CHAPTER 12
IDEALISTIC CONVERSION

The subjective beginning of existential philosophies is reflected in the beginnings of many such philosophies. They often originate in or are ascribed to the views of a single founding individual or a group of only few. Existential philosophies rarely represent an amalgamation or collection of the viewpoints of many in their inception. In consequence of this genesis, existential philosophies tend to be heavily influenced by the individual experiences and the personalities of their founders. Their bias about the nature of happiness and about its workings is often quite obvious. Such philosophies regularly focus on certain experiences of pleasure, desire, pain, or fear over others. They also claim certain forms of pain or fear as more abominable than others and certain forms of pleasure or desire as more exalted, important, or rewarding than others. Their bias toward particular ways of happiness is usually accompanied by a bias against other forms or manners of pursuit.

The subjective origins of existential philosophies are bound to create results with limited or no shared applicability. The effectiveness of such a philosophy for any aspect of our happiness is questionable. The details of our personality and our circumstances may, despite all similarity, differ from those of the originators of such philosophies in significant ways. An existential philosophy might only contain a recipe on how happiness can be achieved for those individuals who share its premises on a particular topic or a range of topics. This might permit originators to establish a group of followers, an interest group, whose members share opinions and emotional attitudes about certain causes of happiness. Some of these causes may be important or even critical. Still, the remaining diversity of positions will likely cause persons who share one or more interests to disagree on multiple others. Individual differences may further result in disagreements regarding the intensity and modalities of pursuit for shared interests. This restricts the possible coherence among individuals even if they share certain interests. Thus, even under most favorable conditions, the systems established by idiosyncratic existential philosophies would have to leave supporters free to pursue their divergent interests independently or in other associations. To maximize happiness, we would have to be able to opt partly into or out of an existential philosophy depending on its correspondence with our individual situation. Such practice would create a system of modules, of topical philosophies that we might join to promote a particular item of pursuit and leave if they do not sufficiently promote our happiness or their purpose is fulfilled. A philosophy that

has our interests in mind or respects these interests will admit its limitations. It will concede us the freedom to contemplate and debate its principles so we can decide whether and to what extent they benefit our pursuits. Although it may publicize its knowledge, it would leave it to us whether and to what extent we follow its teachings. It would grant individuals the privilege to join and depart without compulsion.

That idiosyncratic existential philosophies may not take such a liberal position demonstrates that their promoters desire to take advantage of others by having them subscribe to their philosophy. Such an attitude may develop from a variety of positions. As promoters of a philosophy, we may be interested in assisting other individuals. Their survival and thriving may satisfy or help to satisfy some of our needs. We may desire that individuals for whom we care adopt philosophies that we have learned to acknowledge as helpful or necessary to maintain, increase, or maximize our happiness or that we deem to be beneficial for these individuals. This may motivate us to overcome their resistance to the acceptance of such philosophies. However, because the happiness of such individuals is our objective, we may be sensitive to the question whether and to what extent the imposition of a philosophy on them promotes that happiness. We may ask whether assisting others to develop their own philosophy based on their particular conditions might yield better results. But we may reserve our interest in the happiness of others and related scruples toward the imposition of a philosophy to a relatively small number of individuals. Our desire to impose a philosophy on others may also spring from the fact that our pursuit of happiness intersects in further contexts with the pursuits by other individuals. We may determine that we need the cooperation of others for the fulfillment of our needs or that we suffer from their interference with our pursuits. That other individuals pursue happiness and that we need to deal with their pursuits while pursuing ours complicates our planning considerably. We have to consider and include into our plans that other individuals possess diverging ideas regarding their happiness and that their schemes may detract from our pursuits. The benefits we desire may be conditioned upon the subscription of a sufficient number of other individuals to a compliant philosophy.

Our philosophy may find sufficient assistance from individuals whose interests are aligned with our interests. If a philosophy is formulated to benefit a particular group of beneficiaries, their assistance may be expected. Yet the number of individuals whose compliance or noninterference would be necessary or useful often exceeds the number of individuals to whom that philosophy applies. We can try to address the potential interference and lack of protection and support by

other individuals through the threat or exercising of adverse activities. Still, in an interactive system, other participants may try to compel us to curb our interests and to promote their interests as well. Even if they do not take an aggressive stance, they may try to defend their interests and independence, recoup their losses, or obtain retribution. This places us at risk of confrontation and not being able to maximize our happiness because of strife or the pall of its continuing potential. We may therefore determine that we can better advance our needs if we avoid the application or threat of adversarial activities concerning others. To make a philosophy function without compulsion, we might resort to manipulation. We may deceive others about our intent to use them so we can extract means for our pursuit of our happiness from or through them. We may conceal or misrepresent our activities against their interests to avoid their defenses and to obtain and secure means from them or otherwise at their cost. Conversely, we may be subjected to attempts by others to manipulate us for their benefit. The discovery of manipulations creates a high risk of repercussions because victims and those in solidarity with them may take protective, retributory, or corrective action. That action may take similar forms as a reaction to coercion. The ensuing risk of conflict makes the pursuit of happiness through manipulation seem antithetical to our goal of improving our happiness. In consideration of the risks of coercion and manipulation, we might not be certain that we can gain and maintain our advantage in such competition. We might doubt whether we can prevent significant repercussions from defensive reactions to our impositions or our endeavors in defending ourselves. Alone the preparatory and preventive preoccupations and barriers we and others maintain may severely restrict our potential. We may realize that coercion and manipulation are not the most effective or efficient manners to advance our happiness. To maximize our happiness, it seems necessary that we arrive at a better arrangement with others that renders their behavior compliant with our wishes. Such an arrangement appears possible if we could convince others to act voluntarily in ways that advance our interests. We may convince others to serve the interests of our happiness in a more secure manner if we can convince them that doing so will serve their happiness as well and if such a conviction is based in fact.

To that end, we will have to devise a philosophy for those individuals whose compliance with our requirements we desire and convince them that this philosophy applies to them. We may have a philosophy that cannot permit others to pursue happiness in the same way or must reserve certain portions of activity if we are to succeed in our objectives. To motivate others to protect and support such a sys-

tem of our philosophy and keep them from interfering would require that others follow a compliant but different philosophy. Such a mode of coexistence would confront us with considerable complexity. We would have to build and maintain a philosophy for ourselves and at least one other philosophy, or a more restricted philosophy, for those whose submission we require. It seems unlikely that such a dual system of beneficiary and subservient philosophies could remain stable, particularly if it is openly employed. It still would take advantage of the pursuits of certain individuals to facilitate the pursuit of happiness by the beneficiaries of the system. A dual system may allow for some fulfillment to those who cater to the privileged group's fulfillment of needs. But it is instituted with the primary objective of securing the integrity of privileged pursuits. This inequity threatens to expose an auxiliary existential philosophy devised for such purpose as a sham.

