/the-cultural-transformation-driven-by-the-internet-the-case-study-of-asexuality/> (Carrigan, <http://sex.sagepub.com> n.d.)

When the long standing struggle of *sexual minorities* is considered, it can be said that the use of the word *Asexuality* as a tool for struggle is considerably new and incredibly late at once. Academicians, theoreticians or LGBTQ activists- have perceived the *freedom of sexuality* as the *freedom of doing something*. Even though we are familiar to the idea that all forms of sexualities are *socially constructed*, it seems to me that sex-positive arguments neglected the fact that even our bodies and desires are constructed. Thus, we have forgotten *asexuals* who are trying to acquire the *freedom of not doing anything*. This *repressive hypothesis*⁵ which was self-assured could have not seen the other ways of being, so to say, of not-being. As Foucault has pointed out:

“There may be another reason that makes it so gratifying for us to define the relationship between sex and power in terms of repression: something that one might call the speaker’s benefit. If sex repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom. This explains the solemnity with which one speaks of sex nowadays.”⁶

This study can lead us to a comparative approach between the history of the word *asexual/asexuality* and the history of the struggle of the *asexual community* in order to enlighten their difference. In doing so, I would like to build a connection

⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, Incl., 1978).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

between the *asexual subject* –by trying to disclose the subjectification of the asexual body- and the invisibility of the asexual body.

2.2. ASEXUAL BODY AS “A -NOT YET- SUBJECT” ⁷

If we assume that there is no prediscursive subject before we name it, it could also be argued that identities have no origin, they are constructed through language which is prior to the person who asserts that s/he is a subject affirms her/himself as a subject.

Foucault’s thinking of the *history of sexuality* will be very useful for us to enlighten the ways the sexual body has been established within time. The aim here is to designate the invisible asexual body by understanding how it stayed invisible. We should take into account a few essential questions raised by Foucault regarding the process of subjectification:

“How was the subject established, at different moments and in different institutional contexts, as a possible, desirable, or even indispensable object of knowledge? How were the experience that one may have of oneself and the knowledge that one forms of oneself organized according to certain schemes? How were these schemes defined, valorized, recommended, imposed?”⁸

According to Foucault we are becoming desiring/desirable bodies in the frame of sexual subjectification –either heterosexual or homosexual-. In the context of

⁷ Inspired by Judith Butler.

⁸ Michel Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: The New Publisher, 1997), p. 87.

asexuality, we should subvert the question and look out of the box. If the question “Under which circumstances and how has the subject been established?” is asked for the subject which is accepted as a doer, then we need to raise another question for the asexual subject which is accepted as an undoer: *How and under which conditions has the asexual subject established itself?* To put it another way: *How and under which conditions has the subject remained silent/ invisible?*

I want to suggest that the silence of the asexual body, according to certain strategy, has made it possible for the sexual body to come into being. Whether heterosexual or not, it is *desire* that constitutes the *corporeal body*. Don Culick (2005: 119) in his article entitled “Language and Desire” builds a relation between language, desire, sexuality and sexual identity. He puts emphasis on *who we must not be and what must remain unsaid, the unsayable?*. It could be concluded that in such case, *who we must not be and what must remain unsaid* is the asexual body.

At this point, I would argue that the modern sexual body has been embodied through the *unbodied asexual body*. The *silence* of the asexual body appears to be very meaningful if we remember what Foucault has remarked with regard to silence:

“Silence itself – the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers- is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is

required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.”⁹

If one of Foucault’s most essential argument in “History of Sexuality” is considered, there has not been a ‘*censorship of sex but rather an apparatus for producing an ever greater quantity of discourse about sex, capable of functioning and taking effect in its very economy*¹⁰, it shows how the body has been produced by the system only to produce the reproductive desire. It could be argued that the LGBTT movement has been struggling since half a century against this *reproductive desire* to obtain the *freedom of desire*.

2.2. BODIES THAT DO NOT MATTER

In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler investigates¹¹ the ways to link the question of the materiality of the body to the performativity of gender. She argues that *sex* does not function only as a norm but also as a part of a regulatory practice and as a kind of productive power to demarcate, circulate and differentiate. According to Butler, sex is not a static description but one of those forms which reformulate the materiality of bodies through recasting of the matter of bodies accordingly performativity is a reiterative power of discourse: Construing sex as a cultural norm which governs the materialization of bodies, and the subject, *the speaking I* which is formed by a process of assuming a sex within the framework of certain identifications which are *livable* and *inhabitable*. Thus, different identifications are excluded and can not become

⁹ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.23

¹¹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 3.

intelligible subjects as they are not yet subjects. This exclusionary matrix which forms the proper subject provides certain heterosexual identifications and those who are not yet subjects constitute the space of abject beings. Judith Butler remarks those abject beings as a *constitutive outside*:

“This zone of uninhabitability will constitute the defining limit of the subject’s domain; it will constitute that site of dreaded identification against which – and by virtue of which- the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life. In this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one of which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all *inside* the subject as its own founding repudiation.”¹²

The exclusive framework of the subjectification process establishes itself through repudiation and, according to Butler¹³, to be able to be a subject one needs to achieve the requirements of identification which are seen as *the regulation of identificatory practices* by Butler¹⁴. All these exclusionary practices of identification are grounded on the concept of “normative phantasm of *sex*”¹⁵.

This calls for another discussion about the constitutive outside function of asexuality. As it was mentioned before, the long lasting invisibility and silence of asexuality, the possibility of not having sex have been always *there*, so to say it has been always *inside* of the sexual subject, as a *constitutive outside*. Foucault’s remark regarding that sexuality has never been censored but reproduced through discourse also shows that in order to construct a sexual subject –heterosexual or homosexual-, there is an attempt to consider sexuality as a *suppressed* instinct and try to be an *intelligible*

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

sexed subject. Despite Butler's innovative and pioneering concept of *constitutive outside*, this has been perceived that the only constitutive outside to the heterosexual subject is the homosexual one. I cannot be argued that Judith Butler intentionally ignores to see the possibility of asexuality, but it is obvious that asexuality is the constitutive outside of all kinds of sexual subjects. Therefore, homosexuality has been excluded, but even in this exclusion, homosexuality was *there*. It is the homosexual body that matters. Asexual body, on the contrary, has never been *subjected* to constitution of the matter of the discussions on sexuality. It means *unlivable* and *uninhabitable* zone of sexual subjects was the *asexual* as a not yet subject.

If the discussion introduced by Butler which is deeply connected to the aforementioned quotation by Benveniste is revisited; the relationship between language and subject still needs to be taken into account. In *Bodies That Matter*¹⁶, Butler makes an essential criticism about constructivism which she sees as a linguistic reductionism and accuses of neglecting the body. Butler bears in mind the question of critics: If the subject is constructed by language, who is constructing the subject?¹⁷ According to those critics, constructivism seems to ignore the *I* who performs and critics:

“If gender is a construction, must there be an "I" or a "we" who enacts or performs that construction? How can there be an activity, a constructing, without presupposing an agent who precedes and performs that activity? How would we account for the motivation and direction of construction without such a subject? As a rejoinder, I would suggest that it takes a certain suspicion toward grammar to reconceive the matter in a different light. For if gender is constructed, it is not

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁷ Ibid.

necessarily constructed by an "I" or a "we" who stands before that construction in any spatial or temporal sense of "before." Indeed, it is unclear that there can be an "I" or a "we" who has not been submitted, subjected to gender, where gendering is, among other things, the differentiating relations by which speaking subjects come into being. Subjected to gender, but subjectivated by gender, the "I" neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves.¹⁸

It seems obvious that we cannot make clear cut definitions about the process of subjectification. It would be a waste of time to trace the subject as a historical construction and, as Judith Butler puts it clearly in the aforementioned quotation, the *I* emerges within the matrix of gender relations. According to Butler, the matrix of gender relations is prior to the emergence of "human" and brings into being "the human".¹⁹ The question of *what is human* enables to ask *what is not human*, as Butler puts into words:

"Hence, it is not enough to claim that human subjects are constructed, for the construction of the human is a differential operation that produces the more and the less "human", the inhuman, the humanly unthinkable."²⁰

The human is one of the most important keywords to understand how the subject is constructed in the humanistic perspective which presupposes a constant human essence. This *real human* of enlightenment exists through practices which are

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁰ Ibid.

called by Foucault as *power over life*.²¹ Foucault remarked that, this was a process which had started during the seventeenth century and had been established on two main ways linked together: First way of constructing power over life was *anatomo-politics of the human body* which was centered on the body as a machine:

“[...] its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the disciplines.”²²

The latter of those ways to get power over life is *regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population* which focuses on the species of the body and biological processes of the body such as propagation, births and mortality, life expectancy and longevity as a control mechanism.²³

As Foucault highlights, systematic regulatory control over the body operates in two levels: First of them, *anatomo-politics of the human body* constructs bodies through a regulatory discourse which is mainly based on medical discourse. This discourse creates bodies as desiring/ desirable subjects and it enables to see constructed mechanisms as natural given and unchangeable things. It invents certain *sexual organs* and thereby certain *pleasure points* on the body. With regard to asexuality, we could say that this medical discourse makes it impossible to imagine a body which does not experience any kind of familiar *sexual pleasure*. Firstly, this asexual body claims that it does not have any *natural-given sexual desire* and rejects the presupposition that every single body should have sexual desire which should be managed in a proper way.

²¹ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 139.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

Secondly, the asexual/asexuality also subverts the idea that we have certain mechanisms in our bodies which start to function under certain set of circumstances.

The constructing power over life, according to Foucault²⁴, *regulatory control: a bio-politics of the population* could be observed in a social level which has been used as a very functional tool by political regimes so far. As long as they keep under control reproductivity, bodies should be able to reproduce. The representative human of this discourse should be *desirous* and *reproductive*. This humanist discourse and its practices which is not necessarily discursive but non-discursive, establish the subject as a real human which produces itself through acting in a very opposite way of its constitutive outside.

In the light of the Butler's concept of the *constitutive outside*, a new approach may referring to asexuality which functions as a constitutive outside to all sexual subjects may appear. In doing so, I would like to emphasize two important points for my argument: It seems to me that the concept of the humanistic subject creates itself through two important points: One of them is *to desire* which is deeply connected to the latter one: *to act*. It would be difficult to conceive a subject in a proper way without desiring and acting. To become an intelligible subject in the society, one should first desire and act. To go further, I would give priority to the desire which we have never imagined of its absence because when desire is taken into consideration, people always tend to imagine its freedom. However, the attempt to imagine freedom as a positive concept established through desiring and acting fails to see the freedom of not desiring/acting.

²⁴ Ibid.

