



Reading the code of dehumanisation: the animal construct deconstructed

Lendo o código de desumanização:
o construto animal desconstruído

Leyendo el código de deshumanización:
el constructo animal desconstruido

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Abstract

The article examines the way Western moral discourse is traditionally encoding the exclusion of humans from the human moral community, resulting in their forceful subjection. The analysis focuses on the principle of binarism producing images of ideal “human” and deficient “non-human” (animal) features. While the latter center about “purely” bodily functions encoding “pure” egotism and immediate consumption, the “human” ego-ideal (civilization) is defined as the “total” subjection to collective ends of accumulation.

Keywords: Moral discourse, binarism, body

Resumo

Este artigo examina os modos como o discurso moral ocidental tradicionalmente codifica a exclusão de pessoas da comunidade reconhecidamente humana, por meio de sua desumanização. A análise focaliza como o princípio do binarismo produz imagens de uma ‘humanidade ideal’ como opostas a traços “não humanos” (animalizados). Enquanto esses últimos traços estão centrados em funções “meramente” corporais e na satisfação de necessidades imediatas, as imagens do “ego-ideal” humano (civilização) são definidas por sentidos de coletividade, de divisão do trabalho e de hierarquias permanentes e bem definidas.

Palavras-Chave: Discurso moral, binarismo, corpo

Resumen

Este artículo examina los modos como el discurso moral occidental tradicionalmente codifica la exclusión de personas de la comunidad reconocidamente humana, por medio de su deshumanización. El análisis focaliza como el principio del binarismo produce imágenes de una ‘humanidad ideal’ como opuestas a rasgos ‘no humanos’ (animalizados). Mientras esos últimos rasgos están centrados en funciones ‘meramente’ corporales y en la satisfacción de necesidades inmediatas, las imágenes del ‘ego-ideal’ humano (civilización) se definen por sentidos de colectividad, de división del trabajo y de jerarquías permanentes y bien definidas.

Palabras Clave: Discurso moral, binarismo, cuerpo



Introduction

Approaching the questions of dehumanisation and animalisation, one has to bear in mind the bitter lessons of Western history. Its rhetoric of dehumanisation not only triggered immeasurable violence and destruction, but also had paralysing effects which helped put its cultural catalysts behind a veil of 'ignorance' or of 'natural' inevitability and thus keep its potential intact and available. Coping with this mystification is certainly one of the most challenging tasks when analysing the rhetoric of dehumanisation.

However, it may be even more demanding to face the complementary side to demystification, i.e. the startling simplicity and banality of dehumanising scripts, set against the background of their monstrous effects throughout history. This contrast puts the spotlight on occidental culture as a whole, on its institutions and its power tools throughout the ages, in the sciences, in philosophy, in (Christian) theology, in education and in the media.¹ Thus the rhetoric of dehumanisation has not only been shielded by its paralysing effects, but also by the defensive works of Western *Geistesgeschichte* (cf. MILLS, 1997, p. 18-19).

Having clarity in this area can be a tremendous help for analysis. The system could not have become as powerful and enduring as it is without a simple code as its Archimedean point that was able to penetrate cultural, intellectual and societal structures alike and could be immediately understood and used by everyone.

By the same token, however, the code, when being *decoded*, can turn the system's Archimedean point into its Achilles' heel. Identifying and de-mystifying the code, to question its overall power, is therefore an academic task of considerable weight (IVESON, 2011, p. 4).

1. The binary code

Critical research has already taught us a lot about this code and in particular about what has been called its moral binarism, or dualism, or dichotomy, or Manichean character, or 'exceptionalism' and its production of the *self* (or the *us*) as *good* and *better* solely by drawing a decrepit other as the *bad*, the *dangerous* or the *evil*.

1 Mills, 1997, p. 88: "a depersonising conceptual apparatus".



There is also a consensus that Western moral discourse², its dehumanising vectors included, stems – as Charles W. Mills puts it – from the “writings of Plato and Aristotle” and from “the Greek and Roman Stoics,” evolving “over the next two millennia” up to the present day (MILLS, 1998, p. 172). It was Thomas Aquinas (ibid.) who placed Aristotle’s speculation in the midst of the Christian dogma and of occidental philosophy, whence it made its way into even the remotest classrooms of white Europe, into scientific axioms, into laws, into the media and the arts - and into imperial practice: the “characterisation of oneself by reference to what one is not” has left an indelible stamp on Western culture. The binary categories determine each other reciprocally: the “secondariness” of sub- or non-persons is “essential to the primariness of the European” (MILLS, 1997, p. 43, 58f; citing WHITE, 1972, p. 5, and SAID, 1972, p. 70).

For Johan Galtung (1996, p. 2, 17, 202) this dichotomy is continually being etched “in religion and ideology, in language and art, in science and law, in media and education”, “to legitimize direct and structural violence”, i.e. repression and exploitation. Niklas Luhmann (2006, p. 262) speaks of “distinctions”, implying the “higher evaluation” of the “better” side. These are “classifications according to a specific order of species and genus as they were already conceived by Plato and logically elaborated by Aristotle. What matters is to exclude one side of the distinction from the other, one species from the other, one determination from its opposite.”

Stuart Hall (1996, p. 306, 307; 1997a, p. 21; cf. HULME, 1986, p. 49-50) calls ‘stereotypical dualism’ a regular feature of Western moral discourse, dividing the world “into good-bad, us-them, attractive-disgusting, civilised-uncivilised, the West-the Rest”. Susanne Kappeler (1995, p. 323-324) holds that Western ideological tradition constructs an interrelated set of ‘others,’ “each on a different axis of a dualistic opposition”, creating “a hierarchy between the superior norm and the deviant ‘other’: man/woman, white/black, adult/child, First World/Third World, national/foreign, human/animal, (human) culture/nature,

2 I follow here the definition of *discourse* proposed by Link (1983, p. 60) and Jaeger (1993, 1999) in their Foucauldian adaption of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Link defines *discourse* in a condensed way as: “... an institutionally consolidated concept of speech inasmuch as it determines and consolidates action and thus already exercises power.” Jaeger complementarily understands *discourse* to be “the flow of knowledge – and/or all societal knowledge stored – throughout all time determining individual and collective doing and/or formative action that shapes society, thus exercising power. As such, discourses can be understood as sui generis material realities.” ‘Moral discourse’ can therefore be roughly understood as the assembly of statements and utterances, or of clusters of statements and utterances, forming the hegemonic knowledge in one, i.e. the moral or prescriptive realm in a given (historical, social, cultural) context. Other realms may be – among many others - juridical, medical, political, or medial, with knowledge crossing borders freely. Cf. Siegfried Jaeger’s comprehensive overview and his German-English CDA-Glossary in JAEGER 2005. For centuries, however, philosophy has served as a central hegemonic *institution* to define what ‘can be said’, to sanction what ‘cannot be said’ (JAEGER 2005), and to distribute knowledge among a variety of disciplines, departments, and social and cultural levels. Consequently, drawing upon philosophy in my paper does not reflect a disciplinary or historic interest, as such, but is a means to understand the (still effective) discursive ways of reproduction, the ‘meaning’, and the hegemonic status of the code of dehumanisation (as a cluster of statements).



heterosexual/homosexual, Aryan/Jew, Christian/Jew, Christian/Muslim, healthy/sick, abled/disabled, civilised/primitive, and so forth.”

For Sander Gilman (1985, p. 17, 27), stereotypical dualism forms the “deep structure of our own sense of self and the world”, and it has – according to Peter Hulme (1986, p. 49, 50; cf. SALISBURY, 2011, p. 80) – “proved stubbornly immune to all kinds of contradictory evidence.”

