



THE UNBEARABLE BURDEN OF THE OBVIOUS

**Part III, A: The Janus-Faced Nature
of Adorno and Derrida**



OCTOBER 10, 2023

[COMPANY NAME]

[Company address]

The Unbearable Burden of The Obvious

Part III: The Janus-Faced Nature of Adorno and Derrida

Leo Feyaerts

The Ego is the Id. (T. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, Frankfurt am Main, 1951, Part One, § 39, p. 106: *Ich ist Es*). The *Es* is the Freudian unconscious. "The Id" is not different from other "the Ids" and therefore indifferent. Therefore "the Id"-author is completely indifferent to what other "the Ids" think of "the Id's" books. What is in those writings can happen to every "the Id" in the same way and every "the Id" is able to set these occurrences out with the same indifferent talent. No, these are not clerical errors; this is high wisdom. Contemporary wisdom. The wisdom of "the Id". Whether this wisdom makes sense is up to the other "the Ids" to decide in reading this book.

Dedicated to "the Id" to which the Id is infinitely grateful. Hopefully, "the Id" is not insulted.

"The Ids" and events described in this book are fictional. Every similarity between them and other "the Ids", alive or dead, is based on pure coincidence. It has never been the intention of "the Id" to damage any other "the Id" in "the Id's" innate way.

All rights reserved. Nothing from this publication may be reproduced, stored in an automated database and/or published in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, translation, or otherwise without prior written notice permission from "the Id".

Now that the pointlessness of the indifferent, contemporary thinking has been somewhat revealed:

Dedicated to Prof. dr. Dr. Lode Wils.

The characters and events described in this book are fictional. Every similarity with other human beings, alive or dead, is based on pure coincidence. It has never been the intention of the author to harm someone personally.

(This is a joke.)

All rights reserved. Nothing from this publication may be reproduced, stored in an automated database and/or published in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, translation, or in any other way without prior written permission from the publisher.

(This is a serious communication.)

Writer: Leo Feyaerts

Translated from Dutch by Leo Feyaerts

Cover design: Garri Janssens

ISBN: 9789464358452

© Leo Feyaerts

"The obvious always seems outdated, especially at a time when it is obvious to deny the obvious by saying that the obvious is not obvious because nothing is obvious. Except for that statement, of course. That is obvious."

(Leo Feyaerts)

Preface

This is Carlo's essay, which he announced in his autobiography and wrote between the beginning of November 1967 and 25 February 1968. His critique of leftist thought is limited to philosophies published before 1968. The last work he was able to criticise was Derrida's *De la grammatologie* of 1967. He died at the end of February 1968. It can be seen that he was unaware of the deconstruction system later developed by Derrida, since the latter's writings, *Positions*, Paris, Minuit, 1972, pp. 41-42 and *Hors livre, préfaces de La Dissémination*, Paris, Seuil, 1972, pp. 4-6, in which this is explained, were published after that date. I have therefore taken the liberty of supplementing the text of his essay with additional comments on the subject. Just to keep things simple, I usually don't mention what I'm adding and what I'm not. This in no way detracts from his exposition, as during the short period of our friendship, we greatly influenced each other's thinking, and mine remained an extension of his thereafter.

Readers who do not like contemplative texts are better off not reading this book. They should not punish themselves and waste their money. For those considering purchasing his work, I wish them much courage in dispelling their illusions.

In order to gain insight into his thought process, it is first necessary to reproduce the following conversation. In early November, he had already set forth the fundamental tenets of his philosophy, but it was not until later that he began to elaborate on them. The conversation in question took place on 15 November 1967, a few days after his discussion with Marcusean Van den Borre, a member of the Marxist Student Union (SVB). Van den Borre asserted that all art must be socially critical, to which Carlo replied that the artist must be nothing but an artist. He further stated that every artist automatically expresses the society in which he finds himself, either critically or affirmatively, according to his needs.

The lightning bolt that Carlo mentions later in this preface is the inspiration that struck him a few weeks earlier. This sudden realisation was that every human being is driven by an inherent antinomic need, namely the simultaneous need to distinguish (sadism) and to reconcile opposites (conformism). It was my friend's habit to reconstruct conversations he found funny or interesting. This was a very clever habit, and a fantastic exercise in memory training. After reading such a reconstruction, I began to imitate him. This has resulted in the following account.

On that cold, drizzly evening, we were sitting at the first round table on the left in the Ambiorix, the pub of the Limburg student associations, in front of Leuven's Old Market (*Oude Markt*), near the Kiekenstraat. The building is still there and the façade looks the same. On the ground floor, a grey semi-circular stone arch spans the entrance door and the two windows, flanked on either side by a wide grey stone pilaster with an ionic capital. It's Baroque. I'm not sure if the two pilasters are original, but they help the ground floor blend in with the authentic upper floors. There were few people in the bar, all strangers except for Etienne, the pub owner. The students we'd come to see were singing in the Thier during a Limburg Guild cantus¹, a celebration we'd forgotten about. They hadn't gathered upstairs in the hall that was set up for such occasions because that room was not even big enough to hold all the members of the *Hengst* (Stallion) Hesbania, the students' club from Haspengouw (Hesbaye), and outside that club there were four more from the province of Limburg.

We had plenty of time, so we chatted and joked until my pal suddenly lashed out at the Student Union for using the "Leuven Flemish" (*Leuven Vlaams*) actions to promote Marxist ideas.²

"It still bothers you, doesn't it," I said, laughing, "your clash with Van den Borre."

¹ Student singing and drinking party, often in a fraternity format.

² The Flemish students and the majority of the Flemish professors at the Catholic University of Leuven demanded that the university administration (i.e. the Belgian bishops) comply with the language law that had been passed by parliament in 1962 and entered into force in 1963. The francophone bishops, with the support of the francophone wings of all the major parties (the Catholic, Socialist and Liberal parties), were adamant in their refusal to relocate the francophone wing of the university to the francophone side of the language boundary established by the language law. The legislation also stipulated that the language of administration and education in the Flemish and Walloon regions had to be the official language of that region (the Brussels region was considered bilingual), but made a typically Belgian exception for the French-speaking wing of KU Leuven. This exception provoked considerable indignation among many Flemings, as it afforded the French-speaking wing the opportunity to pursue a deliberate policy of Frenchification of the Flemish-speaking area around Leuven, thereby undermining the language law.

It should be noted that Flemish is a variant of Dutch.

"Yes. And no, I don't like him. But it's nothing personal either."

"Why do these lefties bother you so much? There are reasonable people among them, aren't there?"

He thought for a moment.

