

**Community, Modernity and Modes of Expression.**

**Ph.D. Thesis, submitted April 1999,  
By Gary Stork,  
Sociology Department,  
Edinburgh University.**



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**Declaration:**

I, Garry Stork, declare that the thesis that follows is entirely composed by myself and that it is all my own work.

Signed,

Garry Stork,  
Sociology Department,  
University of Edinburgh,  
18 Buccleuch Place,  
Edinburgh.  
April 1999

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# THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

(Regulation  
3.5.13)

Name of Candidate GARRY STORK.

Address 2 KNOWLES GARDENS, CHURCH STREET, NAIRN, IV12 4AT.

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Title of Thesis 'COMMUNITY, MODERNITY AND MODES OF EXPRESSION.'

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The problem of community, of founding and maintaining a legitimate moral order, is the problem of expression. The problem is, (how) do we find an example of moral/qualitative order in modernity (roughly the period from 1740 until the present day), an example that fulfils the expectation that authority and individual agency be principled, as outlined in Alan Blum and Peter Mchugh's book 'Self-Reflection in the Arts and Sciences'.

The thesis examines the work of three authors: the Marquis de Sade, Fyodor Dostoevsky and James Joyce. The first two, particularly Sade, are interpreted as exemplifying dominant points of view apropos modernity and community. These dominant points of view, it is asserted, contain within themselves a fatal contra-indication re. the whole ambition to found and maintain a sustainable form of community which is adequate to the demands modernity imposes.

It is only when we come to Joyce do we find a satisfactory terminus for the debate that has been generated. Joyce's 'Ulysses' represents a still-nascent form of expression that outmodes the dominant points of view represented by Sade and Dostoevsky and is the only truly modern example of 'community' in our literature.

## **Introduction**

**“The well-known ability of thought ... to dissolve and dispel those deep-raging, morbidly tangled and matted conflicts generated in the dank regions of the self apparently rests on nothing other than its social and worldly nature, which links the individual creature to other people and objects. But unfortunately the healing power of thought seems to be the same faculty that diminishes the personal sense of experience”  
(Robert Musil, ‘The Man Without Qualities’, p. 117)**

This is not a sociology of literature. Rather, it is an attempt to reconcile the “ability of thought” with “the personal sense of experience” using the modern period as the space within which such a reconciliation may take place. Its purpose is to establish a way of thinking that allows for a morally-ordered community. In other words, it is a ‘sociology of sharing’, of the evocation of Being as something that must be done or attempted within the “activity of thought”.

With this dual end in mind, the thesis that follows is partly an analytical survey and partly a critical exegesis of three methods of thinking that characterise the modern period as a whole. These ‘three methods’ are found in the work of the Marquis de Sade, Fyodor Dostoevsky and James Joyce. These methods, in turn, inform and are informed by contemporary sociological theory, ranging from the work of Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault to that of Charles Taylor, Martha Nussbaum and Jean-Luc Nancy.

I should make mention at this point of the tremendous debt owed to the work of Alan Blum and Peter McHugh in what follows. Their book, ‘Self-Reflection in the Arts and Sciences’ has been used as a conceptual and analytical underpinning of all the forms and styles of theoretical exploration that are evident in the thesis. Without a thorough grounding in their work, it is doubtful whether I would have been able to make any initial approach to the subject under discussion.

The organising question of the thesis - and one that provides for a kind of continuous development of the notion of ‘sharing’ and ‘community’ between the work of authors hitherto regarded as completely independent of one another - is this:

Can 'community' be established as a legitimate moral order given the realities that the modern period imposes?

Just as 'being modern' is not a given, so with community. They must be 'done'. In what follows, we will see three representative ways of 'doing' modernity and community, three separate 'abilities of thought', only one of which provides for an affirmation of "the personal sense of experience".

We proceed chronologically. We start in the Eighteenth Century, with Sade and the Enlightenment, go on to the Nineteenth with Dostoevsky and the attempt to return to religious belief and finish in the early Twentieth with Joyce and the whole question of the bestowal of significance. As well as this temporal link there is also a less arbitrary, thematic bond. All were concerned with the type of sharing that is possible in modern conditions. All were engaged in thinking about the proper constitution of a legitimate authority. All were more or less critical of the modernity they found themselves to be a part of and all attempted to make some sort of sense of it in terms of what can be expressed and thought.

To the extent to which they succeeded or failed is a matter for detailed analytical study and comparison, though the short answer is that Sade and Dostoevsky approached the organising question with several ruling assumptions in mind, assumptions which proved fatal to their way of thinking and to the positions they represent.

Sade and Dostoevsky *did* manage to "link the individual creature to other people and objects". But this linking process, the activity that their thought influences, runs fundamentally counter to one that can establish community, one that can provide an example of a moral order that is principled, competent and, above all, enjoyable. In seeking to provide substantive grounds for sharing, they manage to put humanity in the conceptual blender, to diminish the personal sense of experience in preference for a communion, a sharing-out of essential attributes. This way of thinking is still prevalent, still dominant. Joyce provides a

way out of this impasse by changing the terms, asking fundamental questions about our relationship to the past, to authority and to each other that circumvents all substantive talk of the matter. In so doing he gives us what we have been looking for.

But there is a tremendous difficulty here, one that is obstinate, one that demands that we ourselves 'become contemporary', that we leave behind substantive, epistemological ways of thinking about community. In this sense, what follows does not attempt to be substantively persuasive or unassailable. That is, it does not proceed syllogistically. Instead, we move through one writer's work after another, pick up themes that can be carried on with and repeat the method until we arrive at an adequate expression. To do this requires both linguistic analysis and exegesis. Our method, then, may seem strange, even arbitrary at times. But we hope that there is enough thematic unity to keep it afloat.

This 'thematic unity' concerns itself with a challenge that is still being felt in the pronouncements of politicians and sociological theorists: can we provide ourselves with an example of community that resists 'communion' and gives us an acceptable version of 'authority'? Initially, this provision deals with the tension felt between the demands made by the individual and those made by the state. This evolves towards a terminology that has to do with the relationship between 'sharing', 'being' and 'difference' and how to style such a relationship without diminishing any of its elements. Primarily, it is this evolution that we see happening in our survey of modern social thought from Sade to Joyce.

Sade's 'community' is one of predation and abuse, a sharing-out of essential, empirical attributes. The epistemology of this community is simple: strip away baseless conventions and one is left with the Absolute of Nature as Destructive Principle – blameless, undeniable, grounded in existence qua existence. No other informed 'choice' is possible, or even desirable. Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault provide similar prognostications on the character of modernity as the space wherein epochal illusions are shattered and one

is left with a sharing-out of death, horror and abuse. Once convention is set aside, there is simply nothing else but a cowardly return to discretion and denial.

Dostoevsky's world is similarly extreme, but with a religious-tragic dimension that develops the way in which community can be thought out but which nonetheless contains the seeds of its own destruction. Similarly dismissive of the conventions, of the mundane and day-to-day as was Sade, Dostoevsky attempted to install a way of being social, of being ready to share, that was predicated upon Christian commitment. This commitment completed and revealed itself in the Christian attributes of altruism and grace. Contrasted with this ideal, there are broadly sadeian figures in his work – Nicholas Stavrogin, Peter Verkhovensky, Ivan Karamazov, Smerdyakov – who challenge and question the whole foundation of religiosity. In this there is the conviction that a morally-based ontology is indeed possible once we accept the world wherein grace circulates, that we accept it in spite of the wrong, in spite of the sadistic temptation to abuse oneself and other.

Charles Taylor is fundamentally sympathetic to this 'post-conventional' way of proceeding. Taylor insists that the alternative we face is not between a discrete conventionality and a brutal predatoriness. Our choices, what is 'at stake' when we think about what is shared, are far more complex and value-laden than first thought. So far so good. But even as Dostoevsky provides an evolutionary impetus to our thinking he turns in on himself. His position fails in that it tries to establish a moral order on insufficient grounds. Altruism, grace and Christian commitment, 'ontology' in general, can only really work in individual cases. They lack a sufficiently authoritative expectation of collective influence. God is Dostoevsky's authority. But even God, as is made abundantly clear by Dostoevsky himself, lacks the essential authority to guarantee that His Word is unquestioned.

As can be seen from the analysis of 'The Brothers Karamazov', Dostoevsky sabotages his own vision. The sadistic challenge and the understanding of which it is a part, although modified, still remains. Our

problem is reduplicated. We are left with an unanswerable question. No example of community, of authentic sharing, has been vouchsafed to us. We appear to have reached an impasse. The substantive ambition to 'found' or 'build' a community, the activity of its thought, seems to always result in failure or despair. In Musil's terms, "the personal sense of experience" is diminished. The activity of thought is brought to bear on what amounts to a homogenisation of being, of difference, of the possibility of community itself.

We realise, then, that we have reached a crucial point at this stage of the thesis. But how to proceed? How to provide an example? Is there another kind of activity that thinking, theorising and writing influences that does not fall into epistemological traps? What would this look like? Can modernity, to broaden our series of problems, conceive of another way of thinking about community that can guarantee sharing whilst being appropriately principled and grounded?

Before we can analyse such an example, we need to take a conceptual step backwards and survey the kinds of writing that have been regarded as definitive with reference to community. Something is wrong, we have noticed. But what exactly *is* it? How deeply buried is the sabotaging entity that destroys 'community' even before it comes to be written about? To get closer to this, we make extensive use of the theoretical resources provided by Jean-Luc Nancy in 'The Inoperative Community' and by Alan Blum and Peter McHugh in 'Self-Reflection in the Arts and Sciences'.

Firstly, we can make the self-reflective point that 'community' *is not being 'done' at all* in Sade and Dostoevsky. In their different and opposed ways, they end up wanting the same thing: a commonality of being, the reduction of the personal sense of experience to one or two universalised attributes, which then form the basis of a 'sharing'. What stops them from doing this is the very sense of "personal experience" that intrudes upon their theorising. The obstacles they perceive as being in the way of community are

everywhere and are too strong to overcome. Therefore there is no community. Nonetheless, an attempt is made. What is important in this is that it gets us thinking about what we mean when we say 'community'.

Secondly, we have Nancy's work on community, agency, myth, interruption and sharing. For our present purposes, the most important element in this series is 'interruption', and we make an attempt to diagnose the supposed 'impossibility' of community through an analysis of the place of 'interruption' in Sade and Dostoevsky. We then make the paradoxical finding that community is inscribed in the movement 'interruption' signals between modernity and myth. We are now set to provide our example, the only one to avoid the traps we have previously identified: James Joyce's 'Ulysses'.

'Ulysses' leaves a definite first impression of being a gigantic series of interruptions. From the opening scene at the Martello Tower to the affirmative monologue at the end, the nature of modernity is presented as ineluctably episodic. But what, we are led to ask, does it interrupt? What are these episodes episodes *of*?

The answer lies in its redaction of Homeric myth and its stylisation in comedic terms. It is on one level a working-out of Nancy's distinction between a 'common being' and a 'being-in-common'. Fiction is seen as Foundation and vice versa. Sharing is exemplified in those who have none of the measurable properties of 'belonging' and, as 'redaction', it sees community as a forever-interrupted *continuum of being*.

The activity of thought here is radically different from what has gone before and we must alter our understanding accordingly, the predicates upon which any thinking about community must be set. Hopefully by the end of the last chapter it will all be worked out. For now, let us begin with Sade and the understanding he represents.

I must take the opportunity afforded by an introduction to thank various people who have been instrumental in the working-out of what follows: to Stanley Raffel and Steve Tilley, my supervisors, whose

understanding, erudition and general encouragement have been invaluable in taking the thesis from sketchy, directionless notation to what it is today. And to my partner Paula, whose unstinting support and patience --with what has proved to be an erratic process -- has ensured that it has reached completion.

## **Chapter One:**

### **The Sadistic Understanding.**

“There are times when what is to be said looks out of the past at you – looks out like someone at a window and you in the street as you walk along. Past hours, past acts, take on an uncanny isolation; between them and you who look back on them now there is no continuity.”

(Alexander Trocchi, ‘Young Adam’, p. 7)

Donatien-Alphonse-Francois de Sade was born in 1740 and died in 1814. From the age of 23, he was either a fugitive, in prison or otherwise confined.

The disciplinarian processes of victimisation and surveillance started in October 1763, when Sade was incarcerated for a month in Vincennes Fortress for "excesses committed in a brothel" (1, p. 76). Thirty eight years later, in March 1801, after the Revolution had overthrown the monarchy and installed a Republic, it was not Sade's behaviour but his writing that caused concern. For being the author of 'Justine' and 'Juliette', Sade was placed in Sainte-Pelagie prison. In charge of the case Prefect Dubois decided that a "trial would cause too much of a scandal which an exemplary punishment would still not make worthwhile" (ibid., p. 112). Thirteen years later Sade died in Charenton Asylum, waiting for the latest of many release petitions to be considered. The final stipulation of Sade's Last Will and Testament, drawn up in 1806, contains instructions for his burial in a ditch dug in a copse on his estate near Epernon. It ends:

"The ditch once covered over, above it  
acorns shall be strewn, in order that  
the copse become green again, and the  
copse grown back thick over it, the traces  
of my grave may disappear from the  
face of the earth as I trust the memory  
of me shall fade out of the minds of  
all men" (2, p. 157).

Going back over the details of Sade's life, we find ample justification for this continually interrupted desire to disappear, to fade out of the social/communal scene. The beginnings of modernity, and of that stylisation of the social and of community which develops incrementally, bear the traces of what was subsequently to be called "indefinitely progressive forms of training" (3, p. 169). Examining these forms, both with reference to Sade's biography and to the wider cultural movements of which it was a part, brings the response we have before us into a deeper and sharper focus. As Sade was undoubtedly

a victim of Foucault's "training" (as we shall see), is his fate essentially our own and of the modernity of which we are a part?

Five years after his first serious transgression, Sade came to the attention of the authorities again. Although public knowledge of his cruel and violent treatment of a servant girl, Rose Keller, was suppressed by bribery he was detained in Pierre Encise prison on suspicion of assault. Royal orders were issued to the effect that Sade was to attend the High Court and be put back in custody at Pierre Encise. After a period of seven months he was ordered to retire to his estates at Lacoste. Sade complied and remained there for two years.

The next incident occurred in 1772. Sade and his accomplice, Latour, were accused of poisoning and of the capital crime of buggery. Sade's possessions were impounded and listed, as were those of Latour.

In August of that year the charges were dropped but the two men were still found guilty in absentia.

They were formally condemned to:

"expiate their crimes at the cathedral porch before being taken to the Place St. Louis for the said Sade to be decapitated ... and the said Latour to be hanged by the neck and strangled ... then the body of the said Sade and that of the said Latour to be burned and their ashes strewn to the wind" (1, p. 83).

On September 12th 1772, Sade and Latour were executed in effigy on the Place des Precheurs in Aix. Sade was finally apprehended and incarcerated in Fort Miolans prison late in 1772. By April of the following year he had escaped. His mother-in-law was so outraged by this that she obtained a court order to have him imprisoned in Pierre Encise. Sade was a fugitive, living clandestinely for the whole of 1774. The next year, after charges of kidnap were brought against him in Lyons, his uncle (the Abbe de Sade) requested his capture and demanded that his nephew be confined as a madman. In June of 1775, the Prior de Nerclos wrote to the Abbe de Sade assuring him that he believed that he had suppressed any rumour regarding Sade's conduct. At the same time, though, he agreed that Sade must be given a life sentence of imprisonment. In the letter the Prior is sure that Sade's wife

"is no better than her husband, for he knows that no-one in their house went to Confession on Easter Sunday and Lady de Sade allows her servants to have

dealings with a married Lutheran woman." (ibid., p. 88).

This is hardly credible to a Twentieth Century sensibility: kidnap, madness and cruelty are associated and equated with (are "no better than") a neglect of the religious conventions and a disregard of theological difference. If one allows one's servants to "have dealings" with someone outside one's own circle, one's own conduct is automatically suspect. Already, before we have gone half way into an examination of Sade's life, the evident absurdity of the Prior's judgement shows us that something has changed in our conception of what is a justifiable and legitimate use of authoritarian prescriptiveness. We feel that modernity and along with it the public scripts that give it a certain type of expression have moved on to a place where the Prior's commentary assumes a distinct air of antiquity, of an oppressiveness that is no longer a legitimate part of the modern scene. But this is to take a leap forward. The meaning of this suspicion will hopefully become less vague the further the narrative progresses.

The authorities finally caught up with Sade in February 1777. He was taken to Vincennes Fortress. After court hearings, admonishment and an order being given excluding him from Marseilles for three years, Sade was cleared of the charges for which he was burned in effigy at Aix. Despite this, the court ordered his return to Vincennes Fortress. Although he escaped a month later, he was rearrested and transported from La Coste to Vincennes. By 1779, Sade was securely confined. In 1781, after a separation of nearly five years, Sade received his first visit from his wife. They were not allowed any privacy and the visit was conducted in the presence of a formal witness. Sade was not to be released until April 1790.

While he was in prison, his books were confiscated because they "overheated his head" and made him write "unseemly things" (ibid., p. 97). Reading matter was only allowed him six years later, after the intercession of his wife. Meanwhile he was transferred to the Bastille in 1784 and while there had his privileges continually revoked for "impertinence" (ibid., p. 100). Also in this period, he began to write seriously until he was abruptly transferred to Charenton Asylum. By Sade's own account, this transfer "was effected by six men who, pistol in hand, entered his cell and tore him from his bed. He was allowed to take nothing with him, neither his books nor manuscripts." (ibid., footnote, p. 101).

On his release from Charenton, Sade involved himself in political activity. He became the Chairman of the General Assembly of the Piques Section in 1793. Late that year, though, a warrant was issued for Sade's arrest based on a letter he had written in 1791 to the Commander of the King's Guard, the Duc de Brissac. Sade was put in St. Lazare, but released in October of 1794 and ordered to stay in his house on the Rue Neuve des Matharins. For the next seven years, so it appears, Sade lived quietly. He wrote and published. This was until, in March 1801, he was arrested along with his publisher Nicholas Masse.

The grounds for Sade's arrest were based upon a search made of Masse's office. Manuscripts and printed works, bearing Sade's handwriting, were found. Among the books seized by the authorities were copies of 'Juliette' and 'La Nouvelle Justine', both written by Sade. At the same time, the Executive ordered other searches and conducted raids on Sade's house at St. Ouen, where they found a tapestry "depicting the most obscene subjects, most of which were drawn from the infamous novel 'Justine'" (ibid., p. 111). The tapestry was confiscated and taken to the Prefecture. Sade spent what was left of his life in Charenton Asylum, unaware of the legacy he was to leave behind him.

We see a number of features in this brief summary of Sade's life that are familiar within modernity as a whole, although stylisations differ, down to our own day: imprisonment without due trial, arrest based on unsubstantiated rumour and false accusation, the violent suppression of writing and/or behaviour deemed unsuitable and "unseemly", sexual variation looked on as a crime punishable by life imprisonment or execution. Legal procedures were carried out in secret, in the absence of the accused and sometimes without their knowledge. Although Sade escaped being branded or quartered (perhaps owing to his social position), he was nevertheless subjected to the full rigour of the conventional forms of inquiry and confinement - not only under the monarchy but also in the freer atmosphere of the Republic. Although there is a more widespread critical attitude towards such features than was apparent in Sade's day, we can nevertheless point to contemporary societies wherein the same general rules apply - within, for example, a clerically-ordered country like Iran or a dictatorship, such as those that exist in South America and Africa.

Sade's modernity seems to be underlined. The problems he encountered in his life and that he identified in his writing seem to be constant, seem to be associable with modernity itself, though relocated and restyled. More radically, though, one of the major conclusions we can draw from an exigetical approach to Sade is that whether the moral/political order of a community at large is styled as authoritarian, clerical or liberal, it still does not seem to be able to provide an authentic mode of sharing. Isolation and anonymity (a deliberate and absolute suppression of one's own difference) are the only alternatives to an apparently unavoidable conventionality. In order to build on the claim of 'Sade's modernity' and to see where his construction of agency leads in terms of community (ie, what Sade thought *was* shared between disparate individuals) we can start with Sade's own self-conception and what it signifies in the context of the times he lived in. We may then have a perspective through which we can assess Sade's understanding of the social and of the notion of 'moral/qualitative order' in terms of the interpretations put upon it by subsequent writers and theorists. That is, as an understanding that is ever-present within modernity and also dominant in its view of 'what is shared/sharable'.

Writing to his wife from Vincennes prison in 1783, Sade characterised himself as the "reasoning man who scorns the prejudices of simpletons" (2, p. 138). He was fully aware that this self-conception made him "the victim of simpletons" (ibid.). To put it less charitably, the religious and sexual conventions did not flatter Sade's vanity, or his proclivities. They stood in the way. Codified into law, they formed an effective and crude instrument of oppression. The only way to deal with someone like Sade was to imprison him. No compromise or negotiation was possible. Sade's nature, generalised into the "reasoning man", was thus in irrevocable opposition to the kind of moral order that was operative. This operative order, therefore, begins to take on a series of associations: with arbitrariness, artificiality, irrationality and replaceability. The prejudices of simpletons are not easy to overcome. They, after all, continue to command the respect of the social, public world and as such are dominant in law and in the belief systems that law feeds from. How, then, should the reasoning man respond to such prejudices? How could he show that these prejudices are unjustifiable, tyrannical, absurd? More importantly, once exposed as illegitimate, what has the reasoning man got at his disposal to put in their place? Once convention (and the moral) have been dispensed with, have been shown to be

inauthentic ways of being social, of sharing, what takes their place? What does the social look like without convention, without those prejudices Sade was so careful to distance himself from?

In the place of convention, Sade intended to install a manner of being "governed by caprices alone" (4, p. 185) and "all the passions whereof coldly insipid moralists put you in fear" (ibid.). These "passions", Sade insisted, "are naught but the means Nature employs to bring man to the ends she prescribes to him" (ibid.). That 'Nature' - a directive and, moreover, destructive principle - is stronger than 'convention' Sade had no doubt. Once the belief that underpins convention is picked away, so it goes, its inauthenticity becomes all too apparent. Nature then takes over, as of right, to provide the grounds or foundations of a sharing that has destruction as its basic end.

The 'belief that underpins convention' was, for Sade, exclusively Christian. His method of 'picking away' and hence of the installation of government by appetite or "caprice" was didactic. For example, the subtitle of the '120 Days of Sodom' is 'The School for Libertines' and the pretext for the theatrical dialogues of 'Philosophy in the Bedroom' is the instruction of a young girl, Eugenie, in the principles and practices of libertinage. Although the fine details of Sade's response to convention were exclusively of his own making, the general form of his thought takes on a less radical, less subjectively foundational aspect, when we come to consider them in the context of the time he lived in. The significance of this is that, in seeing Sade contextualised, he seems more a part of modernity's development than a unique, uncategorisable figure with whom it is difficult to negotiate the social. Also in doing this, we may be able to see a central irony. That is, the retroactive as well as the more direct importance convention has for Sade, in forming the modernity of which he was a part and in forming the "reasoning man" himself. In other words, 'convention' cannot be got rid of entirely. It must be dealt with.

During the first fifty years of Sade's life (1740 - 1790), order was imposed by and expressed in the "grand theatrical ritual" (3, p. 15) of monarchical authority. Simultaneously, the conventions involved in this authoritarian ritual were becoming outmoded. In the course of the half century leading up to the Revolution, "society outgrew its Seventeenth Century framework" (5, p. 232) while being forced to subject itself to an ethic of power and control indissolubly linked with that framework.

We see this tension between progress and ethics in social commentary and also in the behaviour of those in authority, those who were assigned a role in maintaining 'the social' itself. As early as 1712, Madame de Maintenon wrote in her private diary that she witnessed "every kind of passion, treacheries, meannesses, insensate ambitions, disgusting envy, people with hearts full of rage, struggling to ruin each other" (ibid., p. 204). Modernity seems, then, to usher in competition of the most brutish kind, while only providing a sense of moral recognition without the power to act on it. By 1720, Cardinal de Bernis wrote that it was "no longer considered well-bred to believe in the Gospels" (ibid.). This was written over fifty years before Sade came under suspicion by the authorities for a lack of religious observance and for allowing his wife and servants "to have dealings with a married Lutheran woman".

While Sade was beginning his acquaintance with the French penal system for "excesses committed in a brothel", Louis XV (reigned 1743 - 1774) maintained and frequented a "private brothel of teenagers which he assembled in some houses in a quiet part of the town of Versailles called the Deer Park" (ibid., p. 234). A close contemporary of this Royal French institution in England was "a closed circle of twelve Monks of St. Francis, whose nightly orgies on the site of Medmenham Abbey, compounded of debauchery and mock Devil-worship, earned them the title of the Hell Fire Club" (6, p. 19). Among the members of the Club were the Government Ministers Francis Dashwood and the Earl of Sandwich. The impression of collective and individual moral crisis is a constant theme of the century, both in contemporaneous accounts and in modern historical analysis.

From the beginning, then, modernity has been seen as a time of decline, of offering no sense of authentic moral order - of offering no hope, therefore, of progress in its self-conception. Indeed, the whole notion of 'authentic moral order' seems outmoded. The resultant 'crisis' was portrayed and explored in the literature of the time and was subjected to philosophical analysis. Sade's work is a methodological and substantive hybrid of these two alternative ways of confronting chaos and alteration. Before we can get to a critique of the (Sadeian) perception of modernity as a 'time of decline', we need to see Sade more fully as a participant in the culture of his time. Then we can

hopefully obtain a more realistic assessment of what our inheritance of modernity and of conceptions of the social owes to its inception.

Sade was far from being unique as an author. Bearing out Madame de Maintenon's description of what she saw around her, Laclos' *'Les Liaisons Dangereuses'* appeared in 1782, just as Sade was beginning to give his manuscripts serious attention in Vincennes Fortress. The *Compte de Mirabeau* (with whom Sade was imprisoned in the Bastille shortly before the Revolution) produced *'The Lifted Curtain'* and *'My Conversion'* in 1783. Nine years later, while Sade's involvement in his local General Assembly was still close, Andrea de Nerciat published *'The Pleasures of Lolotte'*. The most popular work in the pornographic genre was produced in 1798 (when Sade was under house arrest in the Rue Neuve des Matharins) by Restif de la Bretonne: *'Pleasures and Follies of a Good-Natured Libertine'*. In English, the period saw the birth of the nascently Romantic 'Gothic' novel, with *'The Castle of Otranto'* by Hugh Walpole (1765) and William Beckford's *'Vathek'* (1786). Ten years after *'Vathek'* was first published Matthew Lewis' *'The Monk'* appeared (1796-97), attracting wide acclaim and success.

A year before Sade was first arrested, Rousseau was recommending in his *'Social Contract'* a conceptual and social denudation of the "super-natural gifts" which the civilised human agent had acquired only by a long process of socialisation. This move was made so that the social theorist would be able to "consider (the agent), in a word just as he must have come from the hands of nature". Thus viewed, the human animal is "the most advantageously organised of any" (7, all quotes p. 47).  
convention, on Rousseau's model of the self, attempts to enforce standards of conduct that go against the natural (good) inclinations and interests of the members of any given society or community. The only authority, as such, is the isolated asocial consciousness of the 'natural' agent. Sade insists on this throughout his career, with one major difference. For Rousseau, corruption - as the dominant reality of socialized human agency - was the inevitable result of large-scale civilized social organization, particularly when viewed from an economic perspective. The origin of the idea of 'ownership' was the key to this reasoning. For Sade, on the other hand, "corruption" (as we shall see) was a purely linguistic phenomenon- a conceptual neologism designed to deter the human agent from expressing natural, essentially blameless impulses - whether these impulses be creative or destructive. Moreover, Rousseau saw 'nature' as a source of unequivocal goodness and moral order. Sade saw it as morally

indifferent. Whereas Rousseau's 'nature' purposefully tended towards the good, Sade's contra-indicated all conventional, moral impulses.

Prefiguring Sade's role as "the reasoning man", Diderot - in his correspondence with Voltaire (1762) wrote: "Our motto is: No quarter for the superstitious ... for the ignorant, for the foolish" (5, p. 227). There was to be a similar ruthlessness in Sade, a similar form of dismissal. His contempt for "the prejudices of simpletons", though carried to violent extremes, owed much of its rationale to the more abstract concerns of 'philosophes' like Diderot, Voltaire and Montesquieu. Virtue (as an outgrowth of "prejudice") was not only dangerous, it was absurd and foolish. It offended the natural/rational faculty through its ignorance of true human motivation, because it tries to obscure what disparate agents share among themselves inevitably.

The articulate mood involved in this rationalistic exceptionalism was considerably enhanced and legitimised by a widespread scepticism regarding the precepts and practices of established religion and therefrom a denial of the moral order it personified in an idea of God. This was most authoritatively expressed by David Hume. He maintained that "the ultimate cause of things has no more regard to good above ill than to heat above cold" (8, p. 160). Later, Hume dismissed Roman Catholicism as "that superstition" (9, p. 68). Nature, indifferent and destructive as well as creative, took control as "the ultimate cause" and definitively superceded religion by offering an objectified version of the authentic in a way that the divine no longer could. In other words, the beginning of the idea of 'God's absence' introduced the notion that every thing, every feature of the social was conventional - was replaceable because *rooted* in the social, was worth-*less*. Once this disappears, so Sade argues, so does virtue itself. Nothing then is regulative except the "caprices" or "passions" of which he wrote. At one point in 'Philosophy in the Bedroom', he asks:

"Where now in our souls (is) that cradle of the pretty and useless virtues of generosity, humanity, charity, all those enumerated in the absurd codes of a few idiotic religious doctrines, doctrines which, preached by impostors or by indigents, were invented to secure them their sustenance and toleration? (Why) do you yet acknowledge something sacred in men?" (4, p. 287).

By the end of the century, 'convention' was no longer the authoritarian monolith exemplified by Royal arbitration. The period ushered in a process of individuation which based value judgements on conscience rather than upon dogma. This powerful tendency was popularised by Thomas Paine who, in 1790, wrote that:

"Every civil right has for its foundation some natural right pre-existing in the individual ... . The natural rights which (the individual) retains, are all those in which the power to execute is as perfect in the individual as the right itself ... . A man, by natural right, has a right to judge in his own cause; and so far as the right of mind is concerned, he never surrenders it" (10, p. 80).

As the key terms of Sade's philosophy of libertinage were shared out amongst his less extreme contemporaries ("nature", "reason", "prejudice"), they form a resource which was common, that was thereby directed according to ascribed notions of significance, ascribed notions which were 'conventional'. The Eighteenth Century was not only a time of questioning and innovation, but also of the proliferation of definitive solutions, which were based on shared social premisses rather than on enforced dogmas. It can thus be said that Sade exhibited a kind of convention, both in the fidelity he prescribed and in the methods and language that he used.

The Eighteenth Century revolution in philosophical concern and method was expressed by those who looked "out upon a universe ... in which everything worth attending to (was) visible, and everything visible (was) seen to be unblurred and ... evidently intelligible to the human mind " (11, p. 34).

Simultaneously, in the forms of social organization and control that were emerging - for example in the programmes for efficient social management, there was:

"a military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not to the state of nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract, but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility" (3, p. 169).

The limiting dates of Sade's life (1740 - 1814) enclosed not only the achievements of Enlightenment Reason, but also the definite beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. Moreover, by the end of the century, reaction and the drive for efficiency - not revolution and liberty - proved to be the dominant forces in political and social life. As well as being an 'Age of Reason', it was also an 'Age of Improvement'. We see this duality being played out throughout Sade's work as a whole.

Sade's protagonists share three basic things: a similarly-styled social position, an actively realized contempt for "the prejudices of simpletons" and, perhaps more importantly, a fanatic adherence to the 'Government by caprice' referred to at the beginning of this opening chapter. Their 'community' (or rather the regime to which they owe loyalty) is one of predation. Moreover they have no choice but to belong to such a regime, it being "naught but the means Nature employs to bring man to the ends she prescribes to him".

Typically, the libertines are "gentlemen of the highest note" (12, p. 191) who "strengthen their ties by means of alliances in which debauchery (has) by far a heavier part than any of the other motives that ordinarily serve as a basis for such bonds" (ibid., p. 192). Of the main characters in the '120 Days of Sodom', Blangis is a Duke, Curval is a retired judge, Durcet is a financier and Blangis' brother is a Bishop. They are all immensely wealthy, powerful and privileged - buoyed up by the very "prejudices" they seek to abuse. They use their position in society "to cover an infinite number of little secret debauches" (ibid.) and they agree upon "the value we set upon despotism in the joys we pursue" (ibid.). There is both a dichotomy between nature and convention - between what is sharable in an authentic sense and what is derided as mitigating against the possibility of such a sharing - and a bond uniting them. What is significant here is the lack of interruption. There are no obstacles in the way of Sade's characters, no threatened incarcerations, no attempt at 'training'. Unlike their author, they are able to indulge to the fullest extent.

Nature feeds off of convention in that it uses the latter to add to the pleasures that a fidelity to the former promises. Insisting upon a determined relationship between convention and virtue, Sade has one of his characters in the '120 Days' say that:

"it often happens that a woman who shares our faults pleases us a great deal less in our pleasures than one who is full of naught but virtues: the first resembles us, we scandalize her not; the other is terrified, and there is one certain charm the more" (ibid., p. 216).

A fellow libertine would not be half as scandalized or as abused as one to whom the conventions of respect and bodily integrity actually meant something. The tone Sade adopts may be flippant, but the connection between nature, convention and virtue is nonetheless charted. The contradiction involved in charting the dichotomy/connection is not resolved, though Sade comes down on the side of denying convention any authenticity or authority when it reaches towards forms of behaviour which are in strict accordance with the precepts of Nature - with a sharing that transcends merely societal ascriptions. All of this is further developed and extended in the later (1795) 'Philosophy in the Bedroom', where the libertines' pupil, Eugenie, is persuaded that virtue, being equated with convention, with societal and not with preordained or divine constructions, is worthless. Although Sade underestimates the depth at which convention and virtue operate, he does realize that for any socially and ethically acceptable sharing to take place, convention must be considered as an important element. Moreover, without convention (or, rather, a moral order that is observed and articulable), all that exists is the 'community of predation'. This remains to be developed, though, in our analysis both of Sade's work and the legacy he has left to the modern understanding.

For now, though, we can say that Sade's libertine impulse (at least in the earlier work like the '120 Days') is directly communicated: there is no medium of convention between 'Nature' and the acts it governs. One could do otherwise but that would merely be to conform. One either conforms or one deviates. There is no such thing as a thoughtful compliance or a reasoned dissidence. Sade thus leaves himself open to two major objections. One is philosophical/linguistic: that in attempting to avoid the question of a moral order, Sade involves himself in an abuse of language, a too-violent interpretation of what 'community' can mean. The second is more important and concerns the meaning that Sade actually put upon 'community'. It can be termed self-reflective.

Sade - in identifying areas of empirical and appetitive sharing, does not really 'do community' at all. This affects his whole project and also the theories and prescriptions of those more contemporary social analysts who owe him a conceptual and substantive debt. This is to go too far ahead at this stage. The objections we have mentioned, though, do apply to Sade's work as a whole. This is brought out when Sade says that:

"Nature ... in destining Blangis for immense wealth, had meticulously endowed him with every impulse, every inspiration required for its abuse" (ibid., p. 197).

Principles (identified with restrictive practices) are mere preferences. Blangis says that:

"nothing but the law stands in my way, but I defy the law, my gold and my prestige keep me well beyond those vulgar instruments of repression which should be employed upon the common sort" (ibid., p. 199).

He is cognizant of the instrumental value of prestige in keeping him from the need to apply the vulgar instruments of repression to himself. However, Blangis regards himself as being necessarily above the social reality of prestige as it confers obligations on the possessor (ie, not to inflict death or injury upon another, less powerful individual). In this formulation, self-preservation and self-aggrandizement are the ruling passions of any individual, to the exclusion of any and all conventions of blame or endorsement. They are what is truly sharable between disparate agents, beneath the portable and convenient carapace of effect provided by a 'moral order'. For example, Blangis

"loudly proclaimed that his poltroonery being nothing other than the desire to preserve himself, it were perfectly impossible for anyone in his right senses to condemn it for a fault" (ibid., pp. 202-3).

More than being invested without necessity (ie, one can freely choose not to adhere to moral commands like the one to sacrifice oneself), conventions (and the virtues of which they are a part) attempt to obstruct the natural ('blameless') desire to preserve oneself, at whatever cost. Fidelity to ethical standards (courage in Blangis' case) merely leads to the destruction and betrayal of the self. Blangis is a coward. This he freely admits.

Sade's ambition, in attempting to remove the inherent moral judgement involved in the label 'coward' (as a label that is shared), seems to be to objectify. That is, to remove the evaluative force of the language of moral judgement. What is shared out, then, is (ideally) a common recognition of natural impulse: blameless, directly communicated, empirical and without being seriously altered by the moral orders it seeks to subvert.

Sade's ideal social actor is one who is

"lawless and without religion, whom crime (amuses) and whose only interest (lies) in his passions, who (heeds) naught, (has) nothing to obey but the imperious decrees of his perfidious lusts" (ibid, p. 240).

Others, particularly social inferiors, are regarded "exclusively as animals one feeds in return for their services, and which one withers with blows when they refuse to be put to use" (ibid., p. 252). An exemplar of this outlook is Madame de Sainte-Ange, who, in 'Philosophy in the Bedroom' says:

"I have discovered that when it is a question of someone like me, born for libertinage, it is useless to think of imposing limits or restraints upon oneself - impetuous desires immediately sweep them away" (4, p. 186).

To maintain the validity of this prognosis (which seems, oddly enough, to buy in to the Platonistic view of desire as being led around by "a lot of mad masters"), though, Sade continued to use language which is significant only in terms of the distinctions he wished to abandon (for example, the recurring use of "corruption", "evil", "vice", "virtue", "just", "unjust"). This seems decisive in itself, but it is not enough to say that Sade employs the language he is seeking to deny a place to, because it could be objected that the use of this language is rationally necessary if we are to understand him at all. We must attempt to show that the very way Sade uses language constitutes a profound abuse of that same language and the ineluctable ethical associations and ascriptions we make as everyday users of language. It amounts to what can be termed 'an abuse of the sharable', an abuse of community and not its foundation.

Although Sade speaks through his characters of "the blackest, most frightful crimes" (ibid., p. 235), he tries to deny them any authenticity as crimes. For example:

"Destruction being one of the chief laws of Nature, nothing that destroys can be criminal ... 'Tis our pride prompts us to elevate murder into a crime" (ibid., pp. 237-8).

Sade can only do this with language if he assumes a hard and fast division between the world (or authentic reality) and the language we use in analysing and describing this world (as an inauthentic attempt at control). He denies evaluative language any role in providing access to "reality" and thus involves himself in an impossible dilemma. By trying to go beyond language, he falls into the trap of unintelligibility. He tries to provide articulate responses through the use of the very language he derides as being an inefficient instrument.

Sade also falls in to an extreme form of naturalism. "Immorality", "corruption", "evil", "destruction" - all are taken as literal, as value-free labels designating no ethical associations. Language, purged of all conventional (and commonly shared) meaning, becomes a purely instrumental feature - conveying nothing but instructions and data. The strangeness and perversity that this involves (in that Sade seeks a kind of sharing above and beyond the social) can be seen in a much more developed form in 'Philosophy in the Bedroom', which Sade published in 1795 after he was freed from St. Lazare.

'Philosophy in the Bedroom' takes the form of a dialogue between a pupil (Eugenie) and various teachers and exemplars (Madame de Sainte-Ange, Dolmance and Le Chevalier). They succeed in convincing their charge that a Nature that is common to all and not a Virtue that is relative and changeable should govern the individual human agent and also bind him/her to others of his/her kind. Eugenie's principal teacher is Dolmance, of whom it is said that:

"He is the most notorious atheist, the most immoral fellow ... his is the most complete and thorough-going corruption, and he is the most evil individual" (ibid., pp. 187-8).

The sense of ethical dislocation is found in and reinforced by the realization that the character sketch above is not meant as a warning but as a summary of Dolmance's qualifications to be Eugenie's teacher. It is a recommendation rather than an indictment. By being a monster - by being fully in possession of what is sharable between individuals once the social has been put aside - Dolmance is uniquely qualified to serve as an instructor. The language used in the character sketch thus also makes the attempt to have a 'value-free' significance. The ethical associations of 'immoral', 'evil' and 'corruption' (blame, disapproval, castigation, revulsion) are implicitly dismissed as conventional prejudice. Immorality, evil and corruption, so it goes, are essentially blameless attributes. Being in accordance with the dictates of Nature, they are even to be promoted as carrying within them the possibility of full self-realization under the guidance of others whose immorality, evil and corruption are ahead of one's own. Already this sounds idiosyncratic to those of us used to employing language on an everyday foundation of common understanding. Indeed, Sade was not interested in such a thing as 'common understanding' (which he saw as overly changeable and relativist in application to ethical norms), but in a common absorption in appetite - a communion with the visceral instead of an interpretation of the articulable.

Eugenie is told by Dolmance that pleasure should be "the one god" (ibid, p. 204) of her existence. He goes on to say that "it is to this god a girl ought to sacrifice everything and in her eyes nothing should be as holy as pleasure" (ibid.). Sade may be subversively ironic here (associating 'sacrifice', 'holy', 'god' and 'pleasure') in order to deflate conventional notions of the 'seriousness' of the terms he uses, but it does at least sound as if pleasure is more compatible with the grammar of 'duty' and 'obligation' than with 'preference' and 'inclination'. This is reinforced by his treatment of the relationship between Virtue, God, Convention and Nature. The virtuous agent "acts, or is inactive, from pure selfishness" (ibid., p. 209). Owing our existence "to nothing but Nature's irresistible schemes" (ibid.), we have recourse to a belief in God only in a gratuitous, prejudiced way - one that involves itself in not seeing the 'true basis' of our being and action. The social agent's true character is fixed and unalterable and is realised by a didactic process of discovering "the creative agent" (ibid., p. 210), which is necessarily in opposition to conventionally-imposed systems of belief. Convention, once exposed as convention, is worthless. True, the social agent can adhere to convention, act virtuously, believe in God. But this is derided as error and an error which is correctable via a rudimentary series of rationalist arguments.