However, speaking of a ‘deep structure’ of Western moral discourse should not tempt us to prematurely believe that by identifying binary logic as its basic feature we had already grasped the code in question which, by its very *form*, would produce moral judgments – or rather, verdicts. It is the mingling of the plain, the simple and the obvious with the seemingly unintelligible, even the fantastic, which has for centuries been supplying Western dehumanising routines with perplexing fortifications. As Charles W. Mills (1997, p. 119) put it: “...one has to think against the grain”.

Consequently, we may not be in the position to understand the functioning of Western moral discourse, unless we consider additional intermediary encodings *beneath* its binary logic.

2. The animal category

It is, of course, the animal category which has been identified as one of the most obvious intermediary categories in Western moral discourse. In fact, moral binarism cannot be adequately explained without referring to the narration of *animal* and *man* as its two *dramatis personae*.

According to Marilyn French (1985, p. 341), Western paternalist tradition is based on the assumption “that man is distinct from the animals and superior to them”. As a reason she suggests the idea that only man is in contact “with a higher power/knowledge called god, reason, or control” and therefore obliged “to shed all animal residue and realize his ‘divine’ nature, the part that seems unlike any part owned by animals - mind, spirit, or control.”

For Richard Iveson (2011, p. 8, 9, 10), by defining ‘the human’ through the exclusion of ‘the animal’, “the privative determination of ‘animality’” started “mutely padding” throughout Western philosophy. Judith Butler (1993, p. 7-8) agrees that “the construction of the human is a differential operation that produces the more and the less ‘human’, the inhuman, the humanly unthinkable. These excluded sites come to bound the ‘human’ as its constitutive outside, and to haunt those boundaries as the persistent possibility of their disruption and re-articulation.”

According to Giorgio Agamben (2004, p. 21), “determining the border between human and animal” is “a fundamental metaphysico-political operation in which alone something like ‘man’ can be decided upon and produced”. Agamben concludes that without this ‘operation’ “not even the divine” would any longer be thinkable. In other words: without defining *man* by rejecting *the animal* Western moral philosophy could lose its *raison d’être*, its condition of possibility, altogether.



Jacques Derrida (2004, p. 21/22, 63; cf. HALL, 1990, p. 229) even dedicated his complete Œuvre to the de-construction of the human-animal binarism.³ From this opposition all the attempts to delimit “what is ‘proper to man’, the essence and future of humanity, ethics, politics, law, ‘human rights’, ‘crimes against humanity’, ‘genocide’, etc.” are derived. Derrida questions the ‘humanism’ of “the most powerful philosophical tradition within which we live” (DERRIDA 2008, p.135): “Wherever something like ‘the animal’ is named, the gravest, most resistant, also the most naive and the most self-interested presuppositions dominate what is called human culture (and not only Western culture); in any case they dominate the philosophical discourse that has been prevalent for centuries” (DERRIDA, 2004, p. 63).

Thus, as a ‘deficient’ antagonist to what may be defined as *the human*, the *philosophical animal* (DERRIDA, 2008, p. 23) has been and is still ascribed not only to innumerable animals⁴, but also to human ‘minorities’ *ad libitum*. It supports violence against (real) animals, as it commands “all other structural excludings” in human contexts on the basis of “race, gender, class, sexuality, and so on”, impacting people due to their various societal roles in a cumulative, intersectionist way (IVESON, 2011, p. 7; HUND, 1999, p. 10-11, 14).

Consequently our search for the operating code of Western moral discourse should not be distracted by an essentialist notion that there is a *multiplicity* of codes of exclusion in accordance with the group they are launched against (COHEN, 1986, p. 85, 129). We should rather put up with the code’s uniform, multivalent⁵ character, which can be traced back to Greek philosophy.

There is, however, another distraction offered by Western moral discourse which must be rejected, namely, that the *philosophical animal* (i.e. the properties which it ascribes to humans) has anything to do with empirical biology. Rather, it was biological camouflage which ancient rhetoric, i.e. its analogical machine, supplied to the *philosophical animal* so that it could produce natural or even scientific ‘effects’.

3. The analogical machine

In turning to the analogical machine behind the moral code of the West we should address one more intermediary layer: as Rosemary Ruether (1992, p. 138-139) has pointed out, binary tradition explains “the superiority of the human to the animal” to mean the rule of the ‘rational’ soul’ (man) over the ‘body’ and “the embodied world” (animal). To

3 He refers to his central terms, such as “difference”, “logocentrism”, “trace, gramma or grapheme”.

4 The ‘animalisation’ of animals (ROBERTS, 2008, p. xi) as a prerequisite of the Western Cartesian treatment of animals must be seen as an intrinsic, systemic function of the animal construct. Although this extensive, extremely weighty aspect cannot be dealt with in this paper, it should be clear that the discursive deconstruction of the animal construct may be crucial for any cultural changes of attitudes towards animals. We should not forget, however, that the construct is and has been ascribed even to plants (PAUL, 2004, p. 320ff). For the Jewish perspective on animals, cf. GROSS, 2012.

5 Cf. my typology of modes of dehumanisation in: PAUL, 2004, p. 95-152.



deny certain groups “the capacity for reason and self-rule” has been taken as permission to treat them as sub-humans. As Greek philosophy lined up women, slaves and animals “in descending order of inferiority,” Western tradition was to take ‘rationality’ as the “defining requirement for membership in the moral community” (ADAMS/ DONOVAN, 1995, Introduction). Alongside conquered peoples, these were used “as means of labor” for the benefit of their rulers (RUETHER, 1992, p. 139).

The sketchy summary echoes the absurd argument back and forth, from human individuals to collectives or types of animals, from human classes to ‘human animals’ and so forth, originally proposed by Plato and Aristotle. One may rightly call the analogical machine a *philosophical* camouflage, which was subsequently exploited as justification for the universalist and “transcendental claims” of the West “to speak for everyone, while being itself everywhere and nowhere” (HALL, 1996, p. 166, 167).

Forging this device, Aristotle⁶ draws on an undifferentiated narration of evolution, which he then applies, by way of daring analogies, to whatever domain he can.⁷ He holds that if nature ‘steps up’ from matter to *plants* and *animals* and only then up to *man*, societal order can be declared to be a mirror of that order, with slaves at the bottom and philosophers at the top (cf. LOVEJOY, 1936).

Aristotle further claims that the human body reflects this order, consisting of matter (flesh), the circulatory, vegetative system (the *plant* kingdom), the stimulus-response system (the *animal* kingdom) and the soul monad (*human* selfless reason). Aristotle then declares the human soul as also being divided into analogous parts, with the ‘pure’ spirit again placed on the top and the vegetative soul⁸ on the bottom rung, with the animal (involuntary/instinctive) soul in between.

However, certain complements inspired by Aristotle’s description of the ‘animal soul’ were of vital importance for the development of Western dehumanising traditions. He not only concedes to this the potential of involuntary (if *self-centered*) *feelings*, but also that of instrumental reason, the faculty to satisfy one’s ‘purely’ bodily desires even when obstacles are encountered – or to hold them back until they can be satisfied. However, this pseudo-cerebellum which, of course, does not in the least mingle with the superseding ‘human rationality’, forms only the first part of the biological camouflage.⁹

6 For the following cf. De Anima III.1, 4–7, II.1, 413a23; Politics, I,5. 1254a21–24, I,6. 1255b11–12, I,7. 1255b37–40, I,13.1260a12; *Nikomachean Ethics* I, 1095b17–19, and X. Ch. 7–8. Cf. also HUND, 2006: 23–25, 34 (FN).

7 Hund (1999, p. 35) mentions the ancient practice of analogising between the four seasons, the four elements, the four cardinal directions, the four ages of man, the four humours, and the four human temperaments.

8 Cf. also the term *vegetable-* or *cabbage-*existence for highly disabled persons. Cf. LANTOS/ MEADOW, 2006, p. 118.

9 Ironically, René Descartes’ minor role in the history of dehumanisation is due to the fact that in his machine concept of *animal* – which had other disastrous effects – an Aristotelian type of animal soul is omitted and cannot therefore be used as a means of creating a human animal analogy. Cf. REISS, 2005.