"Imagine that your left-hand neighbour constantly rubs your nose in his sacred truth that all your thoughts and feelings are not your thoughts and feelings but those of the class or structure to which you belong – in other words, that you are utterly worthless as a person. And then there's your other neighbour on the left, who goes by the name of Derrida. He's just moved into a new building he designed himself and he says that it doesn't matter what you feel, think or say because everything you feel, think or say is just the product of your hidden assumptions. In that sense, it's always subjective. So, what's not in a text is more important and essential than what it does say. He can then fill in the missing motives and facts as he sees fit...

It's simply sadistic to want to destroy a way of thinking that has developed over two thousand years, even if his intention, like Plato's, is to reconcile all contradictions. He wants to eliminate all ethnocentrism, as he himself says in the first sentence of *De la grammatologie*.³ But in trying to do so, he immediately creates a new black-and-white opposition, this time between Western ethnocentrism, the only form of ethnocentrism that matters to him, and his own "liberating" beliefs. All the while, however, he says he wants to eliminate all black-and-white contradictions by reducing every statement about anything to an undecidable formula...⁴ Clever of him...

Everything we feel, think and do is, according to him, up for grabs – or at least,

³ J. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1967, *Exergue*, p. 11. In citing an anonymous Akkadian (Akkadian Empire in Mesopotamia, c. 2334 BC - c. 2154 BC), Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Hegel, Derrida writes: "Ce triple exergue n'est pas seulement destiné à rassembler l'attention sur l'ethnocentrisme qui, partout et toujours, a dû commander le concept de l'écriture."

"This triple inscription is not only intended to draw everyone's attention to the ethnocentrism which, everywhere and always, must have driven the concept of representing the spoken word and thinking in writing".

Derrida's assertion here partially confirms the correctness of Carlo's view of man. The first users of writing immediately distinguished between themselves and those who did not use writing, and felt superior to these "others" by virtue of this distinction. According to Carlo, distinction/discrimination/sadism is one of two components of the antinomic need inherent in human beings. If Derrida had considered the role of writing in the formation of groups and identities for a longer period, he might have concluded that each group with a particular type of writing developed into a more coherent conformity, which is into a form of internal reconciliation of opposites. This is the other component of the antinomic need inherent in man, and through this use, the group perceived itself all the more strongly as a unit and identity distinct from "others". (Staf Van der Auwera, 1999)

⁴ J. Derrida, *La voix et le phénomène*, Paris, Épipiméthée, 1967, pp. 113-116.

that's how he sees it. And it's the same as saying it's all indifferent⁵. If everything is up for grabs, then nothing matters, not even the idea of universal undecidability. Indeed, if there are no real differences, that is, if there's only indifference⁶, then there's no real truth or moral content to anything...

But since he's just another human being, like everyone else, living in a certain time and in a certain society, it's fair to ask him what hidden presuppositions led him to this judgement, what hidden needs led him to pronounce this sadistic judgement on his Western predecessors and thinkers who speak or write from a different need than his supposedly critical one...

Well, this need is always the same, you know. The need to distinguish between oneself and one's peers, and between oneself and one's opponents. And at the same time, the need to form a new conformist group in which all opposites are reconciled. You know, the general human antinomy that I've talked about several times."

"Yes, haha, I know that only too well, haha. It makes sense, yes, you are right. I've said that several times."⁷

"Okay, thanks... What I'm trying to say is this. The Left always thinks from the same presuppositions, namely that human beings are such that everyone's equality is an attainable ideal. The Right always challenges this view of human beings from its own presuppositions. So, in essence, both are doing the same thing out of exactly the same need, out of exactly the same antinomic need. They both have the need to make distinctions and reconcile opposites, but each with a different view of humanity in mind. So it is up to yourself to find out how man is, what his nature is, by deducing it from his language and his actions. And it'd be good to do it without contradicting yourself all the time...

Well, my view of man isn't leftist. So the Left will dismiss it as biased right-wing after just a few sentences and refuse to think about it. Because the Left considers anyone who emphasises the personal and social identity of human beings and anyone who rejects the ideal of equality to be right-wing, regardless of the reason and grounds those so-called right-wingers cite for that rejection. Agreed?"

⁵ Late Middle English (in the sense "having no partiality for or against"): Via Old French from Latin *indifferent*- "not making any difference", from in- "not" + different- "differing".

⁶ Late Middle English (in the sense "being neither good nor bad"): from Latin *indifferentia*, from in- "not" + different- "differing, deferring" (from the verb *differre*).

⁷ To gain insight into the extent of Carlo's ongoing struggles with his beliefs prior to this discourse, it is recommended that readers consult his autobiography, specifically the chapter titled "Doubts, Quran, and Pertinent Comments on My Inconsistencies." Those who are disinclined to engage with the text due to its critical stance towards the Quran may choose to read on without any difficulty.

"Agreed."

"And then the Left thinks it's their moral duty to lecture you because everything you feel, think and do is hate speech. At the same time, they say you must feel, think and live their way in order to feel, think and live as a good person.

Otherwise, they say you must be silenced, imprisoned or murdered in order to purge society of all evil. How do you respond to such arrogant, self-contradictory hypocrites? Well, that's what the Left has been preaching to us since Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx. For more than 200 years. And we just nod our heads and shut up. What do you think about that?"

"That it sucks, indeed. But this alternative of yours, can you substantiate it so thoroughly that it can convince others?"

"Some people might be convinced, but most certainly not. For I don't promise a perfect reconciliation of all contradictions in an earthly paradise. And they can't use my ideas to condone or justify sadistic excesses."

"Can they do that with Derrida's?"

"Yes. If he sees Plato's dualism and his Theory of Forms as present in the whole of Western thought, and if he wants to destroy this Platonic heritage in one fell swoop and replace it with his own system, supposedly free of all dualism and all discrimination, then he sees himself in a very differentiated way as a messiah, as a white saviour who comes to bring earthly paradise to a black, depraved world...

Yes, Staf, I got my idea from wondering how it is possible that all these left-wing messiahs like Karl Marx, Adorno, Marcuse, Foucault and Derrida constantly contradict each other and themselves with such an unwavering conviction that they are right. For one thing, it was Adorno himself who put me on the right track with his *Minima Moralia*. Do you know this book?"

"No."

"Never mind... Anyway, it's thanks to you that I read it. You mentioned Marx and I read some of his works, but by then I had already finished *Minima Moralia*. So it is he, Adorno, who made me think and showed me the way. He is the one who struck me with lightning. I've already put some of my views down on paper, about one hundred and twenty pages so far, but I can't just quote them from memory."

"One hundred and twenty already! In just one weekend!?"