If the ability of subservient individuals to produce happiness for themselves under that auxiliary philosophy is significantly lower and such individuals become aware of that fact and the difference in philosophies, they might question their philosophy. They might ask why there should be separate philosophies. This would lead to the question whether the philosophy devised for the subservient class by the privileged reflects the best manner of pursuing the happiness for subservient individuals. They might deem themselves better served by adopting the philosophy of the privileged class or a third philosophy. These considerations may arise even if a dual system seems to provide sufficient means to members of the subservient class. The philosophy that benefits overproportionally from the protection, support, and noninterference by the subservient class might still appear to be preferable, inducing subservient individuals to adopt that philosophy. However, because the privileged philosophy relies on generating compliance by others according to a different set of rules, the accession of others to the same philosophy would render them competitors for privilege. Beyond that, such accession threatens to leave an insufficient quantity of individuals in the service class to adequately cater to the needs of the privileged. Accessions into the privileged class would create the interferences and the failure of protection and support that the system was built to avoid. They would threaten to make the continuing existence of the privileged class impossible. When the inherent instability of a dual system comes to bear, the privileged class of such a system might harden its interior boundaries by coercion or manipulation. If such attempts are unsuccessful, a dual system may give way to the pursuit of independent philosophies. Such a mode of relating to others may succeed in the form of a cooperative or independent coexistence. It may

also deteriorate into a competitive struggle of philosophies or unprincipled, topical pursuits. Privileged individuals in a dual system may try to foreclose the destabilization of their system by concealing its dual nature as much as possible. They may attempt to hide their subscription to a different or a supplemented philosophy compared to the philosophy they employ in motivating others to cater to them. Yet maintaining this illusion may require restraining contortions by the privileged and a considerable investment of resources into control measures. Moreover, such a system would still carry the hazard of exposure and severe harm to the privileged upon the discovery of their fraud.

If we wanted to avoid the considerable complexities, fragilities, and risks of a dual system entirely, we might fashion one philosophy that is geared to apply to the entire system. The organization of a system according to one philosophy does not necessarily mean that such a system must be peaceful. Even if all members of a society shared the same philosophy, that philosophy might permit or encourage them to prey upon or to otherwise abuse one another. The philosophy might approve total freedom in that undertaking, or it might subject behavior to certain rules. It might sponsor the same right of all members to pursue their needs even if that pursuit damages others. Some individuals might secure desired advantages by leveraging relative strengths. However, the threat of conflict and deprivation may cause even them to lose confidence that they could maximize their concerns in such a system. To pacify such a system, it must be effective for the advancement of all its members. This requires that we reconcile the behavior of individuals. Motivating others to abstain from interfering with our pursuits and to instead assist in our pursuits entails that we relinquish attempts to obtain overproportional benefits and that we practice mutuality. As we expect others to protect and support our pursuits and to abstain from interfering with our happiness, we have to do the same in return. Such a single philosophical system of mutuality appears to carry a potential of providing some benefits to us. But it also appears to require us to give up the exclusive pursuit of our interests to the extent they would unduly infringe on other individuals' legitimate pursuits. Commitment to the mutuality of protection, support, and noninterference involves the principle of equality in what individuals can demand from one another because they can only call for what they are willing to give. Such a system may require that members compromise what would make them happiest for the sake of securing a stable level of happiness below the perceived maximum potential. This poses the question whether the sacrifices required in a compromise of an individual existential philosophy to include others are worth the benefits.

This question may be difficult to answer for us even if a system of mutuality works flawlessly. The difficulty may be attributable to our inability or unwillingness to test alternative systems or to develop our own philosophy. As a consequence, we might lack the competence to tell whether we would fare better in a mutual system, a system of duality, or in another system. Depending on our personality and circumstances, we may estimate the success of our participation in a system posited by an existential philosophy differently. If we believe that we are vulnerable, we may deem our chances improved if we are part of a unified system based on mutuality or another form that provides protective and supportive structures and processes. If we consider ourselves cunning and influential enough, we may think that we can fare better in a dual or in an unregulated single system. To bring about the same effect without the formal institution of a dual or a liberal single system, we may modify our participation in a mutual system. We may try to achieve the benefits of the system without honoring our obligations to the system. We may only pretend to be constructive participants and manipulate the system so we draw more benefits than others. Such deviations, if they are sufficiently pervasive or severe, may translate a mutual system into a dual system that institutionalizes an imbalance surreptitiously. Beyond that, we may perceive ourselves to be so powerful that we would have a better chance of obtaining happiness without being tied to any system, rules, or parameters. We may therefore promote the absolute freedom of individuals to pursue happiness according to their own philosophy or without a philosophy.

Individuals may form and change features of their personal philosophies as the fulfillment level for their needs fluctuates and as they deem themselves more or less capable to compete successfully and secure advantages over others. These and other assessments may be only partly based on examinations of facts and their logical development. They may also be founded on emotional factors. In addition, individual philosophies may contain a strong aspect of speculation about past, present, and future circumstances. That speculation may hinge on incomplete indicators or indications may be ignored, insufficiently understood, or misinterpreted. These aspects may condition individuals to create inapplicable philosophies of their own or to deem inapplicable external philosophies appropriate for them. A lack of applicability should naturally limit the maintenance and spread of an idiosyncratic philosophy. To the extent individuals have built their own philosophy, they might adjust it relatively easily to their deviating experiences. Adjustments may be more challenging if we are caught in a philosophical system. As reality catches up with and disproves mistaken approaches,

discredited philosophies should cease to attract individuals. This outcome would seem to be unavoidable even if proponents apply deceptions to mask the subjectivity of their views. Existential philosophies that involve others are destined to reveal their feasibility through the compatibility of developments. Only, despite that inevitable clarification, the complexity and scale of activities that are claimed to result in happiness may delay the emergence of convincingly positive or negative effects and may thus intensify their possible detriment. Inapplicable existential philosophies may also be hard to shed if their principles have permeated our environment. The harm they may cause until and after disillusionment sets in may therefore be devastating.

The threat external existential philosophies pose for our happiness should render us suspicious and disinclined to adopt them. However, such considerations may not overcome our inclination to trust external philosophies. That inclination may be founded on instinctive mechanisms by which we adopt philosophies from our caretakers. We may be genetically or environmentally programmed to imitate and assume their behavior and underlying mental processes. We may also be programmed to fit ourselves into the social order of our environment as well as the actualities of our environment generally. These acquired manners of pursuit merge with our genetic programming that already instructs us how to behave as a matter of instinct. Hence, the idea that we develop an initial existential philosophy of our own as a matter of our consideration appears to be a fiction. We are or become generally conditioned to pursue our needs in a set way and to regard these pursuits as attending our happiness. Our genetic and acquired instinctive mechanisms condition us to evaluate these matters according to their signals of pain and pleasure. It is only within these presets and their mandates and restrictions that we begin to develop our own considerations about happiness. Our philosophy may not be adequately developed because of our unreflecting familiarity with our genetic and acquired instincts. We may not reflect much on our needs or instinctive formulas for pursuit and whether they are in our interest. Our lack of reflection may cause us to seek solutions in technical inquiries to improve our happiness. Because our needs seem to have already decided what will make us happy, it appears legitimate that we concentrate on the creation of means and develop and harness technology in an effort of fulfilling our needs more effectively and efficiently. Such advancements cannot give us purpose. It cannot uncover for us what we want, what would satisfy us and make us happy. All technical issues we pursue are subordinated to answering his question. Nevertheless, a technical stage may be vital in advancing our cognizance of our needs. As

we become more astute in pursuing and fulfilling needs, that capacity and its application contrast our relative lack of knowledge what those needs are, how they interrelate, and that their automatic guidance of our behavior might not optimize our happiness. That realization may motivate us to fill our void in knowing what will make us happy. We may attempt to develop guidance on our own by referring to our experiences and explorations. We may also look to external sources or allow them to inform us at their initiative. While we may derive some guidance from such personal and external references, they may omit or misaddress important features of our desires. As long as we can arrange a tolerable way of living, we may console ourselves. We may not believe that a more useful philosophy might exist or that it would warrant the additional efforts that might be necessary to bring it to fruition. Because our philosophies are the result of genetics, instruction, and other circumstances that have fused into cultural traditions, habits, and our setting, we might not question them. Significant segments of our generated or adopted philosophies might be dedicated to vindicating why they do not enable more happiness. Then again, as long as we perceive deficiencies, we may search for or be open to remedies.

