

C.8-11. Elements of philosophy of culture

Location

8. Courses from 1996 to 2000

8. Courses from 1996 to 2000

- 8.1. Elements of Logic, 1996-1997 (EL1-EL92, 115p.)
- 8.2. Elements of methodology, 1996-1997 (EM1-EM71, 101p.)
- 8.3. Elements of Philosophy of Religion 96-97, ERF1-ERF335, 396p.)
- 8.4. Introduction to New Age, 1998-1999, (NA1-NA151, 80 p.)
- 8.5. Elements of Logic, 1997-1998, (EL1-EL99, 133p.)
- 8.6. Elements of Ontology, 1997-1998 (HM1-HM24, 30 p.)
- 8.7. Cosmology, 1997-1998 (K1-K52, 62p.)
- 8.8. Theology, 1997-1998 (TH1-TH42, 50p.)
- 8.9. Man as a biological being, 1997-1998 (BW1-BW42, 52p.)
- 8.10. Man as an Immortal Soul, 1997-1998 (OZ1-OZ37, 37p.)

8.11. Elements of Philosophy of Culture, 1998-1999 (CF1-F58, 70p.)

- 8.12. Elements of Cognitivism I, 1999-2000 (COGN1-COGN52, 68p.)
- 8.13. Elem. of Cognitivism II, 1999-2000 (COGN2.1-COGN.2.130, 157p.)
- 8.14. Elements of Cognitivism III, 1999-2000 (COG3.1-COG3.58, 82p.)
- 8.15. Elements of Logistics, 1999-2000 (LOG1-LOG39, 49p.)
- 8.16. The social question as a cultural quality, 99-00 (SK1-SK100, 141p.)

Remark: *This course has been provided with larger spacing than the text of the original course. References in the older version of this text therefore do not correspond to the current pagination of 'Word'. For this reason, the original pagination is displayed each time with the letters 'CF'. They stand for Culture-Philosophy', (in Dutch: 'Cultuur-Filosofie'), and are derived from the old page number.*

Introduction: *We have previously defined culture as seeking a solution to a given and a demand. This course illustrates this in a number of ways and in a number of time periods throughout history.*

C.8-11. Elements of philosophy of culture

Content: *Click on the text you wish to read.*

C.8-11. Elements of Philosophy of Culture	0
Preface. —	2
1. Ontological method. -- (01/6).	2

1.1. 'Culture' according to Hans Blumenberg (2)	3
1.2. Franz Kafka: The Laws. The Deviation from them as well as the feedback (3)	4
1.3. Culture as a law-based problem-solving method (4).	5
1.4. Scientific and pseudoscientific reasoning (6).	8
2. Being is known by reason. Experience and especially testimony (7/13) ...	9
2.1. Is pure reason what is governed by two and only two axioms? (8) ...	10
2.2. Explanations (9)	11
2.3. Metaphysics (ontology): what it really is. (10)	12
2.4. Nominalism(s) versus realism(s) (11)	14
2.5. Empiricism (12)	15
2.6. Applicative model (13)	16
3. Discussion of opinions (14/22)	17
3.1. Modern discussion regarding the foundations is liberal (14)	17
3.2. The theory of communicative action (J. Habermas) (15)	18
3.3. Critical Religious Theory (16)	20
3.4. Reason. If reason alone. Leads to undecidability (17)	21
3.5. Rationality regarding pure reason and its foundations (18)	22
3.6. WW Bartley on philosophy and theology of deployment (20)	24
3.7. Criticism of Reason (22)	26
4. Premodern/ modern/ postmodern (23/37)	28
4.1. How modern are primitives and how are they modern? (23)	28
4.2. How modern are ancient and medieval medicines and how? (24) ...	29
4.3. How modern are the moon religions and how are they modern? (25) ...	30
4.4. The typical modern man: he can make himself (26)	31
4.5. Freethinking (libertinism) (27).	32
4.6. Cartesianism as modern thought and life (29)	34
4.7. The Consistent Rationalism of the Marquis de Sade (31)	37
4.8. Students and libertarianism (34)	40
4.9. From modern to postmodern: Georg Simmel (37)	41
5. Modern opinions on ethics (38/50)	45
5.1. Bourgeois-liberal morality (38)	45
5.2. Value theory as axiomatics (39)	46
5.3. Morality from a socio-biological perspective (40)	47
5.4. Ethics (41).	48
5.5. What is the fellow man: I - again or not-I? (42)	50
5.6. The reason of the modern bourgeoisie according to K. Marx/ Fr. Engels. (43)	51
5.7. The purely rational man (44)	52
5.8. The moral question according to Vladimir Solovyev (45)	53
5.9. Kierkegaard's critique of rhetoric (46)	54

5.10. Sex. Sexual Revolution ed (47)	55
5.11. Moral-free eros (48)	57
5.12. Pia Pera, diary of Lo (50).	59
6. Modern reason, political confessions (51/58)	60
6.1. Analysis of Fate (51)	60
6.2. Reason proposes but fate disposes (the turn into the opposite) (53) .	62
6.3. Descartes and Hegel propose, but fate disposes (54)	63
6.4. Revolutionary reason proposes. Revolution disposes (55)	65
6.5. The ecological issue (56).	66
6.6. Ecology (Biblically interpreted) (57)	67
6.7. The 'intellectuals' in modern discussion (58)	68

CF1

Foreword. —

We begin by defining 'culture': "If a problem (given (gg) + requested (gv)) - usually called 'nature' - is both correctly understood and correctly solved (solution), then there is culture.

With *Arn. Toynbee* (1889/1975; *A Study of History* (1934/1961), one can also say: being able to meet a challenge is culture. The definitions of Blumenberg (02) and Kafka (03/04) are models.

1. Ontological method. -- (01/6).

The GG and the GV are 'beings', realities. The solution is 'real' (in the Hegelian sense), capable of handling it, fitting the given and requested realities. - Peirce emphasizes science (05/06). Sources are one's own experience and testimony (07). Ontological reason aims at identity (phenomenology) and seeks reason (logic) (08/09). Ontology, primarily Platonic, investigates how (seemingly) real something is and how it is (seemingly) real. For example, culture (10). Three main tendencies: realism (Platonic and Aristotelian) and nominalism. The latter characterizes modern reason (11/13). It aims to construct concepts free from ontology or metaphysics.

Discussion of opinions .

The autonomous self, confronted with ever-singular data and issues, expresses constructed concepts in debating opinions.- (14/23) -- Discussing with a view to communicative action (14/15).

Consequence: indecisiveness (14/17) on the grounds of “Neither you nor I prove strictly”. Even regarding foundations or 'foundations' (axioms) (18/22). This entails rational criticism that exposes the crisis of foundations.

Premodern/modern/postmodern . -- (23/37). -- Primitive (23/25). Contemporary (26/34). Postmodern (35/37).

Modern opinions regarding ethics (morality). -- (38/50). It tends towards anarchic life.

Modern reason viewed from a fateological perspective . - (51/58). -- In summary, it can be asserted - as an 'opinion' on the matter -: “Modern reason proposes, but fate (that which it actually produces) disposes”. How things can turn out is confirmed here (up to and including a reversal to the opposite).

CF2

1.1. 'Culture' according to Hans Blumenberg (2)

Library st.: Tr. De Ruytter, *Dance of Death of Metaphors* (Hans Blumenberg's Reading of Western Cultural History) , in: *The Owl of Minerva* 11:4 (1995: summer), 221/238.

Blumenberg (1920/1996) was a professor at the University of Münster. We consider his definition of the concept of 'culture'.

1. The 'absolutism' (overwhelming supremacy) built away from reality .

a . The given

Nature ('reality') is so overwhelming that man, in his powerlessness against it, does not control the conditions of existence into which he finds himself thrown; indeed, he believes that he has no control over them (ac, 230).

b. The requested

As soon as there is talk of man as man, as we know him, he is the designer of the dismantling, the deconstruction, of the supremacy of reality. That is the meaning of his life. Blumenberg justifies this axiom on the basis of prevailing biological theories regarding the origin and survival of man as a biological species.

From the time of the jungle man, instincts prove unadapted to the environment, and man therefore lives in fear, the feeling that reality is so powerful that it compels human powerlessness from all sides. Blumenberg

also justifies his axiom on the basis of the theory of Thomas Hobbes (1588/1679), a modern Cartesian.

From the 'primordial state' there has been a “war of all against all”, such that man does not survive this state of overwhelming power unless he enters into a contract that finds one of its forms in the (modern) state.

2. Culture as a “solution to a problem”.

Oc, 231. -- The whole question is: “What problem?” Answer: making human powerlessness livable.

Metaphorology.

Confronting the harsh reality head-on is, as it were, impossible. Therefore, powerless man resorts to 'metaphors,' those things that position themselves between him and the 'absolutist' position of power of nature. They gloss over them.

Such 'symbols' (metaphors) are, to begin with, primitive myths, but also Greek philosophy, Christian theology, and the modern sciences. If myth does not overcome the supremacy of nature, neither do the other 'euphemisms'—including the modern sciences, products of reason.

So that Blumenberg does not share the typically modern belief in progress from that perspective. The crushing overwhelming power of all that is surrounding reality remains what it is: overwhelming.

CF3 .

1.2. Franz Kafka: The Laws. The Deviation from them as well as the feedback (3)

Pre-Socratics viewed nature, the cosmos, from a steering perspective: nature is;

- a.** purposeful (lawful),
- b.** at least partially deviating and
- c.** therefore, as deviating, in need of corrective (feedback, repair).

The Bible thinks analogously: paradise, the fall, restoration by virtue of redemption.

According to HJ Schoeps, **On Man** (**Reflections of Modern Philosophers**), Utrecht/Antwerp, 1966, 119/121 (** Franz Kafka: The Belief in Tragic Position **), this cybernetic schema governs the work of Fr. Kafka (1883/1924), a writer of world stature. We will examine the structure.

1. Oc, 123 . -- *Zur Frage der Gesetze* , a short work by Kafka, discusses the 'laws' known in Jewish circles. Jewish theologians (concerning the Hasidim, in Kafka's eyes a kind of 'nobility') speak at length about them. Kafka himself considers himself ignorant on the matter (am ha-arez) who, typically modern-enlightened, wonders whether “the laws” are not perhaps sham laws.

For Kafka lives “in the constant impression that he is governed by laws that he does not know” (oc, 123). For what is immediately given to him, a modern man, are not the laws but the theologians who, as a kind of theological-Biblical 'nobility', proclaim and explain for the benefit of “the people” (am ha-arez).

2 Oc, 124 . -- The great mass of “the people,” in contrast to the interpreters of the law, the 'nobility,' has deviated from the laws. (*Psalm 1:13*) -- That, at least, is the hypothesis that Kafka puts forward as a still somewhat Jewish believer.

3. Oc, 124 . -- A deviation—interpreted in the Jewish-orthodox sense—causes a divine judgment (gesera), i.e. an intervention by the lawgiver who is Yahweh who 'avenges' the deviation (i wants to rectify it).

Investigations of a Dog . -- Kafka knows theology but is not a theologian, but rather a man of letters who 'visualizes' theology in his artworks, depicting it in artistic models. Thus, in *Investigations of a Dog*, he tells how “the people” (think of present-day humanity) of dogs—already many generations ago—went astray (deviation).

This error or sin takes revenge and weighs heavily upon the current race of dogs that bears the burden of it but does not know the sufficient reason for it. This sufficient reason is the 'x', the weighing unknown, which lends Kafka's works the absurd atmosphere in which so many contemporaries recognize themselves.

CF4

1.3. Culture as a law-based problem-solving method (4).

We refer once again to *H.-J. Schoeps, *Over de mens **, *Utr./Antw.* , 1966, where he states that Fr. Kafka, raised Jewish, having become skeptical under the influence of modern rationalism, nevertheless continually looks forward to “the law(s)”.

These are to such an extent—in his view—the essential core of all successful culture that the disaster of present-day humanity lies in the fact that it “has been deprived of the awareness of being God’s creature, so that individually it grows into a 'thing', a 'lifeless matter', and socially into a nameless mass (oc, 131)”

Odradeck.

In Slavic, 'odradeck' means something like “fallen outside the law(s)”. -- The artist Kafka visualizes our cultural degeneration by means of a ghostly creature, Odradeck, 'deviated'. Modern man is increasingly a “dog-like man” without an 'I'. He is rather an 'it'. Just like the objects he increasingly makes use of—in our technological culture.

Thus he gives Odradeck attention to “the senseless (*note*: absurd, i.e. in this context: unexplained) form of a spool of yarn” (oc, 131).

The process.

The title of a famous work published in 1925. -- In a descriptive-narrative image (visualization), **Der Prozess** characterizes the fundamental structure of our degenerating culture, which is increasingly unable to cope with its mandates and is becoming 'more unreal'. Our culture is **a**. An enigma **b**. that compels unraveling. Unraveling that, at least according to Kafka, does not find the 'x' and is stuck before the enigma.

Note-- Let us consider a popular model for a moment: “Where did I earn that?”

Joseph K. is being charged by a mysterious and 'higher' (Kafka uses this to indicate a remnant of sacrality) court. But the file is accessible to neither Joseph K. nor his lawyers.

Behold the riddle.

Now for the unraveling. -- Joseph K. attempts to uncover the guilt for which he is being prosecuted. The role of his lawyers is immediately primarily to guess the offense. “To deduce from the interrogations what the content of the file is that forms the basis. That is very difficult.” (Oc, 130). “From the character and forms of the punishment one must try to find the 'x' of the sin (...).

the essence of guilt (*note: original*) from the nature of the punishment (*note: model*) ". (Oc, 129). -- This is how Kafka characterizes the modern rational man.

CF5

Ontology. (6)

Let us pause once more, just for a moment, at the definition of ontology described as the 'study of reality'.

Library st.: Kl. Oehler, *Einl.*, Charles S. Peirce, "*Ueber die Klarheit unserer Gedanken (How to Make our Ideas Clear)* ", Frankf.aM, 1968. Peirce discusses "the subject 'logic' and a concept that is very closely associated with logic, namely 'reality'" (oc, 80). Indeed, logic invariably begins with a task, namely a given (GG) and a requested or sought (GV), that is, something that imposes itself as "being there" ('actually').

Four methods . -- Peirce briefly characterizes four ways of dealing with reality.

Ia1. -- Method of tenacity . To a specific problem, an individual responds with the same specific type of solution, excluding any consideration for a possible alternative answer. People, including scientists, react in this way.

Ia2. -- Method of authority (orthodoxy method).

A specific problem is addressed within a group led by authoritative individuals with the same solution every time, to the exclusion of any consideration for a possible alternative solution. -- Many people, including scientists, react in this way, as well as, and not least, people belonging to religious groups.

Ib-- A priori method (preferred method).

