

Journal of Theoretical & Philosophical Criminology

ISSN: 2166-8094

JTPCRIM, April 2019, 11:52-63

Connectivity, Ambivalence and Terror: Adlerian Speculations on the Great Refusal to Submit.

Ronnie Lippens, Keele University

Abstract

To understand terrorism in this 'liquid' 21st century of ours (dixit the late Zygmunt Bauman) requires one to meticulously analyse individual biographies and corresponding life-worlds, meanings and intentions. In this contribution an attempt will be made to supplement –only supplement- such an endeavour by pointing to the undercurrent in the 'climate' of our contemporary age which, by most accounts, seems to be a deeply unsettling one. Starting from Zygmunt Bauman's reading –which he completed during the 1990s- of our time as the age in which it became clear that ambivalence is ineradicable, we will make an attempt here to paint the undercurrent, or 'climate' that resulted from this 'postmodern' awareness, as a Luciferian one, i.e. as one that thrives on, and is fuelled by, a radical desire for –or will to- absolute sovereignty. This desire –or will- aims, impossibly, and paradoxically, at superhuman non-submission. It imposes, however subtly, a Law that says: 'Thou Shalt never Submit. Never Ever! To Nothing and to No One!'. It is precisely in this undercurrent, or climate, that Alfred Adler's insights acquire a new import which they may, quite rightly perhaps, not have had when they were first written down. In an age of radicalised aspiring absolute sovereigns –Luciferians- the agony of frustration and feelings of inadequacy and inferiority are as inexhaustible as they are unbearable. It is here that Adler's *Individualpsychologie* (the depth psychology of 'in-dividual' social and interpersonal dynamics and relations) is able to shed some light at least on the farcically grotesque violence that mars our age.

Keywords

Non-submission - Zygmunt Bauman – ambivalence – Alfred Adler – sovereignty – Lucifer – terror

Prologue: 'Negativism'

In 1953 the then 30 years old psychiatry trainee Alexander-Karel Evrard submitted his short but insightful PhD thesis on 'The Patho-Psychological Meaning of the Negativistic Attitude'. In it, and inspired by *inter alia* Bleuler, he explored the theme of 'negativism'. 'Negativism', both in its everyday life ('psychological') and in its pathological ('patho-') forms and manifestations, can be

read as the result of an incapacity, or inability, to live with, or in, ambivalence. Whether this incapacity, or inability, is constitutional, or whether it is the consequence of social interaction and the terror of stigma, is not really crucial here. The main point, according to the young Dr. Evrard, was that a 'negativistic' attitude can be read as a manifestation of the incapacity or inability, in the 'negativistic' individual, to either process or resolve the constant flood of exigencies, often highly contradictory, that keep impacting on him or her from the outside, from the world. Underpinning 'negativism', then, is a certain weakness, or lack of potential for real 'encounter' and for real engagement with the world. To the thus 'weak' Self the world appears as an endless stream of commands –some highly contradictory and conflicting- which cannot be processed or resolved. Those commands –i.e. all this Law coming from the world- flood the Self which then projects them back onto the world in 'negativism'. The negativistic Self tends to generate, or perhaps merely reproduce, counter-propositions and counter-demands, whenever it picks up a proposition or a command from the outside world. But very often the Self, in an attempt to preserve what little is left of itself, simply withdraws from all engagement with the world. Depersonalisation can set in – sometimes this is a defence mechanism in its own right- and is then, once again, projected back onto the world in a process of derealisation. The world of the withdrawing Self then gradually crumbles into entropy, and an escape into an alternative, fantasized world, or indeed hallucination, become possible. Social stigmatization will compound the problem of course. In the final stages the Self can even withdraw from itself. Encounter will then no longer be possible at all: there is no longer anything there, in the self, to undertake the process of engagement *with*. In that sense the 'negativistic attitude', wrote Evrard, always to some extent betrays a desire to escape and withdraw; all forms of 'negativism' are, ultimately, a 'surrogate for non-being' (1953: 57-60).

This was written in the immediate wake of the war. Although we will later in this contribution argue how the war may have had a thorough impact on Western –and later global- sensitivities and culture, and how it may indeed have led to a complete overhaul of said sensitivities and culture, 1953 was probably too early in that process for psychiatrists to have picked up on the massive cultural change that at the time was still only emerging as an embryonic kernel. At the time of Evrard's writing one could still have presumed that the basic cultural command was one of 'encounter'. Sartrean existentialism had already begun questioning this, but as early as 1953 one could still have believed that the most fundamental premise in culture was built on the command 'Thou Shalt Make Attempts to Genuinely Engage with the World, and to Make 'Encounter' with the World and the Beings in It'. Problems (such as 'Negativism') would then ensue whenever or wherever this most fundamental of commands could not be followed or realised. It was of course understood that any process of engagement or encounter is always fraught with danger and difficulty. The world is often very contradictory and conflict-ridden. It can often be this very ambivalent place. However, a solution was always possible, i.e. it was always possible to resolve contradictions by fabricating or, if necessary, by submitting to a coded system –or Law perhaps- that would have allowed the Self to delude itself as living in a space where entropic ambivalence could be held at bay, or simply wished away, and where something that to a deluded Self could pass for 'encounter' can take place. In such a culture 'Terror' occurs when the Self, in all its 'weakness', is incapable or unable to thus submit to the Law, and to the security that any such submission tends to bring.

