

Disease Of Conceit – an analysis by Kees de Graaf

Whoever has followed the recent political events in the USA, the inauguration of the 45th President of the United States, may agree that if there is one Dylan song from the eighties which has lost none of its topicality than it is the **'Disease of Conceit'**. Populism is rampant, not only in the USA but also in Europe. We feel that certain aspects of populism are a fertile soil for the disease of conceit to flourish, and it shows, not only in the USA as we have seen, but also in Europe, where in a number of countries elections are coming up this year. For this reason it would be very appropriate if Dylan would reintroduce this song in his upcoming European Tour. You never know.

'Disease of Conceit' is one of those little precious gems from the album 'Oh Mercy' (1989). On page 170 (page 184 of the Dutch edition) of 'Chronicles' (2004), Dylan offers us some useful background information about the way in which this song came about. In 'Chronicles' Dylan emphasizes that **'Disease of Conceit'** definitely has gospel overtones. By the way, we feel that this does not only apply to **'Disease of Conceit'** but almost to any other song on this album. Undoubtedly the main theme on this album is compassion. This compassion is, reflected in the album's title 'Oh Mercy', shines through in all the songs on the album and particularly in the way in which Dylan deals with conceit here. We will say more on this below.

The first question we have to try and answer is: what is this 'disease of conceit'? In 'Chronicles' Dylan gives us some sort of a clue when he says: *'Conceit is not necessarily a disease. It's more of a weakness. A conceited person could be set up easily and brought down accordingly. Let's face it, a conceited person has a false sense of self-worth, an inflated opinion of himself. A person like this can be controlled and manipulated if you know what buttons to push'*. The first thing Dylan invites us to consider is that we should not take the word 'disease' in this respect too literally but more metamorphically. That is why Dylan says that conceit is not necessarily a disease. The disease of conceit certainly has some characteristics of a 'real' infectious disease like e.g. the flu. You can't see the flu, it seems to come out of nowhere, it spreads easily and it is very hard to control. What also strikes us in this quote from 'Chronicles' is that Dylan looks at the disease of conceit from the reverse side of the medal. Although it is true what Dylan writes that one of the main characteristics of a conceited person is that he *'can be controlled and manipulated if you know what buttons to push'* but it is also true- and even more so - that a conceited person exactly knows how he or she can control and manipulate *other* persons and even whole nations and such a person knows exactly what buttons he or she has to push to do so. What is beyond doubt is, that a famous person who suffers from the disease of conceit produces some very bad fruit which, often for political reasons and/or for protection of public image, is kept secret to the public at large. But once this bad fruit becomes known to insiders, such a conceited person can sometimes be easily controlled and manipulated, if not blackmailed. A main characteristic of a conceited person is that such a person turns a blind eye to the damage he or she causes to other people because of one's actions and also turns a blind eye to the risks one runs, once one's actions come home to roost. Pride goes before a fall. Dylan correctly says that a conceited person *'has a false sense of self-worth'* and *'an inflated opinion of himself'*. The result of this attitude is that a conceited person feels that he or she is above the law and that certain moral standards do not apply to him or her but only to other people. Deceit is more of a weakness Dylan says. We feel that deceit and therefore also the disease of conceit, is part of the human condition. But where does conceit originate from? Dylan gives us a clue by saying that the song has gospel overtones, so this time nobody will disagree that we have to look for an answer in

the Gospel, in the Bible. Although it does not use the word 'deceit' literally, nevertheless the Jewish and Christian tradition teaches us that the origin of conceit goes back to the very beginning of mankind, to what happened in the Garden of Eden as described in Genesis 3. In the garden of Eden man was deceived by Satan into believing that if he would become disobedient and rebellious to God by eating from the forbidden fruit, man could be like God. God had said to man that if he would eat from the forbidden fruit, man would die (Gen. 3:3). Satan immediately waved away the penalty, saying a blatant lie to man: "*You shall not die*" (Gen.3:4). To encourage man's obedience Satan offered a reward by saying: "*You shall be like God*" (Gen. 3:5). This was an offer man should have refused, but man unfortunately chose not to do so. Satan's offer to man meant a complete reorientation of the focus of man's life. The 'self' of man would from now on become the predominant focus of life: '*You shall be God*'. From now on man would be independent from God, having standards of his own to determine what is right and wrong. The focus of man turned away from obedience to God to disobedience. From that point on, the mind of mankind was driven by deceit, hatred, anger, competition, destruction, all encompassed within an overweening pride. (I borrowed these thoughts from John W. Ritenbaugh's Bible Tools). It was here, in the Garden of Eden where and when the '**disease of conceit**' was borne and it has been an integral part of the human condition ever since.