The subtitle of this section, *Asexual Body As a Not-Yet Subject*, aims to remark the possibility for the asexual body to become a subject. Rather than intending to give a positive or a negative meaning to the fact of becoming a subject, I would like to express the fact that the asexual person, as a constitutive outside to all sexual subjects, has become more and more visible and has started to use its own discourse through identification. In doing so, it is aimed to investigate this identification process through names and point out the importance of the naming process. In that sense, two different positions related to the state of *not having any sexual intercourse* will be mentioned. On the one hand, asexuality will be considered as a neither positive nor negative positioning which does not explicitly negate or refuse to do, and on the other hand, anti-sexuality appears to be a clear cut positioning against sexuality.

2.4. THE WORD ASEXUAL

*“It started out as a feeling
Which then grew into hope
Which then turned into a quiet thought
Which then turned into a quiet word
And then that word grew louder and louder
(Regina Spektor, The Call)”*

It could be said that the word *asexual* has been used for a long time in the scientific field to define some unicellular organisms which reproduce themselves

asexually. However the use of this term for human beings is quite recent and is as young as the movement which emerged ten years ago. According to AVEN (The Asexual Visibility and Education Network) which is one of the most prominent organizations defines that *an asexual is someone who does not experience sexual attraction.*²⁵

There are not many researchers of asexuality. One of the few is A. C. Hinderliter, he claims that in asexual discourse sexual and emotional/ romantic attraction does not mean the same.²⁶ This leads us to the discussion about the difference between *physical and psychic love* which will be elaborated in the second chapter. In another essay on asexuality, *Reflections on Defining Asexuality*, Hinderliter also remarks that the other definition which finds acceptance in the asexual community is that *asexuals are people who call themselves asexual.*²⁷ This definition carries us to the *identification process* which brings along a few questions more about the *asexual subject*, such as: *Under which conditions a person becomes asexual? Do we need a name to become a subject of an identification process? Or after we realize that we are “not” something or someone, do we need an umbrella term to act or not to act in this case?* There are certainly more questions could to be asked but the aim here is to investigate the subjectification process of an asexual person.

At this point, it is very important to reconsider the subjectification process of the sexual body. Before I look for the traces of the sexual body in the second chapter of my study, I will refer to Foucault’s notion of the *technologies of the self* to comprehend

²⁵ AVEN. 2001, accessed July 2, 2012. <http://www.asexuality.org/home/overview.html>.

²⁶ A.C. Hinderliter, A. C., accessed July 2, 2012. «Asexuality: The History of a Definiton.» *Asexual Explorations*. <http://www.asexualexplorations.net/home/>

²⁷ A.C. Hinderliter, A.C., accessed July 2, 2012. «Reflections on Defining Asexuality .» *Asexual Explorations*. <http://www.asexualexplorations.net/home/>.

this process. Foucault claimed that the sexual subject had been forced to confess the truth about itself.²⁸ He named it and meant in doing so that human beings aim to develop certain knowledge of them and understand themselves as a subject through certain techniques.²⁹ As long as we want to know about ourselves and product our identities through this knowledge, our bodies are also shaped and also subjected to a repetitious production of bodies.

The asexual body could provide as a possibility to see how our bodies are constructed as sexual mechanisms which are at the same time resisting to this constructive discourse. Asexuality could also be seen as an instrument of resistance to this system which does not hold in all cases in our lives.

Another approach to the definition of asexuality made by another researcher, Anthony F. Bogaert states that:

“The definition of asexuality here concerns a lack of sexual attraction to either sex and not necessarily a lack of sexual behavior with either sex or self-identification as an asexual. Sexual behavior and sexual self-identification are of course correlated with sexual attraction, but, for a variety of reasons, one's attraction to men or women and overt sexual behavior or sexual self-identification may have a less-than-perfect correspondence.”³⁰

This remark is also very important in order to see the relevancy of a discussion about the *gender* of an asexual person. Indeed, if one preassumes that gender is constructed by sexual identities/orientations which are supposed to be determined by

²⁸ Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*, p. 224-30.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

³⁰ Anthony F Bogaert, “Asexuality: Prevalence and associated factors in a national probability sample,” *findarticles.com*, 2004, accessed July 2, 2012.
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2372/is_3_41/ai_n6274004/

sexual organs, then the gender of an asexual person would be undetermined, in the context of sexual and reproductive intercourse. Through the word asexual, we could also problematize the functions of so-called “sexual organs.”

Regarding the body and its perceptions related to gender identity, it is worth to remember what Judith Butler has remarked about the relationship body and its pleasures:

“If gender differentiation follows upon the incest taboo and the prior taboo on homosexuality, then *becoming* a gender is a laborious process of becoming naturalized, which requires a differentiation of bodily pleasures and parts on the basis of gendered meanings. Pleasures are said to reside in the penis, the vagina, and the breasts or to emanate from them, but such descriptions correspond to a body which has already been constructed or naturalized as gender-specific. In other words, some parts of the body become conceivable foci of pleasure precisely because they correspond to a normative ideal of a gender-specific body. Pleasures are in some sense determined by the melancholic structure of gender whereby some organs are deadened to pleasure, and others brought to life. Which pleasures shall live and which shall die is often a matter of which serve the legitimating practices of identity formation that take place within the matrix of gender norms.”³¹

2.5 A-SEXUAL, NON-LIBIDOIST- NON-SEXUAL, ANTI-SEXUAL

³¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of The Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 89-90.

I would also like to undertake the term *asexual* as a linguistic form which constitutes itself through the term *sexual*. I do not want to claim that the term *asexual* simply negates the term *sexual* –reasons will be explained –, and as an obvious negation I want to use the word antisexual.

In *The Semantics of English Negative Prefixes*, Zeki Hamawand studies English negative prefixes in the framework of cognitive semantics.³² He distinguishes two different types of negation in English: syntactic and morphological:

“Syntactic negation is the process of negating an expression by using negators like *no*, *not* or *never*, as in *She is not happy*, or words having negative senses like *hardly*, *rarely* or *scarcely*, as in *There is scarcely any coffee left*. Morphological negation is the process of negating an expression by adding affixes to bases. This type of negation is difficult to describe as it covers diverse processes. Affixes in English are of two sorts: prefixes and suffixes. Negative prefixes are lexical items that are added to the beginnings of bases to form words, as in the word *unhappy*. Negative prefixes are lexical items that are added to the end of bases to form words, as in the word “cordless”...English provides its speakers with a variety of such prefixes including *a-*, *ab-*, *anti-*, *contra-*, *counter-*, *de-*, *dis-*, *in-*, *mal-*, *mis-*, *non-*, *pseudo-*, *quasi-*, *semi-*, *un-* and *under-*.”³³

Hamawand rates the prefix *a(n)-* among primary negative prefixes which are *a(n)-*, *de-*, *dis-*, *non-* and *un-*. The negative prefix *a(n)-* is transferred from Greek language and is generally used with the words formed from Greek bases.³⁴ Hamawand

³² Zeki Hamawand, *The Semantics of English Negative Prefixes* (London, Oakville: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2009), p. 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

informs us about the meaning of the negative prefix a(n)- by separating it in four different ways:

“A) ‘divergent from the quality referred to by the adjectival base’: This meaning arises when the prefix is attached to gradable adjectival bases, which describe humans. For example, an amoral instigator is an instigator who does not have moral principles.

B) ‘unlike the quality referred to by the adjectival base’. This meaning arises when the prefix attached to non-gradable adjectival bases, which describe non-humans. For example, an ahistorical phenomenon is a phenomenon that is not related to history or tradition.

C) ‘without the thing referred to by the adjectival base’. The meaning of privation arises when the prefix attached to non-gradable adjectival bases derived from nouns, which describe entities. It is chiefly used in medical terms. For example, *acardiac* means without a heart, *acaudal* means without a tail, *aglossal* means without a tongue, and *asexual* means without sexual organs, without sex or without sexual desire.

D) ‘not adhering to the belief referred to by the nominal base’. The meaning of opposition arises when the prefix is attached to nominal bases, which imply abstraction. For example, an atheist is a person who does not adhere to theism, the belief that there is a God.³⁵

First of all, it seems very important to see, that in the entry C, by explaining the word *asexual* Hamawand does not take it as an obvious opposition but as a *privation* which is much different than the opposition. Indeed, privation designates a fact which

³⁵ Ibid., p. 61.

is mainly used in medical terms to specify the meaning *without*. In the case of asexuality it could mean “without sexual organs, without sex or without sexual desire”. Secondly, by saying that, it comes up for discussion about the history of the Body. To come into the open, this definition of asexuality pushes us to ask several questions: *What are sexual organs? What is sex? What is sexual desire?*

To explain my argument in a better way, I will undertake the other words used to describe the situation of distant positioning against sexuality. The second word is non-libidoism which is defined as:

“A nonlibidoist is a person who does not have a sex drive, and hence does not experience sexual urges or desires (and in particular, does not masturbate). Nonlibidoism is not equivalent to asexuality, since a large percentage of asexuals do have sex drives or libidos, but still lack any sexual attraction.”³⁶

As it can be seen, this definition differentiates sexual attraction from sex drives and/or libido which also enables to investigate the medical discourse. This medical discourse, I would argue, creates a mechanism by naming our feelings under the same roof and by creating these negations we do not basically subvert those identities. But in this case, as I have said before, it could be very useful to discuss the possibility of the absence of *something*. In his aforementioned essay, Hamawand examines also the prefix non-, and mentions four different positions which would be related to *non*:

“A) Failing to do the action described by the nominal base: non-acceptance

³⁶ AVENwiki, accessed July 2, 2012, <http://www.asexuality.org/wiki/index.php?title=Nonlibidoism>.

B) ‘not fulfilling the requirement described by the nominal base’: non-conformist

C) ‘different from the quality described by the adjectival base’: non-allergic

D) ‘devoid of the characteristics described by the nominal base’: non-problem

E) ‘resisting the action described by the verbal base’: non-iron suit”³⁷

A non-libidoist could be seen as *not fulfilling the requirement described by libidoism* and also as being *devoided of the characteristics described by libidoist*. This different situation allows opening a discussion about the *neutrality* of sexual drive/desire and practices. It is also very important to question at this point whether masturbation sexual or not. Can someone who masturbates be called as asexual or not? What kind of *drive* functions behind masturbation and other auto/self-sexual practices? At last but not least, if the body is a construction, how is that possible to stay out of this construction?

Hamawand’s comparison between the prefixes a (n)- and non- is also worth to be mentioned. To him, both of those prefixes are associated with the domain of distinction but each one represents a different side of it. ³⁸ The prefix non- shows that the described entity is not related to the thing specified by the base; it is merely descriptive and acquires contradictory reading. ³⁹ On the contrary, the prefix a- means *divergent form the quality referred to by the adjectival base*:

“It serves to show that the entity described is related to the thing specified by the base, but it is not willing to do it or have it. In this function, it is evaluative; hence the word it derives obtains a contrary reading. Of the two prefixes, non- is stronger in

³⁷Hamawand, p. 69.