But that was 1953. This is 2019. It may very well be the case that in this 21st century of ours the old fundamental command has now given way to its opposite. It will be argued in this contribution that the deepest of cultural commands now urges us to embrace ambivalence, to live in it, dwell in it, wallow in it. It commands the Self to live its life in absolute sovereignty. In its more extreme forms this command no longer requires 'encounter' or even 'engagement'. It puts a premium on detachment and on indifference. It celebrates radical disengagement and withdrawal on the one hand, and radical undiscerning abandon on the other. Here the 'weak' Self experiences 'Terror' when it is incapable or unable to live a life according to this command, i.e. when it feels it has to make desperate attempts to cling to coded systems –any code, any Law- in order to give itself some modicum of stability. But this solution –i.e. submission to code and Law- has now

become problematic: in a culture of radical sovereign aspiration, clinging to stability, code, or Law, is highly suspect. The Law now commands: 'Thou Shalt not Submit to Law!'.

Introduction: 'Terror'

Below an attempt will also be made to supplement the literature on terrorism. The focus here will be on terrorism in the 21st century. Much in this literature, in order to make sense of terrorists' violence, focuses on their biographies and life-worlds, or points to the specific social, political and ideological contexts in which those biographies and life-worlds form and take shape. There is little point in refuting any of this literature. Here we just want to add an element to the debate on 21st century terrorism. Our point is going to be that there may be something in the overall 'climate' of our contemporary age that we need to explore if we want to make some sense of the terror that it generates. The previous sentence includes the word 'terror', rather than 'terrorism'. Indeed, 'terrorism' proper is but one manifestation, and consequence, of a more diffuse 'climate', or 'mood' perhaps, that seems to characterize, at least partially, global culture in the 21st century. It is this climate, or mood, we hold, that forms the undercurrent that both fuels, and that is fuelled in turn, by the anxieties and terrors which it generates. There is something deeply unhinged about this '21st century'. No student of terrorism can afford to ignore this overall 'climate' in attempts to *make sense of the sense* that is generated, mobilised and circulated in so many of its life-worlds and contexts.

Others have of course been able to make sense of 'the 21st century'. The late Zygmunt Bauman's work on 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000) is arguably one of the most serious attempts to grasp the unhinged character of our age. In an age of hyper-connectivity, all that was once so 'solid' is, once again, 'melting into air'. This age spouts at the same time untold promises of freedom and sources of anxiety; indeed any one promise of freedom is simultaneously also the source of anxiety. All 'solid' boundaries have been lost. Bauman's later work on the fluid contingencies of life in our contemporary age was, however, built on his earlier work, and it could be argued that his overall thesis had already emerged, fully-fledged, in his mature work of the 1990s. It is to that work that we will turn in this contribution. One notion in particular, i.e. 'ambivalence', will take centre stage here.

In our reading it is a heightened awareness of the ineradicable nature of 'ambivalence' –an awareness that had been made so clear in Bauman's writing of the 1990s- that ultimately led to a radicalisation of desires and sensitivities in global culture. It radicalised an anti-authoritarian trend which had already emerged in the wake of the Second World War, albeit then, as said above, as an embryonic kernel only. The radicalisation of this trend into what I have elsewhere (Lippens, 2018a, 2019a, and 2019b) called a Luciferian direction was fully completed by the 1990s. This process of radicalization can be called 'Luciferian' because it thrives on desires and imaginaries of absolute radical sovereignty. Indeed, it even goes far beyond such desires: aspiring Luciferians desire to live life before or beyond *all* law, before or beyond *all* code, before or beyond *all* creation. We are talking here about desires of utter, absolute sovereignty before or beyond all that the gods and the world can throw at us. The great Luciferian refusal is a refusal to submit to all and everything, even to this very refusal itself. The great Lucifer even refuses to submit to His very Self, distrusting its origins, and standing in proud contempt above its possible source codes. This is where Alfred Adler's work deserves another look. If it is indeed the case that Luciferian aspirations –utterly impossible, and insurmountably paradoxical aspirations of course- are gradually beginning to energise a significant undercurrent in global culture, then the resulting frustration, neurotic agony, and violence should, from an Adlerian perspective, come as no surprise. Nor should the fact that all this frustration, agony and violence can do little more than further add to Luciferian aspiration. In what follows we will make an attempt to unpack the argument. But allow us to repeat here that in no way do we intend to refute the literature on terrorism. Our only wish is to supplement that literature.