"No, I'd already been working on it before the fight with Van den Borre, but since then I've been working on it constantly, when I'm sober or at the d'Haeseleers'. But the style is still pretty terrible: unreadable and full of grammatical errors. So there's still a lot to do. But in the meantime it has become as clear to me as the moon and the stars on a cloudless, freezing night that I am much better at explaining human

behaviour than the Left. All I have to do now is make sure they don't have a leg to stand on."

"Any idea how you're going to do that?"

"Yes, it's now clear to me that they're contradicting themselves, and why."

"You're going to write a whole book about it, aren't you?"

"At least an essay."

"And then publish it?"

"Yes, with this publisher where my mother is a proofreader."

I sat there looking at him for a while.

"But she's Francophone."

"Bilingual. If she likes it, we'll translate it."

"You're really getting into this. I know how hard it is for you every time someone rejects you, how much you're hurt. Is that publishing wise?"

"Someone has to tell people, someone has to tear off the masks of these sophists and formulate an alternative to their nonsense. Otherwise we are heading for a destruction of democracy like that of the Greek city-states in Hellenistic times."

"You'll get tons of hate and criticism. And if they can find the tiniest flaw in your argument, they'll laugh in your face."

"Then so be it."

"You're pretty brave."

"I'm not so sure. Any criticism is sadomasochistic."

"Again, sadism as the source of all thinking and feeling?"

"For half of it. You know that. You agreed with that. And with my idea that everyone has the need for conformism, too. But let's stick to the sadomasochism of all criticism."

"Okay, that's already quite something. How am I supposed to see it?"

"Have you ever scolded a driver for almost running you over and laughed when someone said something stupid?"

"Yes, I have. But then you give a very broad interpretation to the term sadism."

"It's not just about the pleasure people get from hurting someone, nor is it about blind violence when someone beats up another person alone or in a group, or when they vandalise something. It's about everyone's tendency to hurt others in any way they can, to bring them down, to despise them, to belittle them, to smear their reputation, or whatever you want to call it."

"Hm... Freud can pack his bags if you want to look at it that way. But what about this masochism?"

"If you criticise someone, you can be pretty sure – as you say yourself – that there

will be a reaction from the person you are criticising. That reaction is unlikely to be positive. It could be a long face, objections to your thesis, attempts to ridicule you, anger from the other person if they are unable to formulate an adequate response, for example because they are simply wrong, and then perhaps swearing and threats, and possibly even physical aggression. So there are lots of options, and none of them will leave you unmoved."

"Hm... Okay."

"But that's not all."

"What else?"

"Something that requires you to keep a close eye on your own sadism."

"How then?"

"Any criticism is destruction. You agree with that, don't you?"

"Yes, but you can always replace what you destroy with something better, can't you?"

"Haha, you can indeed, yes, but you don't have to. When you destroy something, even on a whim, you are destroying something valuable to someone else. That's sadism."

"Yes, okay, so what?"

"The harsher and more thorough your criticism, the more sadistic it is."

"Okay, but..."

"Why would you want to destroy something that has no meaning to you in any way? The more important something is to you, the harsher and more thorough your criticism, and the harsher and more thorough your sadism."

"Yes, yes..."

"So every criticism is simultaneously an intense attachment to and a destructive turning against."

"Can you be clearer? Now say exactly what you want to say."

"You're not going to criticise something that doesn't interest you in any way.

Unless you are a nitpicker. But even then, you think the person you are criticising is worth belittling and destroying their dignity as a human being."

"Hm... Yes... So what?"

"If you want to destroy something, a scientific theory, an ideology, a dignity, a moral rule, a society, you have to be particularly attached to these things by hating them before you can make it your life's work to destroy them at all costs. So, Staf, if you, like the Left, make it your life's work to destroy the existing society, you are simultaneously destroying your own life's work, the destruction of that society."

"OK, I see what you mean. But you can have other goals in life besides that, can't

you? The arts, or a family, or a girlfriend?"

He laughed: "Any 'but' is critical."

Then serious again: "That is indeed possible. It all depends on how you were brought up and what models you imitate, consciously or unconsciously. I think that after a successful revolution, practical critics like our leftist messiahs have to keep destroying. They've spent their whole lives focused on every aspect of the society they want to destroy, so after their revolution they'll keep recognising the features of that society in all sorts of behaviours and attitudes. These are then "counter-revolutionary" and must be destroyed. And so it will go on until the man in the street, Candide, has had enough and has his executioners executed while selling his soul to the man who restores peace, Napoleon, for example. That's how every revolution eats its own children..."

But that's not what I wanted to say...

Once you've made the meaning of your existence entirely dependent on the achievement of a single goal, it's hard to maintain a positive outlook. As the English say, hopeful travel is better than arriving. Besides, the only way to win the Tour is to beat your opponents. So there is a sadistic element to winning, as there is in any competition."

"Is that a bad thing?"

"It's not a moral issue. At least not at the beginning. But it's human nature. If you really take offence at something, that obstacle becomes an obsession, and so you want to destroy that obstacle."

"Why do you drink so much? Is that for another such reason?"

"Yes," he grinned. "I get angry at myself, and not just a little."

Then again warmly: "But I'm trying to remedy that."

"How?"

"It's through you, through our friendship. It gives me the chance to discover myself. It forces me to do so."

"Let's drink to that."

We drained our glasses and ordered more. Etienne served them.

"To my sadism!"

"And that of all humanity!"

Immediately Etienne protested, "But not to mine, eh. I'm not a sadist."

"You see, he already makes a distinction! The sadist!"

"And he puts himself above his clients!"

"And thus endangers his patronage, the masochist!"

"Hahaha."

"The dirty exploiter! He discriminates!"

"Carlo, you curse, you dirty sadist!"

"Hahahahahahaaaa."

"Mentally deranged."

"Haaaa, he's doing it again! Sadism again!"

"Hahahahahaaa, and now we are sadists again!"

"Yes! Hahaha!"

We both laughed out loud, Etienne went off and the beer was soon empty. To bring my colleague back on track, I said, "So it doesn't matter how fleeting your displeasure is. So if you insult or curse someone, even silently and not for more than a split second, you are already a sadist?"

"Of course, you are linking it to Flemish nationalism again... But yes, it is like that. It's just that sadism is in you, it's inherent in you."

"So everyone is a sadist? Even me?"