³⁸Hamawand, p. 131.

³⁹Ibid.

expressing distinction than a-. A trawl through the data in the corpus and the Internet leads to the following key remarks. Words beginning with the prefix non- apply to areas of knowledge. Words beginning with the prefix a- apply to animates, including people and animals.⁴⁰

It is obvious that there is a strict difference between the prefixes non- and a- in the way they get closer to their bases. In the case of asexuality it is very important to notice that the prefix a- relates the negative words to the entity described but “is not willing to do it or have it.” It is also important to notice that the prefix a- is weaker in comparison to non- , to express a clear distinction.

The last word and prefix I would like to mention is “anti-sexuality” which is understood as an explicit objection. AVENWiki gives the following definition of anti-sexuality:

“Antisexualism is a belief that sexuality is wrong or should be avoided. It is distinct from asexuality in that it is a belief, whereas asexuality is a sexual orientation. It should also be noted that not all asexuals are antisexual, and not all antisexuals are asexual.”⁴¹

There is no need to say that anti-sexuality constitutes an opposition to any kind of sexual intercourse. Many different antisexual organizations have different objections, which can correspond for example to religious or feminist viewpoints, against sex. Sex is defined by a religious antisexual internet website as:

“... [e]verything concerning "sexual relations". That is, not only the act of copulation (either in "normal" or perverted form), but also what precedes it,

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ AVENWiki. <http://www.asexuality.org/wiki/index.php?title=Antisexual> (accessed 05 04, 2012).

accompanies it, or is aimed at it. (By "precedes or accompanies" I mean the components of the same process, not external events.) In a more specific sense, copulation without the aim of procreation."⁴²

The 'essential' difference between anti-sexuality and asexuality could be that antisexuals do not reject the fact that they have sexual attraction/desire/ drive.

At this point, it is meaningful to look back to Hamawand's explanations about the prefix anti-, in order to see the difference more clearly. According to Hamawand, the prefix "anti" has different meanings:

"A) 'reacting against the thing named by the nominal base': anti-discrimination slogan

B) 'opposed to the thing named by the base': anti-capitalist

C) 'displaying the opposite characteristic of the thing named by the nominal base' : anti-hero

D) 'preventing the thing named by the nominal base' : an anti-bacteria chemical

E) 'hindering the action named by the nominal base' : anti-freeze liquid

F) 'defending against the weapon named by the nominal base': an anti- tank gun"⁴³

He argues that there are two different ways of constructing a word with the prefix anti-. The first one aims to make a prototype opposition and the latter one

⁴² *ANTISEX*. <http://antisex.info> (accessed 05 04, 2012).

⁴³ Hamawand, p. 74.

expresses a periphery obstruction.⁴⁴ Anti-sexualism would belong to the category of an “opposition to the thing named by the base”.

Lastly, it is also very important to observe the difference between anti- and non-, which is also remarked by Hamawand. To him, the difference between them is due to the fact that they represent different domains in language: the prefix non- belongs to the domain of distinction meaning ‘different from the quality described by the adjectival base’ and implies absoluteness, whereas the prefix anti- belongs to the domain of opposition, meaning ‘reacting against the thing named by the nominal base’ and implies relativity.⁴⁵

In this chapter, my aim is two-folded:

Aiming to introduce a different discussion on sexuality through the question of a-sexuality, my first intent is to rethink a-sexuality instead of celebrating it. - This intent can be described as an attempt to “disclosure” sexual and/or sexual desire through the concept of *aletheia*:

“The ‘Being-true’ of the logos as aletheia means that...the entities of which one is talking must be taken out of their hiddenness; one must let them be seen as something unhidden; that is, they must be discovered. Similarly, ‘Being-false’ amounts to deceiving in the sense of covering up: putting something in front of something (in such a way as to let it be seen) and thereby passing it off as something which it is not.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.144

⁴⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 56-57.

The Greek word A-letheia(α-λήθεια) means primordial 'truth; truthfulness, frankness, sincerity'. Alēthēs is 'true; sincere, frank; real, actual'. There is also a verb, alētheuein , 'to speak truly, etc' (cf. XIX, 21ff.). The words are related to lanthanein , with an older form lēthein , 'to escape notice, be unseen, unnoticed', and lēthē , 'forgetting, forgetfulness'.⁴⁷

By using this definition of aletheia, I aim to show that I have the same intention by using the word a-sexuality, in the sense that a-sexuality appears to be a strategic word which can disclose the meaning of sexuality and reveal the body as a sexual object.

Secondly, the emphasis put on the linguistic side of the word makes it possible for the purpose of my study to relate two different positionings to sexuality with two different characters depicted in literature. Further off, in the third chapter of my study, I will examine Herman Melville's Bartleby the scrivener, who replies *I would prefer not to* when he is asked by his chief (a lawyer) to accomplish different tasks in the office, in the light of asexuality. The other literary character that will be discussed in the same final chapter in association with anti-sexuality is Kafka's *Hunger Artist* who performs the art of fasting in a cage. As someone asks the *Hunger artist* why he continues not to eat even after his performance has ended, meaning although he does not need to anymore, the hunger artist explains the reason of his fast: He is fasting because he could not find anything he likes to eat

⁴⁷BLACKWELLREFERENCE.http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?id=g9780631190950_chunk_g97806311909504_ss1-1 (accessed 05 01, 2012).

3. SUBJECT WITHOUT *OBJECT*

“No one is saved and no one is totally lost.”

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Phenomenology of Perception

In the first chapter of my thesis, I aimed to explain, by referring to Foucault, that the body has been constituted through several power operations and that it is a subject of and subjected to these operations at once. According to Butler, this process of subjectification also enables the emergence of an intelligible sexual subject through the constitution of abjected beings. Through Butler’s concept of the *constitutive outsider*, we have argued that the asexual body could also be seen as a constitutive outside of the sexual subject including abjected sexual identities like homosexuality. The explanation of linguistic meanings of related terms, such as nonlibidoism and antisexualism, has showed that there are different identifications to the situation of not having sexual desire or rejecting to have any sexual practices.

In this chapter, I want to discuss the probable relations between body/ desire and the subjectification process of an asexual person. If we assume that the humanist desiring subject is constituted through the desirable object, then, if there is no object to desire, how could we constitute this asexual subject? Could we use the asexual subject without object as a subverting means against *subject-object* dualism?

3.1. SUBJECT AND SEXUAL DESIRE

In the beginning of the first chapter, I quoted a passage from Foucault in order to ask the proper question about the subjectification process.⁴⁸ Foucault has remarked that we must first investigate how the subject has become an object of knowledge, at different moments and in different contexts. In that same essay, Foucault argues⁴⁹ that every civilization displays procedures to determine the individual's identity and that these procedures basically function through the acts of the subject who has to begin by knowing oneself. Starting with Plato's Alcibiades, Foucault claims that the concept of the "care of oneself" could be seen as an intersection of a history of subjectivity and an analysis of the forms of governmentality which can also be called *techniques of living*.⁵⁰ According to him, sexuality is not an adequate translation of the Greek word *aphrodisia* which is considered an application of those techniques of living and we should first consider sexual acts and pleasures not as repressed desires. Considering these techniques of living also makes it possible to see the connection between sex and subject⁵¹.

3.2. PLATO AND DESIRE AS A SIGN OF INNER LACK

The analysis of the constitution of the sexual desiring subject and acknowledgment and of the body/soul distinction, beginning with Plato's reflection on the subject matter seems to be a good starting point.

In *Phaedrus*⁵², Plato uses the chariot allegory to explain his understanding of the human soul: Plato argues that we can compare the human soul *to the combined*

⁴⁸ Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, p. 87.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John Madison Cooper (Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 1997), p. 530.

capacities of a team of winged horses and their winged charioteer. In that sense, he divides each soul into three parts: two parts have the form of horses and the third one has the form of a charioteer. One of the horses is white, noble and a *lover of honor with modesty and self-control*; the other one is black, ignoble and a *companion to wild boasts and indecency.*⁵³ Plato identifies the charioteer with reason (logos/nous), the white and noble horse with the rational desires (thumos, thymos), and the black and ignoble horse with the appetitive part of the soul (eros/eputhimia) which represents the irrational, corporeal and sexual desires of the body. According to Plato, if one wants to have a virtuous life, one must keep these horses in order and should not fall into the trap of irrational desires.

In the *Republic*⁵⁴, Plato refers to the three parts of the soul and argues that we have an appetitive part which regulates bodily desires, a spiritual part which regulates the “rational desires” of the soul desiring the good for the body, and finally a rational part which governs the soul to maintain a balance between the spiritual and the appetitive part of the soul.

In one of his latest works, *Philebus*⁵⁵, Plato asserts that in order to be able to have a good life, one must have to strike a balance between knowledge and pleasure. Desires, according to Plato, are always lacking in something: if one is thirsty and wants to drink, it means that there is a lack of water in the body. This lack also refers to the emptiness in the body, which moves desire in order to be fulfilled. To have a certain desire of something means to have a certain experience of desiring something. To have an experience of the pleasure engendered by

⁵³ Ibid., p. 531.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 1073.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 398.

fulfillment also means that one has an entry in memory related to these pleasures. Thus, there are true and false pleasures.

Another discussion related to the direction of desires takes place in *Symposium*.⁵⁶ In *Symposium*, Aristophanes argues that the original human nature is not like we know it. Instead of being two as it is commonly assumed, the numbers of sexes are three, namely man, woman and a combination of both which is embodied by the “Androgynous”. This androgynous man was round, his back and sides forming a circle; he had four hands, four ears and four feet, one head with two faces, two privy members. Then these three sexes tried to attack the Gods. To punish them, Zeus decided to diminish their powers, to cut them into two so that they shall walk on two legs from now on. As they belonged to each other, they would come after each other to be able to complete themselves, to recover and reach unity in their lives. Obviously, Aristophanes sees desires as a medium that connects the soul to what it is lacking. Plato, on the other hand, does not seem to agree with this conception, in the sense that Eros does not seek neither the half nor the whole but the good.

In the *Republic*, Plato distinguishes desires in four different categories of desire⁵⁷: Eros represents desire for someone, Philia represents desire for friendship with someone, Nomos actualizes desire for an intellectual companionship and Theoria represents desire for harmony with ideas.

My aim here is to open a window in order to observe how Plato construes desires of bodies which, in the final analysis, should be guided by reason and it would thereby seek what is good for the soul which is commonly incorporeal and

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 399.

immortal. Incorporeal should be understood as a desire for Truth, whereas immortal should be understood as a desire for leaving a permanent mark on earth by having children, writing important works...

The reason why I started with Plato's concept of desire is that I consider him the first major philosopher who has claimed that desire is a lack of something. Needless to say that here we do not have an adequate place to examine Eros entirely. Yet, it seems important to notice that Plato builds a connection between the means of body and the ends of the soul.

