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**Doctoral Thesis**

## Wound, Interrupted: On the Vulnerability of Diversity Management

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# Wound, Interrupted – On the Vulnerability of Diversity Management



PhD thesis submitted by

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Sara Louise Muhr,  
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## **1 Introduction**

This thesis is about diversity; or more precisely it is a critical investigation into the ethical foundation of diversity management. We are in our daily lives, business as well as private life encountered by, surrounded by and influenced by diversity. After all, the world we live in is inhabited by a civilization with unstable boundaries, continually changing its form, and these inhabitants all have different lifestyles, cultures, looks, norms and values. The world is not uniform, and we are flooded with diverse and contradictory fragments of impressions, theories and stories (see for example Sim, 2001, Anderson, 1996, Berlin, 1996, Smart, 1993). Because of this, rationality has expanded to go beyond the cognitive and scientific area to also include among other things ethical and aesthetic domains of life (see for example Strati, 1999, Linstead and Höpfl, 2000, Parker, 1998). On this view, the social can also be analyzed in terms of paradoxes and indeterminacy; thus, the human being is rejected as being the centre of rational control and understanding (Cooper and Burrell, 1988). As a consequence, progressive conflicts between an increasing number of grand narratives (Lyotard, 1999) that try to explain our world have ended up weakening them all. It has become difficult to believe in them, as many of them contradict each other. What is left, according to Kvale (1996), is a liberating nihilism, a living with the here and now, where local and personal responsibility for actions here and now, therefore, becomes crucial. This ‘liberating’ nihilism, however, also brings frustration, as it is difficult for the individual to identify itself and others as well as building relations in a world full of opportunities and choices. In this thesis, I will investigate this vacuum of personal responsibility and ethics in a diverse world.

Mirroring the trends in society, organizations also experience an increasingly diverse workforce (see for example Jehn et al., 1999, Nkomo, 1995, Polzer et al., 2002, Sessa et al., 1995). This increasing diversity is both an opportunity and a challenge to the well-being and functioning of organizations. Getting different people to work together is a challenge due to the tensions that diversity can create. But many also suggest that social interaction among diverse perspectives has great potential to lead to creativity and new ideas, as creativity is argued to depend on diverse viewpoints and perspectives (e.g. Jehn and Bezrukova, 2004, Jehn et al., 1999, West, 2004).

The diversity management literature has however not settled this question of whether diversity is beneficial for organizations or not. Indeed, the literature is characterized by a very specific discrepancy on the question of whether diversity is an advantage or a disadvantage for creativity (see for example Polzer et al., 2002). I want to discuss why this discrepancy exists. In doing this, I will take a somewhat different approach than seen in management theory so far; I intend to investigate into the ethical foundations of diversity management and connect the discussion on differences to that of personal responsibility and ethics. My first argument is that diversity management is basically about the encounter with other people. It is a question of how we approach other people who are different from ourselves, and it must therefore be about ethics. Very little diversity management literature has emphasized the question of ethics, and when it is done, it often stems from an ethical desire to make society or business more just. It is assumed that diversity can be 'handled' by either calculating consequences or constructing rules and codes of conduct. In this way, ethics is often taken for granted, as it is assumed that handling diversity is a good thing (Czarniawska and Höpfl, 2002). I will argue that this view on ethics follows that of traditional business ethics approach. That is, a teleological, deontological or virtue oriented approach. These three

approaches will later be explained, but for now the important aspect is that they rely respectively on calculation of consequences, universal rules and virtuous characters to evaluate ethical behavior. An important part of this thesis will therefore be the discussion of traditional business ethics, its limitations, and the suggestion of Levinasian ethics as an alternative theory. The thesis is thus about how Levinasian ethics interrupts and alters the discussion of diversity management.

Traditionally, business ethics has mainly been focused on discussing whether managerial decisions have ethical consequences or intentions, whether managers can or should hold ethical virtues, and whether there can be defined codes and guidelines to ensure such defined ethical behavior. Business ethics has thereby taken the form of a calculation or a guideline, which shows us how to behave ethically. As Jones et al. (2005) points out, business ethics is used to define the right rules and based on these about making the right moral decisions. However, this emphasis on making moral decisions based on calculations and rules risks losing touch with independent judgment, and it therefore loses perspective for the difference of the individual human being. A traditional ethical view seems to erase differences and as differences are the foundation of diversity management, the traditional ethical view seems to limit or erase this very foundation of diversity management.

In this thesis, I will therefore question whether this traditional business ethics approach is the best way of approaching and understanding diversity management. In doing this, I will take a different perspective on ethics and instead investigate what it means to talk about an ethical foundation of organizations. I will argue that calculations and guidelines have little ethical value for diversity management. In fact, as we shall see in later chapters, they create what Bauman (1993) calls ‘moral distance’. Instead, I will direct



attention to what I believe ethics is basically all about: the individual encounter with the Other. For this purpose I will draw on the moral philosophy of the post-war philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) who was deeply concerned with the respect for the Other's difference and the effect this difference has on the self. It is therefore an ethics very different from the one usually seen in business ethics and organization studies. On this view, I will argue that ethics is beyond consequences, rules and virtues. Ethics happens in the encounter with other people; in the encounter with the Other. Seeing another person as Other means acknowledging that person's distinct otherness and letting that person interrupt one's own world. Ethics is a question of openness to interruption, and this very interruption puts my common sense into question. An ethical encounter with the Other is an encounter where responsibility—a response-ability—for the Other is at centre-stage. Only through the responsible response to this Other, and with respect for the Other's otherness, can managers hope to foster an environment where diversity is reflected and respected, and where creativity thereby finds space to unfold. This view on ethics and especially on otherness will have significant consequences for the way diversity management views differences. It will therefore have significant consequences for the way diversity is managed; in fact it will question whether it should be managed at all. This thesis will in this way present a Levinasian ethical perspective that interrupts and reformulates the discussion of organizational diversity.

I will therefore not discuss whether managers live up to certain rules or guidelines, whether their actions have overall 'pleasurable' consequences, whether managers have 'good' intentions or whether they as human beings hold virtuous characters. Instead, I will suggest a move away from the traditional foundational perspectives on ethics and introduce Levinasian ethics as an alternative. On this view, I will propose that a personal ethical

responsibility for the Other is not only a better foundation for diversity management—it disturbs and shatters this very foundation, which is exactly what makes it ethical.

This is not how Levinas is normally read, however. Generally, readings of Levinas are used to emphasize, for example, a postmodern ethics as opposed to traditional approaches (Bauman, 1993), notions of affectivity (Tallon, 1995), language, responsibility and ethics (Werhane, 1995, Eskin, 2000, Waldenfels, 1995), post-humanism (Cohen, 1998, Fryer, 2004) and matters of identity (Rosenthal, 2003). Levinasian ethics is rarely used for issues of management and organization, and when it is, it is primarily used for the purpose of renewing or provoking traditional business ethics, thereby discussing the possibilities of a personal ethics in business and the interrelation between ethics, morality and justice (see for example Jones, 2003, Jones et al., 2005, ten Bos and Willmott, 2001, Bevan and Corvellec, 2007, Byers and Rhodes, 2007, Karamali, 2007, Kaulingfreks and ten Bos, 2007). This literature will be reviewed in greater detail later, but for now it is just important to point to the youth of this field.

This thesis contributes to the above field, but focuses in particular on a critical analysis of the ethical foundation of diversity management. To materialize this discussion, a case-study of a diversity management project in South Africa is analyzed. Here, a human rights consultant explains how his team coached the tabling of the South African justice department after the fall of apartheid. The research questions will therefore be:

- a. *How does Levinasian ethics interrupt diversity management literature and which issues does this interruption raise?*
  
- b. *How is this interruption materialized in the illustrative case-study of the diversity management project in South Africa*

To answer these two questions it is necessary for the thesis first to outline traditional approaches to business ethics, Levinasian Ethics and diversity management. These theoretical discussions will be formed by question a, and thus the focus on diversity management. In this way the business ethics literature, Levinasian ethics and the diversity management literature is in this thesis addressed in the light of the research questions. To answer the two questions, the thesis is therefore structured as follows:

1. Chapter one is the present chapter where the key field of analysis as well as research questions and structure are presented.
  
2. Chapter two is a presentation of methodology. This thesis will empirically rest on a case study from South Africa based on memory telling. Thus the chapter on methodology will present elaborations on case study method where interviews are used to construct a narrative over past events.
  
3. Chapter three is a presentation of business ethics. This presentation examines the three most popular ethical perspectives in business ethics. That is, teleology, deontology, and virtue ethics. This presentation will be based both on traditional business ethics literature as well as on

primary readings of the main philosophers within each perspective. These are John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant and Aristotle.

4. Chapter four is an in-depth presentation of the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. I will in this chapter, situate Levinas historically, which is important as many of his major works were written in the post war years. I will also give a bibliographical overview of his most important works as well as briefly explain his philosophical influences, that is, his connections to Husserl and Heidegger. This introduction to Levinas will be followed by a detailed explanation of his main concepts and a presentation of his contemporaries, those who got inspired by him, and the main critique his ethics has received.
5. Chapter five reviews the diversity management literature and explains the discrepancies and ambiguity present in the literature. It is explained how the field of diversity management is subject to a distinct discrepancy as to whether diversity has positive or negative effects regarding creative performance. The review ends with suggesting a change in ethical perspective that shifts focus from categorization of difference to an exploration of otherness, and in that way constitutes the actual shortage or deficit identified in the field.
6. In chapter six I present the empirical material, which is a story based on memory-telling about a diversity project in South Africa. I have through a number of interviews with a senior consultant at the Danish Institute for Human Rights (and a few of his colleagues) constructed a case on how the Danish Institute for Human Rights has helped table a justice policy as well as helped build the new South African justice

department after the fall of apartheid. The story displays an extreme case of organizational diversity; the mission of getting the former white leaders and the non-white opposition to work together as one team. In this way, the story works as an instrument to explain and illustrate certain theoretical argumentations within an empirical context.

7. Chapter seven is then a discussion of the key issues, which have surfaced out through the thesis. There are three such issues: 1) first, the very important interrelation between ethics and justice—of the moral party of two, and the necessity for justice, the minute the third enters. 2) Second, the always-present element of ethical interruption—the demand from the Other to vulnerability and change. 3) And finally, how Levinas always takes us beyond, and in this case beyond management, beyond labor, and beyond the knower.
8. Finally, the last chapter is the conclusion, where I focus on vulnerability, which is also in the title of the thesis. Conclusively, I therefore reflect on the vulnerability of diversity management, the vulnerable political foundation in South Africa, and the vulnerability of my own text and my Self.

The next chapter will be the methodology chapter, which explains the methodological considerations this thesis is based on.

## **2 Methodology**

Research is popularly divided into two schools. One being positivism and one being interpretive social science (Silverman, 1993: 21). The first is about social structures and facts, whereas the latter concerns social construction and meanings. Methodology is always linked to the theoretical foundation of a given study (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000), and due to the post-humanistic (Fryer, 2004) or post-modern (Bauman, 1993) nature of Levinasian ethics, this study necessarily belongs to the school of interpretive social science. More precisely, due to the subjective nature of Levinas' emphasis on personal responsibility over a rule guided ethics, the empirical material in this thesis has also been both conducted as well as analyzed in the subjective end of the research method continuum (see also Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). Importantly however is to note that the empirical material in this thesis has not been conducted to validate a theory (Yin, 1989) or to generate theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Rather the empirical material in this thesis serves to illustrate and discuss the theoretical perspective generated through critical discussion of existing theory in the field of diversity management and business ethics. To refer back to the research questions, the aim with the thesis is to interrupt diversity management literature and to *illustrate* this through a case study.

To illustrate and discuss the theoretical elaborations in this thesis, I have chosen to conduct a single case study of the Danish Institute for Human Rights about their engagement in South Africa's justice department after the end of apartheid. In doing this, I have interviewed the senior consultant on the project several times as well as conducted interviews with his superior and two of his project workers. The case, however, rests mainly on the senior consultant's memory-telling of the events in South Africa, which are used to generate a narrative of the historical events. The other respondents' roles have more been to validate the context of the stories. To further contextualize the constructed

narratives, I have consulted various internal documents as well as academic articles written about these particular events and related events in South Africa. The more specific event, which the case is centered on, is the senior consultant's engagement in the tabling of the justice policy in post-apartheid South Africa. The senior consultant spend a considerable amount of time in South Africa and the case study is focused on the events he experienced down there and the diversity issues that occurred during this process.

The methodology followed in this thesis is therefore a case study influenced by a narrative approach. This will be explained in the following, where I first explain the case method used, then discuss my narrative influence, and finally discuss the limitations to the present study.

## *2.1 Case Method*

With these methodological considerations in mind, the next question is how these are reflected in the chosen method to study the case. In the following, I will therefore describe the methods used to obtain my empirical material. Method is thus defined, inspired by Alvesson and Deetz (2000), as techniques that connect the theoretical framework with the production and use of empirical data. As the methodological purpose was to obtain rich personal information, the main methods for obtaining the empirical material has been through interviews. Subsequently, document analysis has been used to gain understanding of the broader context. These methods are described beneath.

### *2.1.1 Interviews*

The story has been collected through several interviews with a senior consultant from the Danish Institute of Human Rights. These interviews were

minimally structured and resembled informal conversations in which he told me about his experiences. More explicitly, I did not have a prepared questionnaire. Instead, I asked him about his role in the South African project, and if he could tell me in his own words what happened and what he experienced. As his story unfolded, I naturally asked probing questions if there were things or events I needed explained better, but in general I tried to keep a low profile while interviewing. Over a period of six months, I have had several conversations with the consultant about what happened in South Africa. Every time I went back to interview him, I had analyzed the former interview and prepared clarifying questions. Most of the conversations were taped, transcribed and translated, but some have also just been short clarifying phone calls. In the same manner one interview was conducted with his superior and two of his project workers. After writing-up the narrative, the consultant has then read it, and it has been adjusted according to his comments and clarifications.

According to Alvesson (2003), qualitative interviews stand in contrast to so-called 'talking questionnaires'. These strictly belong to two different interview positions, where the talking questionnaire belongs to a neopositivistic position (also known as the qualitative positivism) and the qualitative interview to a romantic position. I lean towards the romantic position in my way of interviewing, and will now explain the difference between these two and the consequences for my way of conducting qualitative research. The neopositivistic position emphasizes the importance of determining a context-free truth about the reality 'out there', and minimizing personal bias is consequently important. Neopositivistic research in this way resembles quantitative positivistic ideals of using rules, procedures and detailed coding to control the interview situation. The romantic position, which belongs to the school of interpretive social science mentioned above, on the other hand tries



to establish a more genuine human contact in the interview situation, where trust, openness and inter-personal connection is important. This is done, not to get access to an objective truth, but to enter an inner world, which can provide valuable deep insight about feelings, attitudes, meanings and intentions (Alvesson, 2003). The romantic position believes that the neopositivists' attempt to avoid bias by not getting involved is outdated. Instead, the romantic position believes that getting involved makes the interviews more honest and reliable. It is also assumed that treating the interviewee as an equal and letting him or her talk about their own interests presents a more realistic picture (Fontana and Frey, 1994). My position in the interview has leaned more towards the romantic as I have tried to keep the interviews as little controlled as possible. I was in the interviews interested in the stories of the consultant with all that entails of feelings, meanings and intentions. Moreover, my family relation to the consultant made it impossible for me in the first place to keep the interviews detached from emotions. But instead of seeing this relation as something negative and damaging to the interviews, I see it as an advantage, because it made it easier for me to get involved in the interview and establish a relation, which also made the consultant get involved and open up. I however still tried to conduct the interviews with as little bias as possible, and tried to let him talk instead of me asking the questions. In my interpretations of the interviews, I can of course not completely set our relation aside. To minimize this bias, it was therefore extra important to consult internal documents and academic articles about the events that took place in South Africa.

Generally, the qualitative field is leaning towards the romantic rather than towards the neopositivistic position (Alvesson, 2003). This could point to the assumption that the else so rigid rules of interviewing are loosening up. Another aspect pointing towards a loosening of the rigid rules of interviewing is the growing acceptance of focusing on the experiences of one person, thus

conducting in-depth cases of one person. As an example Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) focus a case-study on one person and in this way they aspire to provide a “situational and detailed understanding of organizational phenomena” (1165). In aiming to obtain a more concentrated and intensive study, they focus their study on one single individual. This single individual is then studied in depth to obtain a rich understanding of her actions and decisions.

Inspired by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003), I also concentrate my case study on one single individual. In doing this, the case study is conducted on two levels, where one is the person in question—the consultant—and the other is the context in which he works. The consultant is analyzed through interviews, whereas the context is analyzed through both the interviews and the analysis of various documents describing the context in which he operated. These documents are both internal working documents from The Danish Institute of Human Rights, publications from the Institute as well as academic articles written about South Africa—particularly about the post-apartheid period. The post-apartheid period was also the period where the consultant spent most of his time in South Africa.

### *2.1.2 Document Analysis*

To support case study findings document analysis is therefore of great relevance (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 1994: 40). To supplement the consultant’s stories and place them in a context, internal documents from the Danish Institute for Human Rights as well as literature about the period after apartheid has been consulted. First of all, the Danish Institute of Human Rights provided me with various documents—both internal working documents and memos and published material on their activities. The published material includes for example a small book on their international procedures by Lindsnæs (2008)

and a more comprehensive book containing their basic principles by Vase (2008).

Secondly, I have conducted a thorough literature search on academic articles written about ‘The Truth and Reconciliation Process’, and on ‘Justice’ and ‘Apartheid’ in South Africa in general. Most of the reviewed articles have been found in journals within the field of law and political science, and they have proved valuable in the construction of my understanding of the context.

The above methods thus described how I gathered the data to construct the narrative of the historical events in South Africa. Next, I will explain why narratives are an important source of empirical material in social science.

## *2.2 The Narrative Approach*

According to Belova (2007), management research has long been dominated by an approach to the researcher-researched relation, which follows the natural science model of engaging with the object of study. In this model, the subject and object of research are seen as autonomous entities that do not affect each other’s existence. On this view, it is the role of the active researcher to make sense of the utterances from the respondent (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002, Holliday, 2002, Yin, 1989). Belova (2007: 4), who criticizes this traditional approach, calls it an “interrogation of the other” because it in this approach is the scientist’s goal to reveal the true essence of the research object. This view is supported by more recent work in ethnography and postmodernism, which has also challenged the traditional perspective on the role of the researcher (Cunliffe, 2002). Following these recent critical perspectives, and also in line with the above ‘romantic’ position, the researcher is no longer only seen as an objective observer, who is external to the knowledge being discovered.

Instead, Cunliffe (2002) stresses, the need for narrators of organization theory as it is important also to examine organization members' own ways of telling research tales. This of course gives the author a great responsibility to treat the story with respect. As Belova points out, it puts the author in a position as "both the strongest and the weakest link between those whose lives the author reports and the wider community of academics and practitioners to whom their stories are addressed" (2007: 2). It is a position of power as it gives control over the respondents' stories. Doing narrative research and dealing with stories from the field therefore becomes an act of fine balancing between respondents and receivers of the research text.

I follow Alvesson (2003) as well as Belova (2007) and Cunliffe (2002), and am critical towards the traditional interrogating form of research. I believe that the interrogating view is problematic as it assumes that a respondent can transfer a story or meanings to me as a researcher. Instead, I want to analyze the stories that people themselves find interesting. In this way, I believe that by letting the respondents themselves decide what is of interest, the researcher can get access to much more valuable and personal knowledge about the respondents and their work.

Czarniawska (1997) emphasizes that to understand everyday organizational life, local and concrete stories are needed. On this basis, Czarniawska (1998: 13-14) defines four narrative approaches: Research that is written in a storylike fashion, research collecting stories, research that conceptualizes organizational life as story making and finally organization theory as story reading. I take the second approach as I have collected a story of a specific event. The story is told to me by the lead consultant of the South African project, and is therefore a reproduction of his experiences. I will provide the reader with some background to the story, and tell the story using as many of

his phrases as possible, but at the same time building it into a narrative account of the event. In doing this, I am taking a process view (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005), and give a narrative account of one specific event, more specifically the story of how they build the Justice Department as a new organization in South Africa. The interviews were conducted as both informal conversations and semi-structured interviews, which means that the story reproduced here is chosen by the consultant and thus describes the events he found of specific importance to the overall project. However, the point of telling the story here is not to get a ‘universally true’ representation of the story, because no two people would tell this story in the same way. Instead, the purpose of telling the story is to give us illustrations of how diversity and ethics are at play in a concrete situation. In this way, it explains what went on at this specific event, but raises ethical issues that I argue are relevant more generally to contemporary debates on diversity in organizations. Drawing on one specific event told by one person can therefore never count as ‘thick description’ (Hansen 2006; Deetz 2003). Thick description would have called for a longer ethnographic study of the actual happening. Nevertheless, I do not see this as a major problem, as my objective here is not to be able to generalize from the event, but instead to identify certain key aspects, which are necessary and important to discuss theoretically in relation to the field of diversity management.

I therefore follow Czarniawska (2004), de Cock and Land (2006), Gabriel (2000) and O’Leary (2003) and view human beings as story tellers, who construct narratives, and who live in a world consisting of stories. Furthermore, I follow de Cock (1998) and view stories as a report of an event, that is a situation seen through the eyes of the storyteller. Stories in this way bring valuable social knowledge of individual meaning constructions. In the narrative approach the story, therefore, includes much more than just a

sequence of events (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005). It includes, according to Tsoukas and Hatch (2001), a plot. In discussing the relevance of the plot, they refer to Aristotle and Ricoeur and claim that narrative thinking produces plots. To make sense of a narrative, one needs to grasp both the plot and the story. To also take into account the plot means asking the question ‘why’. In the narrative approach an event is explained by relating it to a human purpose, and a narrative is therefore closely intertwined with motive. As a consequence, the narrator or the storyteller is always present in the narrative and is obviously affected by the motive. In the same fashion Czarniawska (1998), Tsoukas and Hatch (2001) and Hansen (2006) emphasize the process of storytelling within organizations as an approach to understanding the ongoing meaning construction in organizations. In the same way, Weick (1995) argues that a good story is necessary for sense-making. Following Hansen (2006), the narrative approach emphasizes discourse and is centered on how “people use discourse to build understandings and representations, make sense of their work lives, and to organize, interpret and influence each other’s actions” (1050). That is, to construct meanings not uncovering the truth. Instead the stories have what Bruner (1986) called a ‘narrative truth’.

Hansen (2006) emphasizes the values of the narrative approach, but also reminds us about the importance of considering the context within which the event takes place. Deetz (2003) argues that narrative analysis should also entail an analysis of the general discourses as well as an examination of the context. I do conduct an analysis of the discourse as I have made both a review of the academic literature on the processes in South Africa as well as consulted internal documents from the Danish Institute of Human Right. I have however not examined the physical context of the events in South Africa, as the event first of all took place a long time ago, and secondly because fieldwork in South Africa would exceed the financial support for this thesis. I

am however fully aware of the very powerful events taking place in South Africa around this point of time. These events do affect my analysis in the sense that I have tried to include them through studying literature on the happenings before, during and after the project conducted by the Danish Institute of Human Rights. These events are of course of uttermost importance to the way the project unfolded. Besides consulting literature, the interviewed consultant did give me an impression about the knowledge/power structures in the society and I also have some sense of my own based on general historical knowledge. Therefore, even though, I have not conducted any analysis in South Africa about the historical events around the project, I am aware of them and I am trying to avoid an entirely subjective perspective. I have different ways of sustaining an object/subject relation without ending in one or the other extremes.

Regarding the concept of truth, De Cock (2000) brings awareness to the inherent fictional part of organizational life, as he problematizes the representational practices organizational scholars make use of when they attempt to build persuasive 'truths' of organizations. Continuing this view, de Cock and Land (2006) point out that all texts to some degree contain fiction. The main difference between organizational literature and literary texts is, that while organizational texts often refer to their findings as objective presentations of reality, literary texts acknowledge and embrace their fiction. Organizational texts most often do not acknowledge the fictional element of the text. By re-telling this story, I acknowledge a certain level of fiction. This is a story told to me by a consultant who experienced them up to 10 years ago, and then retold by me. It would be naïve to deny any form of fiction. I do therefore not claim to have access to an objective truth. This story represents as little truth as any other organizational text. But it does represent a narrative account of how a project team constructed meaning about ethics and diversity

and gives me personal insight into interesting conflicts, tensions and in-betweens that can lead to valuable organizational interpretations. Interpretations I hope organizational scholars as well as practitioners can learn from in future research and managerial actions.

Arguing for a similar dialogical approach, Cunliffe (2002) emphasizes the importance of language as a relationally engaged dialogical experience. She calls this ‘social poetics’. Social poetics is concerned with our living responsive relationships, with others and otherness. On this view the language used by respondents is not analyzed in terms of codes, structures or taxonomies. Rather, language is analyzed through language styles, ways of speaking, experiencing, and meaning construction. Social poetics therefore holds a responsive nature of dialogical practice and it emphasizes a practical involved understanding. However, as Cunliffe asks:

If we accept that our readings and interpretations are shaped in different moments and contexts by researchers, research participants, authors, readers, and reviewers, and meaning is unstable, can we ever say anything conclusive? (2002: 134)

What Cunliffe here refers to, is the well-known problem of generalizability that qualitative research always faces (see for example Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). Qualitative research is not statistical generalizable, in fact it is not the point of qualitative research (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 1994: 39). Instead of generalizable ‘objective’ truths, qualitative research provides deep insight into human emotions and relations, which can never be captured in quantitative research. Therefore, qualitative research does not provide a broad description, but a deep description. Narrative research, which is only one type of qualitative research can in this way be seen as “a living process of reconstructing and reinterpreting in which we need to develop rhetorical



strategies and practices that enact this process” (Cunliffe, 2002: 134). It is not a question of collecting enough data but of relationally engaging with others. Cunliffe did this by speaking with managers about how they work in a world of uncertainty. People she talked to had very evocative ways of talking about their experiences, which made a major impact on her. She reports that she felt at one with the stories and that the stories, metaphors, images and phrases affected her in a way that stuck in her mind and gave her a vivid sense of the managers’ experience (Cunliffe, 2002: 136). The consultant I talked to passed on the same kind of energy to me. As reported earlier, we do have a family relation, which might have influenced that we obtained a relation of trust, instead of an ‘interrogating interview’. No matter the reason, he was so enthused when he spoke that I couldn’t help getting caught up in his story. I could feel his passion for this project, and how he himself immediately went back to the events when he began talking about them. On several occasions he in fact thanked me for bringing him back to the events and for making him remember.

Thus, the matter that my main respondent is a kin to me has to be mentioned but is in fact of little relevance. Silverman (1993: 95) argues that the goal of the in-depth interview is for the interviewer and interviewee to become ‘companions’ where the validity of the analysis is based on deep understanding rather than on objectivity. Similarly, Agar (1986: 12) emphasizes the value of intensive personal involvement. This deeper understanding of and involvement with the interviewee is often easier obtained when there is a relation already. Thus, whereas in a positivistic sense being family related to the respondent is a limitation to the study, in an interpretive light, this is not necessarily seen as a problem, in fact it might even be an advantage.

Thus the point of a relational narrative approach is to let the respondents tell their own stories in exactly the way they feel about it. Let them be carried away by the story and draw the listener into their world. As Boje says:

We all tell stories, and during the better performances we feel the adrenaline pump as word pictures dance in our intellect and we begin to live the episode vicariously or recall similar ... As listeners, we are co-producers with the teller of the story performance. It is an embedded and fragmented process in which we fill the blanks and gaps between the lines with our own experience. (Boje, 1991: 107)

Following Cunliffe (2002) I may, through this dialogical approach, gain insight into how the narrator and the characters in the story construct their lives and identities. Thus I get the opportunity for relating with others in more reflexive, responsive and, according to Levinas, also ethical ways. In this way, Cunliffe (2002) further argues that the theory-practice gap is narrowed as we as researchers get closer to the life of our respondents. Especially with the ethics of Levinas in mind, this approach to fieldwork makes sense. In talking about the interviewed person Czarniawska cites Richard Rorty: “We have a duty to listen to his account, not because he has privileged access to his own motives but because he is a human being like ourselves” (Rorty, in Czarniawska, 1928: 21). Fieldwork is an approach to the Other and should be handled as an interest in the Other that can affect the way I see the world and not as a way to gain access to the Other’s mind. Cunliffe describes such an experience where the respondent’s poetic way of telling the story affects her:

All this drew me into his story and gave me an emotional charge. Not only did I have the impression that the manager felt very deeply about the situation, *I felt with him*”. (2002: 141, my emphasis)

This view expressed by both Cunliffe and Czarniawska perfectly fits a Levinasian ethics of responsibility to the Other, as exactly the acknowledgement of the Other's difference is of key importance to ethical behavior.

To conclude, we of course have to be careful when we as researchers analyze people's stories and be aware of the power we have over them. On the other hand, narrative research also gives the respondent a chance to live in the data or to become alive through it. In telling the consultant's story, I will try to approach this balance humbly, although I know that the perfect balance does not exist.

I have now explained my methodological point of view and the methods I have used to follow these. The next three chapters will consist of the theoretical discussions of the thesis. These chapters will discuss first business ethics, then Levinasian ethics and finally diversity management. Following these theoretical discussions, I will return to the case study. In the case study I will re-tell the consultant's story and analyze this based on the theoretical reflections made in the chapters on ethics and diversity management.

### **3 Business Ethics**

Almost all books on business ethics contain chapters on three basic approaches: 1) teleological perspectives on ethics mainly discussed in relation to John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism, 2) Immanuel Kant's deontology and 3) virtue ethics defined already by Aristotle (for reviews of business ethics literature see e.g. Des Jardins and Mc Call, 1999, Hartman, 2005, Shaw, 1998). This thesis is a critical analysis of the ethical foundations of diversity management. As stated in the introduction, I will support this critique with the ethical reasoning of Levinas. Thus, before going into depth with Levinasian ethics, it is important to review the ethical theory that business ethics is traditionally build on. This is important both to review the literature, which diversity management forms its ethical foundation on, but also due to the fact that Levinas wrote his ethics based on the knowledge of the traditional theories. Even though he rarely mentions Aristotle, Kant and Mill, whom we are about to encounter, he must as a professor of philosophy obviously have had great knowledge of these, and they must in some way have been sources of inspiration. It is therefore, the purpose of this chapter to introduce business ethics and review the ethics of the most referenced philosophers in business ethics: Aristotle, Kant and Mill.

The relevance of business ethics has correctly been formulated by Scott and Hart in their argument that:

every managerial act is a moral act. Because managerial actions involve the exercise of power, the live of others are affected. Therefore, there are considerable moral obligations that go along with the job, and managers must be aware of the moral ramifications of what they do. (Scott and Hart, 1990: 7)

Doing business and managing organizations is not a black and white business. Organizations consist of people with emotions, values, feelings and histories that all influence the way they act and thus the decisions they make. And when values and emotions are conflicting, problems of ethics and morality emerge. Any act is therefore in a sense a moral act, and any business decision is build on a foundation of ethical reasoning. Also the values of the larger stakeholder system are important to the organization. As, the stakeholder framework provides the framework required to unify the internal and external focus without necessarily arguing for universal or absolutistic ethics (Freeman, 1984).