In these permutations, our genetic, acquired, and other personal and environmental circumstances determine the extent of our individual forays compared to our acceptance of external influences in our considerations. Yet, even if we are independent-minded, we are prone to be overwhelmed by the difficulty of developing our own existential philosophy. In the absence of a philosophy that reveals and speaks to our wishes and needs and helps us respond to them with knowledge, we may try to fill our lack of confidence with external help. Even if we recognize the necessity of individual trials, we may see ourselves unable to go forward with them. The pervasive impact of our idiosyncratic needs on our happiness would require us to intensely and broadly engage in trials to find better let alone ideal ways of satisfying our needs. Further, we may not have sufficient clarity about our existential needs and their requirements, their interaction, or the relation between idiosyncratic and existential needs. Considering the scope of our insecurities, we may not consider personal trials a feasible option to improve our pursuits, except perhaps in some circumscribed areas that may be mostly of a technical nature. We may claim to possess neither the necessary resources nor a competent plan to undertake the extensive discovery that appears to be indicated. We may fear that our trials might overwhelm us, not appropriately reward us, or trigger adversities. We may presume that the adoption of external philosophies may give us reprieve from personal trials. We may prefer subscribing to an already

implemented philosophy in search for predictability. To gain a measure of happiness under the purportedly thought-out scheme of such a philosophy, we may be willing to compromise some of our pursuits.

In our search for reliable guidance, we may disregard scientific speculations by because they disclose their premises and the speculative character of their concepts. Their lacking assurance and our aversion against experiments may inspire us toward nonscientific philosophies that seem certain in their claims. We may follow them provided that they can deliver a trustworthy impression on us, manage contradictory evidence, and give us sufficient indications regarding the reliability of their advice. They might achieve this in part by surrounding speculative claims with claimed corroboration and by making claims of resolution that, while they cannot be proved, also cannot be readily disproved. We may accept their unproven representations and speculations because we want to believe them. Our desire to find solutions to our fear and pain focuses on them because we see no other or better way to improve or even maintain our happiness. This voluntary investment of belief may be complemented by assertions of such philosophies that their teachings must be unquestioningly accepted if we are to benefit from them. These self-inflicted and external indoctrinations may subdue our critical thinking. We may allow them to dispel doubt, inconsistencies, and failures not only by externalizing blame but also by creating imaginary present of future adjuncts to our world in which they claim all problems are or will be resolved. That removal of issues from reasonable consideration may afford them with a position of unassailability no matter how nonsensical their averments may be.

Notwithstanding, this strategy alone may not suffice to keep us enthralled if our dissatisfaction is not resolved or increases under their leadership. To entrench and preserve their position, nonscientific existential philosophies may resort to proven practical strategies that may exist independently of them. They may take up popular objectives and pursuits that are already successful and confer upon them philosophical legitimization. This may make them and their ideas seem to be the source for the prosperity to which they attach a philosophical expression. They may also incorporate proven aspects of scientific existential philosophies and claim such concepts to have been authored by them. They may further set forth some valid practical advancements of their own. The collection, reiteration, and possible advancement of insights by such philosophies may appear unobjectionable past possible claims of plagiarism. But such a practical philosophy might be illegitimate for several other interrelated reasons. It may constrain its followers' considerations to a limited focus dedicated to the fulfillment of proximate

needs and wishes. This might forestall individuals from developing a more comprehensive philosophy. The extensive, familiar fulfillment of needs within the confines of the philosophy may make it seem largely unnecessary to develop additional insights. That lack of coverage may lead to manners of pursuit that benefit subjects in some respects but damage them in other respects and ultimately even the concerns that appear to be the focal points of such a philosophy. A limited practical philosophy may render subjects of that philosophy prone to manipulation because they may be merely aware of some needs and distracted from others. If concerns not addressed by such a practical philosophy break through in subjects' minds, they may needlessly suffer because of a systematic disregard for such concerns. Even if individuals realize that such a philosophy does not represent all of their aspirations, they may not want to jeopardize its successful representation in the areas it covers. Such an appreciation and reluctance may leave an incomplete practical philosophy intact and its supporters with dispersed and incomplete philosophical views on issues they deem or are made to believe to be collateral. They may accept that it is upon them to find answers in supplemental or individual philosophies in harmony with the principal practical philosophy that seems to secure their existence.

However, the limitation of its scope may also translate into unrest that may affect the stability of its established aspects. To keep the effects of needs they cannot or refuse to cover at bay, practical philosophies may propound reasons, possibly comprising otherworldly satisfaction, why such needs cannot or should not be pursued or met, even if such claims were not the origin of such a philosophy. But nonscientific philosophies that originated in notions of belief may use the convincing power of incomplete practical philosophies as well to instill or reinforce allegiance to their beliefs. The trust individuals extend to a philosophy that seems to reflect and resolve many or all of their basic existential concerns may motivate them to trust its speculative aspects that exceed these concerns. Its practical basis may constitute a lure to make them accept speculation. Such mechanisms, whether intentionally or coincidentally installed, may use both belief and proven aspects to gloss over doubt, inconsistencies, or failures. More than that, they may detract us from exploring and proving aspects that do not agree with their dogma. They might even have us renounce insights we have already confirmed. They may remove aspects of our life from our consideration. Nonscientific speculative philosophies may therefore arrest and reverse our progress as individuals and as a species. Their combination with scientific speculative and practical philosophies may render such detrimental philosophies difficult to discern or fight.

The delinquencies that allow belief-based and incomplete existential philosophies to gain influence and persist appear to be caused and advanced by our lack of determination to fully develop our philosophy. Our absence of insight that such a development is possible or even missing may prompt us to approach philosophical matters largely as a task of interpretation under guiding philosophies or of topical treatment that is overshadowed by the organized import of the philosophies we adopt. Their domination may contain our dissatisfaction for some time, and we may find adequate outlets for our frustrations. Yet, as we stall, the pain of unfulfilled or underfulfilled needs advances. Our lack of relief may eventually sway us to engage in experiments that the speculative nature of belief-based philosophies and the open issues of incomplete existential philosophies suggest. Our unresolved pain may reach states where we fail to limit efforts to carefully paced and limited experimentation. It may force us to engage in increasingly tenuous and hazardous speculations and enactment adventures. This willingness may be used and channeled by the claimed coverage of belief-based philosophies that might even have caused our desolation. It may also have us fall prey to other nonscientific philosophies.

In deciding whether and to which extent we should follow external philosophies, we weigh our pain and fear about current nonfulfillment and our apprehension regarding our engagement in our own trials against concerns about following a philosophy. Misinformation or lacking information about philosophies as well as misconceptions about personal trials we would face and the intensity and scope of our future deprivations may sway us. We may further evaluate our capacity to improve our happiness independently as inferior because of our apparent disability to remedy undesirable conditions and because we discount our ability to formulate alternative strategies. Our purported knowledge of our dissatisfactory capacity and prospects may seduce us into adventures to rise above our deprivation by investing in the relative unknown of an external philosophy. The inducement to follow a philosophy grows with rising pain or fear in unfavorable circumstances. Yet, even if we merely believe that our experiences do not present the most happiness that we can achieve regarding a need or a range of needs, we may give a philosophy that promises to improve our happiness a try, provided we do not believe there is a prohibitive downside. Our search for ways to increase our happiness may render us open to existential philosophies that we presume to hold sufficient promise in providing them. If they contain no features that clearly signal incompatibility or other trouble, we may be willing to invest some trust and effort even if the indication that they might assist us is slight.