In the name of 'reason' (reasoning), one responds individually or in groups to a specific problem with the same type of preferred solution, but including consideration of possible other solutions (discussion method)—many, especially those with a scientific background, practice this method.

II.-- Method of science (scientific method).

This approach is truly ontological. -- A specific problem is responded to individually or in a group with the same specific solution, namely testing against data independent of thinking by anyone. "We may define 'real' as that

whose characteristics are independent of what anyone thinks about it (without testing)” (oc, 80).

This course on special ontology (especially cultural ontology) stands or falls with the above. Sometimes the scientific method is labeled with the term “critical method” (a term that is, however, open to more than one interpretation).

CF6

1.4. Scientific and pseudoscientific reasoning (6).

Library st.: H. Roelants, *In the margins of science* , in: *Journal of Philosophy* . 60 (1998):1 (March), 5/32.

Steller very briefly reiterates the 'demarcation – or delimitation problem' – which has been posed for years in order to arrive at a clear and definitive definition of “all that is science”. Immediately, 'pseudoscience' becomes delimitable. However: “Quite a few delimitation criteria (including combinations) have been proposed, but none of them has proven unproblematic”. (Ac, 6). K. Popper, Th. Kuhn, I. Lakatos, – in between M. Bunge (the most developed physics is the norm), P. Feyerabend are briefly sketched.

Astrology is targeted as a pseudoscience. Each of the cited authors has their own reasons—which betray their axiomatics—for rejecting astrology, of course. Which in itself already calls for reservation. Then, fringe phenomena within the established sciences are dissected.

1. Marginal research .

The Gaia hypothesis, the hypothesis of morphogenetic fields (R. Sheldrake), the anthropic principle, applied catastrophe theory, animal language, artificial intelligence research, vitamin C and cancer, etc., are situated within the sciences but encounter suspicion, indeed, rejection.

Note-- Extremely divergent opinions. -- 'Endoheresias' (Asimov). For example, P. Duesberg's hypothesis that AIDS is not caused by the HIV virus.

2. Pathological science

Term originating from I. Langmuir (1881/1957), who defines 'pathological' in the context of science as “science concerning things that do not exist”. Still

within the sciences, but rejected by most as “highly debatable”. Such as the N-rays of R. Blondlot. Likewise, the so-called biological effect of extremely diluted homeopathic medicines (J. Benveniste) et al.

Resistance to new insights .

New insights rarely gain acceptance among scientists without difficulty. Consider B. McClintock, B. Belousov, and LaBerge. They were initially rejected as too unorthodox. The main reason: amidst a proliferation of genuine and spurious new ideas, established science is forced to resist in order not to lose itself in useless research.

Pseudoscience

This one exhibits “radical flaws” (even though real criteria are lacking). Pseudo-sciences do not die out as “social institutions” that are essentially inert: -- Or perhaps for other reasons!

CF7

2. Being is known by reason. Experience and especially testimony (7/13)

Western philosophy and ontology begin with the Milesian school. This originates from thinkers such as Thales (-624/-545), Anaximandros (-610/-547), Anaximenes (-588/-524), and others, who, as kindred spirits, saw the same solution to problems of all kinds. Unfortunately, we now possess only fragments. Fortunately, it is established that, for example, Herodotus of Halicarnassus (-484/-425) and Thucydides of Athens (-465/-395), both historians, however different they may have been, situated within the Milesian tradition. We do have extensive texts from them, so that they bear witness—or rather, provide remnants of witness—to the method of the Milesians.

Around 40 BC, an anonymous Greek author writes: “Do you see, fellow thinker, how Herodotus seizes your soul when he leads it through the lands and thereby transforms your hearing into seeing? Even above the 'historian' (*note*: explorer, observer) stands, however, the man Herodotus: with his sympathy for the subject matter he deals with, with his empathy, driven by controlled passion, for all that takes place. And of which he traces the presuppositions.”

“That, of all things, constitutes the totally personal magic that Herodotus radiates” (*DH Teuffen, Herodot , Vienna/Munich: 1979, 20*).

This text captures the atmosphere of perception and thought of the first Greek thinkers. Their method, their way of solving problems.

Direct and indirect knowledge . -- How does Herodotus define the method?

1.-- What he himself has seen (opsis, to see, -- sometimes gnomè) as an observing scout (histor, Lat.: inquisitor, is scout).

2. -- What he knows thanks to witnesses, informants whom he chooses, moreover. He calls this 'historiè': Lat. inquisitio, investigation. Focused on what is not immediately given.

That is the twofold source of information. "I know it (autoptès elthon), because I experienced it myself." "I know it ('akoèi historion'), based on hearsay." Cf. A. Rivier, *Etudes de littérature grecque* , Geneva, 1975, 344ss.

The sources of this course .

"There is an immeasurable amount that we accept on the basis of the testimony of others, both in daily life and in science" (*R. van Woudenberg, Knowledge based on experience and knowledge based on testimony* , in: Tijdschr.v.Filos. 59 (1991):3, 416). In that sense, this course is still Milesian.

CF8

2.1. Is pure reason what is governed by two and only two axioms? (8)

Library st.: HJ Hampel, *Variabilität und Disziplinierung des Denkens* , Munich/Basel, 1967, 14,-- fl. 17/21.

For when one restricts oneself to classical or traditional logic, two axioms prove to be 'fundamental':

1. The principle of identity and

2. The principle of reason (ground). Both were already clearly understood in the earliest Greek antiquity (Parmenides (identity) and Plato (reason)).

1. Identity. - All that is, is. -- Can be focused on some non-transcendental given: "All that this is, is this".

2. Reason (ground). - All that exists has its reason or ground, either within itself or outside itself.

Platon: “Nothing is without reason”. The author pauses briefly to consider the justification (proof) of these two principles or presuppositions. In doing so, he refers to W. Dilthey (1833/1911), who, following in the footsteps of A. Comte (1798/1857; founder of positivism), can be identified as the first theorist of the human sciences, and to W. Wundt (1833/1920; experimental psychologist), who identify immediate or direct experience as the 'source' of insight regarding identity and reason.

Here, Steller cites *E. May*, **Am Abgrund des Relativismus **, Berlin, 1941. “When I experience 'red' and at the same time understand the meaning 'red' in a deeply felt manner, then I furthermore grasp in a deeply felt way that 'red' (insofar as it is a deeply felt meaning) simply is 'red', and that this 'red' is precisely 'this'. In this way, I perceive the principle of identity in its compelling validity.”

Note: With May, one could just as well assert: “When I experience something as red ('experience': 'live through', immediately grasp), then – if I understand the fact 'red', e.g., in the case of someone turning red ('grasp' in its meaning) – my mind, as a thinking mind, is compelled – not from the outside but from the inside – to seek out the reason or basis of that red, or turning red, as the question asked of the given situation. In other words: “By what or why does that person turn red?”

Note: Why do Dilthey, Wundt, May et al. repeatedly fall back on grasping the immediate experience of meaning? Because, if one wishes to 'prove' the axioms (derive them from prepositions), both axioms must already be presupposed as given.

CF9

2.2. Explanations (9)

Note the formulations of the axioms: “All that is, is and all that is, has a reason.” All that is is the object of ontology (metaphysics), the core of classical or traditional philosophy. For it is in the confrontation—'encounter'—with “all that is”—being or being (in the language of the ancient Greeks)—that both principles emerge in the thinking mind,—are grasped. At least unexpressed.

1.-- Phenomenology

“All that is”. That is the given. That which is not sought—that which is not asked about. Its formulation is called 'phenomenology'. Why? Because the term 'fainomenon', Latin phaenomenon, revealing itself ('appearance' or 'phenomenon'), as part of 'phenomenology', indicates that phenomenology is 'logos': one who brings up phenomenon.

The principle of identity governs, is 'archè', presupposition, the fact that I, for example, see something. And the fact that I, in intellectual conscience, am compelled to acknowledge and affirm this.

What is asked (of me) is then to say that all that is, is. In phenomenology, the question is precisely to represent the given as precisely—as it is—as given. That is pure reason in its encounter with reality or being.

2.-- Logic .

“All that is”. For example, someone turns red in my presence.

a. I establish this (the fact).

b. I wonder what causes the person in question to turn red (e.g., a psychological mechanism) or why (psychological motive).

What is now being asked is no longer the fact as a fact or given, but the reason for it. -- But then I enter the domain of reasoning. This is of logic: “If this person is embarrassed and ashamed, then the blushing is understandable, logical.” That is reductive reasoning that starts from a lemma, a hypothesis, and can be tested afterwards based on new data.

Conclusion . -- That is the classical or traditional definition of reason. As soon as one posits a different axiom or fact, it is no longer a matter of pure reason but of applied reason. If that applied reason is interpreted as pure reason, then one is in the realm of ideology, for then reason is invariably more than pure reason.

For example, if one claims that sacred data are not 'rational', then one adds a secularist axiom to pure reason. Fine. But then reason is no longer pure.

CF10

2.3. Metaphysics (ontology): what it really is. (10)

Let us begin with a definition of philosophizing.

O. Willmann, *Die wichtigsten philosophischen Fachausdrücke in historical Anordnung*, Kempten/Munich, 1909, 20, says that according to the ancients the term 'theoria' (Lat.: speculatio, contemplatio), understanding, comes from Pythagoras. A 'theatis', speculator:

- a. perceives, becomes aware,
- b. but not superficially, yet with depth. His phenomenology is thoroughly logically reasoned.

Just as with the Romans the speculator, the soldier on guard, or the spy. Just as for a modern daily newspaper an observer-correspondent who also delves into and interprets the facts he observes.

They are.

Platon calls it 'science', "theorètikikè tou ontos", the fathoming of what is real. To put it with Parmenides: the fathoming aims at "to on kath' heautou", being according to itself, not as it appears to us. In Middle Ages Latin: "obiectum materiale", the material object, i.e., the given for every interpretation.

Or as Plato also says: "to ontos on", that which is real, i.e. in a real way—ontos—real or being, is the true object of philosophy. Cf. oc, 33. Not the apparent reality.

Metaphysics (ontology).

We know immediately that metaphysics is the work of philosophy, for metaphysics aims at the truly real. And this is twofold: it asks how real something is and how that something is real (what existence and essence are). The answer is the ontological definition that articulates the identity of something.

Define . -- There are at least two fundamental types of defining.

1.-- The nominal . -- The nominalists claim that we cannot (or do not) know the truly real. They limit themselves to the 'nominal' definition, that definition which – for the time being – contents itself with a few characteristics, sufficient to make something distinguishable from the rest.

2.-- The real one . -- The realists—conceptual realists—claim that we possess a truly real insight into the entire reality of something and are therefore capable of a real definition.

In reality, both propositions are correct: the nominalist cannot deny total reality (the 'idea' in Platonic language, for he says that he is content with a 'part' of it, whereas the realist finds that he knows only parts.)

CF11

2.4. Nominalism(s) versus realism(s) (11)

Library st. :

-- J. Largeault, *Enquête sur le nominalisme* , Paris/Louvain, 1971 ;
-- Role. Van Zandt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of American History* , The Hague, 1959.

-- R. Jolivet, *Les sources de l'idéalisme* , Paris, 1967 ;

R. Jolivet: "Kant regards Cartesianism as a problematic idealism while he labels Berkeley's system of thought as dogmatic idealism" (oc, 7).

In other words: a good name for modern thinking is 'idealism'.

Nominalism(s).

The basic axiom of modern idealism states: "Thinking attains only itself and its thought content immediately and derives from this, at once, the exclusive validity of mathematics" (ibid.). What exists in the 'external world' (understand: reality situated outside inner consciousness) is given only mediately—indirectly—and is therefore known. -- Modern thinking literally revolves within the bubble of individual consciousness.

Modern idealism is a logical consequence of nominalism. As Jolivet, oc, 9, says.

With William of Ockham (Occam) (1290/1349), the "venerabilis inceptor", the venerable innovator, nominalism becomes the basis of modern thought. Indeed, within the bubble of intimate consciousness ("sens intime" (Descartes)), what we think—e.g., a concept—is merely a sign referring to "the things" of an external world, a sign that we—very detached from reality—'construct' (constructionism) within our minds. This is in response to sensory perceptions (sensations) that provoke such 'concepts' (conceptualism). Cf. Largeau, oc, v.

'Idea'

"The Platonic terms 'idea' and 'eidos', idea, denote an objective (*note*: present outside the inner nature of individual consciousness) structure. Not a representation in our mind (*note*: as the nominalists (idealists) claim). (...). If

a good craftsman wishes to produce good work – according to Platon – then he ought to look at the idea (of what he is working out), – it must hover before his mind, – it must be present in his mind.

Thus, in the 16th century, people came to use the term 'idea' for “an ideal representation in the mind” and then for every 'concept'. -- This, however, was never the case in antiquity.” (*E. De Strycker, Concise History of the Antiquities, Phil. 95*).

CF12

2.5. Empiricism (12)

Modern idealism or rationalism—for reason, interpreted in modern terms, is the faculty of idealists—is—according to Jolivet—“a logical deduction of nominalist empiricism” (oc,9).

Indeed: empiricism or sensory experience is the starting point.

What is truly given are, after all, the material 'things' of our sensory perceptions, or sensations. Our mental constructions (concepts, etc.) refer to these from the interior or 'bubble' of modern (self-)consciousness or the ego.

Idiography. -- What the senses offer is strictly “this here and now” di singulier (idion).

Nevertheless, it is clear that our constructions situate that singularity both in sets and in systems. In other words: our constructions are general (universal) and all-encompassing (compact).

For the nominalist, those relations are not present in the things themselves but are constructed by our creative mind.

Put differently: our general and universal concepts are merely signs, -- not the things themselves with their relations (as the realists claim). Immediately, the nominalists state that the general and the universal are merely constructions to which we assign nomina, names. They 'exist' only within the bubble of our conscious self. Nominalism.

One sees that Platon's idea, that the singular exists insofar as it is conjunct with that which resembles it (set) and with that which is connected with it (system), evaporates into a mental construct. For Platon, the perceived and

perceived things are immediately present within our open mind. For him, the relations of similarity and connection, present in those given things, are also immediately present within our open mind.

These are not constructions (unless provisionally as lemmas or provisional ideas) but reality. Realism is therefore the term given to this. Or theory of ideas – not modern 'idealism' or rationalism.

Note: Platon experiences (perceives, becomes aware of) things as bathed in the higher, divine world. Aristotle does too, though clearly to a lesser extent. The ideas therefore situate the things of experience in that higher world. The nominalists also separate the things of experience from that sacred world: they 'secularize' or worldlyize the things that are experienced by them without higher relationships.

CF13

2.6. Applicative model (13)

This Athenian thief here and now is, for Platon, a single singular instance (example, 'image') of the collection of 'man'. He is a single singular part ('image') of the system of (Athenian) 'humanity'. When he steals, he shows himself to be sophisticated 'expert' (technè) but in contradiction with the higher laws of conscience (conscienceless). He disregards that higher, indeed, sacred dimension or relationship.