Ethics deals with the nature of morality and with moral acts. Morality is the ethics in practice, and morality constitutes the individual's attitudes and actions. The ethical theorizing represents in this way the ideal moral perspective and provides in its traditional form abstract principles to guide an individual's social existence (Ferrell et al., 2002). Ethics is the theoretical evaluation of human values, actions and reasoning processes, and as such ethics is the theory behind morality. At the theoretical level, ethics and morality can be separated, but in practice this becomes much more difficult (Lewis, 1985, Tsalikis and Fritzsche, 1989). Similarly, I will in this thesis try to separate the two concepts, however, this will at times proof difficult and the meanings of the concepts might overlap.

The general perception is however that to operate morally, an organization needs to maintain its legitimacy within its stakeholder framework. Business ethics therefore regard every aspect of management as well as business operation and is not just about financial fraud but also about more typical occurrences such as violating minor organizational rules or lying to peers

about for example being sick. In a similar manner it is also about sexual harassments, diversity as well as the problems surrounding whistle blowing and loyalty. Furthermore, ethical malpractice in business is not always a result of a conscious intent of lying, cheating or stealing. Unethical action can also be a symptom of incentives unintentionally created by the formal design and structure of the organization to encourage such behavior (Grover, 1993, James, 2000). Business ethics is the literature that tries to guide how organizations should handle such issues.

What I believe is common for most of this literature, is exactly that it tries to *guide* moral behavior and *handle* ethical problems by trying to formulate solutions. This is typically done through the aforementioned three approaches, teleological ethics, deontology, and virtue ethics, which each defines rules or guidelines on how to behave or calculate ethical outcomes. Each approach employs distinct ethical concepts, and each emphasizes aspects of ethical behavior that are neglected or at least not emphasized by others (Valesquez, 1998), but they still all try to handle ethics and minimize the insecurity surrounding ethical problems. Later, I will show how ethics can also be perceived differently, but first this chapter will concentrate on explaining these three traditional ethical perspectives. After a presentation and discussion of these, I will then spend a chapter explaining the philosophy of Levinas, which is an ethics that challenge the basic assumptions of each of these three perspectives.

### *3.1 Teleological Perspectives on Ethics*

The teleological approach to moral decision-making advocates for a selection of actions that maximizes benefits and minimizes costs or harms. It is thus a pragmatic normative approach to ethics where only consequences count and

where motives are less important. An action is judged 'good' or 'right' if expected benefits exceed costs for relevant stakeholders. Ethical behavior can therefore be calculated following a cost/benefit analysis (Carroll, 1996).

The two most known examples of teleological theories are egoism and utilitarianism (Petrick and Quinn, 1997). The egoist position argues that each individual should make decisions according to their own long-term 'good', and as such they would be acting ethically if they ensure their own good. Each person should maximize their self-interest and strictly speaking only help others if they hereby gain personally in terms of for example knowledge, rational self-interest and/or self-actualization (Tsalikis and Fritzsche, 1989, Fraedrich and Ferrell, 1992). Machiavellians are an example of egotistical reasoning. They will employ opportunistic, exploitative means to achieve personal objectives without any feeling of remorse or guilt. Egoists will furthermore make sacrifices in the short run for the purpose of long-term gain (Chonko, 1995). From an organizational perspective, decision-makings are judged to be ethical if they promote the long-term interests of the organization, ignoring, though, the interests of the larger social system in which the organization operates (Chonko, 1995). Milton Friedman's statement that the company's key responsibility is to make profits for its shareholders is a well-known example of ethical egoism (Crane and Matten, 2007).

Egoism reasons from individual self-interest, whereas the second teleological perspective, utilitarianism, reasons from the greatest good for everyone. The utilitarian approach, which is the most popular of the two teleological approaches to ethics, thus recognizes the importance of other stakeholders in business decisions, and decisions are made on the ground of the situational circumstances of the time of the decisions. No action can be judged as universally good, at all times in all places. The utilitarian orientation has for

many years been found to be dominant among business managers (Fritzsche and Becker, 1983, Jones et al., 2005).

Utilitarianism is most often related to the work of the British philosopher John Stuart Mill. Mill's key argument was that morality is not an attempt of pleasing God or an act of following abstract rules, instead it is the desire to bring the world as much happiness as possible (Rachels, 1993: 91). This caused Mill to formulate the so-called happiness principle:

The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals *utility* or the *greater happiness principle*, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By 'happiness' is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by 'unhappiness', pain, and the privation of pleasure. (Mill, 1961: 407)

Formulated like this, utilitarianism is clearly a form of cost-benefit analysis that directs us to make decisions based on the greatest good for the greatest number of people. On this view, one is to calculate the costs and benefits of a given situation and make a decision based on what result gives the greatest overall gain (Hartman, 2005). All moral decisions become a question of increasing pleasure and enjoyments and reducing pain (see also Mill, 1961: 412). When following cost/benefit or consequent analysis, it would for example be ethically correct to sell an unsafe product, which causes harm to a smaller number of customers, if the sale of the same product ensures the survival of a manufacturing plant, and the considerable amount of employment that this provides. What matters is the number of beneficial consequences over harmful consequences on all stakeholders affected. As a consequence, this line of theory could be characterized as a rational goal theory or an outcome oriented theory, as the right action has to do with the



expected consequences (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985, Hunt and Vitell, 1986, Akaah and Riordan, 1989).

To act in line with the utilitarian argument, we are as moral agents obliged to do everything we can to increase overall happiness and pleasure. Sustaining the lives of human beings is the first step to pleasure and Mill gives this rather extreme example of how a human life always comes before anything else:

It appears from what has been said that justice is a name for certain moral requirements which, regarded collectively, stand higher in the scale of social utility, and are therefore of more paramount obligation, than any others, though particular cases may occur in which some other social duty is so important as to overrule any one of the general maxims of justice. Thus to save a life, it may not only be allowable, but a duty to steal or take by force the necessary medicine, or to kidnap and compel to officiate the only qualified medical practitioner. (Mill, in Hartman, 2005: 35)

This example makes it very clear that moral actions can be weighted and prioritized, and that one by calculation can identify the ‘best’ action to take. Because saving a life creates more pleasure than stealing creates pain, the act of stealing medicine to save a life would be the morally right decision. Likewise, it is here shown that the life of a person is more important than the insecurity or fright of another; it is morally responsible to kidnap a person to save another person’s life.

These examples clearly show some of the greatest problems with utilitarianism. Following utilitarianism, actions are to be judged only on their consequences and more specifically on their level of produced happiness. But how do we measure happiness? And is it only happiness that is good? As

Hartman (2005: 7) points out, if an action would bring one person extraordinary happiness and make three others only moderately unhappy can we then calculate the total gain and loss in happiness? Can one person's extraordinary happiness be compared to the moderate unhappiness of three people? Or to go back to the former example: how do we ever know that saving one person's life creates more happiness, than the actions, of saving that person, creates pain.

A further problem with applying a teleological approach to ethical decision-making is measurement. Listing the consequences of any action reveals items that can be measured in monetary terms and items—such as human and social costs—that are difficult to measure accurately, and therefore cost benefit calculations will most often be incomplete. Comparative measures of values cannot be made objectively. Hiring one person rather than another might produce different amounts of utility or value that cannot be objectively measured (Valesquez, 1998). Since many costs and benefits of an action cannot be reliably predicted, they cannot be adequately measured either. Additionally, it is unclear what should be included in the calculation of costs and benefits, and different stakeholders might regard the same item as either a cost or a benefit depending on their interest in the decision. Finally, as Rachels (1993: 106) points out, utilitarianism is incompatible with justice. To treat people according to principles of justice requires that we treat them fairly, and always respect their individual needs and merits. However, when majority rules, who is then to protect the individual needs and merits of the minority?

The teleological approach is however important to ethical decision-making in business for various reasons. Most people would admit that considering the consequences of one's decisions is important for good ethical decision-making, and it has, as shown above, also been found that most managers hold

teleological attitudes towards ethical behavior. This is not surprising as such attitudes are consistent with traditional productivity goals with emphasis on the bottom line and timely achievement of organizational objectives. In the western business world it is not uncommon to conduct cost-benefit analysis to determine which alternative that would create the most utility measured in for example jobs, economic growth, and organizational growth.

### 3.2 *Deontological Ethics*

The word deontology comes from the Greek term *deontos*—meaning the obligatory as for example a duty. The deontological perspective on ethics is thus a duty-based approach to ethical decision-making, which does not calculate possible consequences but instead considers the underlying motives and incentives. It is the individual's personal norms concerning for example lying and justice that are used to reach evaluations. Obligations are followed regardless of the inherent consequences, and the theory assumes absolute rights and wrongs. Circumstantial factors do not justify disregard for rules. The ten commandments are an example of such deontological rule-based analysis where actions are inherently right or wrong, independent of their consequences (Smith, 1993).

Willingness to universalize a principle behind an action makes the action ethically right. Rights cannot simply be overridden by utility, only by another more basic right (Carroll, 1996). Managers engage in ethical behavior because they feel that it is the right thing to do. In making decisions, the application and interpretation of rules and principles (e.g. civil rights, employee rights, customer rights, minority rights) are predominant, and adherence to standard operating procedures are monitored, just as employees who adhere to

contractual agreements in a coordinated manner are rewarded (Ferrell and Skinner, 1988, Akaah and Riordan, 1989).

Deontology is most often related to Kant's ethics of duties. Kant's deontological system is founded on rules or principles that guide our decision-making. What matters here, is the rightness of the rules and the goodness of the will rather than the consequences of actions (Hartman, 2005: 8).

Thus the first proposition of morality is that to have moral worth an action must be done from duty. The second proposition is: An action performed from duty does not have its moral worth in the purpose which is to be achieved through it but in the maxim by which it is determined. Its moral value, therefore, does not depend on the realization of the object of the action but merely on the principle of volition by which the action is done, without any regard to the objects of the faculty of desire. (Kant, 1959: 16)

So, for Kant it is not enough that one follows the rules, it is evenly important that the rightness is felt and intended—that it is a deeply felt duty. Kant further argued that any person has a sense of duty within him or herself. Therefore, it is possible for everyone who knows how to act in line with this sense of duty to become a moral person.

“This pre-eminent good, which we call moral, is already present in the person who acts according to this conception, and we do not have to look for it first in the result. (Kant, 1959: 17)

Even though Kant emphasized an ever-present moral duty, he did not turn to theological considerations in his formulation of these duties. Instead, he relied heavily on the rational human being's ability to perform a rational argument

(Rachels, 1993: 118). “From what has been said it is clear that all moral concepts have their seat and origin entirely a priori in reason” (Kant, 1959: 28). By reason or logic alone, humans know what is right and wrong, and that reason determines our conduct.

With the use of reason, Kant ends in the claim that there is only one categorical imperative. Kant’s categorical imperative can be viewed as the ultimate moral law. Decision-making should in this way be based on only reasoning processes in order to be ethically correct. For Kant, nothing was good in itself, except from the good will (Chonko, 1995). Through reasoning, we can arrive at a moral law that will oblige everyone without exception to follow it (Tsalikis and Fritzsche, 1989). The ultimate moral rule must therefore be that you should want your action to be universal. If you perform an action, which you don’t want to be universal law, it cannot be moral responsible. Kant then says the following about the categorical imperative:

Under this condition alone the will can be called absolutely good without qualification. Since I have robbed the will of all impulses which could come to it from obedience to any law, nothing remains to serve as a principle of the will except universal conformity of its action to law as such. That is, I should never act in such a way that I could not also will that my maxim should be a universal law. (Kant, 1959: 18)

The most important ethical ‘test’ for Kant is that every time I make a decision, I have to ask myself, whether I want this to be a universal law—whether I want this to count for myself as well. And he therefore continues:

Can I will that my maxim become a universal law? If not, it must be rejected, not because of any disadvantage accruing to myself or even to others, but because it

cannot enter as a principle into a possible universal legislation, and reason extorts from me an immediate respect for such legislation. (Kant, 1959: 20)

As a consequence, only those rules I myself want upon me can be accepted as moral rules. Kant's reasoning is simply that only good will can be universalized.

Furthermore, the categorical imperative implies that a person should not be treated as an object. "The categorical imperative would be one which presented an action as of itself objectively necessary, without regard to any other end" (Kant, 1959: 31). We as humans can be distinguished from other animals as being rational of nature, and a rational being always proposes an end to itself. "For all rational beings stand under the law that each of them should treat himself and all others never merely as means but in every case also as an end in himself" (Kant, 1959: 52). As the beings he is talking about are always rational beings, treating them as ends in themselves means respecting their rationality. Thus, we may never manipulate or use people to achieve our purposes no matter how good those purposes may be. This is in great contrast to the above example of Mill where one is obliged, if necessary, to kidnap and steal to save a life. But since we would never want this kind of behavior to be universal law, it could never be considered moral by Kant.

There are of course also problems with deontological ethics. A question that immediately arises for me is how a person of good will knows what is right. What makes one person's intentions better than another's, and who is then to judge who is right? How do we (and who is this we, and are we not of good will?) judge who is a person of good will? I can will something to be a universal law and another person can will something else. Which one of us is the moral person? Thus, there is obviously a problem of deciding who holds

the good will. But another problem is that of universality. If only those actions that can become a universal law are moral, it leaves very little action to be judged moral.

It is also problematic to define the limits of each right and to balance/adjust one right against another conflicting right. As such, reasoning from the categorical imperative does not give solutions to stakeholders' conflicting interests and their relative importance. The demand for universal or general validity is not precise and cannot be used in order to sort out ordinary dilemmas. Furthermore, the theory does not give guidance on how to secure interpersonal agreement about basic duties—neither what they are nor how to weight them (Goodpaster, 1984). As such deontological analysis is often very inflexible, which makes it difficult to implement (Smith, 1993).

### *3.3 Virtue Ethics*

In virtue ethics, which is associated with the philosophy of Aristotle, the ultimate goal for mankind is to develop a moral character: “Virtues are neither emotions nor capacities, it remains that they are dispositions” (Aristotle, 1996: 39). Virtue ethics is therefore character-based whereas teleological and deontological perspectives are action-based. Action-based perspectives focus on doing, and character based on being (Carroll, 1996). Good ethics is therefore not measured in rules, rights or responsibilities. Instead, it is a question of character (Hartman, 2005: 9). Virtue ethics emphasizes the person who is motivated to do the right thing. And this motivation comes from virtues. One would know the right thing to do because of a virtuous character, not because one is subjecting to the right rules.

These virtues are not innate abilities; instead they are cultivated through the proper education and upbringing:

[A] moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit (ethos). (...) The virtues therefore are engendered in us neither by nature nor yet in violation of nature; nature gives us the capacity to receive them, and this capacity is brought to maturity by habit. (Aristotle, 1996: 33)

The virtues will then always be depending on the context or the specific society in which they are defined. Aristotle himself defined a list of specific virtue (see Aristotle, 1996: 32) that fitted the ancient Greek society, but many of the more recent philosophers (e.g. Anscombe, 1958, MacIntyre, 1984, 1998) have adjusted virtue ethics to our time and a modern Western context. The key point is that Aristotle claimed that the ultimate moral person was the one that could balance and find the golden mean between excess and deficits of the given virtues. That is, a moral character is one that can be self-restraint in accordance to virtues:

It is clear then from these considerations that self-restraint is a good quality and unrestraint a bad one. (...) The unrestrained man departs from principles because he enjoys bodily pleasures too much, the person described does so because he enjoys then too little; while the self-restrained man stands by principle and does not change from either cause. And inasmuch as self-restraint is good, it follows that both the dispositions opposed to it are bad, as indeed they appear to be. (Aristotle, 1996: 187)

Aristotle's virtue ethics was more or less forgotten during medieval times, but was brought back again first by Anscombe. In a groundbreaking article from 1958, she wrote that the very concepts of obligation and duty, on which modern moral philosophers (here mostly referring back to Kant) were focused,



made no sense. She argued that we should stop thinking about rules and rightness and instead turn the focus back to Aristotelian virtues (Anscombe, 1958). Aristotelian virtue ethics has since Anscombe been taken up by many contemporary philosophers as for example MacIntyre (1984, 1998) and is today together with utilitarianism the most frequently used in business ethics. Utilitarianism, because of its applicability, and virtue ethics, because of its adjustability to a given company's idea of a virtuous person or strategy.

In today's business ethics, virtue ethics is divided into three different types of ethics: individual, work-related, and professional character (Petrick and Quinn, 1997). Generally, business oriented virtue ethics looks at the virtues managers and employees need in order to stick to the ethical principles of the organization. As such, it addresses the same landscape of issues that ethic of principles does, but, in addition, it also addresses issues related to motivation and feelings (Valesquez, 1998). An example of a recent popular management book, which suggests virtue based thinking is for example 'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People' by Covey (1989). Managerial techniques within this line of ethical reasoning are concerned with interpersonal development and team-building skills as criteria of flexible work communities. Characteristic for these techniques are that they support character development through building cohesion and moral, they facilitate participative decision-making, and they foster consensual resolution of openly expressed differences. In the ethics of virtue, or character, traits such as trustworthiness, self-control, sympathy, fairness, loyalty, and openness shape the vision of both individuals and organizations. The effective functioning of an organization is not the automatic result of a strategy and design, but instead, it critically depends on the moral virtues that managerial actors bring to the organization.

Despite its popularity, virtue ethics also has limitations. The first question that to me problematizes virtue ethics is whether a predefined set of virtues are morally preferable for all people? It must rely on culture, situation and position whether a given character is deemed virtuous. Societies provide systems of values, institutions and ways of life within which individual lives are fashioned. Thus, different traits of character are needed to occupy these roles that will always differ. Also the traits needed to live successfully will differ. Even though, more recent virtue ethicists have tried to define virtues according to context (e.g. Anscombe, 1958), we very quickly run into problems in a diverse setting. The virtue of modesty for example can impossibly have the same connotation in a large global organization. In an organization operating globally it becomes extremely difficult to define overall what is a virtuous character and what is not, it will always differ depending on which branch, division or country one looks at. And to follow the diversity thought of benefiting from different skills, having different virtues can also be beneficial in teamwork. As we shall later see in the story from South Africa, having different virtues in a team might benefit the outcome—even the moral outcome of an action.

### *3.4 A Critical Approach to Traditional Business Ethics*

Most business ethics are based on the above three theories and are thus clearly defined as calculations, rules, obligations or virtuous character. These definitions are made explicit, and standardized instructions are prepared on how to behave and act in a proper and right way; both inside the organization as well as in the engagement with different actors and groups outside the organization (see for example Jackson, 2000, Stevens, 1994, Warren, 1993). It is therefore often assumed that the right ethical view can ensure an objective or rational ‘solution’ to moral issues and potentially problematic or precarious situations (Cummings, 2000). All together, these three approaches call for the

involvement of external ‘objective moral experts’ in the organizational process of constituting moral guidelines—regardless whether these guidelines prescribes ways of calculating and prioritizing actions, define ethical rules or virtuous characters and ideals. Besides the justification of the behavior of managers and employees, codes and guidelines are supposed to give protection of rights and duties for organizational members and partly also for different groups outside the organization. Another significant aspect of the above approaches is the expected clarification of organizational values and the identification with them. One related consequence therefore is the providing of routinized means, independent of individual morality.

The way I see it, the moral agent can in most business ethics approaches expect a return on ethical behavior. This idea implies a strategic component as inherent in ethical behavior. This means that social activities are not practiced because of a ‘genuine’ ethical understanding or even feeling, but because of the recognition of groups who are useful for the organization. Jones et al. (2005: 122) ironically point out that in business ethics “we care about the Other because the Other is useful for us.” Such forms of business ethics focus first of all on the specific interests and goals of the organization. As it will be discussed in the following chapter, this kind of ethical reasoning is not what Levinas (especially Levinas, 2007) would call a pure ethical act, but is instead a circular economic interest based on expected return. The attempt is to present oneself and one’s social activities as good as possible; a behavior, which can be labeled as strategic or as conditional morality.

I will therefore argue that what many organizations currently do in the name of business ethics is to define sets of codes and formulate principles and guidelines for organizational members. This procedure is considered a social responsible activity where the defined rules are supposed to assure responsible

behavior. However, I argue that following codes and guidelines does not necessarily ensure responsible behavior. I argue that responsibility and ethics cannot be prescribed. Instead, it must always include a certain space of singularity. In this sense, calculating or controlling behavior does not obtain responsibility. Instead, responsibility always implies a relation to a contingent other, to the unknown and unmanageable. It means to give a response to the other person or group and thereby to respond to norms according to the singular situation (see also Jones et al., 2005). As we shall see in the following chapter discussing Levinasian ethics, the encounter with the Other always comes first and overrules all ethical guidelines. Ethics is about a personal responsibility to the Other.

## 4 Levinasian Ethics

Many might ask what a philosopher like Levinas has of relevance for organization studies. However, as John Wild (1969) correctly says in the introduction to Levinas' major work *Totality and Infinity*, the work of Levinas deserves to be widely read—not only by professional philosophers. His work is carefully thought out by an original mind, and above all it is *close to life*, which is exactly why his philosophy is of so great importance—also to organization studies.

Much of Levinas' work is influenced by the fact that he is Jewish and therefore spend time in the German concentration camps. It was with this in mind, he in the post war years wrote his major contributions. Still, his work is not about hatred and avenge; his work is about compassion and understanding, and can easily be transferred to 'life as such'. Levinasian ethics is not a normative prescription of how to live one's life. It is more a way of thinking; it is an inquiry into the meaning of ethics understood as an infinite openness to the Other's difference. As Jones et al. write in their recent book on business ethics:

Levinas offers us a way of thinking critically about how and why it is that we experience an openness to the Other so infrequently. If we agree with Levinas that ethics is something about openness to the Other, then the lives that we live—both in business and in our homes—do not seem to measure up very well. We seem to be insulated from Otherness, doing our tourism from hotels, seeing the starving via the TV, reading books about how to be good. This is the limitation that Levinas shows us. (Jones et al., 2005: 77f)

In this way, the philosophy of Levinas has much to teach us on how to do business; especially in the context of diversity as all Levinas' thinking is concerned about the encounter with otherness. At the heart of Levinas' writings lies the irreducible ethical proximity of one human being to another, morality, and through that encounter a relation to all others—justice.

Even though Levinas always claimed not to build an *ethical theory*, his writings are definitely what (Cohen, 1998: xi) correctly calls an *ethical vision*. In this sense, the perspective of Levinasian ethics will “guide us in our endeavors to imagine a different world” (Jones et al., 2005: 79), open up the concepts and reflect over the meaning of ethics and the meaning of diversity.

#### *4.1 Biographical Notes*

Before going deeper into the philosophy of Levinas, I will briefly introduce him and his major work and place this in a chronological frame.

Levinas was born in Lithuania in 1906, but fled to Ukraine during World War I. Levinas then went to France in 1923, where he began his university studies. He stayed in France for most of his life and became a French citizen in 1930, which is also why he is often referred to as a French philosopher. Levinas was Jewish and taken prisoner by the Germans in World War II, but because he was a soldier in the French army, he was sent to a military prisoner's camp, instead of a concentration camp. Unlike most of his family, Levinas and his wife and daughter survived the war. After the war he became director of a school that educated teachers. Strangely enough, considering his later philosophical importance, he didn't hold a university position before 1964, where he was appointed Professor of Philosophy at the University of Poitiers. Ironically enough, Levinas, who is now considered one of the most important

philosophical voices of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, spent most of his adult life as a school administrator. It was not before the 1980's that his philosophy became widely known in wider academic circles (Critchley, 2002).

Despite the fact that the first many years of his career took place outside of the universities, he has accomplished to publish rather extensively. I will beneath mention the works I find of greatest importance. His first major works included *De l'existence à l'existant* (Existence and Existents) and *Le temps et l'autre* (Time and the Other). *Existence and Existents* was originally published in French in 1947 and later translated by Alphonso Lingis, Levinas' most influential translator. *Time and the Other*, which was also originally published in 1947, was translated into English by Levinas' other main translator Richard A. Cohen. In the following years, he only published minor articles and commentaries, but in 1961, what was to become one of his two most important works, *Totalité et infini* (Totality and Infinity) was published. Alphonso Lingis later translated this into English in 1969. In 1971, he published the, in my opinion, overlooked work *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (Humanism of the Other), which was not translated into English before 2003. Less ignored was, what is considered to be Levinas second major work, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence), which was originally published in French in 1974 and translated by Alphonso Lingis in 1981. Later, edited volumes of his work were published. These included *Collected Philosophical Papers* (Levinas, 1987a), *Entre Nous: On Thinking of the Other* (Levinas, 1998), and *Basic Philosophical Writings* (Levinas, 1996). Just before his death in 1995, he published *God, Death and Time* in 1993, which was translated by Bettina Bergo in 2000. Levinas has written other works, which are also referred to in this theses, but these are the once that have influenced me the most. Of important secondary work the following is worth mentioning: *Re-reading Levinas* by Bernasconi and Critchley (1981),

*Ethics as First Philosophy - The significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion* by Peperzak (1995), *Levinas – an Introduction* by Davis (1996), and *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas* by Critchley and Bernasconi (2002).

#### 4.2 *Philosophical Inspiration*

Levinas was a student of both Husserl and Heidegger and was very inspired by the phenomenology of these authors. At the same time he also moved away from his mentors and developed his own very unique philosophy. In this sense, Levinas' work expresses a position, which is opposed to Husserl's transcendental idealism as well as to Heidegger's ontology. Especially, he distances himself from their perception of being, as he believes that being appears as an imprisonment in their phenomenology, which one must try to escape. As Jones (2003) succinctly puts it:

Levinas, while deeply influenced by such arguments, later challenges the primacy of ontology, finding the Heideggerian framing of the question of Being too restrictive (...) In the place of the primacy of ontology that one finds in Heidegger, Levinas argues that, 'before' Being, one is always in a social world, always in relation with Other people. So for Levinas the relation to the Other comes before Being, and hence Levinas posits the primacy of ethics over ontology, ethics being not simply a branch of philosophy but first philosophy. (Jones, 2003: 226)

In relation to this, Levinas asks: "Does not sense, as orientation, indicate a thrust, an outside of self toward the *other than self*, whereas philosophy wants to absorb all Other in the Same, and neutralize otherness" (Levinas, 2003: 25). Instead he is occupied with theories of that, which is to be found beyond being; as he explains, something, which can be found in the encounter with something other than the self. Following Levinas therefore, the failure of traditional phenomenology lies in its inability to picture an encounter with the Other, which does not necessitate a return to the self (Davis, 1996). The



mission of Levinas then is to clarify how a truer encounter with the Other can be achieved; an encounter which acknowledges the Other as infinite other. In this way, Levinas moves the encounter with the Other beyond being, beyond ontology, where he finds ethics. Levinas' insistence on the non-ontological character of ethics is therefore directed against the contemporary ontology and existential phenomenology of Heidegger. Levinas thus surpasses phenomenology and reaches the plain necessity of an ethical metaphysics—a metaphysics that is expressed through a moral and subject responsibility. In Levinas' second major work *Otherwise than being or beyond essence* the very title reminds us of the priority Levinas gives to his continuous disagreement with Heideggerian ontology. "Otherwise than *Heideggerian* being; beyond *Heideggerian* essence (Cohen, 1998: xiii).

For Levinas, meaning therefore does not originate in the Heideggerian being. Instead, meaning originally emerges from the face-to-face encounter as an ethical event, that is, from the other person as moral command and the self as moral response (Cohen, 2003). On this view, every relation is always 'before being'; one is always already in a social world. Thus, the relation to the Other comes before being, and hence Levinas posits the primacy of ethics over ontology, ethics is not simply a branch of philosophy, but first philosophy (Jones, 2003, Peperzak, 1995).

#### *4.3 Ethics as First Philosophy*

When Levinas speaks of ethics as first philosophy, he means an ethics without an ethical system (Jones et al., 2005: 74). Before cultural expression, before the said, lies the universal but deformed humanism of the other, the saying of the other as Other, as another irreducible different human being. Therefore, before does not simply mean before as an epistemological condition, but rather before as better, as an unconditional ethical imperative (Cohen, 2003). "What

this signifies is not that ethics is a moment of being but that it is, rather, otherwise and *better* than being” (Levinas, 2000: 224, original emphasis). The moral self comes into its own through its ability to rise above being, through its defiance of being. As Bauman (1993:72) says about Levinasian ethics: “Ethics does not have an essence, its ‘essence’ so to speak, is precisely not to have an essence”. In a morality that comes before being, there is nothing to justify the responsibility of the self, and nothing to determine whether the self is responsible, that responsibility belongs alone to the self, and this 're-personalization' is what makes it moral (Bauman, 1993). Ethics, therefore, can never be calculated, defined in a code or a character.

As a consequence of the pre-ontological nature of ethics, it is difficult by reason to determine whether an action is moral or not. Instead, one can recognize a moral self by its uncertainty whether the action was moral or not. When there are no rules to follow, I never know when I am responsible enough. In fact, I can never be responsible enough; I can always do more. Responsibility does not have a definite purpose or reason; instead it is the impossibility of not being responsible to the Other, which forms my moral capacity (Bauman, 1993). Consequently, Levinas rejects the Kantian emphasis on reason being the foundation of ethics. If reason is the foundation for consensus among all rational human beings there is no dialogue *in* it and it does not comprise an encounter with the Other. A Kantian ethics of reason can therefore only be a monologue of the Same (Davis, 1996).

Practically, an ethics as first philosophy does also make sense. After all, if asked very few of us would be ready to explain the basic ethical principles of our behavior. We rarely explicitly consider the foundations, which are believed to form our ethical understanding of the world. Therefore, Levinas shows us the limitation that morality is difficult to explicate or calculate into

codes and definitions. Ethical questions are separate from ontological concerns due to the fact that the concept of good transcends essence (Davis, 1996). Only rules can be universal. One may explicate universal rule-dictated duties, but moral responsibility exists solely in interpellating the individual. Morality, or as Levinas says—responsibility—always arises in the ethical call of an other person; another person who by virtue of his irreducible difference is always an Other. Central for Levinas is therefore the ultimate ethical imperative of acknowledging any other human being as an Other. The Other is not to be thematized or categorized, any other person is always radically Other.

#### 4.4 *The Other*

The Other has traditionally been understood as separate from the same or the self, however ultimately and ideally united with it. On this view, Belova (2007) argues that otherness as a unity with the self effaces the differences between the two instead of exploring them. In this way the Other has often been seen as a ‘proper’ other, thereby attempted appropriated. However, by appropriating the Other, what defines it as Other—its otherness—is lost. In fact, the philosophical tradition has attempted to understand the plurality and alterity of a manifold of entities by reducing plurality to unity as well as alterity to sameness (Critchley, 1992: 28). Even though the self has been seen as unique, the goal has traditionally been to perform an appropriating or normalizing function to come closer to a situation of sameness where people were alike. Homogeneity and similarity are easier to grasp than heterogeneity and otherness. Thus, otherness has traditionally appeared as a temporary interruption, which man must attempt to eliminate as it is incorporated into or rather reduced to sameness. On this view, Wild (1969: 12)—in the introduction to *Totality and Infinity*—points out a strong tendency to maintain an egocentric attitude and to think of other individuals either as extensions of

the self, or as alien objects to be manipulated for the advantage of the individual and social self. Neither of these egocentric views, however, do justice to the experience of the other person as Other.