We may be susceptible to impressions that others have brought or can bring talents, insights, and implements to bear that exceed our reach, that they can observe the world in more detail and with a wider scope, better acuity, or superior rational or emotional wisdom. We also may be prepared to believe that recipes for happiness were given to others by mysterious or mythical forces or other authorities that are beyond questioning and cannot be explained or confirmed. These impressions may be supported by tolerating a philosophy to be encoded in language and practices that make it unapproachable to nonexperts or by shrouding it into concepts that leave nonexperts confused. Our inability to access, trace, and understand methods, justifications, and sources of an external philosophy we regard as superior may represent additional causes for us to resign to its leadership. These factors may greatly reduce our incentives to scrutinize the merit of a philosophy.

In our search for indications that warrant trust, we may not only look for signs of superiority. We may also require indications that the objectives and methods of an external philosophy are aligned with ours. Such an assessment must stay necessarily incomplete if we have not yet identified many of our objectives and methods. We may be attracted to philosophies that appeal to fundamental laws because these are universal. We may take these indications of congruence as causes to trust remaining aspects of existential philosophies that they represent to constitute fundamental laws or logical deductions as well. We may moreover be tempted to identify with a philosophy by indications that idiosyncrasies appear to be shared or accommodated. We may be attracted by features of a philosophy, its creators, proponents, or surrounding circumstances that comport with our internal and external conditions, experiences, or objectives. An impression of similarity or identity of interests that is attributable to such indications may motivate us to let trust overcome reservation and critical thinking. We may believe that the philosophy, its creators, or its proponents have our interests in mind or have the same or parallel interests. This motivates us to cooperate with them or to emulate them. They may move us to abandon previously held different opinions and to share the conclusions and instructions of a philosophy or of authorities that purport to represent it. Even if aspects that induce such effects might be intentionally or unintentionally attractive attachments to a philosophy that are not integrated into its substance, we may not notice that shallowness if we base our trust on poorly explored semblances. An apparent logical process and systematic nature of a philosophy may additionally increase our confidence that we have found an applicable approach to happiness. Moreover, the fact that others have already subscribed to

such philosophies may sway us to assume that they have familiarized themselves with its objectives and techniques and have found them beneficial. Critical reviews may also be moderated by examples that a philosophy has proved its capacity to deliver happiness to us or other individuals we regard as similar. In that respect, we may not demand broad practical proof. The fulfillment of one or a few needs may lure us into the belief or hope that other as of yet unproven parts of a philosophy are accurate as well and will benefit us. Further, we may not parse whether benefits are attributable to the merits of a philosophy, an ancillary ploy, or unconnected and merely coinciding with activities of a philosophy. We might even deem a cessation of deterioration that may be ascribed to a philosophy as sufficient indication for its reliability. Although we might have the opportunity to critically assess a philosophy, indicators of reliability may weaken or eliminate our resolve to ascertain or investigate into its premises, argument, or consequences or to scrutinize the intent of its originators or supporters.

The perceived level of resonance may cause us to ignore or discount incongruities. Even if we discover potential or actual incompatibilities, we may have confidence that the benefits in some areas warrant the risk or actuality of incompatibility in other areas. We may be willing to entertain a philosophy if the unsatisfied needs it promises to address are critical enough and we are at a loss for practicable alternatives. A crisis in our ability to fulfill our needs may render it obvious that our principles of how happiness can be achieved have failed. The resulting vacancy and our particularly low self-confidence constitute a unique opportunity to be filled with a theory that promises a cure for that deprivation. Our desperation to soothe our pain in that condition may prompt us to accept the risk or reality of extensive incongruities and contradictions, and we may be prepared to suffer some damage. A lack of alternatives may even cause us to accept a mere promise with no or only little proof that a philosophy can help us. We may commit to settings that superimpose foreign thoughts, emotions, and behavior on us even if these call for extensive sacrifices or confront us with uncertainty. While such an attitude may damage large segments or even the entirety of our existence, we may prefer the pretense of guidance to the reality of a painful conclusion that such guidance does not exist. We may prefer hope of salvation to the harsh reality of failure, confusion, and struggle. We may willingly subject ourselves to the governance and manipulation by others if we believe that, by participating in their schemes, we can build overall profitable structures and processes for us that would otherwise not be possible. As our state of deprivation grows more desperate, we may be willing to sacrifice our search

for ideal happiness and safety for the sake of survival and merely getting by. Particularly if our basic survival needs are threatened, we may place trust in philosophies that promise to protect and support these needs and we may tolerate requirements such a philosophy poses that might be at odds with or outside our objectives. Feared and actual deficiencies may be powerful motivations to devise or accept ideas that diverge from or surpass our personality and experiences. We may intend to limit such nonconformities to exigent circumstances and may hope to transition to more congruent aspects of a philosophy or even to move on to more congruent types of philosophy once our exigency ends. But we may also conceive or concede that we and possibly other aspects of our environment have to go through extensive adjustments according to a philosophy to reach higher levels of happiness.

Our delusional approaches may have us follow nonscientific existential philosophies even if they are demonstrably inapplicable to us. Nonscientific existential philosophies might be applicable as a matter of intuition or coincidence. Yet the complexity of human needs and particularly the variety of idiosyncratic human needs make it extremely unlikely that such a philosophy would constitute a properly developed instrument of guidance for us in more than rather rudimentary, commonsensical aspects. It is equally unlikely that such a philosophy would limit itself to rudimentary insights. We may therefore be well-served by shunning nonscientific existential philosophies at least until they transition to a scientific form that reveals all their relevant premises, arguments, and conclusions. There is also a danger that we may uncritically accept even a scientifically derived existential philosophy that discloses its speculative nature in all respects. Its disclosures cannot guaranty that we would peruse these and base our determination whether to follow the philosophy on adequate consideration. Our inability or unwillingness to obtain clarity about our needs and their pursuit through our independent reflection may render us prone to adopt such a philosophy with insufficient comprehension and thus a partial distortion. Even if we understand its treatments, we may fail to grasp its speculative nature and its function as a foray of consideration that still awaits confirmation. In our zeal to find practicable recipes for our pursuits, we may exhibit an excessive conviction in its implementation and may lack tolerance toward other speculative constructs. Scientific speculative philosophies may hence be commandeered by individuals who abuse and pervert them. This may bring speculative philosophies on which they draw into disrepute and disqualify them from further consideration. A mistaken insistence concerning scientific speculative philosophies can easily develop from experimental settings that probe

their validity. It may be difficult to sustain an appropriate reserve because individuals considering and applying speculative principles may become invested in the capacity of these to serve their interests.

Our propensity to seize on ideas that might improve our happiness without much prior consideration makes it easy for nonscientific existential philosophies. As long as they can influence us without disclosure, they are disinclined to undertake it. They might also refuse to rationalize themselves because that would mean to lay open their inapplicabilities, at least if we would gain clarity about our views on their stated positions. Stating their premises, arguments, and conclusions may set such consideration in motion. Philosophies that try to influence us underhandedly may therefore retain the lack of clarity in their derivation. By subscribing to and proceeding under a philosophy that does not meet our needs, we become willing, although potentially unwitting tools in providing benefits to those whose needs it is able to meet. We place other forces in charge that might use us for their purposes with our protection and support. We may be to blame for much of the undue influence of external philosophies over us and their deleterious consequences. We may follow others even if they undertake no actions to impress us or even if they try to keep us at a distance. However, they may also fabricate an existential philosophy that is acceptable to us to take advantage of our susceptibility to surrender to such a philosophy, or our submission may instigate them to engage in abuse. They may undertake to instrumentalize us for their benefit, realizing that the philosophy they promote is not or not primarily geared to our interests. They may investigate the tipping point in our considerations that causes us to trust their philosophy and try to steer us toward that point. They may emphasize concordances over dissonances and try to gain our trust through assistance. They may purposely confuse us and weaken our resolve and ability to develop autonomous philosophies of happiness. They may place us in positions of deprivation and dependence to increase our willingness to submit to external leadership.