Bauman: Connectivity, Ambivalence and the Age of Non-Submission

In a highly connected world nothing keeps its boundaries, once assumed to be so solid, for a long time. This liberates, but at the same time, it also threatens. What yesterday seemed so rock-solid has today been proven to be built on mere loose sand. What today feels desperate can tomorrow turn into an escape route. Yesterday's enemies are today's allies. Tomorrow's friends are, today, hiding in the trenches at the other side of our many frontlines. Life in this unsettled, unhinged world has become very 'ambivalent' indeed. In our desperate attempts to explore the opportunities that bubble up from the inexhaustible vastness of the interconnected 'rhizome' of global culture (to evoke Deleuzoguattarian language here), we unavoidably come to realise that each come at a cost –a cost that almost invariably strikes us as involving an unbearable loss of 'security'. And whenever we flee -in disgust, or with contempt in our hearts, and with our eyes set on pure 'freedom'- anything that dares to present itself to us as a *should*, an *ought*, or a *must*, we nearly always come to realise that the flight towards freedom itself undermines not just our sense of security, but our very sense of freedom itself as well. This is an age when so many have come to realise that all that we do comes at a cost. All that has consistency about it –all that operates according to a law or a code- also produces waste. All law, all code is wasteful. All law, all code holds some promise of achievement, but it invariably also generates waste, very often so much so that this will undermine its own conditions of possibility. All has become so 'ambivalent'. This is, ambivalently, a good thing. But it also is, equally ambivalently, so insufferably bad, catastrophic even. Our contemporary age is the age when this has become so abundantly clear to so many: life costs. It costs potential. Every morsel of life is spent by using up potential. It is lived at the expense of plenipotentiary sovereignty.

In his book on *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991) Bauman, referring to what then was still called 'postmodernity', concluded thus:

"Postmodernity is modernity coming of age: modernity looking at itself at a distance rather than from inside, making a full inventory of its gains and losses, psychoanalysing itself, discovering the intentions it never before spelled out, finding them mutually cancelling and incongruous. Postmodernity is modernity coming to terms with its own impossibility: a self-monitoring modernity, one that consciously discards what it was once unconsciously doing" (1991: 272).

This sobering insight did of course have a history. Bauman himself contributed to the understanding of the postmodern awareness of ambivalence when in his *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) he analysed how coded systems of thought and behaviour, taken to their 'logical' consequence, will generate waves and floods of potential-wasting atrocity. This idea is explored further in his *Postmodern Ethics* (1993) and in *Life in Fragments* (1995). In those works, Modernity appears as a chain of ever so many attempts at eradicating ambivalence, all of those to no avail, able only to reproduce ambivalence. "Humans", he concludes, are "morally ambivalent [...] non-ambivalent morality is an existential impossibility" (1993: 10). Morality, like order, or structure, or, to use our own words: law, or code, is, quite simply put, "not universalizable" (1993: 12). We are now aware of this. We are, in Bauman's words, "without illusion" on this point (1993: 32). "Ambivalence", we have become aware, "lies at the heart of morality: I am free as far as I am a hostage. I am I in as far as I am for the Other" (1993: 78). In other words, freedom can only be achieved if it isn't. And I can only guarantee my own 'security' if I don't. And, very painfully so: vice versa.

Bauman himself hoped for something like a Levinasian 'postmodern morality', or a morality without rigid code, without the imposition of strict law, to emerge out of this 'postmodern' disillusionment. Mere "tolerance", always floating to some extent on indifference, would not do: "postmodern tolerance breeds intolerance" (1993: 238). Tolerance, like anything else, we now know, is 'ambivalent': it is 'good', but it also provides space for intolerant, "neo-tribal" codes to flourish (Bauman was inspired here by the work of French sociologist Michel Maffesoli). Bauman's hope, then, was that, somehow, out of this 'postmodern' awakening, a morality would emerge that would manage to steer clear from both "the Scylla of indifference, of the

responsibility abandoned, and the Charybdis of the autonomy stolen” (1995: 66). This would be a morality that refuses to be bound by anything that, consolidating as law or code, threatens to spread outward in a colonizing movement. Bauman’s hope was for a spontaneous but care-full morality that is aware that all comes at a cost. In a way this morality had a lot in common with a non-submissive Buddhist-inspired ethics of ‘letting go’ in which all that is solid is not clung to, but examined, and given a place, in a continuous process, among all that it does not recognise. There may be little coincidence in the fact that Buddhism began to inspire global culture – academic and artistic culture in particular- during the 1990s. This process is still ongoing, and has indeed achieved quite a popular appeal, although it now often goes under the heading of *mindfulness* (see e.g. Andre, 2011). It does however not take a tremendous stretch of the imagination to suggest that the awareness of ambivalence in global culture that Bauman was so apt to detect and analyse, did not make this drift towards mindfulness the dominant flow in contemporary culture. One could argue: on the contrary. The pre-dominant drift in our age was, and continues to be, one in the direction of ultra-radicalized sovereign aspiration. Care-full processing of the ambivalence of (and in) ‘solid’ law and code is not what is on the aspiring sovereign’s mind. Theirs is a non-submissiveness that abhors all engagement with anything that even suggests law or code. Their non-submissiveness desires, or wills, to be out-of-this-world. Bauman himself was of course aware of this possibility and indeed, in his *Life in Fragments* he referred (1995: 8) to the work of Christopher Lasch on late modern narcissism and sovereign aspiration.