Instead, the Other exists entirely beyond the understanding of the self, and ought to be perceived—and appreciated—in all its peculiarity and otherness. Therefore, the Other is situated absolutely outside the self's intellectual capacity, and exists in all its strangeness. It is not simply a mirror image of oneself. Levinas further expresses this uniqueness of the Other in the below citation, where he clearly states that it is never possible for the self entirely to understand the Other and the Other's reactions—we are never the same.

The Other is in no way another myself, participating with me in a common existence. The relationship with the Other is not an idyllic and harmonious relationship of communion, or a sympathy through which we put ourselves in the Other's place; we recognize the Other as resembling us, but exterior to us; the relationship with the Other is a relationship with a mystery. (Levinas, 1987b:75)

Thus, my relationship with the Other is that of copresence. That is, I am aware that there is another body coexisting with my body and of similar appearance, however we are not equal. Of course I may simply treat a fellow being as a different version of myself, or, if I have the power, place this being under my categories and use it for my purpose. But this means reducing a being to what it is not; the same. Instead, a fellow being as Other is not a mere object to be subsumed under one of my categories, and given a place in my world. That is, in treating another human being as Other, I try to create a relationship between the Same and the Other; without the dissolution of either. The absolutely other is the Other. He and I do not form a number. The collectivity in which I say 'you' or 'we' is not a plural of the 'I' (Levinas, 1969: 39). By viewing the

relationship between self and Other as essentially non-symmetrical, non-unifying and non-polarizing, it eases the pressure of overcoming differences between self and other. On this view, the paradox of differences and interruption does not have to be resolved or denied; rather it can be perceived as a useful way of getting to better understand the Other (Belova, 2007).

As Jones et al. (2005: 75) point out, one of Levinas' most important contributions is to ask the question "what if everybody else is not just a mirror image of me? What if they have really different ideas and needs?" I may find the Other to be of a world that is basically other than mine and to be essentially different from me, and Levinas' point is not to be intimidated by this otherness but see it as an opportunity to learn. Being ethical is therefore exactly to let the Other's otherness interrupt me and in this interruption question my common sense. The first time Levinas mentions ethics in *Totality and Infinity* he writes:

Critique does not reduce the other to the same as does ontology, but calls into question the exercise of the same—which cannot occur within the egoist spontaneity of the same—is brought about by the other. *We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics.* (Levinas, 1969: 43, my emphasis)

In fact, the Other is a 'not yet' (Introna, 2007). Levinas always recalls us to an ethics that is critical of the way things are, that displays a suspicion of common sense. Put simply, this is a call towards the willingness to be critical of the current order of things (Jones et al., 2005). Introna (2007) also points out that for Levinas, ethics happens in an acknowledgement where I let the Other take me by surprise. In my ethical opening up towards the Other I'm overturned and my categories, and I let my themes and concepts be challenged.

In this sense, Levinas guides our attention towards a basic difference between on the one hand a mode of thought that tries to gather all things around the mind of the self, and on the other hand, an externally oriented mode that attempts to penetrate into what is radically other than the mind of the thinking self (Wild, 1969). This difference between the two approaches emerges through the works of Levinas and is clearly exemplified in the case of my meeting with the other person. “I may either decide to remain within myself, assimilating the other and trying to make use of him, or I may take the risk of going out of my way and trying to speak and to give to him” (Wild, 1969: 16). In this way, beings of course exist in relationship, but on the basis of themselves, and not on the basis of totality (Levinas, 1969). The ultimate violence to people would not so much be a physical injure, but more radically in “making them play roles in which they no longer recognize themselves, making them betray not only commitments, but their own substance, making them carry out actions that will destroy every possibility for action” (Wild, 1969). As Knights and O’Leary (2006: 133) argue, the relationship with the Other is non-instrumental and not based on an imperative outside the self; it is about an inexhaustive care for the Other.

The difference between Other and other is therefore not a coincidence. It refers to the distinction between the two French words ‘autrui’, which is the personal Other and ‘autre’, which signifies other others (Levinas, 1969: 24). Jones et al. explain this in a more straightforward way:

Autre (‘other’) simply refers to other people in general, to the vast mass of other people. Autrui (‘Other’), however, refers to someone who is so close as to open up his or her radical difference to me. ‘Autrui’ is not just another person, but displays radical otherness. (Jones et al., 2005: 75)

In the citations quoted in this thesis, the difference between other and Other might however vary. This is due to the different interpretations of other/Other Levinas' translators and Levinasian scholars have used. In my text I follow the above explained difference between other and Other.

#### 4.5 *The Face*

In order to expose and communicate the otherness and vulnerability of the self, Levinas introduces one of his widely discussed ethical concepts; the face:

We can proceed from the experience of totality back to a situation where totality breaks up, a situation that conditions the totality itself. Such a situation is the gleam of exteriority or of transcendence in the face of the Other. (Levinas, 1969: 24)

Responsibility to the Other is carried out in the encounter with the Other as a face. In the interpersonal relationship it is not a matter of thinking the self and the Other together, but of facing. Responsibility arises as a response to the call of the Other as face.

Very important however, the face is an expression, not of an idea or an image, but of what is as such (see also Kaulingfreks and ten Bos, 2007). The Levinasian face is therefore not the plastic face or the physical appearance of a human being. Rather, through the face as expression, the Other presents itself exceeding my idea of what this Other might conceal and my imagination of what is other. This way of surpassing the idea of the same in order to present oneself as Other, is to signify, to have a sense thus it is to speak (Levinas, 1969: 66). The expression of the face identifies the Other as a unique human

being, infinitely different from the self. “The face is present in its refusal to be contained. In this sense it cannot be comprehended, that is, encompassed. It is neither seen nor touched” (Levinas, 1969: 194). The alterity of the Other does therefore not depend on any distinct quality that would distinguish the Other from me, for a distinction like this would imply a relation of knowledge and categorization which immediately would nullify alterity.

The face of the Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me, the idea existing to my own measure and to the measure of its *ideatum* – the adequate idea. It does not manifest itself by these qualities, but καθ’ αὐτό [is in itself]. It *expresses itself*. (Levinas, 1969: 51, original emphasis)

Its expression is therefore an invitation to be with the Other, to live with the Other, and to be put in a society with the Other. The face of the Other interpellates; it calls me into existence.

The Other remains infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign, his face in which his epiphany is produced and which appeals to me breaks with the world that can be common to us, whose virtualities are inscribed in our nature and developed by our existence. (Levinas, 1969: 194)

It is the irreducibility of the Other’s face, and in the epiphany that this brings about, which interpellates me and thus calls me into existence. It is precisely the infinitely foreignness of the Other that has the possibility of changing my point of view, my common sense. And this allowance for the Other to interrupt me is exactly what is ethical for Levinas. My consciousness is in this sense challenged by the face. However, the challenge does not come from an awareness of that challenge. “This is a challenge of consciousness, not a consciousness of the challenge” (Levinas, 2003:33). The face enters our world



from an absolutely foreign sphere, and the Other proceeds from the absolutely absent, and this signification of the face is always exterior to all order. The face draws me near. “The face imposes on me and I cannot stay deaf to its appeal, or forget it, what I mean is I cannot stop being responsible for its desolation” (Levinas, 2003: 32).

#### *4.6 Responsibility*

The above call from the Other, which draws me to the Other, dedicates me the obligation of responsibility. This responsibility is moral, because it applies only me that I take this responsibility, and because it is not due to a matter of exchange of services or favors, and thus it is not possible to standardize and make responsibility universal. Being moral means that I take responsibility no matter who takes the same duty and responsibility as I do (Bauman, 1993). Morality is not moral if it is performed either because I have no choice or if I expect to get something in return. Perfect responsibility cannot be planned or calculated. Rather, the ethical encounter with the Other is a one-sided ethics (Davis, 1996). In this way Levinas again distances himself from Mill’s cost benefit analyses as well as Kant’s categorical imperative. He does not believe that the self finds moral standards in the rules, which it may demand of others. The self is responsible only because of the unique morality in the self not benchmarked to the Other's actions.

The responsibility for the other can not have begun in my commitment, in my decision. The unlimited responsibility in which I find myself comes from the hither side of my freedom, from a ‘prior to every memory’, an ‘ulterior to every accomplishment’, from the non-present par excellence, the non-original, the anarchical, prior to and beyond essence. The responsibility for the other is the locus in which is situated the null-site of subjectivity, where the privilege of the question ‘where?’ no longer holds. (Levinas, 1981: 10)

Levinas here calls the relationship with the Other non-original and an-archival. This means that responsibility is not based on an imperative outside the self; it is about unconditional responsibility for the Other. This willingness of being for the Other is exactly what introduces the concept of responsibility. When addressed to me, responsibility is moral. It may well lose its moral content completely the moment I try to turn it around to bind the Other. I therefore always have one responsibility more than all the others and my responsibility is always a step ahead, always greater than that of the Other. I can never be responsible enough; my responsibility is infinite:

What is positive in responsibility, outside of essence, conveys the infinite. It inverts relationships and principles, reverses the order of interest: in the measure that responsibilities are taken on they multiply. This is not a *Sollen* commanding the infinite pursuit of an ideal. The infinity of the infinite lives in going backwards. (...) The positivity of the infinite is the conversion of the response to the infinite into responsibility, into approach of the other. (Levinas, 1981: 12, original emphasis)

What is important to Levinas here is that responsibility is infinite. It is not a *Sollen*; that is not something an external authority requires of me. Rather, it is something that reverses the order of interest. The responsibility for the other is therefore beyond interest; it is something the expression of the Other demands of me as an ethical call. I am therefore denied the comfort of the already existing norms and already followed rules to guide me, to reassure me that I have reached the limit of my duty and so spare me that anxiety which I would account for as 'guilty conscience'. Responsibility does not have a purpose or a reason (Bauman, 1993), responsibility is therefore non-intentional.

#### *4.7 Affective Intentionality and Non-intentional Affectivity*

That responsibility is non-intentional means that we do not consciously choose to be responsible: “The Good is not presented to freedom; it has chosen me before I have chosen it. No one is good voluntarily” (Levinas, 1981: 11). By taking the notion of proximity to its extremes, Levinas believes that responsibility arises in non-intentional affectivity. To intend affectively is to mean through feeling. Opposite, non-intentional affectivity, insinuates feeling without intention, without a target or goal. Levinas thus dismisses utilitarian moral calculation, and believes that only non-intentional affectivity can be moral. More specific, the feeling of responsibility is caused by the non-intentional affectivity initiated in the intimate face of the Other, where the Other affects the self to act morally without a target attached to the moral action. In other words, Pepersak (1995) explains that affective intentionality for Levinas assumes an ability to be affected. Non-intentional affectivity assumes a responsibility; an ability to respond without any apparent or rational reason. Therefore, the moral response without intention is a more pure moral act than an ability to be affected intentionally on demand.

Here Levinas speaks not only of the face of the other affecting me in the present, but also of another way of being affected, one that reaches back into pre-conscious and pre-intentional past, what Levinas calls an an-archic state (see also Levinas, 2003: 51). A non-intentional affectivity is therefore a pure passivity, the absolute receptivity, and prior to all action. “Responsibility for the other, in its antecedence to my freedom, its antecedence to the present and to representation, is a passivity more passive than all passivity” (Levinas, 1981: 15). Together affective intentionality and non-intentional affectivity explain Levinas’ philosophy of the face as ethical responsibility. The point of the dual affectivity between non-intentional and intentional, is that the face acts not only with its own present power but also as and with the deeper force

of a call to responsibility. This call stems from a pre-ontological archetype from where there occurs a deep communication between the past and the present. As a plastic face it speaks words, but as archetype, the face is much more than words, it is a call. As archetype the face calls for responsibility through its affective link to all humanity (Tallon, 1995).

#### *4.8 The Third - or the Sense of Justice to other Others*

Much of the work of Levinas is focused on the moral responsibility for the Other. However, Levinas is very aware of the fact that there are other Others in the world as well. Life is very rarely about me and the Other alone; there is often a third. From the moment the third party enters, we must compare (Levinas, 1998: 202). In the face-to-face with the Other, there is no judgment, but from the moment the third enters, judgment and justice are required and rationality takes the place of passion.

The act of consciousness is motivated by the presence of a third party alongside of the neighbor approached. A third party is also approached; and the relationship between the neighbor and the third party cannot be indifferent to me when I approach. There must be a justice among incomparable ones. There must then be a comparison between incomparables and a synopsis, a togetherness and contemporaneity; there must be thematization, thought, history and inscription. (Levinas, 1981: 16)

Levinas does not start his ethics from the ego, the individual or the cogito. Nor does he begin with community, language or convention, nor from some meta-ethical intuitive foundation. Rather Levinas begins with face-to-face, the call of the irreducible alterity of the Other (Werhane, 1995). In a similar manner, Cohen (2003) emphasizes the humanism of the Other in the heart of Levinas' philosophy. For Levinas the subjectivity of the self arises in and as an

unsurpassable responsibility to the Other. In this sense, the responsibility that arises in the face of the Other, reminds me of the demand for justice for all those I do not face: That is, the face of the Other gives me a sense of justice for all other Others, and opens me up for all of humanity. Justice therefore does not derive from rules, which are created to institute and maintain justice, but from the transcendence of the Other that underlies justice (Cohen, 2003: xxvii).

The issue of justice therefore becomes critical and is linked in a much more complex manner with responsibility when a third party appears; when one is faced with a community of others. Justice depends on ‘first philosophy’. In this sense the confrontation with the Other constructs who we are as subjects, and how we act as Others, and from this first philosophy, community emerges. But as Werhane (1995) points out, justice is necessary because of the multiplicity of relationships, but very importantly it is not meant to degrade or objectify them. Justice then encourages human responsibility and defies egocentrism. Introna (2007) points out, that the face of the Other does not only signify its own otherness, but more importantly it also immediately and unconditionally reminds us of every other Other. As such, the radical asymmetry of the ethical claim immediately and simultaneously recalls the symmetrical claim for justice; the claim that also I am Other for others. “[Justice] does not come to birth out of the play of injustice; it comes from the outside” (Levinas, 1987a: 44). Therefore, the strength of such a justice is not its disregard for the idiosyncratic in its search for categorical imperatives or principals of equality and fairness. Instead, its importance lies in its irreducible willingness to be interrupted by the outside; by the otherness of the Other.

#### 4.9 *Language*

Reading Levinas however raises a central question: How can I coexist with the Other and still leave this central otherness intact? (Wild, 1969: 13) Or as Jones et al. (2005: 75) pose the question: “how can I treat other people ethically, if I do not recognize this difference?” According to Levinas, there is only one way—through language (Levinas, 1969: 195). The Other calls on my response and on my responsibility. Through the Other’s interpellation I become response-able (Eskin, 2000). Ethics, therefore, constitutes me as a response-able person as the Other is seeking for a meaningful response. Being ethical implies that a responsible answer must be given. “I must be ready to put my world into words, and to offer it to the Other” (Wild, 1969: 14). Levinas’ ethics therefore differs from for example Habermas’ and Apel’s discourse ethics as well as from Foucault’s discourse analysis. Although Levinas often in his works labels ethics as discourse, the term is neither comparable with Habermas’ and Apel’s discourse as practical, intersubjective, consensus oriented ‘procedure’, nor the semantic complexity of Foucault’s discourse (Eskin, 2000). Instead Levinas’ discourse is always a discourse oriented towards the Other; it is a response to the call of the Other’s face. In this sense Levinas’ ethics is not about what has been said, but it is about what has to be said (Waldenfels, 1995).

Language is not reducible to a system of signs representing beings and relations. Instead “speech proceeds from absolute difference” (Levinas, 1969: 194). The difference thus encountered in language is perhaps to be defined as the very power to break the continuity of being. Therefore, the sign cannot be merely a shortcut of a pre-existent real presence, and neither can it be an exact representation of the past. Instead, as Eskin (2000) points out, language already bears a form of sensible life. Language is already ‘living’ because it in the response to the Other constructs us as human beings. With this argument,

Levinas is not denying that a great part of our speaking is systematic and bound by logic of some kind. But prior to language systems is the self, and its ethical choice to respond to the call of the Other. Prior to language systems, I have the ethical choice to expose my world by speaking to the Other. As Levinas says:

I cannot evade by silence the discourse which the epiphany that occurs as a face opens. (...) The face opens the primordial discourse whose first word is obligation, which no interiority permits avoiding. It is that discourse that obliges the entering into discourse, the commencement of discourse rationalism prays for, a force that convinces even the people 'who do not wish to listen' and thus founds the true universality of reason. (Levinas, 1969: 201)

I therefore have to respond to the Other, I cannot stay silent to the Other's call. I as a self "can either decide to remain within myself, assimilating the Other and trying to make use of him, or I may take the risk of going out of my way and trying to speak and to give to him" (Wild, 1969: 16). In *Humanism of the Other*, Levinas (2003) extends this argument as he points out that most analyses of language in contemporary philosophy emphasize the embodied being, that expresses itself as a superior person in an attempt to assimilate or illuminate the Other. Levinas does not neglect the speaking self, but asks whether the dimension of the Other has not been forgotten? The Other is not only collaborator and recipient of our expression, but also interlocutor—"the one to whom expression expresses" (Levinas, 2003:30). This relation to the Other as interlocutor originally transpires as discourse—it is essentially inquiring and vocative (Eskin, 2000). Ethical discourse, therefore, involves interlocutors, a plurality of others, whose original purpose is not a mere mutual representation. Instead, it is a radical separation—the interlocutors' mutual strangeness is an exposure of otherness. The Other, who faces me, is therefore not included in the totality of being that is expressed. Instead, the

Other arises as a unique one from the masses of being, as the one to whom I direct my response.

When the Other faces me, I am put in question which obliges me to respond. “That ‘something’ we call signification arises in being with language because the essence of language is the relation with the Other” (Levinas, 1969: 207). That is, the face of the Other speaks to me, and the manifestation of the face is, therefore, the first discourse. The expression of the Other’s face, which originates in the unreachable otherness of the Other, puts the self into moral question (Cohen, 2003). The Other thereby interrupts the stability of the self and demands a moral obligation to respond.

To understand this ethical element of the response, it is necessary to introduce a distinction highlighted in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. This is a distinction between what is said, the content of discourse, and the more original and interhuman saying of them (Cohen, 2003), which is an ethical event exposed by the vulnerability of the response-able self. The main point in this distinction is that there is always an expression of the face that precedes the said. Language and speaking is a way of coming from beyond one’s appearance, beyond one’s form; an opening of the otherwise than being—a window to the vulnerable self; to otherness.

The said is the written or spoken word, that is, the apparent communication, which proclaims this as that, whereas saying always precedes the said. This inherent notion of transcendence informs, according to Eskin (2000), the claim that saying underlies and conditions the said, however, just as any said depends on saying for its possibility, saying depends on the said for its witnessability. To put it differently, we can follow Critchley (1992:7) and say



that “the content of my words, their identifiable meaning, is the said, while the saying consist in the fact that these words are being addressed to an interlocutor”. Language is in this way always constructed by both saying and said; the pre-ontological and a code intertwined. Davies (1995) explains the relationship between saying and said as saying being orienting as opposed to an always oriented said. “Essence fills the said, or the epos, of the saying, but the saying, in its power of equivocation, that is, in its enigma whose secret it keeps, escapes the epos of essence that includes it” (Levinas, 1981: 9-10). Levinas then asks a question: “How is the saying, in its primordial enigma, said (...) how can transcendence withdraw from esse while being signaled in it?” (Levinas, 1981: 10). In other words, how can we recognize the saying in the said. The answer is to be found in the primordial responsibility to the Other.

The time of the said and of essence there lets the pre-original saying be heard, answers to transcendence, to a diachrony, to the irreducible divergency that opens here between the non-present and every representable divergency, which in its own way (...) makes a sign to the responsible one. (Levinas, 1981: 10-11)

In this way saying is first philosophy; saying is before everything else. Saying is ethically handing over meaning to another. Thus I cannot evade by silence the discourse, which the epiphany of the Other’s face opens. The face opens the primordial discourse whose first word is obligation, which no interiority permits avoiding. The model of the saying and the said is Levinas’ way of explaining how the ethical signifies within ontological language. The saying is my exposure—corporeal, sensible—to the Other, my inability to refuse the other’s call (Critchley, 1992:7). It is to this call from the Other that I respond in saying before using any explicit language. In saying I do not say anything, I signify my responsibility in my response to the other’s call (Eskin, 2000). The Other draws me near, and it is this drawness, which constitutes saying. It is a

non-verbal ethical performance, whose essence can never be caught (Critchley, 1992:7).

Given that philosophy qua ontology speaks the language of the said, the methodological problem facing the later Levinas, a problem that can be seen at every page of *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, is, according to Critchley (1992:7), how saying can be said. How can saying be explicated within the ontological said in a way where it does not immediately betray this saying? Critchley calls this Levinas' linguistic or deconstructive turn. Levinas tries to solve this problem in the method of reduction. This entails finding ways in which the said can be unsaid, or reduced, and thereby letting the saying work as an interruption within the said. In this way, the language of *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* according to Critchley (1992: 8) "performs a kind of spiralling movement between the inevitable language of the ontological said and the attempt to unsay that said in order to locate the ethical saying within it". In this way ethical saying is not something that can be said; it is rather the continuous undoing of the said that constantly arises in running against its limits. "One does not comprehend the ethical saying within the said; the saying can only be comprehended in its incomprehensibility, in its disruption or interruption of the said" (Critchley, 1992:43).

Before the said, lies therefore the saying of the other as Other, as another human being which can be said to be Levinas' humanism of the Other (Cohen, 2003). In an humanism of the Other I communicate to the other person for no other purpose than that the call of this person's face makes me respond. Similar to earlier arguments, 'before' is not an epistemological condition. Rather, 'before' stands for the involuntarity of the pure humanism of responding to the Other's face—as a non-intentional unconditional ethical imperative. The saying is imposed in the immediate and imperative

deformalization, breaking down common sense, affected by the non-intentional moral responsibility to the Other—in the ethical proximity of the obligation to respond to another human being. The saying therefore, suggests an exposure in a sense that the self is ready to hear the Other. In the welcoming of the face I thereby open up to reason. And in this sense as Levinas says “language reaches and introduces the new into thought. The introduction of the new into a thought, the idea of infinity, is the very work of reason. The absolutely new is the Other” (Levinas, 1969: 219).

#### *4.10 Contemporaries, Critique and Post-Levinasians*

Levinas was obviously not writing in solitude. I have already mentioned his inspiration—but also his move away from—Husserl and Heidegger. An important contemporary philosopher was Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), who remained an inspiration to him all through his work, and whom he had a life-long correspondence with. The relationship between the two was initiated in Derrida’s response to *Totality and Infinity*. This response was cemented in one of Derrida’s major works *Writing and Difference*, where he devoted almost one hundred pages to responding to Levinas’ *Totality and Infinity* in form of the chapter/essay *Violence and Metaphysics* (Derrida, 1978). Although, *Violence and Metaphysics* is often referred to as a critique of Levinas, it was not only that. First of all, it was published in French in 1967, at a time where Levinas was still fairly unknown, and it was thus the first major respond to Levinas’ work. In a sense, Derrida therefore introduced Levinas to the wider philosophical scene. Second, spending one hundred pages on a philosopher practically unknown—except for a limited circle of academics—must be seen as an appreciation and a strong approval of the work. Furthermore, as Bernasconi and Critchley (1981: xii) argue, Derrida’s chapter should be seen as a deconstructive reading, that is, a truly acknowledging and responsible response to a text. Bernasconi and Critchley (1981: xii) further point out that

Derrida's very important comment to Levinas is, that if the relation to the Other is dependent on discourse, it in fact presupposes that ontological language, which Levinas is trying so hard in *Totality and Infinity* to go about. Derrida states in a key quote from 'Violence and Metaphysics' that:

But what happens when this right is no longer given, when the possibility of metaphysics is the possibility of speech? When metaphysical responsibility is responsibility for language, because "thought consists of speaking" (TI), and metaphysics is a language with God? How to think the other, if the other can be spoken only as exteriority and through exteriority, that is, nonalterity? And if the speech which must inaugurate and maintain absolute separation is by its essence rooted in space, which cannot conceive separation and absolute alterity? If, as Levinas says, only discourse (and not intuitive contact) is righteous, and if, moreover, all discourse essentially retains within it space and the Same—does this not mean that discourse is originally violent? (Derrida, 1978: 145)

In this way Derrida points to the problem that Levinas' ethical theory presupposes a language, and questions the an-archicality of Levinas ethics when the Other have to be spoken of in an ontological language. Levinas emphasizes ethics as first philosophy and before being, but how is this possible when the Other is determined by an ontological language. Levinas takes Derrida's comments very seriously and first of all responds directly to these in 'Wholly Otherwise' (Levinas, 1991, originally published in French in 1973). His second major work, 'Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence' (Levinas, 1981), is also a respond to Derrida's comments. The main goal of this book seems to clarify and overcome the problem of ontological language in the separation between saying and said (explained above and further elaborated in following chapters). The correspondence continues in Derrida's 'At this very Moment in this Work here I am' (Derrida, 1991) and is cemented in Derrida's 'Adieu to Levinas' (Derrida, 1999), which was his tribute to Levinas after Levinas' death in 1995. Subsequently, Derrida continued his

writings inspired by Levinas. Especially his later work, which has been announced as ‘an ethical turn’, or ‘the late Derrida’ (see for example Mitchell and Davidon, 2007, Dooley and Kavanagh, 2007), is deeply indebted to the influence of Levinas (most noticed in Derrida, 1992, Derrida, 1995, Derrida, 1997).

Another author that Levinas has inspired deeply is the German sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. Bauman’s first major work on post-modern ethics builds heavily on Levinas, but is more radical in the sense that Bauman emphasizes ‘morality without ethical code’, ‘the moral party of two’ and ‘the solitude of the moral subject’ (Bauman, 1993) and later analyzes this in relation to bureaucracy and the extreme event of Holocaust (Bauman, 1999) where he defines the term ‘moral distance’, which is also explored later in this thesis. In a sense, one could say that Bauman primarily builds on Levinas’ early work, but ignores the attention Levinas gives to justice and the Third in ‘Otherwise than Being’ and works published hereafter. As a sociologist Bauman is less complicated to read than Levinas’ philosophical texts, which means that many might primarily know Levinas through the work of Bauman. When Bauman discusses Levinas, he mainly does so by referring to ‘a moral party of two’, thus many mistakenly think that Levinas’ theories ignore the aspect of justice and society. Levinas’ ethics is however not reducible to Bauman’s moral party of two, but holds a much more advanced philosophical reasoning on the interrelations between morality, ethics and justice (this interrelationship will be explored further in chapter 7). Still, Bauman has without doubt contributed to popularize Levinas and introduced him to the field of sociology.

Contemporary philosophers have also taken up the work of Levinas. Most noticeable is the Levinasian scholar Simon Critchley, who besides editing several volumes on Levinas (e.g. Bernasconi and Critchley, 1981, Critchley

and Bernasconi, 2002) also wrote independent books, which are indebted to Levinasian thinking. In 'The Ethics of Deconstruction' (Critchley, 1992), he discusses Levinas and Derrida together and developed the method of ethical deconstruction. In 'Infinitely Demanding' (Critchley, 2007), he discusses the work of Levinas along with Alain Badiou, Knud Ejler Løgstrup and Jacques Lacan. Another scholar, who wrote about the somewhat odd couple Lacan and Levinas, is David Ross Fryer, who analyzed ethical subjectivity in Levinas and Lacan in his book *The Intervention of the Other* (Fryer, 2004). Although my goal is to focus on a Levinasian analysis, these authors, especially the work of Critchley, have been important for writing this thesis.

Another field, which has been inspired by Levinas' ethics, is feminist philosophy. This attention is however not only positive as several feminists have criticized Levinas heavily for his limited view on women. Levinas, who's writings are otherwise very focused on respect and openness to otherness seem to completely exclude women from such an otherness.

And the other whose presence is discretely an absence, with which is accomplished the primary hospitable welcome which describes the field of intimacy, is the Woman. The woman is the condition for recollection, the interiority of the Home, and inhabitation. (Levinas, 1969: 155)

Levinas in this way distinguishes between the completely different, incomprehensible and unique other, who is capable of ethics (the man) and the feminine other (the woman), who is the warm welcome of the home, the safe haven, the loving womb.

The Other who welcomes in intimacy is not the *you* of the face that reveals itself in a dimension of height, but precisely the *thou* of familiarity: a language without teaching, a silent language, an understanding without words, an expression in secret. (Levinas, 1969: 150)

For Levinas, the true other can never be reduced to the same and is always incomprehensible and out of my reach. Thus, the other teaches me, speaks to me and opens up a new world to me and shows me the original thought. The woman, on the other hand, is reduced to gentleness and familiarity. She is outside of teaching, deprived the original thought and is reduced to the caretaker, the one who welcomes the stranger at home. As Chalier (1991: 122) argues, the feminine in Levinas becomes that which man requires in order to be capable of an ethical act. In this way, Levinas implies that the woman is not a 'true' Other in the sense that the feminine is the gentle, welcoming Other of the home, but not the radically different other belonging to the sphere of ethics. This position that excludes women from the ethical sphere has naturally created some debate in feminist circles. Luce Irigaray, is also very inspired by Levinas; an inspiration, which is most noticeable in her ethical piece 'An Ethics of Sexual Difference' (Irigaray, 2004). Especially Levinas' argument that the Other in Western philosophy has not been seen as Other because of itself, but as a not-same in relation to a totality has inspired her. Irigaray transfers this to feminism by arguing that the feminine has not been seen as a feminine Other, but as a not-masculine other (for an excellent analysis of the relationship between Irigaray and Levinas see Sandford, 2002). Irigaray in this way takes Levinas' theory of the non-categorizable Other and use it on the feminine Other, which he himself didn't include a 'true' Other. In this way, Irigaray's work is both a critique and an elaboration of Levinas' work. The importance of this body of literature is seen through the fact that an entire section in 'Re-reading Levinas' edited by Bernasconi and Critchley is devoted to feminism, where Irigaray (1991), Chalier (1991) and Chanter (1991) has written the chapters. Chanter has also edited a series on gender theory, where two interesting recent books by Diprose (2002) and Guenther (2006) draws on Levinas to discuss generosity and giving. As a final feminist writer inspired by Levinas, Judith Butler is also worth mentioning. Judith Butler is heavily

inspired by Michel Foucault and mainly engaged with feminist writings, queer theory and identity issues, but has in her latest book ‘Giving an Account of Oneself’ (Butler, 2005) taken up issues of ethics with significant inspiration from Levinas. In here she goes in to depth with giving an account of one self when self-knowledge is limited, but that a responsible person, is the person that tries despite the limitations. Although, this is just a minor part of Levinas’ work, she oddly enough didn’t comment on Levinas’ view on women in her book.