"Yes. We are all sadists. When you say 'this difference or this distinction is not allowed', what you're really saying is 'there is a difference or a distinction' – because otherwise it's not possible to talk meaningfully about differences – 'but I don't like that', and then you just call these differences 'contrasts' or 'interpretations', like Derrida. Interpretations that are poisoned by the hidden presuppositions of the Westerner who speaks. But at the same time, he's making a new, firm distinction between himself and those he criticises... But I think it's pretty obvious that languages are different, and that people feel a sense of belonging based on a common language. So, is there any value in having different languages? Even some leftists admit that there is. But then, of course, you also have to take the differences between cultures for granted, and they don't, especially when it comes to the different degrees of sadism that different cultures find meaningful and obvious... But, as you say yourself, you can also enjoy things that are not value judgements, not judgements of others. And you can curb your sadism, but then you have to know yourself very well. That's it... The more quickly you dismiss someone or something, the less you value them. But the longer you dwell on something you don't like, the more you value it."

"How can that be? If every criticism is sadomasochistic, and if everyone sometimes criticises other people in a questionable way, killing their own obsessions in the process, then surely everyone is always and everywhere a sadomasochist?"

"Yes."

"But what about the self-criticism you need to know yourself? That's

sadomasochistic too, isn't it?"

"Yes. In a way it is. Together with you, I am challenging the image of the saintly, unhappy Carlo, always the victim of circumstances. That is an image I am very attached to. So together we are challenging something in me that is wrong, that is not authentic, and in the meantime I am hurting myself to please both of us. Because if I don't correct myself, we will inevitably fight and our friendship will be over. So the sadism I turn on myself, however painful it may be, is the joy of my life. In that sense it is masochistic. Sadomasochistic, actually."

"OK. I see. So that applies to everyone?"

"Yes. As a possibility. Most cannot deal with the pain, so they always blame others. Then they can take their sadism out on "society" and "others" by criticising them. That's how it works. But I can deal with myself much better now. And with you too. That's a win for us."

"I get a lot of flowers thrown at me here, along with the pot and the soil, but okay... But there has to be a limit somewhere, hasn't there?"

"I don't think so. People are always judging, implicitly or explicitly. All you have to do is say, 'I'm good, and so are you, because you're the same as me', and you're basically saying, 'and that third one isn't, because he's different'. That's just human nature, to judge in that way, to make value judgements about others and yourself in that way."

"And this is all because of language?"

"No. It is human nature expressed through language. Every language is perfectly adapted to human nature because it expresses it perfectly. It cannot do otherwise. Creation always expresses the qualities of the creator. Language always makes distinctions and therefore always creates divisions. If man did not need this from himself, he would never have invented language. Moreover, every human being is hereditarily endowed with the ability to acquire language. So without heredity, there is no need for distinction and no ability to acquire a language that makes distinctions. And therefore no need for sadism or anything else, but also no need for friendship."

"Can we ever form an image of ourselves and others that is completely accurate and pure?"

"No. I don't think inner conflict ever ends. It is a struggle. But one through which you grow."

"Let's have another drink. *Ad fundum!*⁸"

⁸ Bottoms up!

Needless to say, we lost the thread after that third Stella⁹. But I remember asking him another question, and what he said. "So your criticism of those guys from the SVB is also sadomasochistic?"

"Yes, until I have thoroughly dealt with their contradictions. After that, it will be business as usual."

We paid our bill to Etienne and crossed the Old Market to "Bacchus", our own student pub, to get on with business as usual. And you can bet that our Marcusean leftists, who believe that everyone is equal and should let their libidos and death drives run wild while living beyond good and evil, were pretty critical of our agenda.

Staf Van der Auwera, 30 November 1999.

⁹ Stella Artois is a pilsner beer, brewed by *Brouwerij Artois* in Leuven, Belgium.

Chapter I: Species-Being Versus Antinomy

Preface

Antwerp, 25 February 1968

Dear Mother,

In this essay, I'm trying to find a way out of the "nature-nurture" debate that has been going on since Plato. I wrote most of it in the d'Haeseleers' villa after reading Marx, Adorno, Fromm and Marcuse, and the latest work of Derrida. Nobody should be smarter than me, you know, not even my best friend Staf Van der Auwera. It is not nice to behave like this towards a friend. And my manic tendency to always want to have my say on every hype, preferably with some expertise, is equally unattractive. There are plenty of bookshops in Leuven, and what I can't find there, I'm sure I'll find in Brussels or Antwerp. And I'm not short of money, as you know only too well.¹⁰

Poor d'Haeseleers! They thought I was writing on something I needed to get my degree. And how they spoiled me! As if dying wasn't hard enough for them. After they died at the end of January, I tried to continue working on my essay in Leuven, but I couldn't. Like last year, the demonstrations were in full swing and the Flemish professors expressed their solidarity with us Flemish students and assured us that we would not be judged on our participation in July. However, I really wanted to finish this essay and I am in a time crunch because of my change to Modern History. To avoid being constantly distracted by the noise of the street and friends ringing the doorbell, I rented a room in the Balansstraat in Antwerp South at the beginning of this month. It's not far from home, but you'll understand that I couldn't concentrate there because of the tensions between you and Dad.

How did I come to think about left-wing ideas?

Before answering that question, I'll first define what the terms "leftist", "left-wing"

¹⁰ The reasons behind his financial abundance are elucidated in his autobiography. In this introduction, it appears that he is seeking to settle a score with his mother, but this is not the case. In fact, he was profoundly disillusioned when his sister informed him in mid-December that their mother had a lover. Following his parents' divorce, he had desired to reside with her, but he believed that the man in question was G.v.d.W., whom he found disagreeable. A few weeks after his conversation with his sister, his mother revealed the true identity of this man to him. (Staf Van der Auwera, 1999)

and "the Left", and "rightist", "right-wing" and "the Right" mean in my vocabulary. *I define a leftist as someone who believes that equality for all is desirable, and/or necessary and/or achievable and who considers human beings intrinsically capable of a shared experience of that equality and/or equivalence, and I define a rightist as someone, who for whatever reason disagrees with this left-wing view of human nature.*

As Staf and I had agreed in early October, I had reconstructed our conversation about the Koran and the causes of violence in general. A few days before I started this essay, he had sent it back to me, with all the corrections and additions he wanted, and asked me to turn it into a readable dialogue. If you're interested, it's in that other folder, along with my life sketch. I will give it to you when your divorce is final.

While I was thinking about this discussion with my friend and all the mutual hatred and jealousy your would-be writers display every week in our music room, and all the mutual attacks of all kinds of people and groups in Leuven, something in their behaviour and statements struck me like a bolt of lightning. And when I reread Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, it happened to me again. I don't know if others have expressed my views on human nature and its implications more clearly, but they came to my mind without their help and assistance.