It is to this development that we will turn in the next section. But before we do, let us note that Bauman, in the quotation above, mentions ‘psychoanalysis’ twice. ‘Postmodernity’ was, or is, wrote Bauman, the age that awakened to itself, became ‘aware’, when so many were forced, if not perhaps prepared, to look their (self-)delusions in the eye. This may of course have been the case and for many it will hold true. ‘Postmodernity’ was, to some extent at least, the age of sober disillusionment. In an age of near complete connectivity, no illusion, no delusion, will hold. There is nowhere to hide. There is precious little to hide or keep hidden. All is in the open. There are only endless chains of hopeful actions, frustration, and anxious reactions. For all to see. And that also means that there is now little to psychoanalyse. There are fewer hidden depths. Shame seems to be something of a bygone age. We have psycho-analysed ourselves through and through, and psycho-analysis itself, in the process, to destruction it seems. Some would argue, then, that there no longer is any need for psycho-analysis since nothing is hidden, and there’s nowhere to hide. Aspiring sovereigns may add that they would refute any attempt to bind them to themselves, to their biography, and to their hidden shame anyway. They refute *all* that is solid, all that suggests law, or code. And yet ... there is in our view still ample room to psycho-analyse our age. One of its predominant operative codes –its basic Law, so to speak- commands us to refute all foundation, to elude all law and code, and to have done, pure and simple, with all that is solid, and with the waste that is creation. This is a Luciferian Law. But however paradoxical a law this may be, it is a law. The Law that shouts ‘Thou Shalt have Done with Law’, is indeed, unavoidably so, a law. It is a command. And as such it generates waste. All law does, and aspiring Luciferians are well placed to be aware of this source of ambivalence. Like all law, the Luciferian command is bound to lead to frustration, shame, neurosis, and violence. Even under Luciferian Law, and one could say, *especially* under Luciferian Law, there is, and there will be ‘hidden depths’. This is where psycho-analysis slips back in -through the backdoor, so to speak. In this contribution we will focus on the uses of Adlerian ‘Individual Psychology’ in attempts to make sense of those depths. Contrary to what is suggested by its badly chosen name, ‘Individual Psychology’ is the first fully ‘social’ of depth psychologies, developed by Adler well before Freud developed his own work on group and social relations and dynamics, and Law (e.g. in Freud, 1913, 1932, and 1939).

The Luciferian Command, or The Command to Trump God

In one of his recent books, on *The Terrible Children of Modernity* (2014), Peter Sloterdijk argues that Modernity always had an “anti-genealogical” tendency within it. This tendency was (and is) carried by those who deliberately, and with contempt or indifference, turn their backs on tradition

–that is, on the Law of the past- and who set their sights firmly on the future. Sloterdijk calls them the “bastards” of Modernity. A pun is duly intended here, for, as Sloterdijk claims, the “anti-genealogical” trend emerged first among the “bastards” (read this in the literal sense now) in elite families who, cut off from inheritance law or custom, were forced to carve out their own life path, and forge their own future. Sloterdijk has a point of course. But there are in our view reasons to assume that the level of “bastard-ness” has increased very severely, particularly following the humanity-crushing experience of the Second World War. It is, one could perhaps argue, as if one of the most pre-dominant and deeply embedded ‘operating logics’ or ‘source codes’ in global culture has changed very considerably, i.e. from a code that held ‘All else failing, submit!’, to its direct opposite: ‘All else failing, refute all foundation! Refute all submission!’. On the eve of the 21st century, we speculate here, the Law of Lucifer was gradually building up and ultimately crystallized in the space that was opened up by a process that saw the radicalisation of the aforementioned “bastard” code. The Luciferian Law commands that we, ultra-bastards, “Shall Never, Ever Submit to Law’. The aspiring Luciferian rejects past, future, and even intends to reject the present. He (or she, of course) rejects all that is structured or ordered by law or by code. The Luciferian refutes all that has solidity in it. Whereas Sloterdijk’s “bastards” are still looking towards the future, and are still prepared to, indeed eager to create (their own life paths, their own future), the Luciferian bastard has radicalised far, very far beyond this point. The Luciferian, then, refuses to submit to all creation.

Lucifer is, as is well known, the First Son of god. He’s the Morning Star, the Bearer of Light. He’s also well known for having organised a rebellion against the father who, He claimed, had wasted potential in that abominable creation of his; a creation full of wasteful law. As the First Son, as the Guardian of Pure Primordial Light, that is: of Pure Potential, He could not accept the father’s wastefulness. The father’s creation was, in His eyes, nothing but a waste of pristine potential. Lucifer’s many attempts to reverse the father’s creation have all, as we know, failed spectacularly, and indeed, on one occasion, in the Garden of Eden, the problem was made worse when god decided to chase humanity out of the realm of biological law and into the zone of culture, with its endless collections of additional human-made laws and codes in ever so many ‘civilizations’, the one desperate to clash with the other. But when the guns fell silent at the end of the most wasteful of clashes, in 1945, when humanity was torn apart, or better: when a tear appeared in the flesh of humanity, Lucifer sat upright again, took note, and became very hopeful indeed. Luciferian desires for absolute, ultra-radical sovereignty began to stir, that is, for sovereignty that is out-of-this-world, before, and far, far beyond anything that dares to suggest fixed law, or code. It took a while for these desires to spread and gain some foothold in global culture but, and this is our speculation, by the end of the previous century all was in place. It could very well be that Lucifer himself, at that point, roughly around the year 2000, may indeed –as so many Hollywood productions imagined it at the time- have stepped through the tear in humanity, from the Great Primordial Beyond, and is now actually walking the earth. It is possible that His father –the creator of wasteful Law- has now indeed fled this world, as so many have been dreading for some time. There is no place anymore for an amateur deity whose main feat was to create wasteful laws only to then realise that those laws went their own path-dependent way, leaving him unable to do anything about them and their catastrophic consequences. It is indeed possible to speculate how this failed and pitiful sovereign-to-be, this ultimate creator of waste, has now fled the scene, leaving Lucifer to fill the vacuum left in his wake.