Although every human being suffers from the disease of conceit, not all do suffer in the same degree. First of all, God has restrained the efficacy of the disease of conceit. If there were no restraint, every human being would swallow the other and – and after Cain slew Abel- the world would soon have become an unliveable place. Secondly, the gravity of the disease of conceit is largely determined by the individual traits of character of each human being. An intelligent, strong, arrogant and dominant personality with charismatic leadership capacities - especially when such a person has despotic and/or dictatorial power - has all the ingredients it takes to suffer from the disease of conceit in its extremity. The result is devastating.

Apart from this, we feel that the disease of conceit shows a lot of the characteristics of NPD. NPD stands for '**Narcissistic Personality Disorder**'. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), offers a common language and standard criteria for the classification of mental disorders. According to DSM-IV NPD is characterized by:

"a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behaviour), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning in early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts, as indicated by five (or more) of the following:

- (1) has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements)*
- (2) is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love.*
- (3) believes that he or she is "special" and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people (or institutions)*
- (4) requires excessive admiration.*
- (5) has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favourable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations.*
- (6) is interpersonally exploitative, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends.*
- (7) lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings or needs of others.*
- (8) is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her.*
- (9) shows arrogant, haughty behaviours or attitudes".*

It is said that an estimated 1% of the American population suffers from this disorder. Many successful

people like businessmen, lawyers, doctors and academics are said to suffer from it. Back to **'Chronicles'** and the **'Disease of Conceit'**.

In **'Chronicles'** it seems obvious that the fallen televangelist Jimmy Swaggart somehow suffered from the **'Disease of Conceit'** which eventually led to his downfall. The evangelist Swaggart- as Dylan puts it - had been *'linked to a prostitute, caught on camera leaving her motel room in sweatpants'*. *'This incident'* -Dylan goes on to say -*might have had something to do with inspiring the song but then again, it is hard to say'*. We may safely conclude that yes, Dylan – when he wrote this song in 1988- was somehow inspired by this incident. What strikes us is Dylan's clemency, if not compassion with the fallen Jimmy Swaggart. Dylan feels no need to expose Swaggart. In covert terms Dylan hints at the fact that those who are eager to expose Swaggart, are equally suffering from the **'Disease of Conceit'** and that there is a lot of hypocrisy involved in this story.

Although **'Disease of Conceit'** is written in C major, a key which is frequently used for grand musical statements, and although it is obvious that Dylan condemns the disease, yet there is the same compassion in the song as there is in **'Chronicles'** for Swaggart. We find no sneer or guile or unholy glee in the lyrics but Dylan's voice is full of mercy for the victims of the **'Disease of Conceit'**. This makes the song perfectly fit in with the main theme of the album **'Oh Mercy'**. The dramatic and emphatic piano chords strikes at the beginning of the song, immediately give you the feeling that important and dramatic news is coming up, news which you'd better not ignore if you want to survive the devastating consequences of this disease. The way in which the news comes to us reminds us of the beginning of the book of Job. In the book of Job, one after the other bad news messenger bursts upon the scene to report new victims on the battlefield. But with every successive messenger arriving, things get worse, till finally even Job's children are killed. This also happens in this song. It all ends with: ***'Then they bury you from your head to your feet from the disease of conceit'***. Having all said this, let us now take a more detailed look at the lyrics of this outstanding masterpiece.