To achieve its full version, its central motif had to be worked out, i.e. the *stimulus-response* stereotype. Western tradition has codified this stereotype by way of three 'purely bodily', 'involuntary' functions within the *beast* (the 'body'), which – to intensify the effect – can also be combined:

- excessive gorging, devouring, eating up, biting apart, biting into pieces and biting to death (food, flesh etc.)
- excessive sex, i.e. massive procreation/ multiplication,
- excessive production of excrement and bodily fluids.

As these motifs are to signify the absence of 'rational' control in the *beast*, the message can also be summed up as the *stupidity* of the *philosophical animal*, in short: as its being without a head.

4. The animal construct

Thus we have before us a comprehensive script which I have elsewhere called the *animal construct* (PAUL, 2004).¹⁰ In the following section I will sketch out a summarising map (a) of the 'animal' narrative. I will then address the narrative's function to establish a moral relation between the speakers and their victim groups (b). Finally I will suggest three examples of the animal construct in action (c).

a. The narrative

The individual speaker decides where to enter it and how to exploit its nuances. The choice made may betray the speaker's relationship to the people addressed, for example, in terms of militancy or paternalism, or in terms of nearness or distance, etc.

Speakers may claim to be merely 'joking' (LOCKYER/ PICKERING, 2005), they may shift from the *beast's* (the victim's) voluptuousness to its sensuality or even to its 'natural' artistic faculties - inspired by its 'primitive' nature. They may allude to the victim's 'childlike'

10 within statement analysis [*Aussagenanalyse*] and one more tool in the CDA toolbox. For a detailed discussion of methodical, discourse-theoretical, discourse-analytic questions, of the topical character of the construct, and of text corpora and dossiers cf. PAUL, 2004, p. 24-45. The core of the construct could be deduced from a very compact dossier, accumulated from the everyday vocabulary of verbal abuse. The results were used in an inductive way to review a broad and diversified fund of historical and contemporary sources participating in the moral discourse. Part of the fund were philosophical-theological, scientific-epistemological, social and political sources, but also contemporary sources from the media dealing with questions of 'good and bad'. The search was supported by consulting research literature and thematic-historical vocabulary collections. For former debates on animal categories cf. LEACH, 1964, and HALVERSON, 1976. As one important working step in a sequence of investigative steps within Jaeger's CDA-procedure (JAEGER, 2010) is the identification and the analysis of statements or of clusters of statements contained in the material examined, the identification and the analysis of the animal construct can be a considerable help



or apish pretension and stupidity, to 'effeminate' submission or to doggish servility, as an outcome of successful domestication. Or they may decry the beast's deceitfulness - as a lamentable outcome of its instrumental reason. But they will always insist on the beast's lurking character and its potential to 'hit back'. The script's *full* potentials can even be condensed into one-word ethnic¹¹ or animal insults, such as *dog*, *swine* or *ape*¹², to make the dehumanising message more manageable in everyday or media communication.

That the narrative threads mentioned above enable powerful speakers to pursue a vast array of strategies of marginalising, degrading and exploiting minorities is bad and sad enough. It is, however, one of the most disturbing features in the history of dehumanisation that the script allows for massive intensification which has consequently even served to underpin policies of mass murder and genocide conceptually and rhetorically.

As already indicated, stereotypes which *combine* the sexual/ procreative, the devouring/ gorging, and the excremental motifs and thus ascribe to minorities super-vitalistic features have brought about the most destructive rhetorical effects.

The rat stereotype, for example, combines the aspect of excessive procreation, i.e. the horrifying image of steadily multiplying squadrons of 'body' machines, with the narrative of the rats' excessive and aggressive biting apart and gnawing to death of their 'human' prey. It is, however, the stereotypical rats' immunity to and spreading of the pathogens and contaminants in the biological (human) waste on which they live which completes the extremely vitalistic image of the rat stereotype.¹³

We should here, however, be aware of the fact that the devastating narrative of infectious agents alone, of 'viruses', 'bacteria', 'pathogens', or 'germs', ascribed to minorities, functions as an extremely reductionist symbol for a kind of bestial feeding (human blood, bodily fluids) and procreation, which could not be more aggressive, explosive or threatening. Consequently, by playing on this additional intensification, the rat stereotype appears to allude to hierarchical beast categories, the one overbidding the next in terms of appetite, of procreative speed, and therefore of threat impact.

In a similar, if in an only slightly less inflammatory manner, vermin, cockroach, and the worm stereotypes combine the sex/ procreation and the nutrition motifs with the aspect of spreading pathogens and contaminants from human decay.

While all these stereotypes are mainly based on the aspect of *collective* troops of devourers, the parasite stereotype, on the other hand, tends to turn an *additional* spotlight onto a concrete kind of 'germ' living directly on human flesh, blood, or bodily fluids. It intensifies not so much the beast's procreative features, but the aspect of the parasite's

11 *List of ethnic slurs* URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ethnic_slurs>. Viewed 06 March 2016.

12 *Stereotypes of animals* URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotypes_of_animals>. Viewed 06 March 2016.

13 German Nazi propaganda made the most excessive use of the rat stereotype against Jews to legitimise the extermination of European Jewry (BARSAM, 1992, p. 205). In a far less aggressive manner the stereotype was used to ridicule the Irish. Sibley (2002, p. 28) calls this dehumanisation even "a necessary part of the colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland."



uncompromising instrumental drive to satisfy its individual appetite. In fact, by ascribing an exceptional instrumental reason, or the status of *master mind*, to minorities, Western tradition has formed an influential indirect alternative to stereotypes playing directly upon sex/ procreation- and the nutrition-motifs. This variant opens the animal construct to a vast array of conspiracy or 'evil empire' rhetoric.¹⁴

b. The 'moral' camouflage

It must be underlined that the dehumanising function of the animal construct and its calculus of exploitation and violence is, as we already noted above, not an accident, but a structural part of the moral philosophy of the West and central to its value system. Consequently, Jean François Lyotard (1990, 27, 29) calls "negative dialectics" an "inevitable fashion of occidental thought" which does not affect "entities that will have been here and now and can, in this future perfect, be collected in the *Erinnerung*" but affects "what cannot be interiorized, represented, and memorized." According to Lyotard *humanism* takes even "care of this adjustment because it is of the order of secondary repression." Similarly Charles Mills reminds us that

... racial self-identification, and race thinking" are "not in the least 'surprising,' 'anomalous,' 'puzzling,' incongruent with Enlightenment European humanism¹⁵, but *required* by the Racial Contract as part of the terms for the European appropriation of the world. So in a sense standard contractarian discussions are fundamentally misleading, because they have things backward to begin with: what has usually been taken (when it has been noticed at all) as the racist 'exception' has really been the *rule*; what has been taken as the 'rule,' the ideal norm, has really been the *exception*. (1997, p. 122)

For Niklas Luhmann (2006, p. 271) "our concepts, European concepts", such as "*humanitas*, of *ius gentium*, of humankind or of human rights" were entirely compatible with defining "barbarians" and "other ethnicities, the pagans, the savages" and the freedom "to convert them or to enslave them, or to cheat them when exchanging goods."

But even then, it is the crucial function of the animal construct and of its ascriptions, to give *moral* meaning to dehumanisation, to establish a *moral* relation between the speakers and the victim groups, i.e. to proclaim a *moral* need for action towards or against them. In the narrower sense, however, it is the ascription of limited instrumental reason which has mostly served as a justification for victim groups to be subjected to poisonous education, i.e. forceful 'domestication' in order to subject them to 'civilised' ends.

14 In particular, it is and has been turned against Jews and Judaism (PIEPER, 1999; RIEDMANN, 2002). Cf. also the standard symbolism of binary science fiction, namely 'bloodless' bodies with oversized heads.