The Luciferian aspires to live his (or her) life in a zone of pure potential. In this zone no law, no code whatsoever is able to restrict, not even to a minute extent, one’s absolute sovereignty. In this zone there is no path dependency. Previous choices never preclude later ones. There is no determination. There, one can eat one’s cake and still have it. Tradition, law, one’s biological and sexual make-up, one’s very DNA, one’s biography, one’s social context, one’s desires, one’s flaws, and so on: *all* this, in that zone of pure potential, *all* becomes largely irrelevant. In this zone the Luciferian walks calmly, with indifference, across paths (rather than along them). With something like slight, barely perceptible contempt smouldering in their hearts, the Luciferian glides over and, if necessary, *through* all bounded solidity. Theorists such as Bernard Stiegler (2015) have argued

how, particularly in the age of super-connectivity, “all that is solid” tends to evaporate towards entropy. Nothing that has a certain consistency about it –or, in other words: nothing that has a law, or a code, that structures it- is allowed to persist. We agree, but this drift into utter entropy is, we speculate here, not just a consequence of technological super-connectivity. It could very well be a manifestation of Luciferian aspiration.

Let us look at this from another perspective. Writing on the importance of ‘death denial’ in human beings, the anthropologist Ernest Becker (1975) argued that human beings deeply need meaning systems (a particular faith, belief, or ideology) in order to allay the unbearable anxiety, or the sheer terror, that stems from their awareness of their own mortality. Human beings, for all their God-like ambition, cannot but submit to this or that particular meaning system in a bid to forget their creature-like, slimy origins on the one hand, and their abominable, equally slimy, impending demise on the other. Human beings need this submission to meaning systems. The meaning systems quell the anxiety at the heart of their lives and allow them to gain a sense of immortality. This, Becker argued, is an anthropological given, and it also explains the violence that human beings are prepared to unleash whenever ‘their’ meaning systems are under threat. The human need to submit, according to Becker, is the root of evil. In our view, however, it could very well be the case now that, in the Luciferian age, Becker’s fundamental insight is in need of some qualification. The aspiring Luciferian needs no submission. He or she has moved on to a level of “bastard”-ness that holds: ‘All else failing, refuse to submit! Refute all foundation! Refute all law, all code!’ In the Luciferian imaginary, to submit is to surrender sovereignty. It is to relinquish potential. It is, in a way, death: in submitting, you somehow die, and you allow law and code to spread death around them. This, granted, is still a “meaning system”, but it is a peculiar one.

It should be clear that the Luciferian imaginary is a deeply paradoxical one. There is of course the simple insight that the Luciferian command to refute all law is a command. It is structured around its own code. This is a code that urges to live one’s life before, or beyond all law, that is, before or beyond “all that is solid” in creation. This is a command to trump the failed deity known as ‘god’. There is no pun intended in this turn of phrase here, but the image may come to mind of a newly elected president whose administration has no qualms whatsoever in sending out the one (self-)contradictory message after the other into the world, as if there was no path dependency, and as if no policy choice made at time X would somehow have to be taken into account at time X-plus-one-second. But the Luciferian imaginary is also paradoxical for a number of other reasons. He or she who is desperate to elude all law and all code is of course held captive by them. And in trying to flee the clutches of law, the aspiring Luciferian sovereign is bound to at least make attempts to safeguard the success of his or her flight, or journey, and more often than not such attempts will take the form of coded ‘solidities’ that are then combined to build fortress shaped protective devices which, paradox upon paradox, the fleeing sovereign will then have to depend on whilst their desires are, simultaneously, undermined by their very attempts to protect them.

The aspiring radical sovereign, in the Luciferian guise, is –to evoke Christopher Lasch’s work once more- prone to keep his or her Self as small, as “minimal”, as possible. Utterly “narcissistic” he or she may be, but that doesn’t mean that their Self should be huge. On the contrary: as Lasch has been able to argue a while ago, when he detected an emerging narcissistic trend in global culture, which, according to him, took off sometime during the 1970s (Lasch, 1979 and 1984), the smaller the Self the less the likelihood it will be captured by law or code, and the more the aspiring sovereign will be able to move elusively, with indifference, or with slight contempt at the most, across or through the solidities of life.