Not all endeavors to extend an existential philosophy to others may be driven by nefarious objectives. Promoters might be genuinely under the impression that the philosophy they advocate is applicable and beneficial to subjects of their efforts. They may seek to derive satisfaction from benefiting other individuals by disseminating the philosophy they have devised. That may be a laudable objective with regard to philosophical principles that have been proved to be generally applicable or specifically applicable to others. It may also be acceptable for speculative insights whose relevant premises, arguments, and conclusions are disclosed if the recipients are able to reflect on such

presentations without being improperly influenced by them. But individuals may exceed such boundaries in the spreading of their philosophy because they are immersed in their needs, wishes, and knowledge or imagination of means and strategies and tend to register phenomena exclusively through the prism of their viewpoint. They have a propensity to interpret, produce, and use objects and events in ways that confirm their position. Caught in such references, existential philosophies become closed systems whose concepts may not escape the perceptions, rational interpretations, and emotional mechanisms of their proponents. Because philosophies appear to match their outlook, they may be unaware of the subjectivity of their viewpoint. This impression of objectivity may grow by a lack of experiential awareness that other individuals generate happiness in different ways. Proponents of a philosophy may not be acquainted with the multiplicity of contours and pursuits that happiness takes and may therefore not have correct, let alone profound knowledge about what makes other individuals happy. They may have typically experienced homogeneous environments and may be rooted in their influences. These experiential limitations may strengthen them in assuming that other persons' mechanisms of happiness are identical with or similar to theirs. Even if they are aware of variations in individual needs and preferences, they may be convinced of the superiority of their philosophy over all other ways of achieving individual and collective happiness. Their dispositions and experiences may induce them to consider other concepts of happiness as pathological, disingenuous, erroneous, frivolous, ineffective, or inefficient.

Arguably, nonscientific existential philosophies that individuals develop based on their impressions might not even apply to their proponents because they may not give them reflective clarity about their relevant premises, arguments, and conclusions. Their lack of transparency may also embolden them to assume that their philosophy applies to others. That may infuse an additional degree of error into such philosophies. However, even if initiators and proponents of a philosophy would be completely clear about their philosophy and thus elevate it to the status of a scientific existential philosophy, they might not wish to share that clarity with others whose compliance can serve their objectives. They may not consider their philosophy to be speculative and therefore have no hesitation to impose it despite its unproven nature. They may even be accurate in their conviction of its applicability concerning their person. But they may not be aware of or respect the possibility that their philosophy might not be applicable to others. They may believe that other individuals who do not share their views would illegitimately reject their viewpoints against the interest of these indi-

viduals. Even if promoters of an existential philosophy originated it as speculative and gave complete disclosure of its premises, arguments, and conclusions, they might still be tempted to induce others to invest themselves in their philosophy. They may want other individuals to take note of what they set forth, discuss it, take it seriously as a possibility, and engage in trials to test its practical merit. They may want the philosophy they endorse to prove correct and find acceptance. The competition by speculative philosophies that vie for the same position and the resistance by entrenched attitudes and philosophies may intensify their resolve to influence possible subjects. Hence, there may be a considerable risk that objectively formulated philosophies might be promoted with subjective bias. The advocacy by their promoters may negligently, recklessly, or willfully influence proposed subjects to take considerative shortcuts. Many promoters of philosophies may be unimpaired by the threat of such transgressions. They might not even hide behind the notion that their philosophy is superior to the philosophies held by others. They may impose their instructions of pursuit in excess of their appropriate boundaries to benefit their goals regardless of whether they lose their integrity and damage others.

Regardless of the reasons proponents of a subjective philosophy advocate its applicability beyond its boundaries, their excessive claim causes them to favor the conversion or at least neutralization of dissenting individuals. The recognition of nonconformities within its asserted scope of applicability as legitimate would reveal a philosophy to be at least partly duplicitous or erroneous. As a consequence, an overreaching approach to happiness is likely to reject differentiating ideas as subversive and hostile. To achieve and maintain an unnatural position of domination, it has to induce a sufficient number of dissenting or uncommitted individuals to adjust their pursuits and to replace or modify their concepts or lack of concept with a promoted philosophy, and if it is only for considerative and trial purposes. To secure that objective, an overreaching philosophy has to preclude subjects from following competing viewpoints and deny competing viewpoints the capacity to exist or at least to compete. It may therefore try to restrain or eliminate different ways of reaching happiness and seek to align individuals holding such ideas within its asserted scope. If it cannot win over all individuals to whom it declares to apply, it will want to influence hesitating individuals sufficiently to not interfere with its establishment. It will also want to restrain individuals it does not assert to cover from interfering. Even if a philosophy does not apply to them directly, they have to be convinced that its establishment will not unduly interfere with their affairs. Such strategies may not distinguish over-

reaching philosophies. All existential philosophies that require or can benefit from cooperation or noninterference may create strategies for individuals to think, feel, or act in accordance with their demands. All existential philosophies that attempt to convince others may publicize their advantages. But promoters of overreaching philosophies may also resort to manipulation and coercion to fulfill their objectives where the content of their philosophy fails. Such strategies may be most ardently pursued by an ideology. To attain the quality of an ideology, an existential philosophy would not have to claim to have found universally applicable, objective truth about human happiness and hence be nonspeculative. It may limit its scope to a certain group of individuals and shared aspects of their needs. Its distinguishing characteristic is its claim of objective truth and exclusivity in the creation of happiness for the individuals and areas it claims to cover. That exclusivity may extend to an acknowledgment that other manners of generating happiness exist that is eclipsed by a claim of superiority. The claim of representing the sole or the best manner of organizing happiness for certain types of individuals radicalizes ideologies. Due to their unquestioning conviction, they tend to be particularly ruthless in the original application and escalation of means. Because of the insistence by ideologies on objective truth and exclusivity within their claimed scope of applicability, the execution of their course appears uniquely legitimate to them. The resistance or nonparticipation of claimed subjects might appear illegitimate. They would stand in the way of their own happiness and forestall the happiness of others if their contribution to the ideological plan is helpful or required. Ideologies infer from this position of righteousness an unquestionable license to align deviating intended subjects by any means required to accomplish their objective.

Nonideological existential philosophies may have more scruples because they do not declare objective applicability. Their acknowledgment that individuals within their purview may have different ideas of happiness and that such ideas may be valid for those individuals may render them tolerant. It may stimulate considerations that respecting one another's particularities might be beneficial and that applicability assertions might have to be adjusted. Then again, a finding of different usable manners of pursuit by other individuals does not automatically cause an existential philosophy to abstain from interfering with the interests of these individuals. It may resort to similarly harsh strategies as an ideology if it deems the subject matters it represents sufficiently significant relative to the virtue of respecting the objectives and pursuits of individuals with other needs. To implement its concepts as designed, a nonideological existential philosophy might foist itself on in-

dividuals even if it realizes that they embrace different objectives and modes of pursuing happiness. It might patently subject them and take advantage of them. To inspire its intended beneficiaries for that challenge, it may organize them in an ideology. However, its requirements may go further. To build the structures and processes that such a philosophy claims can convey happiness for its intended beneficiaries, it may benefit from or require the assistance in significant breadth and depth by individuals on whose benefit it does not focus. For this reason, it may overrepresent its claim of coverage and the substances and processes of its benefits to make all designated participants in its establishment believe that it can make them happy. To undertake such a scheme, its true overreaching nature might not even be shared with intended beneficiaries. Knowledge may be reserved to a small group of functionaries or its intended results may be embedded in its instructions to come to automatic fruition as it progresses. The nonapplicability of such an overreaching philosophy results in unwarranted calls for individual adjustments and organizational changes. It may require significant alterations in our nonhuman environment as well. The restructurings and advancements it demands may entail lengthy and involved development processes before they can prove the claimed benefits of their purported function. The requirement to comprehensively invest time, effort, and other resources into a system that has not yet proved its functionality creates a massive opportunity for deceit.