As Alan D. Schrift has pointed out:

“Whether rationalist or empiricist, whether ancient or modern, the history of philosophy displays a remarkable consensus among the views of those philosophers who discuss desire. While acknowledging the relative infrequency of these discussions, we must note that when desire does become the object of philosophical reflection, almost without exception it is conceived as the consequence of the lack of the object desired.”⁵⁸

As we have seen in this quotation, Western tradition of philosophy has generally tended to see desire as an act that always seeks to overcome its deficiencies. This idea that we naturally have deficiencies and that we should supply them prepared the way establishing certain binaries which continue to govern our lives and bodies.

⁵⁸ Alan D Schrift, “Spinoza, Nietzsche, Deleuze: An Other Discourse of Desire,” in *Philosophy and Desire*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 173-85, p. 174.

3.3. DELEUZE AND GUATTARI, PRODUCTIVE DESIRE AND THE “BODY WITHOUT ORGANS”

As it could be observed in the above-mentioned quotation, the act of desire has been conceived as an orientation to the lack of the desired object. However, as Schrift adds⁵⁹, the recent works of Gilles Deleuze have enabled another approach to desire:

“This other discourse supplements the discourse highlighted above by recognizing the productivity of desire. Where the philosophical mainstream has focused on the desideratum, the object of desire, as lacking, this other discourse focuses on the motivational force of the desiderare, the act of desire, as productive.”

60

Obviously this standpoint has been a crucial turning point in the history of Western philosophy which had mainly perceived desire as a lack of the desired object till then. Deleuze and Guattari argue that there are no desiring subjects but instead desiring machines:

“Desiring-machines are binary machines, obeying a binary law or set of rules governing associations: one machine is always coupled with another. The productive synthesis, the production of production, is inherently connective in nature: "and . . ." "and then . . ." This is because there is always a flow-producing machine, and another machine connected to it that interrupts or draws off part of this flow (the breast—the mouth).”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 176.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus-Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 6.

Desiring machines reproduce desire and desiring subjects as material products that are deeply connected to the other machines of capitalism and social life. By considering desire as a lack and by repressing desire, society reproduces itself. It could be argued that desiring-production is a capitalist tool which flatters desire. However, these capitalist power mechanisms are also part of this desiring production. Desiring production and social production complement each other.

As Schrift has remarked it, *to say that there is only assembling/ assembled desire also enables to refuse to personify desire and to think critical the idea that desire requires a desiring subject and a desired object*⁶²:

“... we make no distinction between man and nature: the human essence of nature and the natural essence of man become one within nature in the form of production or industry, just as they do within the life of man as a species. Industry is then no longer considered from the extrinsic point of view of utility, but rather from the point of view of its fundamental identity with nature as production of man and by man. Not man as the king of creation, but rather as the being who is in intimate contact with the profound life of all forms or all types of beings, who is responsible for even the stars and animal life, and who ceaselessly plugs an organ-machine into an energy-machine, a tree into his body, a breast into his mouth, the sun into his asshole: the eternal custodian of the machines of the universe. This is the second meaning of process as we use the term: man and nature are not like two opposite terms confronting each other—not even in the sense of bipolar opposites within a relationship of causation, ideation, or expression (cause and effect, subject and object, etc.); rather, they are one and the same essential reality, the producer-product. Production as process

⁶² Schrift, p. 179.

overtakes all idealistic categories and constitutes a cycle whose relationship to desire is that of an immanent principle.”⁶³

Desiring production produces and also abolishes these binaries and desiring machines are working *productively* when they break down:

“What would be required is a pure fluid in a free state, flowing without interruption, streaming over the surface of a full body. Desiring-machines make us an organism; but at the very heart of this production, within the very production of this production, the body suffers from being organized in this way, from not having some other

sort of organization, or no organization at all. An incomprehensible, absolutely rigid stasis” in the very midst of process, as a third stage: “*No mouth. No tongue. No teeth. No larynx. No esophagus. No belly. No anus.*” The automata stop dead and set free the unorganized mass they once served to articulate. The full body without organs is the unproductive, the sterile, the unengendered, the unconsumable.”⁶⁴

Deleuze and Guattari argue that desiring machines basically prevent us from having free flowing desires and push us to be organized. By referring Antonin Artaud’s poem:

“The body is the body

⁶³ Deleuze, Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus-Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 4-5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

It is all by itself
and has no need of organs
the body is never an organism
organisms are the enemies of the body."⁶⁵

They suggest a resisting point against desiring machines, a non-productive body which disorganizes the established functions of the organs.

The *body without organs* does not imply an opposition to the bodily organs; it should rather be understood as a denial and an opposition to the organism. The *body without organs* is opposed to the organization of the organs which is organism which is the organic organization of organs.⁶⁶

By emphasizing the fact that social production is libidinal and that libidinal production is social, Deleuze and Guattari claim that sexuality is not repressed but rather everywhere: *in the way that a bureaucrat fondles his records or in the way the bourgeoisie fucks the proletariat, and so on.*⁶⁷

Consequently, we see that Deleuze and Guattari treat desire differently the afore tradition of western philosophy, arguing that the concept of desire as a lack is a socially constructed notion, it is a social product which is for the benefit of capitalist production. This capitalist system of organization also reorganizes bodies and turns them into organisms. In order to resist this process, one must release the flows of desire

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

which have basically no agency or no any specific act of desire or no specific erotic zones in accordance with this capitalist desire production. This desiring process also enables individuals to become desiring subjects who do not reveal themselves only through sexual desire but also as a desire for power.

Deleuze and Guattari investigate the relation between body and desire by revealing that the body is not a mechanical organism which only desires in the case of a lack. Both make no distinction between man and nature or subject and object by stressing that there is no opposition between them and that they are instead one and the same essential reality.

I would like to discuss in relation to one of the foremost philosopher of phenomenology: Merleau-Ponty. While doing so, I should underline the fact that I am aware of the distance that exists between Deleuze and Guattari and phenomenology, as they also keynote:

“If we wish to have some idea of the forces that the body without organs exerts later on in the uninterrupted process, we must first establish a parallel between desiring-production and social production. We intend such a parallel to be regarded as merely phenomenological: we are here drawing no conclusions whatsoever as to the nature and the relationship of the two productions, nor does the parallel we are about to establish provide any sort of a priori answer to the question whether desiring-production and social production are really two separate and distinct productions.”⁶⁸

However, it seems important to think together desiring machines and the intentional character of desire in Merleau-Ponty’s reflection in order to go one step further and see how we could understand the subject without an object.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

3.4. BODIES OF THOUGHT ⁶⁹

In his book *Bodies of Thought*, Ian Burkitt remarks that, as we see it in the old saying *the body is the temple of the soul*, the soul is still thought as the nucleus of the self, ⁷⁰

Ever since the mind/body distinction made by Descartes, Burkitt argues, it is assumed that the essence of a person is strictly distinct from its physical presence and it could exist despite our bodies. While Burkitt criticizes the Cartesian body concept for being blind to the embodiment of a person, he is also suspicious of *social-constructionism*. He argues that we need a multi-dimensional approach to see both the material and symbolic sides of the body:

“... [w]e are not just located in the world symbolically; nor do we experience reality purely through text: instead, we are located in relations that transform the natural and social worlds in which we live. It is within networks of interdependence that we can effect the actions of other people and also change the face of reality.”⁷¹

This viewpoint enables to start emancipation from or a subversion of the Cartesian body and the socially -constructed body dualism, which also reproduces soul/body, mind/body or subject/object dualisms.

By using Foucault's *self-regulation* concept, Burkitt argues that Descartes' mind/body division transformed the body into an object of the mind which urges individuals to govern themselves.⁷² Descartes' discourse of the *narrated self*

⁶⁹ Ian Burkitt, *Bodies of Thought* (London: Sage , 1999).

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

⁷¹ Burkitt, p. 2.

⁷² Ibid., p. 19.

becomes the ground for all truths and consequently, for Burkitt, the world becomes something represented by humans:

“The human body, then, is both an object of knowledge and a knowing, sentient being; we sense, touch, feel, hear and see ourselves as individuals located in space and time, and so experience ourselves as a continuous being. However through relations to others and in the establishment of a relationship to our own self, we can see ourselves from a distance and also act and perform differently in different contexts.”⁷³

In the fourth chapter of his essay named *The Thinking Body*, Burkitt continues to argue that our own bodies have become the object and the target of knowledge and discipline; he claims furthermore that this perception of the body became the primary foundation of the knowing subject.⁷⁴

To move *beyond the opposition between realism dividing ontology and epistemology and extreme ontological scepticism found in different varieties of constructionism*, Burkitt valorizes Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the *active body*⁷⁵.

Before we introduce Merleau-Ponty’s active body notion, it could be necessary to be informed about the body concept of Husserl who is a pioneering figure in the tradition of phenomenology. This could be a starting point for a better understanding of Merleau-Ponty.

Husserl argues that “the body is the medium of all perception; it is the organ of perception.”⁷⁶ According to Husserl everything that we experience is related to

⁷³ Ibid., p. 61.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 67

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 74.

⁷⁶ Edmund Husserl, “Material Things in their Relation to the Aesthetic Body,” in *The Body*, ed. Donn Welton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 11-38, p. 12.

the experiencing subject and the body gives the significance spatial world to construct it:

“... [t]he body “is involved” as the perceptual organ of the experiencing subject, and now we must investigate the constitution of this Corporeality.”⁷⁷

This means that we perceive the world through body; it is a “bodily” perception, to use Husserl terminology “leibhaftig”. As there is no exact equivalent of the word “leib” in English, we must comprehend the meaning of the word in German. *Leib* is translated as “the lived body” into English and means living bodies differently than the “körper” which refers to inanimate bodies.⁷⁸

“The Cartesian paradigm can be said to eradicate the essential difference between the *Leib* and the *Körper*. The former becomes but a special case of the latter, one instance of the general class of physical things. The notion of “lived body” rejects this conflation. It holds the body of a living being has an essential structure of its own which cannot be captured by the language and concepts used to explain inanimate nature.”⁷⁹

It could be argued that by differentiating these two words, Husserl shows that “leib” constitutes another concept which is not a passive form of perception. In opposition to the Cartesian Dualism, Husserl argues points that the Leib – the living body- is quite different than the Körper which designates a physical system:

“Husserl explores the body’s fundamental role in perception and action. He argues that the body is ‘constituted originarily’ through the sense of touch (Ideas II,

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 24.