15 Mills (1997, p. 16) adds that this language of equality "echoes in the American and French Revolutions, the Declaration of Independence, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man".



This was true in the case of external colonialism, where the construct served as a means of victim blaming, i.e. as a justification for forcefully subjecting distant peoples, or groups, who did not in the least exert any power on the speakers and who did not even have the potential to develop that impact. In such a case, in order to cover up the calculus of exploitation and subjection under the guise of moral ends, the animal construct was used to label these distant victim groups as *associated* and as social applicants in urgent need of disciplinary and regulatory treatment.

A complementary moral relation was established in the case of local colonialism. The ascriptions provided by the animal construct were used, for example, in the course of the 19th century by hegemony such as the English against the Irish, or as the white US majority against the black minority, or as the Christian and *folkish* fundamentalist majority against the Jewish minority in Germany to alienate these victim groups and – in the real sense of the word – to a-sociate them, in order not to collide with what the (Christian) doctrine of unselfish loving one's neighbour might have prescribed (MICHIE, 1993, p. 48-50).

However, the construct was not only there to morally justify the forceful subjection and 'domestication' of victim groups. The ascription of insidious behaviour, or of the 'beast's' refusal to be domesticated, of its absolutely uncontrollable, egoistic bodily passions, and also, as mentioned above, of an excessive form of instrumental reason to design (as *master mind*) deceitful plots have been used as justifications to fight and even annihilate victim groups as dangerous to civilisation.

As Jacques Derrida (among others) has pointed out, the occidental thought of the last two thousand years was formed by philosophers who based their manipulative deductions on the human vs animal binary and on the resulting figure of the monstrous 'human animal'. By trading this narrative virtually unaltered through the centuries, hegemonic philosophy has used the 'philosophical animal' as a rhetorical key to deduce the social 'chain of being', i.e. the personhood of some and the non-personhood of others.

c. The animal construct in action

Philosophy has thus also served as an established or even normative source of inspiration for literature, for political satire, and also for the creation of long-standing stereotyping routines in everyday speech (RICHTER, 2011). I will suggest three examples: Swift's *Yahoos* as an example of combining the excremental, sexual and gorging motives, a satire in *Punch*¹⁶(1862) as an example of the catachrestic use of the construct against various addressees, and Louis Agassiz' racist *Letter to his Mother* as an example of the literary and dramatic potentials of the construct.

¹⁶ *Punch* was a British weekly satirical magazine published 1841-1992 (and 1996-2002). During the 19th century *Punch* was known to be Anti-Irish. Cf. SPIELMANN (1895).

Swift's *Yahoos* (1726)

It was Jonathan Swift who – in chapter IV of *Gulliver's Travels* – created one of the most spectacular literary incarnations or embodiments of the philosophical animal, or of the human beast *par excellence*. Swift's *Yahoos*¹⁷ may, therefore, be representative of the full narrative range of the animal construct (BARTRA, 1997, p. 75ff; MILLS, 1997, p. 155-156; PAUL, 2004, p. 188-196; SAX, 2001, p. 11-12, 163. Cf. LENFEST, 1966).

Swift tells us (ch. 9) that the *Yahoos* are not native to Houyhnhnm Land, the home of the rational horses who live according to Platonic maxims (ROTHSTEIN, 2007, p. 59-72). It is, of course, only when *Yahoos* on their part enter Houyhnhnm Land and demonstrate their limited intellect that they are tamed and enslaved.¹⁸ Consequently, Swift's central focus is the cause for the *Yahoos'* stupidity, namely, their extraordinary physical greed. Consequently, Swift indulges in the *Yahoos'* excremental, sexual and gorging practices:¹⁹

... if ... you throw among five *Yahoos* as much Food as would be sufficient for fifty, they will, instead of eating peaceably, fall together by the Ears, each single one impatient to have all to itself. ... If their Prey held out, they would eat till they were ready to burst, after which Nature had pointed out to them a certain Root that gave them a general Evacuation (SWIFT, 1999, p. 276, 278).

Swift even creates a crescendo of excremental and gorging motifs. For example, if the *Yahoos* become sick (because of their greed), they are administered "... Hnea Yahoo, or the Yahoo's-Evil; and the Cure prescribed is a Mixture of their own Dung and Urine, forcibly put down the Yahoo's Throat" (ibid., p. 278, 279).²⁰

In another passage, Swift binds the sexual, the gorging and the excremental motifs together with 'doggyish' servility and bodily deformity:

... in most Herds there was a sort of ruling Yahoo (...) who was always more deformed in Body, and mischievous in Disposition, than any of the rest. That this Leader had usually a Favourite as like himself as he could get, whose Employment was to lick his Master's Feet and Posteriors, and drive the Female *Yahoos* to his Kennel; for which he was now and then rewarded with a piece of Ass's Flesh. This Favourite is hated by the whole

17 For the reciprocal use of the animal construct, cf. PAUL, 2004, 80-81. The role of Swift's *Yahoos* in founding the Yahoo-Internet corporation was confirmed by Joanna Gurnitsky in: *What Does >Yahoo< Stand For?* URL: <<http://netforbeginners.about.com/od/internet101/f/yahoostory.htm>>. Viewed July 2012.

18 We also learn (IV, 9) that the Houyhnhnms debate the question of whether the *Yahoos* should be wiped off the face of the Earth. Gulliver himself uses the skin of young *Yahoos* as material for his canoe sail. Cf. MILLS, 1997, p. 155-156.

19 However, Swift (IV, 7) establishes a distinction between 'European' *Yahoos* and 'Houyhnhnm Land' *Yahoos*, with the former being somewhat tidier but also falser and with a brutish nature.

20 The fantasies and practices of torturers for centuries have followed and still follow the same lines.



Herd, and therefore to protect himself, keeps always near the Person of his Leader. He usually continues in Office till a worse can be found; but the very Moment he is discarded, his Successor, at the Head of all the Yahoos in that District, Young and Old, Male and Female, come in a Body, and discharge their Excrements upon him from Head to Foot (ibid., p. 279).²¹

Swift also uses the excremental motif to depict the Yahoos' lack of educability and of communicative faculties, and to justify their status as slaves:

... I once caught a young Male of three Years old, and endeavoured by all Marks of Tenderness to make it quiet; but the little Imp fell asqualling, and scratching, and biting with such Violence, that I was forced to let it go (...) while I held the odious Vermin in my Hands, it voided its filthy Excrements of a yellow liquid Substance, all over my Cloaths (...) the Yahoos appear to be the most unteachable of all Animals, their Capacities never reaching higher than to draw or carry Burthens (ibid., p. 281).

While Swift seems to use the Yahoos as a caricature of the English intruders in Ireland, others – encouraged by the Darwinian debate – conversely take Swift's Yahoos (and Shakespeare's *Caliban* (Cf. BARTRA, 1997, p. 51, 16, 239; CORBEY, 1995, p. 360-363; FANON, 1967, p. 142-143) as a means to reciprocally arrange for the animalisation, i.e. the 'simianisation' of the Irish.

A satire in *Punch* (1862)²²

We find one famous example in a satirical commentary in *Punch*²³ with the title *The missing link*, which is also an example of the catachrestic use of the animal construct against various addressees.

The anonymous author of the satire starts by pointing at the philosophers, "who maintain themselves to be the descendants of the Gorilla". He goes on to *question* the philosophers' thesis of the Negroes being the missing link and instead suggests "the lowest species of the Irish Yahoo", a "climbing animal", "laden with a hod of bricks", which could be seen "in some of the lowest districts of London and Liverpool".

However, he continues by complaining of large numbers of Irish Yahoos also gathering in Hyde Park "... and molesting the people there assembled to express sympathy with Garibaldi and the cause of United Italy". The Yahoos' devotion to the Pope "urges them to fly at all manner of persons who object to grovel under the Papal tyranny ... Nevertheless they will howl for their own liberty to do what they please like so many *Calibans*."