Even if a philosophy has not been conceptualized for such abusive purposes, convincing subjects of the feasibility and utility of its concept so they will stand by the philosophy until its purported fruition forms an essential condition. An existential philosophy that pronounces far removed achievements may not be able to give us much present assurance of its usefulness. It may prevent us from confirming its applicability until its processes and structures become reality. We may have to decide the merit of a philosophy by preliminary and collateral aspects. We may be asked to commit before we possess clarity whether our commitment is warranted. We may not obtain such clarity until we are far invested into implementing a philosophy. This may cause substantial and even existential problems if we should find ourselves mistaken or misled. In consideration of the uncertain and possibly deferred effects and momentous changes a philosophy requires, many individuals may hesitate or not fully commit to the implementation of a philosophy or even to meaningful experimental forays on its behalf, thus decreasing its support level below its requirements to become a working reality or prove its applicability. Overcoming these attitudes of resistance is often the reason for ideological radicalization.

Arguably, such ideological radicalization is justifiable if an applicable or promising speculative philosophy encounters unreasonable resistance that cannot be overcome by attempts to convince intended beneficiaries. But this presumes that a philosophy can be sufficiently qualified before its application or trial to warrant ideological imposition. It also assumes that such imposition can replace voluntary cooperation and that it will eventually result in voluntary cooperation once its benefits emerge. However, unless an ideological imposition focuses on standards that can be scientifically proved to correctly correspond to and ameliorate the circumstances of all subjected individuals, such assumptions are wide open to error and speculative insecurity.

In cases in which an existential philosophy proceeds with ideological impositions without sufficient assurances of its applicability, its proponents are implementing its requirements with the understanding that they are or might be suppressing the happiness of others and take advantage of them. This inherently weakens their conviction of authority and subjects them to concerns. These include that their regime is illegitimate and under risk of being overturned if this becomes apparent to their victims, and that they might be punished for their overreaching in ways that might reach or exceed the severity of their usurpation. This fear may spur them on to become even more fanatical in their impositions, but it may also have them consider means of imposition that do not use coercion. While proponents of an ideology are not subjected to this self-consciousness, even they may fear repercussions of harsh imposition methods. The aggressive assertiveness of ideologies seems to create resistance and strife that might be circumvented with less confrontational but still effective forms of promotion. Promoters of a philosophy who wish to accomplish dominating results have a variety of manipulatory schemes available that can overcome or moderate such disadvantages. To subject individuals unconditionally, they may apply mechanisms of allegiance, commitment, membership, and similar constructs that create a strong emotional bond. They may further try to systematically direct and streamline subjects' thinking in accordance with their requirements with the assistance of indoctrination. Beyond that, they may achieve conformance by making the pursuits and the fulfillment of subjects' needs dependent on compliance with the system. If such mechanisms of dependence can be successfully created and maintained, subjects may not be able to escape an ideology because large parts of their existence would be tied to its existence. They may not know how to cope without its implements. Only where these are insufficient to inspire allegiance may coercion be applied to keep intended subjects committed or at least from objecting.

Such a moderation of ideological strategies renders them more interesting and more manageable to overreaching existential philosophies whose proponents do not have ideological conviction. Such proponents may also be drawn to such approaches because an ideological claim of applicability may render the system they venture to establish more successful in orienting the blame for subjects' unhappiness away from the system. It may be more effective in deflecting questions why circumstances have not progressed or why reaching certain stages has not resulted in the promised improvements of happiness. Rather than seeking or allowing the answers to be located within itself, the radical self-confidence of an ideology is more likely to blame external interference or claim a lack of commitment by its followers. Its conviction and influence may turn the threat of negative results in its implementation into a strengthening factor. It may be able to convince supporters that they need to subscribe more comprehensively to its principles or work harder. It may impress them to increase their efforts, to fight circumstances that allegedly keep it from coming to fruition, and to extend their patience because they believe that there is no viable alternative. Such techniques may succeed temporarily in adjusting reality or impressions of reality to match the claim of an ideology. It may be able shape its environment to a degree where some of its principles are or appear to be successfully implemented. This may produce a certain degree of happiness or at least expectations of happiness because subjects may gain confidence that happiness can be reached in its application. Such a restructuring of reality or of its perception may reach far. Still, unless an ideology can permanently assimilate and transform the reality of existence as well as the needs of its subjects, its superimposed constructs and modifications remain ultimately incompatible. If its doctrine does not arrange itself with how its subjects generate happiness, contradictions between its assertion to improve happiness and the deficiencies it leaves in the emotions of subjects' lives are destined to become conspicuous in time. When expectations are eventually disappointed without credible excuses and incompatibilities become undeniable, disillusionment sets in. Individuals who for all such time intensified their efforts and bore other hardships because they were successfully misled may turn against their manipulators and avenge their betrayal. As a result, manipulatory ideological strategies may ultimately generate significant repercussions for those who apply them.

The fundamental problem of incompatibility may be shared by philosophies that desist from availing themselves of ideological impositions. The revelation of incompatibilities may hinder the implementation or maintenance of their scheme. But they have the advantage of

not needing to insist on infallibility to survive. They may adjust to the requirements of their subjects, including demands for a pluralistic society and governance. They may acknowledge their station as one philosophy among others or retreat to a common philosophy that can be shared by all or the vast majority of philosophies in a society. Ideologically phrased philosophies cannot resort to such an adjustment without endangering or abandoning their tenet of objective truth and exclusivity. An ideology is characterized by its unwillingness to compromise or to otherwise accommodate opposing positions among its purported subjects and by its determination to abolish these positions. It might adjust if opposition is so formidable that it cannot be overcome or if the related struggle might jeopardize its benefits or existence. It might strategically and temporarily provide semblances of coexistence and compromise and hide its nature until it can resume its course.

Then again, an ideology might not be able to commit to truces without endangering its existence because plurality constitutes a contradiction to its totalitarian claim. A change of strategy might be misinterpreted as the abandonment of its claim by its supporters and critics and it might not be taken seriously by other interests. As a consequence of these factors, an ideology might not only be unwilling but also unable to retreat. It may be unable to continue to exist as a pluralistic philosophy because much of its strength is built on unquestioning obedience by its subjects. The destruction of its claim of absolute truth leaves its aggressive assertion devoid of justification. This may prompt an ideology to become particularly defensive. That defensiveness may be shared by a nonideological philosophy that takes cover in ideological manipulation and enforcement mechanisms. By casting itself as an ideology, it restricts its options to respond to threats. It might compel itself to take a stand and risk falling as an ideology rather than being able to transmute into forms that allow it to compromise with other philosophies and might enable it to survive at least to some extent. A revelation of ideological pretense may even subject its proponents to additional adversities because of their intentional misrepresentation. The existential danger that actual and simulated ideologies bring upon themselves may oblige them to continue their ways as the only feasible choice to survive as long as possible even after it has become clear that they cannot ultimately succeed. With the effectiveness of manipulation waning, they may increasingly resort to coercion. This insistence may greatly increase the damage they create and accelerate and increase the intensity of their destruction directly or by response. Hence, neither ideologies nor their emulations appear to be effective manners of imposing existential philosophies over others.