Levinas has also been criticized for his deeply religious grounded theory. Of these critical voices, Visker (2004) is one of the most dominant as he dedicates a whole book to problematize the concept of difference after Levinas (and Heidegger). One of Visker’s main objections against Levinas is the alleged highly religious argument in his ethics (I write alleged as there are, as we shall see beneath, very different opinions of this). Visker believes that it is impossible to read Levinas “whilst leaving God out of it” because “the Other is above me” (Visker, 2004: 11). Following Visker, to take God out of the context would reduce Levinas’ ethics to “the caricature that unfortunately still circulates, an at best endearing moralism, but floating in thin air” (Visker, 2004: 12). I believe however, that Visker is deeply mistaken on this point. In my opinion, Levinas’ Other cannot be reduced—or ‘enlarged’ if one will—to a divine Other. Levinas’ Other is most definitely also a human Other, a point which is also supported by for example Critchley (2002: 14). Fryer (2004: 34-35) points to the fact that Levinas has both a human and a divine Other, but criticizes Levinas for going too far, and believes that making God an idea of the Good is problematic. In Levinas’ earlier writings, the philosophical and the religious Jewish writings were separated, but in the later Levinas, the religious arguments have been more integrated in the philosophical works. The religious emphasis is therefore especially visible in for example *God, Death*



*and Time* (Levinas, 2000), where his ethics becomes much more bound up on a divine rhetoric. I believe that Levinas' Other is not to be characterized at all. It can be anything, even otherness within oneself (the way Butler, 2005 interprets Levinas). On this view, I think it is a mistake in itself to discuss whether it takes one or the other form, the Other simply has no predetermined form. This is also why I see no problem of 'leaving God out of it' as Visker (2004) would say. Levinas' ethics is about the passions and apathy of our everyday life (Critchley, 2002: 28) and therefore describes very well our problems in everyday encounters with the Other whatever form it may take. Critchley (2007), however, does take up the religious critique in his latest book. Although he still claims that some readers of Levinas mistakenly continue to believe that the Other is God (59) he also argues for the value of a psychoanalytical critique of Levinas, which can minimize "some of the metaphysical residua and religious pietism present in Levinas' text, but even more present in certain interpretations of those texts" (Critchley, 2007: 67).

Although I think that Visker is mistaken in many of his critical points to Levinas, he has a very good point in relation to the singularity of the Other. He asks:

what if these Others .... Are not satisfied with their status as "abstract human beings" "without any cultural ornament". What if the Other refuses to be just another (an Other) human, and insists on being a woman, on being black, homosexual...? ... Such a person does not want to be reduced to his/her ("different") skin-color, etc., *but also refuses to be detached from it* – insists on something that, in not being a thing, escapes full understanding, is not possessed. Cannot be determined (the way one determine whether a thing has such and such quality). (Visker, 2004: 181)

Visker does have a good point here, and touches the very heart of the problem of difference in both race and gender discussions. Because although people

want to be recognized for who they are, and not judged from the color of their skin, the sex they are born with or their sexuality, some might still want to be able to identify themselves through that exact category, which they also somehow try to escape. Thus, a big challenge for literature on minorities is how a minority group defines a difference they can be proud of, but also a difference, which is not receiving negative attention in the form of prejudices and judgments.

Visker's critique about Levinas' claims is however not alone. Levinas is often—and maybe to some extent rightly—criticized for being all about grand impossible claims. But what this critique misses is the fact that the impossibility is exactly the purpose of his ethics. His purpose is not to make a set of ground rules we can follow to make us ethical. Levinas' point is exactly to make us think and reflect about ethics and push it to its limits. Remind us of the fact, that we can never be ethical—or rather responsible—enough.

Despite inevitable critique, Levinasian ethics has made a solid impact on late 20<sup>th</sup> century ethics and will most likely continue to do so in the future. Levinas and his contemporaries and followers therefore also have an impact on how both ethics and business ethics is viewed. Even though business ethics still to a considerable degree relies on the abovementioned three traditional ethical approaches (teleology, deontology and virtue ethics), ethical perceptions are beginning to change. In the following, I will briefly relate Levinasian ethics to the traditional perspectives as well as show how this is beginning to change the focus in business ethics.

#### *4.11 Levinas and Traditional Ethics*

Levinasian ethics holds many differences from the traditional perspectives and Levinas has together with his contemporaries changed the way ethics and responsible behavior is perceived.

The difference from teleological perspectives of ethics is perhaps the most obvious as both the self-centeredness of egoism and the calculative method of utilitarianism go directly against Levinas' argument of the Other's singularity and the self's infinite responsibility towards this singularity. Following Levinas, one can never be responsible enough, and as a consequence there is not a certain amount of good deeds, which turns one into a responsible person. Likewise, responsibility can never be calculated or weighted against other actions. This would deny the Other his or hers singularity and alterity. As I will go into much more depth with in the next chapter on diversity management, categorizing and calculating totalizes the Other and reduces the Other to the same.

The difference from Aristotelian virtue ethics is centered on the impossibility of a categorical character. In virtue ethics, ethics is reflected in the responsible character. This character can be taught and when a person has learned how to behave according to the virtuous character he or she behaves ethically. This strongly contrasts Levinasian ethics as first philosophy where ethics lies before being and is never a 'mask' one can wear when appropriate. One could however make the argument that Levinasian ethics could be seen as a form of metaphysical virtue ethics, as openness towards the Other could be argued as a form of virtue to respond to the call of the Other. Still, in the way Aristotle and also more contemporary virtue ethicists formulate virtue ethics, its core is that it is possible to define virtuous characters and promote these by the proper training (or upbringing). This would for Levinas be an act of appropriation and

thematization and therefore disrespect for totalization of otherness. Defining virtuous characters is rather a reduction of this otherness.

The difference from Kant is however slightly less obvious as some might be led to argue that Levinas would agree with the basis of the categorical imperative; that every human being should be treated not as a mean but as a goal in it self (Critchley, 2007). The fundamental and very important difference, however, is based on Kantian autonomy orthodoxy (Critchley, 2007: 36). Levinas differs from Kant because the ethical experience is a demand that does not correspond to the subject's autonomy. Instead, it questions this very autonomy. Ethical experience is in this way heteronomous as the subject's autonomy is called into question by the fact of the other's demand that is not of the subject's own choice (Critchley, 2007: 56). In this way, Levinas argues for a heteronomous approach to the subject, where the sovereignty of the subject's autonomy is always seized by the heteronomous experience of the other's demand—a demand that it can never meet. This divides the subject and creates the experience which Critchley calls 'hetero-affectivity' as opposed to 'auto-affection' seen in the Kantian autonomy orthodoxy (Critchley, 2007: 40). Another more obvious difference from Kant is the fact that Kant relies heavily on universal rules, whereas Levinas sees universality as totalizing and appropriating the Other.

#### *4.12 The Response from Business Ethics*

Even though business still to a great degree relies on traditional approaches to ethics, the field is beginning to respond to the contribution of Levinas and similar contemporaries. One of the first signs of changes was when Cooper and Burrell (1988) published their article *Modernism, Postmodernism, and Organizational Analysis*. This was followed by an article dedicated to the

work of Foucault (Burrell, 1988) and another dedicated to the work of Derrida (Cooper, 1989). This work inspired management studies in general, but also the field of business ethics. One influential work signaling this was Parker (1998). It took a little longer for the work of Levinas to make an entrance to the business ethics field. Among the first to do this was for example Jones (2003), Aasland (2004), Jones et al. (2005), and Knights and O'Leary (2006). Levinas also received considerable attention at the conference 'Levinas, Business, Ethics' held in Leicester in 2005. Based on this conference, a special issue was published in the journal 'Business Ethics: a European Review' edited by Campbell Jones (2007). Here all the papers were dedicated to Levinas and business ethics and focused on themes as for example the face (Kaulingfreks and ten Bos, 2007), justice (Byers and Rhodes, 2007), the stranger (Karamali, 2007), as well as questioning the possibility of business ethics (Bevan and Corvellec, 2007). Subsequently, the author of this thesis has published on Levinas and business ethics in the areas of language and creativity (Muhr, 2007), love and HRM (Bojesen and Muhr, 2008), responsible decision making (Muhr, 2008b), health care responsibility (Lemmergaard and Muhr, 2009), ethical appropriation (Jeanes and Muhr, 2009), and diversity management (Muhr, 2008a).

Levinasian ethics is thus still relatively new to business ethics. Common to the above contributions is however that they all challenge the traditional ways of seeing business ethics as teleological, deontological or virtue ethics (Jones, 2007). In this way Levinasian business ethics questions the morality of defining rules and codes, of calculating good deeds or of defining 'good' behavior and 'good' characters. Levinasian ethics is not a system of ethics, which defines rules and guidelines of its own, but more precisely seeks to disturb or interrupt current views on ethics and by doing that seeking the

meaning of business ethics. Responsibility can never be determined or exhausted and thus rules are never enough (Muhr, 2008b).

Levinasian ethics must sound appealing to managers in need of ways to foster ethical awareness. After all, how can anyone fail to appreciate the force of an ethics of infinite humility and compassion? Still, no matter how strongly we reject rule, cost/benefit or virtue-based business ethics, there are also problems with a Levinasian inspired business ethics. Levinasian ethics is difficult to reject, however also difficult to enact in an organizational context. Since ethics is empowered, decentralized and arising in the face of the Other in the moral proximity, there is now no one to justify the morality of actions but the self. But is the human being moral enough for that? Is the human being morally capable of living this unconditional Levinasian responsibility? As Kaulingfreks (2005a) argues, that we are capable of a moral impulse does not necessarily mean that we are all good. It is not a universal impulse in the sense that every time I face the Other I feel morally responsible to the Other. Furthermore, I never know the consequences of my actions. I can non-intentionally cause evil. What do I do if my actions unintentionally harm the Other? Or how can I choose between two actions if both of them lead to the harm of another? Furthermore, is it human possible to feel affect for all people? What happens if the Other disgusts me? Again following Kaulingfreks (2005a) being face-to-face with the Other can very likely arouse hate and disgust, where he refers to Sartre's idea that 'hell is other people'. Encountering the Other might not imply a morale impulse as an ethical responsibility, but could as well arouse a violent impulse—a sickening, which can be just as pre-rational, non-intentional or beyond as Levinas' responsibility and Bauman's moral impulse. Is it not naive to think that we human beings are capable of such a task that a personal moral ascribes to us? Even if the answer is yes to these questions, if we believe that it is in fact

human possible to live by such an ethics, how do we develop a method of applying it without destroying the very personal foundation of the Levinasian ethics, which is exactly what makes it so unique? How do we overcome the problem of moral ambiguity raised here? What does it in practice mean to act based on a morality of proximity instead of a code or guideline? The only answer to this and the only way forward would be to learn to live with the *acceptance* of the ambivalence. Recognizing the ambivalence is the key, or as Levinas would say recognizing the otherness, and accepting the impossibility this implies, is the very foundation of ethics.

It is therefore important that the face of the Other not only signifies its own otherness, but also immediately and simultaneously reminds me of every other Other. As briefly mentioned above, many misinterpret Levinas and think that he only sees morality between two people. But the very important passage to the third—to humanity itself—is the key to understanding the sensibility of Levinasian ethics. As such, the radical asymmetry of the ethical claim immediately and simultaneously recalls the symmetrical claim for justice—even I am Other for others. Rules might be supportive for anybody who is facing a moral dilemma, however, solely following rules can never solve a moral dilemma. “We can only be moral subjects because we always choose how we subject ourselves to a particular rule” (ten Bos, 1997:1012). The strength of such an ethics lies, thus, not in its search for the universal categories and principals of equality, fairness and the like. Rather its strength lies in its ethical willingness to be disrupted by the proximity of the Other. Justice for Levinas is a normative term; it prescribes human responsibility and condemns egocentrism. Therefore, justice always depends on ethics as ‘first philosophy’ and starts with the call of the Other’s face. In other words, “justice well ordered begins with the Other” (Levinas, 1987a: 56). The encounter with the Other is the foundation of who we are as selves, and who

we are as Others, and the relation with the Other is therefore what constitutes community. Justice depends on our capability of feeling responsibility to the Other. Justice, and society are only possible because of an initial claim to proximity. This is what distinguishes us from animals—proximity, care and feelings. This means, as Van de Ven (2005) puts it, that nothing is outside of the domain of the responsibility to the Other. We are constantly thrown between our rational world and the empathy of morality. This ambiguity *makes* our lives. Levinas' work simply requires and relies on this inconsistency, the essentially ambiguous over and against the essentially unambiguous. The inconsistency or indeterminacy is a constitutive moment in the production of Levinas' text. Levinas therefore reminds us of the vulnerability of an ethical system and brings awareness to the productivity and the fundamental responsibility that lies in ambiguity and inconsistency. It is only by realizing this that we can be truly ethical; that we can overcome our self-evident categories and see each other as Others. It is only by realizing this fundamental flaw that we can let the Other interrupt our common sense; become something else; something more vulnerable and infinitely open.

I have now discussed Levinasian ethics, both its philosophical roots, its critics and its relations to business ethics. I will in the next chapter focus on diversity management—first its concepts and results, then its weaknesses and then how these can be analyzed differently through Levinasian ethics. As we have seen in this section, one of the aspects that distinguishes Levinasian ethics from traditional ethics, and one of the aspects, which has also been questioned in business ethics, is the attempt to categorize and appropriate ethical behavior. In the chapter that follows on diversity management categorization and appropriation will be discussed in more detail. Diversity management is a discipline founded on ethical theory and intended to be for the good of people—especially minorities. The next chapter will however show how



diversity management by relying on traditional ethical theories tries to categorize and thematize differences. This is done with the ethical desire to protect minorities, but end up appropriating them instead and reducing the difference it sets out to protect.

## **5 Diversity Management**

In organization studies, traditional definitions of diversity most often follow a common distinction between observable or readily detectable attributes such as race, age or gender, and diversity with respect to less visible or underlying attributes such as education, technical abilities, functional background, tenure in the organization, personality characteristics or values. One reason for differentiating between observable and non-observable types of diversity is that when differences between people are visible they are particularly likely to evoke responses that are due directly to biases, prejudices or stereotypes (Milliken and Martins, 1996). More specifically McGrath, Berdahl and Arrow (1995) divide diversity into five categories: 1) demographic diversity (gender, ethnicity and age), 2) organizational diversity (tenure, occupation and hierarchical level), 3) capability diversity (knowledge, skills and qualifications) 4) value diversity (culture and norms) and 5) personality diversity (type of psychological personality profile). This five dimensional categorization scheme is today by far the most used classification, perhaps because it supports the most specific definitions.

There have been conflicting results, however, as to whether an organization can benefit from diversity or not. As a result, the literature is vast in both disadvantages of diversity and advantages of diversity, thus, “diversity appears to be a double-edged sword, increasing the opportunity for creativity as well as the likelihood that group members will be dissatisfied and fail to identify with the group” (Milliken and Martins, 1996, p. 403). But why does this discrepancy exist? After a review of the existing literature, I will suggest that the discrepancy is due to a tendency to impose rigid categories on the phenomenon of diversity. In fact, the discrepancy is caused by an underlying

conceptual ambiguity in its categories. This paper suggests that an ethical approach to diversity should shift attention from categorisation to the acknowledgement of individual otherness. More specifically, the ethics of Levinas is suggested as a way of better understanding the underlying ethical concepts of diversity. I will identify the limitations and critical aspects of categorizing differences, and instead suggest an approach, which lets otherness disturb one's own stable diversity categories.

In chapter 6 these points will be further analysed in the story told by the lead consultant of the tabling of the new justice policy in South Africa. This story has very interesting ethical aspects, and I will show how the consultant made it possible for the people he coached to move from a categorical approach to diversity to an approach where individual differences were respected for their otherness.

### *5.1 Disadvantages of Diversity*

Many are skeptical of diversity because it threatens conflict and strains the cohesion and sociability of a well-functioning team. Overall analyses show that diversity is likely to foster miscommunication, intergroup anxiety and contrasting goals. These three disadvantages of team diversity will be reviewed below.

Diversity in organizations often causes different kinds of language barriers, which prevents communication. Miscommunication and the lack of a common language makes it difficult to engage in an exchange of ideas and questions, an exchange, which is essential for effective cooperation (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). If individuals carry out negative stereotyping of out-groups—and by doing that generating baseless perceptions of others—it may prevent them

from trusting and engaging with perceived dissimilar others, and may therefore threaten communication patterns within organizations. With interpersonal relationships and communication patterns underpinning knowledge sharing, diversity may this way obstruct creative practice. Justesen (2001) argues that miscommunication seems to arise when there is a lack of common context and language usage. That is, identity, culture, language and communication become inseparable, which makes communication one of the most important aspects to deal with in the context of diversity. One of the fundamental hypotheses of communication illustrates according to Gelfand, Triandis and Chan (1996) that when the receiver of a message belongs to another diversity category than the sender, the chances of precisely transferring and decoding a given message as it was initially anticipated, will be lower than if both receiver and sender belonged to the same diversity category. Diversity may, thus, prevent knowledge sharing and creative problem solving if the language is not translated, and therefore, leads to misunderstandings and miscommunication (Henderson, 1994). Thus, lack of communication and exchange of opinions and perspectives lead to limited understanding of the other's perspective and allow differences in values to create negative views about out-groups and conflict between co-workers.

Shaw et al. (1998) point out that heterogeneous groups experience more negative affect. To overcome stereotypes, social processes take considerable cognitive effort, and can make members anxious because of the increased negative affect. In a situation characterized by diversity, a variety of psychological mechanisms are seen to drive various aspects of intergroup anxiety, which by Northcraft, Polzer, Neale, and Kramer (1995) is defined as the discomfort individuals experience when interacting with people, who are perceived as belonging to another diversity category. Intergroup anxiety is, therefore, as Stephan and Stephan (1985) claim, the experience an individual

undergoes when encountering a perceived different. Anxiety in the team occurs when people identify themselves as placed among people belonging to different diversity categories. Thus, diversity will in this situation make it difficult for the individuals to identify with the team, since there is no unified perception of what values the team represents. Intergroup anxiety is therefore an emotional state, controlled by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension and worry regarding a potentially negative outcome. Anxiety is a state of heightened self-awareness, perceived helplessness and expectation of negative outcomes, which may manifest itself as feelings of discomfort, distress and fear. When in-group and out-group distinctions become visible, factors such as stereotyping, distrust and competition develop and according to Nkomo (1995) interfere destructively with performance. When diversity causes intergroup anxiety, members will find it difficult to make out a unique identity from their engagement in multiple diversity categories. It will, therefore, be difficult for an individual to match his identity in more than one category. Kossek and Lobel (1996) claim that individuals, who feel they work in a hostile environment, will feel more threatened and more likely to insist to maintain the identity of their perceived, and thereby making it more difficult to gain social integration with their co-workers. In addition, a number of studies have shown that diversity not only lowers levels of social integration but also increases employee turnover (Aldrich, 1999).

The categorization into specific in-groups and out-groups can have damaging effects on collective goals and objectives. In a diverse work setting, the values and perceptions of different diversity categories may be contrasting or even mutually exclusive, which is likely to bring about incongruence in goals. Incongruence in goals can limit communication, which is fundamental to the creation of interpersonal relationships and trust. Furthermore, as Justesen (2001) argues, goal incongruence may also prevent individuals from sharing

and combining knowledge all together, if they are not able to reach agreement on common goals for pursuing such knowledge processes. Henderson (1994) adds that when mutually exclusive goals obstruct interaction, it may result in one party winning by defeating or reducing the power of the other, in order to accomplish his goals. This win-loose situation may allow for knowledge to be exchanged, due to problems being solved according to the values of the 'winner'. However, a win-loose solution in contradicting goals will not be able to foster a combination of different values and perspectives, but will deny this creative practice of the benefits of diversity.

### *5.2 Pressures towards Homogeneity*

As shown above, diversity in organizations can lead to serious interpersonal tensions and conflicts, which are difficult and time consuming to solve. Maybe this is why Gergen, McNamee and Barret (2001) claim that there is a tendency to avoid those people who are different from oneself—especially when these people seem antagonistic to one's own way of living. People naturally seek homogeneity because they are more comfortable with similar people. Especially in situations where time and resources are scarce, people tend to seek individuals who are like themselves because it is easier and less time consuming to work with someone like oneself. From this tendency to seek what is like oneself, an overall tendency to homogeneity in self-chosen work settings or groups seem unavoidable. The literature has so far identified a great deal of factors that create a pressure toward such homogeneity, among others similarity attraction, homophily and conformity. These will be explained beneath.

Numerous factors have been associated with interpersonal attraction. One rather consistent factor is similarity of attitudes, beliefs and interests. People

tend to agree and comply with people they like (Hogg and Terry, 2000). Such reinforcement is according to Fisher (1981) evidently a pleasing experience causing people with similar attitudes to tend to like one another. That is, similarity is reassuring in that it reaffirms our beliefs, and serves as a signal that future interaction will be free of conflict. Furthermore, similarity engenders a sense of unity, all of which are interpersonally rewarding. Schneider's (1987) famous attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework suggests that individuals with similar personalities will tend to be found in the same work setting, as attraction to an organization, selection by it, and attrition from it yield particular kinds of persons in an organization. Schneider's (1987) basic argument is the claim that people are attracted to careers as a function of their own interests and personality. In the same way, people's preferred environments tend to have the same personality profile as they do themselves. Similar kinds of people are likely to have similar kinds of personalities, and often choose to do similar things, as well as they behave similarly. Thus, attraction to an organization and attrition from it is likely to moderate the diversity of people in an organization.

The likelihood of small teams to become increasingly homogeneous over time grows when team members already share much in common. This is due to the fact that members are more likely to share and discuss information, which they have in common, rather than sharing personal views and information. The views of the majority are, therefore, amplified by this frequency-dependent bias, and those of the minority further suppressed, and thereby, reducing the variety of views in the team. Once developed, routines are fairly resistant to change among other things because they—as mentioned above—simplify member's lives (Aldrich, 1999). Ruef, Aldrich, and Carter (2003) clarify, that the similarity of individuals disposes them toward a greater level of personal attraction, trust and understanding and consequently greater levels of social

affiliation, than would be expected among dissimilar individuals. Individuals are usually more comfortable with people perceived to be similar to the self. Another expression of homophily is the fact that managers tend to recruit people similar to them, and that organizations tend to attract people who believe that the organizations' members are similar to themselves. Once inside an organization, members get to know one another better, and they remain according to Aldrich (1999) satisfied members as long as their initial judgment of similarity is retained. If differences are perceived as unpleasant or tension creating, the most dissimilar will often be encouraged to leave to retain group harmony. Over time these processes create psychologically homogeneity. New members discover fairly quickly that they do not fit into the setting well, therefore, the likelihood of quitting is higher in the early years of a member's tenure than in later years. In this way, homophilic selection forces tend to reduce internal variability and instead create a pressure towards homogeneity.

Conformity as defined by Kiesler and Kiesler (1969:2) is 'a change in behavior or belief toward a team as a result of real or imagined team pressure, and thus, involves an alteration of behavior and belief toward a team'. As West (2004) indicates, team members are subject to social conformity effects causing them to withhold opinions and information contrary to the majority view – especially if the majority view is an organizationally dominant view. More specifically, conformity entails an alteration that occurs as a result of group pressure, which is 'a psychological force operating upon a person to fulfill others' expectations of him, especially those expectations of others relating to the person's roles or to behaviors specified or implied by the norms of the team to which he belongs' (Kiesler and Kiesler, 1969:32). When people try to conform to a team of others, for example by trying to get others to like them, they often attempt to express opinions similar to those of the other, to agree with the other. People apparently develop a strong need to be personally



and socially 'correct' in their behaviour and opinions. To further ensure the continuation of a team, they will attempt to avoid conflict with the others resulting in conformity of individual goals. People in a common situation will, therefore in time, come to perceive themselves as similar to each other. This, plus the motive to be 'at one' with the others, will result in the feeling that 'we' are a team. West (2004) illustrates that most people would go along with the majority view, even though they are aware that this is the incorrect line. There are according to Nemeth (1997) two primary reasons for adopting majority viewpoints, even when incorrect. One is that people assume that truth lies in numbers and are quick to infer that they themselves are incorrect when faced with a unanimous majority. The other reason is that they fear disapproval and rejection for being different. When individuals are faced with a majority they search for information in a biased manner, as they consider primarily information that confirms the majority position.

### *5.3 Advantages of Diversity*

Although homogeneity, as shown above, may have useful effects on the team members' possibility to get along with one another, homogeneity, as argued by Aldrich (1999) limits the variety of views and capabilities within a team, and may decrease an organization's ability to react creatively to challenges or problems. In contrast, several analyses have shown that groups made up of people with different cultural and educational backgrounds, different personalities, different professional backgrounds and different skills are potentially more creative and innovative than relatively homogeneous teams. Tjosvold and Wedsley (1986) found in a field study that constructive controversy characterizes successful decision making in organizational situations. In the last decades many more studies have supported the idea that diversity can be constructive as it improves creativity of decision-making and

problem solving. These studies have proved diversity to cause variations and originality and to help avoiding groupthink, which will be reviewed below.

The most apparent result, which diversity is supposed to create is variations - variations in perceptions, values, ideas, opinions, and methods, which are highly essential for developing a stimulating creative environment. According to Aldrich (1999), any deviation from routine or tradition is a variation—the higher the frequency of variations, the better the opportunities for change. Campbell (1960) argues that the existence of variation in fact is fundamental to all inductive achievements and to all increases in knowledge. Therefore, diversity, and the variation it causes, is fundamental to the process of change. The only way we can move ahead is by performing continual breakout from the bounds of what was already known, a breakout for which variation provides the only mechanism available. Pursuing diversity is important because it helps generate and sustain organizational heterogeneity that would otherwise disappear because of pressures to homogeneity. Organizational variation is a result of organizational values, which according to Aldrich (1999) include an allowance for irrational every day behavior manifested in experimentation, playfulness, laughter and forgetting, mistakes, luck, imitation, passion, misunderstandings, surprises, idle curiosity and randomness.

Several studies have been conducted on the influence of majority and minority viewpoints (e.g. Nemeth, 1983, Nemeth, 1986, Nemeth, 1997, Nemeth et al., 2001, Nemeth and Kwan, 1985, Nemeth and Kwan, 1987, Nemeth and Wachtler, 1983), where a number of experimental designs reveal that subjects exposed to minority views are more creative than subjects exposed to majority views. The presence of dissenting minority views seem to stimulate more originality than the individual would ordinarily manifest (Nemeth and Kwan,

1985). Additionally, Nemeth et al. (1983) discovers that subjects exposed to a minority view are specifically stimulated to make novel judgments and to find new solutions to a problem. Majority influence, on the other hand, is seen to force a decision between two alternatives, the position of the majority or the information from one's own senses. Subjects either conform exactly to the majority view or tend to remain independent. That is, the experience of a majority view seems to restrict creativity, as it exerts a powerful pressure to conform. In another study Nemeth et al. (1987) found that majority influence narrows the range of considerations to solve a problem, and for minority influence to widen the range of considerations to include novel strategies. Nemeth (1997) continues by arguing that one must feel free to deviate from expectations, to question shared ways of viewing things, in order to evidence creativity - one must be able to look 'outside the box' to find new insights. Minority viewpoints have importance and power, not just for the value of the ideas themselves but also for their ability to stimulate creative thoughts. Thus, one must learn not only to respect and tolerate dissent—but to welcome it. Besides leading to more creativity, minorities tend to have a more positive reaction on diversity initiatives (Kossek and Zonia, 1993). That is, they are more open to co-workers' diversity, which again affect the willingness to express divergent views.

The restraint of a locked majority view has been further analyzed under the term groupthink. The term groupthink was invented by Janis (1972), who suggested that highly cohesive groups may be 'victims of groupthink'. The independent judgments of individual members are affected by the group's level of cohesiveness. Members seek the group's judgment in the belief that the judgments on which group members concur are inevitably superior to judgments made by any one member. In this way members employ group thought as the basis or standard for determining their own individual thinking.

Members thus suspend their own critical thinking in favor of group beliefs, which stems from concurrence. They probably feel implicitly that their group is invulnerable to bad decisions. One of the characteristics of groupthink is strong in-group loyalty and a belief that people outside their own group are less capable and less aware of important information. Also, the phenomenon of groupthink gives members an illusion of unanimity. Groupthink typically implies ineffective or poor decision-making. The ineffectiveness of the decision-making process results from the members' suspension of their critical faculties blinded by the goal of consensus. A period of interaction involving conflict over ideas and critical idea testing is normal and typical of the group process. Groupthink, however, short-circuits this natural group process and proceeds directly to agreement, which is likely to result in decisions of poor quality. Groupthink is, thus, a phenomenon that inhibits conflict and results in defective and low quality decisions that achieve consensus. As Chatman, Polzer, Barsade and Neale (1998) argue, individuals sacrifice themselves in favor of the group. Increasing sense of in-group membership causes a de-personalization of the self, as the individual member perceives himself as an interchangeable archetype of the social category. Members of strong in-groups are more likely to cooperate with in-group members and to compete against out-group members. Nemeth et al. (2001) also finds that groups often make agreements at the expense of quality of discussions or decisions. People converge both in the rate of ideas and the type of ideas that are generated. In her 2001 analysis she attempts to identify solutions to escape groupthink. Janis (1972) offered several recommendations for escaping groupthink including the use of outside experts, meetings of subgroups, and the use of devil's advocate, where the role of the devil's advocate is to purposely criticize plans and ideas under consideration by a group, to force them to think twice and produce better arguments. The hope is that such dissent will thwart the rush to judgment and instead foster discussion, a consideration of more alternatives and careful examination of the available information.

#### *5.4 Discrepancy in Results*

From the above review, it becomes clear that diversity management theory is characterized by conflicting results. This discrepancy seems to point to the fact that even though diversity is fundamental for creativity, there is still a strong need for safety, trust and understanding among people in a group, which is best achieved when people are alike. Therefore, although diversity offers the possibility of enhancing organizational creativity, work groups will not truly benefit from diversity unless sufficient communication, trust and openness are available to enable different group members to feel comfortable in expressing their unique opinions and perspectives (Eigel and Kuhnert, 1996). If they are not able to trust and communicate with co-workers belonging to other diversity categories, they will not be able to engage in what Leonard-Barton (1998) calls 'shared problem solving', perceived to be one of the most important aspects of creative practice.

Nevertheless, most of the literature (see for example Pelled et al., 1999) agrees on one thing: that diversity causes conflicts. While some might think of conflict as a liability to the interaction process, Fisher (1981) claims that the opposite is more accurate. The 'perfect' social system free from conflict is not likely to succeed because of its inflexibility, its difficulties in coping with environmental stresses and thereby for growth and progress. Social conflict inevitably requires social interaction, thus, the lack of social conflict in organizations is most likely an indication of low involvement or commitment of group members. Social conflict also increases cohesiveness in an organization by providing an outlet for hostility. The more inhibited the group members are in expressing their feelings, the greater the frustration they experience because of their suppressed conflict. Thus, social conflict may, according to Fisher (1981), in fact serve as a form of releasing social tension.