To live an elusive life whilst carrying a minimal Self can be attempted by deploying a number of strategies. All are inevitably paradoxical and self-defeating. One could, for example, decide to reject all law and code that presents itself as ‘civilization’. Here the strategy is to achieve sovereignty by diving into the purely natural or biological dimension of life. This strategy, as French philosopher Georges Bataille (1957) was at pains to explore, hopes to find the sovereign life in an escape from all “functional” strictures. The problem here though is that at the imaginary point

where one would have succeeded, that is, when one would have *become* purely *animal* (to evoke Deleuzoguattarian language once more), all sovereignty would then of course also have been lost. Another strategy is to withdraw even further from the world in a move to elude all law and code, whether “functionally” civilized, or purely natural. This may remind us of the industrial mogul Howard Hughes who, after the war (there may be little coincidence in the timing) withdrew completely from social life, to the point of keeping and storing all his waste (urine included), and who tried to live in a hermetically sealed escape pod, far away from it all, in the zone of pure potential, with no potential ‘wasted’. But the more recent phenomenon of the hikikomori in Japan may also come to mind. They withdraw behind their computer screens and do little more than just watch the world crumble apart, with what seems to be cold indifference. But here again: the point where imaginary sovereignty is reached is also the point where it vanishes completely in thin air. Then there are the “faux” strategies. There is the plunge in the superficialities of consumerism whereby one hopes to achieve absolute sovereignty in endless chains of purchase and rejection of consumer codes –a recipe for constant agony, as Bauman wrote in one of his ‘liquid’ books (2008). Or there is the strategy whereby, as psychoanalyst Janine Chasseguet-Smigler (1999) has discussed, sovereignty is searched for, again quite paradoxically so, in deliberately ‘negativistic’ perversions of the norm –the norm which the aspiring sovereign will then of course be held captive by.

But the fact that the Luciferian imaginary is ineradicably paradoxical and plainly impossible (unless creation could somehow indeed be reversed) is not the point. The point is that the Luciferian imaginary may, to some extent at least, have crystallised, during the last few decades, at the very extreme of the cultural spectrum of “bastard”-ness. The ‘operating logic’ or ‘source code’ that underpins this imaginary has of course not completely over-coded, or captured, global culture. No code will ever achieve this. Luciferians are –paradox again! - among the first to grasp this. But, to repeat: that is not the point here. The point is to realise that the Luciferian imaginary, and the codes that structure it, to the extent that they have crystallised, are there, available as a resource to be partially circulated, mobilised, and put to use, by so many individuals, in so many life-world contexts, on the paths of so many biographies, and in so very many different ways. To the extent that it is indeed now a resource, it is likely to have some impact. It is to this impact that we shall turn in the next section, after a brief excursion.

We are writing about ‘the 21st century’. It is almost impossible not to discuss the issue, and the problem, of hyper-connectivity in the age of ‘social’ media. Let us for example consider the massive use of emojis in ‘social’ media communications, in particular the ‘negative’, or ‘negativistic’ ones (see the prologue). This can be read as a manifestation of the ‘culture of narcissism’ which we discussed above. The narcissist aspires to achieve absolute sovereignty and omnipotence, and desires to live his or her life as frictionless as possible. As Christopher Lasch has argued, this requires them to keep their Self as ‘minimal’ as possible. The more ‘minimal’ or empty the self, the more responsive, and the less friction. The narcissistic life manifests itself, as said above, in a variety of ways, between two ends of a spectrum. At one end the narcissistic Self withdraws from the world which it then observes and reflects upon in what it deludes itself to be splendid isolation. At the other end the narcissistic Self lives a purely embodied life, completely unreflective, and utterly responsive. The new technologies of recent decades, and the use of avatar-type, surrogate bodies such as emojis, have allowed both these forms of life to merge into one. It is now possible for the narcissistic Self to be everywhere (through its avatars), and nowhere (utterly withdrawn), at the same time.

The 21st century allows the narcissist to keep up his or her delusions. In our contemporary age, and in the thoroughly global and globalizing culture that is its hallmark, life tends to be hyper-connected life. On the one hand this poses an almost insurmountable problem for the narcissist: the world bombards the Self, however minimal that Self may be, at a relentless pace, flooding it with anxiety. But on the other hand, this hyper-connectivity also provides the narcissist with the means to escape anything that threatens to generate ‘solidity’. ‘Solidity’ is what the narcissist abhors. Solidity is ‘there’ and it cannot be ignored. But a life lived in hyper-connectivity

allows the narcissist to escape, either into 'discontinuity' (dixit Bataille), or hermetic seclusion. Any escape is only temporary, though. Even when in perfect isolation, the barrage of impacts coming from the world is unrelenting and relentless. This is where the emoji comes in. The growth in the use of aggressive or 'negativistic' emojis in social media could be read as, on the one hand, an expression of, and, on the other hand, a reaction to the deep tension and anxiety in contemporary narcissistic culture. In this reading the aggressive emoji is not just an attempt to flee the desperation of life in the relentlessly bombarded narcissistic void. It could also be read as an attempt to engage in a functional embodied 'discontinuous life' (embodiment here takes place through an avatar type simulacrum).