Nature can be the only "creative agent", both as a consequence of individual self-realisation (in a community wherein Nature is shared out as the foundation of a common being) and because the Divine/God is objected to as being "inconsistent ... a frail being forever unable to bring man to heel and force him to bend a knee" (ibid., p. 211). Thus, struggle and difference, as allowable and positive elements of the sharable, are deemed to be contraindicative of an intelligible and sustainable community. The Divine, so it goes, is founded on uncertainty, doubt, a lack of control. Sade seeks irrefutable certainty, closure, absolute and total control. Therefore, his version of sharing translates into a supposedly biologic foundation for what is shared, a visceral foundation. God's absence - or, rather, the irrelevance of the Divine - is easier for Sade to think about than any influence the Divine might be supposed to have on what is shared out. In short, God is absent. No trace of Him remains. Nature, an altogether more tangible component of human life, takes His place. What is shared, therefore, is a basic sameness, a unification of all.

Eugenie, taught by those to whom such a unification is given and unproblematic, immediately and consistently obeys the commands Nature imposes upon her. She totally rejects both convention and virtue. There is a serious problem here, though. This is locatable in the model of teaching that Sade's work exemplifies. We feel that a less one-dimensional more social pupil may strongly resist Dolmance's assertions and opinions. We feel uncomfortable with Eugenie's simple and complete conversion to libertinage. This is not specifically as it relates to 'libertinage' but to the nature of 'conversion' - the way it is achieved. There is an air of the spurious about all this, a non-specific kind of anxiety. What can this dissatisfaction be identified with? What are the foundations upon which Eugenie's knowledge both of the social and of libertinage are built? These questions influence us in the direction of an analysis of Sade's model of teaching, in what he presents as the communication and articulation of a kind of sharing or community but what emerges instead as a kind of communion - a denial of communication itself.

First, there is an odd kind of mathesis in 'Philosophy in the Bedroom'. It is not precisely definable as 'bringing out' what Eugenie already 'knows' (ie, what principles she can use and articulate), but to bring to her attention (via demonstration, rhetoric, opinion and contradiction) her true nature - what she shares with her teachers. It is what is literally 'inside' her, the entity that impels the aware

individual to commit acts of libertine violence and destruction. The function of teaching on Sade's model is to induce obedience to a reality which is divided from all possible articulations of it, separated from descriptive and ascriptive procedures. Obedience to such a reality (or rule) implies that one inevitably follows instead of understands.

As a consequence of this, Sade's model of teaching does not admit to a distinction between obedience and understanding. Although Sadeian obedience is conditioned by pleasure and the unpleasant consequences of disobedience, this qualification does not make it anything more than appetitive and mechanistic. It is not knowledge or understanding.

Returning to general principles, Sade maintains that the language of virtue (ie, compassion, pity, gentleness, humaneness) attempts to describe a reality which it cannot articulate adequately, one which goes beyond its descriptive competence. For an example, we can take a typical utterance by Dolmance:

"benevolence is surely rather pride's vice than an authentic virtue in the soul; never is it with the single intention of performing a good act" (ibid., p. 215).

Virtues (and vices) qua virtues (and vices) are not ascriptions. On this model they are something we 'have', like inner counterparts of physical features. Paradoxically, they "contain for us naught but local ideas" (ibid., p. 217) and, therefore, "geography alone decides whether an action be worthy of praise or blame" (ibid.).

In dealing with the realities of social disapprobation and punishment for vicious indulgence, the Sadeian actor may avoid condemnation by promoting secrecy in the acting out of his/her desires. But Nature cannot be evaded, or only at one's peril. Madame de Sainte-Ange declares that:

"continence is an impossible virtue for which Nature, her rights violated, instantly punishes us with a thousand miseries" (ibid., p. 220)

A formal disobedience is prescribed. One may no longer be governed by the possibility of social disapprobation and legal punishment (a milieu wherein virtue amounts to self-control), but fidelity to Nature sounds even more demanding and compulsive. Formal disobedience and the disorders it gives rise to are

"but a sincere homage we render to (Nature); it is to obey her laws, to cede to the desires she alone has placed in us; it is only in resisting that we affront her" (ibid., p. 223).

This is not exactly argument, but again we find that Eugenie is thoroughly convinced by what she has been told. She says, "What short work you make of all the false principles my mother planted in me" (ibid., p. 226). The prior enumeration and enforcement of moral rules up to the occasion of the dialogue has had no effect on Eugenie. Sade just opposes one set of unreflective commandments with another. So, what is needed for the 'moral' (and the order to which the social actor subscribes) to be adequately taught and shown? Maybe it is the weakness of prior instruction rather than the strength of Dolmance's "maxims" that affects and forms the background to such a complete conversion to libertinage.

Throughout the dialogue, enjoyment is synonymous with rule and pleasure gives access to authenticity. The "creative agent" (Nature) is accorded the power, on a full appraisal of its laws, to alter perceptions of crime and evil:

"we have evolved the principle of generation, and now that this material mechanism offers nothing more astonishing to the eye than the development of a germ of wheat, we have been called back to Nature and away from human error" (ibid., p. 249).

As a consequence, Sade attempts a thorough translation of value terms to value-neutral descriptions of Nature's intentions. His definitions become bolder and he appears to be working out the full implications of what has gone before for human agency outside the immediate parameters of the dialogue. The role Nature plays is depersonalised and Sade calls for a radicalisation of language as an emancipatory force. In doing this, though, Sade takes grammar for fact when he says that cruelty "is simply the energy in a man civilization has not yet altogether corrupted; therefore it is a virtue, not a

vice" (ibid., p.254). The conventional associations made in referring to 'cruelty' (corruption, vice, violation, evil, gratuity) are, on this model, the results of a faulty translation. Access to Nature through violent release radically denies these associations and the ethical frameworks arising out of them. All morality is error, a historical construction which "lies in the ridiculous acknowledgement of that tie of brotherhood the Christians invented" (ibid., p. 283). The ground for this notion is that human nature is fixed from birth. The reasoning goes that, if the virtues were "inspired in man by Nature's voice, men would be aware of them at birth" (ibid., p. 284). Unlike 'virtue', then, 'vice' is immanent and is perfectly in tune with "Nature's voice". Social necessity and the conventions of law and custom deprive us of the awareness of this voice. Virtue is a minor accretion, inherited from and crudely imposed by society. This imposition is effectively denied and escapable-from by the aware individual. This awareness is available to all through the direct experience of pleasure.

An intriguing consequence of this is that the Sadeian actor is not encouraged to see the reasoning behind the rule of Nature:

"it is far less essential to enquire  
after the workings of Nature than to  
enjoy her and obey her laws; they  
are written in the hearts of all men  
(and) it is but necessary to interrogate  
that heart to discern its impulse" (ibid., p. 304).

There is a strong element of compulsion, of thoughtless indulgence without even the simplest need for reason. This reinforces the accusation that Sade does not see any real difference between obedience and understanding. Sade's actor does not really 'know' anything, but merely follows brutish impulses.

The criticisms hinted at here become more definite as we see the position Sade adopted being developed into an understanding of what is shared out in modernity. Such an understanding, it will be argued, is the dominant means of theorising the place of the social agent and of community. The challenge that this understanding lays down is that we find a means of providing alternatives to it - both as a matter of thinking about/interpreting the social and, more importantly, the provision of examples of what a convincing, sustainable and legitimate moral order would look like.

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## **Chapter Two:**

### **The Ethics of Confinement.**

“Exhausted after the Fall of Man  
I packed my bags of sin  
And took a fortnight’s holiday in hell  
Hoping to find my origin –

al soulgusto. In the lower depths I ran  
Into Charles Stewart Parnell.  
He looked tired and sad. ‘The Bishops spun  
A yarn about you’ I remarked, ‘You’re whole

Dream of a humane island was wrecked.  
Isn’t love wicked? Eunuchs’ envy is fierce.  
They nailed you to their Celtic cross despite your gritty

Fight. You poor thing! You still look shocked.’  
No words. And then ‘I am he said, ‘What’s worse,  
Though I scour every hole in hell, I can’t find Kitty.’  
(Brendan Kennelly, ‘Holiday’, in ‘The Book of Judas’, p. 319)

In this second part of our consideration of 'the sadistic understanding', we use Sade's work as a medium through which opposed versions of modernity can reflect upon each other. These versions in turn are treated here as they restate and/or reshape Sade's problem (ie, how to construct a communal order without virtue or convention) and how the challenge inscribed therein can be dealt with. To make this mutual reflection work non-arbitrarily, we maintain that on one side there are theorists (Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault) who exhibit a 'sadistic understanding' and on the other there are those (Martha Nussbaum, Charles Taylor, Jean-Luc Nancy and Alan Blum and Peter McHugh) who engage with this understanding and try to renegotiate its terms, identifying as they do so a kind of misdescription or violence of interpretation of modernity, the social and agency. On a wider canvas, what this mutual reflection signifies is that a sadistic understanding can be found in elements of 'the modern' as a whole and represents an actively dominant danger to community, to sharing itself.

It can be said that the vanguard of nineteenth-century cultural and literary movements, from Romanticism onwards, owed substantial parts of their structure and rationale to readings of Sade's work - especially to the most famous parts of the canon: 'Justine' and 'Juliette'. This is evidenced in the work of Baudelaire, Flaubert, Verlaine and Rimbaud in France and Swinburne in England.

At times, particularly late in the century, Sade appears by virtue of reputation alone. In Dostoevsky's 'The Devils' (1873), one character asks another whether it is

"true that in Petersburg you belonged to a secret society given up to a bestial sensuality? Is it true that the Marquis de Sade could have taken lessons from you?" (1, p. 260)

The employment of Sade as precedent, exemplar and sign indicates a large degree of disturbance, disorder and corruption more than adequate to a period of late modernity whose anxieties and concerns are substantially our own. The extent of the 'fit' between Sade and the modern can be easily demonstrated, primarily in what was ascribed to his work. Jean Paulhan wrote that:

"Freud was to adopt Sade's very method and principle. There has not, I think, been any other example in our Letters, of a few novels providing the basis, fifty years after publication, for a whole science of man" (2, p. 18).

And Mario Praz speaks of "the recent (1930) enthusiasm of the Surrealists for Sade" (3, p. xviii).

Again, he is at the forefront, the notion being that he discovered fundamental, 'real' properties of the self and of the kind of sharing which is most possible and most intelligible. Modernity's self-perception seems to begin and end with the '120 Days of Sodom'. However, it is not the fact that elements of modern psychology and sensibility can be found 'in' Sade that signifies his importance. It is that Sade's form of understanding persists and is thought of as revolutionary and ineluctable. He is both "the master of the great themes of modern thought and sensibility" (4, p. 70) and "given a place in the great family of those who want to cut through the 'banality of everyday life' to a truth which is immanent in this world" (5, p. 58, *my italics*).

Sade exhibits much more than a series of pornographic tableaux. It would be relatively easy to dismiss him if that was all his work contained, as the popular consciousness ignores Sade's close contemporaries such as Bretonne, Mirabeau and Nerciat. Instead, Sade's desire to disappear was and is continually interrupted. As we shall shortly see, subsequent theory places him before us in a radically unequivocal light.

Georges Bataille went further than his immediate contemporaries like Paulhan, Praz and de Beauvoir in providing us with a version of modernity and the self developed from Sade. This version has two distinct elements, which exist in tension with each other. Especially in his earlier writing, Bataille was intent on establishing Sade as a guide to revolutionary action. As such, the 'sadistic understanding' he recommended was activated by the individual will. The alternative was capitulation, cowardice, weak liberal fear of a liberating excess. The second element in Bataille's thinking on the subject of Sade,

evident in his writings after the Second World War, is that the world and the self are deeply Sadeian: that Sade made discoveries that are universal and undeniable. On this level, there is no real 'alternative', just a more or less crude attempt at sublimation.

While under the indirect influence of the Surrealist enthusiasm for violent disorder, Bataille wrote that he intended to:

"set forth the propositions that ... allow one to introduce the values established by the Marquis de Sade, obviously not in the domain of gratuitous impertinence, but rather directly in the very market in which ... the credit that individuals and even communities can give to their lives is, in a way, registered." (6, p. 94).

This "setting forth" had definite political and social implications. Bataille goes on to say that:

"without a sadistic understanding of an incontestably thundering and torrential nature, there would be no revolutionaries, there would only be a revolting utopian sentimentality" (ibid., p. 101).

Bataille restyles Sade's account of the opposition between convention and nature, between the moral and the true, into a general form of understanding or of dealing with and living in the world. As the revolutionary attempts to refound the world on illusion-free fact, so Sade occupies an essential place in the being of that same revolutionary. Sade's work, as a completed series of 'values', and the nascent activism involved in overcoming the persistence of repression appear synonymous. A sadistic understanding is the ultimate resource of the quest for liberation. Bataille goes further than even this.

He writes:

"it is time to choose between the conduct of cowards afraid of their own joyful excesses and the conduct of those who judge that any given man need not cower like a hunted animal, but instead can see all the moralistic buffoons as so many dogs" (ibid.)

Already, there is a movement from "revolutionary" to "conduct", from a notion like 'action' to one more like 'everyday behaviour'. Also, the impulse behind this remark of Bataille's is more than narrowly political. It also includes a condemnation of virtue itself, as the choice of a buffoon or a

coward who is wilfully ignorant of the way the world really works. A further implication of this is that the ordinary social agent, not just the 'revolutionary', can choose, that convention and ethics can be completely annihilated. Nothing takes their place apart from the purely appetitive "joyful excesses", which are shared out between those who have a supposedly more clear-sighted perception of modern social reality. Morality and the order from which it nourishes itself and to which it bestows legitimacy, are non-integral components of human existence, separated-out as they are from 'the true'. The effect of their obliteration is, moreover, taken as positive - liberating the sharing that can take place between agents from the narrowly economic and the crudely prescriptive. Bataille regards social constraint and enforcement as the only realities shaping moral ends and articulations, along with the concerns that 'virtue' represents. Now we come to the second, and later, element of Bataille's work on Sade - although he still maintained that the abandonment of convention was a matter of will: "the will which (denies) the constraint of good in the same way as the athlete denies the weight of the dumbbell" (7, pp. 47-8).

Bataille's main theme in this later work was "to extract the essence of literature" (ibid., p. viii) by giving substantive insights into what he thinks is the central fact of modernity: 'Evil'. Sade's contribution was to reveal "the process of breaking the law ... independently of the necessity to create order" (ibid., p. 25). In Sade, "Evil is no longer irrevocably opposed to the natural order as it exists within the limitations of reason" (ibid., p. 29). Bataille maintains, along with Sade, that "society, like the individual, is forced to choose" (ibid., p. 54) between expressive disorder and obedience to convention. To this end, Sade's life and work indicate the existence and (therefore) universality of "the Evil which goes against our own interests and which is brought about by a passionate desire for liberty" (ibid., p. 65). From this, Bataille concludes that the "abyss of Evil is attractive independently of the profit to be gained by wicked actions" (ibid, p. 66) and that such actions disclose a "liberty towards Evil" (ibid., p. 74). He starts, then, with an insistence on there being a complementary relationship between "wicked actions" and a (relatively unexamined) "liberty" and ends, logically enough, with a statement about the '120 Days of Sodom': that it is the only book "in which the mind of man is shown as it really is" (ibid., pp. 121-22). Sade's "values", then, exist in a historical vacuum. Modernity, therefore, and the moral order to which it aspires, the sharing that it wants as a matter of ethical principle and moral practice, are frozen in sadeian attitudes. All other possible resources for sharing,

for community, are subordinated to the sadistic understanding: the inevitability and authenticity of destruction. Defilement is inscribed within modernity and the successive attempts it has made to construct a moral order of non-appetitive, un-arbitrary sharing. The choices that can most intelligibly be made, so it goes, are between absolutes: liberty or slavery, atheism or dogmatism, convention or “joyful excess”. Modernity means an absolute lack of legitimacy of anything outside the appetitive, outside of pleasure. One is either a “moralistic buffoon” or one shares out the “liberty towards Evil” however it manifests itself.

A more subtle and long-range critical distance is achieved by Michel Foucault. His analysis is more grounded in history, in cultural context, than that of Bataille, but it nevertheless betrays a ‘sadistic understanding’ in its depiction of modernity, agency and the relationship between resistance, power and the developing problem of the sharable.

To found his evaluation of Sade’s contribution to modernity, Foucault looks back upon an eighteenth century very different from that which is traditionally presented by historians of ideas. In distinction to the presentation of the beginning of modernity as an ‘Age of Reason’ or Enlightenment, Foucault identifies:

“ a military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not to the State of Nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract, but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility” (8, p. 169).

This foundation of Foucault’s subsequent analysis of modernity as a whole and of what can be shared out therein is styled as both central and ineradicable. Essentially, ‘modernity’ - as resource, measure and expression - begins and ends with Sade. This is not to say that Foucault uncritically subscribes to a version of Bataille’s ‘sadistic understanding’. The ‘long-range distance’ Foucault has on his two predecessors, particularly Bataille, emerges in his writing on the history of sexuality. However, even after this ‘distance’ is countenanced, it still does not seem to be adequately digested or brought to bear on the analysis of modernity and power apparent elsewhere in Foucault’s work.

Foucault says that the sadistic understanding arises out of the shared perception that modernity has recently been liberated from the constraints of the Victorian Age and out of the notion that “repression has indeed been the fundamental link between power, knowledge and sexuality” (9, p. 5). The end form of the understanding is that “a transgression of laws, a lifting of prohibitions, an irruption of speech, a reinstating of pleasure within reality, and a whole new economy of mechanisms of power will be required” (ibid.)

What Foucault finds instructive about Sade is that, after him, “sex is without any norm or intrinsic rule that might be formulated from its own nature; but it is subject to the law of a power which itself knows no other law but its own” (ibid., p. 149). In terms of Foucault’s inquiry into the nature and productive capacity of power and domination, this means that:

“to conceive the category of the sexual in terms of the law, death, blood and sovereignty - whatever the references to Sade and Bataille and however one might gauge their “subversive” influence - it is in the last analysis a historical “retro-version”. We must conceptualise the deployment of sexuality on the basis of the techniques of power that are contemporary with it” (ibid., p. 150).

This process of conceptualisation is taken to be both a necessary and sufficient means of constructing the possibilities of sharing that are open to us in modernity. Sade (and “the category of the sexual”) cannot be confronted in any other way without going back to an unsustainable de-historicisation of inquiry. In its detailed deployment of sexuality as an indicator of ‘the true’ as opposed to ‘the moral’ (social/conventional), Bataille’s system of understanding is a closed one. By failing to take account of “techniques of power that are contemporary”, Bataille involves himself in inadmissible elucidation, not in analysis. He is therefore part of the process he attempts to resist. In this criticism of Bataille, however, Foucault proves himself to be as essentially sadeian as his predecessor: there is no way of resisting the process. Foucault endorses Sade’s implicit point - that power and domination are essential to any explanation of modernity and our responses to social phenomena. In a deep sense notions to do with resistance considered apart from domination, power and the stylisation of modernity as an elaborate machine are meaningless. True, Sade no longer appears as uncontextualisable or unique. But

in abandoning the traditional portrayal of Sade, Foucault moves on to regard his work as a diagnosis of the fundamentals of social being and existence - of the possibilities of 'modernity' itself.

For Foucault Sade's frames of reference are in essence ours as well. Along with Sade, 'modernity' expresses "everything that a clumsy society has stifled in man" (10, p. 285). Sade's work both accuses and describes this "clumsy society". His reaction to convention, as a series of coercions and what his work expresses (forms of mechanical training) are thus explained and synthesised. Sade represents a paradox: a disciplined disorder entirely in keeping with our perceived confinement within the techniques of control founded in the Age of Enlightenment. For Foucault, we live in an "age of the infinite examination and of compulsory objectification" (ibid., p. 189) which, although less crudely enforced in contemporary terms, nevertheless cannot escape its eighteenth century foundations. As well as for the wider context of social order and political issue, this age of compulsory objectification finds itself exposed in what can be shared out between individual social agents, whether or not these same agents call what is shared 'moral order' or not.

Foucault articulates this aspect most specifically in his first published work. In Sade,

"man is finally attuned to his own nature; or, rather, by an ethic peculiar to this strange confinement, man must scrupulously maintain, without deviation, his fidelity to Nature" (ibid., p. 282).

Thus the cruelty, violence and "liberty towards Evil" found in Sade (to mean: found in the basis of modernity) are requirements. That is, what can possibly be shared is not accessible through a notion like 'choice' which is close to being meaningless in sadeian terms. The social agent is irrevocably confined within the limits of a series of predetermined functions and responses. The use of "confinement" (as opposed to Bataille's notion of "liberty") to account for Sade/modernity can be interpreted as indicating a form of unreflective imprisonment within a particular ethic or milieu. Foucault's insight, somewhat violently interpretable as an "insight", is that Sade is an extreme example of the mechanically-influenced actor. Freedom - to choose what can be shared out in an envisaged community - is desired so that the agent can instigate an undeviating fidelity, as undeviating a fidelity than convention itself could wish for, even on Sade's model. Foucault therefore goes further

than Sade. For the latter, fidelity to Nature was prescribed in terms of it being a more authentically ordered way of being, an honest recognition of pleasure as one's sole reason and goal. For Foucault, the self-same fidelity is an unavoidable inheritance, skirting around notions of choice and subverting such notions as illusory. The ascription of 'libertarianism' to Sade and, indeed, the whole notion of 'liberty' seem even now to be conceptually incongruous, to hide innumerable and ineluctable abuses. The recognition of these abuses does not lead to rehabilitation but to a more or less hermetic isolation.

We now come to a consideration of how this understanding of the social and of modernity can be dealt with. That is how, given the highly persuasive and influential terms with which the sadistic understanding has been endowed, we can conceive of community and of sharing in a way which both engages with and repudiates these sadistic terms. To explore our initial charges of misdescription and violence of interpretation, we must return to first sadeian principles in order to obtain access to an evolving reflection on the meaning of the social.

Pleasure, for the sadeian actor, is not an opportunity that can be foregone. It is a causal factor in response and decision. It is the one sure and certain basis for a sharing that exists only within certain boundaries - be these boundaries set by convention or by the individual libertine. However, despite giving "the passions" a central place in authenticated human agency, Sade nevertheless regards these passions as non-cognitive. For Sade, action without emotion is inadequate. But he denies the idea that emotion could ever provide an ordered basis for morality - which is dismissed as a mere series of prejudices having no validity. The passions can be refined through imagination and directed by reason. But they cannot be controlled. Even when refined and directed, they can only tell us minimal things: that pleasure should be one's only objective. All other more restrained forms of passionate response such as compassion, pity and love should be annihilated. Sade reserved a special condemnation for the positive emotions:

"if, by chance, you should hear some inner voice speaking to you - whether it is custom that inspires these announcements, whether it is your character's moral effect that produces these twinges - unhesitatingly, remorselessly throttle those absurd sentiments ... local sentiments, the fruit of geographical accident, climate, which Nature repudiates and reason disavows always" (11, p. 354).

Now, there is a lot of material to work on here, most of which has been dealt with in the previous chapter. I will select just two aspects of the passage given above - one implied therein and the other more specific, which have a definite bearing on the 'evolving reflection' upon modernity referred to earlier - specifically relating to the responses that can be given to the 'sadistic understanding' as represented by Bataille and Foucault.

The first of the two 'aspects' concerns the role of motive. We can ask ourselves what part does it play in determining the responses and actions of the sadeian actor and what implications does this have for the understanding of which the actor is a representative. The charge to be laid here is one of unintelligibility. In other words, if we asked the sadeian actor why s/he killed someone, would his/her answer meet the requirements of adequate discourse and language? That is, would the actor be able to meet the first requirements of membership of a community: that of being able to be understood? In reply to these questions, it must be borne in mind that Sade did not give any really explicit attention to motive in his work. However, it can be said that his model of the social actor involves notions of motive which result in serious difficulties. Partly, the extreme weakness of Sade's position in reference to motive lies in the very intelligibility he attempts to give to violent releases. For example, he says that "Nature, if she incites us to murderous acts, she has need of them; that once grasped, how may we suppose ourselves guilty in her regard when we do nothing more than obey her intentions?" (ibid., p. 332). What sense are we to make of this? Perhaps a way forward is to imagine a number of 'sadeian' replies to the question, 'Why did x murder y?' Four main alternatives present themselves:

- a) 'Nature' incited x to murder y.
- b) X finds murder pleasurable.
- c) Because, in not murdering y, x would be going against Nature.
- d) Because y was in x's way.

Of the four, d is the most intelligible as the motive of a social agent. An ascription of motive can be made here. Perhaps y threatened to tell the authorities about x's criminal activities. However, response d is the kind of reply to our question that Sade devotes least attention to. Inner compulsion, the prospects of pleasure and the fear of offending Nature being more interesting and productive in an investigation into violent release. But the ascription of reasons and motives (ie, the 'translation' of compulsion, pleasure and fear of offence into reasons and motives) is not possible if one takes the

sadeian replies as a base. In other words, Sade's work exhibits the absorption by 'causes' of 'reasons' and 'motives'. As a result of this weak conception of motive, rather than justifying x's action, replies a and c sound like excuses, as if the 'reason' given for murder in this case precludes blame by the ascription of mitigating circumstances and mental instability. The inner compulsion implied by reply a leads us to absolve x of most of the responsibility for y's murder. This is precisely the opposite of what Sade intended. For him, Nature provides authenticity and intelligibility to action. We can begin to see, though, that the sadeian actor is more intelligible to us as an example of psychopathology than as a model of human agency.

In answer to our question, 'Why did x murder y?', we normally (conventionally) expect an explanation in terms of motive for the act of murder and for x as a social agent to be barely intelligible to us. A conventional response may take the form of 'was jealous of y' or 'x was envious of y's wealth'. An inquiry into motive would then appear to be necessary. But the sadeian replies, even after we have provided them with a wide scope of possible articulation (we ask 'why did?' instead of 'what motive?'), are self-evidently inadequate. They interpret the question as allowing only for explanation in terms of cause and compulsion. The actor follows impulses that are immediately translatable into action, as almost a matter of definition. Moreover, there is no real need for the actor him/herself to articulate the reasons for such a response. One is reminded here of the protagonist in Camus' 'The Outsider', Meursault, who murders for no discernible 'reason' and who cannot even account for his own actions in an adequately responsive fashion. Blum and McHugh present Meursault as an example of the 'mechanical actor'. We are led to say that to ask for the place of 'motive' in Sade and on the wider scale of the 'sadistic understanding' makes no real sense and thus definitively exposes Sade's account to charges of inaccuracy and inadequacy. The actor does not really even understand him/herself. S/he either obeys the dictates of Nature or not.

In case b, an explanation of the act of murder in terms of motive is precluded by the general form of the reply given to us. X finds murder pleasurable, not in a particular case (for then we could ask, 'Why did x find murdering y pleasurable?') but in all cases. There being no further elucidation offered to us, the reply takes x out of the space of motivational concerns and categorises him/her and the act of murder as indiscriminate, random, psychopathic. This categorisation is strengthened by the implication

extractable from reply b: that pleasure is a causal factor for the sadistic actor - not an opportunity that can be foregone. This brings us full circle, back to the passage from 'Philosophy in the Bedroom' quoted above and to the second, more 'specific' aspect of Sade's thought that concerns us here: its non-cognitivism. We here take the emotions as our starting point and follow through with an examination of Martha Nussbaum's work on Greek tragedy as providing a valuable resource out of which we can assess at least part of the 'sadistic understanding'.

The notion, for example, that love "possesses ... an unequalled clarity of vision" (12, p. 240) is flatly denied by Sade. For him, love is an irrational, non-cognitive obstruction to the clarity of perception and the happiness of existence. Sade, as we have seen, prefers the "unquestioning obedience that an act of violence can exact - the obedience every criminal can count on" (13, p. 41). The way in which this position can be negotiated, without recourse to mutually exclusive contradiction, is provided by Arendt - whose implicit point is that emotions are cognitive factors enabling us to see and respond correctly. This repudiates the sadistic understanding of the human agent and his/her relationship to what is shared out as being essentially based on the power of brutal impulse.

The idea that emotions are cognitive factors in correct responsiveness to social factors grounds virtue and the order to which it tends not in the crude and mechanical enforcement of dogma (as the sadistic understanding would have us believe) but in a given ontology of the human agent. It can thus be said as a preliminary to further explanation that the sadistic understanding has an inadequate version of the emotions, both regarding their role in correct perception and in reference to the depth of response they signify, as they are articulate and conventionally-grounded reactions. Before we get to Nussbaum and to a more direct engagement with Bataille's insistence on joyful excess, an illustration of what we mean by 'depth of response' is needed. Otherwise, the connection we wish to establish - as one which involves a continuing debate across the modern period - will seem arbitrary. Our example comes from the popular press.

"On 27 October, shortly before midnight, the corpse of Seaman Allen Schindler, 22, was found brutally beaten in (a) park toilet (near an American naval base in Japan). Only weeks before, he had confessed his homosexuality to his Commanding Officer, and was expecting to be discharged by Christmas ... . The murder was gruesome. Schindler had been repeatedly bashed against the toilet fixtures. All his ribs were staved in,

his face was smashed to pulp, and his penis had been slashed. His mother later said she could identify his body only by a tattoo on his arm" (14)

We have here a 'worst-case' of unreasoning and brutal violence based upon incoherent bigotry. How are we meant to respond? How does the language and physical detail ("repeatedly bashed ... face smashed to pulp") used in the report contribute to our response? We feel revulsion, disgust, anger, bewilderment. We seem to ask ourselves, 'How could one human being do that to another?' and the linguistic usage can thus be identified with our response.

Perhaps it would be instructive if we were to imagine a purely 'intellectualist' reaction, in order to emphasise the centrality of emotional response and the cognitiveness that it carries with it. What would an 'intellectualist response' be like? Why do we find it repellent?

An intellectualist response could take the initial form of a contemplation of the effects of bigotry and hatred. Then, there would be speculation as to what sort of thing was used to smash Schindler's face in (a hammer? a boot?) and on the nature and design of the tattoo used to identify his body. It had to be very distinctive. How do we react to this response? We do not just ascribe a lack of vision to our intellectualist. As observers of the response, we also ascribe callousness, a 'lack of feeling', even a cynical determination not to be manipulated by an emotive report in the popular press and a wilful misinterpretation of the facts. Our intellectualist, then, "did not really see, take in, recognise, what had happened; (s/he) did not acknowledge the situation for what it was" (15, p. 309).

What is needed for recognition and acknowledgement, then, is an articulation of emotional response (revulsion and bewilderment regarding the perpetrator, compassion and pity for the victim). The language of this 'articulation of emotional response' cannot be mechanically imposed like a religious dogma, but

"describes a pattern which recurs, with different variations, in the weave of our life. If a man's bodily expression of sorrow and of joy alternated say with the ticking of a clock, here we should not have the characteristic formation of the pattern of sorrow or the pattern of joy" (16, p. 174).

We have here a strong version of what an articulation of emotion requires - what words like 'sorrow', 'joy', 'compassion', 'love' and also 'hatred' exemplify, how they are intelligible. For Sade, no 'pattern' of expression is described by such language. 'Compassion', for example, simply refers to an absurd and geographically localised sentiment, the product of a habit that is easily overcome. Virtue is expressed mechanically, in the same way as a clock 'expresses' time (or in the same way as a soldier obeys an order). In other words, we would not be able to recognise emotion as 'emotion' on Sade's model, where a word has to describe a material structure to have any meaning at all.

Sade's view of the emotions and the language of ethical response is inseparable from his model of convention. For Sade, convention is not something we share in and as a community, based on trust and association. It is a crudely imposed series of arbitrary dogmas designed to keep the individual in a state of fear, dependence, repression and automatic obedience. Echoing this view, as he establishes the parameters of the 'sadistic understanding', Bataille talks of "the conduct of cowards afraid of their own joyful excesses". The felt realities of humaneness, which are held in common, are dismissed by Sade and Bataille and the understanding they exemplify. They also have a narrow version of 'character'. Sade and Bataille can conceive of 'character' as thoroughly emancipated from convention both because it is not deeply touched by convention and because the self, in its essentials, is perceived as asocial. Paradoxically, convention cannot have any real bearing on human agency because it too is asocial. So it goes, it is imposed and enforced and is not the result of agreement or association. So the asocial is equated both with the possibilities of total freedom (regarding the individual) and total impotence (with reference to convention). The principal locus of Sade and Bataille's repudiation of the conventional is that nothing really backs it up. This draws them both into unsustainable notions of convention itself, as being extra-human. The fact that 'nothing' backs convention up should lead us in another direction. This direction is signposted by an inquiry that finds value in the social, as an expression of human interaction and not as a crude instrument of control. It realises that the basis of Sade and Bataille's model is both overly self-fulfilling and unintelligible: the postulation of an obviously redundant extra-human realm of convention and morality which is exploited in order to deny them any essential place. For instance, it is a matter of little controversy that if "I promise to care for your child and I murder

him, that promise does not sit unblemished in some holy realm, witnessing against me. It is defiled; nothing replaces it.” (15, p. 404). Because conventions do not emanate out of some extra-human realm, are not imposed by a dogma that has at bottom a definite Presence in mind, they are extremely vulnerable to reversals and betrayals. Sade recognises this. But he takes the reversibility as a sign of weakness and inauthenticity rather than as a sign that, there being no God-like referent, conventions are of vital importance if human life is to be bearable and intelligible.

Recognising convention as specifically human both brings with it a notion of vulnerability and a sense of its value. For Sade and Bataille, this sense of value is illusory. Sade says that “the heart deceives because it is never anything but the expression of the mind’s miscalculations ... sensibility ... is nothing but the mind’s weakness” (11, p. 342). The demand for absolute certainty in the realm of the social involves an unsustainable skepticism, the *reductio* of which is that “if I question everything and look for betrayal behind every expression of love, I am ... perhaps no longer a person at all” (15, p. 405). One is led on to say that an actor with a ‘sadistic understanding’ of social relations would not find it possible to live in a society which demands so much suspension of disbelief in others’ sincerity.

We have seen that Sade, Bataille and Foucault recognise, along with Nussbaum, “that nothing is beyond defilement” (15, p. 408). Unlike Nussbaum, though, they tend to minimise the depth and the scale of the defilement when it happens, particularly in the arena of the conventional. So it goes, convention is easily and simply dispensed with. All one needs is the strength and the will, once rational inquiry has exposed the defining characteristic of the social as the prejudice of simpletons.

Nussbaum maintains that the break up of convention is by no means a simple matter. Nor, she insists, is its actual ‘defilement’ synonymous with liberty or a cause for celebration. She asks what it takes to shake our largely implicit belief in a particular convention, that of friendship, and what effects its reversal has for an agent whose responses are emotional as well as intellectual. Her answers, also largely implicit with reference to the ‘evolving reflection’ that is the main theme of this chapter, illuminate the inadequacy of the account provided by Sade and Bataille and they give us access to a more sophisticated version of convention, emotion and violence than has been previously allowed. Nussbaum’s account is based upon a reading of Euripides’ tragedy ‘Hecuba’, which she calls “an assault upon our fondest thoughts about human safety and human beneficence” (*ibid.*, p. 397) because

it “makes us recall that our possibilities for goodness depend upon the good faith of others, who are not always faithful” (*ibid.*, my italics).

The play is set in the aftermath of the siege of Troy. Hecuba, once Queen, is now a slave of the Greeks along with her daughters Polyxena and Cassandra. Her youngest child, Polydorus, lives in safe-keeping with her most trusted friend, Polymestor. Polyxena, acceding to a demand made by the Commander of the Greek army, sacrifices herself willingly and with dignity. Although wretched and sorrowful, Hecuba’s condition “is mitigated by the knowledge of the firmness of (Polyxena’s) noble character” (*ibid.*, p. 398). No conventions are broken. Her next misfortune, though, irrevocably alters her perceptions and attitudes, with the news that Polymestor has brutally murdered Polydorus for a small sum of money. Hecuba plots revenge, which culminates in the murder of Polymestor’s children and the putting-out of his eyes. Hecuba is then debased, corrupted. She (literally, in the play) changes into an animal, a dog. This is where her revenge and the betrayal of the convention of friendship have led her.

‘Hecuba’ is a “story of metamorphosis” (*ibid.*, p. 399), not of liberation (as a sadistic understanding like that of Bataille’s would have us believe). The violation of convention by Polymestor is presented as “the worst possible case for damage to goodness” (*ibid.*), not as an opportunity for the emancipation of Hecuba from goodness and morality per se. For Hecuba, “ethical commitments are human things (ie, they are social), backed by nothing harder or more stable” (*ibid.*, p. 400). Therefore, “if there is no external appeal, no incorruptible standing structure, this fact will be likely to affect the stability of the individual in both activity and internal goodness” (*ibid.*, p. 402, my italics). This is very far from providing the grounds or foundations of an understanding which is properly describable as revolutionary and is ultimately positive in its effects and expressions. That is, an understanding which seeks to rebuild or reestablish the social on lines that are more just than previous conditions have allowed. Instead, it leads to stasis and a single-pointed defilement of what is shared out under the aegis of a specific convention, the most ‘social’ of which being friendship.

In time of war and social dislocation (pace Sade and Bataille), convention is extremely vulnerable. We then see, through the medium of Euripides’ play, “the total disintegration of a moral community, the

slippage and corruption of (not 'abandonment' or 'freedom-from') an entire moral language ... . Worst of all, even formerly good agents are blighted (not 'emancipated') when betrayal and violation take root. Nothing replaces them" (ibid., pp. 403-4, my insertions).

The relationship between Hecuba and Polymestor, that of *xenia* or 'guest-friendship', "is the deepest and most sacred conventional relationship in which one inhabitant of this world can stand to another" (ibid., p. 407). The question here, of finding a relevant equivalence of relationship under the auspices of modernity, may present difficulties. However, the point to be made here concerns Polymestor's violation of convention and of his obligation to care for and protect Hecuba's son Polydorus, which "was explicitly undertaken by him, over and above the usual obligations imposed by *xenia*" (ibid.). In *sadeian* language, Polymestor transcends the limits which are arbitrarily set by his culture. His act, according to this language, exhibits a freedom from restraint. It is the act of a predator, entirely blameless because in accord with the dictates of a predator's nature. Polymestor murders exactly as the *sadeian* actor would, "without guilt or care, taking no thought even for the burial of his victim's corpse" (ibid.). Yet the 'language' we have spoken of will not do as an adequate and intelligible expression of response to the crime of infanticide. Nussbaum, unlike the *sadeian* actor, recognises that we respond to the murder of Polydorus (or, in less emotive but equally pertinent terms, the defilement of convention) as an instance "of happy guileless childhood suddenly cut off" (ibid.). It is taken as "a blasphemy against everything" (ibid., p. 408) and, instead of leaving Hecuba feeling foolish and gullible, it disfigures and dislocates the pattern of her moral responses. The result is revenge and violence. No 'freedom' or 'escape' from the bonds of convention is desirable or possible.

Hecuba has, in reality, a choice to make between two alternative courses of action - neither of which are blameless: "Either she blinds herself, in which case she is a fool and corrupt, or else she allows herself to see, in which case she becomes contaminated" (ibid., p. 409). This 'contamination' is apparent both in Hecuba's revenge itself and in the way she goes about achieving it, adopting an instrumental or loosely *sadeian* attitude towards the remnants of morality and obligation. Virtue is not totally abandoned, though. It is used in a new way. Moreover, virtue (*contra Sade*) becomes an instrument by being violated, it is not an instrument *per se*. The killing of Polymestor's children and his own blinding are the consequences of this 'contamination' and, more deeply, of the instability of convention itself.

Sade and Bataille's notion of 'instability', as opening up the possibility of liberation, seems both naive and repugnant in this case. Although Sade would approve of Hecuba's revenge as being more self-realised, he would not recognise her metamorphosis as an extreme example of self-mutilation and corruption - the climax of a conception of virtue which is "stripped bare of community" (ibid., p. 415). In doing away with a vital convention, Polymestor destroys Hecuba's hitherto good character. He does not thereby allow this 'character' access to a notion of the 'true basis' of human relations. In distinction to providing the fundamentals of a definitive 'overcoming' of morality, Polymestor's action produces "bestiality, the utter loss of human relatedness and human language" (ibid., p. 417). Qualifying this, though, Nussbaum says that surely "it is important that we see Hecuba's actions as in some sense justified, at the very least extenuated by the circumstances, not as simply expressing a murderous character" (ibid., p. 418). That is, justified or extenuated in terms of morality itself, not in terms of a spurious freedom from constraint upon an essentially murderous character, as Sade and Bataille would possibly express it..

As well as providing our inquiry with a means to understand Sade's possibility via a consideration of the vulnerability of the conventional, Nussbaum also erects a signpost from which we can map a critical appraisal of the tradition and understanding he represents:

"The human being, as a social being, lives suspended between beast and god, defined against both these self-sufficient creatures by its open and vulnerable nature, the relational character of its most basic concerns. But if being human is a matter of one's trust and commitment, rather than an immutable matter of natural fact ... then the human being is the being that can most easily cease to be itself" (ibid., pp. 416-17, my italics).

This indicates how the sadeian actor is indeed possible but is only intelligible in a weak sense. This is brought out more fully by a Foucauldian tautology. It implicitly maintains that Sade can only be Sade by being human, by being a social agent defined by an essentially vulnerable nature. That is, by the character of his commitment (which, paradoxically, was to 'immutable matters of natural fact') rather than by the existence of a series of extra-human values.