He behaves as an individual, detached from his relationships, -- egocentric, not supportive.

The nominalist, insofar as he is an extreme nominalist, can therefore only endorse the thief as an expert.

Three main tendencies .

JK Feibleman, An Introduction to Peirce's Philosophy , New York/London, 445f., says: "The history of philosophy shows that, from one viewpoint, there are only three radically distinct metaphysical fundamental tendencies that anyone, anywhere, or anytime can put forward as their own."

There are, of course, more than three, yet all are variants of the fundamental three." To which Van Zandt, oc, 125, immediately adds: "These three are the two types of realism (note: Platonic and Aristotelian) and nominalism."

Modernity.

The sensory 'object' detached from all relations, insofar as it is constructed within the bubble of the modern, rational, or idealistic subject (consciousness, the self): behold the definition of modern thought! Whereas medieval scholasticism thought realistically (basically Platonic, eventually Aristotelizing), modernity thinks nominalistically.

Feibleman, An Introduction to Peirce's Philosophy (171), cited by Van Zandt, *ibid.*, says: "Peirce says that there was a tidal wave of nominalism(s). Descartes was a nominalist. Locke and all who follow him, namely Berkeley, Hartley, Hume, were nominalists. Leibniz was an extreme nominalist (...). Kant was a nominalist. Hegel was a nominalist with a longing for realism".

Incidentally : as Van Zandt notes, all experts in the field agree with this. Just as they also generally agree that the Anglo-Saxon mentality—Great Britain and the USA—is nominalist. Ockham's nominalism characterizes Hobbes; Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Hamilton, Mill, and the Americans generally speaking (Peirce not, because he is "a scholastic realist") follow English philosophy.

CF14

3. Discussion of opinions (14/22)

3.1. Modern discussion regarding the foundations is liberal (14)

There can be no doubt that the emergence of liberal societies is connected with:

- a.** the emergence of modernity and (...)
- b.** the philosophical disagreement regarding metaphysical and religious issues". (A. Van de Putte, *Positive freedom in a liberal society*), in: *De Uil van Minerva* 14: 1 (1997: autumn), 13).

In other words: the pre-modern collective belief in:

- a.** the objective being (essence) of things - object par excellence of traditional metaphysics - and especially
- b.** The sacred (consecrated) divine order of things—object of theology, part of traditional metaphysics—falls into a deep crisis at the end of the Middle Ages: disagreement regarding worldview and philosophy of life predominates, and the clergy immediately lose their vanguard. -- That is the beginning of the present-day multiculturalism.

The demand for new axioms.

These can be summarized in a single term: the social contract, the essential core of liberalism. *John Rawls* (*A Theory of Justice* , Oxford, 1971; updated in *Political Liberalism* , New York, 1993) puts it as follows: modern societies no longer place themselves under the sign of truth, as metaphysics and theology asserted in a pre-modern view, but under the sign of reason—understand: rationality—which establishes axioms and their conclusion—presupposes them after discussion by rationally reasoning individuals and groups.

I. Kant (1724/1804; leading figure of the German Enlightenment) puts it as follows.

a. Individual. -- I, autonomous (freed from metaphysics and theology), find within myself reason ('ratio' in Latin) which gradually reveals all that is rationally feasible regarding reality, as well as regarding the rules of conduct.

b . Social . -- My reason recognizes that I share it with all other rational persons and therefore reckons with all others regarding insights into reality and regarding living together in society.

Behold the social contract in the name of which liberals think and live.

In other words: modern man is autonomous; he determines for himself what constitutes real and rationally justifiable behavior—individually in the first place (individualism)—socially as well.

CF15

3.2. The theory of communicative action (J. Habermas) (15)

Library st. : *M. Hunyadi, Démocratie et communication* , in : *Journ.d.Gen* ./*Gazette de Laus.* 10/11.05.1997, 36.

For nearly forty years, J. Habermas (1929/...; *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* , 1/11) has been at the forefront of German practical philosophy. He reproached M. Heidegger for his impractical philosophizing. He reproached the Frankfurt School, to which he belonged (and still does), for its “critical theory of modern society” lacking firm axioms (which M. Horkheimer (1995/1973) sought in vain).

Objective -- To construct a practical philosophy (morality that extends into legal and political life) but based on solid presuppositions

Basic axiomatics

Counter-model. - Typical modern life is no longer controllable by an order based on the (abstract) nature of man or on a revelation of the deity. This is also known as “post-metaphysical thinking”, because traditional metaphysics expounded on nature and the deity.

Model. - Modern practical life can only be controlled and provided with rules after communicative action.

Speaking and speaking with fellow man.

1. “If I speak, then I claim – expressly or not – validity ('truth', 'probability')”.

2. “If I speak, I usually address a fellow man and immediately claim recognition of validity on his part.” -- Behold the twofold axiom that defines the concept of 'communication' (not without 'interaction'), as well as the concept of “communicative action”.

Democracy

Not a deity and its revelation, interpreted by sacred figures (priests, ayatollahs), -- not even a human and cosmic nature expounded by metaphysicians. Rather, the citizens themselves who discuss. That is the basis. -- What emerges after every individual or group has articulated their interests is valid. Since no single individual or group possesses “the truth,” ‘validity’ (whatever that may be in reality) only arises after the citizens have argued.

In other words: in modern Western democracy, citizens—by virtue of human rights—are both the creators of their rules of conduct (authority) and the implementers (subjects) thereof.

Note: In Peirce's terminology, it sounds like: “the a priori method” dominates in our current democracies.

CF 16

3.3. Critical Religious Theory (16)

It is certain that in all Catholic countries, since the renewed ('post-conciliar') religious education, parents have reacted with shock when they heard their children recount the ideas they acquired in religious lessons.

Of the old traditional lessons that instilled the essential elements of dogma and morality, little remained in the “critical” lessons that introduce 'opinions' (concepts) regarding religion(s) or atheism(s). The “New Age lessons” timidly breaking through here and there, which attempt to “induce” sacred experiences (revival religion(s), 'revivals'), also provoked reactions from a number of parents, particularly the critically minded.

Readers write

We now cite a text in a journal (which we deliberately do not name to avoid misunderstandings) that assesses critical religious lessons as “the great void” regarding religion. (...).

The noncommittal platitudes the bishop has spouted in your newspaper illustrate the malaise that has penetrated even into the highest echelons of the church.

A non-binding attitude that obligates to nothing and, above all, does not invite a structured approach in which the bishops should take the lead. However, through their unclear stance, the bishops leave the door open for:

- a.** experiments,
- b.** “individual interpretation” or
- c.** even denial of articles of faith in Catholic schools.

They should go and see for themselves how the subject of 'religion' has degenerated into cozy chat sessions, full of:

- a.** personal testimonies and
- b.** 'I think' theories that often tear down the very essence: faith. And that is not even mentioning
- c.** how the institution 'church' and its highest representative (the Pope) are treated by numerous horizontalist-thinking teachers. (...)."

Note-- 'Horizontalism' (as opposed to 'verticalism') means limiting oneself (reduction) to the secular nature of the religion(s), -- neglecting what is truly sacred within it (and thus transcends “this earth”). Such that the sacred, which constitutes the essence of the religion(s), is “left to individual interpretation (understand: interpretation)”, unless it is atheistically denied.

3.4. Reason. If reason alone. Leads to indecisibility (17)

“Reason alone” means, in one usage, “metaphysics-free reason”. Typically modern reason falls under that concept. Instead of the light of the mind (Gr.: nous; Lat.: intellectus) regarding the true essence—the idea (in the Platonic sense, of course)—of every possible given and question, the reason that wishes to be reason alone prioritizes individual or collective opinion insofar as it has freed itself from “the yoke of metaphysics”.

The antique model.

Carneades of Kurene (-214/-120; Third Academy) is notorious for his demonstration of the indecisiveness of pure reason.

In 156 BC, he arrived in Rome as a Greek envoy. There, he delivered two lectures to young Romans. On 'justice' (conscientious conduct).

1. First, he asserts, with arguments starting from Plato, that justice is an objective reality (realism).

2. The following day, he asserts, with equal brrio, that “justice” is merely a name (a sound), -- thereby underscoring that everyone acts according to a criterion of utility (as the Romans liked to do). Whereupon Cato, in the name of Roman tradition, ensured that Carneades was removed from Rome as quickly as possible as a danger to the youth.

Eristics

Eristics is one aspect of ancient logic. It bites into the weak spots of every opinion—even of metaphysical foundations. After all, as soon as morality (understand: living conscientiously) is called into question, pure reason can adhere to two things:

- a.** the almost always disputed nature of everything given and requested,
- b .** the almost always debatable nature of what metaphysicians claim.

That is what Karneades did.

Consequence : Indecisibility! For every 'for' there is a 'against' ('dialectics' in Aristotelian terms). “He who wants to beat a dog will always find a stick.” – Common sense expresses the boundless phenomenological-logical 'flexibility' of reason, which always finds a 'reason' (presupposition, axiomatics) to argue in favor of any proposition or judgment, in this sense.

Take Nazi negationism as a model. Did Voltaire not say at the time: “Lie, lie. Something of it will always remain.” If what is true (given) does not bind metaphysically in conscience, why should one not advocate the untruth by means of 'arguments'?

CF18

3.5. Rationality regarding pure reason and its foundations (18)

Library st.: *E. Oger, Rationality, its foundation and its monsters* , in: *Tijdschr. v. filosofie* 54 (1992): 1 (March) 87/106.

The sound article deals with the principle of reason and “the other of” reason, two points closely related to one another.

Note: The author relies on the fact that many cited individuals, in any case, invoke the Enlightenment (*lumières*, *Aufklärung*, enlightenment), i.e., the more recent, typically modern form of rationalism, as a “final axiom”.

The reason of reason.

The principle of reason states, “If A (reason), then B (B is understandable, justifiable).”

With the axiom of identity, the axiom of reason is the 'foundation' of all rationality and rationalisms.

1. Critical rationalism .

K. Popper (1902/1994)—furthermore W. Bartley, H. Albert, H. Lenk, J. Watkins, G. Radnitzky—claim that prioritizing the axiom of reason is “an irrational act of faith” (ac, 105) that provides access to rational life and thought. This amounts to a kind of fideism, which “presupposes an irrational, understand: not rationally justifiable, belief in reason. “An act of faith”.

What Bartley emphasizes in Popper and replaces with the axiom “A statement is only rational if it is open to criticism”. Otherwise, one falls into the axiom of Zenon of Elea (-500/...): “You, just as I, do not prove what you assert” (“*Tu quoque*”). Otherwise, one might just as well become an irrationalist as a rationalist: after all, there is no decisive reason! Albert states in this regard that the essence of the reason of reason or rationality is ultimately “an undoubtable intuition”—“an evidentiary fact”(ac, 92).

Note-- Which leads us to Dilthey and Wundt, for example. -- Albert on a rational statement: “If open to criticism, then it is rational.”

2. Critical theory .

With K.-O. Apel (1924/2017), the speech act, i.e., communication with others, takes center stage. For him, reason—understand: the axiom of reason—has always been presupposed as an unquestionable self-evident truth in knowing, speaking, and acting. To seek a reason for this is to fall back upon that self-evident truth. Thus, a “ultimate ground or reason” exists for, say, philosophical reason.

In other words: although Apel does not rule out the need for criticism, he believes in an unquestionable 'foundation'.

CF19

J. Habermas (b. 1929; Frankfurt School) places communicative action at the center. When people consult with one another, reason and the axiom of reason are presupposed. Just as with Apel.

But Habermas does not accept a final foundation—an evident truth: he is a fallibilist (comparable to Popper), according to whom all rational activity is essentially fallible. A. Wellmer and F. Kambartel go even further in their critique of Apel's final foundation: there is no fixed criterion that allows one to distinguish true from false judgments.

Note-- Which amounts to the fact that every phenomenology and every logic fail!

3. Deconstructionism . -- The central figure here is *J. Derrida* (b. 1930). -- He believes he can establish the work of the axiom of reason everywhere in our culture—also and especially at universities.

If we 'ground' the axiom of reason, then either in a vicious circular argument (to prove it we must presuppose it) or in “an abyss” (which means: there is no ground or reason). “It is unfounded and therefore abysmal” (ac, 96). Opposing the axiom of reason would amount to irrationality. But simply presupposing it as traditional rationalism does not hold up either: reason (*note*: as Derrida defines it) cannot 'justify' itself.

In other words: there is a presupposition for reason (as he conceives it), an 'origin' (about which Derrida doesn't have much to tell us either).

Note: Derrida, a complex writer, sometimes gets carried away with words and new terms that, on closer inspection, are not so new.

Incidentally : he disagrees with Popper where the latter calls the 'ground' of reason 'irrational' belief. The mysterious 'origin' of reason is therefore rational in some way after all, but no longer in the modern Enlightenment sense.

“The other of reason”.

One criticizes reason in the name of reason itself, or “in the name of something other than reason”. The latter is called “the other of reason”.

Thus, in *M. Foucault, *Histoire de la folie ** (1961), the other of reason is called 'madness'. Practically only the language of a madman—not a rationally clear language about that language—can speak of madness, behind which lies Foucault's thought that a madman does not feel at home in a rational world and precisely for that reason “brings to light” the failure of that rational world in his insane behavior.

CF20

3.6. WW Bartley on philosophy and theology of commitment (20)

Bible st. : WW Bartley, *Flight into Engagement* (*Versuch einer Theorie des offenen Geistes*), Munich, 1962 (/ / *The retreat to Commitment*).

The book takes a stand against a Neo-Protestant tendency in the person of K. Barth (1886/1968), E. Brunner, R. Niebuhr, P. Tillich, et al.

1.-- Critique of Rationalism.

Even reason and its sciences, held in such high regard by enlightened minds, are not without axioms. That is to say, the rationalist ideal of a prejudice-free, axiom-free science collapses.

Well, those axioms are themselves unprovable in an apodictic (absolutely irrefutable) manner. This is evident from the foundational investigation of reason and its sciences. Reason in the enlightened sense and its sciences do

not present an absolutely 'rational' proof. One arrives only at 'plausibility', 'probability'.

2.-- *Neither you nor I.*

You rationalist, just like I, a Bible-believing Protestant, do not prove in an apodictic manner what you assert regarding foundations.

In other words: there is a dose of irrationality at the very core of enlightened rationalism. I, the Protestant, who hear the reproach from you, the rationalist, that I believe on irrational—Biblical—foundations, observe that you, too, do not strictly prove your foundations as you, as a rationalist, would wish.

Well then, I, a Bible-backed believer, make a commitment, a decision of the will that, without apodictic proofs, nevertheless entails Biblical life and thought. In English: 'commitment'; in French: 'engagement'—a decision of the will or 'leap' without apodictic certainties, though with probabilities. That you call, rationalist, 'irrational'.