Adler's Untimely Point, Revisited

Adler had read Nietzsche and, like the philosopher's, his own main insights rest upon the notion that the human being, like all organisms, has to establish itself in a world. Adler's psychology is a psychology of the relations between the human organism and the world in which it lives and moves: this relationship is not so much individual as In-Dividual (Adler, 1929). The world in which the human organism has to make efforts to establish itself is a world of law, of commands, and of expectation. Those make it possible for the organism to form and maintain itself in the midst of that very world (the consistencies or solids in that world, and those include the laws, codes and expectations in it, are as many resources for the organism to draw on), but, at the same time, they also hold the materials in them that may and often do undermine the organism's attempts at self-preservation. Problems arise if and when the human organism's ambitions, fuelled by what Adler assumed is a drive for power (this *drive* is akin to Nietzsche's *will* to power), clashes with the commands and exigencies –or with the Law- in the world. Harboring “all-powerful”, God-like ambitions toward “complete superiority”, for example, the organism then realises that the Law of the world won't permit any of those ambitions to become reality (1929: 101-103). Or the organism, with all its limitations and imperfections, experiences its inability to meet the expectations emanating from the Law that surrounds it, or, in other words, it realizes its “unpreparedness in the face of life problems” (Adler, 1965: 93). This clash usually generates, in the human organism, frustration, and, more often than not, a sense of inadequacy, or indeed feelings of inferiority. And those in turn can lead to neurotic reactions, to psychotic ones (“melancholia” or depression, and paranoia in particular), or to suicide and other violent reactions (there is little fundamental difference between both). In all those reactions, claimed Adler, there is a loss, or a lack of “social interest” to be noted (Adler, 1965). The human organism puts a certain “distance” between itself and the world. That is, it distances itself from real issues in that world, and the commands in it, that it is unable to deal with. Unable to deal with life's problems, lacking the courage to get on with life's exigencies, deeply resentful (Nietzsche again), and unable to rid itself of feelings of inadequacy and inferiority, the human organism then hides, cowardly, in all kinds of fake solution. In Adler's words, the basic move here is to “side-step the demands of reality and [...] reaching out toward an ideal situation which would free him [the neurotic, RL] from any service to the community and absolve him from responsibility” (1929: 23). Those fake, delusional solutions, in Adler's words, are part of the organism's choice for “the pampered style of life” (1965: 242), and very often appear as ever so many attempts to hide or mask feelings of inferiority. The resentful, cowardly organism may then, for example, attempt “faux” superiority through terrorizing the resented world around it e.g. by hiding in “melancholia”, trying to thus induce guilt in others, and somehow control the situation. Or the resentful human organism may decide to defer any engagement with the world whatsoever, and withdraw in a “retrogressive movement”, involving “cessation” of all interaction, whilst hiding behind all manner of excuse. ‘Negativism’ may come to mind here. Or it may busy itself with the artificial “construction of obstacles and their mastery” (1929: 103), that is, it may choose to “travel on easy byways” (1965: 121), i.e. invent and then try to master minor, controllable issues in a bid to elicit either guilt, or sympathy, or both, from others. Or it may seek revenge on the world by committing suicide, or by lashing out violently, in desperate attempts to overcome its overwhelming feelings of inferiority.

Adler's insights never really gained a serious foothold in the humanities and social sciences, certainly not to the extent that other depth psychologies did. The many war-like battles within the broader psycho-analytical community may have had something to do with this. And it should also be noted that in the late Victorian and Edwardian age –high disciplinary Modernity, one could say– social expectations did not really expect human organisms to harbour God-like ambitions, let alone ambitions to “Trump God”. On the contrary: the expectation, or the Law, was to behave in neatly specified disciplined ways. But “the 21st century”, the age of Lucifer, no longer holds an excuse to ignore Adlerian *Individualpsychologie*. If the Luciferian Law now dictates: “Thou Shalt Submit to No Law”, and if, in the Luciferian age, the super-ego compels “Thou Shalt Have no Super-Ego”, then, from an Adlerian perspective, one cannot but predict utter terror, utter agony, and utter violence. There may be little coincidence in the fact that Flemish psychiatrist Dirk De Wachter (2012) has not failed to notice, in his consultancy room, a sharp increase of narcissistic, aggressive, violent borderline type symptoms, so much so, in fact, as to suggest that global culture, today, seems to have become a machine for the production of borderline pathology. Violence in the Luciferian age of course also includes ‘terrorist’ violence which very often provides the aspiring sovereign here and there with a means not just of hiding and masking his or her inability to deal with life's exigencies, but also of “compensating” for his or her deeply felt sense of inferiority, and of projecting a more or less heroic, God-like persona, however farcically grotesque such a persona may be (but see on this, and on the fact that a considerable number of jihadi terrorists are recent converts who did not grow up in and did not have any contact with the Muslim faith at all, e.g. Lippens, 2018b).

The Luciferian command cannot be properly obeyed. If you do, you don't. If you don't, you do. The ambition to trump God, and to live your life before, or beyond the Law, in the zone of pure potential, in the Great Primordial Beyond, to the extent that it is now here, in the imaginary of global culture, available as a resource, is placing an insurmountable burden on those who are inclined to heed its call. This Luciferian command cannot be dealt with. It cannot be “processed”. It is bound to stir massive feelings of inferiority in all who submit to the Law that permits no submission to law. Its Super-Ego appears wherever and whenever a step is taken in the world and by that is meant, unavoidably, and inescapably, the world of Law. Whereas Adler, in his day, could still cherish the belief, and the hope, that engagement in what he called “social interest” would be able to offer the human organism a way to redemption, this has become, in the Luciferian age, a less than obvious solution. To the extent that the Luciferian command is all around us, it has, it seems, closed off all escape routes, while at the same time it keeps whipping up frustration and agony. This, it could be said, is why Adlerian psychology has become quite relevant. To evoke young Dr. Evrard's phraseology (see the prologue): the aspiring Luciferian's inability to deal with and process life's “ambivalence”, will lead him or her, if the contextual conditions in their life-world are right, to the cowardly search for compensatory solutions.