The falseness of ideologies and their emulations is regularly revealed in the contradiction between their totalitarian claim and their radical efforts to suppress or eliminate other existential philosophies or less organized dissent. If there were no reasonable alternative to the path they describe, there would be no reason to be so insistent because their philosophy would necessarily prevail. Arguably, this might require efforts to popularize its ideas. Still, it could generally trust that intended subjects would unavoidably discover the advantages it offers and eventually subscribe to its principles. Even if that might not initially occur by experiencing its benefits, subjects would be eventually led to try this philosophy after all others have failed. That a philosophy would not rely on this mechanism and instead engage in manipulation or in coercion seems to demonstrate the untruthful character of its claim. It appears to show that such a philosophy does not possess sufficient self-confidence that it is superior or the only way to happiness. The aggressive nature of ideologies and their emulations seem to uncover that they do not trust the legitimacy and effectiveness of their ideas. Yet there are exceptions to such a rule. We may not possess the luxury of trying other philosophies or slowly warming to a philosophy. Adopting a philosophy might be so critically important for individual or collective survival and thriving that we could not afford the delay connected with its natural absorption. We might impose fundamental rights on others in an ideological manner under the justification that these spring from shared requirements and because we might be unwilling or unable to wait until abusers come to their senses.

However, ideological pursuits or defenses of fundamental rights must be practiced with utmost restraint. Great care must be exercised to block the influence of idiosyncratic positions on the interpretation of fundamental rights. The assertion and defense of pure fundamental rights may be burdened by error and by attempts of subjective interests to adopt their position of objective unassailability to afford objective status to their views. The ability of fundamental rights to assume absolute authority as an ideology destines them to be particularly attractive to idiosyncratic subversion. It provides idiosyncrasies with a full arsenal of enforcement tools and a mantle of legitimacy. The danger of error and subjective usurpation continues as long as the definitions and the boundaries of fundamental rights have not been settled. Containing this risk may require an ongoing assertion, discussion, and agreement of all competent individuals. Such an agreement might be difficult because of idiosyncrasies and because individuals or their divisions may assert interpretations against one another with ideological resolve. This jeopardizes human coexistence with continuing, uncom-

promising overreaching and strife. Thus, it may be necessary that we reserve ideological treatment and enforcement of fundamental rights to features beyond reproach. Such features might be established as a matter of science that validates the existential importance of a fundamental right and the scope necessary to safeguard its fulfillment. They might also be recognized by overwhelming acclaim and a lack of justifiable dissent under acknowledged fundamental rights. Regions where views of existential needs are individualized without distinct evidence that they violate core tenets may invalidate claims for universal application as a basis for intervention. Such evidence seems easier to establish for basic survival needs than for collateral needs because of differences in traceability. Ambiguities might have to be addressed in the manner in which other idiosyncratic differences are treated under the guidance of fundamental laws. Different viewpoints may compromise to continue a common society or give rise to separate organizations.

The task of conducting compromises and distinctions of nonfundamental philosophies may be complex because it may involve the reconciliation or disjointing of a multitude of incongruent idiosyncratic positions. It implies an inquiry into and statement of multiple viewpoints and underlying needs and the arrangement of our pursuits with other individuals in a manner that minimizes mutual interference and maximizes constructive cooperation. An approach of our happiness in this manner may require that we individually state and argue our positions. That may appear to us as a dubious and bewildering challenge. The statement and negotiation of positions and the potential of conflict that are involved in finding compromised solutions with a variety of individuals may appear to us as sources for danger and insecurity. We may fear the potential of uncontrollable consequences if negotiations or arrangements fail. Moreover, this practice appears to remove us from finding solutions that resemble our ideals. We may therefore consider entering into a variety of alliances and subscribing to multiple limited philosophies that better support and protect our positions. Even then, maneuvering with and among a plurality of limited existential philosophies lacks the plain clarity and direction of a streamlined, comprehensive arrangement under a single philosophy or a few compatible philosophies. We may deem ourselves unable or unwilling to arrange our pursuits for ourselves, let alone with those of others, even as indirect participants in organizations. We may seek the order of one existential philosophy or of a compatible set and may be willing to make concessions to find backing in it or them. We may rather subject ourselves to the compromises in such an arrangement than suffer the unpredictable complications of arranging ourselves with others.

But our propensity to attach ourselves to the idiosyncratic philosophies of others may come at a high price. The history of upheaval and pain that has been brought on by the adoption of such philosophies demonstrates that they are unlikely to improve the fate of those subscribing to them, much less of those further affected by them. It is almost inconceivable that the anguish they cause began with the desire to be happy. It seems equally inconceivable that the negative record of adopted idiosyncratic philosophies would not decisively dissuade us from following them. Their continued popularity evidences our lack of understanding or desperation. Even if we subscribe to philosophies that are willing to compromise, we risk pouring efforts and hopes into pursuits that do not represent our needs because they are likely to only represent parts of our interests and not to be reconciled with our other needs. Our continuing susceptibility is a testament to the power of individuals and groups to wield undue influence over us. But it also proves that we have not properly developed our ideas about our happiness and how to shape our existence according to them.

While it may be true that we are actively looking to attach ourselves, we may live in an environment rife with ideological predations and more moderate endeavors by other existential philosophies to influence and govern us. Social, economic, and religious movements are likely to compete for our allegiance and try to hoist their ideas of happiness upon us. They may seek to incorporate us into their structures and processes to render them more viable in competition with other philosophies and to install and maintain the requisites of their plans. We might be aware of their overreaching nature and may avoid their approaches at least in certain areas where we dissent. Even if we cannot withstand their meddling entirely, we may be able to get by with a minimum of responsiveness and reserve a large section of our pursuits for our contemplation and determination. Nevertheless, overreaching philosophies and their mechanisms might continue to disturb our circumstances. Even if we can resist being converted and can avoid their direct pressures, we may be indirectly affected by others who abide by them. Operating outside their system may be unfavorable. That is not only because philosophies may try to compel us directly or indirectly into compliance or because our pursuits may conflict with their structures and processes. If we persist beyond their reach and they perceive that enforcing compliance does not yield a sufficient benefit for their system, they might try to exclude, abuse, or eliminate us. Even if complying with such a philosophy would be detrimental, a position separate from its system may further deprive us of protections and means and lead to more deleterious consequences for us than membership.

Although the attitudes of overreaching philosophies toward individuals within their claimed scope who distance themselves may be dominated by punitive motives, such philosophies may not necessarily be hostile toward individuals beyond their claimed purview. Admitted limited applicability might imply insight regarding the legitimacy of a plurality of needs among humans, even by limited ideologies, and a willingness to come to arrangements of peaceful coexistence and even constructive cooperation. Any limited philosophy should be interested not to be disturbed by humans outside its purview, and it may rightly guard and defend itself against such interferences. But the impression that certain individuals or groups are functionally irrelevant for a philosophy might also prompt a philosophy to operate without regard for their survival or wellbeing. This may be particularly so because the exclusion of individuals from its scope is likely to be based on disqualifying criteria. That disqualification may cause it to make their exclusion or annihilation as competitors for resources or as potential sources of interference permissible or even mandatory or may permit or endorse their exploitation. A philosophy may target and depend on predatory behavior toward others without including them into its system. It may rely on their availability without a requirement of managing them. Its overreaching may occur without any pretense of conferring benefits.