Sade closes off important human things. But he can only do this by being human, lacking the unthinking self-sufficiency of an animal. This self-sufficiency, then, is seen as an aspiration, not a truth. Oddly enough, we are led back to Foucault's talk of the "strange confinement" the social agent must "scrupulously maintain" via Nussbaum's account. But there is a modification to what Foucault says in the passage quoted earlier in this chapter, in that it can be taken as a call for a further examination of what being "attuned" means and what alternatives to the "scrupulous maintenance" exist in modernity, if any. In other words, after we have dealt with the sadeian interpretation of agency and its relationship to community, there is still left one charge that needs to be substantiated: that the sadistic understanding of which Foucault is a sophisticated exemplar amounts to a serious misdescription of modernity, a reductive picture of what is actually on offer to us. To this end, Charles Taylor's argument against Foucault and the wider stance he adopts elsewhere in his work proves decisive. As well as an 'answer' to the sadistic understanding of modernity, Taylor also asks us to look for developments, for better versions of our inheritance of the social and the moral, which he treats as a whole package - not as one which can be conveniently divided into the categories of 'the moral' and 'the true'. This remains to be seen and to be explored at length, particularly in the chapter that follows this one. For now, we turn to his criticism of Foucault's view of the possibilities contained within modernity.

Bataille and Foucault explicitly disallow any relevance, except an absurdist one, of the values of individual existence to an analysis of the meaning of the 'facts' which arise out of this existence. They pay attention to systems and strategies rather than to individuality and articulation. Bataille, in a typical passage, says that "the true sense of an infinitely profound work is to be found in the author's desire to disappear, to vanish without leaving a human trace, because nothing else is worthy of him" (7, p. 110).

In an analytically comparable way, Foucault has this to say:

"It is comforting, however, and a source of profound relief to think that man is only a recent invention, a figure not yet two centuries old, a new wrinkle in our knowledge, and that he will disappear again as soon as that knowledge has found a new form" (17, p. xxiii).

The felt reality of individual existence, its evaluative nature, is occluded here.

Taylor's central accusation is one of insufficiency, although he allows Foucault's importance as a thinker and theorist of modernity. Of Foucault's account, Taylor says that it "seems to bring evils to light; and yet (distances itself) from the suggestion that would seem inescapably to follow, that the negation or overcoming of these evils promotes a good" (18, p. 152). Taylor's implicit point is that the day-to-day details of an individual life are just as important and relevant to a version of modernity as are the 'facts' or epochal illusions which individuals represent. On this version, no thoroughgoing sadistic understanding is intelligible as a ground or foundation of the social. The sadistic understanding involves one who pretends to its exercise in an unsustainably essentialist and literal version of the self, as if 'the self' can be completely identified and measured. The charge that can be made against both Bataille and Foucault is that they do not ask themselves whether or not the actor arising out of such identification and measurement (which treats felt realities as no more than a "wrinkle in our knowledge") is adequate to modern-day complexities. These complexities are forcefully brought to bear in Taylor's later work on the subject of the self and its relation to its "invention" within the time span that concerns us here:

"the most urgent and powerful cluster of demands that we recognise as moral concern the respect for the life, integrity and well-being, even flourishing of others ... . Of course, the scope of the demand notoriously varies: earlier societies ... restrict the class of beneficiaries to members of the tribe or race and and exclude others ... . But they all feel these demands laid on them by some class of persons" (19, p. 4).

The sadistic understanding inverts this. 'Felt demand' (conveniently repackaged as 'rational fact') is entirely concerned with the liberty to destroy, to mutilate, to kill. On a more cerebral level, witness Foucault's confession of "profound relief" at the imminent passing of our quest for self-knowledge, translated by him into the epithet "man".

Foucault exemplifies a temptation to regard 'felt demands' as non-cognitive reactions "and to consider the ontology which gives rational articulation to them to be so much froth, nonsense from a bygone age" (ibid., p. 5). As with the succumbing to temptation, so with the more general impression given of modernity as the scene within which the sadistic understanding is played out. The accusation of insufficiency raises its head again, basing itself on the contention that, by ignoring 'felt demands' or by translating them into symptoms of a sadistic need to defile, Foucault does modernity a disservice.

Here, though, we can detect a possible objection to the comparative analysis of Taylor and the sadistic understanding which says that all we are really doing is juxtaposing contradictory formulations and opinions, as if some undefined essence of the problem posed remains untouched. Moving beyond this, we could say that Taylor's account is more intelligible as a formulation of the ethically-authentic. That it obviates the need to provide essentialist answers by attending to the hitherto neglected non-sadeian (non-instrumental) sources of modernity, the social and of individual identities. We point to the inadequacy of the sadeian attempt to ground inquiry in closed systems and essents (in, for instance, that they presuppose what they try to prove). Simply put, the foreseen objection misses the point of the juxtaposition, in that it does not represent 'contradiction', but an avoidance and criticism of the absolutist impulse found in the sadistic understanding. Following Taylor's method in 'Sources of the Self', we are not trying to prove Sade, Bataille and Foucault 'wrong'. Rather, we wish to negotiate their terms and those of their subscribers in a way which leaves room both for the understanding they represent (albeit as a danger we may fall into) and for the project we wish to develop out of the challenge initially posed by Sade: that of the morally-ordered community which uses modernity as its resource and measure.

We can ask our sadeian actor, 'What is morality?' and we would get a simple, straight answer: prejudice (and/or restriction, foolishness, the result of the exercise of a crude power system, the outgrowth of "the clumsy society"). Asking Taylor the same question, without qualifying 'morality' with inverted commas, it is very doubtful if he would or could answer us. Especially if we want, say, the absolute truth and/or a definitively substantive formulation like we obtained from our sadeian actor. Taylor needs to clear up prior confusion, to ask prior questions instead of providing us with a neat and essentialist datum. These include questions like, what do we mean? why do we ask? don't we already act morally in our own lives and doesn't this mean that we already know what morality is, if we took the time to articulate our own reactions? Taylor looks to actual individual practices and how these are influenced by wider-ranging and more impersonal historical constructions, instead of to watertight definitions. For example, if a child asks me what racism is, I do not reply adequately by saying, "It is a prejudice" or "It is bad". I could give the child examples of racism in action, showing it as discriminatory, violent, unjust. Or I could draw the child's attention to the causes and effects of racism, showing it as bigoted, stupid and vicious. But to get back to Taylor.

Taylor starts with a diagnosis of modernity in its relation to suffering. This relation is stated in terms of an evolving sensitivity to cases of individual and collective harm, rather than based on sadecian notions of constraint, power and liberty. He says that “the notion that we ought to reduce (suffering) to a minimum is an integral part of what respect means to us today” (ibid., p. 13). This can also be read as a diagnosis of why we find Sade so shocking. It is this latter fact, the outward and visible signs of which appearing to be visceral and not grounded in articulation, that undermines and subverts Sade’s arguments and the vision of modernity to which he has given credence. This level of reaction touches upon something deep in our shared modern understanding of the ethical which we may or may not be able to articulate fully, but which nevertheless hints at the inadequacy of the sadistic understanding of modernity and the self. Taylor’s point about the ‘modern understanding of the ethical’ is that it is an inherited feature, that it has developed over the past two hundred years into something approaching a visceral response, alongside the sadistic understanding of a Bataille or a Foucault and their instrumentalist and Post-Modernist inheritors. That the response approaches the visceral does not thereby mean that it is visceral. It is a ‘moral understanding’. We argue with Sade et. al. We try to provide alternative ways of thinking about the same problems. It would be other if our reaction to Sade really was a visceral one. Then we would not be able to argue with him. He would just sicken us, like rotting meat.

The aforementioned depth of the modern understanding also means that the abandonment of a convention (like marriage) does not necessarily signify a movement towards a sadistic understanding, or the denudation of convention and of moral frameworks as such. Indeed, there is a sense in which this cannot happen, in view of what has been said of the given ontology of the human agent. Even in a period of general disruption (like that of the siege of Troy dramatised by Euripides), Taylor says that “some framework stands unquestioned (like the Christian order or the Natural order or like Hecuba’s initial relationship with Polymestor) which helps to define the demands by which (people) judge their lives and measure, as it were, their fullness or emptiness” (ibid., p. 16). So a “radical reduction cannot be carried through” (ibid., p. 19).

Even Sade had the notion that “some action, or mode of life, or mode of feeling is incomparably higher than the others which are more readily available to us” (ibid.). In Sade’s case, this took the form

of an idea of the superiority of “the rational man who scorns the prejudices of simpletons” and of an incontestable Nature. His fatal mistake, and the mistake of those like him who came after, was to postulate a hard and fast division between ‘the moral’ and ‘the true’, carrying within it a subsequent lack of evaluative force and ‘felt demand’. In distinction, our modern anxieties are primarily directed towards the meaning of individual existence, not towards a dogmatic relationship to an extra-human system of significance. In Taylor’s terms, the locus of meaning has shifted from the ontic (or from an externalisation of meaning ‘in’ the universe as a whole) to the internal (the human, reversible, vulnerable). The ‘anxiety’ and its search for meaning in individual terms are quintessentially modern, part of what it means to exist in modernity, to realise that it is a presence in our lives. Thus individuated, meaning refers to “the notion that questions of moral orientation cannot all be solved in simply universal terms” (ibid., p. 28). What this means in terms of theoretical inquiry in general and also in this particular instance is that ‘partisans’ like Sade, Bataille and Foucault do not take into account that so-called solutions in ‘universal terms’ are “features of (the) imaginative structure of a community in a way that makes them fertile and continuously revisable parts of our environment” (20, p. 70). Thus, the reductive pretensions of the sadistic understanding represent errors of ascription and errors of logic. Errors of ascription in the mistaken conception of Nature, Liberty and Power as being essentially unconventional and not the subject of human interpretation at all. Errors of logic as the results of the faulty ascriptive procedures that are involved.

However, in proceeding beyond a critical treatment of Sade, Bataille and Foucault as ‘definitive’ sources and viewing them as paradigmatic examples of “imaginative structures”, we have access to them “as parts of the symbolic order (which can) both stimulate and expand our discursive opportunities” (ibid.). This stimulation of discursive opportunity bears witness to Sade, Bataille and Foucault’s “value and influence in the community which includes us” (ibid., p. 71). As a version of modernity, what the sadistic understanding demands is a development, in this case, of a notion of sustainable and moral collective identity which has at its core a sense of individualised fullness and integrity. Taylor speaks of “an important element of retrieval”, in rescuing modernity and hence the possibility of a morally-ordered community from its sadeian/instrumentalist opponents. Sade cannot be safely put away and ignored while we get on with the business of ‘being modern’. His position, his sensibility is a ubiquitous one. It challenges everything. More urgently, no competing example of

moral order has been vouchsafed to us, even by Taylor. However, his usage of the notion of 'retrieval' is important. It is this element of retrieval, of rediscovering one's true inheritance as an inhabitant of the modern world, that informs the work of the second major figure to feature in our analysis of the evolution of modernity, the self and community: Fyodor Dostoevsky. In 'The Devils', he presents a sadeian figure, Stavrogin, and provides us with a diagnosis of this type of agency and the alternatives to it.

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## Chapter Three:

### The Loss of Form.

“In Bad Homburg, I watched him over the tables,  
the homely face, false teeth, poor clothes.  
I’m a Swiss doctor, but I read novels.

When he had lost every coin from his worn purse  
he looked up at me and smiled:  
‘I am a man,’ he said, ‘without a future.’

I had treated him the night before  
for epilepsy, and he spoke then of  
the joy he felt while lying on the floor

one moment before the foam and spasms.  
His face was shining there as he explained:  
‘Christ alone,’ he said, ‘can save Russia.’”  
(Elaine Feinstein, from ‘Fyodor: Three Lyrics’, in ‘Daylight’)

Dostoevsky was concerned primarily with a restoration or retrieval of readily available moral sources, to be used to found an order which was to be an exemplification of these same sources. To speak of 'restoration' or of 'retrieval' is close to meaning-zero in sadeian terms. For the sadeian, everything is settled and certain, with those at the forefront of modernity being forever frozen in discretionary attitudes. So it goes, there are no impassable obstacles to the achievement of a communion with Nature-as-destructive-principle. To go 'backwards' - to want to re-think what could become the basis of a 'moral order' - is to fail to see, to be in Bataille's terms a coward afraid of one's own joyful excesses, to ignore the supposedly unchanging realities of social life that lie behind our epochal illusions. For Taylor, on the other hand, modernity, or at least our inheritance of modernity, is unsettled and doubtful. This doubt is interpreted positively. That is, ontology is not so much froth from a bygone age and therefore our options are not merely sadeian. This is what gives modernity its value as a space within which we can retrieve properly 'moral' sources.

Dostoevsky attempts to get away from and to overcome a sadeian essentialism. This essentialism, as we have seen, is based upon the contention that 'the social' cannot explain but merely obstructs and that any sharing is synonymous with the identification of empirically-verifiable similarities between asocial agents. Dostoevsky carries our own previous critique of this further forward, in that he attempts to give us an example of community: an example of what kind of sharing constitutes community and what kind an appetitively-based nightmare. He can entertain both possibilities, sometimes simultaneously. It is with the broadly sadeian nightmare of 'The Devils' that we begin.

Far from being a coward, Dostoevsky possesses an all-too lucid awareness of the problems of modernity, of the problems facing the moral order he wishes to see implemented. For this reason alone, he surpasses Sade - though not without extreme cost. In addition, he battles against his own perception of the nightmare of community. Dostoevsky, although his vision was a tormented one, tries to fulfill the cognate need for a sustainable idea of sharing once the problems of modernity have been

identified. What success he achieved in furthering matters is the central subject of the three chapters that follow.

Set in a small provincial town, Dostoevsky's 'The Devils' (1873) explores the political, cultural, spiritual and social crises consequent upon modernity. It is a modernity which violates traditional social forms and which tries to escape the inhabitants' best efforts at explanation and understanding of what is going on around them. The novel alludes to the solution of these crises in terms of a restoration of community which is dependent neither upon violent revolution nor upon the perpetuation of a revived past. As it is narrated by one of the participants in the action, the book can be divided roughly into four more or less equal parts.

The plot of the novel concerns the fatal and far-reaching impact on the town of Skvoreshniki of a terrorist conspiracy, organised and led by Peter Verkhovensky - the son of one of the town's more prominent citizens. The embodiment of the conspiracy's aspirations is the sadian Nicholas Stavrogin, the profligate son of an aristocratic family - solely represented by his mother (who keeps Peter Verkhovensky's father Stepan on as a paid retainer). Around these four major characters and the narrator revolves a tightly-packaged and inward looking society of co-conspirators (the Virginsky's, Snegirov, Lieutenant Erkel, Shigalyov and Liputin), their associates (Shatov, Kirilov, Captain Lebyatkin and his sister Mary and Fedka the escaped convict), formal acquaintances of Mrs. Stavrogin (the Drozdov's, Shatov's sister Dasha, Lisa Tushin and the von Lembke's) and various unnamed students, workers and radicals of all descriptions and hues. It can be easily seen from this run-down of personnel that, socially, the town is an extremely varied and complex entity, with many levels of communal involvement being possible. There could be no better scene for a diagnosis of modernity in its fragmented aspects and for looking more closely at sadian forms of agency.

The conspiracy successfully disrupts all hitherto existing social relations, exposes the incompetence of the local governor (von Lembke), turns on its own in the execution of Shatov and is complicit in the deaths of five other characters, including that of Stepan Verkhovensky. Even Stavrogin, the figurehead of revolutionary change, does not escape. He commits suicide in an excess of what can only be described as indifferent aristocratic despair. 'The Devils' ends with the escape of the main perpetrator

of chaos, Peter Verkhovensky, and the annihilation of town society as we have come to know it through the course of the book.

In his notebook entry of 23. 12. 1872, Dostoevsky summarises the themes and concerns which preoccupied him in the writing of the novel. 'The Devils', he insists, represents that:

"people have lost their forms; they were immediately obliterated, and new ones are still in hiding ... there are no convictions, no science, no points of special emphasis ... . The main thing is that they do not understand each other. This entire jellied mass was seized by cynicism - the youth, lacking guidance, welcomes it with open arms. Meanwhile a few preconceived ideas, the feeling of honour - a false concept of humanness" (1, p. 3)

In 'The Devils', the 'loss of form' can be translated into 'lack of articulation'. Social agents "do not understand". Threats and challenges to the social, which have as their basis an 'obliteration' of prior conviction and guidance, are perceived but perceived dimly, without taking on the mantle of a "form" or a concretely-articulated understanding. They are just beyond articulate grasp and are therefore not engaged with - to the cost of the society in question. On another level, this "loss" or 'inability to conceive' issues from and results in a resistance to the social itself: a refusal to recognise a social explanation of motive, origin and purpose apropos individual acts and agency.

It is at this point that the loss of articulateness shades in to a loss of significance per se. In this respect, the 'loss of form' as a basic loss of adequate access to meaning can be taken to signify social fragmentation. This occurs at the point where grasping the "new forms still in hiding" is made possible via the skepticism that surrounds the older, redundant forms. However, this is to get ahead of ourselves. Suffice it to say that Dostoevsky's awareness of the 'loss of form', which tends towards a corrosive pessimism, and also his solution in terms of 'retrieval' all but discount the possibility of "new forms" coming to light. This is ultimately to the cost of his project to found a community, to provide us with 'examples'. However it should be clear that, even at this early stage, Dostoevsky's work represents both a profound criticism and a significant advance on sadeian understandings.

In lacking his precursor's sense of rational certainty, in centring the problems he faces around social meaning and social significance, he indicates a way forward in our understanding of what 'community'

and 'sharing' have to mean if they are to be both legitimate and sustainable: that they be moral, principled and significant beyond the merely appetitive. For Sade, there was no crisis that could not be solved by a recourse to supposedly undeniable material features and impulses. There is no doubt there, no conversation. With Dostoevsky it can be said that, initially at least, there is little else. In other words, he starts from the social, instead of trying to overcome it. The asocial, he seems to be saying, leads to the disruption and 'loss of form' he was so worried about in the notebook entry given above. This needs to be shown.

After a protracted absence, Nicholas Stavrogin returns to his home town, attracting a mixed reception of awe and revulsion. No one in Skvoreshniki is indifferent to his presence and the narrator remarks that the women of the town "were sharply divided into two camps - in one he was adored, and in the other he was hated with a deep, abiding hatred" (2, p. 56). No 'reason' is given for this polarised emotional response: Stavrogin has not done anything to merit adoration nor to deserve hatred. Instead of concrete 'reasons-for', the narrator grounds the reaction of the women in the attribution of a nebulous "thought that some fatal secret was probably hidden in his heart" (ibid.). Immediately, there is a lack of openness, a resistance. Quite what the "fatal secret" may actually be is not explored at this stage. The extremity and fact of the response qua response is merely noted and observed by the narrator. In order to make this barely intelligible and to provide for its possibility, we can treat Stavrogin and the response he generates as an outgrowth of the experience of modernity: modernity as potential (adoration) and as threat (hatred). More concretely, this is partly conditioned and justified by what his 'protracted absence' signifies, in terms of where it has occurred.

Stavrogin arrives in Skvoreshniki (as does Peter Verkhovensky) from St Petersburg, a distant and sophisticated metropolis, which can be taken as "representing all the foreign and cosmopolitan forces that flowed through Russian life" (3, p. 176). He is just as detached, indifferent and uncategorisable as the city he left. He brings the experience of modernity with him. He also resists explanation and first appears almost asocial. In this his 'sadeian' character is broadly mapped out for us. This character will become more definite as the novel progresses.

Initially, Mrs. Stavrogin is anxious. She is not content with any explanation she may potentially make to herself about her son's experience, opinions and general behaviour. In other words, about his place

in the social. She is "afraid of something vague and mysterious" (2, p. 58) about her son. Later she asks an acquaintance of his, Liputin, whether "there might be something strange, something peculiar, a certain trend of thought, a tendency to take certain unconventional views" (ibid., p. 111)

Mrs. Stavrogin's remarks denote a lack of articulation and an admitted failure to explain and confront the experience of modernity, the potentials and risks it gives rise to. Although indefinite in what they refer to, they take us beyond the responses evoked by her son on his initial entry into provincial society. They can be said to be a more appropriate expression of the 'loss of form' than that exhibited by the other women of the town who, although far from indifferent to Stavrogin, cannot and do not want to confront the reasons for their adoration or their hatred. Unlike Mrs. Stavrogin, they rest content with their initial reaction, their spurious explanations and attributions. Indeed, Mrs. Stavrogin is unable to come to any definite conclusion. This drives her into asking what the "something vague and mysterious" is, already suspecting that it is "strange", "peculiar", "unconventional". Although she admits to Liputin that the "something" is unspecified, she does not take this as meaning that it is unspecifiable. This is apparent in her search for answers, in her willingness to be told by Liputin or to discover what is "strange" in the context, not of St. Petersburg, but of Skvoreshniki and "unconventional" in the sense of the denial of social rules and norms. Mrs. Stavrogin experiences the 'loss of forms' as the loss of understanding not as a sateian liberation. It is a loss which entails and demands that new forms must be found, be they strange, peculiar or unconventional. In her search for answers and explanations, she exhibits concern and anxiety for another which takes her beyond the distaste for the strange, peculiar, unconventional and towards the experience of modernity. However, this is very far indeed from being also an experience of moral order and community.

With the arrival of Peter Verkhovensky, to augment and bring into relief Stavrogin's modernising role, the loss of forms and the obscurity of those which may potentially emerge takes on a more urgent and threatening aspect. Explicit confrontation with this aspect of the experience of modernity is in a sense impossible at this stage. The risks and dangers Peter Verkhovensky represents, being peculiarly modern, are only faintly alluded to. The narrator, reporting on a typical conversation with him, says that he "somehow could not help feeling that he must have a sort of peculiarly shaped tongue in his head, a sort of unusually long and thin one, very red and with an exceedingly sharp and incessantly and uncontrollably active tip" (ibid., p. 188). In other words, Peter Verkhovensky reminds the narrator of a

snake, a predatory animal. The modernity he represents - as it is new, interruptive, unprecedented - is characterised as sadeian, animalistic, destructive. The association seems arbitrary ("somehow"), subjective ("feeling"), absurd, embarrassing ("could not help"). The narrator does not know why or where from the link emerges. In addition, no one else seems to share his perception of the new arrival, especially those like Stavrogin who are meant to know him well. The temptation is to stifle the uncontrolled feeling or at least not to draw it to anyone's attention. The narrator seems to give in to this, because he does not expand further on the association or the feeling.

Despite the lack of confidence invested in its application, the snake imagery does evoke a series of associations with the Edenic Fall from Grace, the expulsion from Paradise brought about by the Agent of Discord. The "feeling" persists that the provincial society has within it the seed of its own imminent destruction, embodied by Peter Verkhovensky. We can extrapolate from this that the language most closely associable with an 'old form' (that of the Old Testament Biblical Fall) can both be transposed and deal more adequately with a confrontation of the risks and threats which modernity exemplifies than the simple and inarticulate ahistorical search for a completely 'new' set of conceptualisations. That such a transposition can be effected is apparent in the narrator's own language, one that does not explicitly presuppose a belief in the religious framework of which his association is a sign. Although 'Edenic Snake' is lost as a concrete, literal entity, it is reformulable in a social sense. However, Dostoevsky recognises that such a transposition cannot come into full articulation and cannot form the basis for a fully realisable form of social comprehension, both given the discredit into which the 'old forms' of understanding have fallen and the reality of the narrator's "impression" as a social fact. The narrator says "somehow could not help feeling", which denotes an inexplicable subjective distaste rather than a principled reaction, thus confining the "impression" to a superficial place in his social orientation. Finally, the narrator in this extract does not say, 'Peter Verkhovensky's actions and manner mark him as an Edenic Snake'. To do so would confront the threat he represents head-on and could possibly ensure that it is kept from being acted out. Vagueness, as ever, guarantees defeat. The passage in question is, however, both fallible and important. It is fallible because it stays on the level of a "feeling", on "impression" and hence does not confront the menace it indicates. It is important because it provides us with the opportunity to realise that an adequate understanding of the threat of a certain kind of modernity is appropriate in terms of 'old forms', but that these forms must of necessity

be imitative and not literal. For sadeian predatoriness to be explained, confronted and overcome, we must look closer at the social scene and not rely exclusively on opinion.

What this means is that Dostoevsky shows us “how what is ‘ready at hand’ (the extrapolation from “a sort of peculiarly shaped tongue” to ‘Edenic Snake’) is used to show what is ‘present at hand’ (the “impression” which the narrator “could not help feeling”) or how the universe carries within it the possibility of the particular” (4, p. 8). In other words, the narrator’s series of associations imitate an ‘old form’ of understanding which can be used to comprehend a tangible social danger - as “tongue” which is “peculiarly shaped ... unusually long ... with an uncontrollably active tip” imitates ‘snake’. Otherwise, divorced from what is available to us as a form of explanation however absurd or inappropriate it may seem at the time of its making, social threats tend to resist all understanding. Abandoning the old forms completely leads into a vacuum of meaning. The narrator abandons the old forms he starts out with and the only other explanation for Peter Verkhovensky he can come up with later in the book is that he “seemed to have dropped from the sky” (2, p. 193). We are to see this abandonment, this ‘divorce from what is available to us’ later in the novel, when Stavrogin assumes a more centrally important role. For now, though, we can say that unlike the “somehow” uncontrolled “impression”, the narrator’s admission of social failure (he can account for Verkhovensky only as something that has “dropped from the sky”) “calls into question our dependency upon the social, upon interaction” (4, p. 17), just as Sade did. The source which produced Verkhovensky seems unimaginable, with predictably catastrophic results for the community at large.

At the climax of the book, during a fete when the superficial cohesiveness of the society completely fragments, the participants in the action are no nearer to a precise sense of the significance of the processes and forces which are brought to bear on them. In the course of the violent and degrading breakdown of the hitherto existing community, the narrator says that “there was a general sense of irritation, something implacably malicious; it seemed as though everyone were thoroughly sick of everything” (2, p. 458). This non-specific and ‘floating’ resistance (“sense of irritation”) to “something” inarticulately threatening can be taken as both sign of and influence upon the experience of modernisation experienced as a danger. Again, the vagueness of the narrator’s comment can be interpreted as a fatal lack of engagement with the “forms still in hiding”. The narrator is not even sure of either the connection between the “general sense of irritation” and the something which is

“implacably malicious” or whether or not people really are “thoroughly sick of everything”. He only says “it seemed as though”. Even the possibility of definite qualitative ascription (of “irritation”, “malicious” and “sick of everything”) is conditioned and limited by doubt and vagueness (“it seemed as though”, “general sense”, “something”). In this respect, the remarks exemplify the loss of “the art of putting ourselves in the picture, of recognising ourselves as participants in the art and thought of our time” (3, p. 24). This “art” or “ability”, or prior commitment to the cultivation of such an ability, is given an imaginative and dramatic urgency by Dostoevsky. The thesis seems to be that the vague recognition of “a general sense of irritation” does not situate social agents “as participants and protagonists” but attests to a lack of engagement. Nihilism and murder triumph as Dostoevsky leaves the ‘thesis’ and the questions it asks “echoing in the air” (3, p. 21):

“The most sound intellects among us are now surprised at themselves: how could they have been so stupid at the time? What our troubled times were about or what the transition was we were passing through, I don’t know, and I don’t suppose anyone knows” (2, p. 459)

Modernity, then, imposes bewilderingly new conditions and new demands without providing the forms by which they can be made sense of. The profound uncertainty which this both expresses and gives rise to forms the beginning of a response which is necessarily risky but appropriate. The ideal at this level of Dostoevsky’s analysis seems to be to proceed beyond ‘profound uncertainty’ in order to face up to the facts of modernity and its loss of form. The focus of the book, then, is predominantly negative. It attends primarily to a confrontation with the factors that sell the ground from under the feet of the social, even as it tries to come to terms with modernity.

The prior thesis surrounding ‘vagueness’ is deepened by the other variations on the theme of the ‘loss of form’ in ‘The Devils’. Here we can look to Dostoevsky’s general remark that there are “no convictions, no science, no points of special emphasis”. This does not denote a total, Hobbesian absence of all civil society but can be taken to indicate, in Marshall Berman’s phrase, “a dangerous lack of depth” (3, p. 230) inherent in the society that already exists and which threatens to utterly destroy it. But how can a lack of depth be dangerous? What does the lack of depth show that can be formulated as a danger? As a first approach to this, we have in the novel a long passage which gives us a picture of the cultural life of the country as a whole:

“second-rate gentlemen ... usually hailed as geniuses (who) vanish almost without a trace ... as soon as they die, but are often quite forgotten and neglected after an incredibly short period even during their lifetime. (Also there are writers who have) been believed to possess a great store of extraordinarily profound ideas (who) in the end (betray) such shallowness and insipidity of (their) fundamental idea that no one is sorry when (they succeed) in writing (themselves) out so soon” (2, pp. 96-7).

The “geniuses” and possessors of “extraordinarily profound ideas” are given this status by a popular acclamation (“usually hailed”, “been believed”) inaccurate and fickle in its attributions. The “geniuses” are soon thought to be “second-rate gentlemen”; the possessors of “extraordinarily profound ideas” are found later to betray “shallowness and insipidity”. Public opinion, which falls very short of a concretely formal attribute like ‘knowledge’ vacillates from one extreme to the other. As cultural ascriptions which are shared, they also betray a superficiality and “lack of depth” (or foundation) which functions as a sign of a wider instability. Instability, or the fragmentation involved in the predominance of the ‘opinion’ which is not ‘knowledge’ and which refuses to acknowledge that there is a difference between the two, is also represented in the proliferation of “hundreds of papers and journals (which) are published in Russia ... and every day innumerable events are reported in them ... . Many of the facts published in them make an impression and are remembered by the public, but are eventually forgotten” (ibid., p. 137). This forms a kind of homogeneous continuum of data and reportage which cannot be assimilated or shared by the readership, since the “facts” which are reported are “eventually forgotten” or dismissed as unmemorable in the first place. In addition, the production of information and the ineluctable process of forgetting seem linked in this passage. It is as if they are part of a continuous, inevitable process. The procedure is taken for granted: the reported facts are eventually forgotten because of their insistent production. The authors and publishers seem indifferent to the fact that their work is eventually forgotten, primarily because it appears that one particular work is completely replaceable by another. There is no qualitative distinction, in other words. We can say from this that the proliferation does not “consider the value of (its) productions for the whole, as the mediating part of community” (5, p. 13). Therefore “making is taken over and ... becomes thoughtless and ceaseless” (ibid, p. 14). The “lack of depth” expressible through “thoughtless and ceaseless” proliferation becomes indifference to “facts” of whatever kind, be they published in hundreds of papers and journals or as they are “ready at hand” in everyday life. Fashion is extended to the domain

of value. Meaning and knowledge are overwhelmed by formless and irresponsible production, the collective influence of which tends towards fragmentation - the break up of understanding and 'form'.

Liputin says of Kirilov that "he rejects morality as such and is in favour of the latest principle of general destruction for the sake of the ultimate good" (2, p. 106). The oddness of this is brought out if we consider the juxtaposition of "latest" with "principle of general destruction". The grammar of "latest" sets up associations with "style", "trend", "fashion": linguistic elements denoting "short-term" and "ephemerality". In other words, it has no principled character. It is also deeply sadeian.

If I say that 'x is the latest y', I imply that it has replaced a previous x which is now completely outmoded. In other words, it is the essence of the y that it is the 'latest' of its kind. No other conceptual attribute is as important to the intelligibility of what is said. Liputin talks of "principle" in the same way, and of one which is "in favour of ... general destruction". Although "latest" undermines the "principle" of "general destruction", fashionability remains the dominant medium of evaluation. An evaluation entertaining a principle of general destruction takes away all aspirations to community at source, as a matter of brute sadeian fact. In addition to this, we can consider the use of "latest" as a prescription. For instance 'x is the latest y', as well as signifying that the previous x is redundant, also means that the new x is recommended precisely because it is the "latest". The prescriptive force of this kind of language is contextualised and made more overt by other remarks in the text which are similar to Liputin's and which go further in showing us how a "lack of depth" can be dangerous. Also, far from identifying an ultimate profound core of human experience, the sadistic understanding influences a superficiality, informs an easy and flippant nihilism. This is what Sade's talk of 'government by caprice' leads into.

Before all the violent influences acting on the provincial town come to a head, the narrator finds himself on an excursion to visit a local holy man, Semyon Yakovlevich. In the course of the journey, news of a suicide in a nearby village is brought to the company: a young man has shot himself after gambling away 400 roubles, entrusted to him by his family for the payment of his sister's wedding expenses. The initial reaction to this news is described as follows:

"It was at once proposed that the company should have a look at the suicide. The proposal found general support: our ladies had never

seen a suicide. I remember one of them said in a loud voice that she felt so bored with everything that she did not think they need worry their heads about the kind of entertainment they might get, provided it was interesting" (ibid., p. 330)

What is immediately noticeable here is the formality, detachment and emotionless curiosity of the initial response - the lack of shock, bewilderment and reluctance to "have a look". In this, we are reminded of the 'intellectualist' reaction to the murder of Seaman Allen Schindler in the previous chapter. However, the company goes further down that particular road and ends up at a place where 'intellectualist reaction' does not go far enough to describe the profound lack of perception we find here. The news of the suicide is greeted "at once" with a "proposal" which finds "general support", much as a vote is called for in a council or amateur debating society: a language of resolution, decision and consent more appropriate to abstract argument than to something that we feel should be recognised as urgent and tragic. Moreover, there is a translation of 'suicide' into a "kind of entertainment". This leads us to say, along with Nussbaum, that the company do "not really see, take in, recognise, what had happened, that (they) did not acknowledge the situation for what it was" (6, p. 309). When the company actually manage to "have a look" at the suicide, this lack of responsiveness is augmented. It is simultaneous with a lack of the social. The entire company "stared at him with eager curiosity" (2, p. 331). The ladies "looked at the dead boy in silence, while their companions excelled themselves by their witty remarks and their cool presence of mind" (ibid.).

Not only do the company show a lack of recognition of what has happened, but also of who it has happened to. There is no compassion for the dead boy, no imaginative sympathy. Superficial interest rules the day. The suicide is the pretext for social charm more appropriate in the context of a light hearted and frivolous party. This is government by caprice.

No spontaneous or transcendent recognition is allowed to overshadow the "cool presence of mind" demanded in the immediate precincts of a particular social circle. Put another way, the company's response to the young boy's suicide represents "a centring on the self, which both flattens and narrows our lives, makes them poorer in meaning and less concerned with others or society" (7, p. 4). This poverty of meaning can be extended outwards from the company to include the society they inhabit and its central ethic: the refusal to recognise 'the social' as having any bearing on individual

responsiveness. We can detect an “abnormal and regrettable self-absorption” (ibid.) which can admit and accept suicide as a “kind of entertainment”, the unusual nature of which is translated into an item of interest rather than as a reason for social and spiritual unease. The suicide of the young boy is, in a sense, interchangeable with any other social fact, just as one production of the “hundreds of papers and journals” is equally replaceable by another.

The sense of interchangeability is brought out earlier in the book with reference to Stavrogin. He sees “no distinction in beauty between some voluptuous and brutish act and any heroic exploit, even the sacrifice of life for the good of humanity” (2, p. 260). Taken together, the characterisation of Stavrogin and the report on the diverted excursion give us a picture of a society wherein it scarcely matters at all what sort of means are used so long as they can be tailored to suit some atomistic self-absorbed end. Stavrogin and the excursion are part of the same sadistic package deal we get in modernity. Taylor’s examination of an important strand of modernity and the social in terms of ‘self-centring’, of which the “dangerous lack of depth” is a partial symptom, introduces us to the question of what kind of self is actually being centred on and of how crucial the sources and perceptions of self-definition are in exemplifying the denial of the social. In Dostoevsky’s text, these questions are in part worked out with reference to the manner in which a certain version of convention dominates social life and the consequent resistance to explanation and understanding that is inscribed within it. This is most clearly seen firstly in the treatment meted out to the character of Nicholas Stavrogin.

Stavrogin’s story is one of extreme self-absorption and wilful self-destruction. He is the sadeian actor par excellence but with an added tragic dimension that is lacking in Sade’s protagonists. In portraying Stavrogin, Dostoevsky gives us a full picture of what the sadeian actor is really like, the kind of destruction wreaked by the activity of his thought. He is complicit in the suicide of a child (Matryosha) and is responsible for the infliction of violent indignities upon Skvoreshniki’s leading citizens. In addition there is the announcement of an ‘unsuitable’ marriage to Captain Lebyatkin’s retarded sister Mary. He subverts the conventional role of social leader and rejects the burden of being the focus of political hopes and aspirations. He favours the assiduous cultivation of social disgust and condemnation. Stavrogin wishes to be free from all obligation, like the sadeian, but also realises that

his 'liberation' is dearly bought. While talking to Father Tikhon about his role in the death of Matryosha he says, "there is neither good nor evil ... it is just a prejudice ... I can be free from any prejudice, (but) once I attain that degree of freedom I am done for" (ibid., p. 692). He is not just 'the reasoning man'.

In treating of this, we can say that Dostoevsky provides the "terrain ... in which (Stavrogin's) conception of freedom touches on the issue of the nature of the human subject" (8, p. 208) insofar as it provides for the social possibility of Stavrogin's actions and responses. We can make a start on this by seeing how these are conventionally interpreted and made socially intelligible and how these ascriptions are subverted by Stavrogin's own accounts of his motives, the focal point of which emerges as "an undisguised, terrible need for retribution, the need for the cross, for a public execution" (2, p. 681). We can then ask what sort of self organises its actions around such an unusual "need" and how this influences and exemplifies the fragmentation and 'closing-off' of community.

Stavrogin initially appears to the narrator as "the most elegant gentleman of all those I had ever met ... with the manners that only a man accustomed to the most refined society could possess" (ibid., p. 56). He is ideally suited to a prominence and a hegemony within a provincial society which sees itself in inferior terms to the cosmopolitan and sophisticated milieu which Stavrogin represents. He attracts a special admiration and respect as "a man of considerable knowledge" (ibid.) who can "pass an opinion on highly interesting topics of the day and, what was so important, with remarkable good sense" (ibid.). The 'self' that is presented here is fashionable, used to handling himself in 'society' and, above all, functionally capable. These attributes are interpreted in a language whose version of the conventional places primary importance upon the exhibition of manners and refined society. These are taken as both necessary and sufficient validations of Stavrogin's social role as heir to the local seat of traditional leadership. Although there is a residual, associative suspicion of the inadequacy of this series of ascriptions as definitive of a 'self', the actual insufficiency and what it points to is most clearly brought out in the juxtaposition of "considerable knowledge" with the capacity to "pass an opinion" with a gloss of "good sense". Dostoevsky is paying attention to what can be regarded as a common and vital confusion.

Knowledge is not made “distinct from conventionally-ordered discretion” (9, p. 176). The discrimination between these is in itself “the knowledge shown in discriminating that difference” (ibid.). In other words, the exhibition of ‘knowledge’ as distinct from opinion or an ordered, discrete gloss of “good sense”, is missing. All that is required is an acquaintance with a given subject. One is then able to pass an opinion, similarly to the “hundreds of papers and journals” currently in circulation. Ideally, though, we want to be able to say that a:

“knower acts under the auspices of the difference between knowledge and correct opinion and so he exemplifies that his belief is chosen, ie (for the reason) because it is an example of what is good (of knowledge). The one with the true belief does not provide for the choice worthiness of his belief” (ibid., p. 177).

Stavrogin merely exhibits the achievement of social charm, the discretion of which is “conventionally ordered”. If he could be said to be a “knower”, we would properly require of him that he also exhibit a prior commitment to ‘knowledge’ as good, that he is in the process of “imagining methods of caring” (4, p. 31) for the standard of value that is implied by the ascription of “considerable knowledge”. Instead, we are only told that he can “pass an opinion” with no indication either way that it is correct or of its choice worthiness. Stavrogin is far from being a “knower”, in the sense of implying commitment and choice. ‘Knowledge’ here is closer to being a social skill like good manners, which is ruled by discretely-ordered notions of “good sense” and acquired through one’s being “accustomed to the most refined society”. This conception means that any further inquiry into one’s ‘opinion’, its basic grounds and foundations, is taken not to be necessary. It is more important here to pass an opinion with good (habituated or “accustomed”) sense than to do so with good grounds as a “knower”. The sadeian echoes deepen and become more resonant.

This is the Stavrogin who subsequently commits “two or three shocking outrages on various persons” (2, p. 58). This can be taken as showing what the full implications of ‘convention being the limit’ are. If this is so, then:

“there could be just two basic orders of behaviour: acting correctly, enforceably (with “manners”) or acting incorrectly, unenforceably (the “two or three shocking outrages”). Action could only be understood in terms of its competence (“manners that

only a man accustomed to the most refined society could possess”) and would either conform (to “the most refined society”) or deviate (“shocking outrages”) in any instance” (9, p. 174).

The local gentlemen’s club is the setting for the first of Stavrogin’s “shocking outrages”. He assaults an elderly committee member, Peter Gaganov, by leading him around the club premises by the nose. The second takes place at a formal social occasion presided over by his mother. Stavrogin kisses Mrs. Liputin, thereby making her faint. Finally, when called to account for his actions by the local authority, Stavrogin bites the ear of the soon-to-be-replaced Governor, Ivan Osipovich. These incidents are taken by the narrator as examples of “the wild beast (showing) its claws” (2, p. 58). This may seem like a gross over-reaction to what amounts to a species of cruel clowning, but it is entirely consistent with the way in which the society of ‘The Devils’ is constructed, the ‘discretion’ with which it supports itself. Stavrogin goes from one extreme to the other almost immediately, with no explanation. He moves from being an “elegant gentleman” to a “wild beast” just as Sade’s protagonists move from elevated social positions to acts of murderous abuse. He begins by passing all sorts of opinions with good sense, following the rules of polite society and then commits “shocking outrages”. There is no ‘fit’ between these labels, it seems. Alan Blum and Peter McHugh diagnose the extremity we have before us in terms of rule, self and integration:

“the way he is constructed gives him no opportunity to integrate (or not) rule and self. He either follows or he doesn’t” (9, p. 185)

This is compounded by the fact that Stavrogin’s “outrages” were perpetrated “suddenly and for no reason at all” (2, p. 58). That the settings for his actions show that the discrete observance of ‘behaviour’ is set at a premium also augments the sense of bewilderment and inexplicability. It severely limits the ways in which Stavrogin can be dealt with. His outrages are “so unlike anything anyone could have expected, not at all what usually happens” (ibid.). Out of this, provincial society tries to make Stavrogin intelligible in three main ways.