The first messenger arrives and reports: ***'There's a whole lot of people suffering tonight from the disease of conceit, whole lot of people struggling tonight from the disease of conceit'***. The way in which the messenger reports what he has seen, again reminds us of the book of Job. Job 1: 7: *'The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it."* Here in the song it is as if the messenger roams the earth and reports to God the devastating effects on earth which the disease of conceit causes. It is as if God asks: *'What have you seen, my blue eyed Son?'* The messenger reports to God: ***'There's a whole lot of people suffering tonight from the disease of conceit, whole lot of people struggling tonight from the disease of conceit'***. The first thing we have to take note of is that you cannot see the symptoms of the disease of conceit with the naked eye in the same way as you can see the symptoms of a **'real'** disease e.g. the plague. When the plague is about the country, you can literally see many people physically die from the plague all around you. However, you cannot see the disease of conceit in the same way. At the beginning the disease of conceit seems harmless, the disease of conceit is much more a part of your mindset and usually seems to cause no direct physical or spiritual damage. Yet the disease of conceit is much more killing than a **'real'** disease like e.g. the plague, because the disease of conceit may result in a spiritual (second) death which in the end is much and much worse than a physical death. (Rev.20: 6 and 14). The Bible sees the physical death as a temporal separation of the body and the soul (the first death) but the second death as a permanent alienation from God (called **'the second death'**). The five-word line ***'from the disease of conceit'*** comes back in the song over and over again, with its preposition **'from'** which refers to the infection, the cause' of the disease. However, the song not only deals with those who

'suffer' from the disease of conceit, those who are infected by the disease, but even more so with those who are the victims of these sufferers. The sufferers of the disease of conceit cause a lot of – collateral - damage to people in their surroundings. They cause a lot of damage not only to people in their surroundings but even to whole nations and to the creation as a whole. This phenomenon is expressed in the first four lines of each verse. So when people are **'suffering'** and **'struggling'**(verse 1), when people's **'hearts are breaking'** and **'shaking'**(verse 2), when people are **'dying'** and **'crying'** (verse 3) and when people are **'in trouble'** and **'seeing it double'**(verse 4) the poet primarily thinks of what the sufferers of the disease cause to *other* people. *Others* are suffering, struggling, *other* people's hearts are breaking and shaking and *other* people are dying and crying and are in trouble and are seeing it double, all because of what those sufferers of the disease of conceit do to them. So when it says: **'There's a whole lot of people suffering tonight from the disease of conceit, whole lot of people struggling tonight from the disease of conceit'** it is as if the poet says: *'I not only see a lot of people who show the symptoms of the disease of conceit, they suffer from this disease, but I also see a lot of people who suffer because of what these sufferers do to them. Likewise I see a lot of people 'struggling from the disease of conceit', these people desperately try to get away from what these sufferers try to do to them'*. Usually you struggle 'with' or 'against' something, not 'from' something, but Dylan nevertheless deliberately seems to use the preposition 'from' to focus on the collateral damage which the disease of conceit causes on other people. Life becomes a struggle for many people and the disease of conceit is responsible for that. In the next four lines (of each verse) Dylan describes the working procedure of the disease of conceit. Here in the first verse it says of the disease of conceit: **'Comes right down the highway, straight down the line'**. The disease of conceit does not know what modesty is. It does not stealthily creep in through by-roads to catch a person by surprise but **'right down the highway'** with much aplomb and **'straight down the line'**. There is no restraint in the disease of conceit, it reveals itself fully out in the open. Wisdom proceeds with caution but the disease of conceit has no prudence. Patience is a divine characteristic but the disease of conceit has none of that, it cannot wait. The disease of conceit enters a man with brutal and arrogant force like a Blitzkrieg and it is unstoppable when it **'comes right down the highway'** through the great walks of life and **'straight down the line'** into your life, presenting itself as something you can't do without, it gives you no time to think, **it 'rips into your senses, through your body and your mind'**. According to the Cambridge Dictionary 'To rip into somebody' means: 'to attack or criticize somebody with great force' and that is exactly what the disease of conceit does. **'It rips into your senses'** and affects your senses, your senses that is your ability to understand, recognize, value, or react to something, but it also affects the five physical abilities to see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. This ripper rips **'through your body and your mind'** and from now tells you what you must think and believe and how you should react and prescribes exactly what you should hear and smell and taste and feel. Both the human mind and body are from now on occupied territory. When the disease of conceit enters into your body and into your mind it cons you into believing that from now on you are really free to say and to do whatever you please; it all seems so sweet, but the harsh reality is that the disease of conceit enslaves you completely. Although Mr. Disease of Conceit promises you total freedom, he secretly laughs in his sleeve and he knows exactly what he is going to do(just like Dylan said in 'Pay in Blood') : *'I'll put you in a chain that you never will break, legs and arms and body and bone'*. No wonder that the conclusion of verse one is: **'Nothing about it that's sweet, the disease of conceit'**. The disease of conceit is just like the little book of which John says: *'I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter'*. (Rev. 10:10).When the disease of conceit presents itself to your body and your mind it seems so sweet, but