⁷⁸ Drew Leder, “Lived Body: A Tale of Two Bodies: The Cartesian Corpse and the Lived Body,” in *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Donn Welton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 117-31, p. 122.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 123

p. 158), and concludes that ‘a human being’s total consciousness is in a certain sense.... bound to the body’ (Ideas II, p. 160).....For the theme of ‘constitution’ runs through *The Phenomenology of Perception*, and the role of the ‘phenomenal’ body, Husserl’s Leib, is central to Merleau-Ponty’s account(Husserl’s Körper is of course Merleau-Ponty’s ‘objective’ body.”⁸⁰

In order to see how Merleau-Ponty construes his understanding of the lived body to go beyond Cartesian Dualism, it was necessary to see Husserl distinction which could be considered as a groundbreaking emphasis.

According to Burkitt, Merleau-Ponty construes *thinking* neither as *the product of disembodied mind located somewhere outside the material world* nor as *the result of a body reacting to its surroundings*:

“Instead, thought is part of the active relationship between humans and their world, so that prior to the Cartesian ‘I think’, there is an ‘I can’ – a practical cogito which structures not only our relationship to the world, but also the ways in which we think about it. Prior to thought and representation, then there is a primordial coexistence between body and its world, which grounds the possibility of developing conscious awareness and knowledge. Space and time are not something that the body is in, in the sense that the relation between them is distanced and intellectualized, but rather there is a unity between the body and space-time.”⁸¹

As it is expressed in this quotation, Merleau-Ponty sees the body as a “potentiality” which reveals itself in its existence not in its ability to think but in its potentiality to do. In that perspective, he enables us to think that we are not –as

⁸⁰ Thomas Baldwin, introduction to *Maurice Merleau-Ponty Basic Writings*, by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1-33, p. 25.

⁸¹ Burkitt, p. 74.

subject and object at once- strictly separated from each other but rather in a dialogue in which not only subjects but also objects are “acting” and “attracting”, and finally he tries to go beyond empiricism and idealism.

As Merleau-Ponty has pointed out in *The Visible and The Invisible*:

“It is in better understanding perception (and hence imperceptions)-i.e.: understand perception as differentiation, forgetting as undifferentiating. The fact that one no longer sees the memory—not a destruction of a psychic material which would be the sensible, but its disarticulation which makes there be no longer a separation (*écart*), a relief. This is the night of forgetting. Understand that the “to be conscious” = to have a figure on a ground, and that it disappears by disarticulation—the figure-ground distinction introduces a third term between the “subject” and the “object”. It is that separation (*écart*) first of all that is the perceptual *meaning*.”⁸²

If we go back to Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the body, in the light of his objection to the subject/object dualism, we can see that Merleau-Ponty evokes the body in a different way, meaning that we use our bodies to interact with the world which is no more an *outside* to us. In “The Visibility and the Invisibility”, Merleau-Ponty creates the notion of *flesh*, which expresses the idea that our bodies are made of the same flesh as of the world is and that our bodies are in relation with their environment. In that sense, our bodies are not only perceived ones, but they are also the *mesurant* of all.⁸³

⁸² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1984), p. 197.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 248-249.

Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that we do not only perceive things but also actively experience them. As we are living in a social world, our bodies also belong to sentience which is described by Burkitt as “the body’s sympathetic and responsive relation to its environment, which can be regarded as ‘mindful’ even though it is non-rational and pre-linguistic.”⁸⁴

In the fifth chapter of *The Phenomenology of Perception*, in “The Body in Its Sexual Being”, Merleau-Ponty claims that it is not easy to see the relationship between the embodied subject and its world as it is its own activity within the intercourse between the epistemological subject and object that transforms this relationship.⁸⁵ Merleau-Ponty argues that it is necessary to look at our experiences which attain their significance only for us, if we want to comprehend the birth of being. To be able to see how things and beings can exist, we should at first see how a thing or a being exists through desire or love.⁸⁶

As the world is comprehended by means of perception and through the body as a lived experience, it is the body that interacts with the world and other bodies. Sexuality is also, according to Merleau-Ponty, one of the ways of interacting with each other in the sense of the embodiment of subjectivity:⁸⁷

“Understood in this way, the relation of expression to thing expressed, or of sign to meaning is not a one-way relationship like that between original text and translation. Neither body nor existence can be regarded as the original of the human being, since they presuppose each other, and because the body is solidified or

⁸⁴ Burkitt, p.75.

⁸⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p.154.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 155-156.

generalized existence, and existence a perpetual incarnation. What is particularly important, is that when we say that sexuality has an existential significance or that it expresses existence, this is not to be understood as meaning that the sexual drama is in the last analysis only a manifestation or a symptom of an existential drama. The same reason that prevents us from 'reducing' existence to the body or to sexuality, prevents us also from 'reducing' sexuality to existence: the fact is that existence is not a set of facts (like 'psychic facts') capable of being reduced to others or to which they can reduce themselves, but the ambiguous setting of their inter-communication, the point at which their boundaries run into each other, or again their woven fabric."⁸⁸

Merleau-Ponty claims that there is an interfusion between sexuality and existence meaning that they disperse each other, which makes it impossible to determine for sure which decision or act is *sexual* or *nonsexual*.⁸⁹

Sexuality is understood by Merleau-Ponty as a form of original intentionality which refers to the embodied character of our perception and constructs an intentional relation to the object. Merleau-Ponty recounts Schneider's case, the story of a man whose brain had been injured during the First World War, and who because he had lost his *intentionality* was no longer seeking sexual intercourse:

"Schneider, and the majority of impotent subjects, 'do not throw themselves into what they are doing'. But absent-mindedness and inappropriate representations are not causes but effects, and in so far as the subject coolly perceives the situation, it is in the first place because he does not live it and is not caught up in it. At this stage one

⁸⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 166.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

begins to suspect a mode of perception distinct from objective perception, a kind of significance distinct from intellectual significance, an intentionality which is not pure 'awareness of something'. Erotic perception is not a cogitatio which aims at a cogitatum; through one body it aims at another body, and takes place in the world, not in a consciousness.⁹⁰

Burkitt points out that Merleau-Ponty's concept of the body does not include any pre-given bodily senses:

“He believes that sense data in themselves cannot be the basis of thought for there is no initial distinction between the senses, which form a primal unity in all bodies – a synaesthesia. Thus, the senses have to be differentiated and organized for them to have any meaning for us, a process that takes place in bodily action- in active perception. That is to say, a body that is active in the world brings together the senses in a coherent way, and the formation of habits plays a role in this process of perception.”⁹¹

Merleau-Ponty argues here that Schneider's perception has lost its erotic structure which is not instinctive but coextensive through/to perception. This means that we construe another body with its erotic zones. However, this connection does not occur in consciousness but in the *world*. Merleau-Ponty basically argues that Schneider is not aware of the world.

By emphasizing the concept of “inertia” the loss of initiative in general movements, Merleau-Ponty explains that sexuality is not an autonomous cycle and not *purely bodily*.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 156-157.

⁹¹ Burkitt, p. 75.

3.5. TOWARDS A QUEER PHENOMENOLOGY⁹²

It could be said that the tradition of phenomenology, from Husserl to Merleau-Ponty, has started to draw an ever-increasing interest among feminists and queer activists/ scholars.

Judith Butler argues that philosophers have tended to think about acting as what there is *to do* but not as an *ought to do* and that the phenomenological theory of “acts” expressed by Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Mead, has sought to explain how social agents constitute social reality through language and symbolic social signs.⁹³ Butler remarks that by undertaking the social agent as an object rather than a subject of constitutive acts, phenomenology opens up a new discussion about agent and constituting acts. Butler reminds that Merleau-Ponty has argued in *The Phenomenology of Perception* that *the body is an historical idea rather than a natural space* and claims that:

“...the phenomenological focus on the various acts by which cultural identity is constituted and assumed provides a felicitous starting point for the feminist effort to understand the mundane manner in which bodies get crafted into genders. The formulation of the body as a mode of dramatizing or enacting possibilities offers a way to understand how a cultural convention is embodied and enacted.”⁹⁴

⁹² Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁹³ Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (December, 1988): pp. 519-531.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

Another scholar, Sara Ahmed suggests a new concept which combines queer theory with phenomenology, *orientation*, which, she argues could form a common ground for studying these two different traditions together. Ahmed asks about *the meaning of being oriented* and claims that to be oriented also means *to be turned toward certain objects*.⁹⁵ She also asks *what difference makes towards “what” we are oriented* and adds that her interest in this question was motivated by her interest in *sexual orientation*:

“What does it mean for sexuality to be lived as oriented? What difference does it make “what” or “who” we are oriented toward in the very direction of our desire? If orientation is a matter of how we reside in space, then sexual orientation might also be a matter of residence; of how we inhabit spaces as well as “who” or “what” we inhabit spaces with..... What would it mean for queer studies if we were to pose the question of “the orientation” of “sexual orientation” as a phenomenological question?⁹⁶

According to Ahmed *bodies become straight by “lining up” with lines that are already given* and a queer phenomenology might to rethink sexual orientation by reviewing *the place of the object in sexual desire*.⁹⁷

After all above mentioned arguments we can firstly turn back to the title of this present chapter: *Subject without Object*. With this title I aimed to think the subject without a desired object therefore to rethink the unshakeable position of the desiring subject. In the first chapter, I have argued that an asexual person could be called a “not yet subject” in the context of a constitutive outside position to sexual desiring subjects. Precisely because *desiring* and *acting* are conceived as the tools that engender certain

⁹⁵ Ahmed, p. 1.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

forms of subjects by means of defining certain intelligible desired objects. As it pointed out, according to western philosophy, the idea of an *inner lack* has allowed the subject and the object to come closer to each other.

We have seen that Platon was one of the pioneering philosophers who thought that the act of desire should lead a person in any case to the object which the subject does not possess but should possess for its own good. This perception has created a deficient subject who has abjected physical desires that should be kept under control. This way of disciplining bodies has created certain processes that contribute to transform the bodies into hierarchic mechanisms.

Following this distinction between the desiring subject and the desired object, I have mentioned another approach to the relationship between desire and body which is quite different from the former accepted one. Deleuze and Guattari have proposed a critical standpoint to the conception of desire as a lack, and have argued that there is no certain subject/object relationship through the act of desiring: the subject-object is rather the one and only. According to them, the act of desiring is not something physical that happens at the level of consciousness, but rather a process of social production. The “Body Without Organs”, as they have pointed out, emerges as an opposition to the long -standing idea that claims that the body is a mechanical organism and the organs of the body should act in accordance with each other. This point of view could provide a very important opportunity to review the body as a desiring organism with certain *sexual organs*. As we are used to consider a person by taking into account his/her sexual identity and to acknowledge implicitly his/her sexual organs, the ambivalence of the “Body without Organs” has the power of disturbing us. The possibility to think bodies without sexual organs and without sexual desire makes

this body weird, indefinable and therefore disturbing. If one considers asexuality, one could see that the asexual body is not only a matter of sexual orientation or choice but also a matter of sexual identity. What I mean is that people become puzzled when they meet an asexual person because they are unable to give any meaning to their existence as if the asexual body does not *function* at all. This is the reason why I sorted out the “Body without Organs” with the asexual body as both do have body and organs but don’t turn those into an intelligible organism. In that way, both give the opportunity to rethink sexual organs and therefore sexuality. Is it sufficient to ask with which organs we have sex and to determine whether those organs are sufficient to define sexuality with view of the question, for instance, whether if masturbating is also a kind of sex or not?