First of all, he is categorised as a “wild beast” meaning that, by his actions, he excludes himself from the socialised human world. A wild beast is not a threat that can be subdued or negotiated with. It can either go elsewhere to commit its depredations or it can be done away with completely. By its very

wildness and bestiality, such a creature defines itself as 'outside' and, simultaneously, as 'threat'. This is shown in the "general outburst of hatred" (ibid., p. 60) which is the response to Stavrogin's behaviour. In itself, though, this behaviour is "absolutely idiotic and puerile (and) very silly" (ibid., pp. 58-9). But "wild beast" does function as a means of understanding the emphasis upon ruling discretion as the defining qualitative element in deciding upon issues of membership in the provincial society portrayed in 'The Devils'. Agents either conform or deviate. In deviating, they exclude themselves completely. Obedience is the only requirement for membership. However idiotic, puerile and silly a given deviation may be, it still means that one separates oneself from all possibility of being dealt with rationally. We shall see later, though, how this way of concluding is unstable and variable. Moreover, the instability and variability are inscribed within the very discretion which now seems so dictatorial. For now, though, we can turn to the other two ways in which Stavrogin's behaviour is conceptualised, wherein the general extremity of "wild beast" is considerably ameliorated and modified.

The attack on Gaganov is treated as an act of "gross unseemliness ... a deliberate and utterly impudent insult to our entire society" (ibid., p. 59). As Stavrogin's conduct worsens, with the attacks on Mrs. Liputin and Ivan Osipovich, resulting in his temporary imprisonment, madness is widely suspected. We are told that "an acute form of brain fever" (ibid., p. 64) has been diagnosed. Stavrogin then leaves town, not to return there for four years. Thus we see the completion of what can be called a series of discretionary strategies of explanation, which move from "wild beast" to "unseemliness" and "impudence". This process of closure abstracts the deeper levels of threat that the former ascription of "wild beast" denotes. Unseemliness and impudence are serious enough, particularly in the provincial setting. But they are much more moderate than "wild beast". In a sense, the use of unseemliness and impudence can be read as a reformulation of the threat posed by Stavrogin. If he is seen purely and simply as a wild beast then it is an admission on the part of the social world that it cannot deal with him internally. That is, it can only expel him, because a wild beast resists any and all properly social explanation. The movement from this to "unseemliness" now sees the opposition to Stavrogin and Stavrogin's own actions in terms of a wrong which employs discretion, in the sense of insult rather than harm. By disapproving of Stavrogin in this way, the narrator readmits him to the society. If Stavrogin's actions are seen in terms that employ "ill-mannered", then they are closer to the forms of

etiquette they transgress than if “wild beast” was used exclusively. In the latter case, the application of “unseemly” and “impudent” are inadequate, not strong enough if they are taken as augmenting the original categorisation. It is absurd, for example, to call someone “an impudent wild beast”. Instead, “unseemliness” and “impudence” replace “wild beast” and put a gloss of understandability on Stavrogin’s behaviour, which is missing with the prior label. This process of linguistic amelioration is completed by the diagnosis of “brain fever”. In this, Stavrogin is safely marginalised. His supposed insanity is treated as a comforting re-affirmation of discretionary standards: any deviation signifies madness, the removal of the demand for ‘intelligibility’, for further explanation.

After spending four years in Switzerland and St. Petersburg, Stavrogin returns to Skvoreshniki, appearing in his mother’s drawing room where she is receiving visitors. All the major characters are assembled in this one place, including Mary Lebyatkin - Stavrogin’s lawful wife, whom he married in St. Petersburg. Although Stavrogin’s attitude towards her is one of affection and respect, no-one in the room apart from Peter Verkhovensky and Shatov suspects that a formal relationship has been entered into. Without speaking to anyone, Stavrogin leaves with Mary but presently returns and is soon involved in a violent confrontation with Shatov. The narrator merely describes this incident, giving us no attendant speculation as to motive or cause. Perhaps it would be best if the passage referring to the incident is quoted in full, to give a more precise indication of its dramatic and linguistic structure:

“When Shatov stopped silently before him without taking his eyes off his face, everybody in the room suddenly became aware of it and fell silent ... Lisa and her mother stopped in the middle of the room. So passed five seconds; the look of insolent perplexity on Stavrogin’s face suddenly changed to that of anger, he knit his brows and suddenly - And suddenly Shatov swung his long, heavy arm and, with all his might, struck him a blow in the face. Stavrogin staggered violently ... . (The) whole scene did not last more than about ten seconds” (ibid., p. 211)

At this stage, the one thing to note about this description is the resistance to understanding that it offers. Nothing prepares the narrator, the reader or the other characters for it. The whole of Shatov’s assault takes “about ten seconds”. The reiteration of “suddenly” throughout the passage attests to unpredictability. No one really expects that Shatov will hit Stavrogin. The impossibility of motive ascription is also apparent. Shatov hits Stavrogin “suddenly”, without apparent premeditation, giving

no clue as to why he should do so. In the aftermath of the assault, there are social expectations surrounding Stavrogin's response. The narrator assures us that, "If anyone had slapped his face he would, I believe, not have challenged him to a duel, but killed him on the spot" (ibid, p. 211). They are confounded, though. Stavrogin grabs Shatov "by the shoulders with both hands; but ... he snatched his hands away and folded them behind his back ... . Ten seconds later his eyes looked cold ... and calm" (ibid., p. 213). Based on a prior observation of Stavrogin, this seems scarcely credible. Subsequently, "the old hostility of our society to Stavrogin became strikingly evident. Even serious-minded people were eager to accuse him, though they did not know themselves of what" (ibid., p. 216). The discretion which, by and large, Stavrogin and the drawing-room reception symbolise have been violated while no explanation of why emerges. The unease that this induces is depicted in the comment on the eager accusations and the hatred of the serious-minded people. The easiest intelligible explanation of the anxiety which underlies social disapprobation is that it is concerned about the reversal of roles and expectations. If Stavrogin had retaliated, it is doubtful whether the society would have felt the same sort of unease. There would be shock and, quite possibly, "penal servitude for murdering a man not in a duel" (ibid., p. 212). But no anxiety. No suspicion that the discretionary taxonomies of agency and behaviour are possibly insufficient and that new explanations must be sought. However, the society in question here does not make the leap from anxiety to seeking. The social as a resource of explanation is extremely limited by the discrete expectations that govern in its every arena.

The complete restoration of explicability then comes about. Stavrogin fights a duel with Artemy Gaganov, the son of the elderly man he had humiliated on his first appearance in Skvoreshniki. Gaganov persistently insults Stavrogin, sending him letters referring to the incident with Shatov and ignoring his enemy's attempts to apologise and make redress. Gaganov's motive for provoking Stavrogin in this way is transparent: revenge for the insult to his father. During the ensuing duel, Stavrogin refuses to engage with his opponent, firing his pistol well away from where Gaganov stands. After the third exchange of shots, the duel is over. Stavrogin leaves Gaganov uninjured but looking "as though he had been crushed" (ibid., p. 294). What is interesting about this otherwise unremarkable episode is the process by which a "new character appeared on the scene" (ibid., p. 303) and how Stavrogin becomes "the fashion" (ibid.). Once again, rigidly 'discrete' forms of explanation assert themselves. The new Provincial Governor's

wife, Julia von Lembke, is instrumental in this process. She says, "Is there anything surprising in the fact that Stavrogin fought a duel with Gaganov but took no notice of the student? He couldn't possibly challenge one of his former serfs to a duel, could he?" (ibid., pp. 301-02). Any other motive for not responding with violence to Shatov is, in a sense, unthinkable.

If we position Julia von Lembke's pronouncement alongside the previous resistance to explanation which Stavrogin's response conjured up, we can see that this is a society wherein only two extremes of conceptualisation are possible: either actions are totally inexplicable or they are discretionally significant. No third alternative presents itself. It is also important here to realise that the circumstances surrounding the incident with Gaganov and the subsequent social ease that it influences represent the defeat of modernity, or at the very least an admission of failure on its part. Duels, or at least their acceptability in terms of socially-sanctionable behaviour, were becoming outmoded by Sade's time. Modernity introduced more institutional, bureaucratic ways of dealing with disputes between individuals. By the late nineteenth century, the duel was a museum relic, a pre-modern curiosity to be looked on with horrified contempt. It is an "old form". Its use here testifies to the frozen character of the social scene, its disengagement from modern developments and its ability to accept Stavrogin immediately after excluding him completely. Stavrogin becomes, overnight, socially acceptable again because he participates in the duel - the preserve of the aristocrat and the gentleman, attesting to his finely-honed sense of social propriety. The forms by which a mutual antagonism could be dispersed in socially acceptable terms in a proper context of 'modernity' are missing. Stavrogin's action is lauded both by the representative of governmental authority and by the wider social scene. The sense of anachronism is doubly underlined in this episode. In the light of his conduct at the duel, wherein exclusive social distinctions are re-emphasised, Stavrogin:

"ignored (Shatov's) insult because the man who had attacked him was a former serf of his. Society had gossiped and slandered him; frivolous society had looked with contempt upon a man who had his face slapped; but he had scorned public opinion which had failed to rise to an understanding of the real standards of social conduct and yet discussed them" (ibid., p. 302).

Although considerably threatened by its previous inability to explain, discretion reasserts its authority on the more comforting foundation of a series of pre-modern constructs. Stavrogin is now treated as having “scorned public opinion”, the strategy of which is “an understanding of the real standards of social conduct”, but which standards turn upon a similar version of the public opinion which has been previously scorned. A duel with a former servant is unthinkable. The discrete social world castigates itself but only to re-emerge as still the dominant form of explanation, having as its subtext the notion that a “former serf” does not deserve the privilege of even a violent response from his social superiors. That would be tantamount to admitting and accepting that there exists a certain level of equality or kinship with the insulted master. Here we see a reinvention of Stavrogin in terms of a deceptive depth of understanding. A new character appears on the scene. Julia von Lembke is “finally acknowledged to be a woman of remarkable insight” (ibid., p. 303). Even Stavrogin’s “pride and fastidious unapproachability, for which he was so hated in our town four years before, were now liked and respected” (ibid., p. 304). A gloss is put upon Stavrogin’s behaviour and character. This also alters social perceptions. No previous opinion is irreversible. Discretion would now seem to be eminently flexible and adaptable. It is certainly “competent” in strategic terms. But the society’s criticism of itself (as “frivolous”) results in Stavrogin becoming “the fashion” or the latest trend, the language of which denotes a return to the variable, to the ephemeral, to the very frivolousness with which previous public opinion had been accused of.

Discretion involves itself in a fatal circularity, one which returns to the sources of its previously perceived inadequacy. This implicit point is made more overt when we come to consider Stavrogin’s identity. This ultimately leaves behind the modes of explanation which have previously been regarded as authoritative. They also indicate “the existence of a new and unpardonable challenge to society” (ibid., p. 682). In spite of the fact that previous explanation is made redundant, it does not follow that Stavrogin thereby exists outside of the discretionary world of Skvoreshniki. That is, that he has found an alternative to acting in enforceable / unenforceable ways. To the end of his life, he remains essentially unable to integrate rule and self: public opinion makes a new character of him. Questions of ‘selfhood’ hardly arise. In short, Stavrogin does not really realise that he “lives in convention but need not be of convention” (9, p. 116). The consequences of this are fatal. Stavrogin cannot see any other

way out than that which calls for self-annihilation. In this he is truly sadecian, truly mechanical - possessed of impulse but without a coherent social character.

The very first impression Stavrogin makes upon the society is favourable, though not unequivocal. The narrator says of his personal appearance that "he would seem to be a paragon of beauty, yet at the same time there was something hideous about him. People said that his face reminded them of a mask" (2, p. 57). Behind any reassuring emphasis upon surface appearance lies something hideous that is just beyond articulable reach. This unnameable horror which is hidden behind the mask of Stavrogin's face appears in rapid succession as "wild beast", "gross unseemliness" and "an acute form of brain fever". Gradually, we see the apparent disappearance of the suspicion that there is something repellent about him, when for example he is described as an "elegant gentleman" who possesses "an understanding of the real standards of social conduct". But these interpretations do not entirely erase the initial feeling. That the "mask" might be all there is to Stavrogin hardly occurs to those who make his acquaintance or who take note of his social conduct. He later recognises this in his suicide note where he writes that, "Even negation has not come from me" (ibid., p. 667). Stavrogin's relations to those who he can be regarded as being closest to, Shatov and Peter Verkhovensky, illustrate the point clearly.

Immediately prior to the duel with Artemy Gaganov, Stavrogin visits his former assailant. In the course of their conversation, during which Stavrogin attempts to understand Shatov's motive for hitting him, he says, "'You seem to regard me as a sort of sun and yourself as a sort of insignificant insect compared to me'" (ibid., p. 249). After the duel, Peter Verkhovensky responds to Stavrogin's contemptuous reluctance to get involved in political conspiracy by saying, "'You are my idol ... . You're my leader. You're my sun, and I am your worm'" (ibid., p. 420). Stavrogin is regarded not as an incomplete, socially-explicable individual but as an invariant condition of life itself: a "sort of sun" without which existence is inconceivable. The fanaticism and debasement of those around him is thereby traced to its source. The awe attaching to the "sort of sun" stance and the consequent debasement are inextricably linked. Stavrogin, so it goes, is above the social. Further, he provides the conditions for basic existence. The realm of this existence, as constituted by insignificant worms and insects, is one of subhuman obedience. In this it is undeniably sadistic. But how can we arrive at an

understanding of the kind of agency that is regarded as above and beyond the social, everyday world and which thereby “calls into question our dependency upon the social, upon interaction” (4, p. 17)?

Shatov confirms Stavrogin’s “sort of sun” assertion by saying that, “Don’t you know that I shall kiss your footprints after you have gone?” (2, p. 261). But he also criticises his former “teacher” (ibid., p. 254) and the “creation” (ibid.) he has left behind him. In part, this response is conditioned and influenced by Shatov’s previous physical violence towards Stavrogin. The former serf is now in the position to assert himself upon this basis and at one point he demands that Stavrogin should, “Drop your tone and speak like a human being! Speak for once in your life with a human voice ... . Away with the gentleman!” (ibid., p. 252). This amounts to a rejection of what it is assumed Stavrogin stands for, how he is defined by the wider society.

In effect, Shatov does not really regard Stavrogin as a sort of sun, but he is confused as to where this rejection will lead him in the future. The new forms are still in hiding. Shatov implicitly recognises that the “sort of sun” Stavrogin represents is identifiable only in the “tone” with which he addresses the social world. He is still (like Sade) “the gentleman” who refuses (like Sade) to “speak like a human being”. That is, in terms which acknowledge the facts of human kinship and relatedness. Stavrogin leaves behind an attitude that categorises others as insignificant insects, separated from him by an unbridgeable evolutionary gulf. Moreover, the pre-modern social sources of this patrician attitude of natural hierarchy - out of reach, “obliterated” old forms - are buried beneath the weight of discretionary social expectations. This is the Stavrogin, after all, who is soon to fight a duel.

As the conversation moves to its close, we can see that the focus of the assumption that Stavrogin is some sort of sun changes. Shatov narrowly avoids the trap of awe, whereas Stavrogin refuses to recognise the force of the criticisms levelled at him. In this, Stavrogin retroactively endorses being seen by others as a sort of sun. This is detectable in his penultimate remarks in the exchange. He says, “I’ve been sitting here for half an hour under your lash and the least you can do is to let me go civilly ... . I’m sorry I cannot bring myself to like you, Shatov” (ibid., pp. 261-62). Shatov’s criticisms are confined within the simply punitive. That is, Stavrogin is enduring some faintly obligatory sadistic ordeal. He does not take the call to speak “like a human being” as a productive demand, which would

allow him to drop his gentlemanly “tone” and to treat others as equal. He responds as “a sort of sun” would, or as an impossibly distant focus of attention, as someone who recognises criticism only as impudent revolt, as wholly destructive of the discrete edifice of social respect. A sort of sun cannot be reformed or reconstituted, only denied impotently. Stavrogin also reacts like a “gentleman”. In other words, the generally discrete and formal tone of “the least you can do is to let me go civilly” avoids true conversation. This is primarily achieved in the implication of the existence of an unwritten code of etiquette which is out of place in the context of the more intense language employed by Shatov. For example, we normally say ‘the least you can do’ in connection with matters that are not terribly pressing or which, if not fulfilled, merely incur displeasure and not serious blame, as in ‘the least you can do is to post this letter’. Finally Stavrogin’s remark, as a strategy of dismissal rather than an answer, means that Shatov cannot succeed in getting Stavrogin to drop his tone. The preservation of this tone in turn preserves the sense of discretely ordered social separation.

Peter Verkhovensky’s adoration is more straightforward. We are able to see a different level of response to Stavrogin as “a sort of sun”, uncomplicated by any effort at violent repudiation. Shatov’s response is too confused to rest content with. In the present case, we see a tightening up and a concretisation in terms of political ambition.

Verkhovensky’s attitude to Stavrogin and to his own self-debasement (“You’re my sun and I am your worm”) finds expression in a political vision. He says that, ““We don’t want education ... . The thing we want is obedience ... complete obedience, complete loss of individuality””(ibid., p. 419). The means to this end are characterised as ““one or two generations of vice ... . Monstrous, disgusting vice which turns man into an abject, cowardly, cruel and selfish wretch ... . And, on top of it, a little “fresh blood” to make them get used to it!”” (ibid., pp. 421-22). Stavrogin is to preside over this. Verkhovensky’s model of the ideal society is a projection outwards from his own invention of Stavrogin as essentially inexplicable, as “idol” and as “sun”. He bases his politics around a Stavrogin, therefore, who “does not desire to teach or influence but to produce a community of copies, that is, a community of the awestruck” (4, pp. 17- 18).

What the community of the awestruck needs is a leader who exemplifies allegedly ‘super-human’ qualities that are entirely absent in a debased and self-consciously abject, cowardly, cruel and selfish

humanity. The consequence of atomism is tyranny in the political arena and a fatal solipsism in the personal. Absolutist notions of freedom, as freedom from the moral and from access to the self which is constituted by the moral, lead to the denial of the social as the foundation of explanation and as an evaluative medium. Then it is no longer freedom but an abject failure to understand, a cowardly submission to illusorily-based totalitarianism, to a polis or a 'community' having at its heart a Hitler, a Stalin or a Mussolini. The diagnosis of modernity's risks here carries the intensity of prophecy. Only a Stavrogin will do to complete the picture. The new forms may still be in hiding, but it is a fatal mistake to assume that they will manifest by themselves, without being perverted in the process. Shatov's doubt and nascent insistence that social leaders like Stavrogin should speak "with a human voice" exists alongside and in tension with Peter Verkhovensky's more reactionary agenda. What follows is a working out of this tension in terms of Stavrogin's chronic reluctance to engage with the social world, thereby ensuring its defeat. The implicit contention of this seems to be that if an opposition between self and world is postulated and encouraged, as it is here, then both suffer. It would also seem, then, that the 'integration of self and world' in a socially discriminating fashion is essential for the foundation of community. Modernity (Shatov's "human voice") opens up the possibility, if confused, of such an integration. But it is also all-too-vulnerable to reversal. It is the obscurity of the "new forms" that seems to found both the possibility and the reversal. This is, however, to get ahead of ourselves. As ever, though, Dostoevsky's focus at this stage is a pessimistic one. Elsewhere in 'The Devils' he does appear to postulate an 'integration', faintly with reference to Shatov and (as we shall see in the next chapter) much more exactly in his treatment of the character of Stepan Verkhovensky. For now, though, we may conclude with Stavrogin and the defeat of the social.

Stavrogin visits the local monastery. His ostensive purpose is to meet and talk with the Father Archimandrite, Tikhon, apparently in order to resolve some unspecified inner turmoil. Almost immediately, though, on meeting Tikhon, he tries to close off this possibility by saying, "I don't like spies and psychologists, at least not those who creep into my soul. I don't invite anyone into my soul. I have no need of anyone. I can look after myself" (ibid., p. 680). In short, Stavrogin conceives of himself as asocial. The others he encounters are all categorised as "spies and psychologists". Their motives and functions are automatically suspect, instrumental. The language of "spy" and "spies", of "psychologise" and "psychologist" carries within it a usage. The connotation of this 'usage' is 'acting

on' (orders, patients) and 'acting for' (enemy interests, promotion of career) rather than 'acting with' . "Spies" surreptitiously intrude into where they are not wanted, in order secretly to capture some information for use at a later date. The act of seriously visualising the social in these terms seals the one who visualises up into a closed, cynical and paranoid condition.

If one sees all participants in every interactive process as "spies and psychologists", one is hardly likely to speak about one's 'soul' or identity in terms which are meaningful or significant in any shared sense. The reaction is to resist significant speech itself and to present to fellow interactants an invulnerable, enigmatic and inexplicable persona. Stavrogin's soul would now seem to be completely inaccessible. He is reasserting the "tone" which was noticed by Shatov. However, if we consider the moves he makes in his initial remarks to Tikhon (from "like" to "invite" to "need"), we can probably be able to see that he reveals more than he realises.

First of all, it is important to recognise that Stavrogin does not say, 'Spies and psychologists are unlikeable because they use one for their own ends'. This would denote a knowledgeable relation to those who are and those who are not "spies and psychologists". Stavrogin instead confines himself to reporting his own subjective taste ("I don't like") which may find itself, incongruously enough, contradicted by others who do 'like' spies and psychologists. Stavrogin does not thereby exhibit knowledge, only opinion, preference. His reaction is of the same ontological kind as one which limits itself to a report upon individual taste, as in, 'I don't like the colour yellow'. To argue or converse about such a taste seems incongruous. To borrow from Taylor, we do not argue (as we do with reference to issues surrounding knowledge or principle) whether 'yellow' is a fit object of respect. Here, then, conversation or exchange is stopped at source. The initial force of this is then conventionalised in "I don't invite anyone into my soul". The implication of this is still entirely subjective. But the emphasis has subtly shifted, from "like" to "invite" - from a report on a wholly personal disinclination to one which concerns the discrete precincts of interaction. Oddly enough, though, the denial of interaction is becoming hardened and more impenetrable. Like or dislike may be reversible, as a taste or preference (for sweet things or flippant conversation) is modifiable. "Invite" is more rigid, more in the way of an externally-verifiable sign of permission outside of which exchange is disallowed.

Finally, the subjective and discrete is transposed into a report on "need": "I have no need of anyone. I can look after myself". This carries within it an ontological leap backwards.

Generally speaking, 'like' and 'invite' are not synonymous with 'need'. For example, x may dislike taking medicine and will not invite the doctor to call in order to give treatment. This does not mean that x does not need the medicine or the doctor's treatment in order to become well again. It would be more appropriate, therefore, for Stavrogin to say 'I don't want anyone'. Since 'want' translates more appositely into 'preference' or 'like' than 'need' does. X may say, 'I don't like the medicine or the doctor. I don't want them', which would be tautological but consistent. Whereas if x says, 'I don't like the medicine. I don't need it. Take it away.', we would be led to think that x does not really know what s/he needs. 'Need' is essentially independent of preferences.

Stavrogin means to say that his 'need' is based upon the facts that he does not like spies and psychologists and does not invite anyone into his soul. It follows from this that what is really important to him is that his subjectively discrete responses to the possibility of interaction should be taken as definitive and exhaustive. Anything which does not take account of these responses (like Shatov's demand that he should speak "like a human being") is immediately excluded. We are dealing here with an agent whose reliance on the discretionary nexus between self and world (expressible in the aforementioned "tone") is so great that he is unable to see 'need' as transcending immediate tastes and preferences, even in an instrumental way. Here also, there is no reflection whatsoever upon what others may need or like. Others merely function as spies and psychologists who creep uninvited into one's soul. There is not even the suspicion that others may possibly exist and interact independently of him and that there may even be some individuals who feel the way he does about the social world. What is most strongly implied by this is a solipsism, an undue and destructive emphasis upon the asocial, adimensional individual consciousness, which robs it of all potential to realise itself as an intelligible and articulated identity. The possibility of community is taken away, alongside the adequate articulation of a self or identity. Further explanation of Stavrogin is provided, though, and the ineluctability of his final exit, by way of a 'document' describing the time he spent in St. Petersburg and detailing his complicity in the suicide of a child, Matryosha.

At the point in the document when Stavrogin receives the news that Matryosha has hanged herself, he reflects that he was “bored with life, sick and tired to death of it” (2, p. 693). He passed this formless ennui on to Matryosha, the feeling of meaninglessness, which results in the taking of her own life. The suicide seems hardly to register at all. Indeed, Stavrogin says that, “I should have completely forgotten the incident ... if I had not kept remembering angrily what a coward I had been” (ibid.). Matryosha’s suicide (referred to in neutral terms only as “the incident”) merely reflects badly on his own vague sense of honour, in that his well-developed and practised ‘boredom’ does not lead immediately to his own suicide. Adequate response thus evades Stavrogin, but only to be channelled into behaviour which is more indirectly destructive of self and other:

“I vented my anger on anyone I could. It was at that time, but not for any particular reason, that I took it into my head to ruin my life somehow or other, but only in as disgusting a way as possible. A year earlier I had been thinking of shooting myself: however something better turned up ... . In our town I left behind me the idea that I was mad, an idea that still persists” (ibid., pp. 693-4).

Although Matryosha’s suicide provides a contextualisation for these remarks, it does not have the force of a motivating foundation - especially given Stavrogin’s perception of it as “the incident”. In other words, the above remarks appear pathological, arbitrary, in need of further explanation. He cannot give his actions any significance in terms of a non-voluntary influence, implying by “I took it into my head” that any subsequent decision is entirely a matter for the initiative of the self-sufficient and asocial individual. No one else has anything to contribute to the decision. Stavrogin explicitly does not say that, ‘Matryosha’s suicide put the idea into my head that I should ruin my life in some way. Why did I hold off for so long?’, since ‘put’ implies that the receiving agent is incomplete, unable to take some decisions on their own without the recognition of some involuntary, unpredictable influence. Stavrogin’s own self-conception cannot have that he is a ‘receiving agent’, that he has ideas ‘put into’ his head by another. Neither can he countenance the complimentary idea that he ‘has room for’ something to be ‘put into’. To do so would be to recognise that self and world interpenetrate, that they are not mutually exclusive realms. This is compounded in Stavrogin’s denial that there is “any particular reason” why he should “ruin” his life. If there is “no particular reason” for the ‘why’ of subsequent action, then the emphasis is placed upon individual preference or whim, upon a ‘need’ which is independent of social facts.

Stavrogin's confession represents "an undisguised, terrible need for retribution, the need for the cross, for a public execution (and) the existence of a new and unpardonable challenge to society" (ibid., pp. 681-2). No conditioning explanation for or analysis of this need is provided. Attention is given only to what the character's words "represent" on a literal, denotative and isomorphic level. That the need exists is undeniable, as are the suffering and rejection of the world which underpin it. But why choose this route? Why is "the need for the cross" inescapable? Why can't Stavrogin conceive of another way? In what sense is 'another way' impossible for him? We can treat these questions as revolving around Stavrogin's own sense of himself and the ascriptions which others make in reference to him.

We have seen that the wholly representative figure of Peter Verkhovensky regards Stavrogin as "a sort of sun" and that the latter endorses this characterisation. In other words, he is taken to belong not to the explicable, limited and incomplete human matrix of social exchange and relationship, but to an entirely different order of being: one without which life could no longer carry on and in relation to which others are insignificant insects and worms. Stavrogin's 'identity' is ungraspable. He refuses to speak "like a human being". He never says, 'I am a Russian' or 'I am a rationalist free-thinker'. He remains, to the end, "a sort of sun" - not really knowing 'who he is'. Instead, he refuses to acknowledge the importance of saying anything definite about himself, beyond that he wants to ruin his life. As "a sort of sun" he both stands above and lacks the capacity to engage with the world. His solipsism seals him up within this definition. However, the Father Archimandrite is not content simply to regard Stavrogin's confession as a 'need' for suffering as an end in itself, but as this 'need' is provided for by Stavrogin's own resistance to understanding. The most 'social' thing he can think of to do with himself is to submit to a public execution.

Tikhon says that, with reference to Stavrogin's "need for the cross", "'You're not prepared, not hardened ... . You're uprooted, you do not believe'" (ibid., p. 702). The key term here is "uprooted". In what follows, the focus of "uprooted" homes in on the value of the non-voluntary elements in a given life which, if absent or otherwise uncultivated, exact a price of mutilation both upon the social and upon its individual inhabitants. These elements here take the form of a stylisation of physical absence or dissociation and one's relationship to a given language as an expressive 'root' which anchors us in the social and guards against dissociation. The 'uprootedness', in turn, can be perceived

as wholly modern. That is, wholly in tune with the obliteration of the old forms of belonging and of membership. We have already seen a sort of 'uprootedness' at work in the biography we wrote of Sade. Stavrogin puts the sense of dislocation involved in this into a more clearly defined social focus.

First and most simply, Stavrogin's uprootedness is a physical one, signalled by his nomadic indigence. Significant by its absence is any information about his "given webs of birth and history" (10, p. 37) which may bind him, however reluctantly, to a certain society wherein he can lay claim to membership instead of merely to a gentlemanly facade of "tone" and a feeling of social superiority. Instead, Stavrogin lives most of his adult life abroad or in a large, impersonal, modern city among strangers who are similarly "uprooted". This forms the background for the second and most important revelation and completion of his uprootedness: his relation to his native language.

The narrator tells us that there are grammatical and stylistic "irregularities" (2, p. 681) in Stavrogin's written and spoken language. It is as if he is using an incompletely assimilated instrument of communication rather than being completely 'at home' within its structures. This relates to Stavrogin's statement that "everything is as foreign to me (in Russia) as anywhere else" (ibid., p. 666). What is implied by this is that, through the sharing of a common language, we can come up with a "picture of society as a nation, drawn together by similar expressive roots (which) define our common human potentiality" (10, p. 106). His uprootedness is a lack of expressivity, therefore of potentiality. It grounds his more substantive resistance to the social (that which is "drawn together") as a medium of explanation and source of 'expressivity'. The prime mover of all this is a language that is shared or held in common. So it goes, community is impossible without a medium of explanation.

Like Shatov, Tikhon speaks to Stavrogin "like a human being" or as an equal instead of as an awe-inspired follower. He tries, like Shatov, to 'creep into' Stavrogin's soul and although it appears that Tikhon is 'invited' to do so (since why has Stavrogin gone to visit him in the first place?), this only goes so far and no further. Stavrogin ends the interview angrily and abruptly, calling Tikhon a "damned psychologist" (2, p. 704). He leaves, to complete the course of his mapped-out self destruction.

Stavrogin as a totality is both anachronism and vanguard, the personification of the fight between the old and the new forms. It is to his cost, not that he decides on one or the other, on following Shatov's advice or on going with Verkhovensky, which would show a rudimentary integration of self and world, but that he refuses to get involved either way. The results of a world thus left to itself, with no 'self' to populate it, are chaos, murder, the defeat of the social and of the potential for community.

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## **Chapter Four:**

### **The Return to the Spontaneous Life.**

“In Basel, the church floats in the moon  
and the trees whiten. There is no casino.  
I met him once again with his new wife,

looking at Holbein’s coffined Christ,  
that decomposing body, green and blue,  
the swollen limbs like ripened gooseberries.

He turned, and though he did not recognise  
my face, answered my greeting so:  
‘I shall burn everything I once worshipped.’”  
(Elaine Feinstein, from ‘Fyodor: Three Lyrics’, ‘Daylight’)

Once we have considered Stavrogin's story, as one which portrays the very real dangers of modernity alongside its all-too-hidden formal possibilities, we are left with a question: can Dostoevsky extricate himself from the nightmare he has created? That is, can he identify a process by which the "new forms still in hiding" can emerge? And, if he can do this, can he give us an example of 'sharing' which is tantamount to expressing a morally-ordered and legitimate community? The scope and movement of these questions is perhaps too ambitious in relation to the work in question, but it can be said that he does provide a contrast to Stavrogin's nihilism. Dostoevsky's ambitions at this stage are more modest, then. As we have said, the focus is predominantly negative. No legitimate and enforceable moral order is envisaged. The only communal vision is provided by Peter Verkhovensky, in his remarks on "one or two generations of vice" and "complete obedience". The 'contrast' provided to this is to be found in Dostoevsky's portrayal of Stepan Verkhovensky. We now move away from the sadeian actor towards a more sophisticated version of agency and the social. What is remarkable is that this is envisaged in the nightmare context of 'The Devils'. In a letter to his friend A. N. Maykov, dating from the first two weeks of March 1871, Dostoevsky says of the character that

"his story is closely linked with the other (main) happenings in the novel and so I have taken him as the corner stone of the whole. (His) benefit will come in the fourth part; the culmination of his destiny, extremely original, will be in that" (1, p. 196)

The 'self' that emerges, how it develops in relation to the social, is ultimately more in tune with 'community' per se. In this, the elder Verkhovensky proves himself to be Stavrogin's superior. That is, he starts with an advantage over Stavrogin, who essentially has no 'self' to speak of. Dostoevsky

identifies the advantage as centring around “destiny” - an end that is inscribed within the beginning or a ‘bringing-out’ of what is ‘already there’. Stavrogin has no “destiny” in this sense. He moves around in ever-decreasing circles and can do nothing else. Stepan Verkhovensky, unlike Stavrogin, moves away from a self-sealing individualism towards an integration of self and world impossible for the younger man. The paradox here is that the ‘self-sealing’ is, at least in part, overcome by an assertion of individuality or a recognition of self as different from the discretionary social world. In this chapter we will chart this movement, noting first the ‘advantage’ Verkhovensky has over Stavrogin in learning to “speak like a human being” and then going on to consider the factors that influence it, which are largely external and non-voluntary. Verkhovensky represents the sort of non-sadeian agent who:

“returns to the mass, to the spontaneous life, consequently to the natural state, but how? Not forcibly, but on the contrary, in the highest degree wilfully and consciously. It is clear that this higher wilfulness is at the same time a higher renunciation of one’s will. My will is in not having a will because the ideal is beautiful” ( 2, p. 96).

Dostoevsky qualifies this apparent allegiance to uninfluenced individual decision by subsequently showing us how the ‘non-voluntary’ and the ‘voluntary’ interact and interpenetrate. Emphasis is placed neither upon an atomistic “will” nor upon entirely extrinsic and broadly causal determinants. Instead a gesture is made towards some kind of synthesis, to a third alternative which participates in the givens of impersonal (spontaneous) forces and the more vulnerable, individualistic elements of response, decision and action. In other words, we can hereby “imagine cultural character as produced by decisiveness towards the most indecisive features of the collectivity” (3, p. 8). What is essential to the value of this vision is that it not be regarded merely as competence. Then it would be a causally-ordered series of achievements, a measurable and mechanical route that, by extension, any given agent could take - even Stavrogin. Indeed, purely on the level of ‘competence’ or instrumental efficacy, Verkhovensky ‘fails’: his “destiny” results in his death. Instead, the “ideal” he exemplifies is “beautiful”. That is, it falls outside of mechanical concerns. All of this can be analysed in four broad categories:

- 1) The movements in Verkhovensky’s self-conception contrasted with that of Stavrogin.
- 2) The ontological importance of a version of aesthetics in introducing the individual agent to a space of concerns wherein the ‘discrete social world’ is made redundant and shown to be inadequate.

- 3) The way in which an ideal of 'responsibility' is partially worked out.
- 4) The notions of renunciation, suffering and transcendence that are involved in and implied by the previous three categories.

Five major dramatic factors serve to point these categories out, centred around a gradual process of denudation, or a series of reversals which, so it goes, force Verkhovensky out of the detachment he has cultivated in the twenty years he has lived in Skvoreshniki as servant to Mrs. Stavrogin. In other words, the self-sealing compensations and securities which have habitually accrued to Verkhovensky are taken away thus:

- 1) His benefactress' demand that he marry for reasons of social expediency.
- 2) The public exposure by his son Peter of his privately expressed reaction to the demand.
- 3) The wider influence of the terrorist conspiracy led by his son.
- 4) The raid on his house by the local authorities.
- 5) The speech he makes at the climactic literary fete.

In the beginning, Verkhovensky lives a static existence and has done so for the past twenty years, as a dependent on the local aristocracy. As a representative of the old St. Petersburg liberal intelligentsia, left behind by recent developments in the metropolis and effectively 'out of time', his position as the book opens is one of a humiliating and absurd sycophancy to the "frivolous society" of Skvoreshniki. By the end, he has left the scene of his debasement -unlike Stavrogin - in a show of defiant independence which attests to a "return to the mass, to the spontaneous life". How this is achieved, and also its value in the sense of 'integration' outlined above, will be the central theme of this chapter. We start with the progress of Verkhovensky's self-conception - which, in itself, attests to an openness to influence on the part of an individual remarkable by its absence elsewhere in the book.

We first meet a Stepan Verkhovensky who:

"was very fond of his position as a 'marked man' or, as it were, an 'exile'. There is a sort of classical splendour about those two words that fascinated him and, raising him gradually in his own estimation in the course of years, finally led him to imagine himself as standing on a high pedestal, a position that was very gratifying to his vanity" (4, p. 21)

We need first to make note of the oddness of the juxtaposition of “fond of” and “position” connected with “marked man” and “exile”. In general terms, “marked man” and “exile” are proscriptive and oppressive. They denote a severity of exclusion which is official, punitive. This would influence a feeling of victimisation, of being suppressed. The marked man or the exile is an untouchable, a pariah tyrannically excluded from the precincts of society, of contact with the familiar world. In order to recognise his ‘position’ adequately, we may say, Verkhovensky would have to hate it, not feel “fond” of it. How can we style such a fondness, such a feeling of comfort?

On the simplest of levels, we can say that Verkhovensky has lost contact with what “marked man” and “exile” actually mean, in the course of his twenty-year tenure as retainer to the Stavrogin family. This is concretised by the use of “as it were”, which can be translated into ‘a better way of putting it’ or ‘to coin a phrase’. It implies that “marked man” and “exile” primarily function as self-dramatisations rather than self-definitions. This is amplified by the use of “classical splendour”, which tends to treat “marked man” and “exile” as decorative poetic phrases rather than as signs of an oppressive sanction. It can be treated as a strategy of distancing from a predicament that would otherwise be insupportable. His “position” as a “marked man” and “exile” does not raise him in the estimation of others (in fact he seems rather absurd), only in “his own”. Paradoxically, though, his insistence upon “classical splendour” isolates him from the social just as effectively as if he possesses a true, illusion-free perception of what “marked man” and “exile” actually mean. Even after all this has been said, though, there exists a deeper level of interpretation surrounding the precincts of Verkhovensky’s self-obsession. This marks him out as the definite possessor of a social role and as being an agent who is open to the influence of the social, whose vain self-conception is - unlike Stavrogin’s “sort of sun” - vulnerable to reversal and development. This is evident in the movement from “classical splendour” to “imagine himself on a high pedestal”.

“Pedestal” - like “a sort of sun” - obviously has the connotation of superiority and of exclusive possession. One is ‘above’ everyone else and also the notion of a ‘shared pedestal’ is at the very least an uneasy one. The image - also like “a sort of sun” - signifies isolation, stasis, a removal from more ‘ground level’ concerns which may involve one in some sort of shared activity. Once on the pedestal, there is little Verkhovensky can do in the way of movement or progression. He would, though, appear

to be completely protected from intrusion from without or doubt from within. He has only two realistic opportunities: either to stay on the pedestal voluntarily or be involuntarily toppled from it. It is highly unlikely that he will relinquish his position voluntarily, it being flattering to his vanity. Unlike Stavrogin, though, he runs the risk of being toppled from his egotistical position. Stavrogin's self-conception is an inflexible one, seen through the medium of an inflexible "tone" which is encouraged instead of derided, and is confirmed by the treatment he receives from others. We have seen that he provokes awe or outrage, neither one of which is a particularly articulate response. Consequently, he resists explanation. With Verkhovensky, it is quite other. We can get to this through an examination of the grammar of "pedestal" and also, more substantively, through the way in which he is conceived of by others. No one else imagines Verkhovensky as standing on a high pedestal. He can be toppled, losing his position as he loses the recognition of it. Stavrogin loses his own position of leader but he retains a leader's self-perception in the "tone" he amasses. Verkhovensky puts himself at risk in his self-visualisation, with catastrophic but productive results.

Verkhovensky absents himself from human relatedness, but he does it in a recognisably human, ignoble way. His heroic posture is ascribed to a gratification of vanity, not (as it would be with reference to Stavrogin) to "something mysterious". At first, this would seem to make him Stavrogin's inferior. His is, after all, a definitely less competent attempt to make himself look important. Verkhovensky is transparent to us, all-too-human: boastful, trivial and conceited. But it is precisely because of this that Stavrogin suffers by comparison. Verkhovensky is seen from the beginning as human, limited, therefore social - attracted to definite roles and positions, even if these roles are either absurd or negative. In this he does not occupy the same space as that which is inhabited by Stavrogin - who, as "a sort of sun", resists all attempts at explanation. On the contrary, his motives and impulses are transparent, easily identifiable. The "pedestal" on which Verkhovensky imagines himself as standing is manifestly the work of human hands and thereby has an obsolescence built in to its very foundations. "Sun" on the other hand is a natural condition, standing above all notion of 'work' and consequent revocability, without which life could not continue. Verkhovensky does not elicit anything like the feeling of mystery apparent in the responses to his benefactress' son. That he is vain humanises Verkhovensky in a way that Stavrogin cannot be humanised. That is, the older man stands on precarious ground.

At this stage, though, the reversible character of Verkhovensky's "vanity" cannot guarantee anything, neither a final catastrophe nor a purposive ascent. What is required is an outside influence. For a consideration of this, we must as a first step mention the relevant dramatic details of the novel itself, which refer us back to the five major 'reversals' already specified. These reversals, moving from the beginning to the end of the book, hinge upon assaults on Verkhovensky's inflated sense of self-worth. He starts the book "standing on a high pedestal" and ends by seeing himself as "a broken-down and shivering old man" (ibid., p. 535), in sharp contrast to his previously ascribed "vanity".