Well then, since your reason and its sciences do not provide an apodictic foundation either, your rationalist conviction is fundamentally also a stake based solely on probable reasons or grounds.

3. -- *The difference* .

With this difference: I, a Bible-believer, openly and honestly admit that, rationally speaking, I am making a gamble, whereas you, fundamentally just as irrational, working solely with plausibilities, make a rationalistic gamble but are unwilling to admit it honestly and openly. You are full of talk about 'rationality': so-called apodictically proven rationality, whereas there is only probable rationality upon which your leap or gamble rests.

CF21

Note: We mention in passing *K. Hübner, *Die Wahrheit des Mythos **, Munich, 1985, whose thesis reads: modern science is not superior to myth, neither in terms of truth content nor in terms of rationality. For both science and myth have as reason or foundation radically distinguishable ontological and other axioms that are both equally unprovable (understand: apodictic).

The myth is a worldview that is just as logically coherent as the scientific worldview. The explanatory power of the myth is even more comprehensive

(holistic) than that of modern science, because the myth can also explain the accidental event (*note*: 'accidental': that which does not— seemingly—obey scientific laws) by appealing to a sacred event (*note*: think of a ritual, for example).

Hübner takes Greek mythology as an applicative model: Greek myths are governed by rationality just as much as science.

Note: One sees that the same schema is at work as that of the Neo-Protestants: “Neither you nor I” are apodictically rational. I, just as much as you, am rational to a serious degree, -- not irrational merely.”

Bartley.-- Following in the footsteps of his teacher K. Popper, Bartley seeks a fitting answer to Barth et al. -- He accuses the philosophy of commitment and theology of commitment of a flight into the irrational. “Retreat to Commitment”. At least if commitment:

a. Is interpreted relativistically (by claiming that all stakes are equally valid: a Nazi makes a stake and a Biblically believer makes a stake, yet rationally they differ).

b. Is interpreted individualistically (the stakes can be interpreted so individually that humanity is reduced to a set of atoms). -- Bartley: even though our impetus, as rationalists, is for a dose of irrationality, we are nevertheless open to critical examination and discussion. Stakes, yes, but not without a rational analysis of the – perhaps merely probable – grounds for the stakes.

Bartley immediately establishes that originally the Protestants rejected reason as a 'whore' (Luther), while attempting to keep pace with enlightened rationalism. With the initial Protestants, however, it is only then that reason is fully pursued as a whore, incapable of being susceptible to the Bible.

Note: It should be noted that the aforementioned Protestants, such as Barth, were at least fundamentally open to criticism.

CF22

3.7. Criticism of Reason (22)

Usually, one refers to I. Kant (1724/1804) when discussing the Critique of Reason. However, this is merely the modern, 'Enlightened' form of it.

read, for example, *Cl. Ramnoux, *Parménide et ses successeurs immédiats* *, Ed. d. Rocher, 1979, especially oc, 151ss., where she discusses Zenon of Elea (-500/ ...), Parmenides' pupil. The logical scheme of Zenon's reasoning can be summarized as: “Neither you nor I radically prove what you assert.” Which amounts to the fact that reason does not apodictically (irrefutably, definitively) prove either position.

Aristotle would later label such a rational situation as 'dialectical': both lines of reasoning are valid, but not decisively valid.

Skepticism .

EW Beth, De wijsbegeerte der wiskunde, Antwerp/Nijmegen, 1944, 87, says: “The contradictory views defended regarding certain issues by various practitioners of philosophy and positive science are played off skepticism against each other”.

In other words: the same reason as faculty arrives at contradictory conclusions in the person of different reasoners.

Conclusion. -- Appealing to “reason” as rationalism in all its forms—including the modern one—does, is appealing to 'nothing,' for one assertion (as contradictory to another) destroys. After all, is there, God forbid, even a single reality regarding which, through reasoning, no contradictory opinions have been expressed in the course of our Western 'rational' (rationalist) history? Let us consider current pluralism: the Muslim reasons; the atheist reasons. All views of life and the world reason.

In which it becomes apparent that the axioms play the decisive role. As *La Logique de Port-Royal* made clear in his time: people usually reason correctly, but from ever-changing presuppositions which they posit as fixed truths and which they attempt to realize using reason as their faculty.

If, therefore, it turns out that no theme can ever be identified without contradictory rational (reasoning-using) opinions, then the appeal to the reason of the rationalists is an appeal to a premise entailing indecisibility. What can one do with an 'aporia', an indecisibility, regarding the foundations of existence?

CF23

4. Premodern/modern/postmodern (23/37)

4.1. How modern are primitives and how are they modern? (23)

We take an example from ethno-pharmaceuticals.

Library st. : J. Raillon, *Alchimiste des plantes* , Paris, 1983, 64s. (*Un exemple striking*).

1904.-- In Namibia, at the time German South-West Africa, an uprising of 'natives' is suppressed. After the battle, a Khoi ('Hottentot' in the language of the Boers) is transferred to a clinic in Nababes (Marienthal).

His injuries were numerous. The bullets were removed immediately, but the wounds did not close: external bleeding continued, and the clotting agents apparently did not work. It was concluded that he was a desperate case.

The terminally ill Khoi, however, realized that he was being given up on: he asked if they would allow the magician of his tribe to care for him. His "last wish" was granted.

The white people, doctors, and nurses were either amused, indifferent, or curious. In their presence, the magician sprinkles the wounds with a grayish powder. He reveals that it is the pulverized root of "a plant" from the region but withholds the name. The skepticism surrounding him was great.

But the very next day the wounds close, and after a few days the Khoi is able to walk around in the clinic's garden. General astonishment! Since the healer adamantly refused to reveal the name, a white man used his police dog, which followed the healer's tracks and stumbled upon a plant that the Khoi call "devil's claw" (*Harpagophytum procumbens*).

Samples are immediately sent to Germany. Scientific studies not only confirm the coagulating medicinal properties of the plant, which grows only on the edge of the Namibian desert, but tests prove that it 'works' as a painkiller and as a regulator of cholesterol and uric acid levels.

The "cause/effect" connection (or at least "omen/following") is supposedly a modern insight that pre-moderns lack. After this fact, who would now dare to claim that 'primitives' ('savages', 'people of nature') lack this typically modern insight?

Amidst a great many pre-modern, sometimes bizarre rites, truly modern insights apparently lie hidden. Thus, primitives are already modern where skeptical moderns display a pre-modern ignorance.

CF24

4.2. How modern are ancient and medieval medicines and how? (24)

BK Holland is a member of the Medical School of Newark (NJ). In an article published in *Nature* and reproduced in *Courrier International* 198 (13.08.1994, 30), he states the following.

1. Methodically analyzing an incalculable number of plants (...) is very expensive. For scientific methods dependent on chance yield virtually no results. For example, the National Cancer Institute had 114,000 plant extracts drawn from 35,000 plant species and found not a single active substance that fought cancer.

2. There is another way out. Folk belief and the healers of yesteryear have proven that they have much to teach us. Almost all plant-based medicines used in the USA today, such as reserpine, quinine, digoxin, digitoxin, d-tubocurarine, morphine, and codeine, were discovered thanks to thorough scientific research into folk belief.

Traditional medicine.

This is pre-modern Western medicine known from texts of Greek and Latin antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. Now, many works of traditional medicine describe countless plants and other active substances that have not been methodically studied for quite some time.

Among the Greeks and Romans, for example, silphion (Lat.: silphium), a ferula, was found in nature (...). Soranos, Lat.: Soranus, a physician (98/138), recommended silphion (by oral route) as an abortifacient. Recent experiments on rodents confirmed that extracts from plants related to silphion (silphion itself has disappeared) prevent fertilization and nesting.

The same happened with mentha pulegium (pule), which was considered an abortifacient in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Recent studies prove that the active ingredient in it, pulegon, causes abortion in animals and women.

Decision -- Holland, a specialist in preventive medicine and social hygiene, proposes that pharmacologists and experts in traditional medicine collaborate: “From the old texts—tested on the basis of modern testing methods—new medicinal active ingredients might emerge that, moreover, will not have cost much.”

CF25

4.3. How modern are the moon religions and how are they modern? (25)

A. Lefèvre, **La religion **, Paris, 1921, 329/334, briefly but suggestively—although he is an atheist—explains how widespread lunar religions are throughout the globe (he calls them one type of astrolatry, the worship of celestial bodies). In doing so, he notes the strong convictions of the primitives regarding the connection between the moon and its energies and plants.

Note: He mockingly notes how current folk wisdom on the subject still expresses the influence of the moon in folk proverbs.

Library st. : A. Crisinel, *Jardiner avec la lune ? (Les preuves se mettent à germer)*, in: *Le Temps* (Geneva) 28.04.1998.

Galileo, who out of prejudice against astrology rabidly denied any influence of the moon on the tides (he did not even want to investigate it), will now be turning in his grave: the highly scientific journal *Nature* reports that, just like the oceans, trees—according to very precise measurements—expand and contract with the moon by a few hundredths of a millimeter over the course of 25 hours.

A working group from the University of Trento (Italy) carried out measurements on the trunks of half a dozen trees (such as the common spruce, pine, and walnut) in Tuscany. The result: they recorded the expansions and contractions but had no hypothesis (explanation) for them. Ernst Zürcher, a Swiss dendrologist (tree expert), confirms this based on his own research.

The scholar was intrigued by a number of “lunar sayings” put forward by farmers. He has indeed already proven that the germination of plants is definitely influenced by the moon phases. But beware: “Although the moon in its rising phase favors the germination of most plant species he studied, it can nevertheless have an inhibitory effect on other species” (ac). With the

oceanographic service of the French Navy in Brest, he tested the figures for daily changes in Tuscany: “The correlation is perfect”.

Note: Zürcher noted that even the felled trunks still respond to the moon insofar as the cambium (cultivated tissue including the fluid channels) is still 'alive'. Which naturally raises questions. Zürcher: “Perhaps the back-and-forth movements of water within the cells change along with the moon.”

Note:-- Something like this is, of course, grist for the mill of New Age!

CF26

4.4. The typical modern man: he can make himself (26)

Let us consider an excerpt from *G. Pico della Mirandola* (1463/1494), *Oratio de dignitate hominis* (literally: *Oration on the Dignity of Man*), cited by *B. Vedder, De mens als “cusa sui” en de vraag naar zin*, in: *De Uil van Minerva* 9:1 (1992: Herfst, 3/18).

The text in question “at the beginning of the modern era can be called characteristic of the modern Western view of man” (according to Vedder).

De la Mirandola puts the words in the mouth of 'god' (who is certainly not the Biblical God)” - Here is the text.

We have given you, Adam, no specific dwelling place, no face of your own, no special task, so that you may acquire and possess that dwelling place, that face, that task which you choose, according to your own will and desire.

For all other beings, nature is clearly defined and limited within the laws prescribed by us. -- You shall determine these for yourself: unhindered by boundaries, according to your own free will to which I have entrusted you.

I have placed you in the midst of the universe so that from there you may more easily see everything around you that is in the world. Nor have we made you heavenly or earthly, mortal or immortal, so that you, as a free and sovereign artist, sculpt and model yourself in the form you choose.

You are free to degenerate into the lower—the animal kingdom—but you can also raise yourselves to the higher—the divine realm—by your own free will.

Note: How exactly does Della Mirandola's interpretation of the creating God differ from that of the traditional Bible? By the very clear shift in emphasis towards the virtually absolute freedom of man, who is modern precisely because of this. This is evident from the omission of the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) in the creation of man himself.

In the Bible, Yahweh indeed creates a radically free human being, but including from the very beginning—in the very definition of that freedom—the code of conduct with which that indeed radical freedom must reckon and to which its fate is tied: “That my spirit (*note*: God-given life force) should not be unconditionally responsible for man, since he is flesh (*note*: being earthly and conscienceless)” (*Gen. 6:3*). In other words: the wild, boundary-pushing freedom has a stake, namely whether or not to have access to God’s life force.

CF27

4.5. Freethinking (libertinism) (27).

Library st. :

- A. Adam, *Les libertins au XVIIe siècle* , Paris, 1964 ;
- J.-p. Dubost et al., *L'Enfer de la Bibliothèque nationale 7* , Paris, 1988, focuses, among other things, on *Oeuvres érotiques du XVIIe siècle*.
- Cl. Reichler, *L'age libertin* , Minuit, 1987.

Reichler defines the libertarian era as: from 1680 to 17897 - Nevertheless, it is certain that a typical medieval free-spiritedness existed (against which the glorified 'minne(lyric)' reacted (cf. *D. de Rougemont, Amour et occident* (1938) on the minne ('amour') among Southern French troubadours). -

French libertarianism has Italian origins. For example: Pietro Aretino (1492/1556).

1620 .-- Adam, oc, 7.-- “Around 1620, freethinking ('libertinage') spreads like wildfire that sweeps along a good part of the young nobility in Paris”.

Incidentally : Descartes is 24 at the time. And Galileo is facing his first difficulties. -- That typifies the atmosphere of emancipation.

a. Th. Vilau, a poet, openly admits it. Consequence: he is imprisoned by royal order.

b . *P. Bayle* (*Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1696/1697; a first typically 'modern' history of philosophy) hides behind the mask of “honnête homme” (honorable man).

c. 18th-century libertinism becomes theatrical. This amidst a culture that severely curbed such behavior.

Axiomatics . -- Adam, oc, 12s. -- Freethinking is fundamentally freethinking, -- enlightened-rationalist. It considers itself superior as such to “the common people” who have been abandoned to the delusions of “common sense”, -- in the name of reason.

Thus, Th. de Viau or *G. d'Orléans* (the latter: *les quatrains de déiste*) constituted a rationalism around 1624. A freethinker like La Mothe le Vayer (1588/1672), a radically skeptical 'Christian', nevertheless became the 'précepteur' (private tutor) of Louis XIV (1661/1715), the Sun King.

Gassendi (1592/1655), Descartes' rival, was 'ahead' of his time in his rationalism. In all this, know that “reason” means reason detaching itself from “tradition” (= established Christianity (church) and spiritualism (belief in God and in the soul)). God is dead and his Decalogue is becoming a dead letter. That is, fundamentally, the root (basic axiom) of the free spirits.

CF28

Epistemology.

The root is secular perception, or rather perception and thought: this visible and tangible earth and its cosmic environment are the biotope in which the free spirit, or free thinker, lives.

Nature

Freethinking is a form of naturalism—an object of physics—is governed by “le destin”; fate, as a kind of supreme law. As the “first or primal power” (one sees that the God of the Bible is being replaced)—premier puissance—fate has ordered nature and continually orders that nature. Our lives, too, are ordered and programmed by it.

Life,

plants, animals, humans – has as its presupposition the presence and activity of “living principles” that move from one life form to another. In eternal movement.

Ethics.