But before you start belittling my insights or throwing them in the dustbin, saying that it is inappropriate for someone who lives immoderately to pass judgement on people who can control themselves, I want to make one thing clear. I could brush off any criticism cowardly, cynically and pretentiously with the famous quote from someone whose name I can't remember: "I am like a signpost. It does not go where it points." But then I avoid my self and I am tired of all the deception. So now I take a different approach to my motives, one that is probably much closer to the truth.

If one is always afraid of thunderstorms and therefore always pay close attention to the weather, one is probably much more sensitive to atmospheric changes than someone who doesn't care. Similarly, I think my anxiety disorder causes me to be much more aware of threatening situations than others. Indeed, I noticed this on several occasions when I was out at night with the *Geelse*¹¹.

Moreover, I never appreciated the excesses of the *jeunesse dorée*, despite the opportunities I had to participate in it. All I had to do was accept the invitations of Bob Verbruggen, to name just one of the snooty clique you know only too well,

¹¹ Leuven student club whose members came mainly from the Mol-Geel region.

given your dislike of them. Their self-congratulation and their carefully cultivated ironic tone, which they think is sharp and witty but which only shows their contempt for anyone who does not fit into their lifestyle, disgust me. Once, at their insistence, I smoked hash and dreamed the most beautiful dreams I will probably ever dream. But to add another addiction when I already have to deal with alcohol every day? No, my mind is already sufficiently "expanded"; it doesn't need any more "expansion".

And I am not a man like Alcibiades, Mother. I am not a high-born, gifted bastard whose sole aim is to manipulate his countrymen, while having no qualms about betraying and destroying them if, in his opinion, these actions will further his individual fulfilment. I first came across this moral deserter in high school when I had to read Thucydides' "*Peloponnesian War*". It was the part where the Athenians and the Melians argued about the right and wrong of the fittest. I was really interested, so I read the whole book.

And finally, every time someone disagrees with another human being, they are passing judgement on them (by implying "you are wrong"), regardless of the tone in which that judgement is made, and regardless of whether they manage to properly explain and substantiate their own position. So should everyone just shut up, hoping to come across as modest and diplomatic? Or as stupid, dull and underdeveloped, depending on the sadistic needs of another equally self-righteous pedant on the sidelines?

By sadism, I mean the conscious or unconscious experience and conscious satisfaction of the need to harm or hurt someone. The reason or reasons why a particular human being wants to perform and/or carries out these acts are irrelevant to the mere determination of the existence of that need. These reasons are often afterwards merely invoked by the individual or group, which has satisfied its need for sadism, to justify its own feelings, views and behaviour. On the other hand, what is important for that mere observation is the fact that a human being is only capable of harbouring aggressive feelings towards a particular individual or group, of devising aggressive actions against them and/or of committing aggressive acts at their expense, if the need to harm and/or hurt others is inherent in his being. If that need were absent from his being, he would in no circumstance (even in the circumstance of belonging to a particular class or structure, or living in a particular context) be capable of sensing in himself an aggressive feeling, of devising an aggressive action or reaction and of carrying out such action.

Nor are relevant for the mere determination of the existence of that intrinsic need the manner in which an individual wishes to hurt others, the situation he intends

to do so and/or in which he actually does so, and the greater good in the name of which he intends to do so and/or actually does so.

Nor is it relevant to that determination how fleeting that need is (or has been) and how much time its satisfaction has taken.

The pleasure one derives from the satisfaction of this need by toying with the idea of some form of aggression against someone or a group and by carrying out those aggressive acts (making sadistic statements and performing sadistic acts) is also sadistic.

§ 1. Wovon man am besten sprechen kann, darüber darf man nicht schweigen

1.1. Attributing Predictive Value to Ancient Myths Is a Form of Wishful Thinking

The meaning I give to the concept of sadism differs from Freud's. Indeed, Freud's definition (enjoying the suffering of others) is too limited to clarify what I am trying to articulate, and it is also one-sided because it is a priori directed against bourgeois society. Conversely, his concept of "Eros" is useful in the sense of "lust for life" in the broadest sense. However, the scope of his concept of "Thanatos" (the death instinct), the second basic human instinct according to him, is open to question. One could translate "Thanatos" as sadism, in the sense I define the term. However, it would be erroneous to ascribe to the death instinct an all-conciliatory function, as Marcuse¹² does in the following quotation: "(...) moreover, the

¹² The Frankfurt School originated from the *Institut für Sozialforschung* (Institute for Social Research) at the University of Frankfurt. This institute was established by Felix Weil in 1924 and was subsequently directed by Max Horkheimer from 1931. The *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* was launched in 1932 as the official journal of the Institute. It was within this journal that the members of the Institute formulated their ideas and engaged in debate about the concepts that would later be known as 'critical theory'. This could be described as an unorthodox continuation of Marxism combined with other disciplines, including Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. Members of the Institute included Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Friedrich Pollock and Walter Benjamin.

- Some may be quick to dismiss the Frankfurt School as outdated. However, it is important to consider the reasons behind its continued relevance. In 1999, the state is not less involved in the economy than it was between 1924 and 1975. In fact, it was more so. Furthermore, if the current figurehead of the Left, Derrida, is permitted to commence his critique of Western thought with a critique of the thought of Plato (c. 427-347 BC) without his followers feeling compelled to make disparaging remarks about it, why should Carlo not be permitted to commence his essay with reflections on the ideas of the Frankfurt School? At the time he wrote his essay, these views were pervasive throughout Western universities and, through these institutions, throughout Western society.

An original idea deserves attention, especially if one claims to take thinking about human beings seriously. Rather than disdainfully shrugging one's shoulders at his choice, it would be more constructive to allow the meaning and scope of what he communicates to penetrate one's mind. This may result in a similar, albeit less comfortable, catharsis experienced by the prisoners in Plato's cave upon being freed from their familiar shadows and exposed to the first rays of sunlight.

- The quotations are from Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, Boston, 1955, pp. 234-235 and p. 271. Since Carlo relies on his mother's scholarship, he does not cite his source here. I will therefore provide a citation from Martin Jay's *A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-*

objective of the death instinct is not destruction *per se* but the elimination of the need for destruction."¹³

This is a phenomenal excuse for every persecutor, murderer, serial killer, mass murderer and sex murderer. It should be noted that the sex murderer commits his crime while being led to do so by his libido, which belongs to Eros.

It is important to note that Marcuse employs the term "death instinct" not in the sense of "self-destruction," but rather in the context of "destruction," which can be defined as sadism in the sense I have described earlier. Consequently, the terms "Thanatos" and "death instinct" will be used interchangeably in this text to refer to the need for sadism.