At this point, it would be very useful to turn back to the discussion regarding desire and pleasure which occurred between Deleuze and Foucault.⁹⁸ In his article, Deleuze explains that the last time he saw Michel Foucault, the latter told the former that he could not bear the word “desire” even in the way Deleuze uses it. Foucault meant that the word “desire” evokes a lack in every case and that he would rather use the word “pleasure”. For Deleuze, however, it is the word “pleasure” that he can’t bear to use:

“But why? For me, desire does not comprise any lack; neither is it a natural given; it is but one with an assemblage of heterogenous elements which function; it is process, in contrast with structure or genesis; it is affect, as opposed to feeling; it is

⁹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, “Desire and Pleasure,” “eng7007.pbworks.” <http://eng7007.pbworks.com>. <http://eng7007.pbworks.com/w/page/18931081/DesireAndPleasure> (accessed 06 15, 2012).

"haecceity" (individuality of a day, a season, a life), as opposed to subjectivity; it is event, as opposed to thing or person. And above all it implies the constitution of a field of immanence or a "body without organs", which is only defined by zones of intensity, thresholds, gradients, flux. This body is as biological as it is collective and political; it is on this body that assemblages make and unmake themselves, it is this body which bears the points of deterritorialisation of the assemblages or lines of flight. It varies (the body without organs of feudalism is not the same as that of capitalism). If I call it body without organs, it is because it is opposed to all the strata of organisation, that of the organism, but just as much the organisations of power. It is precisely the set of organisations of bodies which will break the plane or the field of immanence, and will impose on desire another type of "plan" (*plan*), each time stratifying the body without organs."⁹⁹

As Judith Butler has pointed out, unlike Deleuze, Foucault rejects any pre-cultural notion of "true desire."¹⁰⁰

In my view, if we consider this discussion in the context of asexuality, I would prefer to use the word *pleasure*. Not because of the association between the word "desire" and the idea of lack but rather because of its association with *interiority*, which means that this word makes me think of an inner source producing desire. The word "desire" evokes a generally accepted ahistorical concept which could conflict with the construction of bodies as sexually desiring machines. For me, pleasure refers to the construction of bodies as sexual organisms and opens a way to resist and to subvert these mechanisms. It connects us to the world by fighting back the inner

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 219.

impetus. It reminds us that *our bodies are also made of the same flesh as the world and they are in relation with its environment*, as Merleau-Ponty has pointed out.¹⁰¹

The connection made by Merleau-Ponty between the body and its environment and the abolishment of the distinction between the subject and the object has invited me to explore his reflection. Merleau-Ponty's rejection of the Cartesian mechanical body which articulates itself as a *cogito* enables us to perceive Merleau-Ponty's active body which says "I can". In the light of Spinoza's *conatus*, Merleau-Ponty argues that the body should be seen with its capacities. This point of view makes it possible to think the body in its relational situation and to rediscover bodies without any dependency on the desired object. We can see the subject and the object not as they are heading towards each other but beyond this orientation. As they disperse each other it is impossible to make any differentiation between what is sexual or what is nonsexual. Nevertheless, we can observe that the notion of *inertia* refers to a pathological situation which simultaneously creates the notion of the *normal*. To consider the body as an agency that says "I can" means to ignore that see the body could also say "I can not". Schneider as a person, who would not interact, could not basically be categorized as being *abnormal*.

Last but not least, queer phenomenology, as an attempt to think intentionality, could also discuss the asexual body as a "not oriented" body which is not totally out of life, but rather interrelating people in different ways that we are used to understand, as *not bodily*. This opens a way for queer theory to rethink the concept of "orientation" and to invite another discussion on queer activism which seems to be based on the idea of the freedom of doing. By taking into consideration another form of activism that

¹⁰¹ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*.

fighters for the freedom of not doing, queer theory could show another side of sexuality which also *perceives not oriented bodies*.

4. “THE ASEXUAL BARTLEBY” AND THE “ANTISEXUAL HUNGER ARTIST”

if I do nothing

nothing does

Kerouac, Mexican Loneliness

In the previous chapters of my thesis, I intended to draw an understanding of asexuality as a term which already subverts celebrated sexual identities and transcends them. To my view, it is necessary to distinguish asexuality from antisexuality in order to emphasize the difference between two different positioning towards sexuality:

Asexuality and Antisexuality; the negative prefix a- does not belong to the domain of opposition but to the one of privation, basically meaning *without sexual organs, without sex or without sexual desire* in this context. As a clear cut opposition to sexual practices, it is better to use the word “anti-sexual” which belongs to the domain of opposition.

In order to clarify the situation that lies behind this distinction, I will undertake two different literary characters that respectively represent those two situations. Firstly Kafka’s *Hungerkünstler*¹⁰² will be considered as an *antisexual*, then Melville’s *Bartleby*¹⁰³ as an asexual character.

The reason why I want to make a connection between those identities and two literary characters is not only that they represent two different situations but they enable to put an emphasis on their positioning. In this study the word asexuality has been perceived as a transcendent term which could mean more than a clear cut refusal and this has reminded me the ambiguity of Bartleby’s formula *‘I would prefer not to’*. Antisexuality is considered as an opposition which does not reject the presence of the act of desire but the object desired and this makes possible to think this situation with *Hungerkünstler* who a desire to eat but could not find anything to eat. The most important point here is that to undertake these characters, enables to reach to the philosophers who considers about Bartleby’s formula and *Hungerkünstler*’s positioning in his life.

¹⁰² Franz Kafka, “A Hunger Artist,” in *A Hunger Artist and Other Stories*, by Franz Kafka (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 56-64.

¹⁰³ Herman Melville, *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street*, (New York: Melville House Publishing, 2010).

4.1. THE *HUNGER ARTIST* OR ANTISEXUALITY: TO REFUSE TO DO SOMETHING

I have forgiven Jesus

For all the desire

He placed in me when there's nothing I can do

With this desire

Morrissey, I Have Forgiven Jesus

Kafka's *Hunger Artist* will be under debate as a character which does not deny the fact that he has a desire to do/ to eat but basically prevents himself from eating. Kafka's short story depicts a *hunger artist* who fasts for living. This hunger artist travels from town to town and performs his "talent" to stay hungry during a long time

of period. In a little cage he shows his starving body to spectators who sometimes suspect him to secretly get a bite to eat. In order to observe him people charge a few butchers and this treatment makes him unhappy. At the end of his performance doctors come in and check his health status. However, as time goes by, the performance of fasting becomes old-fashioned and the hunger artist is left no other choice than to exhibit himself in a circus. After a while, a supervisor notices this beautiful cage and asks the keepers why it is still empty. Finally, they remember that the hunger artist was in the cage and then look for him. As the supervisor finds the hunger artist starving to death, he asks him when he is going to stop his performance. The artist wants them to forgive him and adds that:

“I always wanted you to admire my hungering,” said the hunger artist. “But we do admire it,” said the supervisor obligingly. “But you shouldn’t admire it,” said the hunger artist. “Well then, we don’t admire it,” said the supervisor, “but why shouldn’t we admire it?” “Because I have to hunger. I cannot do otherwise,” said the hunger artist. “Just look at you,” said the supervisor, “why can’t you do anything else?” “Because,” said the hunger artist, lifting his head a little and, with his lips pursed as if for a kiss, speaking right into the supervisor’s ear so that he wouldn’t miss anything, “because I couldn’t find a food which tasted good to me. If had found that, believe me, I would not have made a spectacle of myself and would have eaten to my heart’s content, like you and everyone else.” ¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Kafka, p. 64.

As it could be followed from the quotation, the Hunger Artist does not argue that he does not have any desire to eat, but instead that he could not find anything which tastes good to him in order to eat.

Therefore, the concern of the hunger artist is not the *act of eating* but the *object of the act*. We, as the reader, can assume that he used to be able to eat and that he was willing to eat but that in the meanwhile, he realized that no food was suitable to his taste. This is precisely the reason why the Hunger Artist gave up eating and that people thought that the one and only reason of his performance was *entertaining*. We cannot refuse that entertaining and performance were also involved to situation but the case depicted by the situation of the Hunger Artist can be considered as an explicit refusal and can open a further discussion about *basic needs*. How could one reject to fulfill basic needs by claiming that these needs do not satisfy them? Is this a rejection that could cause fatal consequences?

Deleuze and Guattari claimed that Kafka's "entire writings are a kind of fasting"¹⁰⁵. In their analysis, they proposed that "the anorexic body as an ideological refusal of the power operations applied to the body"¹⁰⁶. The anorexic body does not obey the basic rules like eating; by doing so it rejects the idea that the body is an organism which should desire to eat and fulfill this *natural need*. According to Deleuze, anorexia is a betrayal of natural hunger and could also resist to the subjectification process of the body:

"The point of subjectification is the origin of the passional line of the postsignifying regime. The point of subjectification can be anything. It must only

¹⁰⁵ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 20.

¹⁰⁶ Deleuze, Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus-Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p.

display the following characteristic traits of the subjective semiotic: the double turning away, betrayal, and existence under reprieve. For anorexics, food plays this role (anorexics do not confront death but save themselves by betraying food, which is equally a traitor since it is suspected of containing larvae, worms, and microbes).”¹⁰⁷

Deleuze argues that, in the light of the *Body without Organs*, an anorexic or fasting body is an attempt to resist to the consumption which is continuously reproduced by various ideological apparatus that a *healthy* body must be fed in a certain way, must use certain *organs* to be able to be a *perfect organism*.

In her essay named *Sex is Not a Natural Act*, Leonore Tiefer uses the term *The McDonaldization of Sex* by referring to the essay of the sociologist George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*. The title of George Ritzer’s essay refers itself to Hightower’s term “The McDonaldization of America”. This term emphasizes the standardization of food habits which is the consequence of post-war fast food industry.¹⁰⁸

Tiefer argues that *contemporary America is dominated by mass media which are also dominated by sex*:

“Every aspect of sex, gender, and reproduction is being transformed by globalization, technology, and longer life. Just look at how the new reproductive technologies are breaking down traditional ideas of father and mother and bringing babies into the world in completely new ways. But these social changes in sex, gender,

¹⁰⁷ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Brian Massumi (The University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2005), p. 129.