The free spirit – free thinker – is an empiricist (relies on sensory perception or sensation), a conceptualist (constructs 'concepts' within his modern consciousness), and experiments according to his concepts and perceptions or sensations.

Adam.-- One type of libertine behaves lustfully and cruelly, the other coldly and calculatingly.

Incidentally : modern cynicism begins to show itself here. -- Reichler. -- Axiom regarding conduct: the free spirit-freethinker knows himself to be so free, or liberated from, every norm or institution, that he indulges himself in one of the two ways just mentioned (or alternately).

The woman is central to this, but interpreted as an erotic body .

H. Herr, Du scepticisme de Gassendi 14/ 15: one was more libertine by the type of life one led than by the type of thinking. To begin with, immersing oneself in pleasures. Afterwards: upholding floating axioms.

Adam: “The irritating libertine life of the ones, the erudite libertine life of the others (*note*: 'esprit fort'), and the elusive libertine life unfolding in complete silence throughout the century realized a true revolution regarding ethical values.

Note: What we call 'sex' today, especially since World War II (1939/1945), is the form of free-spiritedness and free-thinking that spread from the USA to Europe and the rest of the planet.

CF29

4.6. Cartesianism as modern thought and life (29)

Library st.: *UP Jauch, Die Stärken einer Ethik der Schwäche (Descartes' Gedanke der “morale par provision”), in: Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 21.09.1996.

Following in the footsteps of Montaigne (1533/1592), R. Descartes (1596/1650) laid the 'foundations' of typically modern thought and life.

1637 .-- *Discours de la méthode* .

1647 . -- In a Letter to l'Abbé Picot, who translated *Descartes' Principia philosophiae* into French, Descartes discusses the famous metaphor: his ideal resembles a tree whose roots are metaphysics, the trunk physics, and the branches all other sciences (primarily mechanics, medicine, and also morality). Descartes honours moral philosophy as the highest and ultimate stage of wisdom. For it prioritizes the total knowledge of all other sciences. In other words: he advocates a strictly scientific and therefore rational behavioral science.

Note: Given the fundamental role of physics at the time, Descartes' system can be labeled as physicalism. This persists to this day—even in the established medical sciences, for example.

The typical modern rationalism .

The tree is the work of reason. But a revolutionary reason. For if one builds upon what others—meaning the great tradition—did and thought, it is difficult to do anything 'good' (understand: rationalistically). Thus, education that proceeds in this manner—established in tradition—is building upon what others did and thought and is immediately a source of irrationality: one's own individual research effort—as scientific as possible—is the true source of rational—understand: rationalistically—enlightened life and thought.

Replacing the 'old' city with the 'new' city.

Old cities are “usually poorly built,” with buildings arranged haphazardly across one another. Descartes proposes that the engineer (the concept as it was understood at the time) should rebuild the city “in all freedom” (unhindered by tradition) according to the will of “a number of sensible people”—'sensible', meaning rationalist-enlightened.

The historically evolved gives way to the rationally scientifically constructed.

Note: His *Discours de la méthode* reflects what we just outlined as a typical Cartesian design for thought and life.

CF30

Towards a rationalist morality.

Descartes: “Is he also going to ‘radically reject traditional education’ in the moral sphere?” For this is the fundamental tendency of his thought and life.

Awaiting the realized ideal .

As Jauch very aptly puts it: “The tree of knowledge is – in the time of Descartes – not yet fully grown up to and including the fruit. Yet we cannot suspend action until the day arrives when the expected culmination of all-encompassing science (*note*: the tree: from metaphysics to morality) becomes a fact.”

The radical skeptical questioning of tradition is situated: even Descartes lives amidst an external world with its data and questioners who tolerate no delay in answering.

Descartes' metaphor .

It is not enough to raze the old house to the ground while the new house (*note*: the fully developed scientific tree) is not yet here! Thus spoke Descartes himself. An interim dwelling is urgently necessary. In the moral realm, this interim dwelling is called “la morale par provision,” the interim—not yet radically rationalist-enlightened—code of conduct. In the meantime, we live on a 'provision,' a 'stock' of rules of conduct.

Descartes' modesty .

At least, that is what Jauch calls it. -- Descartes very emphatically does not speak of a binding theory regarding conscientious behavior in the form, for example, of fixed presuppositions or even commandments. “With a language game that remains vague (...)” he is concerned “only with three or four maxims, rules of conduct”.

They are alluded to in passing. For example, incorporating the inherited religion and laws into his life. Avoiding extremes. Relying, in any case, on the deeds—not the words—of the most remarkable fellow human beings.

Probabilism

One ought to prefer what seems more probable than the rest regarding behavior “as if it were entirely certain”. Since the environment is difficult to change, it is preferable to change one’s own desires.

Nevertheless, he concludes by relying solely on evidence, after investigation, and not on what does not personally appear obvious (which would then be a resumption of his starting point).

Conclusion. -- With that interim morality, Descartes seems still relevant today: rationalist humanity is still debating the foundations of a 'rational' morality. The new house is not yet here.

4.7. The Consistent Rationalism of the Marquis de Sade (31)

It is about DAFr. de Sade (1740/1814), -- the man of sadism.

Someone once wrote that, compared to him, the nihilism (the erosion of higher values) of Fr. Nietzsche (1844/1900) comes across as the ramblings of an old lady. Indeed, de Sade draws extreme libertine consequences from the axioms of Enlightened thought.

His library . -- A. Carter, *La femme sadienne* , Veyrier, 1979, 65s, emphasizes his rationalism. The feminist points out:

a. Novels such as *Cervantes, Don Quichotte de la Manche* (1605-1), and *Mad. deLafayette, La princesse de Clèves* (1678);

b. Rationalist works such as *Voltaire, Oeuvres complètes* (85 volumes) and *J.-J.Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes* .

Carter claims: de Sade subjects the world of 'rationality' to a libertarian critique, disguised as pornography. Indeed: *Les 120 jours de Sodome* (1787), *Justine ou les malheurs de la vertu* (1791), and *La philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795) are pornography that *Le Petit Larousse* (1972) characterizes as “novels in which the heroes are possessed by the urge to torture innocent souls (sadism), but important because they expound ‘the revolt of a free man against God and society’”. In other words: they are philosophical novels.

Cynical self-knowledge .

Simone de Beauvoir (1908/1986; the famous existentialist, in her * *Faut-il brûler de Sade* ?* quotes Sade herself: “Authoritarian, quick-tempered, without measure or purpose. As for moral conduct: abandoned to a confused fantasy that has no equal. An atheist to the point of fanaticism. In short: this is who I am! Kill me or take me as I am, for I will never change myself anyway.”

Some facts . -- His family managed to arrange a marriage for him at the age of 23. Soon rumors began to circulate: the minutes of the Arcueil trials (1768) mention that he “subjected a peddler, Rose Keller, to erotic flogging”. With his valet, de Sade subjects “a group of prostitutes to a number of perversions”. Which led to the Marseille trials (1772).

In his castle La Coste (Provence), he establishes a polygamous sex group with homosexual relationships. Including excesses involving minors.

Note-- H. Leyser: “ *Rationality to a perverse degree* ”. (in: *Antaios II* (1961): 6 (March), 515 ff.)

CF32

Note: Van de Sade's behavior demonstrates his nominalism, which dismantles all higher, sacred, inviolable realities ('ideas') as mere 'names'—hollow word sounds. Empirically, for example, he acquires sexually torturous impressions (sensations). Conceptually, he constructs concepts (ideas) with which he 'justifies' and 'grounds' his behavior. In such a mentality (axiomatics), he experiments with his own body and that of others. Like the free-thinking libertines. Like many among our fellow desires today. Based on free modernity.

Ontology

R. Dasne, *Les matérialistes Français de 1750 à 1800* , Paris, 1965, 88s., quotes de Sade where he has La Durand, a materialist, say to her friends: “My friends, the more nature is studied, the more one steals her secrets, -- the more one knows her energy”.

Behold the basic axiom: nature, only nature, -- with its energy, only with its energy.

B. d'Astorg, *Introduction au monde de la terreur* , Paris, 1945, 30: “De Sade continuously used the term energy in the most modern sense of ‘élan vital’ (life drive), that is, the dynamism that propels humanity in the direction of brutal self-development and self-surpassing.”

Atheism

La Durand.-- “(The more one knows nature,) the more convinced one becomes of the uselessness of a god. The creation of that idol is, among all illusions, the most hateful, the most ridiculous, the most despicable. This disgusting fable, arising in all men who are burdened by the sense of fear, is the utmost that human madness can achieve. I repeat: to attribute a creator to nature is to misrecognize it. To assume that “cette première puissance” (this primal power) is guided by another power amounts to fixating on all that this primal power—nature—can conjure up.”

Thus speaks the Sadean woman: she is radically subjected to the lusts of men, but precisely because she desires this with all her energy, she is “charmingly sexed, free, experiencing pleasure just like men,” as de Sade himself states. She breaks her chains as nature wills.

What Angela Carter, oc, 68, says: “De Sade remains a monster of civility: at the same time monstrous and impressive because he “perhaps put pornography at the service of woman”.

CF33

Energetic ethics.

A few models, namely to demonstrate its permissive character. -- *De Sade, Justine or the Adversity of Virtue* , Amsterdam, 1978-11, 318ff. We quote excerpts. “At the same time that libertine pulled up my skirts” (oc, 318). “Gasping like a dying man, this incorrigible libertine also uttered terrible blasphemies” (oc, 321).

Note: It is evident that de Sade is promoting atheism.

Theft.

Theft is a sign of energy: “The person who is so negligent as to allow himself to be robbed should be punished.” Incidentally: being charitable is to be condemned because “it accustoms the poor to a series of forms of assistance that harm his energy (absolute resilience).”

Crime

In **Les 120 jours de Sodome**, de Sade says : “Although it is true that crime does not possess the 'high' nobility found in virtue, is it not nevertheless always the most sublime? Does crime not continuously display the mark of 'grandeur' (sublimity) (...) ? Does it not thereby—and it will always —surpass the monotonous and effeminate ('efféminée') charm of virtue?”

Murder .

R. Dasne, oc, 237. -- “Never will a sensible nation arrive at the thought of condemning murder as a crime. For murder to be a crime, one would have to presuppose the destruction of a possibility. Well, we have just seen that this proposition is unacceptable.” I repeat: murder is merely a change of form in which neither the regularity—inherent to the biological kingdoms (plants, animals, humans)—nor the regularity of nature lose anything at all.

On the contrary: both laws benefit from it. Why, then, punish a person solely because he has returned a portion of matter to the elements of nature? Specifically: by murdering someone, the criminal accelerates the process of decay of his body. From a materialistic perspective, even a human being—just like all natural bodies—is a portion of matter. Matter, nothing more.

Moreover: it is the case that that portion of matter naturally returns to the elements of nature. As soon as it has returned to them, they use this portion of matter to compose new forms from it. Is a fly worth more than a pasha or a Capuchin monk?

CF34

4.8. Students and libertarianism (34)

Library st.: Claartje Hülsenbeck/ Jan Louman/ Anton Oskamp, *The Red Booklet for Students*, Utrecht, 1970-1, 1971-8.

'Contemporary' teachers who call themselves "critical teachers," "in collaboration with their students," prioritize a kind of anarchism. "In the name of greater justice in society"—the basic axiom—they establish that:

1. the parents manipulate the children,
2. the teachers the students,
3. the 'bosses the employees,
4. the caregivers the elderly

In other words, established society is one network of 'injustice'.

Sexual morality.

From this axiom, one 'critically' deduces that, for example, every "critical school" ought to have a class for sex games.

The 'justification'.

If the newspaper states that someone has committed a "sexual offense," it sounds worse than it is. It concerns someone who can "only" climax in a certain, unusual way.

Note: One observes nominalist reductionism: sexual acts are reduced to empirical experiences which, explained by means of conceptual constructions ("Only reaching orgasm in a certain way," for example), thus become open to experimentation. Without the traditional, established taboos.

Continue like this.

1. If you read that someone has acted indecently, he has usually unzipped his pants and shown his penis: he is then called an 'exhibitionist'.

2. If you read that a man or a woman committed indecent acts with minors, then they masturbated in the presence of children.

3. When you read about a voyeur (peeping Tom), it refers to a man or woman who enjoys watching others have sex: they spy on couples making love who think they are alone. -- Occasionally, these people are thrown into a panic. This is due to the way others react to their behavior. They then no longer know what they are doing, and sometimes it leads to violence.” (Oc, 100).

Note: Now that we have been living since August 1996 in a climate partly defined by the Dutroux affair, misconduct like that of a Dutroux comes across as “critically cultivated”.

In the texts above, there is a casual confusion between objective morality and “merciful explanations” for deviant behavior. This is how one can understand anything and justify it.

CF35

4.9. From modern to postmodern: Georg Simmel (37)

Library st. : J.-L. Vieillard-Baron, trad., G. Simmel, *Philosophie de la modernité (La femme, la ville, l'individualisme)*, Paris, 1989.

The work is the translation of a number of separate articles.

G. Simmel (1858/1918) was a German sociologist and thinker. In Berlin, where he taught philosophy from 1900, G. Lukacz, E. Bloeh, and K. Mannheim were his students. He wrote * *Der Konflikt der modernen Kultur* * (1918).

Following in Hegel's footsteps, Simmel was a true rationalist in the sense of a strictly methodical thinker. Yet he paused to consider themes that traditional rationalism deemed impervious to rationalist-Enlightened analysis: the modern city (the cultural landscape of modern man), women (“Will modernity affect the essence of woman or not?”), and especially adventure (typical of modern individualism). In that sense, Simmel is already postmodern. -- We explain.

Oc 305/ 325 (l'aventure)

Life in its totality can be experienced as an adventure.

a.-- A content experienced in excitement.

Modern man, for example, survives something mortally dangerous, conquers a woman resulting in fleeting happiness, plays with unknown elements, and loses or wins. Such contents only become adventurous when the 'vital' consciousness, the deeper soul, experiences them in an excitement that is lived through as the primary matter.

b.-- History as adventure.

In what we moderns experience, we encounter so many things that are simply "there": these as accidental circumstances escaping our reason.

This proves rational when we interpret the totality of every event as meaningful, and immediately rational and understandable, to us moderns. This also proves rational when we experience the totality of every event as constantly becoming more and something different from what precedes it.

Note: Rationally analyzing the sign is insufficient to rationally deduce the consequence.

Consequence. -- Simmel's historiology, his philosophy of history, contains a dose of unpredictabilities. But unpredictabilities are invariably (rationally analyzed) irrational. By recognizing this, Simmel, the thoroughbred rationalist, becomes postmodern, for with rationalism as an axiom, he arrives at perceiving the irrational that is "more and different" than what reason can predict. Reason contains adventure.

CF36

Postmodernism(s).

'Premodern' is everything that exists "before modernity". 'Postmodern' is everything that exists "after modernity".