We may expect that foundational insights of existential philosophies into the universality of fundamental rights guard against such infringements. But idiosyncrasies and parochial attitudes engendered by these may rule within such philosophies over fundamental rights. Philosophies that engage in the support or protection of fundamental rights beyond their intended beneficiaries to others affected by their demeanor may be scarce or incomplete. The at times extensive claims and consequences of overreaching philosophies may make it hard to evade their infringements. Considering their ubiquitous presence, our best hope might be that a sufficient number of them keep competing and that inconclusive attributions of allegiance might prevent any of them from gaining overbearing status or sole power and from fully installing their direction. Yet, even if they contain one another in competition, they may encumber or thwart effective and efficient interaction and burden those directly or indirectly exposed to their claims. A standoff between philosophies may not or not profoundly improve the fate of their claimed subjects or others. It may have a settling and radicalizing effect. The pervasive conflict and the impasses resulting from competition among overreaching existential philosophies may further counsel them to understand that it is in their interest to establish lasting arrangements of compromise or even collaboration among them.

Arguably, a view that existential philosophies tend to expand to other individuals through a relationship of leaders and followers may not represent the entirety of how existential philosophies can grow. As an alternative, individuals with similar interests may pool their resources and strategies to pursue their shared objectives together. That seems plausible in the area of fundamental rights because their basis is equally shared. But the joining of individuals for more idiosyncratic purposes and even in areas of fundamental law that are susceptible to idiosyncratic interpretations seems to be subject to different dynamics. The fact that idiosyncratic predilections can differ widely is likely to reduce the number of possible candidates for joint undertakings in these areas. Even if individuals share an idiosyncrasy, that commonality is likely to be surrounded by different idiosyncrasies that provide a different setting for a shared idiosyncrasy in each member's context of wishes. This would appear to severely restrain the scope of a common undertaking in idiosyncratic affairs. Individuals may find it relatively easy to join in the production of certain means that they subsequently use in their individual pursuits as they deem fit. However, such levels of cooperation only represent a very narrow and generic philosophy. More extensive particularized cooperation seems only possible in very rare circumstances where idiosyncrasies and their positioning among other needs coincide. Finding such harmony merely between two individuals seems to be already a challenge. It becomes increasingly difficult as more individuals gather. Idiosyncratic existential philosophies would therefore necessarily be restrained to few members if individuals joined under full awareness and reservation of their remaining idiosyncrasies. That would be so even if the philosophy would exclusively represent a specialized objective because the priority of that objective and its coordination with the other objectives of individuals is likely to differ. Individuals may establish enterprises that pursue such purposes within the confines of compromised common denominators. But this might reflect on the effectiveness and hence the attractiveness of such organizations. That idiosyncratic philosophies with substantial membership and range of topical coverage exist may show that their members find value in a corrupted cooperative agenda. It may also demonstrate that they are not aware of or were compelled to hand control to a rule that is unlikely to represent their objectives in many respects.

Beyond oppression by larger-scale idiosyncratic existential philosophies, we are being exposed to a multitude of attempts by personal philosophies or small associations thereof to subject us to these philosophies. Such efforts to influence, replace, or counteract our ideas of happiness are pervasive in most aspects of our life. As pursuits become

increasingly interdependent, individual endeavors to influence others increase as well. Such influences may not rise to what we might consider philosophical heights. They might focus on mundane topics and be limited to one idea for one incident. They might pertain to a small area of concerns and few participants. However, their prolific presence may render them cumulatively as important as comprehensive philosophies. They might be even more difficult to counter or avoid because of the variety and dispersion of their sources. In pursuit of their primary agenda of making themselves happier, individuals try to sell one another on ideas that serve that agenda under the claim that following these ideas will render the other person happier. Their attempts may not rise above the equivalent of a suggestion. If they have difficulties to succeed on open terms, individuals may be willing to enhance their influence by manipulation. If that fails as well, or even without such prior escalation, they may be willing to force others to their purported happiness or they may give up all pretenses and blatantly sacrifice the happiness of others for their own happiness. In either case, they may try to punish, marginalize, or eliminate those who resist their efforts. Even without such an opposition, they may objectify other individuals and seek to exclude, exploit, or eliminate them to serve their own purposes. Such impositions are particularly probable if individuals believe that their ideas represent the best or the sole possible manner of pursuit for them. If they see no valid or sufficiently satisfying alternatives, they may consider themselves entitled to interfere in the existence of others to realize their own wishes without scruples. They may resort to strategies that are similar to those taken by organized aggressive idiosyncratic philosophies and may differ from these only by scale.

We may have different thresholds before we impose on others. Yet, like all other humans, we possess core tenets that we deem essential to fulfill our needs and whose pursuit we are prepared to impose and to defend at considerable risk and cost. We include the benefit of others only in our wishes to the extent it satisfies our needs. Our exclusive motivation to prosecute the satisfaction of our needs seems to necessarily cause us to view others as sources of interference, neutral, or resources. This may prompt us to preclude or prey upon others, to ignore them, or to seek out their cooperation. Our fervor to align others with our wishes may contain features aimed at assisting them. To secure the successful pursuit of our needs, we may seem to espouse a philosophy that endeavors to advance our happiness less or at least no more than the happiness of others. Nevertheless, the only reason we would be interested in the happiness of others is that their happiness, its pursuit, or its results matter for our happiness. Our efforts to help

others draw their motivation exclusively from needs that produce fulfillment from such activities. That we are governed by considerations of utility in our relations and that our behavior is selfish may strike us as the opposite of our ideals. However, if claimed ideals demand behavior that is not rooted in our needs, if they impose a duty on us that is not reflected in our desires, they do not constitute our ideals. Moreover, we might unfairly prejudge what our needs, if fully revealed and considered, would command. Even initial impressions of our ideals reflect a material emphasis on the happiness of others as an important means for the fulfillment of our needs. This should render us optimistic that our happiness and the happiness of others can, and probably must, exist in constructive harmony. These impressions, together with indications that we might be able to construe and correlate our needs as ideals, might inspire us to explore the establishment of a comprehensive set of ideals and to thus bring forth a philosophy of our own.

Short of that or to enhance our own process, we may find external philosophies helpful and even essential in areas where concepts apply regardless of idiosyncrasies. Such objective applicability exists in the area of existential needs, fundamental rights, and their derivatives. It also applies in areas of technical concern. In that respect, we might think primarily of technological, economic, and social structures and procedures that might be verified to be objectively capable of achieving certain objectives. But there also might be techniques that we can apply to identify our idiosyncratic needs regardless of what these idiosyncrasies are. These techniques would result, together with substantive insights, from the scientific exploration of needs, our human and nonhuman environment, and their correlation. We may call methods that instruct us how we can derive insights about happiness procedural existential philosophies. We may distinguish such procedural philosophies from substantive philosophies that try to instruct us directly in what will satisfy us. Considering other individuals' substantive and procedural philosophies may assist us in developing or obtaining access to generally shared and contrasting concepts of our own. Still, we must distrust external philosophies to produce correct answers to our questions about happiness. We have to scrutinize their methods and substance before we adopt any part of them. Even if a philosophy has shown that it can bring happiness to some, we must assess its applicability to us. Even if it benefits us in some aspects, we cannot be certain that it will do so in other aspects. If we want to find competent guidance in existential philosophies, we must become adept in discerning parts that comport with our happiness from aspects that do not. The next chapter reviews strategies to establish such an understanding.