21 Swift/ Gulliver adds: "... any Swine (...) may be a sweeter Quadruped than a Yahoo" (ibid., 280).

22 Cf. the full text of the satire in the *Appendix* to this paper: Anonymous, *The Missing Link*.

23 *The missing Link*, October 18, 1862 (cf. Appendix). Cf. also: CAULFIELD, 2004; FOSTER, 1993; PAZ, 1986; NIE, 2004.



Moreover, the author blames the Irish Yahoos for having been organised “by the Pontifical Government to fight the Italians, at Castelfidardo, where they failed”, because they could not handle rifles but fought with “clubs and stones”. They are more successful in another field of battle, however: “their numbers, strength, and ferocity have struck such terror into the minds of the authorities that the latter have judged it expedient to yield to them. ... Is it not wonderful that creatures so like the Gorilla should frighten anybody; let alone the Lord Mayor!”

The satire merges formal and ‘moral’ features typical of the animal construct. The catachrestic way of aiming at changing addressees is typical of the construct in the broader sense, for example, its turning from philosophers to the Irish, to the blacks, to the Irish Catholics (the Pope), but also to the gutless, who feel intimidated by the ‘Irish Yahoos’.

Moreover, the latter’s howling “for their own liberty to do what they please” suggests that the Irish when meddling in political affairs, their own political liberty included, are doomed to failure because of their lusty character (‘howling’) and poor reason (‘clubs and stones’), resulting in their fate in the docks of London.

A Letter to his Mother by Louis Agassiz (1846)

According to Lewis Perry Curtis, however, cartoons with the “full-blown image of the apelike Irishman” appeared earlier than the Darwin debate, namely, at just about the same time “as information about the great apes ... was disseminated in newspapers, popular magazines, and scientific journals”. But the Irish were not the only, or foremost, addressees, as “the ape, the monkey, and orangutan had become the interchangeable counterparts”, to be turned, as “the next of kin”, against blacks (SHARPLEY-WHITING, 1999, p. 24).

In 1846, in his *Letter to his Mother*, Louis Agassiz (1981, p. 44-45), the Swiss-born biologist and Darwin critic, gives an authentic example of the animal construct turned against blacks in that period. Describing his first “prolonged contact with Negroes” in the USA, Agassiz makes it clear, that his is an imposed encounter, that it is the “domestics in my hotel”, all of whom are “men of color”, who – in his perspective – move near him.

The encounter evokes pain in him and feelings “contrary to all our ideas about the confraternity of the human type and the unique origin of our species”. On the one hand, Agassiz experiences “compassion” in thinking “that they are really men”. But at the same time, he feels “pity at the sight of this degraded and degenerate race” which “are not of the same blood as us”. But he does not regret the fate of the black “domestics”, their deportation, enslavement, and exploitation. He would rather mourn the “unhappiness” of the white race “to have tied their existence so closely with that of Negroes in certain countries”.

What Agassiz thus calls a “prolonged contact with Negroes” seems to be a fearful kind of non-contact, or rather the attempt to avoid the ‘ties’ which he deploras so much “in certain countries”. By referring to blacks as “a degenerate race” with a different “blood” Agassiz moreover hints at a bodily, or even sexual dimension of the ‘ties’ in question. His almost panicking outcry “God preserve us from such contact!” lends a rather dramatic undertone to his following narrative of “domestics” nearing him:



In seeing their black faces with their thick lips and grimacing teeth, the wool on their head, their bent knees, their elongated hands, their large curved nails, and especially the livid colour of the palm of their hands, I could not take my eyes off their face in order to tell them to stay far away. And when they advanced that hideous hand towards my plate in order to serve me, I wished I were able to depart in order to eat a piece of bread elsewhere, rather than dine with such service.

Apparently, the choice of a table situation in a hotel is far from accidental. It enables Agassiz to elaborate one of the marks dividing the world of 'man' clearly from the world of the philosophical animal – the intake of food. Agassiz claims civilised, modest dining ("a piece of bread") as part of his human identity, while he seems to assume quite different ("hideous") aspirations in his vis-à-vis, a waiter, who is provided with textbook components of the ape stereotype ("thick lips", "grimacing teeth", "bent knees", "elongated hands").

Nevertheless, the author's main objective is obviously not aesthetic consistency, but lighting fireworks of moral verdicts, encoded in situational and descriptive details. Speaking of the "wool on their head", for example, may superficially be consistent with the ape stereotype, but could also go with the sheep stereotype, which conveys the verdict of stupidity. However, the abundance of hair (in the context of dehumanising rhetoric) may also be interpreted as sign of excessive sensuality or even sexuality²⁴.

A further possibility is that abundant hair may designate the (dirty) breeding place of bugs and the hearth of diseases, thus pointing at the unconquerable vitality of 'them', and the civilised sensitivity of 'us'. While the same binary aspect of cleanness and sterility vs dirt and pathogens/ procreation may apply to Agassiz' insinuation mentioning "large curved nails", we may also read this detail as an allusion to the carnivorous appetites of the 'predator' before him.

While only an extensive interpretation of the complete passage (cf. PAUL, 2004, p. 97-101) may provide us with the whole picture, Agassiz does not conceal his overall narrative objective to demonstrate how easily he sees through the deceptive attempts of the 'creatures' before him ("grimacing teeth", "hideous hand") - to devour him.

5. The human construct and the morals of collectivism: Social insects and the sacrifice of intelligence

So far, we have been spelling out the dimensions of the animal construct from a top-down, i.e. the 'human' perspective which the construct seems to suggest exclusively. However, it is the crucial point about binary statements and judgments that they reveal or produce their 'ethical' (non-)substance only by the exclusion of opposites.

²⁴ For the role of the abundance of hair in early commercials of the Yahoo-Internet Corporation cf. URL: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKHJlq5leec>>. Viewed 06 March 2016.



Consequently, we may not be in the position to read the code of dehumanization, i.e. to fully spell out the concrete values, clad in binarisms such as *them/ us, evil/ good; body/ mind, animal/ man, animality/ rationality, civilised/ non-civilised*, without adopting a bottom-up perspective and now scrutinising the contents of the Western binary narrative of the 'human', as well.

What is behind the "inalienable free will" or, behind the "ontologically exceptional status" (IVESON, 2011, p. 10) which European humanism claims on its own behalf, if seen as a mere reciprocal product of excluding the non-human?

Ironically, it is the 'social insects' (wasps, ants, bees, and termites) with their total, unconditioned work-ethic which, for supporters of a binary type of morality, have served as an inspiration to define what *should* be the core 'human' rational virtues opposed to the animal ethics of 'pure' self-interest.²⁵

Plato, for example, predicts, that the souls of the purest of all men, of the philosophers, will eventually reincarnate "into some such social and gentle species as that of bees or of wasps or ants" (*Phaidon*, 82b). In his footsteps, Edward O. Wilson (1978, p. 208), the leading American myrmecologist and sociobiologist, calls for the use of techniques which have become available "for altering gene complexes by molecular engineering and rapid selection through cloning" in order to change mankind genetically by imitating "the harmonious sisterhoods of the honeybees".

Wilson also echoes what before him William Morton Wheeler, the American entomologist and myrmecologist, envisioned in 1924 when he stated that we

... can hardly fail to suspect that the eventual state of human society may be somewhat like that of the social insects—a society of very low intelligence combined with an intense and pugnacious solidarity of the whole." A future human society "might be quite as viable and quite as stable through long periods of time as the societies of ants and termites, provided it maintained a sufficient control of the food supply" (WHEELER, 1927, p. 37, cit. in LUSTIG, 2004, p. 305).