Let us consider one type of postmodern thought, namely 'differentialism' (especially in the footsteps of J. Derrida (1930/...), the deconstructionist).

Library st.: G. Lernout, *Science in War* , in: *Nature and Technology* 66 (1998): 7(July), 89/93.

Note: Since *PC Snow*, **The Two Cultures **, the disagreement between the humanities and the natural sciences has persisted. In this context, let us briefly characterize differentialism primarily through its critique of the natural sciences.

After all, given its importance in the 70s and 80s (differentiation thinking was the most important movement in the humanities), we must briefly touch upon it. In the USA, Derridian influence is significant.

1. -- Counter-model.

Western (identity) thinking suppresses or displaces differences or disputes between individuals and groups. The consequence: lower classes are oppressed by the higher ones, women by men, and non-Western cultures by Western ones, because they are squeezed within precisely one thought pattern—the Western one—which, precisely by doing so, safeguards its own (economic and social) interests.

2.-- Model.

That Western cultural pattern is in fact a construction.” To “make that come true,” the differential thinkers attack modern physics in the first place, which is the masterpiece of the West. -- In place of the architectural model of physics (a pedestal upon which science builds), postmodernism of that type proposes the network model.

a. The 'real', understand: actual, world does not exist.

b. Consequence: an objective 'truth', testable against a reality 'present' ('présence' (Derrida)) outside the interpreting subject, does not exist.

Does only a variety of subjective opinions exist, presented (rhetorically) as 'truths'?

Behold the (otherwise nominalist) ontology of that postmodernism. Humanity “floats in a network of words,” detached from any independent 'reality'.

Applied to the (natural) sciences.

A masterpiece of enlightened rationalism, physics in particular, treats it as if an objective reality existed, independent of the scientist as a subject.

CF37

In other words: even physics, which is so 'objectively' oriented, is one big human construct that bears witness to the subject—the scientists—not to a

reality existing outside of them. Theoretical physics, in particular, is the target of many differentialists (such as many 'creationists' (who interpret the Bible too literally) or New Age (which proceeds from a radically different standpoint)).

In other words: there is no difference or gap between the 'truth' of astrology and that of astronomy, between the origin myths of the Navajo and the explanation of the universe of modern physics. For in all cases, one constructs images of the world and of life with letters (written) and words (spoken)—that is, with mere 'language'.

Behold the thesis of the Derridians—substantiated by what they call 'sociology of science': an instrument of 'plural' thinking—there is no single, (identical for all) absolutely valid science of the Western model; there is, however, a multiplicity of 'truths', including that Western type. What is called 'epistemological relativism'.

Rationality.

It is, of course, about the typically modern reason. - *Carl Sagan, The Demon - Haunted World (Science as a Candle in the Dark)*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University, 1997, responds to the dismantling or 'deconstruction' of specialized sciences as follows. With a kind of dilemma.

a. If you wish to argue against rationality, you must carefully consider whether you want to implement such a thing rationally or not.

b.1. If you approach rationality rationally, you place the rationality you wish to dismantle first as an axiom.

Note-- "If you assert that, then it logically follows from it, at least, what you refute".

b.2. If you approach rationality non-rationally, then you deserve—as being outside of all rationality—not a single rational counter-argument.

Note-- The latter is correct if one disregards:

- a.** the fact that there are phenomena that physics does not explain and
- b.** the fact that the method of physics also has its limits (which are, however, axiomatically determined).

Reference is made to *A. Sokal/ J. Bricmont, *Impostures intellectuelles **, Paris, Od. Jacob, 1997, which points out the radical ignorance regarding

physics of leading postmodernist figures (Lacan, Kristeva, Irigata, Latour, Baudrillard, Deleuze, Guattari, Virilio).

Let us think of Lacan, who 'physically' defines the penis as $V-1$ (square root -1). Which gave the physicists a roar of laughter!

CF38

5. Modern opinions on ethics (38/50)

5.1. Bourgeois-liberal morality (38)

Library st.: K. Klop, *The blind spot of liberalism*, in: *Streven* 63 (1996): 9 (oct.), 844/847. -- Steller first defines what traditional liberalism is.

1.1. The government leaves “the good life” to free, equal, and economically independent individuals.

1.2. These individuals must not harm each other in the experience of point 1.1.

2. The relations between these individuals function optimally in a market system.

1.-- Narrow morality.

In themselves, these principles also constitute “a morality”. But it is deliberately a narrow morality, which, in the eyes of liberals, is the minimum necessary type of public behavior to ensure that people who may differ from one another in worldview (strongly or not) can still live together in peace.

Incidentally: this is liberal pluralism. The government merely creates space for the free, independent, economically self-sufficient individual, who carves their way through life while competing, and determines for themselves which norms and values they consider important, and which groups to join and which to leave.

'Values' that the individual freely decides upon are then other than the basic values that define liberalism (1.1., 1.2. and 2).

In other words, 'values' in that perspective have no objective and therefore universally valid reality. They are not metaphysical. When one puts this forward, one encounters the skeptical irony that easily dismisses such a thing as 'moralizing'. Values may well be identified, but they cannot be presented as universally valid.

2. The recent broader morality.

Upon closer examination, a narrow morality leads to anarchy ('misarchy', contempt for values). Or to fundamentalist attitudes. "By choice".

Bourgeois liberalism recognizes this danger and recently—according to Klop—it has been proposing, without irony, values such as respect for rules, assuming personal responsibility, self-reliance, but also caring for one's fellow man, commitment to the public good, decency, and tolerance.

But – according to Klop – this goes no further than conditions that safeguard the functioning of the free market economy. Economics, therefore, cannot function without (respect for) values either. Values that are not treated with irony.

CF39

5.2. Value theory as axiomatics (39)

'Axia', Latin: valor, value. Axiology is value theory.

Library st.: *P. Schotsmans, The Theory of Value as a Way Out of Our Civilization Crisis*, in: *Our Alma Mater* 1986: 2, 107/120.

The crisis of metaphysics.

At the end of the Middle Ages, there was no longer agreement regarding ontology insofar as it had existed since the ancient Greeks and partly under ecclesiastical influences;

- a.** an objective being (essence) of things and
- b.** brought up a deity, existing just as objectively.

Consequence : everything that is valuable in itself (objectively) became the object of critical reason, which from then on decided for itself what value is.

The culture crisis .

Schotsmans. -- The profound cultural crisis in which we all live means that young people today no longer have a foothold in values that exist in themselves and are inviolable. Young people immediately become "rudderless as they are in a pluralistic multiculturalism; beings who can no longer arrive at their own determination of values".

Values Clarification Movement .-- This is the title of a book subtitled *Values and Teaching (Working with Values in the Classroom)* , by L. Raths/ S. Simon (Columbus, 1966-1, 1978-2). This educational theory introduces values into the educational system itself: the value of the human person, personality, and the value-based development thereof.

A view that is gaining ground everywhere. For without an axiomatics, a system of presupposed inviolable data, modern reason is left to itself and to the whims of the subject.

1. In practical psychology (which is primarily what Schotsmans is discussing), authoritarianism prevails: American psychiatrists, for example, control their patients in an overly authoritarian manner. The subservience demanded kills the uniqueness of the person and their “human potentialities.”

2. In practical psychology, on the other hand, anarchism prevails: any adherence to objective data and authority is dismissed as 'authoritarianism'.

Thus this second tendency was forced to introduce a theory of value that, admittedly purely psychological, nevertheless began to emerge: truth,—multiplicity and totality (holism),—justice, goodness, simplicity,—beauty are presented as ideals that bind unbridled freedom without authoritarianism.

CF40

5.3. Morality from a socio-biological perspective (40)

Library st. : L. Ferry, *Les racines de la morale* , in: *Le Point* 21.02.1998, 92s ..

By the way: Ferry is an atheist 'Christian'. In this article he discusses Jean-Pierre Changeux/Paul Ricoeur, *Ce qui nous fait penser (La nature et la règle)* , Paris, Ode Jacob in more detail. Two thinkers speak.

1. JP Changeux (1936) is a professor at the Collège de France. An internationally renowned neurobiologist: in his **L'homme neuronal ** (1983) , he provides an overview of contemporary biology against the backdrop of his materialism, which attempts to justify a universally human morality.

2. P. Ricoeur (1913/2005) is a world-renowned Protestant thinker. For many years a professor at the universities of Nanterre (Paris) and Chicago. He is a phenomenologist in the German style.

Themes

Given: humanity lives according to ethical values. Question: do these ethical values have as their presuppositions merely our material infrastructure (especially our neurons), as biology is beginning to reveal, or do they have as presuppositions “the heaven of ideas” (which Ferry interprets as “abstract principles” specific to religions and philosophies)?

Note: When, like Ferry, one interprets the foundations of morality merely as “abstract principles,” one disregards one of the main currents of our Western tradition, Platonism, for whom ideas are something other than abstract human concepts.

Ferry is extensive on Changeux but all too brief regarding Ricoeur. So far so good. We hear him elaborate on Changeux.

1.- The rise of the biological sciences .

Since around 1965, genetics and neuroscience have experienced an unparalleled rise. The visible signs: cloning, medically assisted pregnancy, genetically based medical treatments, predictive medicine.

2.- Sociology as ethics.

Biology is beginning to discover how—albeit not without the environment (which Ferry does not address)—our genes determine some of our behaviors, whether normal or pathological.

While sociobiology is enjoying great success in the USA, in France, for example, a number of intellectuals are casting serious doubt on it.

Note-- Ferry is honest enough to mention this disagreement.

CF41

5.4. Ethics (41).

Some sociobiologists harbor the pretension to explain human preference for certain moral presuppositions—sympathy, solidarity, cooperation, altruism—which favor both the survival and evolution of humanity, in terms of natural selection.

Changeux regarding this matter.

a. -- *Paradise* .

Central to this is human nature, especially the brain, in which Changeux deems a number of moral predispositions—present in all individuals—to be present. This is called Ferry: moral universalism.

For example, regarding the capacity to discover ideas in one's fellow man such that one can understand him and feel sympathy for him. Likewise, inhibitors that prevent violence (the self-destruction of humanity) or alleviate the desire to suffer.

b. *The Fall*.

The differences, indeed, the disputes—called moral relativism by Ferry—are viewed sociobiologically as a fall from grace. Two causes:

a. the religions, because they disregard human autonomy by introducing values that have a higher origin than man (“the heaven of (divine) ideas”);

b. the communitarianisms that needlessly split people apart on the basis of group affiliations (identities) and create tensions.

Note: Here the (socio)biologists admit that the influence of religions and communitarianism—at least as they must understand it (they are elements of the living medium)—must penetrate deeply into human biology, such that genes suffer and thus help determine behavior.

c.-- *The redemption*.

“After the fall, redemption” (sic, ac, 93). Science with its universalism. Here, Changeux no longer argues socio-biologically but adopts clearly non-biological propositions from *J. Rawls* (*A Theory of Justice* (1971-1), a liberal thinker), and *J. Habermas* (of the second Frankfurt School; *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns I and II* (1981)). Which amounts to an ethics that forms opinions through discussion.

With Ricoeur, one does not clearly see exactly how genes are at work. Ricoeur readily admits the positive facts of biology but accuses Changeux et al. of extrapolating from mere biology to metaphysics. 'Extrapolation' here means a logical leap for which he is still awaiting strict proof.

5.5. What is the fellow man: I - again or not-I? (42)

A. Schopenhauer (1788/1860) is known not only for his pessimism but for his morality based on compassion ('Mitleid'). In his **Aphorismen zur Lebensweisheit**, he refers to the wise men of insight and explains as follows.

1. Good character.

The good character lives in a world consistent with its essence: to him, others are not “not-I” but “I-once again.” The result: his attitude towards everyone is one of friendliness. It feels an inward kinship with all beings, shares in their joys and sorrows, and trusts in the same empathy from all beings. From this springs his deep inner peace and his comforted, reassured, and contented mood, whereby everyone in his presence feels well.

The good character will call upon the assistance of others with as much confidence as it is aware of its willingness to grant that assistance to its own.
-- The magnanimous one who grants forgiveness to the enemy, who treats the wicked with kindness, is exalted ('erhaben') (...) since he acknowledged his own essence even where it decisively denied itself.

2. The bad character.

The bad character encounters a strong dividing wall everywhere between himself and everything outside himself: to him, the world is an absolute non-self. His attitude towards it is hostile from the outset. Consequently, the underlying tone of his mood becomes hatred, suspicion, envy, and schadenfreude.

The wicked character does not rely on assistance from others in times of need. If it does call upon it, it does so without trust. If it receives assistance, it does so without genuine gratitude. To him, assistance from others is hardly anything other than the effect of the folly of others.

For to find one's own essence in the strange essence: it is not capable of this even after such a thing has manifested itself through a clear series of signs. On this rests the insidious nature of all ingratitude.

This moral isolation in which it essentially and inevitably finds itself makes it easily fall prey to despair.

For the one, the world of people is a non-self; for the other, that same world is self-yet again.

5.6. The reason of the modern bourgeoisie according to K. Marx/ Fr. Engels. (43)

Library st.: M. Bodlaender, ed., *Politeia* (Great Men on State and Society), II (*From Napoleon to Roosevelt*), Amsterdam, 1947, 151ff..

It concerns an excerpt from the Communist Manifesto (London, February 1848), the pedestal for all social democrats for decades. The bourgeoisie has played a highly revolutionary role in history.

Wherever it has come to power, it has disrupted all medieval, patriarchal relationships. The bourgeoisie has mercilessly torn apart the multicolored bonds which in the Middle Ages connected man to his natural chieftains. It has left no other bond between man and man than pure self-interest, than cold, cash payment. This cold, cash payment has drowned the sacred emotion of pious fanaticism, chivalrous enthusiasm, and petty-bourgeois melancholy in the ice-cold water of selfish calculation. It has caused personal dignity to vanish into exchange value. Instead of the countless guaranteed and hard-won 'freedoms', it has established the one unscrupulous freedom of trade.

In one word.

She has replaced exploitation shrouded in religious and political fantasy with open, shameless, direct, barren exploitation. The bourgeoisie has stripped all activities formerly surrounded by reverent awe of their 'sacred pretense'.

Note: Marx and Engels say two things here.

1. The history of all society has hitherto been a history of class struggle through the exploitation of the powerless by the powerful. Slaves, plebeians, serfs, journeymen—proletarians have experienced this.

2. The great difference between ancient (Greek, Roman, medieval, pre-modern) systems of exploitation lies in the desecration, the desacralization, the secularization of exploitation. Modern reason is revolutionary reason. “All fixed, entrenched relations—with their consequence of views venerable through age—change before they can stiffen. All that is enduring and fixed vanishes. All that is sacred is desecrated.”

In other words: by desacralizing, that is, by interpreting things outside of God and his moral law, things, the deeds of men, become fleeting, without eternal metaphysical content.