Interpersonal conflict is, thus, an essential, inevitable part of organizational life. Whetten, Cameron, and Woods (1996) argue that organizations, in which there are few conflicts, generally have little success in competitive environments. Members are either so homogeneous that they are poor at adapting to change or so satisfied with status quo that they see no need to change or improve their work.

Jehn (see Jehn, 1995, Jehn, 1997, Jehn and Bezrukova, 2004, Jehn et al., 1999) distinguishes between two types of conflict. In several empirical studies she found that organizational members generally differentiate between task focused and relationship focused conflicts, and that these two types of conflict affect cooperation between organizational members different from each other.

Task related conflict can according to Jehn (1997, 2004) improve performance through improved understanding of diverse viewpoints and creative options. Task conflict improves productivity and creativity by increasing decision quality through constructive criticism, careful evaluation of alternative solutions and ideas and in depth questioning by team members. Organizations use members' capabilities and prior knowledge better when the conflict is task focused, rather than when conflict is absent or relationship focused. Moderate levels of task conflict are therefore perceived to be constructive, since they stimulate discussions of ideas that help organizations perform better. When task conflict is absent, organizations may miss new ways to enhance their performance, while very high levels of task conflict might interfere with task completion. Van de Vliert et al. (1999) suggested that too little task conflict can lead to inactivity because a sense of urgency is lacking. In a similar manner Janssen, Van de Vliert, and Veenstra (1999) suggest that task oriented disagreement rather than consensus appears to facilitate discussions which prevent groupthink.

Empirical research (see Jehn, 1995, Jehn, 1997, Jehn and Bezrukova, 2004, Jehn et al., 1999) shows a negative association between relational conflict, productivity and satisfaction in teams. Relationship conflict interfere with task related effort because members focus on reducing threats, increase their power and therefore attempt to build cohesion rather than working on the task. Relationship conflict decreases goodwill and mutual understanding, which hinders the completion of organizational tasks, and is negatively correlated with employee satisfaction (Jehn, 1997).

### *5.5 A Changing Perspective on Diversity*

To sum up, diversity in a team of people inevitably causes conflicts, and it seems that it most likely will involve both task and relational conflict. Therefore, the findings drawn from this literature review is that diversity can be both destructive and constructive. Even though researchers agree on the fact that diverse groups should—and sometimes do—both emphasize their differences and become socially integrated, how this happens remains unclear (see for example Polzer et al., 2002). Conflict theory, however, has contributed the insight that task related conflicts are constructive whereas conflicts on a personal level are destructive for an organization's creative performance (e.g. Janssen et al., 1999, Jehn and Bezrukova, 2004). It therefore implies that the success of a diverse work team is dependent on how people in a team perceive and handle diversity and the conflicts that it inevitably leads to. This is supported by Ely and Thomas (2001: 234), who found that a group's diversity perspective, which is “the group members' normative beliefs and expectations about cultural diversity and its role in their workgroup”, affects how people express and manage tensions related to cultural identity diversity and whether minorities feel respected and valued in the organization. The work of Ely and Thomas (2001) stresses the importance of perception in

the diversity debate. This argument is then further developed by Polzer et al. (2002), who find that interpersonal congruence—constituted by the degree of similarity of a person’s self-views and other’s appraisal of that person—moderates the impact of diversity on group processes and creative performance. In a similar manner Barsade (2002) found a ripple effect of emotional contagion; that is, not only cognitive aspects but also emotional perceptions of diversity have an effect on performance. More explicitly, Barsade (2002) found that the positive emotional contagion that group members experienced, improved cooperation, decreased conflict, and increased perceived task performance.

### *5.6 An Ethical Approach*

As shown above, diversity introduces both potential bases for social cleavage and increased productivity. Therefore, as Reagans and Suckerman (2001) correctly state, diversity is not inherently an either-or phenomenon. Diversity only creates negative conflicts if the differences influence the way the individual is perceived by others. In some situations, differences might not be noticed and they therefore don’t cause negative conflicts. Ghiselin (1995) argues that problems often arise because team members are likely to assume that differences are in conflict. Often, many of the opinions of different team members might not be as opposing as they initially seem to appear; diversity may thus well be a question of perception. The problem with the categorical view is that demographic variation easily can be a symptom of variation in underlying and invisible processes, which makes it difficult to divide diversity into sterile categories (Kilduff et al., 2000). In relation to creativity, therefore, it does not make much sense to categorize diversity, since it is not the category of diversity that explains the outcome of the situation but the way diversity is perceived and handled. Diversity categorizations do not in themselves affect how an individual acts and interacts. It only affects organizational action if the



demographic differences influence the way the individual is categorized by others. One could extend the argument by suggesting that it is often the categorization and stereotyping of differences, which causes the diversity or at least creates greater awareness to the existence of diversity. Shaw et al. (1998) points out that diversity arises only if the realization that ‘I am not like you’ becomes significant and draws attention to the characteristics that represent those differences.

This implies a change in perspective of diversity away from the rigid categorisations that traditionally dominate the field. I follow this idea but argue further that the change in perspective reveals an ambiguity in the underlying concepts of diversity management, which has caused the visible discrepancy in the field. The visible discrepancy explains the conflicting results between the safety of social integration and the creativity of diversity. On the one hand a team requires social integration to secure an atmosphere of safety and openness to avoid personal conflicts. On the other hand, teams need diverse viewpoints to ensure creative problem solving. These two bodies of literature have had difficulties in coming to terms with each other, which has created an unexplored grey area between them. This chapter will argue that the discrepancy creating the grey area of betweenness can be traced back to a conceptual ambiguity. The remainder of the chapter will investigate this grey area of betweenness. By applying a Levinasian ethical approach, I will show how the grey area can be clarified and how Levinasian ethics can bring together social integration and creativity in diversity management. This rests primarily on the perception that diversity is affected by two parameters: visible differences, but also the much more incomprehensible ‘otherness’.

Based on the above discussion and inspired by Raghuram and Garud (1996) I define diversity as constructed by the individual who, on the basis of his or her

continuous identity constructions, perceives others as similar or dissimilar. Diversity should not only be determined in terms of different static demographic differences, but as a construction and a doing seen to direct the way members of the team act and interact. Diversity is therefore not solely an objective measurable entity as often assumed by the field and its heavy emphasis on experimental data and statistical analysis. Rather, it contains fragments that are situated, context-specific and affected by relational processes. It is these fragments that create the ambiguity in the field. As conflict theory showed, how people in a group personally perceive and approach differences may offer a key to unravel the ambiguity. It may also allow us to reach deeper and more subjective levels of analysis and gauge the importance of whether they are open or hostile to difference.

I therefore return to the ethics of Levinas, where the unique individual is at the centre of attention and where difference and otherness is promoted. As we learned earlier, Levinas argues that everybody is different; everybody is an Other and to understand the relationship between the self and the Other better is to acknowledge the ethical element in the infinite difference this encounter implies. Ghiselin (1995) argues, that perceiving all differences among people as the same makes diversity a benign, almost meaningless concept. Yet, the effects of diversity are not benign. Levinasian ethics also rejects such a categorization of differences and emphasizes that the Other—instead of the same—signifies that every other person I meet is different from and other than me.

In line with the conformity argument, Levinas stresses that there is a strong human tendency toward an egocentric attitude and to think of other individuals either as different versions of oneself, or as alien objects to be manipulated or illuminated (Wild, 1969). Thus, otherness or alterity is often perceived as a

temporary interruption that one must attempt to eliminate by incorporating it into the self. In fact, this urge for conformity is an attempt to reduce the Other to the Same. After all, neither of these egocentric views—of manipulation and illumination—do justice to our original experience of the other person as Other. “The absolutely other is the Other. He and I do not form a number. The collectivity in which I say ‘you’ or ‘we’ is not a plural of the ‘I’” (Levinas, 1969: 39). The Other for Levinas, can therefore not be contained in a ‘we’ or a ‘they’ for that matter; the Other is never a mere object to be included in one of my categories. Instead, if I focus on the Other’s otherness, I may find him be essentially different from me. Due to the alterity and strangeness of the Other, the relationship with the Other is, therefore, never an “idyllic and harmonious relationship of communion” (Levinas, 1987b: 75). If that were the case, it would mean that the Other was reduced to the same, a situation similar to groupthink. The relationship with the Other is instead always of an ethical nature, as our relationship is shaped by whether I ‘let the Other be Other’ or whether I try to reduce other people to the same by stereotyping them. Nemeth et al. (2001) stressed the importance of the minority’s ability to feel free to deviate from expectations. Drawing on Levinas, Jones et al. (2005: 75) turns it into an ethical issue by asking, “how can I treat a person ethically if I do not acknowledge his difference of being an Other?” This acknowledgement of the Other, and the fact of letting the Other be Other, is a central part of the ethics of Levinas.

What Levinasian ethics therefore can bring to diversity management is an emphasis on the importance of acknowledging the Other’s otherness. Levinas teaches us to defy our basic human instinct of homophily and conformity when working with diverse others. As we saw in the section on pressures toward homogeneity, there are several basic human instincts that make us seek people who are similar to ourselves (e.g. Aldrich, 1999, Ruef et al., 2003). It is

easier and less time consuming to be with people who are like us. However, homogeneity does not promote creativity (Pelled et al., 1999, Shaw and Barret-Power, 1998). On the contrary it may have the opposite effect: stagnation. In a similar manner, we should as humans defy the urge to reduce otherness to sameness. The Other is first of all always different from me and is not an object to be either illuminated or dominated. In short, applying Levinasian ethics can be a method of avoiding relational conflict and encouraging task conflict by promoting a culture of openness to the Other, to the otherness of diversity.

### 5.7 *Otherring Diversity*

So far we have learned that the alterity of the Other doesn't necessarily depend on specific qualities. There is much more to a person than what initially appears, and it is a limitation and a simplification to barely classify him according to his appearance. "The invoked is not what I comprehend: *He is not under a category*" (Levinas, 1969: 69, original italics). Instead of viewing other people according to how they appear; Levinas views them as Other and how they are in themselves in their radical otherness, even though this is, as John Wild in the introduction to *Totality and Infinity* argues, "less certain and always more difficult to find" (Wild, 1969: 16). Categories are discovered on the basis of human qualities, but the qualities are in lived experience, which is temporal (Levinas, 1981: 31), therefore, categories can never represent human qualities. The alterity of the Other does not depend on any quality that would distinguish him from me, for a distinction of this nature would precisely imply a sameness which, would have already nullified alterity. Categorization, as suggested by Kaulingfreks (2005b, p. 40), is denying man of all his creativity, the strength to wonder and his ability to change.

Gastelaars (2002: 14) points out that these categorical procedures, through statistical association, may produce stigmatization and thereby help confirm precisely what they originally set out to redress. This is also what Butler (1999) is getting at in her analyses of gender. Here, she claims that the feminine subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation. By this argument both Gastelaars and Butler lead our attention to the fact that by constructing categories to protect so-called minority identities; e.g. women, blacks, immigrants, these categories end up not protecting them, but instead constructing them as minorities. If, as Introna (2007) argues, the Other is reduced to fit into my categories or themes, the Other can no longer disturb the self-evidentness of those categories, and the benefits from diversity disappear. In line with this, Butler (1999) argues that instead of creating ever new categories, which are meant to 'fit' the subject 'better', categories all together should be problematized. Still more 'correct' and 'nuanced' categories would not give a better understanding of the individual, but would be just as restricting the minute they are expressed and established. This seems to be the root of the problem in diversity management. All the field of diversity management has managed to do so far is setting up ever new categories to investigate further into the differences of people. What the field hasn't seen yet, and what this analysis tries to point to, is that this categorization could very well be the root to the ambiguity all together.

Levinasian ethics therefore re-personalizes diversity management. Instead of categorizing individuals in in-groups and out-groups, and tying a person to a stable diversity category, individuals are perceived as always different from each other. Because the Other can never be included in a 'we', a sense of 'we' is always false and neglects the parts of individuals that will always differ depending on the situation. Focus is in this way moves from categorical

difference to otherness, where difference is ontological and visible, whereas otherness is transcendent or metaphysical. Fournier (2002) has explored this distinction further and points out that categorical differences can be compared, connected and evaluated, whereas “otherness is defined by the disconnection of the ‘not’” (Fournier, 2002: 69), of not belonging somewhere specific and always disconnecting from categories. Otherness works through interruption and disconnection rather than translation and calculation. It is a difference that cannot be directly recognized, and it therefore resists capture by categories. “It is a difference that is not to be called into a named presence but remains absent” (Fournier, 2002: 82). Categorical differences are thematized. Otherness, however, is forever absent and can never be thematized. This means that it disappears behind its manifestations. The origin of terms, their principle is always elsewhere (Levinas, 1969: 65), that is they are always hiding as a metaphysical saying in the ontological said. Otherness is not always constituted by social categories (Fournier, 2002: 83)—it precedes social categories. It has “the ability to remain a veiled ‘not’” (Fournier, 2002: 84), i.e., to not be uncovered. Difference is what can be read out of categories or seen in what Levinas calls the plastic face, that is, the visible appearance. Otherness is what appears in the Other’s face as the expression of the moral call. The face is the impression of otherness I receive when facing the Other and acknowledging his difference in the moment. It is in the face of the Other that the ethical call is heard.

### *5.8 Ethics Clarifying the Betweenness*

After the conceptual clarification, which provided us with the distinction between categorical difference and otherness, it is obvious that diversity management theory has been focused on the visible categorical differences, which can be compared, connected and evaluated; that means, managed. The distinction has furthermore drawn our attention to the argument that focusing

on managing these differences in fact creates more differences. Czarniawska and Höpfl (2002) argue along similar lines when they note that several management diversity initiatives—aimed at reducing inequality at the work place—in fact promote inequality exactly by, as this chapter has pointed out, making differences visible. “The management of diversity is a tautology which subordinates difference by reducing it to taxonomic structures and gives it a place within a system of categories” (2002: 2). What we can learn from Levinas in this relation is to pay attention to the ethical foundation of diversity; not the implications. Openness to diversity and that, which is different—manifested as the radically different Other—is the foundation of successful organizational diversity. For individuals to be creative and contribute with their unique views they must feel comfortable in their diversity and feel respected and free to self-differentiate in order not to develop personal conflicts with their fellow organizational members. The starting point of openness to diversity is, therefore, to acknowledge the otherness of the Other, let the other person be Other, and not reduce the Other to what the Other is not—the same. Levinas expresses this as a responsibility for the Other. Perhaps more specifically, responsibility must be taken to support the Other’s otherness, i.e., to support and promote diversity. This implies being response-able (Eskin, 2000) to the other person, that is, able to respond to another person in an ethical manner. The challenge is to welcome the Other, as hospitality in accepting the Other for who the Other is, not assimilating otherness into the self. Therefore focus must be changed from ‘managing’ *differences among people* to ‘respecting’ *otherness within them*.

We are in search, then, of a situation where organizational members can express their differences openly, self-differentiate, and thus identify themselves from within in the encounter with otherness and not according to an external category. If others respect the otherness I, as a self, need, to be

who I am, it is more likely that others see me similar to how I see my self. If these views are similar, there is, according to Polzer et al. (2002), a greater likelihood of a well-functioning team. Additionally, as Nemeth et al. (2001) argued, that if one feels free to deviate and is exposed to others' minority views, the group will more likely feel happy, comfortable and inspired when compared to groups that are exposed to strong majority views, which will not allow for otherness, and are more likely to feel fear, awkwardness, embarrassment and frustration—all feelings which are limiting for the functioning and performance of the team.

The key issue for the functioning of the diverse organization is therefore the ethical approach of letting the other be Other—letting the Other deviate and appreciate this deviation. We should let the Other deviate and let go of the constant urge to manage these differences. For, as Fournier (2002: 68) argues, under the inclusionary embrace of management, otherness seems to dissolve into a play of differences just to be celebrated or remedied. If an organization can succeed in welcoming otherness instead of only managing categorical differences, it will allow for the creative task conflict and increase the possibility of avoiding the two extremes: groupthink and personal conflict. The element of the ethical encounter with the Other is crucial in order to not either reduce the Other to the same, that is, an assimilation, or to engage in personal conflict due to miscommunication or intergroup anxiety. The organization must evolve legitimacy for the fact of being different. Instead of fearing alterity, the organization members should encourage the Other as an individual creative person by acknowledging the otherness within a person. We learn from Levinas that if we open up to the Other we not only treat other people ethically, but they might even inspire us. Recognizing the Other's otherness holds the key to breaking with our common sense; to our own transformation. Levinas teaches us to feel response-able to the Other, and thus



become aware of and value the arbitrary views and attitudes diversity might bring us. For as Fournier (2002: 69) points out, “the Other can only remain a ‘not’ by continuously shifting grounds, by withdrawing from the categories of difference within which it is framed, and moving somewhere else”.

### *5.9 Categorical Differences and Non-categorical Otherness*

This chapter has reviewed the diversity management literature. It showed a discrepancy in the field, as one body of literature argued that diversity leads to creativity and another argued the opposite, that diversity destroys group processes and diminishes creativity. This discrepancy stems from the tendency to view diversity in terms of categorizable human differences. In viewing diversity as a categorical phenomenon, the field encounters a conceptual ambiguity between categorical differences and otherness. The reason for the visible discrepancy in the field is in fact due to an underlying ambiguity in the concept of diversity. Thus an understanding of the underlying philosophical concepts can help clarify the conceptual ambiguity. In this way, diversity is sometimes understood as categorical differences and sometimes as non-categorical otherness. The first destroys creativity by reducing diversity to sameness. The latter, which does not homogenize diversity, but instead acknowledges otherness, is the creative part of diversity. The ethics of Levinas can be used to argue for a shift from a cognitive approach to an ethical or emotional approach. To conclude this chapter, my argument is twofold:

First, I want to raise awareness to phenomena that are not measurable. Research on diversity can and should be supplemented with a focus on the inconsistencies and disconnections that are in otherness rather than clear and stable patterns of diversity categorization. Ultimately there is no universal cognitive process in diverse groups that produces group conflict. Instead,

phenomena derive their meaning from the encounter with the Other, which occurs in every day practices; that is, it is found in the concrete contexts involving other people. Therefore, to move beyond the obvious discrepancy that research in diversity so far has brought us, existing literature needs to be supplemented with different approaches in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of human processes, which inevitably trouble the researchers in the field. This chapter has suggested that categories limit people, restrict behavior and neutralizes otherness, and offered the argument that diversity management must cultivate an ethics of otherness to foster creativity. Creativity in organizations depends not only on ‘managing’ *differences among* people, but on ‘respecting’ *otherness within* them. And implicit in this, the recognition that there is much more to a person than what initially appears. Diversity management must be ‘othered’ and taken beyond the obvious categorization of differences; even beyond management, and back to the Other, who *resists* being managed. Difference can be managed, otherness cannot; it is beyond the categories, and it is time for diversity to separate itself from the compulsiveness of management and celebrate what it is, namely, something radically Other.

The second argument is deduced from the first. In separating categorical differences and non-categorical otherness, an ethical discussion of acknowledging the other person as Other was initiated. This contribution is a natural continuation from the first as ‘othering’ diversity in Levinasian terms inevitably involves the ethical acknowledgement of the Other’s otherness. Working with diversity is about the encounter with other people, and since it is relying on the avoidance of personal conflict, it must be a question of how we as human beings encounter the Other—encounter our fellow organizational members, who are bound to be different and Other from ourselves. Levinas’ ethics is a message, not only to welcome the Other’s strange otherness, but

also to allow oneself to be inspired and changed by experiencing the otherness of the Other—to expose oneself to the Other’s response and questioning, to become response-able. Responsibility for the Other is a recognition of the infinite difference between us and thereby disturbs the self-evidentness of my categories, takes me by surprise—brings me novelty and inspires creativity. Levinas shows us what to focus our research on in the future. If we are to enjoy the creativity of our differences without the feeling of anxiety, group pressure, frustration or embarrassment, we must move away from dominant majorities and rigid stereotyping, and acknowledge the infinite possibility that the Other might bring. But it demands that we let go of our fear of that which is different and learn to embrace the strangeness of the Other. The ethical relationship with the strange Other is the future.

I have therefore analyzed diversity management in two ways. First of all, by identifying an ambiguity in the use of the concept ‘diversity’, which caused the visible discrepancy in the field. In viewing diversity as differences to be categorized, it—probably unintentionally—‘erased’ those differences in a normalizing and homogenizing process of categorization. A non-ethical approach to diversity can only manage diversity away from creativity. That is, diversity management ultimately neutralizes the very differences it had set out to promote. Second, I propose that focusing on otherness instead of differences could build a bridge between the two bodies of literature. Levinas’ concept of ethics as the unconditional acknowledgement of the Other’s otherness and the novelty this can bring to the world of the self, brings together both the creativity of diversity and the feeling of group safety and trust. Ethical management is thereby the way to cultivate the advantages that follow from diversity. Organizational diversity is in this way always about encountering the Other, who, by definition, is always other, and always overturns and overwhelms my categories.

## **6 A Diversity Case: Building the ‘Rainbow Nation’**

The empirical material in this thesis rests on stories from South Africa told to me by a senior consultant from the Danish Institute of Human Rights, who was the lead consultant of the team who tabled the justice policy in South Africa after apartheid as well as build up the justice department itself as an organization. In building the new justice department the former ‘white’ and new ‘non-white’ leaders of South Africa had to face each other after a long period of time with apartheid, oppression and resistance. Faced with each other and the history they shared they had to come to an agreement regarding the new justice policy. This is a case where people’s differences played a very significant role for the outcome of the project and is therefore an excellent example of how conflicts and ethics come to play an important role in the attempt of managing organizational diversity.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the background for the stories, that is the apartheid regime, the fall of it, and the ideologies behind the rebuilding of the country through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. After in this way setting the scene, I will retell the consultant’s stories and subsequently analyze these in the light of Levinasian ethics.

### *6.1 The Apartheid Regime*

Although racial segregation has existed in South Africa from the start of imperialism, that, which was known as the Apartheid regime, started formally with the electoral victory of the Nationalist Party (NP) in 1948. Apartheid was therefore a system of legalized racial segregation enforced by the South African government between 1948 and 1994, but as early as 1901 legal

measures forced almost all black South Africans to move into special created African Townships. Later, the segregation politics developed into an influx control aimed to prevent anyone classified as black, who was not born in a city, to become a permanent resident in one (Burman and Schärf, 1990). Under the apartheid system a 'race classification' was defined, which divided South Africans into four main groups: White, Black, Asian and Colored (Colored primarily includes descendants of Indonesians and Indians, who came to South Africa together with the Dutch colonists) (Burman and Schärf, 1990). In my analyses, I mainly use the term non-whites. The white minority was 100% in political power. They mainly discriminated against Blacks, but also Asian and Colored were affected by apartheid and thus the use of the term non-whites.

The segregation policy resulted in a very strict segregated living, which made it difficult for the isolated black population to get access to for example legal advice. As a result, each township developed its own informal police (also known as home guards) as well as their own justice system. In this way informal courts developed all over South Africa. These were known as street committees and later people's courts established by the Cape Town youth in 1985. Due to the inaccessibility to the justice systems for South Africa's black population, the informal courts became the primary locus of regulation for this population (Lindsnæs et al., 2008).

The informal courts mainly dealt with domestic cases and most often refused to take on so-called blood cases, that is murders, stabbing etc. Officially, street committees were not allowed to exercise physical punishments or fines, however, the police were unlikely to intervene and left it more or less up to the street committees to decide on cases. This meant that they in time developed their own punishment system. This punishment system was unique in the

sense that it was said to be less impersonal and alienating as it heavily emphasized education by demonstrating to the wrongdoer that a caring community was awaiting when the punishment was over. After completing the punishment, the wrongdoer most often got accepted into the group of supporters surrounding the court, and the punishment system functioned in this way as a form of recruitment system to the street committees (Burman and Schärf, 1990).

In the beginning of the apartheid period, the situation was relatively calm as apartheid's whites-only electoral majority established. In the 50's an open resistance towards apartheid flourished, but was brought to an end in the 60's with the banning of the resistance movements among others the African National Congress (ANC). Then followed a period characterized by relatively quiet underground activity (Asmal, 2000). In contrast to many other African uprisings, this underground resistance in South Africa was mainly non-violent and has been labeled the biggest grassroots struggle in human history. The armed struggle was more or less limited to an occasional bombing or intercepted border crossing. This was of course reinforced by the fact that the amounts of firearms among the white people was one of the highest in the world, whereas blacks were not allowed to carry firearms (Zunes, 1999). This relatively stable period was however interrupted by the 1976 student uprising. From this grew the agitation of the 80's and the situation—especially in the African townships—intensified dramatically from the beginning of 1985 (Asmal, 2000). Boycotts, rallies and marches protesting the lack of rights for non-white South Africans led to increased tensions and culminated the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1985 in the Uitenhage massacre, where the police shot and killed 19 people on their way to a funeral. A state of emergency was declared and the government called in the army to patrol the townships (Burman and Schärf, 1990).

The white majority slowly reacted to the resistance and the international pressure put on South Africa (especially from the Western world). At the opening of parliament in 1990 the head of the Nationalist Party government, F.W De Klerk, announced the dismantling of apartheid. This was further symbolized by the immediate release of the political prisoner, Nelson Mandela. South Africa then negotiated the transfer of power to a new transitional government and held its first democratic elections in 1994. Mandela led both the transitional government as well as was elected president in the first democratic election in the history of South Africa (Markel, 1999). The tensions were however still apparent and although the apartheid period was over, South Africa struggled, and still does, with deeply rooted racial conflicts. When the new constitution was drawn up in 1993, ANC accepted the constitutional right that civil servants could remain in their positions after the 1994 elections. Thus, even though ANC won in 1994 with 63 % of the votes (Asmal, 2000), the state was still composed of a rather thin layer of newcomers. The actual implementation of new laws was therefore in the beginning still performed by the same people, who implemented the apartheid laws and regulations (Vase, 2008). Moreover, the financial markets, military and civil service were still more or less loyal to the old order (Asmal, 2000).

The election of a democratic government was therefore not enough. South Africa needed reconciliation and this was seen possible only through displaying the truth and holding the perpetrators of the past responsible for their atrocities. The many victims and survivors of the apartheid period could not move forward without some sense of public recognition for their losses (Markel, 1999). The Truth and Reconciliation Committee was established to handle this task.

## *6.2 The Truth and Reconciliation Committee*

After apartheid, the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) was established as an attempt to provide justice and moral reconciliation in South Africa. The resistance movement had been very clear on both its non-violent methods (Zunes, 1999) and the fact that it did not want to replace a predominantly white government with a predominantly black one. Instead, they had ambitions of transforming the entire society and creating unity as well as justice (Asmal, 2000). Quoting the 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, McGregor (2001: 32) points to the TRC mission, which was "promoting national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding which transcends the conflicts and divisions of the past". The idea behind this is that dealing with inter group conflicts of the past is critical to rebuild a tolerant society. It was believed that people through truth would reach reconciliation and justice, and the committee was therefore faced with the task of providing the truth of what happened under apartheid regime from 1960 to 1994 as accurate as possible (Llewellyn and Howse, 1999). The idea was that providing the truth would serve as some kind of public apology. This would constitute something more than a legal solution in the sense that it also approached moral and social justice by embracing the remorse of the perpetrators (McGregor, 2001).

One of the most significant aspects of the truth and reconciliation process in South Africa was the carefully considered perception of justice. The literature on the truth and reconciliation processes generally operates with two concepts of justice. 1) Retributive justice, which is accomplished in the court of law, where the accused individuals are trialed, and, if found guilty, punished according to appropriate procedures, and 2) restorative justice, in which it is believed that justice can be reached by other matters than punishment



(Dyzenhaus, 1999). One of these matters is providing truth by making perpetrators step forward.

When the world deals with past inter-group conflicts the retributive approach to justice is most often used. In this way, the criminal court in The Hague exemplifies the retributive approach in what is often known as the 'appropriate' response. There is, however, a small body of literature that questions the effects of retributive justice, that means, questions whether criminal trials can bring meaningful social reconciliation (Llewellyn and Howse, 1999, Allen, 1999, Markel, 1999, Dyzenhaus, 1999). This approach believes that justice is not necessarily sacrificed by seeking acknowledgement and dialogue instead of punishment. Although the retributive approach is by far the most used, the reconciliation in South Africa (and also Chile) was initiated from an restorative view on justice (Dyzenhaus, 1999).

In South Africa seeking to aim for retributive justice seemed very unlikely especially as the perpetrators were not a group surrounding one dictator, but instead most of the white minority. Restorative justice was therefore used, as it was believed important in order to create a democratic society where both the groups of perpetrators and victims could live as equal people (Dyzenhaus, 1999). Restorative justice in this way builds on the idea that equilibrium has been disrupted by the offence, and that the most important goal is to restore social bonds. Restorative justice is also rejecting the alienating and isolating methods of retributive justice. It rests on the notion that one cannot restore social equality simply by removing one party from society. Restorative justice therefore does not seek to avenge the crimes of the past, instead it tries to look back in order to get ahead and create a different future. Restorative justice is in this way inherently oriented towards a transformation of society in total, not just justice (Llewellyn and Howse, 1999). Important for TRC was therefore

that it aimed for full knowledge and acknowledgement of the atrocities committed by *both* sides in the struggle (Nagy, 2002). The TRC was not about the non-whites avenging the white people. It was very important that the truth and reconciliation process sought the truth of all the crimes committed—no matter who had committed them.

The restorative approach corresponds well with the old native African ideal—*ubuntu*. Ubuntu is difficult to translate directly, but regards the essence of being human. Quoting Desmond Tutu, McGregor explains ubuntu as how “my humanity is caught up in your humanity because we say a person is a person through other persons ... forgiveness is absolutely necessary for continued human existence” (2001: 38). In this sense, TRC called for “a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for ubuntu but not for victimization” (Nagy, 2002: 324). Forgiving is of course difficult in a situation like this, but as Tutu (1999: 52)—the well known South African Cleric and activist as well as the architect of the term Rainbow Nation—argues: forgiveness is the best form of self-interest as it makes it possible for people to survive and keep their dignity intact despite all the efforts there have been to dehumanize them.