In a previous section of the same book, Marcuse discusses the concept of Nirvana, which he had previously encountered in a work by Freud¹⁴: "If the instinct's basic objective is not the termination of life but of pain - the absence of tension - then paradoxically, in terms of the instinct, the conflict between life and death is the more reduced, the closer life approximates the state of gratification. Pleasure principle and Nirvana principle then converge. At the same time, Eros (...) would be strengthened, and the strengthened Eros would, as it were, absorb the objective of the death instinct."¹⁵

This prompts the question of whether this is also the case in the mind of a sex murderer when he commits his crime.

"If"...

Even if we accept Freud's assertion that humans strive for a reconciliation between the death instinct and the will to live by avoiding the tensions caused by both (see Marcuse's quotation), can we conclude from his observation of this striving that it

1950, Heinemann, London, 1976, pp. 110-111. Having verified the accuracy of Jay's references, I have made corrections to some of them. It is regrettable that Carlo's untimely demise prevented him from consulting this author's work. Jay was an admirer of the Frankfurt School, and reading his book would have obviated the necessity for my friend to consult a great deal of other literature. (Staf Van der Auwera, 1999.)

¹³ H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, Boston, 1955, p. 271.

¹⁴ S. Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, VI.: "Daß wir als die herrschende Tendenz des Seelenlebens, vielleicht des Nervenlebens überhaupt, das Streben nach Herabsetzung, Konstanterhaltung, Aufhebung der inneren Reizspannung erkannten (das Nirwanaprinzip nach einem Ausdruck von Barbara Low), wie es im Lustprinzip zum Ausdruck kommt, das ist ja eines unserer stärksten Motive, an die Existenz von Todestrieben zu glauben."

"That we recognized as the prevailing tendency of psychic life, perhaps of nervous life in general, the pursuit of decreasing, the maintenance of constancy, the abolition of inner tension (the Nirvana principle after an expression of Barbara Low), as expressed in the pleasure principle, that is one of our strongest motives to believe in the existence of death drive."

¹⁵ H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, Boston, 1955, pp. 234-235.

inevitably leads to the complete extinction of these fundamental instincts, i.e. that their extinction is a realistic ideal? It can be argued that man may instinctively feel the need for serenity in order to avoid, thanks to that serenity, the tensions caused by both the death instinct and the will to live. However, this does not mean that perfect serenity, nirvana, is an attainable goal. The constant desire to escape tension creates constant tension. The constant effort of the will to achieve nirvana by denying the world and the self creates tension. Both denial of the world and affirmation of the world are acts of the will. Every intentional act is caused by tension and creates tension. Buddhism is self-contradictory. If it is true that all desire causes suffering, then so does the desire to attain the state of Nirvana. Furthermore, even if some people manage to feel relaxed through meditation or complete resignation, they are forced to end the state of inner relaxation in order to feed themselves and satisfy other bodily needs. Consequently, they must once more force themselves to turn away from the demands of everyday reality in order to regain the concentration required to achieve the state of inner peace. Those who want to achieve perfect, eternal peace must commit suicide. This can be committed, for example, by going on a hunger strike.

Another question that could be raised in relation to Marcuse's optimism about the reconciliation of contradictions and opposites (e.g. the opposites equal-unequal, good-evil, true-false) in Nirvana through man's surrender to his death instinct (instinct of destruction) is this: Does the death instinct require an "objective" that is more than simply the satisfaction of the death instinct itself? Is it not merely an intrinsic need or desire without more? Doesn't Marcuse himself posit that Thanatos is present in every human being, precisely because the death instinct belongs to the being (or nature) of every human being? And does he not contradict himself by claiming that this constant need can be thoroughly and permanently satisfied by the attainment of an "objective" (nirvana, the absence of any tension) that transcends the immediate satisfaction of this need?

In order to achieve this instant gratification, Thanatos requires a target, a victim or a group of victims. In order to be satisfied, the death drive of individuals and groups will seek and find that victim or victims each time. Once the sadistic act has been performed or the sadistic words spoken so that a particular person's sadism has been temporarily satisfied, that particular person's need for sadism remains, for that need is inherent in human beings. The fact that this need temporarily decreases in intensity because an individual or group succeeds in actually killing another human being or committing mass murder against a particular community does not

mean that the death drive of this individual or group is completely and permanently extinguished. While the perpetrator or perpetrators may recall with pleasure and satisfaction how they gratified their sadism, their death drive is merely biding its time for a new opportunity to harm or slaughter "others," including the women, the weak, and the non-conformists. The Aztecs and Assyrians, the Romans, the Huns, the medieval knights and mercenary armies, and not least Stalin and the party that oppressed the Baltic states after the Second World War all harmed and slaughtered these "others".

If there is a (constant) "conflict between life and death" in every human being, so that there is a (constant) tension in every human being, it follows that the absorption of the death instinct (annihilation instinct) into the "enhanced" Eros in Nirvana cannot be achieved. Consequently, the "objective" assigned to the death instinct (destruction instinct) by Marcuse cannot be achieved. Therefore, it is unnecessary to speculate about this objective. Marcuse's argument should not divert attention from the essential aspects of his theory, which is the sadism that should ensure that all opposites are reconciled.

The objective of the death drive (the avoidance of tension) is assumed by Marcuse to be absorbed by the intensified Eros in Nirvana, which, according to him, would lead to the complete extinction of both the death drive and Eros. If both were only incompletely extinguished, the state of Nirvana would not be achieved. In Nirvana, both the death drive and the sexual instinct are said to be reconciled with Eros because they are completely extinguished. This state is said to have been attained because the death drive, which is a lust for destruction, and the sexual instinct, libido, are not hindered by anything in terms of their gratification, such as moral objections or external impediments. It is a question of whether this is possible. Can a person's death drive be fully and permanently satisfied (completely extinguished) after it has been given by that person and by the context in which he lives the unfettered freedom to commit lust murder with impunity (a killing prompted by the libido, which, because the act of committing it gives pleasure, belongs to the Eros instinct), or while the morally uninhibited person yearns to commit murder? Can human beings experience absolute satisfaction and peace (nirvana) without experiencing a desire to re-live their lustful experiences of rape, murder and mayhem that they experienced during race riots, class struggle, persecution, revolution or war?

Of course, man may choose to repent and curb his lustful tendencies. However, if, following the actual rape, murder or manslaughter, Thanatos persists in the brains

of the murderers and rapists as a lustful memory that is a desire for repetition, it is impossible for the complete extinction of all psychic tension to occur by reaching the state of Nirvana. The rapist wants to rape again and the slaughterer of people wants to slaughter again. This is particularly the case if they have the opportunity to commit these acts with impunity. For instance, during a Marxist permanent revolution or in situations of permanent anarchy (i.e. complete lawlessness in the absence of any law enforcement), for instance during plague epidemics and in cases of civil war or war.