¹⁰⁸ Leonore Tiefer, *Sex is Not A Natural Act* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2004), p. 99.

and reproduction produce a lot of stress, as each of us, raised with one set of values, has to adjust to new ideas and life choices. Adjustment to such big changes in emotional subjects would be hard enough, even with help, background, information, a calm approach, and tincture of time. But too often adjustment and understanding about sexual topics are made practically impossible because they are approached in the spirit of sensationalism and polarization.”¹⁰⁹

Tiefer claims that sex industry is getting more and more popular and that it tries to teach people how a *normal standard of sexual life* should be. She relates this industry with fast food and remarks that the “McDonaldization” process of sex life tells people that a highly active sex life is necessary for a *good, happy, normal life*.¹¹⁰

Tiefer’s remark to the relation between food and sex industry, could lead us to the *Hunger Artist*: In Kafka’s novel, *The hunger artist* says that he does not want to eat anything because he found nothing which aroused his appetite. According to Deleuze, an anorexic could be considered as a resisting body without organs against the assumption that each body should be a perfect organism with perfectly functioning organs. The act of eating and sexuality seem to form the *vital connections* of the inside with the outside, assuming that these connections require certain organs.

Another scholar, Patrick Carnes brings sexual anorexia into the agenda of medicine. Carnes remarks that the specialists in sexual medicine noted that there are

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 100.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 102.

parallels between food anorexia and sexual anorexia.¹¹¹ Patrick Carnes defines sexual anorexia as *an obsessive state in which the physical, mental, and emotional task of avoiding sex dominates one's life.*¹¹²

This connection which is made between food anorexia and sexual anorexia can go as far as anti-sexualism. To my view, this connection could also be made between the hunger artist and anti-sexualism as they both resign to act by the desired object.

Anti-sexuals, different than asexuals, could accept the existence of desire which drives individuals to objects; what they reject is the attempt to obtain that desired object.

On the website of an asexual community, one can come across these questions and answers:

“Q. What do you call "sex"? How do you distinguish a sexual action?

A. 1) In the most general sense, sex is everything concerning "sexual relations". That is, not only the act of copulation (either in "normal" or perverted form), but also what precedes it, accompanies it, or is aimed at it. (By "precedes or accompanies" I mean the components of the same process, not external events.) In a more specific sense, copulation without the aim of procreation.

2) The criterion for sex is the presence of sexual arousal/pleasure at least in one of the partners, or just an intention to experience it.

Q. Why are you against sex?

A. Because sex is similar to drugs: It places primitive instincts higher than intellect, a

¹¹¹ Patrick Carnes, *Sexual Anorexia: Overcoming Sexual Self-Hatred* (Minnesota: Hazelden Publishing, 1997), p. 2.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

human being - a sentient being - turns into a primitive animal. The system of priorities suffers deformation. This leads to many nasty perversions of all kinds, including socially dangerous ones.”¹¹³

These questions and answers represent only one aspect of the situation. There could be a long list of antisexual agenda, such as, feminist antisexuals who reject every kind of sexuality by claiming that sexual intercourse builds power relations between sexual partners.

It could be argued that it is not right to mention that each antisexual approach is under one roof, but since the beginning of the study I accept asexuality as a position which is beyond common established binaries. This rejection of antisexuality aims the differentiation of asexuality from anti-sexuality that is necessary to subvert those binaries which are constructed on rejection or acceptance.

4.2. THE ASEXUAL BARTLEBY: TO PREFER NOT TO DO SOMETHING

Bartleby, the Scrivener is a character depicted by Herman Melville's in his eponymous book. Bartleby finds an employment at a law office. At the beginning he seems to be a perfect scrivener whereas the other scriveners of the office are trying to evade. One day, his employer and superior -the Lawyer- asks him to draw up a document but the reply of the hardworking Bartleby is rather disturbing:

“I would prefer not to.”

¹¹³ *antisex*. "http://antisex.info (accessed 06 03, 2012).

I understand this sentence as a quite ambiguous reply which goes beyond a total rejection as I use the term asexuality as a state of being beyond familiar *sexual orientations which does not claim that refuses intentionally to involve in a sexual intercourse but basically would prefer not to.*

Researcher Hinderliter points out that as “there is an ambiguity in the meaning of sexual desire, there is a problem with defining sexuality in terms of sexual desire”.¹¹⁴

“... [b]ecause many people who do not experience sexual attraction do experience some sort of “sex-drive,” but feel that it isn’t directed towards anyone. They may be completely satisfied (or even prefer) to deal with these desires by themselves, and so this desire is some sort of sexualish desire, and yet not desire to have sex. But for people who are not asexual, the experience of sex-drive that is often the motivation to masturbate is frequently closely connected with their desire for sex.”¹¹⁵

This remark shows us that there is a certain ambiguity in the meaning of asexuality which comes from its very ambiguous character. This ambiguous character is the reason why I choose this term. Another reason is to open a discussion about the other terms related to the word asexual.

In that perspective, Hinderliter handles another definition of asexuality: “Asexual: A person who prefers not to have sex.”¹¹⁶ Hinderliter quotes another researcher’s, Johnson’s remark on Bartlebly’s fomula by claiming that:

¹¹⁴ Hinderliter, “Reflections on Defining Asexuality,” p. 16.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

“There appear to be relatively few appropriate words in the English language to describe the individual who, regardless of physical or emotional condition, actually sexual history, and marital status or ideological orientation, seems to *prefer* not to engage in sexual activity. There appear to be relatively few appropriate words in the English language to describe the individual who, regardless of physical or emotional condition, actually sexual history, and marital status or ideological orientation, seems to *prefer* not to engage in sexual activity.”¹¹⁷

It could be argued that there is no coincidence in the fact that the aforementioned definition of asexuality and Melville’s character Bartleby use the word *to prefer*. It goes without saying that there is a *will* when one says *I would prefer not to*, but that there is also an inner contradiction which puzzles, confuses and *disorients* its audients.

This ambiguity could be a connection to think about Agamben's discussion on Aristotle's conception of *potentiality* through Herman Melville's Bartleby and to (re)think Bartleby. In the light of Agamben's discussion along with a new concept of community was introduced in Deleuze's essay on Bartleby which emphasizes an *unlimited becoming* .

Finally the study calls for a discussion of Jean Luc Nancy's concept of *Inoperative Community* with aforementioned concepts in order to find new ways to approach these concepts by touching on the contemporary discussions about *Asexuality*.

¹¹⁷ Myra Johnson, “Asexual and Autoerotic Women: Two invisible groups,” in *The Sexually Oppressed*, ed. Gorchros H.L. and Gochros J.S. (New York: Associated Press, 2007), pp. 477-507, quoted in Hinderliter, “Reflections on Defining Asexuality,” p. 17.

4.2.1. GIORGIO AGAMBEN: *ON POTENTIALITY; BARTLEBY, OR ON CONTINGENCY- THINKING ABOUT IMPOTENTIALITY*

Agamben opens *The Coming Community* with an essay named *Whatever*, in which he relates the word *Whatever* to *singularity* in its being *such as it is*:

“Singularity is thus freed from the false dilemma that obliges knowledge to choose between the ineffability of the individual and the intelligibility of the universal. The intelligible, according to a beautiful expression of Levi ben Gershon (Gersonides), is neither a universal nor an individual included in a series, but rather “singularity insofar as it is whatever singularity.”¹¹⁸

Agamben relates the word *whatever* with its *irreducible quodlibet-like character* and discusses it in the context of potentiality and possibility and probable meanings of “whatever” in this context:

“Of the two modes in which, according to Aristotle, every potentiality is articulated, the decisive one is that which the philosopher calls “the potentiality to not-be” (*dynamis me einai*) or also impotence (*adynamia*). For if it is true that whatever being always has a potential character, it is equally certain that it is not capable of only this or that specific act, nor is it therefore simply incapable, lacking in power, nor even less is it indifferently capable of everything, all-powerful: The being that is properly whatever is able to not-be; it is capable of its own impotence.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 2.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Agamben enlivens this discussion with more details related to *Potentialities* in the essay *On Potentiality*. He describes the subject matter of his work *as an attempt to understand the meaning of the verb can[potere]*.¹²⁰

According to Agamben, Aristotle considers “the existence of non-Being” and distinguishes two kinds of potentiality: “*a generic potentiality*, which is the potential to know of a child, and *an existing potentiality*, the potentiality of someone who has knowledge or ability, and the second one also refer to the potential to not-do and/or think.”¹²¹ Agamben argues that Aristotle also means -by potentiality- the *potential not to be*: “The potential welcomes non-Being, and this welcoming of non-Being is potentiality, fundamental passivity...Human beings are the animals who are capable of their own impotentiality.”¹²²

In *On Potentialities*, Agamben relates Aristotle's notion of Potentiality to Bartleby and argues that Bartleby is “*an extreme figure of the Nothing from which all creation derives; and at the same time, he constitutes the most implacable vindication of this Nothing as pure, as potentiality.*”¹²³

Agamben claims that our ethical tradition has often sought to avoid the problem of potentiality by reducing it to the terms of will and necessity. *But potentiality is not will, and impotentiality is not necessity. Bartleby calls into question precisely this supremacy of the will over potentiality.*¹²⁴ This is why we cannot assume

¹²⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities*, ed. Daniel Heller-Roazen (California: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 177.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

that Bartleby's potentiality is, therefore; unrealized, it is not a lack of will; on the contrary, it exceeds will of his own and that of others.¹²⁵

One of the most noteworthy argument of Agamben's essay is that *the scrivener's formula* suggests a third term that transcends both (to be or not to be) by using the word *rather*.¹²⁶

It is possible to make a connection between Aristotle's term of negative potentiality which designates a state of privation and the meaning of negative prefix *a-* which also defined as a prefix which reveals a state of privation in the first chapter. This could be another reason to connect Bartleby and asexuality through the concept of negative potentiality.

At this point it is necessary to analyse Deleuze's essay *Bartleby, or The Formula*, which is also referred by Agamben to its linguistic references .

4.2.2. GILLES DELEUZE: *BARTLEBY; OR THE FORMULA: A COMMUNITY OF CELIBATES: AN UNLIMITED BECOMING*

Deleuze pointed out that this formula *I would prefer not to* is quite strange and that it functions *as an agrammatical formula*.¹²⁷ In the beginning of the story, Bartleby's workfellows were refusing to use this formula by claiming that it is *queer word* and they would never use it. However, they started to use this formula towards the end of

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 255.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 259.

¹²⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (New York: Verso, 1998), p. 77.

the story, and this shows the *contagious character* of it: *So you have got the word, too.*

128

According to Deleuze, Melville's formula includes three operations: *the result of this treatment is to tend to constitute an original language within language; and the effect is to sweep up language in its entirety, sending it into flight, pushing it to its very limit in order to discover its Outside, silence or music*¹²⁹.