In the same year, Thomas Nelson Annandale (2003, p. 144), the Scottish anthropologist, also praised the "gregarious instinct" in termites and ants as having "reached heights which may be called political". In his view, the two groups of insects

... discovered, long before the evolution of man, the benefits both of eugenics and of socialism, and were able to make use of this discovery because they were not hampered by the vagaries of human personality. They evolved a state of society in which only certain individuals were capable of reproducing their kind, while every individual worked for the benefit of the community and not himself, and only performed the particular kind of work for which he was physically and mentally fitted.

25 For animal worship, animal categories as deities or as symbols of perfection, cf. REGENSTEIN 1991 and PAUL 1990.



In our own days, Marlene Zuk (2011, p. 8-9), the American biologist, holds that bees and ants already “mirror most of our familiar behaviors”, because they “live in sophisticated hierarchical societies, with specialised tasks assigned to different individuals and an ability to make collective decisions that favor the common good.”

Certainly, there is a surprising point in these suggestions. The authors not only hold that the perfect human is defined by his/ her subjection to collective ends and by the division of labour within defined and permanent hierarchies, but they also suggest that individual intelligence, or the “vagaries of human personality” are dispensable for humans, who have been streamlined in favour of collective objectives.

But would not ‘human rationality’ then amount to little more than to limited instrumental reason originally ascribed to domesticated ‘human animals’ or slaves?²⁶ And, if ‘perfect humans’ are obedient to collective ends without intellectually participating in framing them, who, then, is there to define these objectives? Science, dictators, or the media? Are there any ‘values’ or objectives at all? The blatant normative deadlock, which seems to be inherent to the binary concept of ‘animal’ and ‘man’ and which reveals its virtually ‘empty’ values, here brings to the surface its underlying authoritarian function.

6. The philosophical legacy²⁷

We can easily trace back the dilemma to its prototype, namely, to the values of the good and the rational, held by the top elites in Plato’s ideal republic. Not surprisingly, Plato does not allow these elites to use their own rational capacities, in order to define these values. Assigning himself the part of a super-speaker he points at philosophy as the *éminence grise* to administer maxims to the elites by way of brainwashing. In order to rear “best guardians”, who have made “the interest of the State” the rule of their lives (*Republic* III, 412E), they may be supplied with “memorials of honour” (414A). However, Plato claims that myths of the ‘Phoenician’ type – i.e. “lies” (HUND, 1999, p. 23-24; HUND, 2006, p. 160. Cf. BERNAL 1987), as he blatantly calls them, are far more effective (*Republic* III, 389B).²⁸ According to the philosopher, however, these stories should be at the exclusive disposal of ruling philosophers²⁹, in much the same way as he sees the administering of drugs being restricted to physicians.

Plato even sketches out a model myth, to be told to the elite personnel, according to which their earthly existence is only “a dream”. In reality, they are told, they were sent from the womb of their mother “earth” to their country, their “nurse”, “to defend her against attacks” (414E).

26 For my analysis of the ‘authoritarian paradox’ cf. PAUL, 2004, p. 105-107, 143, 160.

27 Cf. OSBORNE, 2007.

28 Plato distinguishes between guardians “in the fullest sense”, and guardians as “auxiliaries and supporters of the rulers”. *Republic* III, 414B-C. Cf. LEHMHUS, 2008, p. 38-39.

29 “... we must assume a control over the narrators of this class of tales as well as over the others” (*Republic* III, 386B).



The rest of society, Plato goes on, should be addressed differently, however:

Citizens, we shall say to them in our tale, you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. Some of you have the power of command, and in the composition of these he has mingled gold, ... others he has made of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again who are to be husbandmen and craftsmen he has composed of brass and iron ..." (415A).

The success of the brainwashing cannot, of course, be expected "in the present generation", Plato contends. But "their sons may be made to believe in the tale, and their sons' sons, and posterity after them" (415D).

Plato's instruction confirms the purely propagandistic function of analogies, i.e. their role as a *philosophical* camouflage, which we have already met in Aristotle's teaching. But he also reveals the one single moral maxim to be instilled by the tale, namely, to be absorbed by the collective good, by its defence against enemies, whatever this 'good' may be, and whoever may proclaim it.

Obviously, Plato views total submission as the central moral, i.e. 'human' dimension, as spiritual *ennoblement* of the rational business of organising 'civilisation', as opposed to self-sufficient, egotistic, i.e. 'animal' *instrumental reason*. And indeed, following Plato, Aristotle defines all those as human animals and barbarians to whom he ascribes unwillingness or incapacity to submit to collective imperatives: women, the handicapped, slaves, revolutionaries and those living the life of wild animals (PAUL, 2004, p. 179-188).

The Church fathers translated most of these positions into the doctrine of the (Christian) corporate state (BUSCHE, 2001, p. 1; GRESHAKE, 1986). Thomas Aquinas, for example, not only reiterates the distinction between man, beast and human animal, but following Aristotle and pointing at the various intellectual conditions among the people of a state, he defines the 'human' mission as the fulfilment of predetermined societal roles (*Summa Theologica* II-II:183.1) orchestrated by a "principle and director" (a king) who is there to further the common good (I:96,4). To this end he may "kill those who are guilty of a capital offense", or "seize property from the infidels, or in pursuit of a just war". Consequently, on behalf of "the authority of the ruler" his soldiers may "kill enemy soldiers", etc. (II-II:64.2, II-II:66.8, and II-II:64.3 ad 1. Cf. PORTER, 2005, p. 110).

According to Jean Porter (2005, p. 100), the concept of the *common good* provides Aquinas with "the rationale for political authority." It serves "to justify the ruler in some courses of action that would be closed to private citizens" (p. 101). However, while Plato intends the *philosophers* to be the super-speakers near to the rulers' ears, Aquinas assigns this function to Christian priests (*De Regno* 15, §111), or the Pope himself (§110), associating the pursuit of the *common good* and the hierarchic division of labour with "the divine government of the world" (§102). Ascending from the pursuit of the pure life ("animals and slaves") to corporeal needs and the accumulation of wealth, to the "knowledge of truth", to the pursuit of the "virtuous life", Aquinas' ladder now ends with the "virtuous life" dedicated to the Church (§106). Consequently, Aquinas attracts future



kings by reminding them that “the higher the end to which a government is ordained”, the more powerful (“loftier”) that government is (§108).

Jean Porter (2005, p. 107) observes, however, that Aquinas has little to say about “what the common good is”: at no point “does he develop anything like a substantive account of the good society under the rubric of the common good.” As a consequence, there is a “kind of public authority that is good and natural”, but “without qualification.”

As it seems, Western thought, even when framing more sophisticated concepts of *work* and *progress* during the successive colonial, capitalist, and imperialist periods, did not add much to the empty imperatives ruling a ‘civilised’ and ‘human’, as opposed to an ‘animal’ or ‘savage’ existence. As both states – due to the limits of binary reasoning – had to be depicted in their *total* differentness, the human part, namely the submission to collective service, the sacrifice of intelligence in favour of a *central* intelligence and the waiving of physical freedom, were bound to result in sobering, depressing or even schizophrenic portraits.

Among others, Thomas Hobbes (1839, p. 113)³⁰, David Hume (2013, p. 166)³¹, John Locke (2002, p. 17-19)³², Emer de Vattel (1797, p. 34-36), Immanuel Kant (1983, p. 55-56³³; MARX, 1853) translated human – i.e. European – ‘greatness’ as set against a savage existence ‘out there’ mainly in the terms of collective and dependent work as the source of added value, i.e. in the terms of the warlike occupation and cultivation of land, of agricultural storage and supply economy, the accumulation and defence of wealth and property, or of the sophistication of production – within a political and social system of discipline, obedience and absolute rule.