### *6.2.1 Sacrificing Justice?*

Many have interpreted the restorative approach as a sacrificing of justice. As perpetrators get amnesty for telling the truth, it could be seen as they get away with their crimes too easily and that justice therefore is not obtained. But for the restorative approach, justice is much more than just punishment. One cannot deny that some aspects of justice in TRC process are sacrificed, but the value as a whole is not simply discarded by granting amnesty (Allen, 1999). It has for example also been argued that the restorative approach to justice used in South Africa in fact held aspects of punishment as those who got amnesty

had to expose themselves and live with both their private and public surroundings knowing about their crimes (Dyzenhaus, 1999, Llewellyn and Howse, 1999). Since the circumstances made an exclusion of the white minority impossible, and that the apartheid government therefore could not be forced to give up power completely, a transition period was necessary where granting amnesty was part of the parcel. The amnesty granted, however, was not total amnesty—so-called ‘blanket amnesty’—but instead particularized amnesty only granted after an individual evaluation of the perpetrator made by the TRC (Markel, 1999). This meant that the perpetrators had to display their offences publicly, that they couldn’t hide it under amnesty, and moreover that those who failed to secure amnesty were liable to normal criminal court (Allen, 1999). To obtain amnesty, the truth-tellers had to live up to three criteria: full disclosure, timing, and political motivation. If the perpetrator failed one of these tests, amnesty was not granted (Markel, 1999). Even though three criteria were set up, in reality the commission valued the test of political motive the most (Bhargava, 2002). This gave the practical problem that those applying for amnesty were encouraged to find a political motive in their actions and in many cases maybe even neglected to also take individual responsibility. However, that justice was not ‘sacrificed on the altar of amnesty’, as some supporters of retributive justice might think, was further established due to the fact that of the 7.100 applications for amnesty registered in 1998, only about 240 had been granted amnesty. Of these, 160 were rejected because they denied their guilt and 3.031 because their actions were committed with personal gain (Gibson and Gouws, 1999, Markel, 1999, Bhargava, 2002)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be mentioned however that these numbers vary somewhat between the different sources. This can be due to the fact that they were calculated at different days, but more likely that TRC granted both full amnesties and partially amnesties and that the borders between these are somewhat blurry.

Allen (1999) suggests that justice on the restorative view includes a form of recognition, which is normally expressed in rights as the recognition of the equal dignity of individuals. In this way, by telling their stories, the victims get included in the society that previously excluded them. Allen (1999) further argues that this concern is not appropriate for a court of law, but is a public ritual of recognition that recognizes the injustice made. In this way restorative justice is taken outside the court and holds much more than just executing the appropriate punishment.

### 6.3 *The Danish Institute for Human Rights*

The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) is an independent, national human rights institution modeled in accordance with the UN Paris Principles. The Institute was established in its current form in 2002, but carries on the legacy from its former constitution; the Danish *Centre* for Human Rights, which was established in 1987. The institute carries out research, offers courses and education and conducts the implementation of national and international programs. The chief objective, as the institute writes on its webpage,<sup>2</sup> “is to promote and develop knowledge about human rights on a national, regional and international basis predicated on the belief that human rights are universal, mutually interdependent and interrelated”. The institute employs about 100 people and had in 2006 an annual budget of €12 million.

DIHR very early got involved in post-apartheid South Africa as advisors on the rationalization and transformation of the administration of the justice system in South Africa and was deeply involved in the reconciliation processes from 1995 to 2001. During these years, DIHR had on a continuously

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<sup>2</sup> <http://humanrights.dk/>

basis a team of consultants present in South Africa to coach the transformation of the justice department and its policies.

The team from DIHR set up a temporary planning unit consisting of both people from DIHR and from the justice department itself. The unit was established as an interim structure in the absence of the justice department's new management team that was still to be defined. It was placed outside the premises of the justice department, but referred directly to the newly appointed minister of justice in South Africa, Dr A. M. Omar. Over the years as the process progressed, the planning unit was first incorporated into the justice department in 1998 and later integrated completely into the department (Vase, 2008).

The planning unit's main goal was to table the strategic plan for the justice department as well as implementing it and running training exercises based on the plan. It was unique because it combined strategic planning tools of the corporate world with strong human rights values of the non-governmental world (Vase, 2008). When the governmental system in South Africa changed in 1994, Dr Omar was appointed the first non-white minister of justice. However, not only was the department solely employed by white male Afrikaners, the justice department was also divided into 11 departments: one in Pretoria, where the ministry was based, and one in each of the ten black homelands. Before, they could think of dispensing justice, they had to build one representative department. One of the more specific main tasks of the planning group was therefore to transform and then merge South Africa's 11 apartheid based justice departments into one unified structure (Lindsnæs et al., 2008).

The Danish team played an important role in this process of rebuilding the justice system in South Africa. Dr Omar is quoted in Lindsnæs et al. (2008: 21) to say the following about the cooperation:

The Danes gave me advice on what a justice system should do, how the rule of law should prevail, how the Constitutional Court should work and how to build a respect for human rights. They also advised me on how to go about the very complicated task of setting up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ... You must remember that a culture of human rights and institutions to support it did not come naturally to South Africa, which had developed a terrible culture of oppression and anti-human rights. These values were steeped in every level of society and many of these values still live on ... South Africa entered into many agreements with other countries for various issues, but on fundamental transformation issues we stuck with the Danes, because we knew that they had no other agenda. The Danes come from a broad progressive European culture, but they were sensitive to our diversity and history and there was never an occasion when the cultural differences between us affected our work adversely. (Lindsnæs et al., 2008: 21)

After two and a half years of the project period, the document ‘vision 2000 – and justice for all’ was tabled and approved in parliament in 1997 (Justice, 1997). The justice vision confronts the past inhumanities in its essence and its strong emphasis on human rights, dignity and equality is a stepping-stone for a new standard in South Africa. But as the minister of justice, Dr. Omar, says in the foreword to the vision:

It is very clear that the past still influences the present. Although formal apartheid has been abolished, we are still challenged to heal its social and systemic effects. This is a problem for all South African institutions, including the justice system. The development of a new justice system, one that is in line with the Constitutions and its democratic values, will be a process, not an event. (Justice, 1997: vi)

Therefore, the planning process was, as DIHR writes in its own case material on the process, not always an even one. Sentiments of guilt, mistrust and at times even hatred surfaced in the midst of workshops and daily consultations. It was indeed a centrifuge of past and present which outplayed itself in the departmental corridors (Vase, 2008). The following sections will tell the stories as the lead consultant from DIHR on the South African project narrated them.

#### *6.4 Building the 'Rainbow Nation'*

The story I am about to tell is a story from when the Rainbow Nation was build. The 'Rainbow Nation' is a predicate coined by the legendary cleric and peace activist, Desmond Tutu, and since used commonly by the people of South Africa to signal their hopes and intentions with the 'new' nation. The 'Rainbow Nation' not only signifies that the new nation should entail every imaginable color as well as all combinations of colors. It also signifies that it takes all the colors and combinations to make light, and therefore symbolizes that the many colors together are able to create something new. The consultant, who is the voice in the following story, was deeply involved in this very process—of making the vision of the Rainbow Nation come true:

We are sitting once again in the consultant's small, smoky and somewhat dark office in a charming building in Copenhagen's old city centre. The consultant seems stressed and probably doesn't have the time for me to be there—again. For a moment I feel guilty and bad for disturbing his busy schedule. He is traveling on an insane pace and I feel guilty for robbing him of his very limited time at the Danish office. But once he starts talking, I know that I am not disturbing him. I am in fact only offering him a break, one of the rare breaks when he is allowed the time to remember—to go back in time and

relive his memories. The office suddenly seems larger and brighter as if the room literally fills up with the stories.

After Mandela was elected president in South Africa, the new government faced the task of building a new justice department that reflected the diversity of the population. That is one, which also employed black, colored and Indian. The problem was that it would create total chaos if they just fired everyone at the same time, and started building a new justice department from scratch. They therefore appointed a management team to handle this. This team consisted of the former—that is only white—leaders, and a reference team, which consisted of mainly blacks, but also colored and Indians. The challenge was now to find a way to make these two teams work together as one, and that was what the government wanted coaching for. They therefore traveled around the world searching for such coaching and came on their way also to Denmark. In Denmark, they liked the model we used at the Danish Centre for Human Rights, and asked us to assist them in the process of building the new justice policy as well as the department as organization.

I immediately get the feeling that the consultant believes in what he is doing—he is passionate about what he is doing, about the approach they use and obviously very proud that the South African delegation traveled the world but chose the Danish approach—the one he had been involved developing in the Danish Institute for Human Rights. To make me better understand this approach used by the Danish Institute of Human rights, the consultant explains to me what the key concepts are:

Our basic principle in our approach is that it is important first to consider what dream, what visions you have for the project, and especially what long term goals you wish to achieve. Having a long term perspective removes many of the conflicts from the discussions. It secures that we at first focus on values and not on activities. My experience tells me that if you are to merge different cultures, it is very important to get the value discussion first in the process. Often projects are started the other



way around; that is, build from below, from the single activities. But I have a better feeling for the other way around. And it suited South Africa well, I think. They had a very clear vision of where they wanted to take the 'Rainbow Nation', and their foundation was human rights and the human right value set. Of course they also had to consider international standards, but the human rights value set was the most important for them.

In the beginning I had difficulties seeing how this approach was so different from all other approaches. Agreeable, it was based on human rights, but besides that what could be so different? It was not before the consultant got deeper into the story that I understood that a great deal of explanation was to be found in his passion for—and believes in—this approach. His person was one of the reasons to why the Danish Centre for Human Rights was employed in the process of building the new justice department. He was therefore invited to South Africa:

I was invited to South Africa, and actually expected that at this first visit I got the opportunity to talk to all the people involved etc. But in South Africa, at that time, they were busy! It meant that I arrived Tuesday night, where I was told that we on Wednesday morning were supposed to drive 300 km out on a ranch. And on this ranch the entire white leader group and the reference group was waiting for me. And they actually counted on that we could start the process right away the next morning! So I thought that I better start the meeting at the ranch by giving a course in what our Scandinavian model used at the Danish Centre for Human Rights meant. So I called home, and kick-started my own people, and they worked all night! And in the morning they faxed me forty slides. I prepared in the van on my way to the ranch, and then I started!

At the ranch, the consultant was faced with a difficult situation. He had to coach the communication between the team of white leaders and the reference group. As the former consisted of the former white leaders and the latter of the

new 'non-white' leaders, it was two very visible different groups. Moreover, there was obviously a long history of hatred, oppression and fighting behind the relationship between these two groups, thus the consultant was here faced with two groups of people who clearly saw each other as enemies, and who had very distinctively drawn up their in- and out groups. The consultant again gets very serious when he illustrates the difficulties in their relations:

The group of 'non-whites' had very little trust left for the white leaders; many of these most likely responsible for the torturing or liquidation of family members and friends. Also the white group felt that they had to stick together, because they saw the 'non-whites' as a threat. The white group was very much aware of the fact that what they had done was not pretty. And due to that, they felt great insecurity of where this would end. Thus, there were some rather rough conflicts between the two groups. The consultant was therefore facing significant problems with the implementation, that is, the actual construction of the new justice organization. They tried to burry their conflicts, but it is difficult to academically and reasonably to agree that now under these circumstances we trust each other.

His point of departure was therefore not easy. He knew he had to make these people work together as one group, and this story is exactly about how he accomplished that:

I'll describe to you what happened: Our first meeting was in a very big conference room. The chief of department sat at the end of the table surrounded by his people. The black group placed themselves in a similar manner at the other end of the table. They naturally agreed on the necessity to change the circumstances [in South Africa], and that they would all like to do this together but it was pretty tough to agree academically that now we have trust in each other. This problem was very visible, as they literally sat on different sides of the meeting table. And these gentlemen are generals and chiefs of departments and not people you easily ask to move around. So where they once sat, they stayed! They were very polite, smiled and greeted each other, but kept to themselves. Also at lunch they were divided. Then eventually we

started a dialogue. I began to talk about this and that and tried to show people who I was and what my points of view were. I did this because people don't trust you if you don't show them who you are, and only then you can hope that others begin to tell, who they are. Then something strange happened: The black group started to enter the dialogue, they started to open up. But it took quite some time before the white group opened up. They were still very reserved. One of the reasons was probably that they, to become the inner circle, must have been part of the system, they must have been among those who tried to stop the resistance movement. They saw me as representing that very resistance which had aimed to turn over 'their' South African society. I was absolutely not one of 'theirs'. But when they found out that I had a military background and that I was also a civil manager and basically pretty 'cool' or neutral in relation to many things and just wanted to create results, then they found out that I after all could be 'one of them', and we could begin to talk. And then an interesting thing turned up. If I was able to talk to both groups, then more and more discussions occurred where more and more people could join. So the way they opened up to each other was to discuss very concrete issues through me.

The consultant thereby got the conversations started, but it was still difficult for him to make them change their seats in the conference room. They were still divided in a 'white' end and a 'black' end. So they took the discussions out of the conference room.

We had beautiful surroundings and a huge Jacuzzi so we had plenty opportunities to discuss informally. And during especially the informal discussions, they brought in humor and laughter and thereby created some human relations; relations, which made them realize that they were probably not that different from each other. They all had families and they all knew about love. What made them change was the fact that they realized that the other group also understood love. If you are you able to understand love, then you will also be able to understand hatred, and then you can begin to deal with things. If these things do not surface you will not be able to deal with it. In that case you can work from now on and for ever, and nothing happens.

The consultant quickly realized that the way he created results in South Africa was not via the textbook examples on diversity management. He dealt with a very unique situation here. And he continued to realize that his own attitude was very important to the way the situation evolved.

Already when I ran my first project down there, something happened to my attitude. When I started to talk about something, I got so caught up in it that I forgot who I was talking to. I talk to the eyes I see, and whether they are placed on a man or a woman, a black or a white doesn't really mean anything to me. And apparently that brought me great luck as I very quickly got the nickname 'color blind'. And it has that fortunate advantage that I quickly take a professional approach and always keep the communication at an adult level so to speak. And that enhances your influence significantly. When the situation is critical and cramped with conflicts, this attitude really pays out. By having this reputation, people rarely question our agenda no matter how delicate the situation becomes, and that gives us a high degree of influence, especially in critical situations. So we are now very aware of the benefit of such an attitude, that is that people are focused on being professional and not focusing too much on who they are speaking to.

When the consultant then was able to distance himself from the situation, to let down his own guards and leave his prejudices aside, he also discovered new things about the people he was working with:

It then suddenly occurred to me that I was not dealing with people who were vicious or deluded or anything like that. I was dealing with *people*, wonderful people, who just had very different backgrounds. They all grew up 'learning' that the others were different and as a consequent 'worse' people. The non-whites saw the whites as 'stupid bastards' who could do basically what they pleased and the 'whites' saw the non-whites as people without real rights as such.

So during those days, they slowly managed to approach each other and to build up a vision for the new South Africa, and that very event made the next long period of tabling the justice policy possible. But, as the consultant was about to find out, things change when a vision has to become real.

When we finished constructing the vision, we had to build the new organization. And then it all happened. We had to set down a group of people to construct the organization. All the personal ambitions surfaced, and people forgot what they had committed to in the planning process. Something very distinct then happened. All the strong personalities stepped forward, that is the people who came from terrible conditions, grew up in townships, and had been in exile and the like. These people really had some scars on their souls. And they were tough; they had survived. But these people also really had potential. To be able to survive the experiences they had, had made them tough. So it ended up in a huge fight, which was a completely wrong process. But it was probably the only political possible thing to do at that time. Still, it went so bad, that we found ourselves in a situation where the good process we had before had stopped. People were now only fighting. No one dared to make any decisions. And what annoyed me was that I had actually talked about setting up criteria for handling the process. And it was completely nuts that we didn't do that, because we wanted to work with transparency, and a set of criteria could have given us that. They wanted a new set of values in a new country where you didn't have nepotism and corruption and of course for those reasons there should have been criteria. But we made the mistake of thinking that the goals we had defined and the method we used and the knowledge supporting these methods were good enough. But they weren't. So we ended up having to make these criteria at a later stage in the process and that happened in a very unorthodox manner.

The consultant therefore found himself in a dead lock. The good process they experienced at the ranch had ended and the situation had turned personal again. The two groups had retrieved to their former positions of not understanding each other. But the consultant had made them work together

once, so he hoped on being able to do that again. And he knew that he had to use unusual methods to make it work:

I thought about who had the greatest knowledge about how such a justice system should really work and who the really affected people in the process were; that is, the people from the bottom of the system. Those two groups, I invited to our office a Saturday morning. And when they had arrived I said to them: 'Friends, this weekend we are building this organization'. And we went to work. The way I approached it was by making a relation between the organization we had and how you would sell a brand in an ordinary store. So, we talked about toothpaste and things like that. So, I took it out of the context it was initially placed within and we discussed the principles instead. When we for example discussed distribution, that is, where we should place the courts and how many there should be, that was compared to having sales managers. And whether people trusted the system had something to do with whether a customer would buy one or the other brand; it is a matter of loyalty. I had the advantage of doing it this way [in business terminology], which was my home ground. And nobody could say that they didn't understand, because everybody has tried to watch TV commercials and shop for groceries. So by taking it out of the regime and thoroughly discuss it, we got the basic principles build up. And then we used the principles to put it back into the context. And that was how we made the organizational chart.

The consultant could now start to build up the new organization and spend the next long period on hiring people to the positions they had agreed upon at the above-mentioned meeting. It was a long and tough process, where there were several surprising events. The consultant remembers especially one of them regarding the budgeting:

And then we reached the problem of budgeting and the national budget, because these things obviously cost a lot of money. And this is when all the international donor relations enter. The international donors have of course an international agenda. And this agenda is all about telling a given 'receiver country' what they

internationally think is right and wrong; in fact without considering the context in the given country or what that given country wants politically itself. And the way they do it, is that they donate money under the condition that the receiving country run the projects that they want internationally; that is they get to run the projects that benefit internationally and not necessarily nationally. So, many of these projects pass through the different embassies and the receiver country therefore often experiences an enormous flow of suggested projects, which are not all that relevant and some of them are completely hopeless. In South Africa we had tons of these project suggestions running in.

The overload of projects in fact became a problem for them because they didn't have the resources to deal with them all in a proper manner. They had to take action, which they did in a rather unusual way:

We had our planning unit communicate that we were happy to receive money. But we would only run projects that fitted the strategy we were building up. And if the projects did not fit, we would not run them. That was the first time people had experienced that we from a developing country said 'no thank you' to money. It caused both the justice department and us [the planning unit] a major international pressure, and in fact made us pretty unpopular. But we dealt with it by splitting the team up, so my project leader took care of the international community and I took the role as the consultant for the South African government; identified myself with them. My project manager then handled all the international pressure, went and made up with them, and I could come right back in playing the mean bastard. In that way, we stayed on friendly terms with them while also keeping our distance.

Their unusual way of handling the international society made a great impact on the South African leaders.

This fact that we handled the international situation as we did made us have a rather significant impact on the situation in South Africa. Because when we came back to talk about human rights and law reforms, people listened because they knew that we

did what we did to get success in the partnership we had; a partnership which was all about carry out visions for the South African country. We did not have an alternative agenda.

This was the story as the consultant told it to me. In the following, I will try to analyze this story in relation to Levinasian ethics and diversity management, and in this way show how Levinasian ethics can bring nuances to the diversity management discussion. More specifically, I will do this by dividing the consultant's story into events and discuss these independently. After discussing these events, I will return to a more overall and final discussion of the impact Levinasian ethics has on diversity management, a discussion. The events analyzed now will be 'How a Polarized Battle became an Exposure to the Other', 'Facing the Enemy', 'Being Color Blind', 'Moral Distance', and 'And Justice for All'.

#### *6.4.1 How a Polarized Battle became an Exposure to the Other – the Role of Language*

As was displayed in the above story, the consultant was in the beginning faced with a very difficult situation of getting two very strongly defined groups to work together. At the first meeting at the ranch the two groups were like oil and water; literally like black and white. The two groups did agree on the necessity to change these circumstances, and that they would all like to do this together. But in contrast to what popular negotiation theory (Fisher and Ury, 1981, Ury, 1993) says about positive outcomes as long as there are mutual gains and identified common goals, these two groups could not communicate and they could not reach a solution. Their differences were too explicit and they experienced the classic disadvantages of diversity such as miscommunication and anxiety. They didn't know much about each other and had difficulties understanding each other's point of view, which made them anxious and suspicious. It didn't matter that they found issues they could agree



on, they still didn't get anywhere. They saw each other as too different. They found out the hard way that it was pretty tough to agree academically that 'now we have trust in each other'. The communication problem was very visible. They were very polite towards each other, smiled and greeted each other, but as the consultant said, they kept to themselves. They didn't exchange one word or gesture, which was beyond the formally required.

What began to change things was a very specific decision made by the consultant. When he saw that no one opened up and didn't do any talking besides polite greetings, he began to talk about himself and tried to show people who he was and what his points of view were. As he explained himself he "did this because people don't trust you if you don't show them who you are. Only when you show them who you are, can you hope that others begin to tell who they are". And then something began to happen: The black group started to enter the dialogue, they started opening up. In the beginning the consultant was quite puzzled that it was the black group—the tough guys—that opened up first. But then he realized that it was probably because they saw him as a representative from 'their group'; that is, one who wanted to change South Africa. On the contrary, it took quite some time before the white group opened up. They were very reserved for a long time. One of the reasons was probably that they too saw the consultant as a representative for the black group, a group that wanted to turn over 'their South Africa'. To become this inner circle that was now present at the meeting, the white leaders must have been part of the system that tried to stop the resistance movement, so the consultant was absolutely not one of 'theirs'. The two groups therefore in the beginning—even through the consultant—stuck to their firmly defined in- and out groups. Their greatest loyalty was to their own group, and it was extremely difficult for them to break free from this situation of groupthink.

But the white group eventually began to open up a little. They slowly found out that the consultant had a military background and that he was also a civil manager and basically pretty ‘cool’ or neutral in relation to many things and just wanted to create results. They found out that he after all could be ‘one of them’, and that it was probably OK to talk to him. Thus, both groups opened up to the consultant, and both of them saw him as one of theirs. In this way, they were still focusing on their similarities with the consultant—that which could unite them with him. But then an interesting thing turned up. If the consultant was able to talk to both groups, then more and more discussions occurred where more and more people wanted to join. So the way they opened up to each other was to discuss very concrete issues through the exposure of the consultant. They found out through him, that if he was able to connect to both sides, then maybe there was more to the discussion than what they could initially judge as belonging to their group or not. They began to see that they probably weren’t that different after all. In this way, both group realized that their visible and categorical differences—the color of their skin—not necessarily defined whether they had anything in common or not. If they opened up in language and exposed their true selves, they discovered things about both themselves and the Other, they didn’t expect.

The story very well illustrates the Levinasian point that language is not an objective instrument for the participants of the conversation to pass over meaning as assumed in popular management communication literature such as Fisher and Ury (1981) and Ury (1993). In these theories, language and the meanings it unquestionably communicates hold an unambiguous concreteness, and language thereby holds some level of universality as it assumes a correct use of discourse.

The Levinasian understanding of language is in this way a part of a movement, which has been labeled 'the linguistic' turn. The main point of the linguistic turn is to question the representational function of language as something fixed and stable. On this basis it is argued that language is not a simple reflection of the external world. Rather it is itself what constructs and enacts both the world and the individuals within it. Language is no longer seen as representing events of an external reality but as shaping them, and in this sense all social practice can be understood as a textual construction of reality (Belova, 2007: 4, Cunliffe, 2002: 129) Following this view it is therefore argued that we live in conversational realities that construct us as individuals by responses to others (Shotter, 1993). The world is therefore constituted by our language and the responses we give each other. However, since language games on this view are in constant alteration, meaning is constantly slipping beyond our grasp, and can therefore never be locked into one category (Hassard, 1993). Building on this view, Belova (2007) argues that conversation is not seen as a bridge that creates a smooth passage of meaning between the interlocutors. Language doesn't flow in a straight line from one to the other. Instead, she argues for conversation as a rhythm, which is characterised by intervals and breakdowns; staying true to both closeness and separation.

Speaking however is most often directed at an Other. Therefore it is not only a question of seeing language as something that constructs you as an individual, it is equally important to consider how we in language approach the Other and how this encounter affects both self and other.

As we encounter people whose positions differ from ours, we tend to represent ourselves one-dimensionally, ensuring that all our statements form a unified, seamless web. As a result, when we enter a relationship defined by our differences, commitment to unity will maintain our distance. And if the integrity or validity of

one's coherent front is threatened by the other, we may move toward polarizing combat. (Gergen et al., 2001: 696)

Speaking is inherently an ethical act of encountering difference, and in this way conversation constructs me. But what I find more interesting—and what Gergen here also insinuates—is how I as a self approach my interlocutor in conversation. How does language—not only construct me (as an ethical subject)—but how does the language used construct me as well as the one I'm responding to; that is the Other. By a commitment to unity and with the goal of persuading the other unifying the other into me, we will most likely end in an assimilation of the Other's otherness or in a polarised combat that takes us nowhere. Levinas connects language and ethics; and does this in a way that nicely follows up on Gergen et al.'s own wish to create a 'transformative challenge' to language, which is "to shift the conversation in the direction of self-reflexivity—or a questioning of the otherwise coherent self" (Gergen et al., 2001: 696). I will now return to the consultant's story and illustrate this shift in language.

Language at play in the consultant's story very much constructed the participants' situation, as well as who they were in this encounter. If language had been a merely rational instrument, it would have been possible to follow the method of mutual gains or aiming towards consensus. But in this case no language rational and logical enough could have made these people meet in consensus. By a commitment to unity or with the goal of persuading the Other and unifying the Other into self, they would most likely have ended up in an assimilation of the Other's otherness or in a polarized battle that would have taken them nowhere. Instead, we saw how language—in the form of both the ontological said and the ethical saying—constructed the scene from the moment the consultant began exposing himself. By telling stories about himself, the two groups began to open up to each other as well. In this way it

was the consultant's exposure that started the positive process. The consultant had no other option than to begin to talk about himself. If he didn't get them to open up, he would not succeed. He was in a vulnerable position; and he showed that to the two groups.

The consultant did this initiated by the recognition of the strange world of both Others. He realized that they were too far apart from each other, but also that they were ordinary people. Not defined by the color of their skins, but by their human qualities—qualities, which were not linked to their race, but to who they were as human beings. He realized that he needed to get beyond the color of their skin and the only way of getting there, was to start that exposure himself. He then exposed himself and in doing this made them become Others to each other. Instead of illuminating the two groups of how they should behave, he saw them as Others, embraced the dimension of the Other. He recognized their otherness and exposed himself.

He did not act according to textbook negotiation, but according to his own moral response-ability to the Other. He did not solely listen to what they said, he listened to the call of an Other; to the saying the entire situation expressed. He acted by the involuntarity of responding to the Other's face. Besides that he did not only respond in a said but responded in saying. He acted by exposing himself; in the offering of his own world to them. He responded in a saying as a sign to them as neighbor about a responsibility, which can never be contracted. So it was not only the words he gave them, the stories he told. It was just as much the way he did it, the way he laid himself vulnerable in doing it. In an ethical saying he offered his vulnerability to them.

It was the face of this Other that drew the consultant to be interlocutor, and the Others to be his interlocutor. That they took the role of interlocutors is in this relation very essential, as it meant that the Other is was not just an object for the monologue of the self, the Other became partner in the conversation, the Other took part. The ‘stable’ consciousness of the self was in this way challenged by the face of the Other. The consultant’s ‘stable’ consciousness was challenged and turned out not to be so stable. Both ‘sides’ realized that he was capable of showing other sides to them in an encounter—that he was capable of change. And they reacted to this capability, saw it as a call; perhaps even saw him as an Other that demanded a response from them.

In the passivity of the exposure, the consultant didn’t try to force rules or milestones upon the two groups; he knew this would end in a polarized battle. Instead, he passively exposed himself, showed that he abolished “identical quiddity” (Levinas, 1981: 49). He neglected his defenses, left his safe shelter of being the boss—or even the savior. Instead, by making himself vulnerable and taking a chance, he exposed himself to outrage, to insults and wounding. But instead of insulting and wounding him, they responded to his call and opened up as well. To expose oneself is also to take a chance, to run a risk of failure and embarrassment. The consultant took a risk. He risked that they would just mock him for his openness. He risked that they lost respect for him. But he performed the ethical act and risked his exposure. His exposure was what made things happen. They all, thereby followed a Levinasian rationality as they made themselves vulnerable to the critique and attack of the Other, they all let the Other interrupt them, and they reached a solution not by *defending* themselves, but *responding* to the Other.

#### 6.4.2 *Facing the Enemy – Differences and Otherness*

The next event is a direct continuation of the first as it describes what happened after the tabling of the policy initiated on that first meeting at the ranch.

When the team from the Danish Institute of Human Rights finished constructing the vision they had to build the actual organization, which meant implementing the vision. And according to the consultant that was when the good process established at the ranch broke down. When they started the process of actualizing the vision, all the personal ambitions surfaced, and people forgot what they had committed to in the planning process. All the strong personalities were fighting for attention; people were only discussing and no one dared to make any decisions. As the consultant said, he had underestimated their personal feelings and ambitions. He thought that because they had set up principles and build a vision that they would be able to follow this vision. But he had underestimated their individual stories, the fact that the stories were so influential and dramatic. What these people had experienced could not easily be pushed aside just because they agreed to want to build a just system based on a defined set of rules.

The consultant therefore found himself in a jammed situation. His process was stuck because personal ambitions came in the way of the overall goal of the project—respecting human rights. He was dealing with two groups of people. None of the groups were particularly homogeneous, but as they both saw a potential enemy in the other, they felt a common internal goal of fighting the other. This was not about building a vision anymore; this was distributing the positions of judicial power in the new nation. Both groups were in this way building up very strong ‘in’ and ‘out’ groups, and did not see each other as individuals, but as categories; whites or non-whites. They didn’t consider

other character traits or qualifications but whether people were white or non-white. The color of their skin was what determined which group they got categorized within. They were in each group struggling to fit in and in doing this betraying their individual identities in letting a totality—the category of either white or non-white—determine their belonging. They were 100 % loyal to their own group and could therefore not see potential mistakes or limitations to their decision process. They were literally defining themselves purely from their plastic face; the color of their skin.

The consultant knew that this would take them nowhere and that he had to find a way to change the way they perceived each other. He therefore had to take drastic measures to defeat and go beyond these strong ‘in’ and ‘out’ groups. He, therefore, contacted those he found to be the most influential people, and called them to a meeting a Saturday morning. “Friends”, he said, “now we will build this organization”. He was determined to change things and the way he did this was by taking the problem out of its context; he wanted them to go beyond the strong categories of the color of their skin and make them focus on the person behind the mask. As he did that, his story took a twist—not only in content, but also in atmosphere. It seemed like taking the problem out of the ‘regime’ as he called it made these people view each other as people—not as either whites or non-whites. They suddenly managed to open up for each other’s otherness.

He did this by relating the tabling of the justice department to something they all could relate to—selling, distributing and buying toothpaste. Instead of judges, courtrooms, head of secretaries etc., he talked about logistics, warehouses, customer service, buying habits etc. In this way, he took it out of the context it was initially placed within and made them discuss the organization by the principles instead. So, when they for example discussed



distribution, that is, where they should place the courts and how many there should be, they instead discussed placing sales managers. It made sense because whether people trusted the system had something to do with whether they buy one or the other brand; it is a matter of loyalty. And these everyday situations made it possible for them to move beyond their masks and realize that they are all individual persons behind their masks. Nobody could say that they didn't understand, because everybody has tried to watch TV commercials and shop for groceries. So by taking it out of the regime they got the basic principles build up and could afterwards use the principles to put them back into the context. Meaning was not predefined, but continuously constructed in the events.