once it has entered your body and your mind, people all around you will soon find out that there is **'Nothing about it that's sweet, the disease of conceit'** and that the bitter taste remains.

In verse 2 the second messenger arrives on the scene and this messenger reports about further and deeper infiltration of the disease of conceit. Again there is no anger or wrath but compassion in the messenger's voice. In verse one the senses, the mind and the body, are affected but now the disease of conceit penetrates deeper into the emotional life of its victims; in fact the disease now penetrates into the spiritual life of its victims. Here in verse two the soul is affected and that is serious business. The soul is the place where matters of life and death are decided. But first this verse further outlines what damage the disease causes to other people. It does so when it says: **'There's a whole lot of hearts breaking tonight from the disease of conceit, whole lot of hearts shaking tonight from the disease of conceit'**. In various degrees sufferers from the disease of conceit show some, if not all, the symptoms of NPD as we stated above. Some of the symptoms of NPD are really heartbreakers. In the spectrum of NPD, some narcissists are *'interpersonally exploitative, i.e., they take advantage of others to achieve their ends'*. Others *'lack empathy and are unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings or needs of others'*. Again others *'show arrogant, haughty behaviours or attitudes'*. These behaviours and attitudes have broken and shaken many a heart and the messenger sees it all unfold when he reports: **'There's a whole lot of hearts breaking tonight from the disease of conceit, whole lot of hearts shaking tonight from the disease of conceit'**. The working procedure of the disease of conceit in this verse is that it **'steps into your room, eats your soul'**. There seems to be no defence against this disease, without permission it enters your house and **'steps into your room'** as if it is fully entitled to be there. In the first verse the disease rips into your body and your mind which is already bad enough, but here things further deteriorate and you get in a very critical position when the disease penetrates into your soul and even **'eats your soul'**. The Cambridge dictionary defines the soul as: *'the spiritual part of a person that some people believe continues to exist in some form after their body has died, or the part of a person that is not physical and experiences deep feelings and emotions'* What happens when something **'eats your soul'**? At the beginning of this process, when something **'eats your soul,'** you have a strong feeling that something is wrong with you, something is bothering you deep inside. It may be a pain, something that hurts, often something immoral or sinful. At this early stage your conscience, which is part of your soul, starts to bother you, you are conscience-stricken but there is still a way back to recovery. However, if you do not mend your ways and you allow this process of eating your soul to continue, it gets harder and harder to find a cure. Your conscience is more and more seared up and stigmatized. Once your soul is completely eaten, you may end up doing the most horrible things and not even be bothered by your conscience. At this stage the feeling that you have done something wrong is completely blurred. A lot of those who committed all those terrible atrocities during the Holocaust testified afterwards that they had a free conscience and that they were not troubled at all by their conscience. It is as if the messenger implicitly admonishes us here and says: *'mend your ways when you still can, otherwise you will come to a point of no return and your soul will be completely eaten and the words of the song 'Foot of Pride' will come true: 'Well, there ain't no going back when your foot of pride come down, ain't no going back'*. Elsewhere - in *'TV Talking Song'* - Dylan says: *'Your mind is your temple, keep it beautiful and free, don't let an egg laid in by someone you can't see'*. If this applies to the human mind, the more so it applies to the human soul. The alternative is that when you do not mend your ways and if you let this process of eating your soul go on to the very end, you will more and more lose control over your senses. That's why the poet concludes: **'Over your senses you have no control'**. In these words **'Over your senses you have no control'** there is some kind of a paradox, because on the one hand the deceit of conceit