Certainly, these projections of ‘human’ civilisation fell dramatically short of the claims raised by the enormous human halo produced by the rhetorical rejection (and creation) of the ‘beast’. Instead, the invocations of the ‘human’ proposed no definition of good and evil, nor of ‘values’, such as human equality, the ethical responsibility for the ends of actions, or individual spiritual independence. Nevertheless, the dissonance surfaced in quite unexpected or revealing inconsistencies. The category of war, in particular, had intoxicating and confusing effects on political theorists who were willing to accept war as a prerequisite of ‘human’, i.e. civilised, life.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, for example, points out that “the most rigid censor of inner conscience” would “not only approve but even order the war” as a means of “promoting culture and religion among barbarians”, the more so as war which is applied with “moderation which reason dictates” does not tend “to the extermination nor the servitude of a people but to wisdom and happiness and the emendation of human kind.” To further exactly this, namely “piety” and the “welfare of a great part of human kind”, Leibniz suggests that wars should “not be waged on men but on beasts (that is, barbarians), and not for killing but for taming”, and by doing so, “an affair of God and the spirit is certainly put in motion” (LEIBNIZ, 1931, p. 379, cf. PERKINS, 2004, p. 111).

30 *Leviathan*, Part I, XIII: Of the Natural Condition of Mankind as Concerning Their Felicity and Misery.

31 *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

32 *Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. V (Of Property), §37-41.

33 *Speculative beginning of human history*.



According to Peter Fenves (2006, p. 11-12), Leibniz also followed this line of thought in his role as a political adviser to Louis XIV in 1671/2, when he presented to the Sun King his *Consilium Aegyptiacum*, or Egyptian Plan, with which he thought to “divert France’s imperial aspirations away from Holland and direct them toward the Turkish ‘barbarians’ (Leibniz’ term)”. In his paper Leibniz proposes “to resolve the contradiction between humanistic universalism and Christian particularism – by representing non-Christians as nonhuman”. A “powerful and wise monarch” would not wage war “against human beings but against beasts (that is, barbarians), and not for the purpose of massacre but to defend his interests”.

With respect to the nature of the warriors serving in a (human) war against barbarians, Leibniz – revealing a rigorously tactical and instrumental stance towards the ‘human’ construct – offers a cynical and indeed shocking answer. In an addendum to his *Consilium Aegyptiacum* he suggests a *Method for Instituting a New, Invincible Militia, That Can Subjugate the Entire Earth, Easily Seize Control over Egypt, or Establish American Colonies*³⁴:

A certain island of Africa, such as Madagascar, shall be selected, and all the inhabitants shall be ordered to leave. Visitors from elsewhere shall be turned away, or in any event it will be decreed that they only be permitted to stay in the harbor for the purpose of obtaining water. To this island slaves captured from all over the barbarian world will be brought, and from all of the wild coastal regions of Africa, Arabia, New Guinea, etc. To this end Ethiopians, Nigritians, Angolans, Caribbeans, Canadians, and Hurons fit the bill, without discrimination. What a lovely bunch of semi-beasts! But so that this mass of men may be shaped in any way desired, it is useful only to take boys up to around the age of twelve, as this is better than [attempting to] transform girls and adults (LEIBNIZ, 1931, p. 408–410).

Despite his contemptuous air, Leibniz admits the thoroughly ‘human’, even classical build-up of the prospected militia as he compares its super-warriors, who “will easily conquer the mightiest European fortifications”, even to Achilles, and „other ancients”. Moreover, the militia is to be divided into “as many classes as nations that is languages”. Consequently, it is – as Peter Fenves points out – essential in Leibniz’ plan “that the captives speak as little as possible, that they be forced into virtual silence”, because otherwise rebellion will result: “Take care lest troops of diverse languages ever get used to one another and thereby understand one another The same things must be guarded against among men of the same language. Let a Pythagorean taciturnness be introduced among them; let them be permitted to say nothing among themselves except when necessary or when ordered.”

34 *Modus instituendi militiam novam invictam, qua subjugari possit orbis terrarum. Facilis execution tenenti Aegyptum, vel habenti coloniam Americanam.* English translations by Justin E. H. SMITH. URL: <<http://www.jehsmith.com/philosophy/2009/01/a-method-for-instituting-a-new-invincible-militia.html>>. Viewed 06 March 2016.



In other words, the so-called 'semi-beasts', thought by a philosophical super-speaker to be the military masters of the world, turn out to be utterly exploited and maltreated humans themselves. They are "not born into this condition but, rather, made so, and the process of creating such a link between inarticulate beings and articulate ones consists at bottom in denying those who can speak access to their own tongues" (FENVES, 2006, p. 14-15).³⁵

A century later, Immanuel Kant is obviously well aware, that scaling down free human reason to the size of a treadmill might tempt some to look at 'animal' freedom or 'savage' idleness with envy. Moreover, he cannot help but concede that living in a 'human', i.e. civilised state means living in questionable moral conditions. Consequently, a "reflective human being", wearied of civilised life, might well develop "the empty longing" for "an age where one is freed from all the imagined needs that luxuriousness loads upon us, where a modest life with only the needs of nature is supposed to exist, a universal equality of human beings, an everlasting peace among them, in a word, the pure enjoyment of a carefree life of lazy daydreaming or a life frittered away with childish games."

According to Kant, it is the philosopher's task to counter this longing by demonstrating that human affairs only gradually develop from worse to better, that war, for example, is "an indispensable means of bringing about progress in culture". Only after culture has been perfected will "a lasting peace" be salutary for us and "only through such culture" will it become possible (KANT, 2006, p. 24-36, here: 36).³⁶ In other words:

Before this last step (the federation of nations) can be taken [...] human nature must endure the harshest of evils, which pass in disguise as external well-being; and as long as we have not reached this last stage to which our species has still to climb Rousseau was not so far from right in preferring the state of savages (KANT, 1983, p. 36).³⁷

Rousseau, however, would not have accepted Kant's binary logic, or moral double standards, but, instead, describes their deforming authoritarian results: for Rousseau the citizen is always

... in motion, is perpetually sweating and toiling, and racking his brains to find out occupations still more laborious: he continues a drudge to his last minute; nay, he courts death to be able to live, or renounces life to acquire immortality. He cringes to men in power whom he hates, and to rich men whom he despises; he sticks at nothing to have the honour of serving them; he is not ashamed to value himself on his own weakness and the protection they afford him; and proud of his chains, he speaks with disdain of those who have not the honour of being the partner of his bondage (ROUSSEAU, 2002, p. 137).³⁸

35 Obviously, Leibniz had put together his military programme from various contemporary sources.

36 *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*.

37 *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent* (1784). Seventh Thesis.

38 *A Discourse Upon the Origin and the Foundation of the Inequality Among Mankind*. Part II.



In short, “we have nothing to show for ourselves but a deceitful and frivolous exterior, honour without virtue, reason without wisdom, and pleasure without happiness. (p. 138).”³⁹

Another line of thought, however, fully internalises the ‘re-valuation of values’. John Macpherson (1768, p. 136; cf. FAIRCHILD, 1928, p. 5), for example, a high British colonial official, in 1768 calls hospitality “one of those virtues, which, if not peculiar to, is most commonly met within a state of barbarity. It is after property has taken absolute possession of the mind, that the door is shut against the stranger”. Showing a generous disposition may, therefore, “carry along with it, in the eyes of the polite part of mankind, a degree of rudeness ...”⁴⁰

Gouverneur Morris, an author of large sections of the Constitution of the United States and one of its signatories, even argues that it is not “life and liberty” which was most valuable and “the main object of society”, but property. Consequently, only people who have “not acquired a taste for property” prefer the savage state “which is more favourable to liberty than the civilised; and sufficiently so to life”. Morris argues that these values have to be “renounced for the sake of property”, which can “only be secured by the restraints of regular government.” In other words, there “never was, nor ever will be, a civilised society without an aristocracy” (THATCHER (VII), 1902, p. 346, 351).