We have already seen that "standing on a high pedestal" amounts to saying that, 'Here is someone who has risen above the common mass of humanity, by virtue of the sole possession of enviable attributes recognisable by only a select few'. On the other hand, "Here is a broken-down and shivering old man" can be amplified by, 'Here is someone who definitely recognises that he belongs to the common mass of humanity by virtue of nothing else but a statement of verifiable fact which is recognisable by the most casual observer'.

Verkhovensky does not say that 'I am broken-down and shivering'. He puts himself in the third person: "Here is (an) old man" and thus sees himself as part of the mass or as implying that there are other old men who are similarly broken-down. However, the description we find here goes further than the literal implication, in the fact that Verkhovensky thus renounces the pretensions and the 'separated' character of "standing on a high pedestal" in a way that Stavrogin cannot do with "a sort of sun" since his 'self' depends upon an insistence of "gentlemanly tone" and on nothing more substantial. At least Verkhovensky has "exile" to rely on, even in his most deluded moments. But even when so deluded, Verkhovensky's prior self-conception introduces an idea of communal character. "Marked man" and "exile" refer to a trace of this character, in that there are presumably other individuals in the same position as Verkhovensky. This is, however, repudiated through the vain or exclusive medium of "classical splendour" and the sense of sole possession obtainable from the grammar of "pedestal". In distinction, there is no similar amortisation of "old man" and any risk of possessive individuation is comparably minimal. For instance, the application of "classical splendour" to "old man" is at best incongruous. As the use of "old man" frees itself from the vain constraints of the pedestal, it shades

into a statement which is factual but not value-free. That is, it is something to which everyone can assent. The contrast with the subjectivity and delusion involved in an individualistic distancing from authoritarian prescriptions and taxonomies of agency is sharply realised. In the prior case, Verkhovensky's heroic posture is only seriously entertained by and for himself. In saying, "Here is a broken-down and shivering old man", he abandons the pretence of superiority.

We see here, then, a radical movement in self-conception which is unique in the novel and which reveals and completes the agent's openness to the social. We need now to examine the kind of influences exerted on the individual by the society in question, in proceeding towards a version of moral agency that is dependent neither upon a simple authoritarianism nor upon an unrealistic and self-defeating conception of individual freedom that doesn't enslave itself to a sadistic understanding of social life. This involves examining the relationship between the choice Verkhovensky makes in moving from the "pedestal" to "old man" and the uncontrolled, external, precipitating factors influencing choice and hence an agency that is properly principled, properly ordered and moral.

The first thing that comes to the attention in the course of the book is that Verkhovensky's vanity and self-delusion persist almost across its entirety, from the portrait given of him in the introduction to the raid conducted on his house by the local authorities. The break with this self-deception and the beginnings of what can be termed the "old man" phase are only arrived at prior to the speech he delivers to the literary fete organised by the Governor's wife, Julia von Lembke. The movement, however, is not a sudden one.

There is the demand made by Mrs. Stavrogin that he marry one of her other minions. He is expected to comply without complaint. This unlooked-for humiliation forces an adverse though privately-expressed reaction from Verkhovensky. He is said to find it "tyrannical" (5, p.117). In other words he doesn't just meekly give in, although the species of his resistance is ineffective. It serves here, rather, to point out the difference between his self-conception and of the way he is perceived by those who are his social superiors. The conflict comes out in the open when his reaction is publicly exposed by his son, Peter, in another unpredictable outburst at a formal social occasion. His social position in the discrete precincts of the provincial drawing room, hitherto peripheral, is made completely unsustainable. Like Stavrogin, he is rejected. His benefactress says "leave us at once and don't darken

my door again” (ibid., p. 209). It is the first of a series of reversals that move the specifically instantiated agent forward from a reliance upon discrete and imposed conventions towards a retrieval or return to the moral and communal sources which have hitherto been abandoned. The sadeian alternative to convention (that is, to convention of a specifically discrete kind) does not arise. This is subtly signalled in the oddly general remarks made surrounding Verkhovensky’s response to his initial exclusion:

“a real genuine grief is sometimes capable of transforming even a phenomenally irresponsible person into a resolute and determined one, for a short time, at all events ... genuine grief sometimes even turns fools into wise men, also for a time, of course ... . And if so, what might not happen with a man like Stepan Verkhovensky? A revolution, in fact - also for a time, of course” (ibid.)

To the sadeian actor exclusion from the discrete social world, when publicly realised, provokes a nihilistic refusal to recognise any value at all. The actor would be excluded from ‘the social’ per se, but there are definite compensations. There is the freedom from rules and constraints, for example, allowing the understanding that the sadeian possesses to find expression in acts of defiant and self-annihilating abuse. Grief is not an option. It is a sign of weakness to be violently suppressed. Nothing in the social is worthy of such a response. So it goes, one’s exclusion finally exposes the worthlessness of social rule and order as such from the already weakened starting point of the discretionary-conventional. One is thereby free to indulge in as violent a way as possible. This is, to all intents and purposes, the route taken by Stavrogin. On the other hand, Verkhovensky grieves. That is he feels his exclusion, even from the self-evidently frivolous and etiquette-led social scene, as a reason for mourning. A “real genuine grief” thus underlines the importance of the social as the scene of sharing, as the scene of lost potential. Initially, this signals an alternative to the sadeian way of perceiving things. For now, though, the above passage merely sketches the outlines of this alternative in its simple translation of exclusion into grief. It also contains serious doubts as to the taxonomic value of such a response. The key phrase in the above passage, for the present purpose, is the repeated and deflationary one of “also for a time, of course”.

The real genuine grief that is felt is not enough to sustain a “revolution” or a total change. Its effects are felt “for a time”. That is they are essentially transient. In general terms, grief per se is ‘recoverable-from’ after a time and is therefore insufficient to precipitate a long-lasting and radical change. But what is interesting here is the stylisation of grief itself and the extrinsic forces that have influenced its appearance in the predominantly static and suffocatingly mannered social world. In other words, we should not conclude from the grammar of “for a time, of course” that ‘extrinsic force’ qua extrinsic force is taken as having no value. Indeed, external involuntary forces are allocated a vital role. In this role, though, they are not cast as ‘causes’. Neither is Verkhovensky’s response predicated on the event of his exclusion itself. The “return to the mass”, Dostoevsky realises, cannot be formulated on the basis of causation however rooted this causation may be in real and genuine emotions. It is not a coerced and mechanical reaction to demand. More deeply than the sense of ‘transience’ already noted, this is what is interesting about the grammar of “also for a time, of course”. The sadeian’s route is set and fixed from the outset. It seems in this case that we are dealing with an entirely different order of being, one whose responses are not coerced or caused but one whose responses rely on something other than the discretionary-conventional, on something other than those exhibited by Stavrogin and his kind. How can we make this intelligible, especially given the otherwise dominant portrayal of the kind of agency represented in its most extreme form by Stavrogin?

We can make a fairly large claim here and say that the “return to the mass” has to be based on a prior and constant orientation to do with what constitutes a “valid and binding order” (5, p. 113) or “about that which (Verkhovensky is) in a position to speak well” (ibid.). This is alluded to in Verkhovensky’s “artistic feeling, (the) feeling for higher things” (4, p. 104) and is concretised in the speech he makes in front of the audience at the literary fete. For now, though, we need to take a step back from the emphasis on this claim and try to establish the tangible foundations of the ‘prior orientation’. This means examining the gradual denudation of Verkhovensky’s hitherto jealously guarded and precious social role.

Mistakenly thinking that he is a prominent activist in a terrorist conspiracy, the local Governor’s henchmen raid Verkhovensky’s house. They do not put him into custody. Instead, they are content with searching for evidence of radical tendencies and end the raid by confiscating his books and

papers. We are reminded here of a similar raid conducted upon Nicholas Masses office by Sade's enemies, resulting in life imprisonment for the author. The precise relationship between authority and the persecuted, one that admits to intrusion and imposition, would seem to have changed only slightly. But Verkhovensky's initial response to an unjust totalitarian action is an odd one, especially when viewed from a sadeian perspective. It takes us back to the narcissistic self-regard noticed at the beginning of the book:

"I (the narrator is speaking) simply got angry. He pulled a face and was evidently hurt - not because I had shouted at him, but because I had suggested that he might not be arrested" (4, p. 428).

The disappointment that is ascribed here seems odd when taken by itself. Isn't 'not being arrested' reason for relief rather than "hurt"? However, when seen alongside the passage previously quoted, concerning Verkhovensky's "vain" attitude towards the "classical splendour" of his "position" as a "marked man" or "exile", the 'disappointment' is put into an explanatory context: Arrest would finally serve to confirm his inflated sense of self importance and would reinforce the vain martyrdom and separation from community of "standing on a high pedestal". Verkhovensky would be actually thankful for being taken from community. His position, or sense of exclusivity, would be confirmed. Any other suggestion hurts him. In not being arrested, he suffers a disturbance of vanity. The Verkhovensky we see at the start of the book seems to be the same one we are presented with here.

What is not immediately noticeable, however, is that there is one crucial difference: he is given the opportunity and is willing to pay for his convictions with arrest and imprisonment, with actual physical consequences. Far from being afraid of the consequences of exposure, as he was previously in Mrs. Stavrogin's drawing room, he now welcomes it. That he regards these consequences as opportunities rather than risks is important. The notice given is that there is something else going on than just the fascinated contemplation of the words "marked man" and "exile". His classically splendid stylisation is breaking down. There is more to Verkhovensky than the assumption of the role of victimised and defeated minion. In short, his willingness to go to prison for his suspected beliefs signifies that these beliefs matter to him intensely. More, that is, than if he were merely "vain". If he really was "a stylist and nothing else", lacking principled commitment, then he would most probably abandon any style (or 'decoration') if it calls for payment in terms of not being able to indulge in a style (or 'pose') at all.

Also, we can say that it is the very 'willingness' to 'pay for his convictions' that is of greater significance, not the raid qua 'causal factor' - not the failure to be arrested. Competence is not the issue. The raid merely externalises the meanings of "marked man" and "exile" over which Verkhovensky has spent two decades in isolated contemplation. In this, the raid is important not qua 'external force' alone, but in reference to the commitment that it demands from him. That he assents to the demand attests to the basis of the said 'commitment' itself.

At this stage we can tentatively hypothesise that the claim being made by Dostoevsky is that the predicates of 'community' are not grouped around revelatory experience but on a better understanding of the relationship between prior convictions and present predicaments. Community for Dostoevsky does not start simply with a violent shock, whereas for Sade true interconnectedness consisted of nothing but such shocks. Individuals are not forced out of a loosely-aggregated complacency towards a revelatory understanding of what 'community' means and 'what it can do' for them. Instead, it is determinedly non-mechanical. We have seen that Dostoevsky relates a "return" or a retrieval of the spontaneous life to an "ideal" which is "beautiful" despite the fact that its exemplars are sometimes only all-too-human:

"If he was always ready to satirise and to parody the fatuity of Romantic attitudes (like those of Verkhovensky) or their use as a screen for egoistic impulses ("standing on a high pedestal"), he would nevertheless always continue to believe in the importance of maintaining the capacity to be stirred by the imaginative and the ideal" (6, p. 347)

This "capacity to be stirred" is close to what Charles Taylor calls "our sense of the creative imagination as a power of epiphany and transfiguration" (7, p. 454). This is not all however. The "sense of the creative imagination", as it is exemplified by Verkhovensky in contrast to the character of the famous writer Karamazinov, exists alongside and is simultaneous with the evolution of "a principle of belonging or obligation, that is a principle which states our obligation as men to belong to or to sustain society, or a society of a certain type, or to obey authority, or authority of a certain type" (8, p. 188). "Classical splendour", although it does not escape the associable charges of decorative fatuity and distanciation from the social, nevertheless carries within it an ideal which is antagonistic to the discrete social world and is superior to it.

We see both the “fatuity” and the “capacity to be stirred” in an exchange between Verkhovensky and Mrs. Stavrogin. The latter sees only the futility and wastefulness of her retainer’s lifestyle as it has become habituated over the past decades. That is, the complete lack of competence that is displayed, the lack of any measurable achievement. However, it does not begin and end with a simple condemnation. As in reference to her son, Mrs. Stavrogin’s social perceptiveness is apparent behind the remarks she makes:

“Same as ever - friends, drinking, the club and cards, and the reputation of an atheist. I don’t like that reputation of yours, Mr. Verkhovensky. I wish they wouldn’t call you an atheist ... I didn’t like it before, for its just empty talk and nothing more” (4, p. 73)

To which Verkhovensky replies:

“... let us suppose that I do make a mistake, but I still possess my human, eternal, supreme right of freedom of conscience, don’t I? I have the right to refuse to be a bigot and a religious fanatic if I want to” (ibid.)

Verkhovensky’s “right of freedom of conscience” is not expressed in any active manner. He wastes his time in “empty talk”, being preoccupied with the habitual recourse to “friends, the club, drinking and cards”. The “right to refuse” which he places so much importance on is read in this instance as nothing more than the socially uncomfortable “reputation of an atheist”. The discrete world would prefer its atheists without the public label. It would seem, then, that Verkhovensky’s “right of freedom of conscience” is fatally undermined, that nothing more remains of this but a faint reputation for atheism and empty talk. That the “right to refuse” is, moreover, based on a preference (“if I want to”), not on principle. Alongside this treatment, though, there is a variant reading.

Behind the substantive force of Mrs. Stavrogin’s remarks to Verkhovensky there is the implication that there is something of value that is being wasted and abused as well as “time”. The possibility of another more generous treatment of the passage is also embedded in Verkhovensky’s response with the use of “human, eternal, supreme”: there exists an invariant ontological core that is identifiably human (limited, fallible) but also eternal, supreme. This is relatable outwards. His “freedom of conscience” is “human, eternal, supreme”. That is, common to all, constant and hegemonic. There is

an aspiration to universality: that such an 'invariant core' of conscience-based principle is possessed by humans by virtue of them being human, of speaking "like a human being". Verkhovensky's Trinity, as well as meaning 'a refusal to accept what goes against my conscience' also signifies 'a capacity to affirm in concrete ways those principles which accord with my conscience'.

In spite of the fact that all his time is wasted in talk, that the "human, eternal, supreme" does not influence action, Verkhovensky can be said to be "one who orients to the model's orientation as opposed to the model's properties" (5, p. 12). Therefore the potential for a valid and binding order, strongly indicated by the orientation towards the "human, eternal, supreme", is made at least realisable. It remains a problem, though, that the ontological significance of this is severely limited by the distinct lack of a definite object to which it can anchor itself, or a series of concrete issues and causes within which a principled orientation of this kind can be expressed and through which it can be developed. We are still talking in terms of potentia. What is needed first of all is a "method of caring" (3, p. 31) for the standard to become accessible to us.

To rewrite what we said earlier, this method of caring is first approached in the contemplation of the "classical splendour" of the words "marked man" and "exile". The fact that this contemplation is indicative of vanity and leads to self-separation need not in turn lead us to condemn "classical splendour" or the contemplation of "marked man" and "exile" in themselves. In other words, we interpret Verkhovensky's vanity as a risk and not as an inevitable result. Indeed, the exile's case itself is not unequivocally vain and subjective. Although egotistically revealed, the implied acquaintance with "classical" standards also allows Verkhovensky access to Taylor's "set of ends or demands which not only have unique importance, but also override and allow (one) to judge others" (7, p. 63). Standing on a high pedestal can be read as a method by which an impersonal standard is arrived at as well as how an aspiration to be separate from community is based on vanity.

Verkhovensky recognises that, whatever his failures, he is convinced that something 'human is worth living up to, has the force of a recommendation not just for himself but for others as well. This becomes more explicit when he says of his son that he has "no artistic feeling ... no feeling for higher

things, for something fundamental, no germ of any future great idea" (4, p. 104). This is again a propadeutic, but it is worth noting both the implication of the statement and the move the speaker makes from "feeling" to "idea" and from "artistic" to "higher things" and "fundamental". It is put into deeper focus if we triangulate the 'implication' and the 'movement' with the portrayal of the fashionable writer Karamazinov. It is said of him that "his connections with high society and persons of great consequence were almost dearer to him than his own soul" (ibid., p. 97).

First, the implication of Verkhovensky's statement is that he himself possesses the "artistic feeling", the "feeling for higher things". He is, moreover, able to see beyond his own "vanity" and also speaks about what is important to him in a more reflective and self-realised sense. That is, the "artistic feeling" is beginning to be fleshed out as "the germ of (a) future great idea" in terms of what opposes it. On the more extreme level, the opposition is located in terrorist violence. On the lesser, but no less decisive level it shows itself in Karamazinov's shallow instrumental artifice. The "human, eternal, supreme" is either denied completely or is placed beneath one's "connections with high society". Both Karamazinov and Peter Verkhovensky belong to the frivolous society. The difference between them is one of degree. That is, the different levels of discrete obedience they display when called upon to act or perform.

Progress is also made by the move from "feeling" to "idea" and from "artistic" to "higher things". The "artistic feeling" is able to provide us with a "future great idea" which transcends its origin in subjectivity. The vagueness of this would seem to be a problem, but it functions as a potential for commitment - the precise boundaries of which are not limited by any prior taxonomy. What is needed for this to emerge from "empty talk and nothing more" is an element of decisiveness, expressible via a demand that Verkhovensky show rather than state his reiterated allegiance to the "human, eternal, supreme" - a demand, moreover, that allows a fuller and more adequate expression of "the feeling for higher things". Fuller and more adequate, that is, than the defiance of the discretionary world represented in turn by Mrs. Stavrogin, Peter Verkhovensky and the writer Karamazinov.

The 'decisiveness' emerges in his developing relationship to the social that rejects and is rejected: in his friendship with Mrs. Stavrogin and his appearance at the literary fete where he makes a speech.

Parenthetically, that Verkhovensky's relationship to the social develops at all is a considerable mark of progress over an understanding that takes social rejection and the conventions which underpin it as proof of an essential inadequacy, an inadequacy that justifies an immersion in sadeian excess. Verkhovensky thus personifies a development over such an understanding and its more contemporaneous location in an idea of nihilism.

Under the influence of Peter Verkhovensky's very fashionable social opinions, Mrs. Stavrogin re-examines the relationship she has had with Verkhovensky senior. The value of this association, as we have seen previously, has been damaged by Verkhovensky's resistance to the demand that he marry. In a later exchange between the two it would appear that the 're-examination', in the sense of a rejection of prior friendship, is completed and that Verkhovensky is excluded from the social world he has become accustomed to. It is also worth noticing the differences in response to 'influence' that are apparent in their contrasted remarks. The essence of their exchange can be set down by quoting two passages at length. It is Mrs. Stavrogin who speaks first:

"People today talk rudely but plainly. And you would harp on our twenty years! Twenty years of mutual self-admiration and nothing more. Every letter you wrote to me was not written for me but for posterity. You're a stylist and not a friend. Friendship is merely a glorified expression. In reality it is nothing but a reciprocal outpouring of slops" (ibid., p. 341).

To which Verkhovensky responds:

"Yes, I have sponged on you; I speak the language of nihilism; but sponging has never been the guiding principle of my actions. It has just happened like that, of itself; I don't know how. I always thought that there was something higher than food between us and - I've never, never been a scoundrel." (ibid., p. 345).

Like Peter Verkhovensky's earlier sweeping and general indictment of religion, in that it "is necessary in order to brutalise the people" (ibid., p. 312), Mrs. Stavrogin challenges a whole scheme of value. In doing this she identifies herself with the "people today" who talk "rudely but plainly". She moves from general observation to personal accusation back to general observation. She seems to be completely given up to fashionably nihilistic modes of expression. However, the paradox of this is that she does it

in company with someone she affects to despise. She speaks honestly, as if to an equal. She would hardly talk like this to someone towards whom she felt nothing but contempt. She shares her opinion of and with Verkhovensky and speaks her mind, as she does to no-one else in the book. Not even to her son or to Peter Verkhovensky, whose influence is hereby put into perspective. The frankness of the exchange, although in no part affectionate, denotes instead of denies friendship. Hitherto, moreover, the label "friendship" really has been "glorified expression" - empty, devoid of content. Friendship disallows a relation of clientage as is apparent in the marriage demand and Verkhovensky's subsequent exclusion. There is a collapse of the discrete social distance that has hitherto separated them. In this, the otherwise catastrophic effect of nihilism has positive results if it issues in re-examination and not in simple, inarticulate dismissal. To put this another way, the artificiality and pompousness of their previous association has been stripped away. 'Nihilism' (which can be characterised as the ground or foundation of a sadistic understanding of the social) has but a cosmetic influence, in the ridding of "glorified expression". But it is a decisive one, in that prior stylisations of the social are exposed as masks of abuse. In their place there exists a nascent egalitarianism. Friendship as such is not undermined, then, only its prior interpretation in terms of discrete social demands. True nihilism, the nihilism of Peter Verkhovensky, which wants to overthrow value, is defeated. The discrete social world which dominates is turned inside out. But this only denotes an essential weakness in that same world, not an inherent strength and/or 'truth' of nihilism. This is to get ahead of ourselves, though. We can confine ourselves now to a consideration of Stepan Verkhovensky's response, as it recognises the truth of what Mrs. Stavrogin says and as it attempts to rise above that truth.

Unlike in previous exchanges with Mrs. Stavrogin, his response here can be counted as a genuine one and not as a speech that could have been made without reference to what the other has said. It has an urgency, a point-by-point engagement and forcefully other-directed language: "Yes, I have sponged on you (but) ..." It has a precedent in his previous resistance to the marriage demand, but this time it is more direct, more courageous, less dependent upon unlooked-for intervention.

First, then, Verkhovensky admits that he has "sponged" on Mrs. Stavrogin, accepting to a very limited extent the "reciprocal outpouring of slops" that such a parasitic relationship involves. Thus he owns up to a complicity ("I speak the language") with the nihilism that is an essential component of such a

characterisation. However, as he clearly realises, a 'complicity-with' does not necessarily also mean 'definable-by'. A "guiding principle", he insists, takes him beyond the parasitism of "sponging". He does not respond by saying, 'Well, so what?' as a sadeian actor would or as a Karamazinov would - one to whom "mutual self-admiration" is the only worthwhile aim in human relations. In other words, Verkhovensky is moving towards a formulation of agency that is dependent neither upon "food" nor upon the "language of nihilism", but one which can have the capacity to make intelligible qualitative distinctions between what counts as "sponging" and what amounts to a "guiding principle". He really seems to be saying that, 'There are principles (which are not preferences) guiding action which do not (in any reflective instant) participate in the same level of activity as do eating and economics'. To be sure, it could be levelled at this that it involves a violence of interpretation that cannot be sustained or justified. This anticipated criticism misses the point: that we are seeing a gradual 'tightening up' of Verkhovensky's allegiance to principles (and hence to practices that maintain and foster them) that more and more insistently demand a commitment in terms of an active response to what threatens them, not just simply an expression of "the right to refuse". This issues in an affirmation of the "guiding principle" he mentions, developed and extended in the speech he delivers at the literary fete. His clientage is ended, but he still has one more social obligation to fulfill. In this he makes his initial response to allegations of universal parasitism more general, more widely available.

Intended to celebrate the arrival of the new Provincial Governor (von Lembke), thereby to confirm and legitimate his authority and his wife Julia's social/cultural leadership, the literary fete brings together the opposed and disparate representatives of political power, nihilist conspiracy and cultural value. Verkhovensky has been commanded to compose and read a piece of his own work for the occasion. Instead of the anodyne "fine phrases" (ibid., p. 321) that are expected from him, he gives a highly controversial and divisive speech. But it is more than merely incongruous. It asserts and argues for the "guiding principle" he mentioned in his exchange with his former employer. Not only that, but it contains a generosity and an openness, a sense of forgiveness towards strangers and opponents, that previously has only been applied in an egoistic way. Mutual self-admiration is replaced by something more outward looking, something which courts opposition and hostility but which allows them as essential contexts for communication, sharing and hence community. The central passage is worth quoting at length:

“Ladies and gentlemen, my last word in this business is universal forgiveness. I, an old man who expects nothing more from life, I solemnly declare that the spirit of life still breathes in us, and that the younger generation has not yet lost its living strength. The enthusiasm of our modern youth is as bright and pure as it was in our time. Only one thing has happened: a shift of aims, the substitution of one beauty for another! The whole misunderstanding has arisen only around the question what is more beautiful: Shakespeare or a pair of boots, Raphael or petroleum.

“... I maintain that Shakespeare and Raphael are higher than the emancipation of the serfs, higher than nationalism, higher than socialism, higher than the younger generation, higher than chemistry, higher even than almost all humanity, for they are the fruit of all mankind and perhaps the highest fruition that can possibly exist. A form of beauty already attained, but for the attaining of which I would perhaps not consent to live ... I said the same thing from the platform in Petersburg, in exactly the same words, and they did not understand it in exactly the same way, they laughed and booed as now; you little men, what is it you lack still, that you don't understand?” (ibid., p. 483).

Much later, Verkhovensky completes the work of this passage by saying:

“(First) of all let us forgive all and always. Let us hope that we, too, shall be forgiven. Yes, because all, every one of us, have wronged one another. We are all guilty!” (ibid., p. 638).

The main body of the passage, as it moves from an attempt at appeasement to an assertive statement of personal belief, signposts a dominant concern of Dostoevsky's - one that was to become for him, in his last novel, the cornerstone of his whole way of thinking about community: forgiveness and the relationship this bears to guilt, responsibility and Grace-dispensing individual charisma. It is, ultimately, the way in which Dostoevsky moves a thinking about the foundations of community on from sadeian ideas of mutual predation. Its most evolved and sophisticated expression occurs in 'The Brothers Karamazov', ten years in the future from the time of writing 'The Devils'. For now, though, it would be worth noting that the seeds of its development are planted very definitely in what Stepan Verkhovensky says in his speech. That the attempt at negotiation and the establishment of a 'common ground' fails is also important, in that it ultimately points to another way forward, beyond negotiation and the idea of establishing a common mode of substantive sharing. It will suffice for now, though, to proceed with an analysis of what is actually being 'done' in the speech that Verkhovensky makes.

The exile introduces his remarks to a mutually hostile audience with a straightforward insistence upon "universal forgiveness". That is, he recommends a generosity of social and interactive interpretation: a manifesto of reasonability and reciprocal appeasement in order that a common, essentially conflict-free ground be established among those who, more or less violently, disagree about the foundations of what should constitute a common purpose. To this end he promotes, not a forgetting of difference or antagonism, but a sublimation. The way in which this "universal forgiveness" works is via recognition, by way of an agreement among those he addresses - and, by extension, the proselytisation of this agreement beyond the immediate boundaries of the literary fete - about "the spirit of life". This "spirit", true, is manifested in wildly divergent ways. As it is translated into "enthusiasm" and into arguments over qualitative distinctions - "what is higher" - it finds a locus in the conflict between "Shakespeare or a pair of boots, Raphael or petroleum". Wherever one stands on this question, Verkhovensky seems to be saying, one cannot avoid participating in a spirited enthusiasm about the question of 'qualitative distinctions', about the foundations of a common, collective purpose which is inscribed within the 'spirited' movement of these prior distinctions themselves. The difficulty lies in accepting the multiplicity of these distinctions, along with their oppositional character, both without viewing them as equally significant (Verkhovensky, for example, definitely comes down on one side of the ontological fence) and without a dichotomous perception in terms of absolutes of 'right/wrong'. That is, in terms of absolutes that preclude conversation. One cannot converse if one does not first of all forgive - either in the sense of 'forgiveness of error' or in the sense of 'forgiveness of opposition'. A further qualification of this is that it be truly mutual. That is, one has to recognise one's own guilt as a participant in prior antagonism. Verkhovensky's own way of doing forgiveness in this way is to prepare his audience for a final assertion of principle tempered with a series of open questions. He styles what may be termed a 'qualitative antagonism' (or "misunderstanding" as he generously puts it) as "a shift of aims, the substitution of one beauty for another". In other words, he both recognises the "beauty" or "enthusiasm" inherent in 'the pair of boots' attitude and he starts to forgive his increasingly shocked audience. This is not bought at the price of abandoning his own dearly-held Romantic convictions, though. He does not negotiate himself into a timidly neutral corner. He definitely comes out in favour of the 'Shakespeare and Raphael' position.

Forgiveness, thus, is not dealt out from a position of superiority but from a recognition of participation in the debates and concerns of the social. Indeed, Verkhovensky abandons the pretensions of the “pedestal”. He says, “I, an old man who expects nothing more from life”. In doing this, he assents that his own position is up for debate. He is, simply, open to conversation. That is, he does not present his own principles as immutable matters of natural fact, but as parts of an ongoing discussion. If forgiveness is added to the mix, the discussion (and its potentially fatal conflictual aspect) becomes conversation, the admission of influence, of one’s own limitedness and fallibility, of participation in the social, in interaction. It is as far as possible from a sadeian insistence upon ‘Nature’ and from Stavrogin’s “sort of sun” as can be possible at this juncture. It should be repeated, though, that Verkhovensky’s openness does not mean weakness, an abandonment of principle. Both of these contentions are underlined by the movement from the generality of his opening remarks to the assertiveness of his conclusions to the plea given to his audience at the end, a plea that is also a challenge.

But such a plea and such a challenge are beyond his audience. All they can see in his remarks is assault, impertinence, the calling-into-question of their opinions and static social attitudes. Indeed, the audience seems to ask itself the sadeian question, ‘What have we got to be forgiven for?’, absolving itself of guilt but retaining a sense of outrage at the presumptiveness of what it sees as preaching, as imposition. Verkhovensky ends his address to the literary fete as more of an outcast than he was before. But even in this aspect something interesting has occurred. By reacting to Verkhovensky in a violent way, the audience attests to the very “enthusiasm” about which their opponent speaks - an enthusiasm wholly lacking in the response it gives to Karamazinov’s “pretentious and useless chatter” (ibid., p. 475).

The implicit point is that even violence, even the nihilism of which it is a part, is preferable in communal terms to the mindless small talk of Karamazinov’s performance. Sade is preferable to stasis. But Dostoevsky does not begin and end with a presentation of these two alternatives. In any case, mutual antagonism triumphs to the cost of the society at large and to the cost of the attempts made at conversation. In this, as elsewhere, Dostoevsky’s own pessimism (or, rather, his too-keen awareness of the more intractable of modernity’s ontological and structural problems) takes over and the possibility

of “universal forgiveness” is, realistically, withdrawn - since its grounds or foundations, “the new forms still in hiding”, are closed off. Already it seems that Dostoevsky’s awareness of the conflicts and problems of modernity, as they extend the sadeian challenge from the narrowly conventional to the possibility of founding any common purpose at all, overwhelms his thought about community and the sharable. The individual case, though, is possible. But this case, as shall be seen, shows up problems with the use of ‘forgiveness’ as ‘sublimation’.

Abandoning the difficult ascent towards a qualitative/communal significance in a determinedly non-religious way, Dostoevsky makes Verkhovensky a pilgrim, a kenotic representative of the efficacy of suffering and transcendence. What has already been achieved, though, is of special significance. Although Dostoevsky cannot give us a concrete example of moral order and communal influence beyond the merely individualistic and/or negative, he does move us on from Sade.

In Verkhovensky’s speech he simultaneously introduces ideas of social participation and of responsibility. Growing out of this latter idea there is the first appearance of a tripartite ideal of renunciation, suffering and transcendence which has as its terminal point ‘The Brothers Karamazov’. For Sade, the man who “scorns the prejudices of simpletons”, this hardly intrudes upon the blind appetitive seeking after sensation. So it goes on this understanding, the opening to the social world is given and has to be sealed shut if life is to be self-realised and even bearable. That is, without claims being made upon us. For Dostoevsky, the selfsame ‘opening’ is a matter of work, of forgiveness, participation. The ‘claims’ that are made on us are thus essential for ‘life’ as such, for us to be able like Verkhovensky, to “speak like a human being”. Otherwise, one ends as Stavrogin does, confined within a cycle of destruction, not only of self but also of other and of world. All Sade has to offer us is a simple annihilation of the social, the simple and violent repudiation of responsibility with the result of depriving us of humanity, of anything but the purely predatory. Although this descent into the predatory is no longer the inevitable result of all attempts to reach towards a sense of what we share with others, it remains a definite risk ameliorated only by our latent social capacity to ‘forgive’. This seems overly tenuous, but the completion of the work that Verkhovensky’s speech does, signalled by the healing figure of ‘forgiveness’ allied to a vision of a humanity all-too-conscious of its own guilt (at being unforgiving, at being closed), takes us forward. This is concretised in the implicit distinction

made between blame and responsibility. The former is opinionated, discrete, unforgiving, decided. The latter involves a social centring of the self within a participatory context, allied to notions of principle and moral order which are voluntarily endorsed. Through participation, one opens and orders. One is able to forgive.

We can make a start on explaining both 'participation' and 'responsibility' via Marshall Berman's remark on "the art of putting ourselves in the picture, of recognising ourselves as participants and protagonists in the art and thought of our time" (9, p. 24). The application of this statement is deepened and extended if we interpret the phrase "thought of our time" in a negative as well as a positive way. With reference to 'The Devils', the "thought" emerges as nihilism. In turn, what comes out of this is that 'blame' would seem to preclude the recognition of ourselves as participants and protagonists in the less attractive aspects of art and thought. When one blames, one excludes oneself from the need to be forgiven. One becomes "the rational man who scorns the prejudices of simpletons". Others are 'to blame' for whatever troubles or offends us and we have no part to play. 'Responsibility', on the other hand, can be seen as the art of putting ourselves in the picture. This is especially so when the 'picture' (the social) includes elements that we would otherwise not wish to be associated with, still less complicit-in. Generally speaking, this comes out when Verkhovensky says that "we have all wronged one another". He thus exemplifies the participatory art or ability. Blame amounts to a refusal to recognise that we are all guilty, in isolation from "the thought of our time". In other words, blame involves "a projection of evil outward, a polarisation between self and world, where all the evil is seen to reside" (7, p. 451). Dostoevsky elucidates his alternative to polarisation, blame and isolation in three main ways.

The first treatment of the topic takes us back to the beginning of the book. There, Verkhovensky formulates the "human, eternal, supreme" as "the right to refuse" and has to do with the 'responsibility' social agents owe to their own convictions. This is weak, though, because this sense of 'responsibility' tends to deny a similar status to the means by which such convictions can be preserved via a notion of 'belonging'. Verkhovensky's initial conception "affirms the self-sufficiency of man alone or ... of the individual" (8, p. 189) in absentia from that which may possibly erode or augment it in any instance. In this sense, he is not really a "participant" in Berman's terms. He asserts his "right to

refuse” without assuming ‘responsibility’ for its substantive foundation. That is, his insistence is privatised, egocentric, closed. Indeed, the “right to refuse to be a bigot or a religious fanatic” could conceivably put him and the society to which he nominally belongs in actual danger. This is especially so when it comes to be retranslated in his son’s remark that “religion is necessary in order to brutalise the people”. At the top are those people who do the brutalising, who are free from the constraints that religion imposes. The son inherits his father’s convictions but takes them one stage further.

What most obviously frees Verkhovensky from the position of refusal, what allows him to recognise and act upon the demands put upon him by the “human, eternal, supreme”, is the ‘raid’ on his house. In the aftermath of this he is able to see himself as a “participant”, as a social agent upon whom ‘responsibility-for’ what is important to him is conferred and confirmed by the intrusion of authority and the threat of arrest and imprisonment. This not only means an affirmation and a commitment but it also leads to a sense of complicity in and responsibility for the forces and influences which threaten to destroy the society which has brought him closer to what the “human, eternal, supreme” mean. We can make this clearer through a further consideration of the ‘raid’. Verkhovensky is suspected or blamed by the authorities for the distribution of seditious literature among the work force of the local factory, a charge of which he is innocent. However, the fact of his innocence does not, as he formulates it, relieve him of responsibility. The “right to refuse” that he represents is also apparent in the nihilism of the conspiracy led by his son. The only real difference is that the conspirators are unanchored in any notion of the “human, eternal, supreme”. There is thus a sense of ‘connection’ between Verkhovensky and the more consistently mechanical representatives of the ‘new’ radicalism. His speech at the fete shows his recognition of this and it is further explored in the portrayal of his closest relationships, first with Mrs. Stavrogin and then with his son Peter. Ultimately, the species and extent of his responsibility for what occurs in the town under his son’s general direction is brought out in the connection that exists between him and the convict Fedka, whose criminal depredations counterpoint and exemplify the destructive aspects of the conspiracy.

Mrs. Stavrogin commands Verkhovensky to marry a maidservant of hers, Dasha Shatov. The primary inducement offered is a guarantee that large debts incurred in the mismanagement of his son’s estate will be payed off. Also, the command is personally motivated by Mrs. Stavrogin’s “desperate desire to

cover up the aristocratic misdeeds of her precious Nicholas by marriage to an honourable man” (4, p. 117). The scion of the great provincial house and the maidservant had an affair in Switzerland. The bridegroom required for the cover up cannot be of aristocratic lineage. It ideally has to be someone in the position of a dependent, like the maidservant herself. Someone who is also servile and respectable enough not to resist the arrangement. Essentially, this is how events proceed up until the arrival of Peter Verkhovensky. The latter reveals the contents of several letters his father sent him concerning the arrangement, effectively signalling the older man’s expulsion from his benefactress’ household with the remark that, “There is something here about some “sins in Switzerland”. I’m getting married, he writes, because of some sort of sins or because of another man’s sins” (ibid., p. 207). In other words, the blamable actions of another man directly lead to the demand that one who occupies a subordinate social position to the ‘sinner’ camouflage the “aristocratic misdeeds” through marriage. The translation is relatively unproblematic. Yet we want to say here that the relation to “another man’s sins” in this instance does not exactly mean ‘taking responsibility for another man’s sins’. It seems to involve a notion of ‘responsibility’ that is weak because it is mechanically enforced instead of internally authorised and chosen. It sees ‘responsibility’ as discernible in competence (or ability to “cover up aristocratic misdeeds”) which is “entailed by the use of rules (that one follows the commands of one’s social betters however “tyrannical” they may be) for identifying in enforceably intelligible ways the conventional sources (“aristocratic misdeeds”) of practices (marriage)” (5, p. 113, my insertions). This has no real room at all for a notion of ‘responsibility’ as offering “the possibility of principled speaking” (ibid., p. 114) - in other terms, of ‘commitment/orientation-to’ what is seen as one’s responsibility within a society composed of equal “participants and protagonists in the art and thought of (their) time”. It instead calls for unquestioning assent as the one sure route towards the authenticity of any given action: in being a ‘good servant’, which usage takes us back to the spurious foundation of ‘responsibility’ in ‘competence’. In addition to this interpretation, we appeared to be closer to a translation of “another man’s sins” above, in Mrs. Stavrogin’s “desperate desire to cover up”. This will hopefully clarify the notion of ‘responsibility’ and lead on to a deeper reading of the social realities of having to deal with the consequences of “another man’s sins”.

‘Responsibility’ qua responsibility, unlike “cover up”, seems to signify that the responsible agent fully chooses and accepts what s/he is ‘responsible for’ while being completely and reflectively aware of the

consequences of such choice and acceptance. "Cover up", on the other hand, is based around the avoidance of consequences and is merely the observation of a rule-governed formal requirement, the submission to which is based on instrumental and/or social class predicates. Extrapolating further from this, 'responsibility' (as not being a "cover up" or a disguise to avoid public disclosure of embarrassing fact) would seem to mean that one should publicly and openly affirm it both as it is a self-chosen burden and as the notion of 'responsibility' itself places the emphasis firmly upon the reflective capacity of the socially and "morally endowed actor (who ought to ) reauthorise convention through the agency of his decision to undertake or not" (ibid., p. 116). Apart from all this, the phrase "another man's sins" provides us with access to a deeper reading, with a more direct relevance to the whole notion of 'responsibility'. This arises in connection with Verkhovensky's relationship to his son.

During the father's twenty-year tenure as retainer to Mrs. Stavrogin, he has met his son only once, effectively abandoning him in St. Petersburg to the care of a distant relative. Unannounced, the son then arrives at the scene of his father's exile. He then proceeds to disrupt and destroy hitherto stable relationships and to organise a local group of terrorists, leading to murder, the attempted overthrow of civil authority and the fragmentation of provincial society. Peter Verkhovensky's "sins" are thus made manifest. In the sadeian universe, these "sins" are the exclusive property of the sinner. Apart from the process of moralistic labelling (the sole preserve of "simpletons") and away from the role either of fellow sinner or of preyed upon victim, other social agents have no part to play. Dostoevsky appears to want to say that this universe is too small to encompass what "sin" actually means. That is, what it tells us about our own responsibility for the morally repugnant actions of others and how this communicability leads outward to the transcendence of 'blame' in forgiveness. What makes the possibly ubiquitous concentration upon "sin" as humanity's constant feature bearable is forgiveness - a forgiveness predicated on the recognition of the social, of interconnectedness despite differences of condition and sensibility. This is considerably problematic. That is, how can we say that the father is 'responsible but not blamable' for his son's actions? We can make a start on this by treating Verkhovensky and his son as broadly representative figures of their respective generations.

That both Verkhovenskys can be treated as generational or representative figures is heightened and explicitly referred to by Dostoevsky when he says that 'The Devils' concerns "the inheritance of an

idea (“the right to refuse”) developing as it descends from the fathers (not a particular biological father) to the children (not one particular child)” (1, p. 203, my insertions). Given this framework, the sense of ‘responsibility’ is less a matter for the simple identification of exclusively private influence but is more to do with the risks involved in pledging an allegiance to the “right to refuse”, reread by each succeeding generation, and the intra/extra-generational complicity or “dependency upon interaction” that this carries within it. The sense of connection here is similar to the one that has already been established between Rousseau on the one hand and Sade on the other. Suppressed in all of this is the emergence of the notion that ‘responsibility’, unlike blame, has a community-wide application: that it can be distinguished from blame in that the latter refers in essence to particular groups (the conspirators) and to individuals (Peter Verkhovensky), whereas responsibility includes every social agent qua ‘social agent’ in what happens socially - not just with reference to incidents and events but also to orientations prior to those events. These are not the controllable possession of a group or individual but inhere in the relatedness existing between social agents qua those who exhibit a “dependency upon interaction”.