deceives you into firmly believing that you are fully in control over your senses and that you can think and do whatever you please and that you are free to take whatever decision you like to take. On the other hand, the reality is that this is a blatant lie. Once you let the disease of conceit in, it more and more subjects you to its will and in the end you will lose all control over your senses and you are completely subjected to its whims, resulting in huge damage, not only to your own soul but also to other people. The disease of conceit makes a public appearance without any restraint whatsoever, it boasts and it brags, both in the public and the private domain, that is why Dylan concludes: **'Ain't nothing too discreet, about the disease of conceit'**. There is not much discretion in the appearance of the disease of conceit, it does not know what modesty is, its voice is ringing loud and it takes unholy pleasure in exposing others, exposing to the public what may be regarded as 'discreet'. It may have to do with the fact that all those who really suffer from the disease pretend that *they* do *not* suffer from the disease at all, they feel there is nothing wrong with them. But they pretend that only *others* do suffer from it and that they have right to poke their nose into other people's affairs, even in the most private things which may rightly be regarded as 'discreet'. They always cheek other people and never point the finger at themselves, the perpetrator is always somebody else. The disease of conceit does not know of any self-reflection whatsoever. Hypocrisy is never discreet and it is Dylan who hints at this hypocrisy in 'Chronicles' as we have seen above.

In verse 3 the 3rd messenger arrives on the scene and with pain and compassion in his voice he reports: **'There's a whole lot of people dying tonight from the disease of conceit, whole lot of people crying tonight from the disease of conceit'**. The focus in the first line **'There's a whole lot of people dying tonight from the disease of conceit'** may be on the real sufferers from the disease of conceit, rather than on the victims they make. In the second line **'whole lot of people crying tonight from the disease of conceit'** it is the other way round; the focus is now on the victims the sufferers of the disease of conceit make, rather than on the real sufferers themselves. There may be a reason to put it like this.

When the poet says **'There's a whole lot of people dying tonight from the disease of conceit'** he may primarily not speak of a physical death but of a spiritual death. For those who suffer from the disease of conceit, as soon as the process of **'eating your soul'**, as outlined in verse two, is completed, your soul is lost and you will spiritually die, although you may physically be still alive and kicking and even prosper more than ever. Of course, other people may die because of what the sufferers of the disease of conceit do to them but we feel this is not what the poet primarily may have had on his mind when he wrote: **'There's a whole lot of people dying tonight from the disease of conceit'**. However, when it says: **'whole lot of people crying tonight from the disease of conceit'** we feel that the poet primarily may have those people on his mind who are crying because of what the sufferers of the disease of conceit do to them. They cause a lot of tears and sorrow to innocent people in their surroundings, or to the nation and to the creation as a whole. Paul says in 2 Cor. 7:10 about tears and sorrow: *'Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death'*. We feel that this is exactly what makes the difference here. The real sufferers of the disease of conceit do not care a damn about what they do to others, they are far from feeling any sorrow or shedding any tears because of all the wrongs they have done to others. Sufferers from the disease of conceit are sometimes crying but not from repentance because of what they have done to their neighbors, but they are rather crying from frustration when they do not immediately get what they want from others.