In our own days, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (later Benedict XVI) has voiced what he thinks to be a modern version of the ‘human’ construct. Ratzinger celebrates man’s greatness as a *European* heritage, forwarded to the Church by the ancient cultures. Man’s ambiguous nature, to achieve higher and even higher ends as well as utmost destruction, is for Ratzinger the Godly gift of freedom:

“A gnat can do what is in it to do, no more and no less. Man, however, with all humanity, holds in his hands the entire sum of hidden human potential: he can in the end develop methods of destruction that are beyond the capability of any other living thing” (BENEDICTUS, 2002, p. 119).

Ratzinger does not tell us anything about the moral contents of “greatness”. He rather pities the European man as being seized by thrilling shudders as a bystander of his own monstrous deeds. ‘Man’ should try to do better, of course, but is best advised to share God’s trust in ‘man’:

39 Rousseau echoes Michel de Montaigne’s critique of European conditions which he contrasts with the savage state in which “the very Words that signify, Lying, Treachery, Dissimulation, Avarice, Envy, Detraction, and Pardon” have never been heard of. Cf. *Of Cannibals*. In: MONTAGNE, 1743, p. 229.

40 According to Elsie B. Michie (1993, p. 152), Charles Dickens managed to establish his position as a popular author mainly by ascribing voluntary subjection and the collective, non-egotistic mentality of unselfishness and self-sacrifice to the working class, as opposed to the ‘civilised’ egoism of the upper class.



Sometimes we even feel like saying to God, If you had only made man a little less great, then he would be less dangerous. If you hadn't given him his freedom, then he would not be able to fall so far. And yet, we don't quite dare to say it in the end, because at the same time we are grateful that God did put greatness into men. And if he takes upon himself the risk inherent in man's freedom and all the falls from greatness it involves, then we feel horrified by the thought of what that might mean, and we have to try to summon up all the positive forces at our command, but we also have to share in God's fundamental attitude of putting trust in man (ibid.).

On the other hand, Ratzinger underlines the *European* nature of greatness by ascribing inferiority to African "tribal religions". They showed their inferiority, because "when they encounter the great civilizations, they open themselves up from within to these new elements". In contrast, Asian cultures (cf. MILLS, 1997, p. 72) are already "highly developed cultures" in which "religion, national identity, and social order – think of the caste system – are woven into an indivisible whole and have been taken to a high spiritual level" and they "unite to confront what is alien" (BENEDICTUS, 2002, p. 374). Consequently, it is the faculty to form disciplined social orders (including castes), and to confront the "alien" which, in Ratzinger's perspective, makes civilisations great, the Asian cultures⁴¹ being second-best behind the Europeans.

Conclusion

The preceding remarks have, of course, only been able to skim over some aspects of how an analysis of the animal construct may actually proceed. Obviously, this analysis may not be feasible within the boundaries of traditional thematic studies, such as race, class, or gender studies. It should be conducted as *binary studies*.

Such studies will have to take a more systematic account of the fact that dehumanising strategies in a world of migration, flight and expulsion are still embedded in a comprehensive calculus of power. Part of that calculus is not only the multitude of pretexts⁴² under which minorities can be stigmatised, but also the arbitrariness with which powerful speakers and their supporters 'define' victim groups.

Depending on specific interests and opportunities, speakers tend to switch back and forth between, or to conjoin racist, sexist, bodyist, social Darwinist and classist,

41 According to Elsie B. Michie (1993, p. 63-65), for 19th century authors, such as Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, and also for Charles Dickens and Karl Marx, the Asian stereotype – as opposed to the European ego-ideal – was mainly characterised by 'forced', but not voluntary subjection of people to the 'common good' and the absence of private property, i.e. the accumulation of property in the hands of 'oriental despots'. Being led by blind passion, not by rational (European) foresight, these despots tended to lose everything and to destroy in a moment the already deficient political order they had temporarily created, leaving chaos behind them. Cf. LOGAN, 1787.

42 For the opportunism of stereotyping cf. COHEN, 1986, p. 94–96, 135-136; HALL, 1992, p. 306.



authoritarian, anti-Semitic, or other dehumanising modes (PAUL, 2004, p. 95-156). We also have to study more closely the complementary roles of speakers and their audiences and how exactly binary verdicts manage to create hierarchies and chains of obedience. In fact, we will have to review not only the legacy of the rhetorical arts and of speech act theory, but also the comprehensive research, conducted in the 1950s and 1960s on the 'authoritarian personality'⁴³.

Above all, we should develop a toolbox to identify how speakers/ writers exactly shape the sexual, gorging and excremental potentials of the 'philosophical animal', how they mould the motifs of instrumental reason and stupidity in textual, in visual (PAUL, 2011), or in combined forms. At the same time, we must be aware of strategies of turning to indirect allusions and euphemisms, i.e. of evading *bold* dehumanising messages (DIJK, 1993). In short, we must cope with an incalculable contextual and thematic multitude of possible realisations of the script.

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43 As introductions cf. ADORNO et al., 1950; WELLS, 1953; MCKINNEY et al., 1960.



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Appendix

Anonymous, The Missing Link⁴⁴

Doubt not which is the preferable side in the Gorilla controversy. It is clearly that of the philosophers who maintain themselves to be the descendants of the Gorilla. This is the position which commends itself to right-minded men, because it tends to expand the sphere of their affections, inasmuch as it gives them a broader view of their species. Hitherto, however, there has been one argument against the Gorilla theory very difficult to get over, namely, that there is no known fact whatever which affords it the least foundation. This is a deficiency which we trust we are about to supply.

A gulf, certainly, does appear to yawn between the Gorilla and the Negro. The woods and wilds of Africa do not exhibit an example of any intermediate animal. But in this, as in many other cases, philosophers go vainly searching abroad for that which they would readily find if they sought for it at home. A creature manifestly between the Gorilla and the Negro is to be met with in some of the lowest districts of London and Liverpool by adventurous explorers. It comes from Ireland, whence it has contrived to migrate; it belongs, in fact, to a tribe of Irish savages; the lowest species of the Irish Yahoo. When conversing with its kind it talks a sort of gibberish. It is, moreover, a climbing animal, and may sometimes be seen ascending a ladder laden with a hod of bricks.

The Irish Yahoo generally confines itself within the limits of its own colony, except when it goes out of them to get its living. Sometimes, however, it sallies forth in states of excitement, and attacks civilised human beings that have provoked its fury. Large numbers of these Yahoos have been lately collecting themselves in Hyde Park on a Sunday and molesting the people there assembled to express sympathy with Garibaldi and the cause of United Italy. The Yahoos are actuated by the abject and truculent devotion to the Pope, which urges them to fly at all manner of persons who object to grovel under the Papal tyranny, and all others who assist or even applaud them in the attempt to throw it off.

Nevertheless they will howl for their own liberty to do what they please like so many *Calibans*. They were organised by the Pontifical Government to fight the Italians, at Castelfidardo, where they failed, perhaps from want of sufficient dexterity to handle a rifle. Here they assail the friends of the Italian monarchy with the weapons which come more natural to them: clubs and stones. In this sort of warfare they are more successful than they were on the field of battle; and their numbers, strength, and ferocity have struck such terror into the minds of the authorities, that the latter have judged it expedient to yield to them. They have accordingly succeeded in the attempt to stifle the expression of public sentiment by intimidation. It is not wonderful that creatures so like the Gorilla should frighten anybody; let alone the Lord Mayor.

The somewhat superior ability of the Irish Yahoo to utter articulate sounds may suffice to prove that it is a development and not, as some imagine, a degeneration of the Gorilla.

It is hoped that the discovery, in the Irish Yahoo, of the Missing Link between Man and the Gorilla, will gratify the benevolent reader, by suggesting the necessity of an enlarged definition of our fellow-creatures, conceived in a truly liberal and catholic spirit.

⁴⁴ In: *Punch*, October 18, 1862, p. 165.