In essence, though, ‘The Devils’ is merely the beginning of Dostoevsky’s later and more mature thought on the subject of community, its grounds or foundations. At this stage, he was unable to think of the establishment of authentic sharing and reciprocity outside a model of destruction. In this, oddly enough, he resembles Sade. Sadeian predation (the wholly self-realized life) was only possible if conventional checks and balances were annihilated. So with Dostoevsky’s model, though it obviously has another end in view. Verkhovensky does not stay in Skvoreshniki to fight for his vision of forgiveness or to try to exert some influence. As can be seen from the reaction to his speech at the fete, this would have no discernible effect. He escapes the scene of his humiliation only to die. Violent extremity is required in order for him to feel the need for the healing figure of forgiveness. Though it only succeeds in healing him, the rest of the social world breaks apart. Only in total renunciation of this world (contradicting the move towards engagement signalled by the use of ‘forgiveness’), so it goes, can Verkhovensky even make the attempt to connect with something higher or other than that which he has previously experienced. By the time of ‘The Brothers Karamazov’ (1880-81), however, Dostoevsky’s thought had undergone a sea change. There is no comparable apocalypse in the later book and an approach to community is first made by the central character, Alyosha, becoming more

and more involved in the world he has previously abandoned. Whether Dostoevsky succeeds remains to be seen.

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## **Chapter Five:**

### **An Artistic Picture.**

“What were his sins, then, more than recklessness,  
disorder, and a young wife’s jewels pawned?  
I sometimes wonder if perhaps his genius

(so foreign to this sober, cobbled city  
piled above gorges where the black Rhine flows)  
had in the very sob of its own pity

another throb of cruelty and pleasure  
that made the writing shimmer. Well, I know  
I do more human good here as a doctor.”  
(Elaine Feinstein, from ‘Fyodor: Three Lyrics’, ‘Daylight’)

The dichotomy between 'self' and 'world' is still being practised at the end of 'The Devils', albeit in a way that is buried. There is in Stepan Verkhovensky's concluding experience no real "expectation of collective influence" (1, p. 19). By being presented to us as a wholly 'individual' experience it takes us back to the one who 'returns', who realises solely in himself the sources and practices of community. The end, his end, is in death - an inability to combine the moral and the true. This process ignores the developing and transitional medium of the social, of the anterior resources and orientations of 'community' itself, the capacity of the true to be moral and vice versa.

Influence or its expectation is contraindicated by the individuality and hence unique nature of the experience of 'return'. Instead of "making transparent the self-conception of the collective" (ibid.), Dostoevsky anchors the truly social in a paradigmatic experience, in a solitary act of Christian renunciation. This act inscribes within itself a transcendence. Although this is communicable, the question of collective influence is neither anticipated nor expected. Verkhovensky's assertion at the fete is not enough. Forgiveness, to elucidate on this point, can be 'given'; it can 'transmit' and even transform (the one who gives and transmits). But it does not seem to have any broadly pedagogic dimension. It cannot be 'taught' like mathematics or like the stages one must enumerate in a syllogistic argument. In short, it is much better than nihilism, than the nothing-ness sounded out in the discrete precincts of the provincial drawing room or literary fete. But despite its generosity, the experience of forgiveness remains defiantly one's own. It is solipsistic. In a more subtle and imponderable way, the dichotomy is evident in the work currently under discussion.

We are left, as was Dostoevsky, with a series of questions. The mounting complexity of these questions leads us forward into a region where the thought about community and the social transforms itself. This is where the value of the work we are about to consider lies.

The questions are as follows:

- 1) (How) does one move forward from forgiveness toward the expectation of collective influence?
- 2) Do the problems associable with the establishment of such a movement, and hence the beginnings of moral order and community, evolve alongside it?
- 3) Do the 'problems' overwhelm the 'movement'?
- 4) That is, does the consciousness of these questions mask a region of enquiry that remains more or less inaccessible (if one pays exclusive attention to their solution)?
- 5) Given these questions, and the 'inaccessibility' they may maintain, can one progress?
- 6) Although Christian commitments cannot be wholly abandoned (being part of what we inherit rather than what we will), do they need to be styled univocally?
- 7) Are there other voices available to us?

Dostoevsky himself seems to have been only too aware of at least the first three of these questions in the way in which his thought developed. To what extent his treatment of these questions remained at the stage of a tormented aspiration-towards rather than an achievement-of a vision of community will be the central focus of this chapter. For now, though, we can provide a simple treatment of the above questions with a view to structuring what will follow.

A less individualistic, less self-separating notion than 'forgiveness' emerges in Dostoevsky's later work, having as its basis a more sophisticated version of what we previously stylised as 'participation'. This notion is expressed through the idea of grace and is determinedly Christian in its application, though mediated through social contact. The vehicles of grace are human agents seen in engagement with the world and these vehicles have as their primary locomotive power a sense of love (altruism) which transforms the world as it reveals itself. One does the work of making a moral order out of the process of seeing, a process of seeing that is social, that participates in more of an engaged way in the thought of one's time than does 'forgiveness'. Grace cannot but be 'shared out', loosening discretionary attitudes in its movement as a principled choice. Because it is ready-at-hand it can be present-at-hand.

All one requires for this is to see it in operation. Seeing it in operation perpetuates its movement. This is far from being an easy or unproblematic process. In this respect, it is worth quoting Charles Taylor - one of Dostoevsky's most sympathetic interpreters - who expands at some length on the whole notion of grace and its place in the process of transforming an otherwise sadeian world into one wherein love circulates freely:

“What will transform us is an ability to love the world and ourselves, to see it as good in spite of the wrong. But this will only come to us if we can accept being part of it, and that means accepting responsibility. ... Loving the world and ourselves is in a sense a miracle, in face of all the evil and degradation that it and we contain. But the miracle comes on us if we accept being part of it. Involved in this is our acceptance of love from others. We become capable of love through being loved; and over against the perverse apostolic succession is a grace-dispensing one... .

“Dostoevsky brings together here a central idea of the Christian tradition ... that people are transformed through being loved by God, a love that they mediate to each other, on one hand, with the notion of a subject who can help to bring on transfiguration through the stance he takes to himself and the world, on the other. ... What is significant here is the way in which the modern identity, with its transforming powers, has become incorporated in Dostoevsky's vision, even while he opposes it. It is not an accident that Dostoevsky's positive figures have to go through the experience of modernity” (2, p. 452).

However, our other questions intrude on this exegesis. Initially, we can make note of the fact that there is a mutual exclusion in 'The Brothers Karamazov' between the twin scenes of “succession” and “dispensation”. The disturbance that this provokes leads us onwards. Suppressed within Taylor's analysis and also within the deeper meaning of the questions we have set ourselves is the realisation that - unlike in Sade's settled conclusion upon 'Nature' as foundation - the basis of a sharing, a community, is no longer readily available to us. The world is not an entity that is separated from its inhabitants. 'Being' is not a given. Indeed, it is revocable. It is here that the import of our questions begins to take hold. If the 'problems' keep pace with the 'movement' (as they do in 'The Brothers Karamazov'), the risk of a submersion of community arises. This submersion, or 'overwhelming', arises out of the process of 'going through' modernity. One may not “go through” it at all. That is, one may not emerge 'on the other side'. This risk, as we shall see, is most effectively expressed by Dostoevsky through his portrayal of Ivan Karamazov. Ultimately, Dostoevsky is overwhelmed by the sophistication of modernity, the ubiquity of sadeian formulations. In spite of the installation of 'grace',

in spite of his theistic ambitions, an awareness of modernity as the scene of denial takes precedence. We see Ivan Karamazov's understanding as a sophisticated version of the sadeian, an understanding that is strengthened by its humanity, its ethical perception of the tragic dimensions of moral ordering. How do we negotiate a way out of this impasse?

The problem lies in how Dostoevsky 'does sharing', how the foundations of 'together-ness' are imagined. True, he does not fall into the same empiricist trap as Sade. But both writers belong to a tradition of thinking about 'community' in terms of what individuals can be taken to possess in common: that there has to be a definite essent for community to be possible.

Sade's 'essent' is unproblematically portrayed as 'Nature'. Dostoevsky's 'essent', to his credit, is essentially problematic. Too much so. It is insufficiently based, insufficiently authoritative. As we have said, Dostoevsky was only too well aware of this. It is in this awareness that his value lies. That is, the problematics of the 'common ground' are implicitly realised by Dostoevsky in his portrayal of Ivan Karamazov and also in the troublesome nature of the ideas of grace and divine Presence. This points to a possible way forward: a reformulation of the notion of 'common ground'. This reformulation can only be done if we stop thinking of such a ground in literal, Christian terms that are set against an equally literal version of 'individuality' which sees it as 'uniqueness'. Our notions of what can constitute a presiding authority, the moral, the individual and the traditions of which they are a part will have to be changed. This change, in large part, owes its foundation to the problems identified by Dostoevsky in 'The Brothers Karamazov'.

Over a twenty-one year period, until his death in 1881, Dostoevsky couched his project in terms of the problems apparent in the founding of a sustainable community. This was to be achieved by the adoption of a unified, transcendent conception of value strongly resistant to the threats of dissolution and chaos. We find in the notebook entries, dated from 1860 to 1864, a vision of a "disunited" society. The "ripened questions" that modernity brings with it find only an inadequate societal response or one that is fatally missing. The disunity and the questions preying upon it were predicated on what Dostoevsky saw as a widespread lack of conviction as to "the final goal of humanity" (all quotes, respectively, 3, p. 4 & 4, p. 39). How to provide a unified solution? His answer, in large part, was a Christian one: the

model of agency provided by the grace-dispensing mediation between individuals. In other words, grace is exposed by means of this mediation. The outward and visible sign of this mediation is to be found in altruism which is meant to counteract the effects of a sadian form of understanding at source. We see this solution in the process of being formed when he speaks in terms of the self.

In individual and intermittent cases, agency could be “ready” to meet the demands that the “questions” imposed. Consequently, what Dostoevsky envisaged as “the full development of (the) I” (ibid.) consisted in leaving behind an atomistic self-conception, to “seemingly annihilate that I, to give it wholeheartedly and selflessly” (ibid.). Complementing this denial of one extreme form of individualism, Dostoevsky also recognised that the individual agent “is only a developing creature, consequently one not completed but transitional” (ibid.) A social medium is thus essential for the development of this transitional character. Although “transitional” implies ‘transitional-towards’ (a “final goal”), Dostoevsky is not saying that agency achieves an asocial, preconceived purpose. There would be no sense in emphasising the “transitional” if this were so, and agency would be self-sufficient or “completed”. Transcendence (of the seemingly-annihilated ‘I’) and the compassion (the ‘giving’ of the ‘I’ in the movement of ‘annihilation’) which exposes it can be retranslated into a stepping-outside of broadly instrumental concerns in order to see the unity/compatibility between self and world. A synthesis becomes more and more apparent. The true basis of sharing is seen as a “return to the mass, to the spontaneous life. Not forcibly, but on the contrary, in the highest degree wilfully and consciously” (5, p. 96). The sense of “wilfully” is modified to include “at the same time a higher renunciation of one’s will” (ibid.) in the sense of a repudiation of a narrow egoism.

The repudiation involves a rejection of nihilism that is simultaneous with an affirmation of what Taylor calls “the aspiration to fullness” (2, p. 43). One is filled, so it goes, by a sense of meaning that is transmitted both by a sense of God’s redemptive love and by the relation one bears to others. To do this, one needs to collapse the dichotomy between ‘the moral’ and ‘the true’. Order and connection are established in the movement one makes towards significance. In doing this, one confers ‘the sense of meaning’ onto others.

Dostoevsky begins to address issues surrounding a version of the Christian community rather than those which are more immediately relevant to an individual Christian salvation. This he does while keeping the self at the forefront and, more importantly, expanding upon the specifics of a conception of value that is syncretic. Typical in this regard are a number of Dostoevsky's late notebook entries, which were written while 'The Brothers Karamazov' was taking definite shape. They concern the identification of "those living forces without which nations cannot live" (6, p. 74). He looks for definite, formulable expressions of these forces and finds, disturbingly, that it is "impossible to use love of humanity to make up for the absence of God" (ibid., p. 119). He recognises that simple altruism, without a foundation in principle or belief, is not sufficient to found a moral order.

In other words, Dostoevsky's "living forces" are highly problematic, even on the basic level of how to give them initial expression in a conceptual scheme. The suspicion arises, even at this stage, that Dostoevsky overcomes one apparent contradiction (self/world) only to fall victim to another equally insidious one (humanity/God). In abandoning one extreme variant of individualism, he returns to a moderated but still too-violent view of selfhood (hence the talk of "will" in the notebooks).

The problem lies in his syncretic anxiety, which is a Christian one. How to reconcile? How to decide? How to insist on one over the other? Must one take precedence? At what cost? What place should we give to altruism given that it involves a basic ontological contradiction? On the one hand it is of primary importance since it is the only intelligible means by which grace can be made manifest. On the other hand, as Dostoevsky recognises, altruism cannot form the basis for a moral order given its fundamentally unprincipled character. Yet it appears to be the only thing we have to go on given that, otherwise, the social relapses into sadeian chaos.

If these questions are to have any meaning, one's view of 'moral order' has to base itself upon contraries, upon a division between 'correct' and 'incorrect' epistemologies. In diagnosing this problem, we come close to suspecting that there may be a solution in terms of a version of sharing, of community not bound up with Christian anxieties surrounding altruism and the 'right way of getting to know about' 'grace' or 'will'. These are very far from being self-evident or transparent foundations and Dostoevsky thus cannot come to any settled conclusion. Although he would like to clear a space

for the human, he never abandons an insistence upon the absolute value of individualised Christian commitments. The divine, he would like to say, is essential for the human to occupy the space he has cleared. In the absence of the divine, there is a void that cannot be filled. The abandonment of Christian commitments leads inevitably to disaster. The reality of 'grace', so it goes, makes this abandonment the result of a lack of perception. The central anxiety is one surrounding the reality of love. The maintenance of altruism and philanthropy are taken as essential for any sharing to take place that does not end up as an abusive construct. Bound up with these essentials is a modified and socially-dispersed faith in Christian goodness.

At basis, though, 'The Brothers Karamazov' is principally speculative. What this means can be seen if we first summarise the issues that are dealt with in the book and attend to the more fundamental aspects of the author's method in setting up the terms of what can pass as a 'debate': between a modernity whose allegiance is to what can be termed a 'tragic sadism' and a belief centred around the power and participation of grace in everyday life. However, as we shall see, the problems become more sophisticated in direct relation to the subtlety of the Dostoevskyan formulation. There is an insuperable problem that has to do with communication, of the way in which grace is shared. Altruism, ultimately, is too individualised to exert much of an influence. More importantly, the way in which grace is transmitted cannot stand up to an ethic that questions its principled foundations.

The Christian version of sharing receives its severest challenge in the modernity represented by Ivan Karamazov. In conversation with his brother, the novice monk Alyosha, he attacks both the principles and the practical/theoretical consequences of what he sees as the inescapable part of a Christian order: the vindication of divine providence in view of the existence of evil. The existence of this evil is seen as ubiquitous, though it is viewed as an obscenity. Ivan also provides a critical assessment of one alternative to such an order in his story 'The Grand Inquisitor, wherein community can be said to reside in a vindication of evil in view of divine withdrawal. From this, he insists that the whole notion of an ontic and/or systematically-expressed 'order' is insufficient and/or immoral, in spite of the fact that he recognises it as an undeniable part of human aspiration. Starting with a perception of divine withdrawal and the alien character of Christian epistemology given a 'rational' scheme of thought, Ivan goes on to indict and reject all forms of Christian ontology. The way it tries to deal with suffering

and evil and the blindness it shows with reference to acts of simple atrocity strengthen his position. He is led both to a despairing recognition of 'meaninglessness' and concludes that "everything is permitted" (7, p. 309). Dostoevsky does not attempt "an answer point-by-point to the theses previously expressed" (8, p. 224) by Ivan - which, as a collection of "theses" closely bound by a rational intelligence, form a closed system of thought. Indeed, Dostoevsky says in a letter dating from the 10th of May 1879 that Ivan's central claim, "the senselessness of the suffering of children", is "irresistible" (ibid., p. 220). This is decisive, in that Ivan remains intransigent on this point. Dostoevsky's ambitious vision suffers immeasurably from this, despite our generous reading.

To attempt a "point-by-point" answer (to resist the irresistible) would involve Dostoevsky in the type of discourse he seeks to expose as insufficient when one comes to talk of the sharable nature of grace. The author cannot involve himself in a conventional 'debate' wherein logical standards of argumentation can be taken as rationally measurable. Instead there is a juxtaposition of Ivan's direct and intellectualist way of dealing with community alongside that of Alyosha, the Elder Zossima and Dostoevsky himself.

The problem lies in the nature of 'the sharable value of grace' itself. Who is it sharable with?

Dostoevsky wants to say, 'With everyone', but Ivan's "irresistible" argument precludes this. We can see the problem in terms of a tension that exists between what Taylor calls "perverse apostolic succession", the handing-down of a sadeian ethic of destruction, and "dispensation", the influence of altruism.

Already, we suspect that these two facets of the social are mutually exclusive, to the extreme cost of any ideal that wants to establish a sharing that is not 'exclusive' at all. Both are insufficient to form the basis of community because both are fixed and/or tied in with an incommunicable goodness/badness that persists despite attempts at persuasion.

'The Brothers Karamazov' is not read as 'an attempt to refute Ivan' but as something that tries to find a way of formulating community in the light of his challenge. If we take the text following Ivan's "theses" as a 'refutation' pure and simple, it is confined within a dichotomised discursive structure which leads us to dismiss it in terms of rational, strictly logical enquiry. This is not to say that by some route other than argument Dostoevsky dispenses with Ivan's challenge in the sense of ignoring it

unjustly. Far from it. On the most important level, as a closed system of enquiry, it remains untouched. But the form of life it indicates is shown to be inadequate and destructive of the self in which it finds expression. The problem of community, though, reasserts itself. Is there any sustainable sharing mediated between Ivan and Alyosha? Is there any dispensation of grace? Does a version of community emerge from the juxtaposition of theses and artistic picture? Can anything make up for the absence of God? Is the selectivity of grace attenuated in any way?

There is a more 'intellectualist' objection to Ivan and one that ultimately leads us out of the opposed anxieties Dostoevsky would like us to think about: that there is no necessary or sufficient connection established between the withdrawal of the divine, senseless suffering and the principle of "everything is permitted". God may not be wholly absent. Grace is our 'evidence' here, in spite of its selective application. Moreover, why should Ivan's position be resolutely negative, especially if we leave the Christian commitment to the exposure of grace through altruism behind? 'Grace' (or a modification of the notion it contains) may be made available to us by other means than the resolutely Christian. It may have to do with what our commitments really amount to rather than to do with showing how one or other system is the only adequate way in which we can make it explicit. Also, it can take as read that any talk of 'individualism' is ultimately counter-productive.

We can treat Ivan Karamazov's "theses" and the "artistic picture" that surrounds them - in the light of subsequent theoretical elucidations - as opening up a way of thinking and writing about community that does not participate in the conceptual or structural position adopted by the text. In effect, we can go back to the questions we outlined at the beginning of this chapter. What serves as the setting for this claim is based around two successive theoretical axes: that represented by Charles Taylor and Martha Nussbaum, and that which comes out of comparable innovations in modern French theory, most notably examined by Maurice Blanchot and Jean-Luc Nancy. A brief outline of the type of assistance these theorists provide is needed first, to signal the direction that the general argument will take, before Dostoevsky's text is referred to more explicitly.

Instead of interpreting Dostoevsky's work in terms of a simplistic and too-literal atheist/theist debate, Taylor characterises it as an attempt to show "that one or other ontology is in fact the only adequate basis for our moral responses, whether we recognise this or not" (2, p. 10). On this foundation, Ivan's vision of the parsimonious nature of the religiously-ordered community suffers in comparison with the surrounding "artistic picture" not because of his criticism of the ontic/theistic bases of the Christian community, but by the collapse of this same criticism into the ontological, into his own individual being. As his argument and language crystallise into a closed, rational system, Ivan himself becomes similarly sealed-off. Because he sees nothing but abuse done in the name of community, Ivan separates himself from it and participates in the same reductiveness he criticises. In Nussbaum's terms, Ivan represents a "singleness (which) impoverishes the world" (9, p. 353).

The problem here, as ever, is how can an 'adequate basis' transmit to a 'singleness'? Can a Christian version of 'grace' circulate only among those who are predisposed to its perception? And does this indicate an inadequacy of Christian commitments to altruism, love and compassion as humanly-inspired carriers of this same version of 'grace'? As Dostoevsky's "artistic picture" insists upon 'ontology' and thereby calls into question the narrowly 'rational', it would seem to demand that an essential and cognitive role be assigned to the 'non-rational', to emotional responsiveness. It is here that Nussbaum is of assistance.

Traditional rationalism denies that "our cognitive activity ... centrally involves emotional response" (9, p.15). This response is principally directed, according to Nussbaum, towards what lies outside the immediate control of the self: to "the external (which) nourishes ... human worth itself" (ibid., p.1) rather than to the confirmation of a supposedly inviolable self-separation that is inscribed in a wholly 'rational' way of seeing. Primarily, then, the "artistic picture" can conceivably be interpreted as an illustration of this responsiveness as a more adequate way of dealing with what is shared out than that represented by Ivan.

However, it would involve a too-violent reading of 'grace' if we were to go further along this interpretive route. It leads us away from rather than towards a fuller understanding of the kind of

Christian commitment exemplified in Dostoevsky's writing. 'Emotional responsiveness' is all very well, but in a Christian scene of qualitative ordering it tends to lack authority, an impetus to order, to classify, more so than in 'responsiveness', which is too individualised.

The problem remains, after all this has been said, of transmission . That is, does 'grace' suffer the same fate as 'forgiveness' in lacking an adequately pedagogic, authoritative dimension? This seems to be so, especially if one insists, as Ivan does, on "God's absence" and if one remains stubbornly, individualistically resolute on this point. No other influence intrudes.

A further question occurs, in the light of Nussbaum's analysis of 'rationality' and the possible value of an "artistic picture" in general: Can we come up with a notion of 'grace' without buying into Christian commitments and Christian notions of 'authority'? If so, then how would it be modified? Would it be even recognisable as 'grace'?

We obviously need the readings provided by Taylor's "aspiration" and Nussbaum's "responsiveness". Without them, given the 'irresistibility' of Ivan's theses, we are confined within a narrow universe wherein suffering and appetite are the norms, are the conventions that we have only a discretionary relationship towards. In short, we are driven back to sadism. Ivan's tragedy is that he separates himself from his sadistic understanding. The influence this understanding has leads to the murder of his father by Smerdyakov, Ivan's half brother. Ivan is horrified when he finds out that the activity of his thought has led to murder. He attempts to make amends, but collapses into insanity and becomes a fugitive.

Without a version of 'grace' (synonymous with an idea of Presence in Dostoevsky's Christian theology), the world is impoverished. In Nussbaum's terms, we get the kind of 'transmission' that exists between Hecuba and Polymestor, the defeat of human relatedness and human language. Dostoevsky gets away from this. A sadistic understanding is no longer the only one that is available to the self-realised individual. But the price he seems to be paying is one given in exchange for a vision of community. Our second theoretical axis is of considerable help here.

Blanchot and Nancy tend to make no positively-focused or explicit mention of 'ontology' or 'cognitive emotion' in their writing. They instead concentrate upon the working-out of what the irredemability of suffering, the principle of "everything is permitted" and 'the withdrawal of the divine' can mean in an extended sense. In doing this, they can be said to be giving a more dominant role to modernity. They are asking whether our aspirations to fullness can be explained by an adequately 'modern' discourse.

For Blanchot, out of the recognition of divine withdrawal that is peculiar to modernity, there is "nothing man can lean upon, no thing of value other than through the meaning, in the end suspended, that man gives to it" (10, p. 144): community can no longer be based on a "thing of value" (which "thing" may or may not be divine) independent in its evaluative content from the meaning we give to it. On this foundation, Blanchot interprets Ivan's principle of "everything is permitted" as making explicit "the recognition of the fact that, from now on deprived or freed of the ideal of some absolute meaning conceived on the model of God, it is men who must create the world and above all create its meaning" (ibid., p. 145). Quite apart from the fact that this interpretation is vulnerable to an accusation of conceptual incongruity (i.e., there appears to be no distinction made between "deprivation" and "freedom", between alienation and empowerment) it risks the collapse of the ontic into the ontological, of the undeniable external into the revocable internal. This is despite the fact that Blanchot undoubtedly points to something important: that, to be adequately 'modern', to have an idea of meaning that is meaningful, we must get away from viewing ourselves as in some way contingent upon the Presence of God - even in an intermittent sense.

However, we are left with yet another question here. Does the alleged "absence" of the absolute license the permission of "everything"? Blanchot's reasoning tends to be atomistic (the emphasis on "man", on individualism) and it also can influence a denial of the social, since 'creation' in the absence of an extrinsic authority is a solitary act. Moreover, his idea of the "absolute" confines it to the purely extrinsic or ontic. Taylor's, on the other hand, recognises that the "absolute" expresses itself as an internally-authorised ethical standard which may or may not be dependent on an idea of Presence. For both Blanchot and Dostoevsky an "absolute" Presence is essential for an ethic to be fully operative.

Is there a way in which a focus upon modernity develops the “artistic picture” of community rather than simply underlining its responsive superiority? One that has a more critical approach than that offered by Taylor to Christian commitments without abandoning an idea of Presence (or authoritative foundation)?

A possible answer can be found in Nancy’s exploration of the relationship between ways of writing about the withdrawal of the divine and the emergence of community. Nancy does not talk about the disappearance of “absolute meaning” (or full divine Presence) as itself being absolute. He writes of a “representation of divine presence at (the) heart (of community)” (11, p. 143). The withdrawal of the divine, as it exists within a particular form of discourse - designated as a ‘theodicy’ - itself introduces the figure of community. Ivan’s challenge to Christianity both exemplifies the ‘form of discourse’ and thereby the ‘figure of community’ as it starts to think “about meaning and the guarantee of meaning” (ibid., p. 142). Nancy recognises, incidentally agreeing with Ivan, that, in the absence of the divine, community itself could take over its power function and become totalitarian, become a community which “thinks it is God” (ibid., p. 143) - risking the disappearance of that same ‘community’ in an effort to achieve a ‘being that is common’. We see this in Sade, where appetite or “caprice” takes the place of convention/virtue and also in Ivan’s story of ‘The Grand Inquisitor’. Along with this risk there is a tremendous opportunity that has to do with privileging the meaning of ‘to create’, of the creative imagination in its broadest most democratic sense: epiphany.

Epiphany opens up the possibility of a synthesis between an “artistic picture” and an enquiry based around “theses” - one which does not entertain even an extenuated dichotomy between the ‘rational’ and the ‘emotionally responsive’. The possibility exists that there is a text that integrates the two, without seeing community ‘in’ the rational or ‘in’ the non-rational and that consequently escapes the trap of negativity Ivan falls into and the risk of diffusion that the ‘non-rational’ is vulnerable to. It would require too-violent an interpretation of Dostoevsky’s work to say that this ‘integration’ happens in ‘The Brothers Karamazov’, probably because there is too much of a residue of ‘belief’. The question is then whether Dostoevsky leaves community at an impasse, an impasse that we can negotiate ourselves around. However, before this point is reached, we have to investigate the various strands of the novel under discussion and the “artistic picture” it would like to bestow.

Ivan Karamazov indicts the Christian attempt to found community. This he does on the basis of four major contentions. These are contiguous first upon the recognition of divine and/or ontic withdrawal and the relationship this has to an all-encompassing crisis of meaning. Also relevant to the accusations are the problems posed by what Ivan sees as a Christian instrumentalisation of suffering.

Implicit in Ivan's story of 'The Grand Inquisitor', there is a realisation that the divine no longer possesses meaning in and of itself. It has relinquished both its significance and its ontic status to its interpreters. In the story, Ivan brings "heavenly powers down to earth" (7, p. 289). Miraculous scenes of healing and resurrection follow. Virtue "comes from contact" (ibid., p. 291) with the Christ figure, as the representative of divine power. In this latter respect, Ivan manages to question the supposedly 'democratic character' of grace. The contention is that only Christ can truly be the medium of its dispensation and even in this ideal case, the transmission of virtue does not apply in all cases. In ordinary, human, social contact, then, grace dispensation is an impossibility. In this, it is not only Ivan's position on the suffering of children that is "irresistible". The human administration of social life precludes all talk of 'the divine', all influence that may be exerted by grace. The Christ figure is merely taken on to make Ivan's case clearer and stronger.

The Christ figure comes to the attention of the Grand Inquisitor, who orders his arrest and imprisonment. In the extended confrontation that follows between the divine ideal and the realpolitik statesman, the latter begins legitimising his unjust actions by saying:

"you have come to meddle with us ... (You) have no right to add anything to what you have said already in the days of old ... Everything ... has been handed over by you to the Pope and, therefore, everything is now in the Pope's hands, and there's no need for you to come at all now - at any rate, do not interfere for the time being" (ibid., pp. 293-94)

Here, there is not the slightest indication of a revelatory or overwhelming experience of divine Presence. Instead of abdicating from his position of supreme authority, the Inquisitor imprisons Christ and accuses him of trying to "meddle with us" after having "handed over" or voluntarily abandoned

his own position. The pejorative grammar of “meddle” implies an ascriptive devaluation of the one who meddles.

Christ, or the one who wants to dispense grace like Alyosha, is not labelled as subversive or threatening. He is merely a dilettante, a nuisance who cannot be tolerated in a world he has “handed over” to a human administration. He obstructs not just one interpretation of what ‘community’ means, but interferes with ‘interpretation’ as such. If Christ, or the notion of grace, is unmolested by the world, is taken as unproblematic, there would exist something undeniable. Argument or interpretation/thinking along the lines set by a notion like ‘community’ would then cease. We would no longer be living in a recognisable society. Moreover, there is a recognition on the part of Christ himself that everything has been “handed over”, that everything has been said. He does not “add anything” and remains silent throughout his confrontation with the Inquisitor.

The Inquisitor re-doubles his accusation of meddling with the remark that the divine has “no right” to come down to earth. The presence of the divine, the virtue that comes from contact alone, is entirely inadmissible. In the place of this inadmissible Presence there is installed an essentially secular polis, focussed upon order instead of virtue. The Inquisitor does not give us community, but order. He does not want to instigate a broadly-based social understanding. Like the sadeian actor, he demands obedience. The contention is that this can only be done if, along with the divine, the whole notion of Grace-dispensation is systematically suppressed. The Inquisitor is substantially correct in his diagnosis of the character of grace-dispensing contact. The question that echoes in the air, however, is that once this has been realised, is ‘community’ doomed from the start? Is an appetitive ‘order’ the best thing we can expect?

At the end of Ivan’s story, during which the Grand Inquisitor formulates a version of order which is antagonistic both to the divine and to the human, Christ is preremptorily dismissed with the injunction to “Go, and come no more - don’t come at all” (ibid., p. 307). Although the reply that the divine makes is intimate and loving (Christ kisses the Inquisitor), “the old man sticks to his idea” (ibid., p. 308) of the primacy of order. The Grace that Christ dispenses is not available either to the Inquisitor or in the scene he presides over.

Dostoevsky places grave doubts upon the efficacy of Grace as Foundation, given a tyrannical intransigence on the part of the one who may receive. This mirrors exactly Ivan and Alyosha's relationship as between one who receives and one who gives. More positively, the place that interpretation occupies in this means that the possibility of a productive crisis of meaning has been started. A neutral and unproblematic focus of all-unifying significance has been outmoded. To move on, in order to avoid the naive redundancy of Christ (Alyosha) and the cynical pragmatism of the Inquisitor (Ivan), we are called upon to look for an "artistic picture" that participates in neither of these defining properties. Dostoevsky cannot provide this, being too strongly insistent upon the value of Christian commitments.

Ivan's more immediate concern, however, is to keep up with his attack on Christian notions of significance and redeemability.

First of all, Ivan's enquiry is conducted into the meaning one can attach to a way of speaking about community which derives its terms from a Christian framework. Ivan says:

"how can I be expected to understand about God? ... I have a Euclidean mind, an earthly mind, and so how can I be expected to solve problems which are not of this world?" (ibid., p. 274).

Here, the version of "God" that Ivan finds so difficult to understand is one bearing no relation to a "Euclidean mind" - or a mind that is inescapably finite, human, caught up in everyday questions of meaning and possibility. He is in effect accusing Christianity of inventing a standard which is inaccessible. Understanding what is "not of this world" would require a form of agency that could utterly transcend both the "Euclidean" and the "earthly". What Ivan says is that such agency would not be recognisably human, not be concerned with community within which the boundaries of the Euclidean and earthly have their significance.

More profoundly, Ivan re-introduces doubts as to the transmissibility of Grace, love and altruistic ideals - the supposed foundations of community itself on a Christian scheme of things.

He introduces his second major objection to the Christian community. It is a moral one. This involves an argument centred around the irremediable character of violence and evil, particularly with reference to the suffering of children. It is here that the ideal of 'Grace-dispensation' receives its most telling setback. In styling his argument thus, Ivan moves on from the sadeian position of, say, a Stavrogin or a Peter Verkhovensky. He not only says that the Christian ideal is so much nonsensical and irrelevant froth, a meaningless agglomeration of unprovable and unworkable principles which break down when the true bases of human conduct are realised. He also approaches a critique of the Christian reliance upon altruism and redemption from a moral perspective. To Sade, this is unthinkable. Ivan is quite far from adopting a purely sadeian role. He realises, moreover, that the subject he has taken up resonates with even the most committed Christian. It is thus a more social approach to the problem of meaning than that adopted by Sade. Quite what 'value' he wishes to replace the Christian conception with is not clear. As it turns out, Ivan despairs of the possibility that such a replacement may occur. In this his position fails. But we are left with another question, the possible resolution of which takes us into the next chapter of the thesis: in moving on from settled sadeian conclusions but at the same time denying that Christian altruism is an adequate foundation for a morally - ordered community, do we ineluctably face Ivan's despair?

We now turn to the three stories Ivan tells which concern the suffering of children, the severest moral test to apply itself to a Christian conception of the morally ordered community.

In Ivan's first anecdote, enemy soldiers torture and bayonet infants for no reason other than the "voluptuous pleasure" (ibid., p. 279) of killing. The second concerns the abuse of a little girl by her parents, who, "without knowing themselves why ... smeared her face with excrement and made her eat it" (ibid., p 283). In the final story, a serf-owning General sets his dogs on a child for throwing stones at his favourite hunting hound.

The violence and suffering involved is not restricted by any conditions of instrumentality or calculation. Neither is the suffering redeemed or expiated. The Christian community cannot deal with this kind of suffering. If it tries, it devalues those who undergo the ordeals described, primarily by instrumentalising the violence that is involved. The Christian community (the resources that it calls

upon) is not morally or spiritually endowed with sufficient strength to perceive that such instances of irredeemability actually exist.

It may be objected at this point that Ivan dismisses the whole notion of 'Grace' out of hand. Such a powerful resource, Dostoevsky wants to say, can to all intents and purposes be pedagogic in that it has the ability to 'bring out' what is 'already there' in those who receive. But then the problem that we noted above reduplicates itself: Does/can one really 'receive' (is one, for example, voluntarily 'open' or does one have to be pried open?) and still have the moral strength to admit and confront the unforgiveable?

However, Ivan does not make this point. Instead, he steps back from the morality of the argument and seems to make it weaker. He says, "I only took children to make my case stronger" (*ibid.*, p. 290). Why? The answer appears to be that the altruistic resonance that his stories provoke is secondary to a more fundamental point. These stories are intended to call into question the very meaning and form of reasoning that the Christian employs to explain and justify him/herself, to guard against threats. But this level of subversion, as we shall see, remains unaddressed. Ivan questions any notion of community that sees prescriptiveness as basic.

## **Chapter Six:**

### **An Artistic Picture. Part Two.**

“On hot nights now, in the smell of trees and water,  
you beg me to listen and your words enter my spirit.

Your descriptions unmake me; I am like wood  
that thought has wormed; even the angels

that report our innermost wish must be kinder.  
And yet, when your face is grey in the pillow, I wake you

gently, kissing your eyes, my need for you  
stronger than the hope of love. I carry your body

where the hillside flickers: olive Cyprus ash.  
But nothing brings relief. All our days

are numbered in a book. I try to imagine  
a way our story can end without a magician.”  
(Elaine Feinstein, ‘Lazarus’ Sister’, from Daylight’)

Ivan takes the suffering of children as the most conclusive test of the spirit of Christian conceptualisations of moral order:

"little children haven't eaten anything and so are not guilty of anything... . If they, too, suffer terribly on earth, they do so, of course for their fathers who have eaten the apple, but this is an argument from another world, an argument that is incomprehensible to the human heart here on earth. No innocent must suffer for another... .  
"... . Surely the reason for my suffering was not that I as well as my evil deeds and sufferings may serve as manure for some future harmony for someone else... .  
"... if all have to suffer so as to buy eternal harmony by their suffering, what have the children to do with it ... ? It is entirely incomprehensible why they, too, should have to suffer and why they should have to buy harmony by their sufferings... .  
"... . We cannot afford to pay so much for admission. And therefore I hasten to return my ticket of admission. And indeed, if I am an honest man, I'm bound to hand it back as soon as possible." (ibid., p. 278 & pp. 286-87).

First, Ivan appears to make an existentially debatable point about moral consciousness. What is more important in this is that it forms the first stage in a calling-into-question of the universality of communal prescriptiveness.

Adults, whose developed consciousness of "guilt" (after having "eaten the apple" or succumbed to the temptation to possess a form of ethical knowledge) may indeed postulate suffering as a necessary (or expected) consequence of wrongdoing (even if this 'wrongdoing' is not directly punished or punishable). They are not, then, so much of a stumbling-block for the committed Christian, who can point to such a consciousness as evidence of religious truth and significance or of the justification of suffering as part of what it means to be in community. Children, on the other hand, do not have this essential feature, yet they still suffer. As Ivan puts it, they "haven't eaten anything". Thus taken on its own terms, the Christian community not only has to amortize suffering in respect to those who possess a moral consciousness, but

also with reference to those who cannot. Otherwise, the 'Christian community' risks a serious lack of intelligibility, given the universality and prescriptiveness of its ruling principles. The question, then, is what meaning can be given to infantile suffering. Indeed, can such a teleological and/or instrumental 'meaning' be applied or asked about at all? Rationally and morally, the Christian position is redundant, even repugnant. Although Ivan seems focussed too much upon a destructive critique to perceive that a specifically moral condemnation demands a more adequate replacement.

The Christian can extricate him/herself from such a problem via the strategy of pan-responsibility.

Children, on the most fundamentalist version of this strategy, "are punished for their fathers who have eaten the apple". But, as Ivan says, how are we to make coherent sense of this? How can it be illustrated or elucidated, given an "earthly mind"? It is "an argument from another world" entirely divorced from everyday human, rational and communal experience. It participates in the same objection levelled at the metaphysics of the Christian community mentioned earlier: that it is necessarily "incomprehensible" and unintelligible given that the agency through which it could have expression would not be recognizably human.

Ivan does not stop at this reiteration, though. He recognizes that there is a case to be made on behalf of the Christian community. But this involves a partisan of such a community in a radically restricted economy of thought. On this model, all suffering is necessarily teleological and/or instrumental. This is what is left over after the simple objection of "incomprehensibility" has been allowed, in reference to the literality of religious language surrounding the insistence that infantile suffering is related to the 'sins of the father'. One "buys" eternal harmony. The method of 'payment' is suffering and this is so universally and determinedly. Evil, whether it is conscious or not, results in harmony, expiation, redemption. But then we come up against the principally *moral* objection to this: that by so thinking, by being so restricted in outlook with reference to violence one does not really recognize or take in the urgent horror of what violence can actually mean.

By instrumentalizing suffering, one also instrumentalizes the agent who suffers. To use Ivan's language, children are used as "manure for some future harmony". Ivan cannot accept this, cannot bring himself to believe that suffering of the kind he recognizes in the stories he tells to his brother are or should be justified in terms of a "future harmony". If this "future harmony" is indeed "bought" by the suffering of children, Ivan "cannot afford to pay so much for admission" to it. The very restricted economy of the language religion must use involves it in a refusal to recognise evil, violence and death. Moreover, there is another very real danger in using this kind of instrumental argument: if evil results in "future harmony", the more evil there is will result in more harmony. There is a direct trade-off here. One ends by being in the paradoxical position of promoting suffering so that there will be a consequent increase in harmony. The 'expenditure' that is evil is redeemed by the 'conspicuous consumption' that is goodness. Both evil and good, on this model, can be measured by a commonly agreed yardstick. But it involves one in a willful blindness as to the non-instrumental actuality of violence and evil. The realization that religious language, to be meaningful, must involve and implicate itself in a too-restricted conceptualization of agency and suffering frees Ivan. His initial response is to "return (the) ticket of admission". But there are other, much less anti-authoritarian reactions to this. One of these is to base community not on any specifically 'divine' foundation, but to actively seek the vindication of evil in view of the supposed necessity of a particular kind of authority. This is most notably articulated in Ivan's story of 'The Grand Inquisitor', which brings us to the more 'general' phase of Ivan's argument against seeing 'community' as 'unity'.

The Inquisitor elaborates a version of order. As with Ivan's more particular objections to the Christian community, the Inquisitor bases his version around four major points, organized around the remark he makes to Christ, that "'We have corrected your great work'" (ibid., p. 301). In itself, Christ's teaching is fatally insufficient:

"'You promised the bread from heaven,  
but ... can it compare with earthly bread  
in the eyes of the weak, always vicious and  
always ignoble race of man? And if for the  
sake of the bread from heaven thousands  
and tens of thousands will follow you, what  
is to become of the millions ... of creatures  
who will not have the strength to give up  
the earthly bread for the bread of heaven?"

Or are only the scores of thousands of the great and strong dear to you, and are the remaining millions ... who are weak but who love you to serve only as the material for the great and the strong? ...

"(Man) seeks to worship only what is incontestable, so incontestable, indeed, that all men agree to worship it all together... . (There) is nothing more incontestable than bread." (ibid., pp. 297-98).