In other words: modern reason can, and may, manipulate according to its own freely chosen axioms.

CF44

5.7. The purely rational man (44)

Library st.: *Luke 18:2/5* . -- The title is traditionally “the unjust judge”. Upon reading, it will become apparent that it would be better read as “the cynical judge”. Jesus told them a parable (...) .

There was in a city a judge who did not fear God and did not care about people. In the same city was a widow who sought him out: “Grant me justice against my adversary.” The judge did not respond to this for a long time. But afterwards he said: “Although I do not fear God and people mean nothing to me, I will nevertheless, since that widow is a burden to me, grant her justice so that she may not be an endless burden to me.”

The judge's reasoning.

Two of his axioms are clearly stated by Jesus.

a. God is dead (so that he does not revere him), -- which, Biblically speaking, represents the first three of the Ten Commandments;

b. the fellow man is 'nothing' which, Biblically speaking, represents the last seven of the Decalogue.

What remains is what he upholds as an axiom: his convenience. That is his 'hedone', pleasure (feeling). Unless people—God does not interfere anyway, for he is transcendent in such a way that he respects the very far-reaching autonomy of the (spiritually endowed) creatures (up to the Last Judgment, when, according to *Ps. 75(74):3* , he foresees the moment when he will establish a conscientious order)—unless, therefore, people disturb his 'hedone', his pleasure (feeling), the rational judge, for example, sees no real reason whatsoever to grant justice to someone who is in the right.

The reason of such a cynical judge, after all, simply 'sees' the situation of injustice somewhere, but not in such a way that it stirs his conscience. He unconsciously represses or consciously suppresses that situation because it does not touch his pleasure-seeking life.

Jesus teaches us the structure of the desacralization that such a discourse commits:

- a.** God “is dead”,
- b.** the nearest “is nothing”.

Sum: the Decalogue is a “dead letter”. Ultimately, if there is no higher value—one that reduces even the inviolable nature of pleasure to what pleasure is—that is inviolable holiness, then such behavior is 'reasonable', rational.

For it deduces from a hedonistic axiom what can and may be deduced from such an axiom: God is dead and his law is a dead letter. The 'foundation' is, after all, “my pleasure first”.

That is Jesus' lesson regarding rational behavior in one of its variations.

CF45

5.8. The moral question according to Vladimir Solovyev (45)

VI. Soloviev (1853/1900), arguably the greatest early thinker of traditional, realistic-Christian Russia, was raised Orthodox as a child, lost his faith (through his studies of Western rationalism), and regained it. In that sense, he is postmodern. Here is how he defines morality: proper, conscientious behavior.

Library st. : *Fl. Soloviev ; La justification du bien (Essai de philosophie morale)*, Paris, 1939.

1. The fundamental feelings.

Sense of shame (sense of morality), empathy (pity), reverence. They are the threefold, naturally given prelude to conscientious behavior.

- a.** Mastery of material-biological sensuality in and around us,
- b.** solidarity with all living beings, fellow man first and foremost,
- c.** respectful submission based on a free will decision towards something higher are the immutable essential characteristics of proper conduct. In the course of cultural history, they are admittedly interpreted and experienced (sometimes very differently), but insofar as there is true morality, they are present at least minimally. That is the question.

2. The virtues.

These are the conscious affirmation of the three natural, ethically valuable feelings. They are aimed at values, the good in its variations.

Oc, 43/61: the ascetic axiom (self-control); 62/79: the altruistic axiom (humanity); 80/93: the religious or sacred axiom (reverence).-- Behold the three fundamental attitudes of every decent person.

The soil structure.

Oc, 98. -- The virtuous person is as he ought to be in relation to all that is. This relationship is threefold. For either something—being—is by nature below our level of being, or something—being—is essentially equal to us, or something—being—is higher than us. -- That is the ontological structure (network of relations).

Logical conclusion.

We ought not to interpret what is below us (e.g., a biological inclination) as something higher than us (e.g., a God-given higher reality). To treat a being like ourselves—a human being—as if it were lower than us, as if it were an inanimate thing, for example, is 'unreal'; it disregards its reality, and is therefore improper. It is not ethically or morally justifiable.

Behold how Soloviev outlines the ethical question that 'plagues' throughout the entire history of culture.

CF46

5.9. Kierkegaard's critique of rhetoric (46)

Library st.: S. Kierkegaard, *Kritik der Gegenwart*, Basel, 1946.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813/1855), a precursor to existential philosophy, published a small book in 1846 from which we extract a few passages related to the rationality of today.

The salutation.

Our time is essentially the time that uses the intellect, the contemplative, the passionless time, the time that bursts fleetingly with enthusiasm and cunningly rests in inertia.

What else .

Not even the suicide victim ends it with himself out of despair. No: he deliberates on the step for so long and so meticulously until he is suffocated

by rationality. Kierkegaard concludes: the question arises whether such a person can still truly be called a suicide victim, namely insofar as it was primarily reason that took his life. This recalls what Thutukudides of Athens (-465/-395) once labeled as *malakia*, that lack of energy in the sense of lack of character. Of what was discussed in our earlier catechisms as sluggishness, that indecisiveness (concerning morality and religion, admittedly). For is it morally and religiously 'sluggish' that which can only be set in motion from the outside? Not from within. – That was once the seventh deadly sin.

Conscience (lack of conscience).

Oc, 20. -- Morality (*note*: in the sense of living conscientiously and decisively) is having character. Well, 'charakter' in ancient Greek means the engraved. Just as the sea has no character, nor does the sand, so too does abstract rationality have none. Character is, after all, inwardness (*note*: taking an active stand, committing oneself).

Unscrupulousness is also character, insofar as energy is at work. Indecisiveness, on the other hand, is when one prefers neither the one nor the other.

Note: possesses neither conscience nor unscrupulousness.

And indecisiveness regarding existence exists when the qualitative distinction is weakened by gnawing reflection.

The distinction between good and evil is undone by a frivolous, noble, theoretical knowledge of evil. By an arrogant cunning that knows that good in the world is not appreciated and is not worthwhile. So that good is, to begin with, stupidity.

Note: That is just about what today's cynics state and/or advocate.

CF47

5.10. Sex. Sexual Revolution ed (47)

Library st.: M. Van Nierop, *Nieuwe woorden*, Hasselt, 195, 243/245. - The moral problem cannot be discussed without saying at least a single word about the "sexual revolution".

Sex.

Ultimately from the Latin: "sexus virilis" and "sexus muliebris" (literally: male and female body parts). The old Dutch word is 'kunne'.

Sex appeal.

It begins in the 1920s+ with the term “sex appeal,” which had blown over from the USA and means “seductive female appearance.” The sex idols—actresses and pin-ups (up to and including our current top models)—exude an attraction that was discussed unashamedly in the 1920s. In taboo language: a 'taboo' that had prevailed until then was broken.

***Sexual* revolution**

With the beatniks (1950+) and the hippies/ypies (1960+), the term 'sex' becomes generally accepted in the sense of “morally free and openly practiced sexuality”. Sex books are in circulation in porn shops and are practically 'accepted'. Sex boutiques draw crowds—including the older generation who—both shocked and attracted—discover a new world.

Both aspects of the moral revolution in this regard first pass through the Scandinavian countries (particularly via Hamburg) and reach us from there.

Incidentally: words that were once devoid of erotic connotations have since acquired a sexy—exciting—content. Take, for example, 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend': children are taught that they must have a “boyfriend” as early as possible (on pain of not being normal). Europe is imposing mixed schools. And the like.

“Is perversion normal?”

X, *Psychology (Is perversity normal ?)*, in: Petra (Hamburg) 1991: September. -- “Sexual fantasies involving overwhelm and perversions (*note*: what was rejected as perverse, depraved before the sexual revolution) are much more frequent than previously assumed. Also among women. Most people often experience sexual fantasies. Some are so outlandish that they prefer to keep them secret.” (Dr D. Barlow, Director of the Sexual Research Program (New York State University)).

The question arises here: does the sexual revolution provoke those fantasies (which is certain) or did they already exist before (which is also certain)? And: Is sex with animals and with children also 'normal'?

CF48

5.11. Moral-free eros (48)

We now turn our attention to a literary masterpiece by *Vlad Nabokov* (1899/1977), who became Professor of Russian Literature at Cornell University from 1948 to 1959. He is regarded as **a.** an extraordinary describer and storyteller and **b.** a virtuoso of words. Critics say that the theme hidden deep within all his works is obsession. That is: something accompanies a person to such an extent that he or she becomes controlled by it. He is immediately regarded as “an essential leading figure of literary postmodernism” (*D. Coussy et al., Les littératures de langue anglaise depuis 1945* , Paris, 1988, 167s.).

Lolita.

Lolita has been a topical issue in Belgium since August 15, 1996, when Mr. Dutroux, the pedophile with multiple girls—known as 'Lolitas'—on his conscience, was arrested. An event that caused an ethical earthquake among the sane segment of the population.

The scenario.

Professor Humbert Humbert arrives in the USA in 1940. There, he meets *Lolita*, a girl five thousand three hundred days old (at the age of fifteen). He recognizes in her—he is thirty years older than her—his first 'love' from his adolescence. To remain within her circle, he marries the mother. She discovers the true intentions of the marriage but dies in an accident. This, of course, opens the floodgates for the professor. He sets out with her on the roads of the USA. To shield himself from his neighbors.

The young Dolares Haze—*Lolita's* name—is, to the point of vulgarity, a common girl who, for instance, dreams of Hollywood while leafing through women's magazines. Yet to her “Mac Fatum, old baboon of a father-in-law,” she is like an enchanting diva. However, the eros with him does not satisfy the both naive and daring *Lolita*. She searches for Humbert for months on end: he finds her married and pregnant. Upon seeing such a 'disaster,' he becomes drunk with grief and decides to kill his rival.

The reception.

Four publishers rejected the manuscript. But it became a bestseller.

One can view the work from two contradictory perspectives. For not a single coarse word or depraved allusion can be found in the text. Which 'elevates' the offensive nature of the content into a sublime but purely aesthetic atmosphere.

The result is that the former exonerate Lolita from any blemish, while the others—often called “Philistines (narrow-minded people) and seekers of scandalous literature” by the former—dismiss it as a shame-free book.

The lifeblood of Lolita is that morality is interpreted by Nabokov as a non-essential element of eros. In other words: ethics is set aside. To surrender oneself to, for example, eros, free of conscience. This allows Nabokov to play with fantasies (imaginings).

Critics.

Please note that we are quoting from *Magazine littéraire* 233 (September 1981), which was ten years before Dutroux and his global scandal.

Philippe Sollers

A masterpiece like Lolita is still far removed from its true place—one of the first—in the 20th-century novel. Why? Nabokov touched upon two American sensibilities: mental health and the girl.

Gilles Berbedette.

Nabokov's precocious genius reveals itself in parodying our most absurd flirtations with "history," utopias, romance novels, or in other words, with our great taboos. The lack of reverence for grand ideas is merely a fundamental component of Nabokov's literary genius.

Note: Berbedette emphasizes the typically postmodern, namely disbelief, indeed, the frivolous mockery of all that represents higher values. Which amounts to nihilism: all higher values as higher are nihil, nothing (unless utopias or taboos).

The beginning .

This literally throws the reader right into the middle. - “Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-li-ta: the tip of my tongue performs three little jumps across the palate to collide with your teeth three times. Lo-li-ta. She was Lo in the morning. La, simply put, one meter forty-eight in socks, standing on one foot. She was Lola in her pants. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolares on the dotted lines of her form. But in my arms, she was invariably Lolita. (...).

“Actually, there probably would never have been a Lolita if I had not loved a previous girl during the course of a summer “in a kingdom by the sea”. When? About as many years before Lolita’s birth as I was old that summer -- A style full of imagery is the hallmark of a good killer”

Note: Humbert's existence would have been called S. Kierkegaard's 'aesthetic' life. This is a morally free life.

CF50

5.12. Pia Pera, diary of Lo (50).

Library st.: J. Douwes, *A combative rebuttal to Lolita* , in: *Trouw* 07.09.1996,2

Pera (40) is an Italian writer, “who can therefore 'only' make her audience aware of abuses of which children are victims”. Around the age of eighteen she read Nabokov's *Lolita* first in English, then in Russian and then in Italian. She was blown away by the literary achievement but was immensely annoyed by the hero Humbert as yet another character driven by lust and passion, but this time vented on a child.

Writing with empathy for Lolita .

Her disappointment was primarily that she could not empathize with Lolita: “How did she view herself? How did she see the man who married her mother to have her?” – The story Pera presents is at war with Nabokov’s work, if only because she presents the same story in the language of a child. To this end, she read girls’ diaries at Harvard University: “Some were childish. Others pretentious or very wise” – This is how Pera’s work begins, when the first-person narrator is left behind with her mother after her father’s death. As an only child.

Pera's Lolita.

Her Lolita is a spoiled brat. She loathes ugly men. -- Lolita wages a fierce battle with her mother to attract the attention of the new tenant, Humbert. In Lolita's eyes, her mother acts so foolishly that at a certain moment she says: “Now I’m taking this Humbert for myself.”

Sexual offense.

In such a case, does Humbert still commit a sexual offense? “I think so. All children attempt to seduce and manipulate. But as an adult, one knows that. So one must give them the space to do so. However, when one gives in

to this with one's own sexual desire, one inhibits it. One must never 'use' children for one's own sexual gratification. I am very strict about that." Thus Pera in the interview.

Note: Pera speaks as if she is expressing a personal opinion. But the question arises: "What is your sufficient reason to speak so harshly?" As long as our culture confines itself to individual opinions, it lacks any ontological basis. If pedophilia is not essentially, by definition, unscrupulous behavior, why should a pedophile be condemned?

CF51

6. Modern reason, political confessions (51/58)

6.1. Fate Analysis (51)

Peirce once said: "One knows what a concept entails, insofar as one works with it and knows the result."

One of the definitions of 'fate' reads: "actual course of 'events'": with the emphasis on 'actual', for it is understood to mean "independent of the human will", unpredictable: "to be awaited". In other words: reason's ability to act purposefully reaches its limits here.

Library st.:

- R. Guardini, *Freedom, Grace, Fate*, Antwerp, 1950;
- Daniel-Rops, *Eléments de notre destin* (Essai), Paris, 1934 (a work of cultural criticism);
- L. Foldes, *Léopold Szondi et l'énigme du destin*, in: *Sélection* (Zurich) 1985: Juillet, 98/104.

One can define 'fate' as "the dynamic system of destinies". Sometimes emphasis is placed on being predetermined: 'fate' is then "that which is predetermined" and even "the mysterious power that predetermines destinies".

In the background, an ontological insight is present: 'being' is, namely, "all that was, is now, and will ever be" (a definition already mentioned by Homer and Hesiod when they designate the object of the Muses and of their leader Mnemosune, literally: remembering (expanded consciousness)). All destinies are situated within that ontological whole.