By removing focus from the categories, it became possible for them to see beyond their categorical differences. It became possible for them to actually see each other's individual otherness. In this process they also managed to let their guards down, and actually let the acknowledgement of the Other's otherness change their selves; construct their new identities. They staged a scene for a moral encounter where their very subjectification could take place. This was a scene, which was not guided by universal rules, proud virtues or what each group thought would benefit South Africa the most. This was a scene where they could try to let go of previous history and prejudices and anger towards each other as categories and where they instead as moral selves welcomed critique and questioning in a willingness to be changed by this encounter. And they were all changed. In moving beyond prior strives related to the color of their skin, old hatred and misdeeds, they managed to see each other as Other, and the exposedness thereby signified their responsibility, and thus their own selves in uniqueness, stripped of all protection that would multiply them, removed or maybe relieved from the strong 'in' and 'out' groups that they thought were protecting them from their enemy. Instead they

managed to detach, escape groupthink, and to empty themselves of their beings as Levinas explains in the following quote:

Subjectivity of a being who detaches himself, who empties himself of his being, who turns himself inside out—who “is” *otherwise than being*. Otherwise than being is dis-inter-ested; it is to carry the misery of the other all the way to the responsibility that the other can have for me. Here there is no “human commerce”, not a simple swapping of responsibilities! To be oneself—as the condition or uncondition of a hostage—is always to have one more responsibility. The responsibility of the hostage should be understood in the strongest sense. *For it remains incomprehensible to me that another concerns me.* (Levinas, 2000: 175)

Only by letting go of the categorical view of each other could they go ‘otherwise than being’ and see each other as Others, that is, not belonging to categories. And only by escaping the categories could they come to truly understand that this was not a matter of changing favors—of swapping responsibilities. They couldn’t simply set up duties that told them to act in a specific way; it doesn’t work that way. Responsibilities cannot be swapped, it need to arise as a call from the other, as an irreducible ethical call. In this way they learned that you can never commit to feel responsible; responsibility is not an economic transaction like it is often assumed in the utilitarian perspective. Responsibility arises the moment you open up to the Other and at the moment where you are willing to let that experience change yourself. That is, if you are willing to let go of who you think you are, and instead willing to become the one you are always about to be:

The “me” does not begin in the self-affection of a sovereign I, susceptible in a second moment of feeling compassion for the other; instead, it begins through the trauma without beginning, prior to every self-affection, of the upsurge of another. Here, *the one is affected by the other.* (Levinas, 2000: 178)

Therefore, what Levinas teaches us and what this story so clearly shows us is that you don't become a responsible person just by feeling a short moment of compassion where you agree to do good. Instead, responsibility arises beyond the sovereign self, that is, in the trauma—in the wound. They could not academically agree on being good to each other. They had to instead go back to the trauma, and to open the vulnerability this trauma had left. These people had until recently been fighting each other for a long period of time. All of them most likely had friends or family killed or wounded for life in these fights. They could not stitch up the wound and move on. Instead, they had to use that wound, work with it productively, and let the wound be affected by what happened. They had to open up the wound so that they could be affected as people beyond their masks, beyond their being. They had to go back to the wound itself so that they could go beyond the categories.

They opened up to the approaching enemy, exposed their selves to wounding and outrage in the very welcoming of the Other's questions and critique. As emphasized also in the previous event, the self that is exposed develops its very own interiority from this encounter with the Other. That is, during this meeting they became unique and non-categorizable Levinasian faces of otherness. They managed to meet as Levinasian faces—not plastic faces; they were truly facing the enemy. And in the supporting of each others' otherness, a moral moment of acknowledgment arose, where it became possible for them to actually work out a solution. They got the organizational chart build during that very weekend, in that very moral encounter with alterity.

What this story however also teaches us is, that even though people have come to an agreement once, this does not mean that the situation will continue to be so. Responsibility has no definite answer and has no point of ultimacy, which

can be reached by calculating consequences, following rules or defining certain characters. Instead, responsibility is never-ending, one can never be responsible enough. The consultant learned this the hard way, as he thought that the openness and cooperativeness the two groups achieved at the ranch could be sustained. But this was a fatal assumption. When responsible behavior was assumed, they stopped trying and they went back into the former patterns of mistrusting each other. Diversity again showed itself from its worst side, that which only focuses on the categorical differences and on the miscommunication, mistrust, fear and anxiety this brings.

#### *6.4.3 Being Color Blind – the Benefits of Going beyond Categorical Differences*

This event is a rather short one, but important in the sense that it shows a concrete situation where categorical differences were surpassed. Without knowing it, the consultant followed a Levinasian reasoning of trying to get them to go beyond each others' plastic faces and see the person—the Other—behind each mask. They all needed to define new identities to find their place and role in the new system; an individual identity that was not determined by the color of the mask they were wearing. And this identity construction could only happen if they let down the guards, left their safe home ground, exposed themselves, as well as truly let the others be different—also the ones which 'belonged' to the same 'in-group'. As we saw above, they several times got stuck in a situation tensed with fear of difference. When these situations occurred, their natural response was not to dare to expose their selves, because of a fear of losing their belonging and power as a group. Moreover, they were not only constructing these categories for themselves to hide behind. They also constructed categories to identify others within. They were not letting each other self-differentiate, they were all contributing to the totality of the categorical regime.

An important event that helped changing this was therefore that the consultant—as he says himself—turned color blind. When he works, he gets so caught up in the situation and the professional discussions that he forgets who he is talking to. He only sees the eyes of the person and does not really notice whether they are placed in a man or a woman; a black or a white. In the story he saw the Levinasian faces and not the plastic faces: he became color blind. If he instead consciously had followed traditional ethics based on ontological definitions and calculations, he would most likely have defined ways to benefit optimally from a combination of different colors, followed rules how to approach people of different color or something similar. Following a traditional ethical approach would anyway have set up guidelines for his behavior; guidelines which were probably set up to ensure human rights and equality, but also guidelines, which would have emphasized the categorical differences and made it impossible to become colorblind and made it impossible to instead realize the non-categorical otherness, which each and one of the contains beyond their plastic face. The reader might recall that he was in fact asked to approach the project in a categorical manner. In the beginning he was asked to build the new justice department in a manner that reflected the ethnicity of the country. This meant that the justice department should consist of the same percentage of white, colored, Indians, men and women etc. as the country itself did. The consultant even made a joke in the interview that if they were allowed to ask and if it was possible, they would have wanted the new justice department to also reflect the sexuality of the people. But he refused to organize the justice department the categorical way as he didn't believe that distributing positions equally according to diversity categories would ensure cooperation and a just society. The categorical way of constructing the new justice department was not inherently bad in any way. It is in a sense perfectly ethical, especially if traditional diversity management theories of equal rights are consulted. However, it is an approach that creates

even more focus on the categories and the differences between these, and in a country as South Africa, where they tried to escape segregation and division of the society, further categorization was perhaps not the best way to create unity. Instead of following the classification scheme, the consultant (and the entire planning unit obviously) went beyond the act of categorization. Instead, they focused on professionalism and tried to become as color blind as possible.

#### *6.4.4 Moral Distance – when Ethics Disappears*

Under apartheid, there was no lack of a legal system or trials. While one can certainly question whether this system was in line with ethical behavior, it was indeed the rule of law that ruled the country. Even though perpetrators of apartheid was trialed, they were rarely found guilty. This was not because of a biased or tainted jury, but because the criminal justice process itself. The legal system could not accommodate the nature of the crimes. Instead of making people liable, long chains of commands and lack of personal involvement served to create a reasonable doubt and the perpetrator was set free (Llewellyn and Howse, 1999). In many incidents of human rights abuse there were also strong indications of state involvement, but the details remained buried in a complex hierarchy and bureaucratic rules thus managed to protect those responsible (Kollapen, 1993).

In this way, the atrocities, which happened during the apartheid regime, was allowed to happen to a great extent because of what Bauman (1993, 1999) inspired by Levinas called moral distance. Traditional ethics based on guidelines, codes or calculations tends to create moral distance and undermine personal morality (Parker, 1998, Jones et al., 2005, Kjonstad and Willmott, 1995, Bauman, 1993, Jones, 2003, ten Bos, 1997). Ten Bos and Willmott (2001) extends this argument as they point out that bureaucracy allows and encourages its employees to develop what they call a ‘calculating instinct’

instead of a ‘moral instinct’. This moral distance is extended in bureaucratic organizing where decisions seldom rely on the individual moral of the employee, but instead on specific rules or virtues defined by a management. Management decides what constitutes a ‘virtuous’ character and thus a ‘good’ employee.

The horizon of a particular action is thus not determined by how the actor himself thinks about its effects, but by its being in conformity with the rules laid down by those who occupy a higher rank in the bureaucratic hierarchy. (ten Bos, 1997: 999)

Distance—both geographical and hierarchical—is in this way following Jones et al. (2005) a strategy that often lead to the disposal of personal care. Bureaucrats have to obey orders at all times, and orders are not questioned by a sense of personal moral (Kaulingfreks, 2005a). On this view, actors attempt to achieve moral neutrality through both physical and hierarchical distance (Jones et al., 2005). The face of the other person disappears when there is a distance in between the self and the other; and we are exposed to what both Bauman and Levinas would denote as an *effacement*. In effacement, the face disappears and individuals are only seen as categories or entities to be managed. The idea about moral distance created by bureaucracy is put to its extreme by Bauman (1999), who discusses how the holocaust was morally possible. Holocaust, for Bauman is the cruelest example of how a large number of people can be subjected to an essentially utilitarian calculation, where the only concern is how the best means available can meet a particular end.

The remarkable question following Jones et al. (2005: 90) is how bureaucratic organizations manage to encourage normally moral people to behave in what

would otherwise be regarded as immoral ways. Ten Bos relates to this when he argues:

that it was normal and civilized people and not inveterate sadists who paved the way for Treblinka. These normal and civilized people were working for bureaucratic organizations: They could destroy a whole people by sitting at their desks. (Ten Bos, 1997: 997)

Kaulingfreks follows this line of argumentation with the claim that bureaucratic “institutions numb our moral impulses and dehumanize us. They make us forget ourselves in order to rely solely on rules and obedience to laws and management experts” (2005a: 38). In this way, a business ethics build on bureaucratic distance, removes employees from their personal sense of morality. On this view, ethics does not encourage moral actions; in fact it undermines it, because its foundation rules out the personal moral responsibility. As long as we act solely in conformity with rules, we are ‘only’ legally responsible, but we are never morally responsible.

Although South Africa did not experience something as horrible as the Holocaust or the genocides in Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the cruelties in South Africa can be compared to these other cruelties for being targeted systematically against a particular group of the population. The above mentioned analyses of the Holocaust and moral distance can therefore also be applied to the apartheid regime in South Africa. What happened in South Africa was also affected by a ‘numbed personal morality’ and a ‘moral distance’, and its scale was not due to the entire white population being inherently evil, but because of an ingrown legal structure, which supported segregation—a segregation, which was (and to a large degree still is) so deeply rooted in the people, that even the black population supported the basic



ideas of the segregation policy (Bhargava, 2002). Many have also told stories of how they were never true supporters of apartheid. But as it was something so many people grew up with and for many it took quite some time to realize what in fact had happened (Nagy, 2002).

The case of the former white leaders in South Africa from the consultant's story is an example of how 'normal people' can end up doing horrible things; how they experience moral distance. As the consultant said, many of the white leaders—reasonable clever men as he calls them—had been involved in the torturing, liquidation, persecution and suppression of the black people. They had most likely not been directly executing these horrible acts, as they were too far up in the hierarchy for this, but they had without much doubt been involved in decisions or cover-ups regarding such acts. And they had done this for that one 'reason' that the black people belonged to an inferior race. But rules and legislation supported them in their actions, and as we saw above, the justice system was not designed to punish such crimes against the black people. Therefore, their misdeeds were not judged illegal and thereby not deemed unethical. They had the law on their side. In the apartheid regime, human rights abuses were tolerated if not accepted (Gibson, 2004). After apartheid was suspended many, among these the consultant, asked themselves how this could ever happen—especially in a time where the world already had experienced Holocaust.

When we think of the misdeeds these people did, we are very quickly to conclude that they must have been vicious, or mentally ill people with no sense of responsibility or moral judgment. But just like we saw in the writings of ten Bos and Jones et al. above, the consultant found out that he was certainly not dealing with vicious insane people. These people were normal people and actually as he states 'nice guys'. The theory discussed here can

help explain this. These things were possible, because of a rigid rule of law and an ethics that created a moral distance between the people giving orders and the people affected. The structures made it alright; in fact, the apartheid legislation made it more than alright. It was the right thing to do to suppress these people. And the leaders did not feel guilty because the law protected them; they probably truly thought they did the right thing for their country. In this way the legal system very obviously created a moral distance and protected the perpetrators. As long as people were protected by bureaucracy, they were rarely sentenced. Things obviously changed in the TRC process where one of the conditions for applying for amnesty was the political goal and the non-individual act. In this way TRC exposed those who were formerly protected by bureaucratic structures.

This sense of alterity or distance from particular others is following Gergen et al. (2001) an inevitable outcome of social life. As I also discussed earlier, we tend to group up with people who are alike, because it is easier—it gives us comfort and peace. But these groups also make us perform groupthink. The support of the group makes us believe that we are doing the right thing. This is also supported by facts from the TRC Process. At the beginning of the process, 41 % of whites thought that victims were exaggerating their stories. The white population in the beginning refused to see what has in fact happened. They were so comfortable in their belief that their ‘group’ had made the right decisions that it impossibly could be as bad as the non-whites subsequently reported. As Nagy (2002) argues, the whites have mainly remained in denial strengthened by continued segregation and isolation. Racists views or prejudices are often strongly connected to the lack of interracial contact, thus face-to-face interracial contact is very important to reducing prejudices (Gibson, 2004), and as most people in South Africa continued to live divided in self-occurring racially defined areas (as it happens

in most of the world's big cities with vast diversified population), they didn't experience enough interracial contact to move beyond this denial of what happened.

If we go back to the consultant's story, the sense of moral distance suddenly changed now that these white leaders were faced with the opposition—when they finally experienced interracial contact. And they did not only face the non-white opposition, they actually had to cooperate with them; to become a team. They suddenly saw them as people and faces and not only as numbers and names, and that made a big difference. They suddenly felt guilty, as they realized the harm they had caused other people, and that was, according to the consultant, exactly the reason why it was the black group that started to open up at the very first meeting at the ranch. The white group simply felt too guilty and needed time to 'digest' the faces they saw. They had probably never felt this guilt before facing their injustice. As Levinas says "consciousness of my injustice is produced when I incline myself not before facts, but before the Other" (Levinas, 1987a: 57). By facing these people as faces, the white leaders became conscious of their acts; the before anonymous number suddenly became an Other.

#### *6.4.5 And Justice for All – when Rules are not Enough*

The last event concerns the decisions regarding the externally financed aid-projects in South Africa. When the planning unit had to choose among the international donated projects in South Africa, they made a very interesting decision: They decided to decline many of the international funding offers for the simple reason that they only wanted projects that were in the interest of the South African people and not wanted to choose a project just because it was in the interest of the international community. As the consultant said, the planning unit saw that the international donors had an international agenda.

And this agenda was all about dictating South Africa what they internationally thought was right and wrong, and not considering the specific South African context. That is, they in fact wanted to fund projects that benefited the international community and not necessarily South Africa nationally.

This is a good example of implementing an ethics based on utilitarian principles. This story shows that bureaucrats can be placed somewhere in the world and make calculations about what project would benefit the world most. And by ‘the world’ usually only western interest are considered. It seems like that they sometimes forget about the country at hand; forget to view a country as an Other, and treat it as a goal in it self, and not just as a mean to international approval. Formally, their actions are ethical; they donate money to the poor, but they do it in the interest of their own and not in the interest of the Other. And in this sense their acts would never count as ethical in a Levinasian sense. In order to be ethical, in a Levinasian sense, the moral self has to be dislocated from reason and calculation, and that is not the case here. The international community expects to get something in return. They will only donate the money if it is spend on their specific formulated projects. In the view of a Levinasian ethics, this qualifies only as an act of responsibility swapping—it is not inherently ethical (Levinas, 2000: 175). When responsibility is calculated with the expectation of a return, it is compared, totalized and homogenized (Levinas 2007: 204), which is not ethical. For an act to be ethical, it must be carried out without expectation of a return. The funding must therefore be non-intentional to qualify as ethics. The wish to fund South Africa should come out of respect and acknowledgement for what is done in South Africa and not for the purpose of reaching higher international political goals.

The team from the Danish Institute of Human Rights, on the other hand, acted according to Levinasian ethical principles. They were a small team located in the context itself and not a large bureaucratic organization far away from the context. This made the difference; this made it possible for them to act according to a Levinasian ethics, instead of the bureaucratic dictated utilitarian principles used by the larger international community. They communicated to the international community that they would only run projects that fitted the strategy they were building up. And if the projects did not fit, they would not run them. What was truly amazing about this decision was, that it was, as far as the consultant knows, the first time these powerful international people had experienced that they from a developing country said ‘no thank you’ to money. And as he told in the story it caused both the justice department and the planning unit including the Danish team a major international pressure, and made them very unpopular. But the fact that they even down prioritized the international community makes this an even greater case of a personal ethics. They saw South Africa as an Other and ignored the international pressure. In this way, they treated South Africa as a goal in it self and had no alternative agenda, was not expecting a specific return from their actions in the country.

It then turned out to be beneficial for the team to act in this way, but it was nothing they had anticipated. This fact, that they handled the international situation as they did, gave them a rather significant impact on the situation in South Africa. As I earlier quoted the minister of justice for saying, this was one of the actions, which made the South Africans trust in the Danish team, trust in the fact that they—unlike much of the international community they cooperated with—had no alternative agenda. But it was not for that reason they did what they did, their actions were non-intentional and their decisions

had arisen in the face of the Other, in the pain and struggles they saw in South Africa and in the wish for a better society.

The team therefore ended up not only implementing justice, but implementing a sense of justice, which in Levinasian terms had originated in the responsibility for the Other. The basic principle was human rights and the singular respect for the individual. The universality of justice came from the singularity of the respect for another human being as Other. To be legal was not enough. So instead of 'And Justice for All', maybe a more appropriate title for the vision would perhaps have been 'Responsibility for the Other'.

## 7 Discussion

The Levinasian critique of the ethical foundations of diversity management and the changes in perspective that brought, along with the illustration and discussion of the events in South Africa has led me to this final chapter in the thesis, here I want to discuss some of the central issues, which has occurred out through the thesis, and which I find important and in need for special attention. In this way, they serve to connect all the prior chapters and lead us to a conclusion.

These concepts and topics are 1) first the interrelation between justice and ethics, which is a very important interrelation in order to understand Levinas and to use Levinas in business ethics and diversity management. But it is also an interrelation, which proved to be of great importance in South Africa. 2) Second, I will discuss the importance of ethical interruption. As I have already established ethics is not only rigid rules or calculations, but also to let the Other interrupt one's common sense. Ethical interruption therefore breaks with my stable knowledge base and introduces the new into thought. 3) Finally, I will take this discussion further and examine how an ethics of interruption creates new relations and not only transforms our knowledge, but also transforms the knower him or herself. In this way, ethics always takes us beyond, and in this case beyond management, beyond labor, and beyond the knower.

### *7.1 The Interrelations between Justice and Ethics*

A very important, and as mentioned earlier often neglected, issue in Levinasian ethics is the interrelation between ethics and justice. Whereas

many read Levinas only for his ethics for the Other—the moral responsibility to one singular Other—much of his theorizing (especially Levinas 1981) is also about discussing the precarious relationship between ethics for the Other and justice for all other Others. Responsibility starts from facing the Other, but nevertheless in the encounter with the many, we must rely on law and justice. The moment the third enters, moral issues become distant and justice is necessary because of the multiplicity of relationships. The main ethical challenge, therefore, is the existence of the third. Societies do not exist of Bauman's moral parties of two. There is always a third involved, who might not have a voice, but nevertheless is *there*—somewhere—and is affected by the moral decisions I make. There are always other Others. From the moment the third party enters, we must according to Levinas (1998: 202) compare, and this very comparability makes justice possible. What Levinas accomplishes is thinking personal responsibility and justice not as a separate dualism, but as interconnected concepts.

I then acknowledge the unavoidability of falling into law once there is an encounter with multiplicity. As Van de Ven (2005) points out, we obviously inhabit an ontological world of for example technology and politics, and these structures of organization are of course necessary for mankind. I don't deny this, but argue that justice begins with the third in the sense of the third party. The entrance of the third necessitates comparability, thematization, and the possibility of justice (Eskin, 2000).

Still, that which makes justice possible is the relationship between the self and the Other—that is responsibility for the Other. At the heart of this argument lies therefore the irreducible ethical proximity of one human being to another, responsibility, and through that encounter a relation to all others, justice (Cohen, 1998). Levinas explains the relationship between justice and the Other



like this: “We wanted to describe the man to man relationship. Justice does not constitute it; it is what makes justice possible. Justice is rendered to the totality” (Levinas, 1987a: 44). And he continues a little later with the often cited sentence: “Justice well ordered begins with the Other” (Levinas, 1987a: 56). In these quotes he makes very clear that justice depends on ethics. Thus, when the third party enters, ethics does not disappear or dissolves, the everyday encounters with the Other is what makes justice possible.

Reason, to which the virtue of arresting violence is ascribed, issuing in the order of peace, presupposes disinterestedness, passivity or patience. In this disinterestedness, when, as a responsibility for the other, it is also a responsibility for the third party, the justice that compares, assembles and conceives, the synchrony of being and peace takes form. (Levinas, 1981: 16)

Responsibility for the Other is also a responsibility for the third, and face of the Other does in this way not only signify its own otherness, but it also immediately reminds me of every other Other. As such, the radical asymmetry in the ethical call of the Other reminds me of the symmetrical claim for justice that I am Other for other Others (see also Introna, 2007, Byers and Rhodes, 2007). However, the contribution of such a justice lies not in its search for the universal categories and believes in equality and fairness. But its importance lies in its irreducible willingness to be interrupted by the proximity of the Other. “We need the law to give our judgment force, and yet when we face the [O]ther, in its singularity, it shatters the law, making the law seem perverse” (Introna, 2007: 268).

In this sense, the universal for Levinas is constituted in the singular. The singularity of the face of the Other relates us with the third party, because the Other reminds us of every other Other. The multiplicity of multiple demands

places 'limitations' on (or at least tempering of) the capacity of the Same to respond, which is overcome by the dimension of universal justice by which all others are served: the third party is not just interested in good intentions but also good deeds, therefore there must be some economy of action. Yet, at all times the relationship of the self to the Other remains primordial and the responsibility infinite. This allows for universal justice, but a justice not justified by the universality of demands (or totalization), but always on the face-to-face, yet some administration (which necessarily includes totalization) will be necessary (Peperzak, 1995: 182). But justice must always come from the primacy of this face-to-face relation:

How is it that there is justice? I answer that it is the fact of the multiplicity of men and the presence of someone else next to the Other, which condition the laws and establish justice...It is consequently necessary to weigh, to think, to judge, in comparing the incomparable...from whence comes justice. Justice, exercised through institutions, which are inevitable, must always be held in check by the initial interpersonal relation. (Levinas, 1985: 89-90)

Levinas cannot answer for the practicality of how we make these judgments—for that would be reintroducing a universal (and totalizing) ethics. The primacy of the face-to-face no more excludes injustice than universalized laws, and yet this possibility of violence to others will always remain. In that respect Levinas retains political realism and should not be seen as utopian: “the work of justice is as consistent with the acknowledgement of the war implied in peace as the peace implied in war” (Caygill, 2002: 96). Instead, justice works in the space between ontology and ethics.

Respect described in this way is not a result of justice, since the one who is commanded is outside justice and injustice. The one respected is not the one to whom, but the one with whom one renders justice. (Levinas, 1987a: 43, 44)

This means that the singular and absolutely unique responsibility to the Other underlies our sense of justice for other Others and in a sense creates our sense of justice.

This interrelation between justice and ethics is of uttermost importance—both to understand Levinas’ ethics, but very importantly also to give his theories practical sense. Levinasian ethics is, as discussed in the beginning of this thesis, often attacked of being an impractical ethics of high concepts and impossible ideals. But this is only so, if the readers neglect the importance of the interrelation of ethics and justice. What Levinas teaches us is that ethical reasoning or calculation following utilitarian, deontological or virtue ethics is in danger of reducing the Other to the same, robbing the Other of all that is unique and ungraspable. This is inherently unethical. Levinas, however, does not, as some might think, argue for relativistic ethics, where ‘anything goes’ as long as I feel a call. Instead, he teaches us the importance of moral reasoning in difficult situations, where rules do not apply. Especially, in relation to diversity management, he teaches us that we cannot act solely according to rules and we cannot expect diversity to be calculated and measured. Justice is not secured as long as we make sure that we treat people equally, and I don’t treat another person ethically just because I let him or her enter my country or work in my company. Responsibility has nothing to do with what is expected of you. Responsibility, on the other hand is to see the impossibility to treat the Other ethically according to rules or cost/benefit calculations. Political discussion of diversity management (and by political I also include discussions in organizations, as these are also inherently based on political demands and policies) most often start from the perspective of equality, but for Levinas diversity management would not be about equality, but rather the opposite of respecting the uniqueness and incomprehensibility of the individual as radical

Other. It is like political discussion forgets the human and neglect ethics, but on the other hand, Levinasian ethics is often used without remembering the important and influential political sphere of justice and the third. As Critchley (2007: 13) says, “if ethics without politics is empty, then politics without ethics is blind”. By introducing Levinasian ethics to the scene of diversity management, I try to open up the eyes of the political discussion to the fact that solely managing diversity according to politically defined ethical standards has the complete opposite effect—it reduces the Other—and erases the important and creative difference, which our society needs in order to stay in progress.

As we saw in the case from South Africa also here the interrelation between ethics and justice was of great importance to the success of the post-apartheid work. The post-apartheid period was a time where people needed explanation and compensation for the atrocious crimes of the past, and therefore justice was needed. But not any kind of justice. People needed to be able to live together afterwards and share the same society, thus reconciliation and unity was very important too. This was why a restorative approach to justice was chosen—an approach, which corresponds very well with the values of a Levinasian ethics. Most often justice among lawyers is seen as a duty to prosecute and punish, but the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee questioned the effect of criminal trials and instead emphasized social reconciliation and healing.

The truth processes in South Africa can therefore be seen as an ethical respond to the atrocities committed. Responding and taking responsibility for what happened. They could have chosen a regular criminal trial, where the top leaders of the apartheid regime would have been punished, but this would not have brought reconciliation to the country. Instead, it was seen as important

that the crimes were publicly recognized and a public response to the non-white people was necessary. The perpetrators were therefore granted amnesty through exposure—they had to come forward, publicly, face their crimes and expose themselves to the public. The assumption was that people needed to know who to forgive. If truth didn't surface people would never know whom to forgive. They needed a face to forgive to move on with rebuilding their society. In a sense, one could say that the truth process needed to rip up the wounds, before it could let it heal. If they had tried to cover up the details of the crimes, too many questions has been left unanswered and suspicions and mistrust would have continued to permeate the country. This view on justice was however very unconventional as it didn't bring punishment to the perpetrators. Instead, justice was said to be reached by the perpetrators exposing themselves publicly and then living in a world which knew of their crimes (Dyzenhaus, 1999). The perpetrators had to take responsibility for their actions, show responsibility to the Other and expose themselves in order to get amnesty. Justice alone is not enough.

Applying more traditional legal matters would not have benefited the South African people. Legal institutions are based on the recognition of equal dignity for all citizens. But there are limits to what legal institutions can do. As Allen (1999) notes, it is important that we acknowledge these limits and acknowledge that legal institutions do not recognize the individual morality of people as responsible persons capable of making moral decisions. What is important is therefore that politics and in this case political thinking on diversity management allows for a sense of responsibility for the Other. Politics must not forget the sphere of ethics, just like ethics needs politics to not develop into high concepts and idealized theorizing. Politics and political management of diversity issues must allow for ethical interruption—another key concept in Levinasian ethics.

## 7.2 *Ethical Interruption*

What then can interrupt the circular thinking of economy and politics and break with the homogenizing and totalizing functions of society? In Levinasian ethics there is only one way and that is by letting ethics interrupt common sense (see for example Levinas, 1969: 43). Ethical interruption is in this sense essential to avoid totalization or moral distance, which are the likely results of rigid rules, calculations and procedures. Ethics, for Levinas, functions as the interruption of my knowledge, and exposes my willingness to be changed by the Other's critique. Levinasian ethics does not start with external calculations, rules or definitions. It is not rules for other people to live by, "alterity is possible only starting from *me*" (Levinas, 1969: 40, original italics). Ethics arises in the encounter with the Other, and is only possible when I let myself be changed. It is about calling the self into question by letting otherness interrupt my thoughts.

Levinasian ethics might therefore appropriately be called a responsive ethics rather than a communicative ethics (Waldenfels, 1995). This implies that the response primarily refers to something that has to be said or done, as opposed to something that has already been said and done. By emphasizing the response, Levinas opens up for a future; a future that is not reached by the self alone. The Other's face challenges me to go beyond the limits of myself and into the world of the Other. This is a desire for the infinity of the Other—a desire for the novelty the Other might bring into my world. "It consists paradoxically, in thinking more than is thought while keeping it immeasurable with regard to thought, and entering into relation with the ungraspable while maintaining its status as ungraspable" (Levinas, 2003: 33). The desire for knowing more about the ungraspable world of the Other is thus called upon me in the proximity of the face to face encounter.

The questioning glance of the Other seeks a meaningful response—for the self to be response-able. I can respond with a simple word, and proceed with indifference, concentrating on my own task, passing the Other by. But if an ethical relation is to be achieved, a real response, a responsible answer must be given. “The calling into question of the I, coextensive with the manifestations of the Other in the face, we call language” (Levinas, 1969: 171). This means that I must be ready to put my world into words (Wild, 1969: 14), and to expose myself and offer my vulnerability to the Other. The ethical demand arises when the face presents itself in its nakedness (Levinas, 2003), stripped of all plastic form, and it is an exposure of the vulnerability of the self. It is a window to one’s otherness, and in this exposure there is a calling for responsibility—a call for a response.

My response to the Other is exposure through saying. To respond ethically to the Other is, therefore, to expose one’s inner self. In saying, the self approaches the Other by expressing itself in its vulnerability. As Levinas explains: “Saying uncovers beyond nudity, what dissimulation there may be under the exposedness of a skin laid bare” (Levinas, 1981: 49). This nudity is thus not a physical nudity. Rather, it is a mental nudity, or a vulnerability, which Levinas calls the extreme passivity of responsibility:

The passivity of the exposure responds to an assignation that identifies me as the unique one, not by reducing me to myself, but by stripping me of every identical quiddity, and thus of all form, all investiture, which would still slip into the assignation (...) stripped to the core as in an inspiration of air, an ab-solution to the one (...) a denuding beyond the skin. (Levinas, 1981: 49)

In this way, the self is 'stripped' from all identical being and is reduced to the ethical one, willing to change. Therefore, in extreme passivity, the self is ethical in its response, without any intentions or any relations to who the self is. Exposedness is the one in its uniqueness, stripped of all protective categories that could multiply it and make it belong to a defined group. Exposedness is the self, without prejudices towards the Other, and thus reduced to the one-in-responsibility. When the self appears in a 'denuding beyond the skin' it therefore means that it shows levels of itself, which are beyond the categorical difference, it exposes its otherness.