The Inquisitor examines the temptations offered by Satan to Christ in the wilderness. Christ's resistance to this is an insufficient and unrealistic assessment of the constituents of a unifying communal bond.

Both the Inquisitor and Christ seem to agree that community needs what is "incontestable". There remains between them only the issue of 'correction' or fine-tuning. Given that the "bread from heaven" is only accessible to a small minority and the rest of humanity do "not have the strength to give up the earthly bread for the bread of heaven", where are we to locate community in Christ's teaching? How does the "bread of heaven" participate in "what is incontestable" given that the latter is a supposed necessity for a community that is reasonable, intelligible and existentially authorized? That is, the "bread from heaven" or spiritual sustenance that a belief system like Christianity offers is contingent upon an assumption of individualistic "strength" or ever-present resolve. Therefore, the allegedly all-unifying "work" begun and subsequently "handed over" by Christ needs to be "corrected". The Inquisitor, to obtain the kind of community wherein "the remaining millions ... who are weak" can be absorbed and accepted into a basically unified conception of human relatedness, returns to the "earthly bread" both as a more understandable and as a far more "incontestable" building-block.

If one tries to maintain the primacy of "the bread from heaven" in the face of the Inquisitor's analysis, one involves oneself in Ivan's accusation of an elitist instrumentalization of social agency, echoed in the Inquisitor's remark that the majority of people under the rulership of Christ-centred teaching "only serve as material for the great and the strong".

Given the wholly reductive, utilitarian and appetitive foundation put forward as a means of "correction" and as solving the problem of 'incontestability', a difficulty arises for the Inquisitorial community: that is to "hold captive forever the conscience of these weak rebels for their own happiness" (ibid., p. 299). The resources used in the working-through of this problem are characterized as "(the) forces (of) miracle, mystery and authority" (ibid.). No clarification of this conceptual trinity is advanced by the Inquisitor. It is presented as sufficient in itself, with no succeeding enquiry into its precise nature being endorsed or encouraged.

"Conscience" is reduced to an expression of the basic, almost visceral need to believe in "incontestable", convenient fictions in order to assuage doubt and promote social contentment. "Miracle, mystery and authority" appear to have no other function than to enforce the Inquisitor's own rulership. The only requirement is that this enforcement be effective, be competent to deal with any and all dissent or 'meddling'. What this amounts to in translated form is the foundation of community upon the awed stupor consequent upon a thaumaturgy, the sophistry that emerges from this and the extremes of dictation and obedience that give it a spuriously legitimated political expression. This series of partially-developed synonyms for the Inquisitorial "miracle, mystery and authority" is textually justified by the passage that follows the statement of foundation. It contains the Inquisitor's detailed vision of the kind of totalitarian community gestured at by the conceptual trinity outlined above. This 'community' amounts to an aggregation of effectively decorticated and infantile individual subjects, grouped together under a totalizing political and social organization:

"We shall give them quiet, humble happiness, the happiness of weak creatures, such as they were created. Oh, we shall at last persuade them not to be proud, for you raised them up and by virtue of that taught them to be proud; we shall prove to them that they are weak, that they are mere pitiable children, but that the happiness of a child is the sweetest of all. They will grow timid and begin looking up to us and cling to us in fear as chicks to the hen. they will marvel at us and be terrified of us and be proud that we are so mighty and so wise as to be able to tame such a turbulent flock of thousands of millions. They will be helpless and in constant

fear of our wrath, their minds will grow timid,  
their eyes will always be shedding tears ... but  
at the slightest sign from us they will be just  
as ready to pass to mirth and laughter, to bright-  
eyed gladness and happy childish  
song." (ibid., pp. 303-4).

Here, there is not even the casuistic pretence at 'community'. The Grand Inquisitor's vision is entirely generated from narrowly elitist, authoritarian and statist resources, which "give" social agents "quiet, humble happiness, the happiness of weak creatures". This is achieved first by 'persuasion' and 'proof'.

In an ironic inversion of the Christian condemnation of 'the sin of pride' the Inquisitor maintains that, on the contrary, Christ's teaching encouraged 'pride'. This is removed. The 'proof' that the Inquisitor goes on to speak about reinforces this excision of dignity or self-respect. However, it appears to be an odd use of the notion, given that 'proof', generally speaking, requires individual and reflective authorization or understanding. The way in which the Inquisitor uses 'proof' seems closer to 'propaganda' and 'force' than an indication and reinforcement of understanding. This is prefigured by his use of "miracle, mystery and authority" and is further elucidated by the move he makes in the second half of the above passage towards language which is not centred around a voluntary understanding of 'persuasion' at all, but has more to do with a kind of Pavlovian compulsiveness. The reiteration of "will" refers faintly to this, as well as "timid", "cling", "marvel", "terrified" and "helpless". The "flock of thousands of millions" vacillate between a stupefied awe at the extent and manner of theocratic force and a fearful dependence.

Any and all communal reactions and responses are predictable, given the accustomed "sign" from the constituted authority. Any order, however atrocious its details or consequences, is obeyed absolutely. Community is here introduced to the possibility that it may admit and accept, as in a hypnotic trance, things that would otherwise drive its potential actors and agents to justified extremes of rebellion and resistance. In short, the model of the Inquisitorial community would be ideally fitted to a programme of genocide. The Grand Inquisitor's version of community foreshadows its modern equivalents and imitators, the closest of which is Nazi Germany. 'Community', far from being unequivocally 'good', is here portrayed by Ivan as the scene of ethical, intellectual and physical annihilation.

The Inquisitorial community can be looked on as one means of response on behalf of a community which bears in mind the withdrawal of the divine yet still assumes the need to think about itself in terms of unity or in terms that guarantee a communal bond, however crude this may prove to be. In a very real sense, community replaces God. Community takes over the aspect of absolute rule that 'God' represented before the 'hand-over' of authority to interpretive/self-interested figures like the Grand Inquisitor. Ivan is very far indeed from substantively endorsing the Inquisitor's concluding position, though he interprets it generously - with a consequent understanding of the possible complicity of Christian transcendence with the kind of community the Inquisitor embodies. According to Ivan, the Inquisitor is or at least begins as:

"a sufferer tormented by great sorrow and loving humanity ... (A) man possessed, who was eager to mortify his flesh so as to become free and perfect...."  
"....In his last remaining years he comes to the clear conviction that it is only the advice of the great and terrible spirit that could bring some sort of supportable order into the life of the feeble rebels... He therefore accepts lies and deceptions and leads men consciously to death and destruction." (ibid., pp. 306-7).

The Inquisitor is not caricatured in terms of a sadeian monstrosity. Ivan allows that he both suffers and loves, but he is also in the process of attempting to transcend human limits, to succeed to a kind of divinity himself. He uses a type of suffering as material, in order "to become free and perfect" - that is, to be essentially detached from the world, from community and its apparently more prosaic concerns. However, the Inquisitor cannot sustain his life of mortification and penitence. He loves "humanity" (ie, he feels the need to support weakness with a version of order) as well as wanting to separate himself from it. The process by which he emerges from his eremitic solitude to a position of leadership and prominence within community is left out in the above passage, though it is intelligible to assume that he begins to recognize the fact of divine withdrawal (ie, the impossibility of becoming 'Godlike') and the primacy, therefore, of the human (the recognition that he confronts Christ with when they first meet). Instead, though, of wanting to promote the "free and perfect" (ie, acting on the assumption that a Utopia, although not achievable, is nevertheless worth pursuing for the incidental ends it may bring), the Inquisitor shifts his position to

consider the 'primacy of the human' (or, rather, the isolation of the human) in terms of "supportable order". This is entirely compatible with a more literal translation of the ambition to become "perfect" as it is separated from that of 'freedom'. That is, for community to be as absolute and as irreversibly ordered as an ontic cosmogony. By this route, the crisis of meaning consequent upon divine withdrawal is apparently solved. Given that the divine has withdrawn and that humanity consists of "feeble rebels", this order is supportable (so it goes) only via an acceptance of Satan's temptations to Christ, the elaboration upon which has been referred to before.

Ivan abjures the demand that a substantive/positive version of community be provided. He introduces us to a way of thinking about the issue which is not dependent for its intelligibility upon this or that specific version or series of essentialist concepts. His approach has two elements, each independent of the other. The first is the principle that "everything is permitted". The second refers to the theodic form he adopts in his challenge to Christianity.

Although Ivan's main focus of attack is upon a Christianity that supposedly results in the Inquisitorial community, there is the suspicion that his criticism is much wider in scope than his particular anecdotes, stories and denunciations first suggest. It has more to do, it seems, with a whole way of looking at community per se, which is not exhausted in the working-out and *reductio ad absurdum* of Christian premisses. This is gestured at in the Inquisitor's assertion of the primacy of "earthly bread": community has essentially nothing to do with the divine. Its specific basis may indeed admit to a 'Christian' framework but this need not be so. If Christianity participates in a way of thinking that has as its end a version of community, then it involves itself inescapably in the world and is thereby 'corrected' or adapted to suit the purposes of those who construct or maintain social existence. It thus becomes part of a more general discourse about community and the questions of adequate foundation. In other words, it is only one way of talking about community. One can more probably be built around other- even atheistic - frameworks. Indeed, as far as the Inquisitor is concerned, Christianity (as it denotes divine presence) is inimical to community. In any case, no claim can be made for special consideration by any of these frameworks in

themselves. This is referred to explicitly by Ivan, before he even starts to oppose a Christian perception of social agency:

"What are (people) going to talk about while snatching a free moment in a pub? Why, about eternal questions: is there a God, is there immortality? And those who do not believe in God? Well, those will talk about socialism and anarchism and the transformation of the whole of mankind in accordance with some new order. So, you see, they're the same damned old questions, except that they start from the other end." (ibid., p. 273).

Horizons of significance with regard to community or, as it is put forward here, "the transformation of the whole of mankind in accordance with some new order", are confined within the provision and adversarial exploration of the "eternal questions". Whether one works from an idea of 'God' or from an ostensibly ideological structure like "socialism", one is engaged in "the same damned old (eternal) questions".

Both the atheist and the believer still participate in a principled formulation of community with respect to the constitution and maintenance of a notion of adequate/authentic foundation. Both formulations, so it goes, require a prior justification in terms of answers to questions that remain "eternal" even if they do not denote the possibility of a full or even a partial Presence. The answers to these questions may prove to be inadequate, but the attempt is made to talk about and justify 'community' as part and parcel of what an "eternal question" means. In Ivan's language, this emerges as "the transformation of mankind in accordance with some new order". In itself, this would appear to be a simple recognition on Ivan's part of the promiscuity of epistemological and ontological significance which sees community's foundation as *flexible*, as not irrevocably tied to narrowly theistic or dogmatically univocal evaluative premisses. But Ivan does not make the movement towards a recognition of flexibility. Ivan's formulation of the "eternal questions" ties them to the rigid construction of a "new order", whether they have a basis in a Christ-led ideation or an entirely secular (perhaps Inquisitorial) ambition. In addition, Ivan betrays a frustrated dissatisfaction with these alternatives, apparent in the movement he makes between "eternal questions" and the contempt of "the same damned old questions". Ivan's preoccupation with the supposed rigidity of principled (ordered,

limited) relations as such makes him wish to abandon these questions but it leaves him unsure of what precisely to put in their place:

"if I lost faith in the order of things,  
if I were convinced that everything  
was ... a disorderly, damnable and  
perhaps devil-ridden chaos, if I were  
completely overcome by all the horrors of  
man's disillusionment - I'd still want  
to live... . It's not a matter of intellect  
or logic. You love it with all your inside,  
with your belly." (ibid., pp. 268-69).

One could say, to start with, that the repetition of "if" signifies that Ivan has not yet "lost faith" and is not "overcome" by "all the horrors of man's disillusionment". However, this does not mean that faith and order are foci for principled commitment or that the perception of disillusionment and chaos do not destabilise allegiance to 'principle' per se.

"If" (as it can be re-styled as "might" in distinction to "not yet") also denotes that Ivan has "lost faith" in the guarantees of meaning provided for by talk around the "eternal questions" and by a consequently principled commitment to the answers to these questions. The lack of confidence in "faith in the order of things" becomes more all-encompassing and more ontologically disruptive if we look beyond the minimal qualifications to loss and disillusionment Ivan offers. His focus is upon "disorderly, damnable and perhaps devil-ridden chaos" and the admission/acceptance that "disillusionment" involves and expresses "horrors". Also, the preoccupation with the negative aspects of modernity refers forwards to what Ivan has to say about the developing motivations of the Grand Inquisitor. The latter is "tormented by great sorrow" (or overcome by vicariously suffering the disillusionment of "mankind" in general) and becomes "convinced" that "it is only the advice of the great and terrible spirit (Satan) that could bring some sort of supportable order into the life of the feeble rebels".

The "order of things" is thus a "devil-ridden chaos" wherein any foundation is 'legitimate'. If Ivan does not come to exactly the same conclusions as the Inquisitor and distances himself from the emergent order, he nevertheless signals that an 'Inquisitorial' view of social agency is strongly possible and intelligible. It

prepares the way for his submission to the temptation to regard agency, community and "the order of things" as so many meaningless and dangerous abstractions.

The ultimate conclusion Ivan comes to, that "everything is permitted" is thus conditioned, as is his subsequent collapse into pathology and mental illness. The Inquisitor's conclusions remain as an option, though the move Ivan makes from a foreseeable lack of principled, positive conviction takes him beyond the Inquisitorial allegiance to the merely appetitive. His conclusions are vaguer, less concerned with exerting force or seeing community as being based upon purely material factors like "earthly bread". Being less ethically problematic than the Inquisitor's view of community and agency, Ivan's own stated position involves itself in less obvious but equally insuperable ontological and epistemic difficulties.

Even as Ivan gives notice of the intelligibility of nihilism, he says that he would "still want to live". He does not base this option on any principle or evaluation of what precisely it is to 'live' or to justify and explain one's existence in community, given "the horrors of man's disillusionment". As he portrays and represents the crisis involved in guaranteeing meaning to social agency he retreats from principle into a version of 'wanting to live' that reduces agency into a viscerally and non-cognitively expressed desire which persists in the face of reversals of faith or conviction. Denuded of faith and conviction, Ivan's visceral "love" is said to remain constant and inviolate.

It is here, when Ivan's account is most faithful to its roots in 'rationality', in the "point-by-point" (ie, as the visceral view of agency emerges out of a 'rational' confinement of the "eternal questions"), that we can start to obtain an insight into the methodological role and substantive importance of Dostoevsky's response as an "artistic picture": as it accepts the non-rational as cognitive and as it thus provides access to a version of community that participates neither in Inquisitorial nor in exhaustively 'Christian' articulations. This is to get ahead of ourselves, though, and to venture into territory Dostoevsky could not conceive existed. He still wants the 'Christian articulations' to provide the basis for community. How can he do this once the power of Ivan's arguments has been fully felt?

The simple answer is that he cannot. On the one hand - being all too committed to Christian articulations of community - he wants an incontestable alternative to Ivan's tragic nihilism. In other words, Dostoevsky finds himself searching for an incontestable answer to the irresistible. At the same time, he realises - implicitly - that such 'incontestability' cannot be simply imposed, that it cannot resist conversation. He also wants, therefore, a more social version of Christian commitments. This is attempted via a presentation of altruism as the mundane, intelligible, social manifestation of Christian love and grace. He ends the book by being caught in this contradictory net and also we find that altruism, love, grace are insufficient for the foundation or maintenance of community. True, they are broadly 'conversational', they involve the Other. But they do not *transmit*, they do not communicate. An all too modern intransigence, the irresistibility of Ivan's reasoning, dominates the proceedings.

In distinction to Ivan's method of approaching the "eternal questions" head on, Alyosha's position is mapped out at various points throughout the confrontation with his brother and is consequently much less explicit. His contribution to Dostoyevsky's "artistic picture" is as an exemplar of a different kind of ontology as that represented by Ivan. After all has been said, though, after all the argumentation, the problem of community remains.

Alyosha speaks:

"I say about you: Ivan is a riddle... .  
(You're) just as young as all the other  
twenty-three-year-old young men. Just  
as young. Just a very young, fresh and  
nice boy - just a young and inexperienced  
boy, in fact!" (7, pp. 267-68).

The use of the term "riddle" is decisive, in that Alyosha does not say "enigma" or that Ivan is "inexplicably strange". These last would be remarks glossing an essential lack of perception, an ignorance extenuated by the admission of ignorance. Instead, Alyosha says "Ivan is a riddle".

The main characteristic of a riddle is its opacity or obscurity. Its status as a problem (apart from what makes it a riddle, which is a certain deviousness or misdirection) is based principally upon the strength of the resistance it offers to elucidation. A riddle can only either be solved or unsolved: we can either know everything about it or nothing. As such it is a mere distraction, a game played to amuse or divert oneself. It has little or nothing to do with dialogue or conversation.

As a "riddle", then, Ivan's identity is shallow. It participates in nothing except a resistance to conversation and as such is a mere stylization. Moreover, it can be said that Ivan "is" this stylization itself: he takes on the form but not the content of a "riddle" (which conclusion would be reversed if Alyosha said, "You are a riddle"). However, the reading Alyosha gives to "riddle" is not as extreme, or not as focused on its frivolity. This appears to be located in the fact that, apart from the resistance and the lack of depth, a riddle does inscribe within itself a partial disclosure or clue to its solution. In this context, 'solution' can be taken to mean 'identification'. This forms the bridge for the movement Alyosha makes between "riddle" and the progression from "young" to "inexperienced boy".

Alyosha looks behind the stylized obfuscation of "riddle" and finds, "Just a very young, fresh and nice boy". This can be looked at as a complementary prelude, used to soften the pejorative blow of "inexperienced", though there is more of a connection with Alyosha's final move than might first appear. Ivan is newly-created, original, clear in the sense of being blank. The use of "just" indicates that the obscurantist pretensions of the "riddle" do not denote a more profound sense of identity. What strikes Alyosha is not Ivan's uniqueness, his original intellectuality, but his evident immaturity and his sharing of common ontological limits with other young men. In this respect, Alyosha's comment counts as an insight: instead of attending solely to Ivan's arguments "point-by-point", Alyosha asks what the totality of these arguments means, what ontology or form of life the totality introduces us to. This is completed by his concluding remark about his brother - that he is "just a young and inexperienced boy".

Usually when "inexperienced boy" is said it is associable with the grammar of insult and dismissal, ie, that the agent under discussion 'doesn't know what he is talking about', that 'experience' will cause him to revise

his untested and untenable opinions. As with this ordinary usage of the phrase, Alyosha is just as forceful and insistent but the categorisation is less pejorative, being prepared by the 'compliments' preceding it. Ivan is not, then, solely referenced as a brilliant intellectual, immune to the ordinary problems and ascriptions that are intelligible in regard to one of his age and background. In effect, when he isn't being enigmatic, he betrays broadly 'adolescent' symptoms. Despite the fact that he virtually monopolizes the conversation with Alyosha, he fails in his main purpose - as he puts it, to "say what sort of man I am, what I believe in and what I hope for" (ibid., p. 274). Instead of this, instead of finding out 'who he is', we receive a detached intellectualist thesis. Against this, Alyosha says that "there's a great deal of love in mankind, almost Christ-like love" (ibid., p. 277).

Both Ivan and Alyosha base their versions of community upon competence, upon "a mechanical or coerced reaction to demand" (12, p. 114) for the "undeniable" and for "earthly bread" and for Christ-like attributes. Despite seeing it as a nightmare, Ivan can find no other foundation, opting for "everything is permitted" as a means of individual escape from totalitarian conformity. With Alyosha, we find a similar defeat inscribed within what he says. He cannot *deny* what Ivan says. Instead he points to the "love" that also inheres in mankind. At this point, we can reiterate what we said earlier in this chapter concerning the fates of both Ivan and Alyosha. The book concludes with Ivan's madness and exile and with the continuation of Alyosha's altruistic example. The questions we ask ourselves seem similarly fated, to remain as questions that lead nowhere but to an impasse, a simple contradiction.

Do Ivan and Alyosha leave 'community' at an impasse, a final terminus? Is the 'debate' over, with nothing more to be said on the subject? Is there a way of reformulating Ivan's critique of the 'Christian' order so that a writing about community both avoids the errors he represents within the novel and the subsequent extremity adopted by Blanchot?

A first move towards answering these questions is provided by Jean-Luc Nancy. In analysing the relationship that has evolved between the withdrawal of the divine and the nascent character of community, Nancy re-reads the Christian discourse of vindication as a:

"Theodicy (which) can only emerge when the God is in decline and finds himself tangled up, as he declines, in the affairs of the world: it is then that he must be justified. Theodicy is thinking about meaning and the guarantee of meaning: in this thinking it engulfs the gods" (11, p. 142).

Ivan's main error is to see "theodicy" solely as an instrumentalist and unresponsive vindication of absolute divine providence/absolute meaning in view of the existence of evil. This has the unfortunate result of putting one's choices and those of community within a dichotomous framework of 'fixed' and 'random' (ie, between the Inquisitorial and "everything is permitted" or between conformity and "creation"). Also, there is the risk of denying any place for meaning per se outside of an instrumental thought process: the suffering of children, by escaping instrumentality also 'escapes' meaning. This results, ironically, in a justification of "everything is permitted" as it is supposedly vindicated by the suffering envisaged. With Nancy, "theodicy" (as "thinking about meaning and the guarantee of meaning") is no longer confined to the "point-by-point" or the narrowly (instrumentally) rational. Its focus, inscribed in "thinking", moves on from Ivan's (and Blanchot's) insistence on attending to the literality of a given language or the absolute replaceability of a set of commands "conceived on the model of God".

With the resource of "theodicy" at his disposal, Nancy does not make anything like Blanchot's movement from the withdrawal of "absolute meaning" to 'absolute withdrawal'. Instead of a 'total absence' of divine presence/providence, Nancy reads the divine as being "in decline", as unprecedentedly "tangled up ... in the affairs of the world". Even when thinking principally about interpretable "meaning" (as opposed to uncontroversial, ontic Presence) reaches its apogee, the divine is only 'engulfed' or made obscure and opaque (or, one could say, assimilated instead of expelled by the thing that engulfs it). It is not entirely annihilated and wholly replaced by "creation".

Something of the divine, of the "absolute meaning" as Blanchot would have it, still persists. What reveals and completes this is the discourse of "theodicy" itself, as it asks for "the affairs of the world" (ie, the suffering of children, the ubiquity of evil and degradation, the persistence of an ideal of universal respect) to be "justified" in the context of a divinity or "meaning" that is "tangled up" therein. The role that the divine plays in all this is central and crucial (as the focus of "the affairs of the world"), although it is secondary to the way in which we emphasise in "theodicy" the search for the "guarantee of meaning" (or an intelligible way of thinking about the process of 'justification', whether this is said to provide a 'vindication' or not). The form of words Nancy uses in connection with divine 'engulfment' (as a thinking that prioritises "meaning") moves us further away from Ivan/Blanchot.

He says "thinking about" rather than 'abandonment' or 'creation'. The latter demands that we abjure community (or the space within which we have thought about meaning), whereas "thinking" involves us in a dialogue, in a conversation within which community emerges. In its emergence, community accelerates away from the divine (or its undeniability) even as it uses the latter as a resource for thinking. As "theodicy" can thus escape the discourse of instrumentalist vindication and can develop into a thinking about meaning that leaves its original premisses behind, the role of an "artistic picture" (as it also can participate in a "thinking about meaning and the guarantee of meaning") becomes potentially extended: less as a matter of response to and criticism of the "point-by-point" and more a matter of perception in its own right. As Taylor puts it, "what meaning there is for us (can in the latter case be said to depend) in part on our own powers of expression, that (the discovery of ) a framework is interwoven with inventing" (2, p. 22).

Does the 'potential extension' noted above access a means by which Dostoevsky's "artistic picture" can be assessed on its own merits? Also, more importantly, can the themes and principles it contains be developed in another writing about community? With reference to what has been read into "theodicy" (as the organizing discursive core of the 'debate' in 'The Brothers Karamazov'), we can ask Dostoevsky for the notions of "guarantee" and 'engulfment' that are implicit in the novel and in the writing of 'community' that it contains. Rather, we ask about their extent and for their stylisation in distinction to their substance. As

such, we are not gesturing towards a "point-by-point" criticism of Dostoevsky, but indicating the possibility of a more developed and modified interpretation of approximately the same worries, concerns and issues - one that centrally involves an "artistic picture" of some sort.

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## **Chapter Seven:**

### **An Interruption.**

“the man of discourse or writing interrupts the continuous development of the sequence, abruptly turns towards someone, that is, something, addresses himself to you” (Jacques Derrida, ‘The Post Card’, p. 4)

“in the interruption of myth something makes itself heard, namely, what remains of myth when it is interrupted - and which is nothing if not the voice of interruption ... . This voice is the voice of community” (Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘The Inoperative Community’, pp. 61-2)

“The kind of humanism I discern in Joyce is possible only to a psyche that is largely unsupported, vigilant in its scrutiny of self development, consciously experimental ... . (Joyce) believed in nothing, not even, as has been said, in the bread he was eating” (Brendan Kennelly, ‘James Joyce’s Humanism’ in ‘Journey into Joy’, pp. 217-18)

This is primarily intended as an introduction to the last chapter of the thesis, though it is methodologically appropriate to style it also as an interruption: an interruption of what remains of the 'myth' of community once the Dostoevskyan impasse has been reached. As such, we recognise that what follows can be viewed as an abrupt 'turning towards': a change of premiss, substance and method that may be bewildering without the requisite preparation. In the sense that this writing is a 'preparation', it has four main objectives:

- 1) To elucidate the notion of 'interruption'. That is, to give it a positive reading over against the more 'ordinary language' treatments it has received hitherto, especially from those writers whose work we have been considering up until now. As such, the notion takes upon itself the role of a unifying theme. Nancy's "voice of community" was being heard by both Sade and Dostoevsky, but perceived as an instance of contra-indication. In Joyce the voice addresses itself.
- 2) To use the elucidation provided in order to reflect upon the portrayal of modernity and of the possibility of establishing a moral/qualitative order based upon the substantive premisses we have been considering.
- 3) To point out the implications that the usage and elucidation of the notion have for the wider project of founding and maintaining a community or a legitimate moral order.
- 4) To base an interpretation of Joyce's 'Ulysses' in terms of the nascent possibilities of 'interruption' over against the "continuous development of the sequence" apparent from Sade to Dostoevsky.

We recognise that our four objectives interpenetrate and reflect on each others' significance, and especially that 4) lies outside the scope of an introduction and must be consigned to a reading of the chapter that is to follow.

In ordinary language, when we think of 'interruption' it is as of 'being interrupted'; our associations and ascriptions are all negative. We are, say, thinking or working on a problem. Someone unforeseen, like Coleridge's Person from Porlock, asks us a question or makes a demand, interrupts the continuous development of our writing. Our thought is spoiled. We lose our place and have to deal with the person's request. Perhaps they ask us for directions. Or for money. Or to help them in some way that is unpredictable. Either way, our serenity, our sense of communion, is disrupted. Once left alone again, we take twice as long to finish our thought or to solve our problem as we would if no one had interrupted.

It is more than merely irritating. It appears inimical to the whole ambition to provide (ourselves with) order and peace. Or at least predictability and concentration. Such was the view of interruption adopted by both Sade and Dostoevsky. What was being interrupted, moreover, was not just an individualised/atomistic desire but a universalised programme for the establishment of authentic modes of sharing. In other words, the perception of the notion we are discussing, its particular interpretation in terms of irritation and frustration, seems predicated on the attempt to establish a sharing upon prescriptive, determinist grounds. That is, upon a notion that is close to 'communion'.

Sade wanted "the reasonable man" to triumph at the expense of "the prejudices of simpletons". His means of achieving this was through the continuous development of Nature as a destructive principle versus convention as the resource of an outmoded Virtue. He was continually interrupted by imprisonment and censorship - the 'Virtue' that gave meaning to his predators' depredations. All went counter to his attempt to "install caprice". As such, his version of sharing - the irresistible communion with a morally neutral universe of natural impulse - was made impossible. An authentic sadeian order can only be established in seclusion from the social world. Sade's actors seek out solitude, deny relation and difference and end up in a confinement that is neither a shared goal nor a sustainable practice. Interruption triumphs at its most clumsy. But, implicitly, the notion's importance is emphasised. Already there is the distinct suspicion that

it opposes itself to communion, to a sharing that amounts to the establishment of a 'common being'. This is deepened and extended when we turn to Dostoevsky.

Wanting a world wherein qualitative, moral distinctions are of primary importance - in contrast to Sade - Dostoevsky considered the possibility of the triumph of Christian altruism over the modern 'tone' of unbelief and nihilism. His method was one of juxtaposition and the portrayal of consequences - a subtler approach than Sade's all-out assault in manifesto-like terminology. His nihilists, political conspirators, murderers, atheists and skeptics resemble the sadeian actor in their disregard for the social, relational aspects of the self. What he also points out, especially in his portrayal of Nicholas Stavrogin in 'The Devils', is that this 'disregard', this quintessentially modern insistence upon individualised appetite, masks a profound disintegration both of self and of the society of which one is a part. The more positive figures in his work, ranging from Stepan Verkhovensky to Alyosha Karamazov, attempt through Christian commitments to influence others away from mutually assured destruction.

Thus far - and given the author's own commitment to a Christian ontology - the odds would appear to be stacked against an interruption of the continuous development of the sequence of community. The myth of Divine Grace plays a crucial role here. But Dostoevsky's universe - unlike Sade's - was not an irretrievably polarised one. Interruption features again, here in a more internalised way than in Sade but nevertheless in as decisive a manner.

There is the intransigence of the 'disregard' we noted earlier. That is, the nihilism of a Nicholas Stavrogin remains closed off to the influence of Christian commitments. The possibility of sharing, therefore of collective influence, is cut off at source. This is re-emphasised at considerable length in 'The Brothers Karamazov' wherein the Grace - dispensation afforded by Alyosha is subverted by his brother Ivan. In other words, Dostoevsky sabotages his own vision. It seems that he cannot bring himself to believe that Christian commitments alone are sufficient for the establishment of community in a modern context.

Alongside this, though, there is the insistence that the Christian ideal is the only one worth our attention if we are interested in founding a community of selves. Dostoevsky's is a more tragic fate than Sade's in that the interruption of peace and order is not answered in comforting terms.

The interruption of the continuous development (of the myths of Nature and the Divine) in both cases is presented as a reason for a corrosive anxiety. Both the theory and the practice of community seem impossible, given the interruptions involved in establishing settled social conclusions. In Nancy's phrase, "the lost community" is sought out. For Sade this community exists in a reclaimable pre-conventional atavism. For Dostoevsky in an anti-modern return to "the spontaneous life". Both are ineluctably interrupted by a modernity that (so it goes) insists upon a lack of continuous operation, either of Nature or of Christian commitments. Understandably these interruptions are taken as inimical to the project in hand.

Where Dostoevsky differs from Sade is in the respect that the interruption is irrevocable and a reason for despair. Once the operative nature of Christian commitments is called into question, they cease to influence. Sade thought that such interruptions were ultimately annihilable.

In both Sade and Dostoevsky, 'belonging' and 'sharing', outside of the interruptive context of modernity, was a matter of the possession of measurable, quantifiable properties. For Sade, there was the 'reasonable' knowledge of one's role as a predator in relation to others. For Dostoevsky, one's role as a Christian. Ultimately they desired a common being - a communion between self, other and world which amounted to a denial of difference, the refusal to recognise any positive reading of the interruption which forms an essential component in their thinking and writing on the subject of 'community'.

In the end, convention and nihilism triumph. The attempt to establish order, either from a naturalistic or an altruistic perspective, fails to make itself really 'heard'. A continuously interruptive modernity drowns out all other voices. As such, it is styled as so much white noise. Nancy's main point (which is ultimately a self-reflective one) seems to be that, in not 'doing' interruption - in not giving it (or modernity) its due - Sade and Dostoevsky are not 'doing' community at all. In fact, are anti-community even when their statements would lead an interpretation to designate them as writers whose primary interest is in community. Even at this stage, the statement seems strange. It is only when we leave behind the common, ordinary interpretation of 'interruption' that it possibly becomes clear.

What Nancy provides us with is the positive ideal of interruption, hence of modernity. He locates community within what has hitherto been seen as inimical to it. There is a relocation of the notion here, the primary thrust of which is epistemic and methodological rather than empirical or substantive. What is being interrupted within the modern context does not concern itself directly with programmatic attempts to 'build' a moral order. Rather it has to do with myth, with "the phantasms of the lost community" that are part and parcel of an entire culture. These "phantasms" appear to us in an interrupted way. They speak of sharing, of a 'being' that is 'held in common' without, however, coming to a fully conscious (i.e., uninterrupted) realisation. It is in the interruptions themselves that this sense of 'being-in-common' is located. Joyce's 'Ulysses' is a prime example of this, perhaps the only one in our culture that is fully aware of its own value.

The temptation here, though, is to say that interruption is inevitable, ineluctable and that community never truly dies out, that it is a 'given'. However, Nancy realises that 'interruption' needs to be done in order that community be maintained. He recognises the power of the ambition to contact "the lost community" and to found one or other upon determinate, substantive notions of 'belonging'. He cites Nazism as an example of this ambition, albeit an extreme one. If 'interruption' is denied, one risks the concomitant denial of sharing, of community in favour of an attempt to establish a 'common being', a communion or an uninterrupted

myth. Such was the ambition behind the Fascist talk of 'blood and soil' and it haunts the more moderate, liberal thinking about community - for example in Habermas' talk of 'building' on the basis of Enlightenment rationalism in 'The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity'.

The ambition to achieve a lack of interruption, an inviolability, results in the failure of the communal enterprise - either in that it lacks the strength to confront the essentiality of the finite or that it brutally casts the finite aside in preference for a totalitarian politics. What is at stake in community - the legitimacy of a moral order whose focus is in a participatory sharing-out - is thus defeated.

It should be clear by now, especially from what was said above about one's access to myth through interruption, that the notion proceeds quite differently than a process of demythologisation. Myth (of Divine Presence or of ultimate authority) is interrupted not annihilated. To go back to our more individualistic, substantive analogy at the start of this introduction, one's thought or 'flow' proceeds after the interruption has been endured, albeit in a modified way. So with the more communal conception.

Nancy's more radical point, though, is that the 'flow' is identical to the interruption. This should be apparent in our analysis of Joyce. Homer's Ulysses finds his modern equivalent in the process of interruption, in the wholly modern context of early twentieth century Dublin. Authority, in a mythic form, is still necessary. But it is not exhaustive. Bloom is Ulysses. Stephen Dedalus is Telemachus. A being-in-common is established on the basis of a fictive authority that is made manifest only through the process of interruption. The 'absence' of the myth, like that of the Divine, is not an absolute one. Modernity - or at least the interruption that is its defining characteristic - sees to it that such absences are modified, that they are preserved in something like amnesia.

Community is not a feature that can be 'operative' in a substantively naturalistic or Christian sense. But it still needs to be shown - created or 'done'. The procession of this feature in 'Ulysses' is garrulous,

importunate - soliciting a look or a gesture, an abrupt 'turning-towards'. However violent (as in the 'Cyclops' episode), this look or gesture acknowledges that we are beings-in-common, not just in the sense of 'ourselves alone' but also in the sense that a community with the past is established.

At every stage in this, though, there is the risk of failure. We are rescued from this failure not through altruism or belief or through a nihilistic denial of the value of qualitative distinctions as such but through attempting to be Joyce's contemporaries. To paraphrase his biographer, Richard Ellmann, we are still trying to do this. Being 'contemporary' means, in this case, to leave Sade and Dostoevsky behind whilst acknowledging their importance in leading us to this stage, a stage where irony and humour - the enjoyment of principled self-reflection - guide us towards community.

Before this guidance can take on a definite shape, however, we need to see what Joyce is actually *doing* in 'Ulysses': how he is both an interruption and an example of 'community in the absence of God' or, more broadly, in the absence of the kind of substantive guarantees that are attempted by Sade and Dostoevsky. The progress to community, hitherto frustrated, will then hopefully be seen in a clearer light as Joyce leaves Sade and Dostoevsky behind.

In a sense that is broadly introductory to what follows, we may say that both Sade and Dostoevsky seek a substantive support as a foundation for their respective programmes of order. Joyce interrupts this way of thinking. With Joyce the sense of 'support' comes across as *methodological*. He doesn't appear to be concerned with making substantive points centered around a vocabulary of 'building' or 'construction'. That is, to persuade us into his way of thinking by portraying Bloom's Dublin as somehow 'superior' to the various other versions of Dublin he encounters. This attests to a considerable distance between Joyce and those we have portrayed as his most important precursors.

In order both to close this 'distance' so that the 'progress towards community' does not seem to be arbitrarily arrived at and to elucidate Joyce's own role in the 'progress', we can see all three writers as instantiations of a particularly moral progression. Specifically, we can see Joyce's interruption of the development of the notion of 'moral order' in terms of a moral progress, a progress that does not fall victim to the restrictive ontological practices of either Sade or Dostoevsky, of either denying virtue or of attempting to affirm it in terms of a Christian altruism. Indeed, these 'practices' are interrupted. But in a way that results in a display of community. In a way that is particularly 'human', particularly shared and social.

The risk we run, or the temptation we can fall prey to, is to regard Joyce as an innovator who signals an absolute of discontinuity, a resistance to explanation in terms of what went before and to refer to his work as that of an isolated genius whose creation disrupts rather than affirms. Parenthetically, this series of interpretations has been applied to Sade and Dostoevsky. In a sense, then, our method in what follows is not in real terms that different from what went before - in that we want to see Sade as part of his time and Dostoevsky also. This risk and temptation could be influenced by Derrida's remarks on "the man of discourse" and by a simplistic rendering of what Nancy talks about in terms of "the voice of interruption".

This is, however, only a starting point. Hopefully by the end of the analysis, Joyce's role will be seen as more legitimate, less vulnerable to the foreseen charge of irrelevance and arbitrariness. More importantly, we will be able to see a double movement involving both interruption and continuity. Another set of terminological reference points than those provided by Derrida and Nancy is necessary in order that we are able to perceive this movement and, consequently, Joyce's own importance. Another prominent Irish writer, the poet Brendan Kennelly, is the source of this terminology. Inappropriately enough, Kennelly is explaining a passage from the work of Simone Weil in his essay on Joyce:

"Necessity is an enemy for man as long as he thinks in the

first person ... There is a sort of equality between a man's will and universal necessity ... One must try to achieve this point of equilibrium as often as possible ... The bitterest reproach that men make of this necessity is its absolute indifference to moral values ... It is precisely this indifference which the Christ invites us to look upon and imitate ... To imitate this indifference is simply to consent to it, that is, to accept the existence of all that is, including the evil ..."

(*'Journey into Joy'*, pp. 218 - 19)

So, with Joyce, we are not dealing with a Dostoevskyan "imitation of Christ" or a sadeian "imitation of necessity". These two types of imitation represent a continuing moral debate that goes nowhere in terms of establishing an order that is moral, social, conventional and enjoyable. Instead, Joyce's imitation centres around an "indifference to moral values". The focus changes.

It is not that Joyce was hostile to the moral, just that he accorded it a second-order position in terms of the active foundation of community. If one looks for community 'in' Nature as Destructive Principle or 'in' Christian commitments, one impoverishes the world and oneself. Sade and Dostoevsky are two of the more extreme examples of the kind of impoverishment one can expect, the kind of ceaseless tragedy provoked by one's attempt to establish order on one or other ontological lines. Joyce attempts to be all-inclusive. In doing this, however, he leaves behind what would seem to be essential to such an all-inclusive acceptance of the "existence of all that is": a concrete, substantive foundation. Kennelly speaks of the "unsupported quality in Joyce". Sade had Nature. Dostoevsky had Christ. Joyce *appears* to have nothing. Or, rather, he does what he does without Christ, without Nature, even without 'commitment' per se or any substantive ontology. On the level of primary approach, then, Joyce interrupts the way in which the progressive debate about the relationship between community and moral order has been conducted, the terms with which it

has been conventionally settled and explored. This is where the sense of 'interruption' starts. It is from here that the implications of the idea of interruption, of it having a distinct voice, begin and progress in that it appears to echo through the 'lack of support' one finds in Joyce.

How this voice is brought to us is approached in another passage from Kennelly's essay on Joyce. If one's "quality" lies in unsupported-ness, one

"Creates a consciousness on which all things impinge.  
Bloom is not made brisk and cocky with sustained purpose.  
He is made vulnerable, discriminating and reflective through  
being endlessly impinged on, entered into. His candid  
consciousness makes him a victim of the situation, while  
his full expression of that consciousness makes him a  
quiet master." (ibid., p. 228)

This is very far from the monomaniacal alienation written into the types of consciousness explored by Sade and Dostoevsky, on which *certain* things impinge. Sade's "reasonable man" is assaulted and offended by the "prejudices of simpletons". The expression of the opposition involved here re-emphasises his initial confinement in a continually affirmed ethic of rejection. Modernity itself, along with self-doubt and moral criticism, impinges upon Dostoevsky's Christian consciousness. Its expression suffers, both through its ultimate lack of communicability and through its self-skepticism which corrodes rather than leads one to reflectiveness. It is ultimately a tragic vision. At this final impasse, one is caught between Sade and Dostoevsky, between the liberty towards evil and the return to the spontaneous life. As we have seen, both

involve insuperable problems. After Dostoevsky, community seems as far away as it ever was. Social discourse, it would appear, is fated to create a consciousness that is either discretionary or tragic.

Joyce's engagement with the question of consciousness and of adequate expression, of his broadly humanistic purpose in attempting to create the "allround man", puts him in the same general arena with Sade and Dostoevsky. He is, after all, concerning himself with sharing, with a singular consciousness, with modernity, to the end of making the expression of the modern consciousness one that gives us the "voice" we have been looking for for the past two hundred years. Where he interrupts the sequence of debate is in the breadth of his expression. This expression, in turn, is not something that bestows a comforting substantive 'continuity' but is something that interrupts.