Nevertheless, even when the perpetrators no longer have the opportunity to satisfy their sadism with impunity, they usually remain under the spell of their life-threatening desires. For these desires are part of human nature, just as the instincts that drive people to act on them are part of human nature. According to Marcuse too, these instincts are part of that nature, but unlike this essay's author, he tries to downplay and justify the impact of these instincts by proposing nirvana as their ultimate objective.

It is imperative that psychologists, psychiatrists and judges recognise the existence of these desires and the underlying instincts during the hearing of a criminal case and after the sentence has been passed, regardless of whether the accused or convicted person and their lawyers have made non-binding statements of regret. Potential repeat offenders should not be given another opportunity to unleash their Thanatos on that part of humanity that holds its sadism in check. It is impossible to recognise the presence of these instincts in potential recidivists and to protect that part of society which actually keeps its sadism in check if the so-called professionals who protect society are animated only by a quasi-tolerant empathy for the sadistic behaviour and fantasies of their patients or clients. It is similarly impossible for these professionals to fulfil their duty to protect society if they are under the discriminatory illusion that they alone can perfect humanity in a messianic or godman-like way by transforming the perpetrator into a "new man" while neglecting or ignoring the victim. (This position is further developed in Chapter IV).

Only a cold-blooded narcissist can remain completely stoic and unmoved while destroying people or witnessing their destruction. Such an individual is likely to reflect with satisfaction on the act of rape and murder committed against their victims, and on the sensation experienced during the act.

Incidentally, people do not need a mental disorder at all to experience pleasure without any guilt while destroying others or witnessing their destruction. All they

need to that effect is the firm conviction that their cause is indisputably the only right one, in other words that they and they alone are pursuing "the one true greater good". If they hold this conviction, in their eyes all victims of their actions are merely collateral damage. An example of someone who sees them as such is Pilar in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, at the moment when she nostalgically describes an anarchist purge carried out in the first months of the Spanish Civil War by the gang to which she herself belonged.

Moreover, it is a fact that many balanced human beings spontaneously enjoy works such as the *Iliad*, pornography and war films, and that every human being is capable of remembering and enjoying erotic and sadistic scenes and experiences. In the light of these considerations, however, one may ask how a human being, despite his or her inherent sadism that is impossible to satisfy definitively, can live in relative peace with himself or herself and others. I will return to this question in due course.

In addition to the separation of the death drive from the belief that this drive can be completely extinguished in nirvana, the death drive must also be separated from the "phallic drive" of the "oppressive, patriarchal capitalist society" (Frankfurter Schule) and any reference to the myths of Oedipus and Electra and the Oedipus complex, as the unconscious driving force behind all possible and real uprisings of the economically dependent against the "patricentric-acquisitive"¹⁶ monopoly capitalists, should be considered biased and one-sided.

Why?

In *Eros and Civilization*¹⁷, Herbert Marcuse posits that Freud's most challenging and suggestive hypotheses are the most true and valuable. These are the death instinct, the primeval horde and the killing of the primeval father (symbolised by an Oedipus in an animal skin). Marcuse asserts that this archaic legacy has meaning because of its symbolic value. He writes, "We use Freud's anthropological speculation only in this sense: *for its symbolic value* [emphasis by Marcuse]. The archaic events that the hypothesis stipulates may forever be beyond the realm of anthropological verification; the alleged consequences of these events are historical facts, and their interpretation in the light of Freud's hypothesis lends them a neglected significance which points to the historical future."

As will be demonstrated subsequently, this methodology of establishing a

¹⁶ The pejorative and therefore sadistic adjective "patricentric-acquisitive" was coined by Erich Fromm, a man who was otherwise gentle. In *Eros and Civilization* (Boston, 1955, p. 241), Marcuse refers to Fromm, thereby mentioning this adjective.

¹⁷ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, Boston, 1955, p. 60.

correlation between ancient mythological traditions and the socio-political context of the 20th century is a mode of representation that, in consideration of his intended purpose, suits him particularly well.

However, if we assume that Oedipus did not murder his father or had sexual intercourse with his mother in the context of a legitimate marriage, but that he and his tribesmen systematically beheaded and cannibalised the entire neighbouring tribe, then this mythical account may also be beyond the scope of anthropological verification. Nevertheless, it is my contention that this myth also possesses symbolic value in light of Freud's speculation. Indeed, the purported consequences of these events are historical facts whose interpretation in the light of Freud's hypothesis points to the historical future. Or whose meaning, when interpreted in the light of Freud's hypothesis, points to events of the recent and less recent past, such as the historical facts of the massacres and rapes by the troops led by Mahmud of Ghazni and Tamerlane, the massacres in the two world wars, the death toll in the civilian concentration camps (Second Boer War, 1899-1902), the concentration camps of the Fascists who advocated a corporate society, the concentration camps of the Nazis addicted to *Blut-und-Boden*, the concentration camps of the neo-Shinto Japanese and the contemporary "gulag" of the Bolsheviks. Or whose meaning refers to the Armenian genocide perpetrated by the fanatically nationalistic Islamic Turks.¹⁸ These historical facts demonstrate that committing mass murder is not a phenomenon exclusive to capitalist, bourgeois, right-wing or Christian ideologies and is not a privilege of Western whites.¹⁹ What unites these

¹⁸ In this context, it is also necessary to consider the Cambodian genocide of the Killing Fields in Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge (Communist Party of Kampuchea) regime during its rule over the country from 1975 to 1979, the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and the subsequent First Congo War (1996) and Second Congo War (1998), and the Bosnian genocide of 1995 (Srebrenica) (Staf Van der Auwera, 1999). In this context, it is also important to mention the systematic persecution and mass murder of Christians and Yazidis by the IS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant). These crimes were unanimously declared genocide by the European Parliament on 3 February 2016. The Holodomor, which translates literally as "the plague of hunger", resulted in the deaths of millions of Ukrainians due to starvation. It was a famine that occurred in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic between 1932 and 1933. It was one of the most significant national disasters in Ukraine's modern history, resulting in an estimated death toll of between 2.5 and 7.5 million. As with the simultaneous Kazakh Famine, the primary cause can be attributed to the policies of the Soviet government, which involved the harsh collectivisation of agriculture. There is a divergence of opinion among scholars as to whether this government action should be considered genocidal. On 7 July 2023, the Netherlands formally recognised the Holodomor as genocide. On 9 March 2023, Belgium formally recognised the Holodomor as genocide.