The word “outside” is very important to connect it to the *Outsider* position of Bartleby: this formula *stymies all speech acts, and at the same time, it makes Bartleby a pure outsider (exclu) to whom no social position can be attributed.*¹³⁰

Furthermore, Deleuze defines Bartleby as a “Bachelor” and adds:

“Bartleby is the man without references, without possessions, without properties, without qualities, without particularities: he is too smooth for anyone to be able to hang any particularity on him. Without past or future, he is instantaneous. I PREFER NOT TO is Bartleby's chemical or alchemical formula, but one can read inversely I AM NOT PARTICULAR as its indispensable complement.”¹³¹

It is crucial that Deleuze tries to think Bartleby's formula with his *civil status* and remarks his *condition* to be able *to not –be*. As Melville already stated, the community which Bartleby belongs to, as a *community of celibates*, refers to the emancipation of the individual from the father's law -the father being symbolically represented by the character and the status of the Lawyer in Melville's story-. This reference gives birth to a new man or to a man without particularities, to reunite the

¹²⁸ Melville, p. 70.

¹²⁹ Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, p. 72.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

original and humanity by constituting a society of brothers (and sisters) as a new universality.¹³² Deleuze calls this situation an *unlimited becoming* :

“A brother, a sister, all the more true for no longer being “his” or “hers”, since all “property”, all “proprietary”, has disappeared. A burning passion deeper than love, since it no longer has either substance or qualities, but traces a zone of indiscernibility in which it passes through all intensities in every direction, extending all the way to the homosexual relation between brothers, and passing through the incestuous relation between brother and sister.”¹³³

Deleuze tries to find an answer to the question : *how can this community be realized?*: He claims that this matter is already resolved by itself because *it is not a personal problem on the contrary a historical, geographic, or political problem* : “It is not an individual or particular affair, but a collective one, the affair of a people, or rather, of all peoples. It is not an Oedipal phantasm but a political program.”¹³⁴

Deleuze pointed out the fact that pragmatism would have been misunderstood if we had taken it only *as a summary of philosophical theory fabricated by Americans*. Pragmatism, actually, refers to a process and also to an archipelago:

“Pragmatism is this double principle of archipelago and hope. And what must the community of men consist of in order for truth to be possible? Truth and trust. Like Melville before it, pragmatism will fight ceaselessly on two fronts: against the particularities that pit man against man and nourish an irremediable mistrust; but also

¹³² Ibid., p. 84.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 85.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

against the Universal or the Whole, the fusion of souls in the name of great love or charity.”¹³⁵

In order to explain my aim to relate asexuality with Bartleby's formula, Deleuze's understanding of *community*- a community of anarchist individuals-, needs to be highlighted. Before we discuss Nancy's perception of community- it enables to imagine a community not only of being able to do/ be- but also of being able to not be/do which evokes the concept of singularity that suggests another way of connecting people out of identities.

4.2.3. JEAN-LUC NANCY: *THE INOPERATIVE COMMUNITY*: HUMAN BEINGS AS PRODUCERS

In *The Inoperative Community* Jean-Luc Nancy provides a discussion about the meaning of the word *communism* :

“(it) stands as an emblem of the desire to discover or rediscover a place of community at one beyond social divisions and beyond subordination to technopolitical dominion, and thereby beyond such wasting away of liberty, of speech, or of simple happiness as comes about whenever these become subjugated to the exclusive order of privatization...a place from which to surmount the unraveling that occurs with the death of each one of us- that death that, when no longer anything more than the death of the individual, carries an unbearable burden and collapses into insignificance.”¹³⁶

As it can be observed, Nancy's perception of *communism* endures to the death of each one of us thus, to the death of the individual, which is seen to be the atom, the indivisible, the figure of immanence. Human is defined by the communist ideal as

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

¹³⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor et al (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 1.

*producers, and fundamentally as the producers of their own essence in the form of their labor or their work*¹³⁷. According to Nancy, we cannot imagine a community of simple atoms and there has to be a *clinamen* which helps to incline from one toward the other, of one by the other, or from one to the other, therefore: “Community is at least the *clinamen* of the individual.”¹³⁸

The individual, as a figure of absolute immanence, is bound up with communism and collective totality and the term *ecstasy* is the answer to the “absolute impossibility of complete *immanence*: We should investigate the ways of the being-estatic of Being itself by retaining the difference between individuality and singularity:

“...Singularity never has the nature or the structure of individuality. Singularity never takes place at the level of atoms, those identifiable if not identical identities; rather it takes place at the level of the *clinamen*, which is unidentifiable. It is linked to the ecstasy: one could not properly say that the singular being is the subject of ecstasy, for ecstasy has no “subject” -but one must say that ecstasy (community) happens to the singular being.”¹³⁹

Death is the inseparable part of community and it is through the death of community's members, that *being-together* or *being-with* can be imagined. Because death is the only thing of which we cannot produce a work and without it community would not happen:

“...a project of fusion, or in some general way a productive or operative project -nor is it a project at all (once again, this is its radical difference from “the spirit of a people,” which from Hegel to Heidegger has figured the collectivity as project, and

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 2-4.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 4.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

figured the project, reciprocally, as collective - which does not mean that we can ignore the question of singularity of “a people.”¹⁴⁰

Nancy's perception of singularity does not refer to a process nor to a transformation: there is no process of *singularization*. It is a *groundless ground*, a *sharing of singularities*:

“It is not an essence nor, a substance.”¹⁴¹

Nancy uses Blanchot's concept *unworking* which refers to the “before and beyond the work”:

“This is why community cannot arise from the domain of the work. One does not produce it, one experiences or one is constituted by it as the experience of finitude... [unworking refers to that which] withdraws from the work, and which, no longer having to do either with production or with completion, encounters interruption, fragmentation, suspension...Community is not the work of singular beings, nor can it claim them as its works...Communication is the unworking of work that is social, economic, technical, and institutional.”¹⁴²

As a result of this chapter, I would like to emphasize the importance of the workless and “inoperative activity” concept which is expressed by Nancy and which gives me the opportunity to relate *inoperative community* with Agamben's arguments on *potentiality* and Deleuze's own conception of community.

As it has been argued in this study, it is not necessary to add a new identity at a time when we even discuss and put in question the relevance of the term

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 3.

homosexuality. By distinguishing Asexuality from Antisexuality, I would like to discuss the probable meanings of a struggle of being able to not-do:

Following the connection made by Agamben, between Bartleby and Aristotle's conception of *negative potentiality*, which points to the fact that a positive potentiality would be inconceivable without the negative one, it is arguable, in my opinion, that a discussion about sexuality without asexuality would be deficient. To be capable of its own impotence, to be able not- to be could be the being that is properly whatever and thus could imagine *singularity insofar as it is whatever singularity*. Even though asexuality seems to be paradoxical, for it struggles in order to be able not to do, it nevertheless constitutes an alternative movement which aims to be free to not to do *in the age of liberation of repressed desires*.

As Deleuze's does in his essay, to give voice to *not being particular* by saying *I would prefer not to*, is also crucial in a period in which all particularities are being flattered. To say that I AM NOT PARTICULAR could also mean: I am not after those particular identities to be a part of a community, or I am not trying to be something to be 'visible'. I do not exact a community. I do not try to be producer, a father.

This paves the way for a community, in which the determinant factor is not *to do* but rather *to be able to not do*. Individuals would be more free to incline toward each other.

Nancy's objection to the perception of the human being as a producer, enables us to argue that man is not a producer by nature, does not even produce desire and needless to say that he does not need to produce a certain form of sexuality, a child, a family... This approach brings me back to Deleuze's emphasis on *not being particular*. Because if we do not produce something, we would not communicate through those

products, which means that we would not need those *identifiable if not identical identities*, rather *clinamens*, which are unidentifiable.¹⁴³

Moreover, Nancy uses Blanchot's conception of *unworking*:

“Communication is the unworking of work that is social, economic, technical , and institutional.”¹⁴⁴

This opens us a way to think *desire* in the light of this conception of *unworking* : It could be argued that *unworking* is also as *undoing*, a means of unbeing or rather going beyond all types of being, identifying or associating. This could be also seen as a negative potentiality, through which we can negate the *sacredness* of doing and we can see that we do not need a certain definition of our bodily experiences.

We can consider Blanchot's notion of the *negative community* in the sense of a community for those individuals who do not have any community, a community without redemption, without principle, or foundation, and constituted by everyone else's death.¹⁴⁵ Where Blanchot rejects any kind of arche, it could be argued that Blanchot meets with Deleuze's perception of community -a community of anarchist individuals. As we are used to designate reproduction as the first and foremost duty of the body and if the body does not fulfil this duty it could be seen as a corpse. Therefore, I would like to complete this study by opening the discussion under the light of several questions: If we want to have a negative community which could be constituted by every one else's death, could we associate an asexual body with a dead

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 7

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 31

¹⁴⁵ Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris (New York: Station Hill Press, 1988).

body? Could asexual corporeality in its unproductive being evoke a corpse which could pave the way to the negative community?

5. CONCLUSION

In this study, I have tried to discuss asexuality as a means which could enable to rethink the meaning of the established sexual identities and sexualities; and show that the subjectification of sexual body made it impossible to see that the body is also able to not be/do.

I am aware of the fact that having written my study in English, and it could be assumed that this study belongs to an English-spoken area. English language has become a universal language that connects people in all over the world and constitutes them as desiring subjects. I would like to point out the fact that even if I did not want to universalize the understanding of asexuality, English language that I am using for this study enables individuals to organize themselves on a social, political level to perform the identities.

Ever since the moment I have decided to consider asexuality as a research topic, the *virginity* of this issue has preoccupied my mind: How did asexuality remain silent for such a long period of time during which, on the other hand, every kind of sexual freedom movement has raised and been organized? This question has led me to think that all forms of sexual identities were constituted by this invisible “constitutive outside” that asexuality represents.

Whether heterosexual or not, we have never been used to think the body without sexual desire or act. The body without sexual function would be an unintelligible one as if cannot reproduce and cannot be subjugated.

Sex and reproduction cover a major part in our lives and this requires certain mechanisms to control our bodies. Therefore, this dissertation could be seen as an attempt to open a discussion through asexuality about our daily sexual life. While the propaganda of sexuality occupies every single day of our lives, we could investigate and resist this propaganda with the means of asexuality, and ask ourselves if we really want “to do it”, meaning to conform ourselves to the established schemes of life and sexuality. We can ask ourselves if it is possible to perceive someone else’s body not only with its erotic meaning by trying to build singular connections. With the means of asexuality we could also rethink the sex/gender distinction. If we pursue this discussion in the context of asexuality, it could confuse our minds as we establish gender binaries on the genital organs or on the sexual orientation of the body. Asexuality offers a new opportunity to subvert the meaning given to sexual organs and to their functions.

Throughout this study my aim was to suggest the readers that there is another potentiality, a negative potentiality which gives a right to not to have sex and also, on a wider scale, not to conform ourselves to the established “program” of desire and being. I hope this study can be seen as a contribution to the questioning and to the opening of our limits in philosophy, to the rethinking of the body not only as a *potentia* to do but also as a *potentia of not to do*.

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