Conclusion

In this contribution an attempt was made to make sense of what seems to be quite peculiar dimensions of “the 21st century”. This phrase is shorthand for the contemporary age which so many experience, and are inclined to describe as un-hinged, un-settling, chaotic, and indeed violent. Although the focus has not been on “terrorism” per se, it has hopefully been made clear that the exploration, in this essay, of a number of elements and developments in what could be called global culture, do have a bearing on that particular theme.

The opportunity presented by this essay was also used to revisit one of the earlier depth psychologies, i.e. Alfred Adler's *Individualpsychologie*. While it may have been acceptable –to some extent at least– to ignore Adler's insights throughout much of the 20th century, or perhaps to restrict its application to specific contexts and situations, this may now no longer be the case. In an age shot through with what Zygmunt Bauman called “ambivalence”, when one of the more predominant commands seems to hold that life should be lived before, or beyond the clutches of

anything that even vaguely resembles law or code, and attempts should be made to achieve absolute sovereignty, Adler's insights into the often dramatic and painful consequences of failure, frustration and felt "inferiority" suddenly acquire a new sheen. It is well understood that such consequences vary, sometimes hugely, across biographies and life-worlds, but it falls outside the scope of this contribution to explore this variance in any detail.

Finally –and this should perhaps go without repeating: the points made in this essay on the Great Refusal to Submit only aim to supplement, and in no way refute, the ongoing debates on "the 21st century", on the one hand, and those on "terrorism", on the other.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank the following participants in the workshop on "(Psycho-)Analysing the 21st Century: Connectivity and Anxiety", held at Peckforton Castle, Cheshire (UK), in June 2018, where the basic idea for this paper was first presented: Mwenda Kailemia, Anthony Kauders, Lynn Froggett, James Hardie-Bick, Moran Mandelbaum, and Dany Nobus. He also thanks Mark Featherstone for the many discussions on related topics. The author is also very grateful to Emeritus Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry Alexander-Karel Evrard who found the time and the energy on that cold and drizzly Saturday afternoon in January 2019 to discuss psychiatry in the Low Countries during the immediate post-war period.

References:

1. Adler, Alfred. 1969 [1929]. *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
2. Adler, Alfred. 1965. *Superiority and Social Interest. A Collection of Later Writings* (eds. H. And R. Ansbacher). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
3. Andre, Christopher. 2014 [2011]. *Mindfulness*. London: Rider.
4. Bataille, Georges. 2001 [1957]. *Eroticism*. London: Penguin.
5. Bauman, Zygmunt. 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity
6. Bauman, Zygmunt. 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
7. Bauman, Zygmunt. 1993. *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell
8. Bauman, Zygmunt. 1995. *Life in Fragments*. Oxford: Blackwell
9. Bauman, Zygmunt. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity
10. Bauman, Zygmunt. 2008. *The Art of Life*. Cambridge: Polity
11. Becker, Ernest. 1975. *Escape from Evil*. New York: The Free Press.
12. Chasseguet-Smigler, Janine. 1999. Devil's Religions: Some Reflections on the Historical and Social Meanings of the Perversions, in *Psychoanalysis and Culture at the Millennium*, eds Nancy Ginsburg and Roy Ginsburg, 313-336. New Haven: Yale University Press
13. De Wachter, Dirk. 2012. *Borderline Times: Het Einde van de Normaliteit* [translation from Dutch: The End of Normality]. Leuven: Lannoo Campus

14. Evrard, Alexander-Karel. 1953. *Over de Patho-Psychologische Betekenis der Negativistische Houding* [translation from Dutch: On the Patho-Psychological Meaning of the Negativistic Attitude]. Leiden: Uitgeverij Pompe
15. Freud, Sigmund. 2001 [1913]. *Totem and Taboo*. London: Routledge.
16. Freud, Sigmund. 1932. *Civilization and its Discontents*. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis
17. Freud, Sigmund. 1939. *Moses and Monotheism*. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis
18. Lasch, Christopher. 1991 [1979]. *The Culture of Narcissism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co
19. Lasch, Christopher. 1984. *The Minimal Self*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co
20. Lippens, Ronnie. 2018a. In the Zone of Pure Potential: Luciferian Speculations on the Age of Light. *Cultural Politics*, 14(3), 327-343
21. Lippens, Ronnie. 2018b. Depth in 21st Century Prisons? European Salafi Terrorism and Psychoanalysis in the Luciferian Age, *The New Criminal Law Review*, 21(4): 592-614
22. Lippens, Ronnie. 2019a. Mega/City/Crime: Notes on The Cultural Significance of Reggio's *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982), *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law*, 32 (forthcoming)
23. Lippens, Ronnie. 2019b. Withdrawing (from) Waste, and the End of Law: Reflections on Don DeLillo's Prophecies in *Mao II* (1991) and *Underworld* (1997), *Social Semiotics*, 29(3): 364-376
24. Sloterdijk, Peter. 2014. *Die Schrecklichen Kinder der Neuzeit* [translation from German: The Terrible Children of Modernity]. Berlin: Suhrkamp
25. Stiegler, Bernard. 2016 [2015]. *Automatic Society: The Future of Work*. Cambridge: Polity Press