The way in which the disease of conceit operates is described in this verse as: **'Comes right out of nowhere, and you're down for the count'**. The terminology used here is that of a pugilistic contest- a boxing match. The nearer we come to the climax – the end – of the song the more critical the condition

of the patient becomes. The disease of conceit **'comes right out of nowhere'** just like Dylan says in 'Man of Peace' the disease of conceit **'could be standing next to you, the person that you noticed least'**. Your opponent – the disease of conceit – catches you completely off your guard. Suddenly you are struck and you have no time to duck or weave. The punches of the disease of conceit are devastating and soon **'you're down for the count'**. Eight....Nine... Ten... and you're down and out. In this respect it is not without significance that each of the four verses has ten lines, the poet skillfully builds up the drama to its final catastrophe. The enemy is not only within the gates, in the body and the mind and soul of the sufferer of the disease of conceit, but there is also an external foe which feeds and encourages the enemy within. This foe is the **'outside world'**. That is why Dylan goes on to say that **'From the outside world, the pressure will mount'**. We are still witnessing a pugilistic contest. The public is yelling and screaming and wants to see blood. The fist fighters allow themselves to be carried away in an ever faster turning whirlpool of sweat and blood and they go to the very limit to wipe out their opponent. The tragic thing about the disease of conceit is that the outside world offers you no help in overcoming the disease of conceit but makes things worse. Talented (wannabe) public personalities easily contract the disease of conceit. In such cases, one of the symptoms of the disease of conceit is its morbid tendency to thrive on public adoration and acclaim. These (wannabe) famous public personalities constantly have to live up to the expectations of the public which creates mounting pressure. Public acclaim very often gives you the wrong answers to your problems and instead of combatting the disease it stifles you in your feelings of superiority and plunges you into ever bigger problems, even if you are not aware of it. It may even go that far that your addiction to popularity kills you and you become a puppet in the hands of the public. You must be strong personality, with a different purpose in life, to be immune for all of this and be able to handle this kind of pressure from the outside world. In this phase of the disease of conceit when **'from the outside world, the pressure will mount'**, the disease tightens its control over you and it **'turns you into a piece of meat'**. The image used here is still that of boxing-match. After the count, when you have lost the game, your face may end up looking like a bloody pulp. Your face may literally look like a piece of meat you buy at the butcher's shop. However, **'piece of meat'** predominantly has a metaphorical meaning here. You are considered **'a piece of meat'** when someone feels useful only for the physical characteristics one may supply to other people. You are treated as **'a piece of meat'** when people regard you as an object of lust rather than as a unique creation worthy of esteem. People may **'turn you into a piece of meat'** when you always have to live up to their expectations and when they consider you to be their property which they may either praise into heaven or doom into hell. It all has to do with a lack of empathy. Also in this case the (meat) knife cuts both ways. Those who suffer from the disease of conceit may turn their neighbors and relations into a piece of meat and likewise others may turn the sufferers into a piece of meat when they allow themselves to be used as a puppet on a string. We already outlined above that one of the main symptoms of the disease of conceit is that those who suffer from it are not aware of the fact that they suffer from it. They think they are healthy and fine when in fact they are critically ill from the disease of conceit.

In the bridge of the song Dylan offers us a clinical observation of the disease of conceit. It says: **'Conceit is a disease that the doctors got no cure, they've done a lot of research on it but what it is, they're still not sure'**. As we already explained at the beginning of this analysis, the disease of conceit is an inseparable part of the – fallen - human condition. Man is therefore unable to find a cure. It is the reason why it says: **'Conceit is a disease that the doctors got no cure'**. It is not that they have not tried to find a cure, on the contrary, cause **'they've done a lot of research on it'**. Throughout the centuries, countless volumes have been written on the origin and efficacy of evil and what man should do to overcome evil