Levinas continues by clarifying that saying thereby uncovers the responding self "in the sense that one discloses oneself by neglecting one's defences, leaving a shelter, exposing oneself to outrage, to insults and wounding" (Levinas, 1981: 49). That is, exposedness is not just to strip oneself of categorical differences. To expose oneself is also to take a chance, to run a risk of failure and embarrassment. "The one is exposed to the Other as a skin is exposed to what wounds it" (Levinas, 1974:49). In responding to the Other in a saying I reveal my inner self and offer my world to the Other. In this exposure I make myself vulnerable to critique and attacks. That is, in this sense I make myself ready to be changed by the Other.

The exposed response creates a passage to the Other, or rather a passage for the Other to interrupt and thereby change me. In fact, saying is the non-thematizable ethical element of language that is capable of interrupting thought, and thereby enables the movement from the Same to the Other (Werhane, 1995)—the possibility of change.

Language is perhaps to be defined as the very power to break the continuity of being or of history. The knowledge that absorbs the Other is forthwith situated within the



discourse I address to him. Speaking rather than 'letting be' solicits the Other. (Levinas, 1969: 195)

In other words, the exposure of myself in saying requests for the Other's questioning, and through his questioning I open up to novelty; I open up for the experience of the Other to change my world. The learning experience from the encounter with the Other is central in the work of Levinas. To approach the Other in conversation is therefore to welcome the Other's expression, in which at each instant the Other overflows my thoughts. To approach the Other is therefore to *receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I. It means to be taught (Levinas, 1969: 51).

An ethical encounter with the Other is therefore an encounter I can learn from. It is an encounter that transforms me, changes my future. As Levinas says: the Other is the future. "The future is what is not grasped, what befalls us and lays hold of us. The Other is the future. The very relationship with the Other is the relationship with the future" (Levinas, 1987b: 77). Affecting the future or creating something new is therefore not the work of the self alone. Instead, it is the Other that opens up to a changed future. By not exposing myself, and by not opening up to what the Other might offer, I create a deadlock, where my thoughts stay rigid and the same. This would result in a situation where I try to assimilate or illuminate the Other instead of welcoming the Other, and assimilation or illumination does not bring novelty. However, if I encounter the Other in an ethical readiness to expose myself, and with a willingness to let the Other change me, I hold the chance of gaining novelty. The very existence of a future bears otherness, and the alterity of the future then is discovered in the alterity of the other person. Rosenthal (2003) explains that it is exactly because the responsibility for the Other is transcendent that it can change my existence. Transcendence fosters real newness, because the

transcendence per definition cannot be pre-thought. The sense of the future that is opened by transcendence to the Other, is another instant rather than continuity of the same. A new instant is what allows for radical novelty.

### *7.3 Introducing the New into Thought*

My response to the Other's call makes me accomplish knowledge. The call of the Other, and the acknowledgement of the Other's infinite difference from me appeals to me and makes me reflect over my world. The ethical encounter is not about changing the Other, but it breaks with my common sense, and makes me reflect over my world. The Other's otherness disturbs and interrupts my world; makes me open my eyes to see beyond the plastic face. I see the Other's otherness and not only the visible differences. I will here on these last pages discuss how Levinasian ethics is tightly linked to change and the creation of the new. I will thus explain how an ethics for the other, based on non-categorical otherness, can bring novelty beyond labor, beyond knowledge and even beyond the knower.

In the welcoming of the face of the Other, the will opens up to reason. Language is not limited to maieutic awakening of thoughts common to beings. It does not accelerate the inward maturation of a reason common to all; it teaches and introduces the new into thought. The introduction of the new into a thought, the idea of infinity, is the very work of reason. The absolutely new is the Other. (Levinas, 1969: 219)

That is, the new is not something latent in the being waiting to be extracted by Socratic questioning. Still, it does not spring from nothing. The first is not really new, and the second is a myth (Berkun, 2007). Instead, the absolutely new is the Other. In fact, the absolutely new—not the latent—arises from the Other's interruption, which puts me into question. The absolutely new arises from the radical change brought about in the ethical encounter with the Other.

However, as the absolutely new is the Other, it is not something which is graspable and victim of valuation. The new as the Other is ungraspable in nature, always questioning you, challenging you. In this way, Levinas' 'the new into thought' can be used to explain the inspiration that some people are said to experience when working together in creative groups. To be more specific, this inspiration—or synergy—can be explained as the interruption of the Other and the ethical acknowledgement that opens me up to change and novelty. After all, change comes from a transformation of the known, and this is why the knower must be open to interruption.

Levinas hardly ever discusses knowledge directly. In one of the rare passages, however, where Levinas directly connects his thoughts on interruption to knowledge, he states that:

Knowing becomes knowing of a fact only if it is at the same time critical, if it puts itself into question, goes back beyond its origin—in an unnatural movement to seek higher than one's own origin, a movement which evinces or describes a created freedom. This self-criticism can be understood as a discovery of one's weakness or a discovery of one's unworthiness. (Levinas, 1969: 82-83)

The central element of this quote is that if one is truly to obtain knowledge, one has to move beyond one's origins, which brings us back to the encounter with the Other. The unnatural movement to seek higher is the ethical drawness to the Other's face. That is, putting oneself into question and being open to interruption. Only in the sometimes dramatic, exhausting and even traumatic confrontation with otherness can we change our basic assumptions and allow for a transformation of our common sense. So it is in the notion of interruption that Levinas' central imperative of openness to the Other's otherness and exposure of one's own self becomes important.

By taking a Levinasian ethical perspective on knowledge, I propose that we can move beyond a categorical and stable view on knowledge, and instead reach beyond to the interruption of knowledge. In this way, I don't view knowledge as a stock, or a capability, or something that needs to be handled in order to foster superior performance. But instead as something, which needs to be put into question by the ethical encounter with the Other. "Critique or philosophy is the essence of knowing" (Levinas, 1969: 85), and "this awakening comes from the Other" (Levinas, 1969: 86). Understanding change in a Levinasian perspective, however, is not only the transformation of knowledge, but also the transformation of the knower. After all, the encounter with the Other, and the interruption it implies, changes *me* as a knower, not only my knowledge. An ethical encounter with otherness not only changes my assumptions, but it changes my self, because the self is constantly changing in the encounters with otherness. That is, the self is constantly constructed—becoming—in the interplay between interiority and exteriority. The encounter with radical exteriority, the Other, which per definition is always exterior to my comprehension, calls me into question and reveals and changes my interiority, my identity. That is, transforms me as a knower.

To link this more directly to business studies the distinction Levinas makes between labor and the immediate relation to the Other is of relevance. I intend to use this link to further support the argument of how a Levinasian ethics makes us reach a more profound level of novelty. As was established above, novelty is inevitably linked to the ungraspable future the ethical encounter with the Other brings. The uncertain future of the element, however, is suspended and calmed in the "possessive grasp" of labor (Levinas, 1969: 158). That is, the things produced from labor are possessed and stabilized. Stable possessions produced by labor are therefore to be distinguished from the

infinity of enjoyment created in the immediate relation with the Other, the ethical encounter. In fact, labor possesses being and suspends its element. This kind of possession neutralizes being; it “masters, suspends, postpones the unforeseeable future of the element—its independence, its being” (Levinas, 1969: 158). Labor, construed as this possessive acquisition, is a movement towards oneself, not towards the Other. However, the immediate relation with the Other is a possession without acquisition, where I possess without taking and keeping. “Possession is accomplished in taking-possession or labor, the destiny of the hand. The hand is the organ of grasping and taking, the first and blind grasping in the teaming mass: it relates” (Levinas, 1969: 159). Through labor the hand grasps and relates knowledge to needs. The immediate relation with the Other, on the contrary, is not related. This relation is as such immediate, carries infinity. As we saw above my newly found knowledge is not mine to keep, not to be possessed. It will continue to be put into question by encounters with otherness. Product innovation, which belongs to labor, to the production of possessions, therefore, differs from the ethical encounter with the Other, the creation of new relations. “Labor “defines” matter without recourse to the idea of infinity” (Levinas, 1969: 160). That is, labor stabilizes and produces possessions.

In this sense I find what Jones and Spicer (2006: 197) call a ‘general economy’ beneath the ‘productive economy’. They relate this general economy to thoughts on excess, exuberance and passion. I take it one step further and relate it to the ethical encounter with otherness; an encounter that in fact allows for and produces excess, exuberance and passion.

Commerce with the alterity of infinity does not offend like an opinion; it does not limit a mind in a way inadmissible to a philosopher. Limitation is produced only

within a totality, whereas the relation with the Other breaks the ceiling of totality.  
(Levinas, 1969: 171)

In the immediate relation with the Other, in seeking the ethical responsibility in work, we can move beyond mere labor. I must know how to give what I possess. Only then can I situate myself absolutely above my engagement in labor, and engage in the Other. But for this I must encounter the indiscreet face of the Other that calls me into question. To allow for novelty and change, I must encounter the Other ethically, acknowledge the Other's otherness in a response. I must let the Other's otherness interrupt my thought, introduce the new into my thought, and allow for that novelty to change me as a knower. Language, therefore exceeds labor, it is an action without action. It exceeds labor by its generosity of offering my world to the Other. Therefore, we should not only look at production, innovation, and outcomes, but go beyond innovation, beyond the product, beyond labor and seek novelty and change in new relations and identities. The very encounter with the Other, which puts the knower into question, and brings new into thought.

Knowledge is categorized, managed, utilized; that is, possessed through labor. But to know ethically, to put knowledge into question, transforms knowledge, creates something. Therefore, the novelty of the future presupposes a relation with an Other that is not given to labor, but is ethically an acknowledgement of the infinite difference between me and the Other.

If philosophy consists in knowing critically, that is, in seeking a foundation for its freedom, in justifying it, it begins with conscience, to which the other is presented as the Other, and where the movement of thematization is inverted. But this inversion does not amount to 'knowing oneself' as a theme attended to by the Other, but rather in submitting oneself to an exigency, to a morality. (Levinas, 1969: 86)

Levinasian change is therefore not about gaining knowledge, using knowledge and possessing knowledge. It is not about knowing oneself and externalizing a potential. The identity of the knower itself is called into question, which allows for more than just producing new possessions. It creates new relations where the future itself is radically being called into question. In fact, it takes us beyond the foundation of knowledge, it questions this very foundation; ethics puts every foundation into question.

## **8 Conclusion**

I set out on this journey with a deeply felt interest in diversity management. I have always been puzzled—and in a way sad—about how we as human beings treat each other's differences, and I am fascinated by the difficulty for us to enjoy being with people that are dissimilar to us. Even people that generally seem open and welcoming often have an immediate tendency to socialize with people that are similar to them. Even though we know that we can learn a lot from people that are different from us, it is in our human nature to seek similarity. This dilemma fascinated me, and for this reason it seemed natural to me that diversity management was to become my main research area. However, I very quickly discovered that the field did not give me the answers I was looking for. I quickly realized that the vast amount of existing literature had a very mechanical approach to what it means to be different as well as a very narrow approach to the ethical reasons for 'managing' diversity. It soon became evident to me that there was something that needed to be questioned, that the field was faced with discrepancy in its results. I wanted to find out why, and therefore, I began to investigate further into both the ethical foundations of diversity management and what it in fact means to be different from one another—two issues that I found to be strongly interrelated. This interest was what started my journey into diversity management and what I—inspired by Critchley (1992)—have come to think of as its ethical call to be deconstructed.

My approach was ethical and I started by questioning the ethical foundation of diversity management. Diversity management is a discipline within business studies and its natural place to find its ethical foundation is in business ethics. Most business ethics however relies on teleology, deontology and virtue



ethics, which all have a tendency towards simplifying ethics in rules, guidelines and calculations, which means that differences are often erased—or at least moderated—by rigid categorization. I therefore distanced myself to traditional business ethics. Instead, I argued for a re-personalized ethics of responding to the Other's otherness, where I, as a person, am called to responsibility by the Other's face. Ethics is thus the demand for responsibility that the Other's gaze—the expression—the Other's face places on me. I cannot avoid feeling something. I recognize the Other and I respond. One of the most important aspects in Levinasian ethics is thus that the encounter with the Other affects me, and affects my future decisions. In this way, the involuntary demand placed on me by the Other's face has a long-term effect on me, and reminds me of other Others. The everyday encounters with otherness, and the demand they leave me, construct my sense of justice and the way I enact rules.

Levinasian ethics is however not a rejection of traditional business ethics altogether. It is rather a questioning of its absoluteness and its search for finite solutions. What I try to do with Levinasian ethics is not to suggest a new alternative theory to 'obey'. I am not arguing that conforming to Levinasian ethics finally will make the world more just. In fact, that would just create a new set of rigid guidelines. Levinasian ethics is instead a reminder that business ethics is not perfect, and that setting up guidelines and definitions will not ensure ethical behavior. The lesson from Levinasian ethics is that we should accept the impossibility of correct ethical behavior. If we do this, we can supplement our ethical guidelines by allowing our selves to be interrupted by the Other. Of course we need ethical guidelines to live by, but Levinas teaches us that one can never be responsible enough. Justice and rules alone are not enough; they must always be subjected to a personal responsibility. And this responsibility arises in the acknowledgement of the Other's otherness

and in allowing the difference between me and the Other to haunt me and make me try always a little extra. The everyday encounters with otherness and the sensibility towards this otherness is what makes me a moral person capable of questioning the ethical guidelines I am supposed to live by. Rules and guidelines do not in themselves bring justice or make organisations responsible. On the contrary, they in fact hold the risk of making us less responsible and morally numb. Levinas reminds us that even though law and guidelines are important in the field of business ethics, they must never stand alone—justice well ordered begins with the Other.

### *8.1 On the Vulnerability of Diversity Management*

I am in a similar way critical towards the field of diversity management as it justifies its focus on differences by claiming it to be from an ethical wish to create equality and justice. In this way, most diversity management initiatives focus on categorical differences in order to support or promote a minority as for example women, people with different ethnic backgrounds, disabled people or people with ‘different’ sexualities. Differences are then calculated, formulized and subordinated to various guidelines and initiatives. These initiatives are most often initiated for the organization to do good or to be social responsible, but by focusing on the categorical differences, the initiatives often risk creating greater negative attention to the minorities and thus even greater segregation. People become Same.

The world is multiple and there is no way that we can agree on what the right approach towards minorities is or what is best for them. Some might want to be different, and some probably just want to blend in, some wants special attention some don't. Some want to be appreciated for a certain difference, some for something completely other. Some might find diversity initiatives

offending, and some might even find them repressive. In a recent study (Muhr, 2008c) I have identified a repressive tolerance towards women in Danish consultancy firms. In a large case study, where 60 consultants from three large international consultancy firms were interviewed (both male and female), it turned out that diversity initiatives, which were implemented to improve women's terms in the companies, in fact resulted in decreasing their possibilities for promotions. The tolerance and generosity given to women and the encouragement to combine work and family kept them from winning the promotion race and as a result still kept them away from the top management positions. This therefore clearly showed that the diversity initiatives implemented to make women reach top management did rest on a wish to be 'social responsible', but had the completely opposite affect. By focusing on their apparent difference of being women and their special needs they became a marginalized group, which needed help and support. A support, which they found generous, but some also felt offending, because they didn't want to be valued as women, who were important because they brought 'female values' to the company. They wanted to be valued for the job they performed—not their sex.

The above example together with the analyses in the thesis reveals a diversity management field—theoretical as well as practical—which is haunted by a failure to manage diversity. It is this failure, which I interpret as diversity management's vulnerability and its call for a response—a response to shake and jolt it, and to interrupt it and deconstruct it ethically. In the process, it becomes clear that diversity management should direct its focus less on categorical differences and more on infinite otherness. The first destroys creativity by reducing diversity to sameness. The latter, which does not homogenize diversity, but instead acknowledges otherness, is the creative aspect of diversity, indeed, its face. The Other *resists* being managed.

Difference can be managed, otherness cannot; it is beyond the categories, and it is time for diversity to separate itself from the compulsiveness of management and celebrate what it is, namely, something radically Other.

This introduces another view on what it means to be different where not necessarily the categorical differences decide who and what a person is. Instead, identity is constantly made and remade in the encounter with exteriority, a process, which means that diversity categories are always exceeded and transgressed. This means that diversity scholars as well as practitioners should learn to work with the fact that the non-categorical differences—otherness—cannot be classified into the rigid schemes and that diversity is more complex than that. Instead of an emphasis on the classification and management of diversity, I argue for a respect for the complexity of diversity. Instead of only managing differences, I also argue for a respect for the individual and for the otherness this individual holds. This all start with a different view on ethics—personal responsibility for the otherness of the Other.

This change implies that diversity scholars as well as practitioners must lessen their focus on minorities. By viewing diversity management as a fight for minorities, the Other is constructed as a not-Same instead of a true Other (see for example Irigaray, 1985, Sandford, 2002). The Same is in the above cases of South Africa and the female consultants the white and the men, and both the non-whites and the women are constructed as not-Same in the sense that they are minority positions against the established group perceived to be homogeneous. Instead of focusing on these two minority groups' categorical difference of being non-white or non-male, they should be respected for their otherness as well as all the other differences that make them all different from one another. First, when we loose the categorical view, it will be possible to

see them as Others and what abilities they hold as Others, not as a group defined on one character trait—in these cases being black or woman. In South Africa things began to change when the categorical focus was exceeded, likewise with the consultants. First when they are seen as Others with individual needs, it will be possible to find ways of changing things.

## *8.2 South Africa: a Vulnerable Foundation*

The situation in South Africa was—compared to most business ethics cases—an extreme case of diversity where the differences between the various people were cemented by terrible historical events of oppression and segregation. Therefore, the planning unit faced very difficult challenges regarding diversity management in their work in South Africa. Even though, the diversity conflicts occurring in organizations hopefully won't reach the same level of conflict as the situation in South Africa, the conflicts at play and the human patterns of reacting to this are similar to those any organization faces. Many organizations operate at the global market and face extreme diversity challenges when doing business with for example China, Africa or the Middle East. After all, diversity conflicts occur in some form in any group of human beings. Regardless of the level of homogeneity or diversity, diversity conflicts—either positive or negative—will always surface. This is due to the fact that feeling different or alike does not depend on categorical characteristics, but on the specific situation and the task that the particular group of people is facing. For this reason, the example of the South African project can tell us a lot about human reactions, conflicts and ethics in the attempt to manage diversity.

The story from South Africa illustrated how we as people can try to set aside our categorical view of each other. Categorical views do not do much else but

imprison the prejudices we have of people—prejudices that assign people to perceived categories. What the story illustrated was what happens when we succeed to see beyond the categorical differences and into the being of a person. In the story it was first at the moment where they stopped managing diversity, and focused on something other than their categorical differences, that they saw each other and acknowledged the infinite differences; the otherness behind the plastic face. It was when they stopped focusing solely on their categorical differences that they discovered the value of their diversity. Managing diversity risks locking identities into a fixed set of categories and thereby limits the individual's opportunity to change. In this case the attempt to manage diversity maintained people in their 'in' and 'out' groups, because they focused on their physical differences. But managing diversity can never respect the otherness and the infinite non-comprehensibility of the other person as Other.

This story, then, is a story of extreme vulnerability. It is a story of exposure—of exposing one's vulnerability. In this sense, it is a story that shows the creative in the wound. South Africa was badly wounded, but it could not cover up the wound, in that case it would have healed to make a horrible scar. They needed to open the wound and expose every detail, all the bad things as well as all the hopes and dreams. It is only by opening the wound that it becomes possible to question one's foundation. It is only by showing one's vulnerabilities that one is truly capable of changing.

South Africa has come a long way since the end of apartheid and accomplished much more than many people ever thought possible. But as Nagy (2004: 643) points out, the question remains: "given the democratic commitment to difference and dissensus, how deeply should the new citizen ethic bite into one's moral identity?".

Chritchley (2007) in a way answers this, in his most recent book, by reflecting over the following question about justice:

What might justice be in a violently unjust world? It is this question that provokes the need for an ethics or what others might call normative principles that might enable us to face and face down the present political situation. (Chritchley, 2007: 3)

As Chritchley points out, we live in an unjust world. Believing that we, by theorizing about ethics, can make the world just is utopia. Similar, believing that we by setting up moral rules or moral calculations can eradicate injustice is also utopia. Levinasian ethics reminds us about that utopia, but also teaches us that by following solely rule-based or deontological ethics leads us to a situation where respect for the individual easily vanishes. Levinasian ethics therefore functions as a critical voice, an interruption to the archic politics, where foundations seem to be the highest ground. Instead, Levinasian ethics is an-archic (e.g. Levinas, 1981: 10)—an interruption of all foundations.

Ethics is anarchic meta-politics. It is the anarchic moment of democratic dissensus articulated around the experience of the ethical demand, the exorbitant demand at the heart of my subjectivity that defines that subjectivity by dividing it and opening it to otherness. (Chritchley, 2007: 130)

The political tensions about differences are in current diversity management literature archic. It is constantly searching for predetermined and finite politics about difference, equality and rights. Unfortunately, this archic focus has the complete opposite result as it creates a society intensely focused on differences, political correctness and codes of conduct. It does not, however, create reconciliation and respect for each other, instead it creates more visible

differences, a them/us atmosphere and a fear for all that is different and a strengthening of homophily. Instead of searching so desperately for a foundation, this foundation ought to be interrupted. Levinasian ethics offers such an interruption in the emphasis of the infinite demand to response-ability, which arises in the face of the Other.

Ethics is the experience of an infinite demand at the heart of my subjectivity, a demand that undoes me and requires me to do more, not in the name of some sovereign authority, but in the namelessness of a powerless exposure, a vulnerability, a responsive responsibility, a humorous self-division. Politics is not the naked operation of power or an ethics-free agonism, it is an ethical practice that is driven by a response to situated injustices and wrongs. (Critchley, 2007: 132)

### 8.3 *A Vulnerable Text or a Self Exposed?*

In writing this thesis the goal was to make the field of diversity management vulnerable to ethical interruption. It has been my argument that the discrepancy in the field called for an ethical deconstruction; for noticing the saying of the text. But is it only the text that's left vulnerable? Does not the text become my Other, the Other that makes me open my eyes, makes me question my world, my common sense. Does my text not leave me as a writer with a self exposed? Does my text not end up persecuting me as a writer? And if yes, should I then not accept my text as an Other? Accept the text as anarchical to my own knowledge—accept its interruption?

This anarchy is *persecution*; it is the hold of the other upon me, who leaves me without speech. (...) This persecution designates not the content of a mad consciousness but rather the form according to which the me [moi] is affected. It expresses the inversion of consciousness, a passivity that will not be defined in terms of intentionality—where undergoing is always a *taking charge*. However, in the consciousness that is all freedom, or is so at least in the last instance (because, in it,



everything is taken charge of intentionally), how is a *suffering* possible as a *passion*? (Levinas, 2000: 174)

One could say that my suffering became my passion. That I, persecuted by the words of Levinas, and by the words I produced myself inspired by him, became passionate about writing the words that made the text suffer. It became my passion; my wounding to make diversity management bleed and make people see that what they are doing must be questioned. It makes me suffer somehow, when theory tries to manage differences as if that was ethical. And it has become my passion to show that it is not ethical at all. I'm wounded by my passion, haunted by the fact that I try to deconstruct the ethical foundations of management, but by filling the gap with a Levinasian ethics, don't I destroy what Levinasian ethics is basically about—the non-thematization? What I have to suggest is therefore not a new ethical system to replace the bureaucratic rule-based approaches. Instead, it must be a passionate call to listen to the Other, to always allow the Other to change you. To always let the memory of the Other's face remind you of every other Other.

First, through this passion, consciousness is struck or wounded *despite itself*; in it, consciousness is seized without any *a priori* (the other is always encountered in an unexpected fashion—he is the 'first come'). (Levinas, 2000: 174)

Through my passion, I can make my vulnerability constructive. Through my openness to the call of the Other I can allow the wound to be constructive, because only by exposing myself and allowing for wounding can I truly change. The wound doesn't stop me, doesn't limit my endeavor. On the contrary, the wound is constructive. I should always keep the wound open—keep it vulnerable. The minute the wound is closed, I settle, I deny

interruption, I deny the Other. I need to keep the wound open, to expose my vulnerable self, because only in doing that, do I allow the text or any other Other to interrupt me—to change me. The open wound keeps me open to the Other; keeps me open to be changed by otherness. I am wounded despite myself, despite my consciousness; I am wounded by the Other. The Other always is before my consciousness of the existence of the Other, and that is before my own consciousness. That is, the Other holds the only power to actually change my consciousness. The Other, who is always before rules, who always already haunts me, calls me into question.

The text in this sense makes it impossible for me to escape—makes it impossible to hide. The text haunts me and haunts my very being and threatens to change it. In fact, my very self is always exposed through the text.

It is necessary, however, to think an opening that is prior to intentionality, a primordial opening that is an impossibility of hiding; one that is an assignation, an impossibility of hiding in oneself: this opening is an *insomnia*. (Levinas, 2000: 208-209)

Writing makes it impossible for me to hide. Writing these words has exposed me, affected me and made me sleepless. I cannot help living with words; living with them with all that entails of good and evil. Words keep me awake. Words make it impossible for my thinking to sleep. The otherness of Levinas' words and how they have in fact affected my writing has awakened me:

“Such irreducible character of insomnia: the Other *within* the same who does not alienate the Same but who awakens him (and as we have seen, this *within* must be understood as the diachrony of time). It is an awakening that is an exigency or

demand, a more within the less, such as the “within” must be set between quotation marks, since it is at the same time on the outside. (Levinas, 2000: 209)

Responsibility cannot sleep, cannot hide, it is always there, and the call of the Other makes it impossible for me to rest. I don't finish my responsibility by living up to a duty, calculating gains or being a certain someone: My responsibility can never be fulfilled. I am always responsible because the Other doesn't let me go, I'm always called by the Other's face, even the memory of an Other can keep me imprisoned. The Other forever awakens me from my slumber.

## 9 Dansk Resumé

Denne afhandling handler om mangfoldighed og etik. Mere specifikt sætter den spørgsmålstegn ved mangfoldighedsledelsens etiske fundament.

Mangfoldighed ønskes ledet med det udgangspunkt, at det er et etisk anliggende. Det er etisk korrekt at sørge for ligestilling, at tilgodese minoriteter og dermed at opbygge en arbejdsplads, der er social ansvarlig. Dette etiske ønske betvivler jeg ikke, men jeg sætter spørgsmålstegn ved det etiske grundsyn. Mangfoldighedsledelse beror på etiske retninger som utilitarisme, deontologi og dydsetik. Denne afhandling argumenterer derfor for et skift mod en nærhedsetik, der tager udgangspunkt i Levinas' lære om respekten for den Andens uendelige andethed. Derved argumenterer denne afhandling, at når forskelligheder på denne måde tydeliggøres og kategoriseres, øges fokus på forskellighederne—oftest negativt—i stedet for at tilgodese dem for hvad de i virkeligheden er.

Med baggrund i Emmanuel Levinas' (1906-1995) moralfilosofi argumenterer jeg for at den teoretiske diskussion i mangfoldighedsledelse begår en fejltagelse ved at anse forskelligheder som noget elementært kategoriserbart og noget der kan udregnes og styres. Det er her det etiske fundament slår fejl. Hvis man i stedet anlægger et etisk grundsyn baseret på Levinas' nærhedsetik, vil det at betragte forskelligheder som kategorier dybest set være uetisk. Etik er nemlig et spørgsmål om altid at acceptere det andet menneskes ureducerbare og uendelige andethed. Forskelligheder er endelige og kategoriserbare, hvorimod andethed er uendelig og ukategoriserbar. Mødet med den anden, der altid er uendelig forskellig fra mig, er derfor fundamentet for al etisk betragtning. Mangfoldighedsledelse bør derfor udvide sit perspektiv til ikke kun at se på kategoriserbare forskelligheder, men også på den ukategoriserbare, uendelige andethed.

Disse teoretiske overvejelser bliver illustreret i et narrativ fra Sydafrika. Jeg har igennem flere interviews med en seniorkonsulent i Dansk Institut for Menneskerettigheder opsamlet en historie om opbygningen af Sydafrikas justitssystem efter apartheids ophør. Konsulenten fortæller mig specielt om de udfordringer han havde med at få gruppen af de hvide forhenværende ledere og den sorte oppositionsgruppe til at samarbejde. De to grupper var stærkt opdelt; en opdeling som åbenlyst skyldtes deres historiske stridigheder, had til og mangel for respekt for hinanden. Denne historie viser, hvordan det var nødvendigt at se bagom de synlige og kategoriserbare forskelligheder og fokusere på andetheden hos den anden. Kun ved at se bagom deres plastiske maske—deres hudfarve—kunne de finde en måde at samarbejde; en måde som både ændrede dem, deres opfattelser af hinanden og formåede at skabe et resultat.

Casen bringer mig frem til den afsluttende diskussion, hvor de mest centrale temaer i afhandlingen diskuteres og knyttes sammen med de foregående afsnit. Disse er 'forholdet mellem retfærdighed og etik', 'etisk afbrydelse' (ethical interruption), og 'det nye i tanken' (introducing the New into thought). Et centralt argument i Levinas' nærhedsetik er nemlig, at verden ikke kun består af 'moralsk tosømhed'. Når den tredje indfinder sig, er det nødvendigt at sammenligne. Og det er denne sammenligning som muliggør retfærdighed. Det, der er vigtigt her, er dog, at retfærdighed altid bygger på foregående møder med den Anden. Mødet med den Anden minder mig på denne måde om alle andre Andre, og ligger til grund for min retfærdighedssans og min måde at efterleve regler. Anerkendelsen af den Anden fungerer derved som en etisk afbrydelse. Det vil sige en afbrydelse af det etiske spor konsekvensetik, regeletik, dydsetik sætter os i ved deres fokusering på endelighed. En nærhedsetik er aldrig endelig, men netop en afbrydelse, en sætten spørgsmålstejn ved gældende normer. Etisk afbrydelse ændrer min opfattelse

og ændrer mig. Etik for Levinas er dermed ikke et spørgsmål om at ændre den Anden, men om at ændre sig selv og sin relation til den anden. For ved at se etik—ikke som en uigenkaldelig regel—men som et uigenkaldeligt ansvar overfor den andens andethed ændres 'det nye' til at være noget produktorienteret til at være relationsrelateret. Med andre ord, et fokus på andetheden og en åbenhed for at ændres af denne andethed, skaber noget nyt som ikke kun ændrer viden; men som også ændrer den vidende og ændrer de relationer, som de vidende har blandt hinanden.

Afhandlingen konkluderes ved at sætte fokus på skrøbelighed. Først på den skrøbelighed i mangfoldighedsledelseslitteraturen, som 'kalder' på etisk afbrydelse, derved på skrøbeligheden i den Sydafrikanske situation, og til sidst på den skrøbelighed jeg som forfatter har overfor min egen tekst.

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