Time dependency

'Being', reality as we experience it, is a totality of temporary, fleeting moments: from the past (which lingers, indeed, weighs), into which we are thrown, we live in the very narrow 'now' or 'present', towards the future that we help design.

Factors.

The elements—factors, parameters—that act as determinants in the past, present, and future are so overwhelming and numerous for our earthly mind that we must confine ourselves to samples (to generalize and broaden).

Incidentally. This is the true reason why religious people pray. They proceed from the premise that at least 'higher', 'holy' -- “divine beings” know the factors.

As far as we are concerned, we forget a great deal of the past (through suppression or repression, for example); much of the present escapes us; as for the future, our knowing and predicting must be awaited. Our destiny reveals our ignorance.

CF52

Lotology.

Library st.: P. Van Tongeren, ed., *Fate in One's Own Hands ? (Reflections on the meaning of (fate and) destiny in our culture)*, Baarn, 1994.

We know: Leopold Szondi (1893/1986) developed a destiny analysis (Schicksalsanalyse) (1944). “Szondi gave a medical and psychoanalytic basis to the concept of ‘human destiny’, which had been hidden from him until then” (Marvin Webb).

Genealogical fate, in particular, caught his attention: the genes we inherited from our parents and ancestors partly determine our inclinations—the choices regarding marriage partner, friend, profession—and even illness.

Taking fate into your own hands?

Van Tongeren defines fate as “a scandal to human freedom”—destiny (the strong degree of fate) as “the ultimate form of that scandal”. -- Some sixteen writers set out their ideas regarding the uncontrollable and its possible control in the work.

Narratological. -- Narratology, or the study of stories, is a part of all historiography: what happens is capable of being told.

The fundamental structure of history—a history, an event or occurrence, an occurrence—is always the “omen/following” pair, whereby a first event is followed in time by a second event (whether or not the latter has any causal connection with the previous one). The succession inherent in all that is 'temporal', that is, elapsed in time, time-bound, is the only ascertainable link.

The speech.

Whether the connection extends beyond the sequential period of time is evident from rational research. Thus, we have the causal connection that has attracted particular attention since the modern sciences.

The recent (but actually very old) chaology within current physics exposes one aspect: although essentially determined, much in nature (matter) remains uncontrollable and therefore unpredictable. It is then called 'chaos', because it is over-complex and thus rationally confused.

However, as soon as one steps outside physics, for example into the living world (plants, animals, humans), so many factors come into play beyond the purely physical factors of an event that our meager reason is repeatedly confronted with a 'chaos' that is more than physical and different from it. Consequently, for instance, the causal link remains elusive. With that, we find ourselves in the realm of fate.

CF53

6.2. Reason proposes but fate disposes (the turn into the opposite) (53)

The ancient cultures, following in the footsteps of the primitive, knew, based on the unpredictability of the deities, the axiom that expresses the reversal into the opposite: “the harmony (understand: merging) of opposites”.

-- J. Elster, *Ulysses and the Sirens (studies in Rationality and Irrationality)* , Cambridge / Paris, 1979-1, 1984-2, and

-- J. Elster, **Sour Grapes (Studies in the Subversion of Rationality)** , Cambridge/Paris, 1983, from the humanities or social sciences, defines rationality as the human capacity to purposefully ('intention') take the future into account.

1. Biologically, one can speak of teleology (life forms adapt 'functionally' to situations)

2. In the human sciences, however, teleology becomes purposefulness (intentionalism) in adapting to circumstances.

Note: Platon views it as two aspects in the cosmos, man, and society: 'nous' (Lat.: intellectus, mind) and 'ananke', necessity, or better: fate. Our mind is rational. Fate is often irrational. 'Fate' is that which is incomprehensible to our mind (intellect/reason, disposition, will). It is what causes the mind to miscalculate. Hence, anankè, fateful necessity, appears unpredictable and disorderly.

William of Ockham (Occam) (1295/1350),

The nominalist, who directly prepared the way for the modern mentality, was, with his revolutionary action, aimed at the renewal of the Catholic Church. Deliberately. However well-intentioned he may have been, his purge movement resulted in the shaking off, by lay people (especially a number of German and other princes), of “the yoke of Christian Rome”. Thus writes A. Weber (Protestant), *Histoire de la philosophie européenne*, Paris, 1914-8, 234.

Martin Luther (1483/1546)

He was a deeply religious nature who unintentionally became estranged from the Catholic Church. “Nothing was further removed from Luther than the founding of a new ideology.” Even the fragmentation of the Roman Catholic Church was not his intention. His success was fueled by other forces: they lay within him and in the structure of his time.” (Dr G. Deschner, *Luther (Eine Bilanz nach 500 Jahren)* in: Bunte 10.11.1983, 126).

One sees it in both cases: deliberate action that, once placed in situations, causes the opposite of what was intended. Fate decides!

CF54

6.3. Descartes and Hegel deliberate, but fate disposes (54)

R. Descartes (1596/1650) founded modern philosophy.

“Cartesianism as a system was abandoned rather quickly. Yet Descartes continued to influence both modern philosophies and modern sciences no less because of this.” (C. Forest, *Le cartésianisme et l'orientation de la science moderne*, Liège / Paris, 1938, 3).

“It is not the intention to admonish Descartes for the materialistic interpretation of science (...). He remained a believer until the end of his life and his spiritualism is not doubted. -- but the ideas that people put into circulation go further than they have foreseen. With an inexorable logic they continue their way through the thinking minds.” (Oc, 4).

In other words: thus Descartes became a prematerialist, a forerunner of materialism—the aggressive materialism of the French materialists of the 18th century.

G.Fr. Hegel (1770/1831)

He can safely be regarded as the leading figure of typically modern philosophy. He advocated a “Philosophy of the Idea”. For him, 'Idea' is “all that was, is now, and will be”.

Yet he did not hide his deep sympathy for the 'Philosophes' (the 18th-century rationalists). Even those among them who most vehemently opposed the cause of Christianity and that of spiritualism (i.e., the positing of an immortal, immaterial human soul, with or without belief in a deity).

In other words: just as Descartes was ambivalent, on the one hand very spiritualistic (consciousness) and on the other very materialistic (the body as a machine), so too, in his own way, was Hegel. What do we see? Hegel had students. Many kindred spirits. He dominated German thought to a large extent up until the First World War (1914/1918). But they diverged into 'right-wing' and 'left-wing' factions. Among the left were K. Marx (1818/1883) and Fr. Engels (1820/1895), the founders of scientific socialism (communism). They turned Hegel “on his head” and, instead of the 'idea', placed matter first as the principle of all that was, is now, and will be.

Cfr. R. Serreau, *Hegel et l'hégélianisme* , Paris, 1965-2, at 26s. (*Spiritualism et materialism*).

Conclusion. -- Descartes and Hegel are two leading figures regarding rationality. Both believe in a universal reason in all people. Yet this modern reason diverged into contradictory opinions.

CF55

6.4. Revolutionary reason proposes. Revolution disposes (55)

K. Löwith (1897/1973), in his *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen*, in: *W. Otto ua, Anteile (Martin Heidegger zum 60. Geburtstag)*, Frankf.aM 1950, 150, says:

“However inconceivable it may seem at first, namely the fact that radical secularization (*note: total absorption in this world*) found its origin in a religious 'Entweltlichung' (*note: turning away from this world*), this would nevertheless only confirm a general rule of history: in the process of history, the outcome is always different from what was intended at the beginning of a movement (...).”

“The great innovators of history prepare for others the paths they themselves do not tread.” -- Löwith mentions three models.

1. J.-J. Rousseau (1712/1778)

He prepared the way for the French Revolution (1789/1799). Yet he would not have identified with Max de Robespierre (1758/1794), who played a leading role in “La Terreur” (the Reign of Terror). Such a brutal dictatorship was not deliberately envisioned in Rousseau’s mind. Quite the contrary.

2.1. K. Marx (1818/1883)

He prepared the Russian Revolution (February/October 1917). The Bolsheviks, the majority, seized power because they had outnumbered the Mensheviks, the minority, at the Congress of 1903 in Brussels and London. Vladimir Lenin (1870/1924), founder of Bolshevik Marxism, implemented a brutal repression that lasted for years. But Marx, who envisioned the constitutional system of Switzerland or the USA at the time as an ideal, would not have recognized himself in Lenin.

2.2. Fr. Nietzsche (1844/1900),

He was an aristocratizing nihilist, preparing the ground for the Fascist (1922) and Nazi (1933) revolutions. In 1942, A. Hitler (1889/1945) presented Nietzsche's works to his ally B. Mussolini (1883/1945), who, like him, was a proponent of a (brutal) dictatorial system, a totalitarian regime, in the Brenner Pass where they met. But Nietzsche certainly would not have recognized himself in Hitler.

After all this in this and in the previous chapters, it becomes clear why critical minds have called modern reason “a revolutionary reason.” “You will know the tree by its fruit,” said Jesus.

CF56

6.5. The ecological issue (56).

Library st.: *R. Etware and others/Info Sud, Ecology (Véritable pépinière d'emploi l'industrie verte est en Europe un secteur très florissant)* , in: *Le Temps* (Geneva) 28 08.1998, 45.

Man and the environment go hand in hand, for although man cares for his environment, he also pollutes it! We see this throughout history.

The disaster.

Modernity has as its fate—its destiny—to modernize the environment, but not without a reversal into the opposite: “The forests are dying. The deserts are expanding. The soils are becoming poisoned. The air is polluted. -- The climate is warming. -- Waste is piling up.”

The typical modern reaction .

If modern reason is the cause of the disaster, it is also extremely inventive regarding recovery. -- “All this – according to the author – gives rise to new techniques and thus new jobs.” These concern countless domains: water purification, air purification, energy conservation, waste incineration or recovery, and measurement techniques that ensure compliance with standards.

Add to that the restoration of biodiversity. Add to that the measures that prevent disasters: solar panels, organic arable farming and livestock farming (agriculture), landscape maintenance, management of forests and woodlands.

Economic policy.

J. Beishuizen et al., *De magische vijfhoek (Economische politiek in kort bestek)*, Utr./Antw., 1976, 9ff., states that the economic policy of governments upholds five objectives:

- a.** balance of the labor market,
- b .** balance regarding economic growth,
- c.** stable price level,
- d .** balanced balance of payments,
- e.** fair distribution of income.

The proposers raise the question of whether a healthy living environment is a sixth objective. They advocate broadening the concept of “economic growth” so that it provides for not only material prosperity but also overall well-being, which includes environmental care.

The global market for environmental care is heading towards 300 billion dollars.

That alone indicates that environmental concern has become a serious component of the entire system of our culture. -- Governments, businesses, administrations, banks, and insurance companies are involved. Not to mention the various specialized disciplines that underpin the “green sector” industry.

CF57

6.6. Ecology (Biblically interpreted) (57)

'Ecology' speaks of the relationship “living being/environment”—all religions (except the rationalist ones) speak of the connection “religious person/biotope”. The Bible does the same.

Let us now read *Rom. 8:19ff* . “The creation waits anxiously for the revelation (*note*: the becoming visible) of the sons of God (*note*: friends of God). Although it is subjected to futility—not that it wanted it itself, but for the sake of the one who subjected it to it—then it is with the hope of one day being freed itself from the slavery of corruption,—in order to thus experience the freedom of the glory of the children of God (*note*: friends of God).”

We realize it indeed: the whole, creation to date, groans in 'birth pangs'. Moreover: not only they! We ourselves, who possess the 'firstfruits' (*note*: an initial stage) of the spirit (*note*: God's life force), groan inwardly in expectation of the redemption of our bodies.

Interpretation.

Axiom: *Gen. 6:3* , where it is stated that God's 'spirit' (life force that establishes happiness) is ultimately reserved for those who are not “flesh (and blood)” (exhibiting unscrupulous, weak behavior).

Axiom.

The 'creation' (here: the biotope) is in God's eyes in solidarity with man regarding his fate. It shares in his lot. Thus *Gen. 6:13* , where a causal link is established between man's unscrupulousness and the ecological disaster

called the Flood. -- Cf. *Deut. 32:12/14* (positive model). Cf. *Osee 2:20* (future covenant).

A curse (misfortune) weighs upon the earth (and the universe) since the unscrupulousness of the serpent, Eve and Adam (*Gen. 3:17ff.*).

This manifests itself in vanity, that moral evil based on delusional wisdom, and ruin, that material evil. With the groaning human being, the biotope also groans. Yet thanks to God's compassion amidst His omnipotence, who closes his eyes to unscrupulousness (*Wisdom 11:23*), our material part, our body, already now beginningly ("the firstfruits") shares in Holy Spirit (God's life force) which in time will mean full redemption. In solidarity with this, the biotope already now, secretly, shares in it with the expectation of full redemption ('glory').

Yes, the universe will share in it, as *2 Cor. 5:17* says, for example. One sees that, along with the cosmic religions, the Bible also involves the entire cosmos in the drama of salvation of sacred history.

CF58

6.7. The 'intellectuals' in modern discussion (58)

Library st.: *M. Terpstra, Panajotis Kondylis (Only intellectuals believe that intellectuals understand the world better), in: The Owl of Minerva (Journal of History and Philosophy of Culture) 11:2 (winter 1994/1995), 99/120.*

It is known that the medieval clergy was replaced from the modern era onwards by the 'intelligentsia', 'the modern vanguard' consisting of scientists, thinkers, and artists. -- Kondylis is a Marxist Greek-German thinker.

I.-- The collapse of the three axioms.

Kondylis calls them, with K, Marx, 'ideologies' (unreal thought constructs). Since the Renaissance (1450/1640), conservatism (pre-modern tradition, in our case primarily advocating the Christian Middle Ages) on the one hand, and modern liberalism (free-market economy) and socialism (guided economy) on the other, have dominated our Western democracies in a life-and-death struggle.

The new era.

The collapse of the communist systems (from the USSR to Cuba) in particular has proven "once again" that the familiar 'ideologies', typical

products of 'intellectuals', have become unreal. They no longer solve the challenges of today. Only now, after the Cold War, are the deeper driving forces that will determine future planetary politics coming to the surface.

Over the course of the stormy years 1975/1995, they have accumulated into a gigantic potential—explosive. This will not lead to a war, but to tremendous conflicts amidst a state of unbridled lawlessness. -- In particular, the deadly fight for the (just) distribution of essential goods could well be imminent. And on a planetary scale at that.

II.-- *The role of intellectuals in the discussion.*

The modern world is an arguing, debating world in which “the intellectuals” play a leading role.

Kondylis's 'thinking' seems useless in our dramatic survival situation. Yet there will always be intellectuals who will offer their ideological services “for the greater good,” in the opinion that “they know better than others.”

Typically Marxist, Kondylis says: “Intellectuals generate nothing more than thought constructs alien to life.”

Note: What exactly is Kondylis's way of thinking, then?