but all in vain. All along there has been a persistent belief that, in an evolutionary process, in the end man will be able to conquer evil but again and again all these attempts to wipe out evil have failed. Evil expresses itself in the disease of conceit and there is no cure available. When it says: **'what it is, they're still not sure'** this is meant as an understatement. What the poet intends to say is that although anthropologists, psychologists and psychiatrists have done a lot of research on it and have written countless volumes on this subject, they have not succeeded in mapping out the disease of conceit, they don't know where it came from, they have no control over it and they did not find any effective therapy to overcome the disease of conceit. The truth is that they will never find the solution to the problem. That is to say, no cure is available *under the sun*. If no cure is available under the sun, here on this earth, then you may conclude that the solution of the problem must come from somewhere else, from another world or reality. But that is not the subject here and the poet does not deal with this question. He only reports what he sees happening before his eyes. It looks as if the poet deliberately puts it this way, to make you think and draw your own conclusion. Basically Dylan did the same thing in his masterpiece 'Dignity'. In 'Dignity' Dylan concluded: *'Sometimes I wonder what it's gonna take to find dignity'*. The poet searched everywhere to find dignity but could not find it under the sun, at least not on this earth. It did not say that dignity could not be found in another world or reality.

In verse four the fourth messenger wraps things up and we reach the climax of the song: the lethal outcome of the disease of conceit. The messenger reports: **'There's a whole lot of people in trouble tonight from the disease of conceit'**. Again, there is sadness and compassion in the messenger's voice. He sees a lot of people heading for disaster but there is nothing he can do to stop them now, they are in deep trouble and it is too late for them to turn back. The messenger goes on to report: **'Whole lot of people seeing double tonight, from the disease of conceit'**. Clinically, when you are **'seeing double'** you have a problem with your eyes so that you see two of everything. This may be caused by exhaustion, alcohol or drugs or because you are ill. In this case you are **'seeing double'** because you are suffering from the disease of conceit. It may be used metaphorically here to denote that you have lost your discernment, you have lost your sense of what is right or wrong and you can easily be deceived into believing and doing the wrong things which in the end will kill you. It is all just an illusion when you are **'seeing double'** and a fertile soil for what now follows: it **'Give ya delusions of grandeur'**. When you have **'delusions of grandeur'** you nurse the firm belief that you are more important or powerful than you really are. These **'delusions of grandeur'** as Dylan describes them here are exactly in accordance with indication 1 of DSM-IV's description of a **'Narcissistic Personality Disorder'**. Indication 1 says that such a person *'has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements)'*. It is not that the disease of conceit makes a man will-less so that the sufferer could decline all responsibility for his actions and hide behind his illness. The responsibility remains because the disease of conceit not only **'gives you delusions of grandeur'** but also gives you, what goes hand in hand with it: **'an evil eye'**. The **'evil eye'** is said to be 'a look that someone gives other people that is believed to have the power to injure or harm them'. An **'evil eye'** is an expression that occurs quite often in the Bible, both in the Old and New Testament. Jesus e.g. uses this expression in Mat. 6:23: *'But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!'*. An **'evil eye'** comes straight from the prince of darkness and occupies your whole body and mind and makes you do a lot of harm to other people, that is why **'an evil eye'** is one of the worst characteristics of the disease of conceit. Just like Jesus said, this evil eye produces total darkness in your body, so that you are not only looking at other people with **'an evil eye'** but you will also lose your understanding of who you really are, you may

think you are living when in fact you are dead. Even today man is prepared to believe that old lie from Satan in the Garden of Eden: *'You shall not die'* (Gen 3:4). Those who suffer from the disease of conceit are willing to believe that *others* deserve to die but the sufferer says: 'not me, I am too good for that'. The voice of the disease of conceit continuously whispers in your ears to ***'give you the idea that you're too good to die'***. The disease of conceit lulls you asleep with false promises so that you are not aware of the fact that you are in a critical condition and that the undertakers are already at your door's steps. The conclusive line of the song drives the nail home: ***'Then they bury you from your head to your feet, from the disease of conceit'***. The task of the reaper, the disease of conceit, ends here. Not the disease of conceit buries you but 'they' bury you. The disease of conceit has killed you. When it says that they ***'bury you from your head to your feet'*** it is as if the poet intends to say that you are dead, not only physically but also spiritually. You are totally dead and completely buried. Implicitly a word from Jesus may resonate in the background: *'And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell'* (Mat. 10:32). That is exactly what the of disease of conceit intends to do: kill both the body and the soul. The disease of conceit is pretty awesome.