¹⁹ This is not a pleonasm. Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands and Hokkaido (Japan) are home to a white minority, the Ainu, who were expelled and discriminated against by the native Japanese, a mixed race of later invaders. It is evident that neither the Ainu nor the Japanese were influenced by Judeo-Christian asceticism, which the Left believes to be the cause of hatred by Jews and Christians. Similarly, neither were they affected by Western capitalism and ethnocentrism, which the Left believes to be the cause of all

perpetrators of mass killings is that they all committed their acts with the intention of achieving a *greater good*.

I do not accept in advance the Left's possible objection that my imagination has no right to create a myth, as the same leftists do accept as an argument myths arising from other people's imagination. This objection from the Left would discriminate against me in a completely arbitrary way, especially since Marcuse himself states that "the archaic events mentioned by [Freud's] hypothesis may be forever beyond the reach of anthropological verification". Similarly, the events described in my myth may also be beyond the reach of anthropological verification. The unconscious Eros and Thanatos that prompt me to mythologise are no less valuable than the unconscious Eros and Thanatos of an anonymous prehistoric human being. It is likely that the latter consumed alcohol or smoked cannabis and believed that he was in communication with spirits or deities. And equally likely is the possibility that he was a wealthy young man, the youngest of a chief, and not particularly physically strong. But in any case, what he must have had is enough free time to engage in mythologising while the other tribesmen went hunting or gathering food.

Hey, I did it again! I again gave "all power to the imagination" and constructed yet another myth!

And probably the archaic events underlying this new myth are also beyond the reach of anthropological verification. But like any myth, according to Marcuse, when interpreted in the light of Freud's hypothesis, it too has symbolic value because its alleged consequences are historical facts pointing to the future. If the characters and events depicted in myths are indeed archetypes, then these archetypes must be applicable to all characters and circumstances in all cultures throughout history that bear a resemblance to the characters and circumstances depicted in those myths. So to what contemporary characters and circumstances does my second myth refer? It refers to a number of well-known figures from recent history and the circumstances in which they grew up. For example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and almost all the philosophers of the Frankfurt School, including Marcuse, were born into upper- or middle-class families, which provided them with considerable wealth and leisure.

In short, it is possible to create fantasies at will, always postulating that the

evil in the world. The Japanese were found to be particularly susceptible to hatred without Judeo-Christian asceticism, capitalism and Western ethnocentrism, and continued to exhibit this mentality and behaviour after they imported Zen Buddhism (12th century AD) with its denial of self and pursuit of nirvana.

characters and situations appearing in them are archetypes referring to contemporary individuals and situations. These fantasies can then be employed to support certain, self-desired conclusions, for instance, the conclusion that capitalist society is inherently evil because of the structural violence inherent in it. It is sufficient to posit that the ancient, archetypal myths possess symbolic value and that these archetypes are manifest in a multitude of historical facts and phenomena in the present. In other words, following Marcuse, it is only necessary to assume that the meaning of myths, when interpreted in the light of Freud's hypothesis, points to the historical future, e.g. to the feelings and actions of today's bourgeois capitalist society. However, from any myth that recounts the murders and massacres that are perpetrated by gods, goddesses, demigods and heroes, it can similarly be demonstrated that violence, in whatever form, is inherent not only in bourgeois capitalist society, but also in that of the Aztecs, the Incas, African peoples and Islamic states. In addition to my myth of the murderous and cannibalistic behaviour of Oedipus and his tribesmen, each of these myths can be seen as foreshadowing the death camps of the USSR and the Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic of China, as well as the establishment of all future death camps and the waging of all international wars. However, each of the above-mentioned myth-creating states had its own system of production, its own system of exchange of goods and its own unique culture. In light of this given in combination with the above, these mythological archetypes are superfluous in explaining the behaviour of individuals and groups, even within the framework of dialectical materialism. The utilisation of these myths to substantiate the tenets of this philosophy is a diversionary tactic that diverts attention from the intrinsic qualities of human beings, irrespective of the material circumstances in which they find themselves.

What then is the undeniable origin of human behaviour?

This question can be answered by examining what all human beings have always had in common, namely their language. If one adopts this approach, one no longer needs the thesis that man in his natural state is inherently good and the *language-worded* assurances of Jean-Jacques Rousseau or Friedrich Nietzsche, respectively, that the realisation of an earthly paradise or the creation of the *Übermensch* are achievable goals. One then no longer needs the Frankfurter Schule's *language-worded* "proofs" that the archetypes of ancient myths point to the future of contemporary Western society and that, as a result, the utopias of Rousseau and Nietzsche can only be realised in a classless society. One then no longer needs to

demonstrate in Derrida's way (*in a language*) that an unobservable "pure movement", namely the "*différance*" (see §2), precedes the formation of the form of the differentiating language made possible by this formation of the form, in order to conclude (*in a language*) that Rousseau's and Nietzsche's utopias can only be realised in a society that does not differentiate (and is therefore indifferent). As usually when seeking a solution to a problem, also in the search for an indisputable answer to the question of the origin and nature of every human behaviour, Ockham's razor is the most effective tool. Indeed, it is possible to derive the characteristics of the nature and fundamental needs of every human being from the most salient and least arguable feature of the human genome, namely the capacity to acquire language. Moreover, the fundamental needs of human beings can be inferred from the essential characteristics of each language and from the ways in which each human being uses language in his interactions with others, especially when he makes value judgements expressed in language about the views, character and behaviour of those others.

Note that the term "value judgment" is used here in the singular. The author does this because any value judgment a human being makes about himself or herself implies a value judgment about other human beings, and vice versa. When someone says "I am a good person", he is in effect declaring that anyone who does not share his beliefs, emotions or actions is morally inferior. This phenomenon occurs in all times and civilisations, regardless of the underlying assumptions behind the value judgements of different civilisations. These underlying assumptions may be of a mythical, religious or philosophical nature (e.g. with Husserl and Levinas), or of a linguistic nature (with de Saussure).

Take, for example, an elderly woman who, stepping along the pavement, trips and falls on the road surface. Someone immediately offers help, supports her and frees her from the predicament. The woman expresses her gratitude and leaves. The person, who has come to her aid, smiles with satisfaction and thinks "You are a good guy". This judgment of that person about himself implies that in his eyes anyone who, for whatever reason, would have left the woman lying on the tarmac when he or she could have helped her, is not a good person (see the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Bible). For something to be considered good, that something must be contrasted with its opposite. In all cultures and structures (conformist groups), there is always a dichotomy between what is generally considered good and its implied opposite. If this were not the case, unwritten law, common law, jurisprudence and legislation would never have arisen, nor would the