Everything "impinges" on Bloom: the tragedy of his son's death, the insensitivity of others, the burned breakfast kidney, a friend's funeral, his wife's infidelity, the practice of municipal legislation. He is not fixed on one particular thing and beyond these instances of 'being impinged on', Bloom says nothing. Rather, his "full expression" is identical with what impinges. What impinges on, interrupts, Bloom also gives his consciousness a mastery, a victory that is Homeric. The expression, interruption and consciousness are the same. Everything is brought together.

There is another, deeper level of interruption in Joyce's work, one that founds the work as a whole and indicates how he is giving us community. It also modifies the sense of "unsupported" that we noted above. It concerns the parallels that can be drawn between 'Ulysses' and Homer's epic.

In Joyce, to paraphrase Nancy, fiction is a foundation and vice versa. In the absence of "support", in the absence of the Divine, guarantee or authority is provided by a work of fiction, a myth. This myth is itself 'absent'. That is, it does not form part of the day-to-day modern consciousness. It is, however, shared in common in a modern context in a way that preserves the continuity of the myth and also insists on the

integrity of the modern qua modern. This it manages to do simultaneously. The moral dimension, the humanistic concern, emerges as a consequence of this and not vice versa. The progress to community - that is, to a sharing that centrally involves a working-out of what 'foundation' actually means, what voice it has - is achieved by a broadly 'methodological' approach to the problem. Ultimately, what is held in common is expressed through implication, through the interruption of the founding myth.

We now turn to an examination of Joyce's 'Ulysses' as a working-out of this notion.

## **Chapter Eight:**

### **Becoming Contemporary.**

“A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.”

(James Joyce, ‘The Dead’, from ‘Dubliners’, pp.200 – 201)

Mulligan says to Stephen Dedalus that "'if you and I could only work together we might do something for the island. Hellenise it.'" (1, p. 6).

For there to be a community in Ireland, the island must be concretely rehabilitated in Hellenic terms. Joyce's own intentions were far less substantive. They can rather be grouped under the heading of a 'methodological Hellenisation'. What this clumsy phrase means is that there is inscribed in the version of Homer's 'Odyssey' an emergence of a singular identity. This is translatable from its shared correspondence and identification with the archetypal character of myth.

In a letter to Carlo Linati dating from the 21st. September 1920, Joyce says of his work (then in progress) that it is:

"the epic of two races (Israel-Ireland) and at the same time the cycle of the human body as well as a little story of a day (life). .... It is also a kind of encyclopaedia. My intention is not to render the myth *sub specie temporis nostri* ('under the type of our time') but also to allow each adventure (that is, every hour, every organ, every art being interconnected and interrelated to the somatic scheme of the whole) to condition and even create its own technique. Each adventure is so to speak one person although it is composed of persons-as Aquinas relates of the heavenly hosts." (2, fn., p. 521).

The initial concentration is instrumental. It is fashioned by way of literary form ("epic", "little story") and stylization or framing ("a kind of encyclopaedia") based around the developed use of Homer's 'Odyssey' ("myth") as exemplification, authority, measure, resource and model.

The central claim here is that the way in which 'Ulysses' renders the 'Odyssey' gestures towards community, first in the systematic identification of correspondence and equivalences existing between the two and second in the way in which these thematic and existential similarities find an analogue in what Jean-Luc Nancy calls "the sharing of being" (3, p., 75).

Joyce's method implies much more than a purely technical expediency - one in which 'correspondences' and 'equivalences' are sufficient as well as necessary. In allowing "each adventure ... to condition and even create its own technique" as well as rendering Homer 'under the type of our time', Joyce indicates that 'Ulysses' is not only concerned with the exegesis of literary techniques. As both a copy of the Homeric model in modern terms and a portrayal of adventures which "condition and even create", Joyce sets up the suspicion that we are not dealing with a version of community whose main manifestations are individualism, self-sufficiency, obedience, lack of equivocation and the ambition to commune. Instead, again following Nancy, we appear to be guided towards a recognition of community as a space involving the exposure (within "each adventure") of singular agents whose existence (as 'singular') indicates a "sharing of being". This sharing is a sharing-in-common. All Joyce's characters, no matter how opposed, exemplify this sharing. Where 'being' comes in is in reference to the foundation of sharing: in reference to Homer, the human past. To exist is to share.

Joyce casts an Irish/Jewish advertisement salesman, Leopold Bloom, as Odysseus. The hero's son, Telemachus, is - in the Dublin of 1904 - a penurious artist manqué (Stephen Dedalus) who has no blood relationship with Bloom. The abandoned spouse of Odysseus, Penelope, is Bloom's wife Molly. Immediately, these disparate people share a 'family' relationship through their Homeric precedents. Yet, in terms of Joyce's book, they remain unconnected by the conventional ties of father-mother-son-husband-wife. Bloom does not (literally) 'become' Odysseus by some process of Grace-dispensing self-abnegation.

Stephen, similarly, does not 'become' Telemachus, nor Molly Penelope. They do not 'come to' Homer or to be 'Hellenised'. They are their Homeric equivalents already, without them being conscious of the fact. The movement from the literal to the figurative, as a technique of Joyce's, provides us here with a community of essentially unconnected and sometimes antagonistic social agents. Though the characters in 'Ulysses' meet each other and converse, the sharing that takes place is provided in large part through their relation to Homeric counterparts. This sharing is provided for by the designated singularity of Bloom as Odysseus, Stephen as Telemachus and Molly as Penelope. Community is neither 'brought about' nor given, but is shown within the very way Joyce accords the characters, dramatic events and themes a mythic significance.

This, then, is the first stage in depicting 'Ulysses' not just as a writing-out of Homeric episodes in modern terms with a "Hellenic ring" (1, p. 4) to them but as a portrayal of community that shows it to be an "epic", a "little story" and an "encyclopaedia" created out of the adventures that happen within it. To make this clearer, a brief exegesis of the 'Odyssey' is necessary in order to point towards the kinds of relationship that exist between it and Joyce's text - what separates them and what they have in common, what forms the basis of their 'being-in-common'. Then, the techniques and framing Joyce alludes to in the letter to Linati will be made more explicitly identifiable and open to a more detailed analysis.

Homer's 'Odyssey' is the story of the protracted and deferred homecoming of a Greek warrior-hero-king, Odysseus, from the Trojan wars and through various adventures. In his absence from his kingdom of Ithaca, attempts are being made at usurpation - principally focused on the Royal Household and on the person of his wife Penelope. Homer starts the story with Telemachus, Odysseus' son, who fears being dispossessed of his inheritance and is in search of his father (whom he alone in Ithaca believes to be alive). At first Telemachus merely observes the activities of his mother's suitors - the political usurpers of his father's realm - and seems content to carry on watching over the drawn-out and inevitable disappearance of his patrimony. However, under the guidance of Pallas Athena (who disguises herself as a mortal man, Mentor), he decides to seek out his father's former companions-at-arms in order to gather any information he can on Odysseus' whereabouts. First he visits Nestor, an old king and trusted adviser, from whom he learns nothing but part of the history of the Trojan adventure. Dissatisfied, he journeys to Sparta to talk to

king Menelaus, with whom he stays until he is finally brought back to Ithaca, following Pallas Athena's advice again. Menelaus, having previously captured and questioned the sea god Proteus, knows where Odysseus can be located. Telemachus learns that his father has been held captive on an island (Ogygia) by a minor goddess (Calypso). With this, we leave Telemachus behind until the extended conclusion of the epic, when his father has his revenge on Penelope's suitors.

We find Odysseus bored with Ogygia and Calypso. He wants to go home to Ithaca, to the comforts and the indeterminacies of the domestic scene and to leave ageless perfection behind him. This he does, but he gets shipwrecked and is cast ashore, semi-conscious and naked, in Phaeacian territory. He spends a night in the open, during which he covers himself to ensure against dying of exposure. Under the guidance of Pallas Athena, he is befriended and shown hospitality by Nausicaa - daughter of the Phaeacian king Alcinous. While at the court of Alcinous, Odysseus (who initially keeps his identity a secret from Nausicaa) relates the story of his adventures. These adventures tell of capture and escape, of the various failures and uses of violence and restraint, force and moderation.

Odysseus recalls how he and his crew were imprisoned by Polyphemus the Cyclops, an erstwhile neighbour of the Phaeacians. Polyphemus intends to eat his way through Odysseus' crew. Before he can complete the preparations for his final meal, the Cyclops gets drunk and falls asleep - at which time Odysseus and what is left of his ship's company manage to free themselves. Not content with merely being out of their cage and wanting to ensure a safe passage of escape, the heroes heat up the point of a wooden spear and blind the Cyclops while he sleeps. Additionally, Odysseus effects his escape from the other Cyclopes by telling Polyphemus that his name is 'Nohbdy'. When asked who had blinded him, all Polyphemus can provide in the way of an answer is that it was 'Nohbdy'.

However, by mutilating Polyphemus, Odysseus has angered Poseidon - who makes sure that the hero is always on the receiving end of storms and shipwreck while at sea. Odysseus then tells Alcinous about his next major adventure, which is set on another island. This time, it is not the uncomplicated adimensional paradise of Ogygia but a dangerous and transformative space, Aeaea, home of the witch Circe.

Odysseus tells how his ship landed on the shore of Circe's island. Unsure of the kind of reception he will receive, he stays on the ship but allows a portion of his crew to disembark. After a time, one of the landing party arrives back at the ship and tells Odysseus that the rest of his companions have been turned into swine. The hero goes inland and meets the god Hermes, who advises Odysseus to proceed with caution. Hermes gives Odysseus a magic root, moly, to counteract Circe's drugs and strategies. Thus armed, the hero sets off to confront the sorceress, following the god's advice to the letter. Meeting Circe, Odysseus makes her promise not to harm him. Only after accepting her assurances does he sleep with her. Afterwards, enjoying Circe's hospitality, he says that he will not respond to the pleasures offered on Aeaea if she does not let his crew out of the sty where they have been incarcerated and if she does not remove the spell she cast which transformed them into swine. Circe obeys. Now the main theme of deferred homecoming re-emerges. Odysseus extracts information from Circe on how to obtain the best advice apropos the route he should take. She tells him to enter Hades and seek out Tiresias, who will know the quickest navigable course to take to Ithaca. Following Circe's prescription, Odysseus descends into Hades, offering up the correct blood libations and sacrifices. There, he talks to the ghosts of the deceased: the heroes of the Trojan adventure, their spouses, his mother, some of his rivals (most notably Ajax, who refuses to speak to him) and Tiresias. Odysseus' tale ends with his encounter with the Sirens, the journey through Scylla and Charybdis (avoiding the 'Wandering Rocks' Circe had warned him about), the transgression against Zeus on the part of his crew in killing the sacred oxen on Trinacria and the subsequent shipwreck - which he survives only to be held captive on Ogygia. Odysseus' tale comes full circle. We are back with the Phaeacians. The rest of the 'Odyssey' tells of the hero's final homecoming, to Ithaca, and to new trials and ordeals out of which he emerges triumphant.

When put ashore on Ithaca by the Phaeacians, Odysseus does not recognize his immediate surroundings. After over twenty years of wandering and exile, the precincts of his home island are dissociatingly unfamiliar. With Pallas Athena's help, he himself is made similarly unrecognizable when she transforms him into an indigent and destitute old man. Odysseus visits Eumaeus, the keeper of the Royal swine, obtaining shelter and information on what has been happening in his absence. Eventually, Telemachus

returns from the court of Menelaus and also goes to see Eumaeus, where he finally meets his father. Re transformed by Pallas Athena, Odysseus declares himself to Telemachus and they plan violence towards Penelope's suitors/the usurpers of legitimate power. Telemachus infiltrates the palace and hides the suitors' weaponry. While this is happening, Odysseus first appears before Penelope, disguised in his transformed aspect. Showing an unmistakable mark of his true identity, Odysseus prepares his bow for the coming contest to find a suitable marriage partner for Penelope. The contest is used as an occasion for massacre. Only after he has killed all of the suitors does he reveal himself to his wife. But, not recognizing him, Penelope asks for proof of his identity. She is ultimately convinced when Odysseus notices that the conjugal bed occupies a different space in the room from that he had remembered. He is also familiar with the construction of the bed, which he made himself. Odysseus' homecoming is complete. He has defeated his enemies, is reunited with Penelope and Telemachus and rules once again in Ithaca.

First, we can identify the initially technical gestures 'Ulysses' makes in relation to the 'Odyssey'. These can be simply enumerated:

- 1) the construction of a relationship between the wholly subjective and the wholly archetypal.
- 2) the shift from Presence to abstraction.
- 3) the articulation and assertion of identity.
- 4) the use of metaphorical and concrete displacement.
- 5) the vacillation between the figurative and the literal.

These provide the inaugural setting for the Joycean community as one which "is a matter of ... existence inasmuch as it is *in* common, but without letting itself be absorbed into a common substance" (4, p. xxxviii). This "existence", though, is not a given. Not something we inherit unreflectively. It needs to be

'done' and it needs to protect itself from being "absorbed into a common substance". Existence should signify the developing process of a being that is both singular, exposed to modernity and that is held in-common, both with contemporaries and with the traces of the human past that are apparent in myth or in a modified 'absence of existence': things the conscious "existing" mind forgets but which are nonetheless present, binding, which complete and reveal the ways in which the being, of which existence is a part, is shared out.

Joyce's 'Ulysses' is the story not of adventurous decades in the life of a famous man, but of a day set in the Dublin of 16th June 1904. In the telling, it focuses on three characters: Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom and Molly Bloom. Like Homer, Joyce begins the book with the first of these characters, who has returned to his home town from Paris. Stephen's presence in Dublin is ostensibly explained by his mother's recent illness and death. There are tensions and conflicts surrounding his relationship with Mulligan (with whom he quarrels), along with his unrecognized feelings of guilt, grief and cultural/political confinement.

The action of the episode takes place in the early morning, just as Mulligan, Stephen and Haines (an English visitor) are awake and preparing for the day. We are told that Mulligan is a medical student, Stephen a frustrated writer who is at present an unsuccessful and reluctant schoolteacher and Haines the English visitor is researching for a book collecting living examples of Irish folk-tales and sayings.

After breakfast, the three of them go out - Haines and Mulligan to swim and Stephen to his job at the school. The quarrel with Mulligan is a serious one, causing the friendship to be forgotten: just as Telemachus' appeals for Ithacan help to find his father are mocked, Stephen's very real grief at his mother's death and his pervading sense of crisis are similarly jeered at by Mulligan. Leaving the key to the front door of the Martello Tower on the mocker's shirt, which he takes as indicative of a final breach, Stephen moves on - only to be frustrated again.

We find him in the 'Nestor' episode teaching Classics and Ancient History, confronted by a "dull ease of the mind" (1, p. 20) on the part of those he teaches. He is learning nothing, achieving nothing at the beginning of the episode, rather like Telemachus on his visit to Nestor. The history he teaches is "a tale like any other too often told" (ibid., p. 21). The country where he teaches is "a pawnshop" (ibid.). Like Telemachus, Stephen's historical and cultural inheritance is under threat. But it is a threat to self-realisation, a threat to singularity rather than to property and position. These last two hold no attraction for Stephen, or if they do the property is intellectual and the position is an artistic one.

Instead of a father, instead of wanting to belong more fully to what has been inherited in the "pawnshop" of Ireland, Joyce's Telemachus is in search of a mode of being that allows his (hitherto uncreated) art to manifest itself. In other words, he wishes to father his own creation, himself, outside any substantive claims that would lead to him being 'absorbed'. Stephen's predicament, then, is "a matter of existence" in the sense we discussed above. In Joycean terms, Telemachus wants to come into being rather than into money. He wants legitimation but of a kind that is not ready-at-hand. To be Telemachus, Stephen must be wilful, must reject substantive claims. In doing this, the matter of his existence is in-common.

Meanwhile Stephen goes to see the headmaster, Deasy, to be paid and sent on his way. In Deasy's study, Stephen is subjected to all kinds of useless advice - mainly on how to conduct his financial arrangements. Deasy also lectures Stephen on the "tale like any other too often told" - Irish history: 'Fenianism', Home Rule, Ulster. The tale Deasy/Nestor tells hardly affects Stephen at all, but it does dramatize the latter's need to escape, to find a sharable type of singularity in the books he wishes to write. In response to Deasy's anti-semitism, Stephen says that history "'is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake'" (ibid., p. 28). Telemachus' 'history' - one which includes a famous father and the prospect of inherited authority - is reversed here. This is despite Deasy's assertion that, "'We are all irish, all king's sons'" (ibid., p. 26). Stephen's confinement within this designation does not excite him or fill him with hope for the future. It merely restricts him. Stephen escapes Deasy after being paid and, leaving the school as Telemachus leaves Nestor for the more helpful Menelaus, travels to the beach ('Proteus'). While there, he starts to reflect seriously on what the past few hours and months can signify, imagining himself having a conversation

with his uncle Ritchie (Menelaus). As well as this, Stephen thinks about what is left of his family, about Paris, about fellow expatriates there and the possible shape that his life and art will take, once ties have been cut. An abstracted version of the god Proteus in the 'Odyssey', this shape constantly changes and tells him (instead of Menelaus) where to find his inaugural mode of being. However, the information received does not lead to action but to a cessation of activity. As Homer left Telemachus behind at the court of king Menelaus, Joyce abruptly takes us back to the start of the day and introduces his second and third, more substantial characters: Leopold and Molly Bloom.

Bloom is in his Ithaca (7 Eccles Street) busy preparing breakfast when we first meet him. The idyll of Ogygia, with which Homer begins his writing of the 'Odyssey', is rendered ironically, with a sharp attention paid to a sense of reversal, of the interruption of the main textual authority. Instead of being served and attended to by an ageless goddess, Joyce's Odysseus begins his adventures in a similar way to Stephen Dedalus. He serves and attends instead. Bloom takes the full breakfast tray with the morning's post up to the bedroom where his wife Molly is half asleep. Unlike Homer's Calypso (and as a human who needs sleep and is fallible) she is dismissive of her spouse at this time of day. Mirroring Odysseus' extenuated reluctance to leave his goddess, Bloom takes his time. He goes out to buy a pork kidney and is soon back in the kitchen cooking it. As it begins to fry, he opens a letter from his daughter Milly, who is working out of town as a photographer's assistant in Mullingar. He brews the tea and takes it up to Molly. When he enters the room, he notices that she has concealed one of her letters beneath a pillow. Bloom is aware that his Penelope, in a total reversal of the Homeric Penelope's behaviour, will that day be unfaithful to him with Hugh (Blazes) Boylan. She is already unfaithful even before he leaves. Unlike Odysseus, whose absence from Ithaca (military duty, shipwreck, capture) is involuntary in the extreme, Bloom stays away from home so Molly can have an affair. Lingering in the bedroom, as Odysseus prevaricates whilst taking leave of Ogygia, Bloom suddenly remembers the frying kidney. It has burnt, but only slightly. He feeds the spoiled portion to the cat. Like Stephen, his Homeric son, Bloom is in mourning. He has to attend the funeral of his friend Paddy Dignam later on in the morning. For the moment, though, Bloom is preoccupied with the more everyday and prosaic (as Odysseus is obsessed with thoughts of domesticity, hearth and home, whilst becoming dissatisfied with Calypso) - his meal, his daughter's letter, the cat, the

newspaper and a visit to the outside lavatory. This done, he leaves the house to go about his business. There is nothing martial or exotic about what Bloom does. Instead of (literally) engaging with monsters and gods, like the Homeric hero, Joyce's Odysseus canvasses for adverts (entrepreneurship here serves as Odyssean resourcefulness). Despite this 'reversal', Bloom's last thoughts before his wanderings commence are of mortality and death. Odysseus wants to escape a static immortality, to go home to Ithaca and Penelope. As Bloom leaves 7 Eccles Street he thinks of his friend Dignam. Joyce's hero is gone for the day, which will last eighteen hours. Odysseus is absent from Ithaca for twenty years. As both set off from the scene of betrayal (Ithaca/7 Eccles Street) and stasis (Ogygia), they are similarly situated, similarly victimized and tested by forces outside their immediate control. The striking thing is that Joyce hereby makes a summer's day in 1904 equivalent to decades of Homeric adventure and also that, in the dense detail of a modern urban existence with its quota of futilities, negotiations and general agglomeration, he gives us a hero who is just as resourceful, ambivalent and victorious as Odysseus himself.

In the 'Lotus Eaters' episode, an advert for Ceylon tea sets him off on a fantasy about the supposed tropical lack of entrepreneurship and industry:

"Wonder is it like that. Those Cinghalese lobbing  
about in the sun in *dolce far niente*, not doing a  
hand's turn all day. Sleep six months out of twelve.  
Too hot to quarrel. Influence of the climate. Lethargy.  
Flowers of idleness." (ibid., p. 58)

Although Bloom's "wonder is it like that" interrupts his fantasy before it can start, unlike his Homeric counterpart Joyce's hero participates in the lotus eating while those around him have more urgent business. Bloom temporarily escapes from the vicissitudes of the day. As Odysseus' crew eat of the lotus tree, forgetting their wider obligations, Bloom similarly 'forgets' himself. But only up to a point. Bloom is always aware in this episode, unlike his Homeric companions, of potential discovery, of the demands that can be made upon his time and attention.

After his Montesquian reflections, he walks to Westland Row post office to collect an illicit letter from Martha Clifford - with whom he has been conducting a quasi-erotic correspondence under the pseudonym

of 'Henry Flower'. Instead of openly reading the letter in the street (forgetting his surroundings, as a true Lotus Eater would) he tries to find a secluded spot but is continually frustrated. Unlike in the mythic world of the Mediterranean, there is no public space available for private reflection. Much to his irritation, he bumps into C. P. McCoy and talks to him about Dignam's funeral, which will take place later that morning, and about Molly's forthcoming singing tour.

Bloom wonders about the contents of the letter in his pocket. Finally, after taking leave of McCoy, he manages to read it while concealed from view by the Cumberland Street train station wall. Martha has pinned a flower to her letter, a modern lotus with its "almost no smell" (*ibid.*, p. 64). Prudently, he then tears up the empty envelope and throws the pieces away. Bloom continues on his aimless early morning stroll, going into All Hallows Church to cool down and hear Mass. He buys bath tincture and scented soap from the chemists. As he leaves the shop, there is another abrupt reminder of the intrusive world around him when Bantam Lyons' "voice and hand" (*ibid.*, p. 70) garrulously ask for a look at his newspaper.

Unwilling to be detained by Lyons, for whom he feels a certain distaste, Bloom says to his persecutor that he can keep the paper, that he was just going to throw it away. Taking no notice of Bloom's request, but reading into his remark a sly tip on the probable winner of the Gold Cup (Throwaway), Lyons gives the paper back to Bloom and disappears as suddenly as he appeared. Bloom sends him on his way with a "God speed scut" (*ibid.*). Temporarily knocked off course, Bloom continues on his way - this time to the Turkish baths. We leave him foreseeing his own body "softly laved" (*ibid.*, p. 71) in an oiled, scented bath. Instead of forgetfulness, there is calm before the rigours of Bloom's day can begin in earnest.

Homer's Lotus Eaters belong nowhere, do nothing, exist in a limbo of common absorption. They are also exotic, utterly strange. There is nothing else like them in the entire epic, which is all struggle. In Joyce, we know exactly where Bloom is at any given moment, who he meets, what his thoughts are. He exists in a continuous flux and his absorption is not one that is immediately common. The facts of his daydreaming, though, are prosaic, common. But, as in Homer, this is the last restful episode in the book, before the rigours can begin. Lotus eating is part of a singular routine, an indication of Bloom's eccentricity. He

stands out from and is not absorbed by the crowd. Thus Joyce's version both interrupts and is continuous with Homer. Bloom is not absorbed, though. The being that muses on Ceylon tea and Martha's flower is modern, yet this modernity is shared as a matter of its presented existence.

The next time we see Bloom he will be en route to Hell, during which time the 'sharability' between the present and the absent, the living and the dead, between the Homeric hero and the compromised modern man, is underlined. Again, it is a "matter of existence".

Odysseus converses with the souls of the dead heroes and their spouses. He also obtains a lot of information apropos the best route back to Ithaca. Bloom remembers those who have left him, those who have died. We also obtain a lot of information, mostly based around Bloom's memories while on the ride to the cemetery. We learn a lot about his life before 16th June 1904, as well as those of his peers and the relationships he has with them. Bloom travels to the funeral with Martin Cunningham, Simon Dedalus and Jack Power. We learn that it is eleven years to the day that his baby son Rudy died. It is also nearing the anniversary of his father's suicide. Molly's infidelity with Boylan is also alluded to and foreseen. Odysseus' son and father are still alive. Unlike him, his wife remains sexually faithful. Nevertheless, he is absent from them and has been so for decades. The Homeric protagonist willingly goes to Hades to acquire information.

In Joyce's epic, information is not sought by Bloom, nor is he a willing communicant. The reflections that beset him come unbidden, are unpredictable and are internal, influenced by but not sourced in the funereal occasion. Bloom does not encounter ghosts as Odysseus does. Instead he has to deal with memory.

As throughout 'Ulysses', the objective occasion (formal remembrance, burial) influences subjective sensibility: Bloom's thoughts are mostly about what and who has left him. The complicated Odyssean ritual libations and sacrifices which open access to the netherworld are mirrored here in a funeral tradition: the carriage driver takes the mourners around Irishtown, Ringsend and Brunswick Street, about which Simon

Dedalus says that it is "'a fine old custom... I am glad to see it has not died out'" (ibid., p. 73). As with Stephen, who we get a glimpse of as the carriage passes Watery Lane, Bloom is isolated, on the periphery in the company of his peers. His thoughts are not made public, as are Odysseus'. They are initially all about his son's conception and death. They are influenced not so much by public ritual as by Simon Dedalus' anxiety about the association his own son has with Mulligan. There is a sharing that sets Bloom off:

"If little Rudy had lived... My son. Me in his eyes... Must have been that morning in Raymond terrace... She had that cream gown on with the rip she never stitched. Give us a touch, Poldy. God, I'm dying for it. How life begins...  
... My son inside her. I could have helped him on in life. I could. Make him independent."  
(ibid., pp. 73-74).

Although Bloom understands Dedalus' anxiety in almost too painful a way, the direction that his experience and subsequent thoughts take is entirely different from the older man. He does not say anything about Rudy to his companions. Unlike Odysseus' otherworldly communicants, most of Bloom's contemporaries remain ignorant of their companion's history (with the notable exception of Martin Cunningham). Functioning in a similar way to the mask that Odysseus frequently hides behind in his dealings with various kings, monsters and deities, large parts of Bloom's own identity and experience are unknown to his company. If they are aware of his son's death, they show no sign. Indeed, they exhibit a gross insensitivity to Bloom. Unlike Odysseus, Joyce's hero is not in charge here. He remains singular, an agent ineluctably exposed to sharing memories of death but without thereby establishing an essential (or even a friendly) connection with any of his fellow travellers. He is nevertheless intimately involved in the occasion and in the wider issues that it opens out upon. Even his companions' insensitivity acts as a catalyst for his thoughts of others - not necessarily sentimental or altruistic.

Anti-semitism is apparent in Cunningham's remark on a briefly-seen figure: "of the tribe of Reuben" (ibid., p. 77). Bloom attempts to tell a humorous story about the figure's son, but is interrupted "rudely" (ibid., p. 78). Bloom's fellow mourners' mawkish reflections upon Dignam's death (as "decent a little man as ever wore a hat" (ibid., p. 79) according to Simon Dedalus) are halted by his statement that the dead man had

the "best death... . No suffering" (ibid.). No one answers Bloom. Right after this a child's funeral passes, about which Dedalus says, "Its well out of it" (ibid.). The we get on to suicide:

"- But the worst of all, Mr. Power said, is the man whotakes his own life.  
Martin Cunningham drew out his watch briskly, coughed and put it back.  
- The greatest disgrace to have in the family, Mr. Power added.  
- Temporary insanity, of course, Martin Cunningham said decisively. We must take a charitable view of it.  
- They say a man who does it is a coward, Mr. Dedalus said.  
- It is not for us to judge, Martin Cunningham said. Mr. Bloom, about to speak, closed his lips again. Martin Cunningham's large eyes. Looking away now. Sympathetic human man he is. Intelligent." (ibid.)

As when his Homeric offspring, Stephen Dedalus, has to deal with Mulligan's more direct insensitivity in the first episode, Bloom is systematically driven back on his own subjective resources by the social ignorance of those around him. As with Odysseus, Bloom's response is to attempt to communicate (as in the joke he tries to tell) and/or to keep secret his own more direct responses. Odysseus masks his reaction with guile and obfuscation, Bloom with secrecy, silence. The main similarity between them is that both are practical men, occupied with pragmatic thoughts. Odysseus does not seek mystical communion in Hades. He wants information and good advice. Bloom's thoughts, as the carriage gets nearer to the cemetery gates, are full of plans for civic improvements. According to him, Dublin should have:

"municipal funeral trams like they have in Milan, you know. Run the line out to the cemetery gates and have special trams, hearse and carriage and all. Don't you see what I mean?" (ibid., p. 81).

He avoids speaking about his own grief and talks instead about a more humanely-ordered means of disposing of the dead. This is not detachment. Bloom's Milanese reflections emerge from his own prior tragedy, with which he is still trying to deal. He also universalises the occasion, noting the simultaneity of Dignam's funeral with others:

"Funerals all over the world everywhere every minute. Shovelling them under by the cartload double quick. Thousands every hour. Too many

in the world." (ibid., p. 83).

The ineluctability and ubiquity of death and its occasions connect him to "everywhere every minute". A further Odyssean parallel suggests itself here: Odysseus is the only man among his company to descend into Hades, to communicate with the dead. So with Bloom. The rest of his companions, although they talk to each other in a way that excludes Bloom and provides them with a sense of mutual relatedness lacking with reference to Joyce's hero, the modern Odysseus is able to reflect upon the communal aspects of death and bereavement (as one funeral is very like another and many happen simultaneously) in a way that the more socially acceptable (eg, Simon Dedalus and Jack Power) do not. Bloom sees Dignam's funeral qua funeral as being shared out, as symptomatic of those "all over the world". Yet Bloom's approach to this reflection is firmly rooted in his own, unique, experience of grief - at his son's and father's deaths. The perception of the 'sharing out' is predicated on the recognition of the occasion of grief as ineluctably and irreducibly singular. Dignam's funeral is not engulfed in generalities. Bloom does not 'speak' to the departed, does not imagine conversation with them. But his reflections upon what death means, in terms of its circumstances, consequences, possible management and inevitability, bring him into contact with the wider world around him.

Bloom has no son, literally speaking. His father and mother are dead. He has a daughter who is absent and an unfaithful wife. He is not defined by these deaths, absences and changes of manners, though. He is able to view the intimate and tragic social occasion of a funeral as being shared out, as Odysseus is able via ritual to communicate with the dead. Rather than emerging from Hades, as Odysseus does, with concrete information, Bloom does not know anything on his escape from the cemetery that he did not at least suspect or allude to before. After the Hades episode, Bloom becomes fully involved in the day of business, of routine, of conversation and of decision. Like Odysseus, Bloom's visit to hell provides him with a subsequent 'direction' that he will follow throughout the rest of the book, culminating in his arrival back in Molly's bed at the end of the 'Ithaca' chapter. For now, though, he merely feels relief that the distress of the last few events and exchanges are over. Before reaching the cemetery gates, he says:

"Back to the world again... . Plenty to see  
and feel and hear yet. Feel live warm beings

near you. Let them sleep in their maggoty beds. They are not going to get me this innings. Warm beds: warm fullblooded life." (ibid., p. 94).

What Odysseus learns in Hades is the best route homewards, which is nevertheless subject to reversal and danger. The advice given him in Hades does not work out to his advantage and he has to wait until he meets Nausicaa before he really begins the final journey home. What Bloom learns is assertion, a refusal to be overcome by thoughts of his own ineluctable mortality. As the book progresses, Bloom will find this form of assertion a source of developing strength and a means by which he 'returns' to the unfaithful Molly. In many ways, this 'assertion' is more consistently effective than the objective set of criteria given to Odysseus. But what Bloom gives notice to here is similarly subject to reversal. He is still kept away from Ithaca, not by storm and shipwreck so much but by his involvement in the working day, his involvement with the "live warm beings" with whom he shares a treacherous and frustrating social space. The conventional precincts of community take on a dangerous aspect, like the Homeric sea.

As with Odysseus, Bloom will have to wait until his encounter with the modern Phaeacian princess (Gerty MacDowall) before his long day finally closes. Back in the world, among "warm fullblooded life", Bloom's assertion in favour of "(plenty) to see and feel and hear" emerges not as altruism but as mischief - as making a Patrician enemy (John Henry Menton) talk to him. The parallel here with the Homeric epic is locatable in Odysseus' encounter with the ghost of an enemy, Ajax, in Hades. Ajax refuses to speak to Odysseus and the latter cannot persuade or force him into any kind of dialogue, even with the evocative blood libation he has made. Ajax turns away from Odysseus. In Joyce's version, Ajax is one of the "live warm beings" referred to by Bloom in his approach to the cemetery gates. The Joycean 'libation', the actuation of dialogue between Menton and Bloom is the "fullblooded life" mentioned at the end of the paragraph quoted above. Directly after he says this, Bloom notices Menton and recalls that the latter:

"Got his rag out that evening on the bowlinggreen because I sailed past him. Pure fluke of mine: the bias. Why he took such a rooted dislike to me. Hate at first sight. Molly and Floey Dillon linked under the lilactree, laughing. Fellow always like that, mortified if women are by."  
(ibid., pp. 94-95).

The source of Menton's dislike is envy of Bloom, who - unprecedentedly - got the best of him once at a lawn game where others were present and who laughed at Menton's defeat. Ajax hates Odysseus because the latter obtained military preferment during the seige of Troy. By acclamation, Odysseus won the right over Ajax to own the battle gear of the dead hero Achilles. As Bloom says that his victory was a "fluke", Odysseus is similarly contrite - though in a much more intense and generous way than his modern counterpart. He says:

"Would  
god I had not born the palm that day!  
For earth took Aias then to hold forever,  
the handsomest and, in all feats of war,  
noblest of the Danaans after Achilleus"  
(5, pp. 182-183).

Menton carries on living after his social embarrassment but, like Ajax, studiously ignores the hero. Unlike Ajax for Odysseus, Menton for Bloom is a ridiculous figure. His "rooted dislike" is entrenched because the modern epic hero "sailed past him" on the bowling green. The seige of Troy, the victory over Achilles, is a bowling match.

Bloom feels no awe for Menton, no admiration. He merely wants to make his presence felt again, to compound a previous embarrassment with another - not to apologise. Unlike Odysseus, Bloom makes his Ajax speak to him. The pretext is appropriate, not arbitrary. Menton, Bloom notices, has "a dinge in the side of his hat" (1, p. 95). With a respectful "Excuse me, sir"(ibid.), Bloom draws his attention to the asymmetry. He does not try to flatter Menton or to expose himself to the possibility that he will be ignored. Menton, being one (like Ajax) who puts a high value on his own social propriety (even in a bowling match), cannot pretend that he does not notice or hear Bloom, especially as there are others present (like Martin Cunningham) who have heard what Bloom has said. His enemy responds:

"John Henry Menton jerked his head down  
in acknowledgement.  
- Thank you, he said shortly." (ibid.)

At least Bloom obtains a response, unlike Odysseus. The latter remains guilt-stricken by his victory over Ajax. Odysseus' references are all to his own unworthiness, his own feelings apropos Ajax's intransigence. Instead of this, Bloom's references to Menton recognize the latter's own absurdity. A hero does not get "his rag out". Bloom further punctures Menton's eminently deflatable persona with mimicry and mockery, as in:

"Thank you. How grand we are this morning!" (ibid.)

This is not the speech of someone remorseful at past conduct, but is centred around a perception of other as limited, as involved in a social space, in community and not in some untouchable, otherworldly realm. The key to the 'being-in-common' and, more obviously, to the sense in which Joyce interrupts Homer, lies in the absurdity of the episode. Ajax loses a bowling match. The prize goes to Odysseus, whose wife is laughing at Ajax because of his incompetence. This is not military honour. It is the closest that modern existence comes to it, though. The absurdity lies in the passion that is brought to bear on the mundane, the inconsequential. Bloom, like Odysseus, remains the victor. It is just that the victor can laugh at his victim.

We now enter the life of the city as a whole in a series of proliferating snapshots of the "Hibernian Metropolis" (ibid., p. 96). We see business transactions and the mechanics of distribution and communication, from the trams and mail cars of the start of the episode ('Aeolus') through glimpses of Bloom at work and Stephen delivering a letter from Deasy to the newspaper office.

Aeolus attempts to help Homer's hero in his Ithacan course by providing him with a sack full of turbulent air. Odysseus' crew, as ever, cause catastrophe by opening the sack prematurely. They find themselves shipwrecked again, far from home and the prospect of ever returning there, having to go back to Aeolus' island for further help but in the process of leaving again come across the Lestrygonians, cannibals. In 'Ulysses', the 'navigational aids' provided are in the form of paragraph headings in the style of overblown newspaper headlines (ie, "Gentlemen of the Press"; "We See the Canvasser at Work"; "Erin, Green Gem of the Silver Sea" and "Return of Bloom" (ibid., pp. 96-120)). Even in an initial sense, though, they do not exist as a possibly helpful resource, a binding or sharing, but serve to mock communication by the attempts made at it in the course of the working day. The 'winds'(words) spoken of here are already chaotic, already

buffeting both Stephen Dedalus and Bloom in a directionless vacillation. The journalists mock their contributors' language, taking it apart as Odysseus' crew open Aeolus' sack. They share their mockery in the editor's office, in the presence of Stephen Dedalus who shares the Aeolus episode, unlike in Homer, with his older contemporary Bloom. Both move in and out of the picture, as Odysseus and his crew leave, come back and again take leave of Aeolus' island. The redaction of 'winds' as 'words' recurs throughout, Bloom reflecting that one especially purple passage read from the newspaper is:

"High falutin stuff. Bladderbags" (ibid., p. 102)

With obvious reference back to the sack that Aeolus imprisoned the winds in. Here, the "bladderbags" is the writer/speaker, the winds the language that issues from him. Not only is the chaos caused by Odysseus' crew mirrored in the episodic nature of the chapter and in the frustration of communication referred to in the language, but also in the agenda of those in attendance upon Stephen and Bloom.

Even when language and significance are abused, when the continuous flow of Homeric discourse is interrupted by the typically modern absurdity of the proliferation of language, sharing exists as a matter of existence, of the absurdity being in-common. The role the newspapermen play is close to the catastrophic one assumed by Odysseus' crew. As well as being a burlesque interruption of Homer, at the same time it participates in a sharing of mythic event with modern circumstance.

The winds having blown themselves out, it is lunchtime, when the whole city seems to be taking time off for nourishment. This regular, conventionally-observed time of day portrayed in 'Ulysses' finds its Homeric counterpart in Odysseus' encounter with the cannibals. Joyce's chapter is named after them: Lestrygonians.

From the episodic framing of the last chapter, wherein frenetic activity and frivolous exchange marks both an interruption and a sharing with the freed Aeolian winds, we are now back with a more unified episode, back with Bloom. In the modern urban scene, Lestrygonian Cannibalism is redacted. It becomes an image of exhaustion, of the need for a temporary change of scene and habit. Bloom says to himself:

"this is the very worst hour of the  
day. Vitality. Dull, gloomy:hate this  
hour. Feel as if I had been eaten and

spewed." (ibid., p. 135)

The modern-day Lestrygonians are the "dirty eaters" (ibid., p. 139) that Bloom sees in the Burton restaurant on Duke street. He enters on impulse, but is immediately repelled by the "pungent meatjuice, slush of greens" and the men there, who are "wolfing gobfuls of sloppy food" (ibid., both quotes, p. 138). The Lestrygonian parallel is emphasised in Bloom's thoughts as he hurriedly leaves the restaurant without ordering:

"Every fellow for his own, tooth and  
nail. Gulp. Grub. Gulp. Gobstuff.  
He came out into clearer air and turned  
back towards Grafton street. Eat or be  
eaten. Kill! Kill!" (ibid., p. 139)

Excessive consumption, then, orders the interruption and the sharing out of myth "Every fellow for his own", as Bloom says. Distaste is the modern version of the danger of being eaten, of being assimilated or absorbed. It is a common enough experience. The land of the Lestrygonians is here temporal rather than spatial. It is lunchtime. By its very designation as a time for eating, lunchtime recurs every day. The Lestrygonians are always among us. But absorption into such a mass can be resisted or avoided. Bloom still has lunch, though, but in Davy Byrne's pub.

On his walk after the meal - going to the library on Kildare street - he sees Boylan. Boylan is another sort of cannibal, who may 'consume' human (menstrual) blood by making Molly pregnant.

"Straw hat in sunlight. Tan shoes. Turnedup  
trousers. It is. It is. His heart quopped softly.  
To the right. Museum. Goddesses. He swerved  
to the right." (ibid., p. 150)

He finds safe haven among "the Greek architecture" (ibid.) of the Capel street library/museum, where he spends his time absently - listening to a debate and inspecting the statue of Venus. On escaping the Lestrygonians, Odysseus finds landfall on Circe's island of Aeaea, to face new trials before being told the route to Hades and home therefrom. Again there is a temporal dislocation or interruption of the order of myth. Bloom's Circean ordeal in Dublin's red light district has to wait until a more appropriate time of day.

Instead, the route to Hades advised by Circe comes next. As Odysseus supervises his crew, so Bloom watches as others navigate between Scylla and Charybdis. The modern version of perilous voyaging emerges as linguistic adventure. As well as this modern filtration of myth - the portrayal of physical danger as spiritual, internal dilemma - we see a re-assignment of mythic role. Or, more simply, a sharing out of the Homeric episodes themselves. This 'interruption' of these episodes ensures their absence but it also means they are present albeit in an attenuated sense. The matter of their existence is visible as metaphor. The means of 'navigation', the intelligence that guides Odysseus between the rock and the whirlpool, is in Joyce an insistence on the comic, on the absurd and scatological reduction of high falutin' phrases.

The rock of Scylla and the whirlpool of Charybdis, dangerous obstacles that sink inexpertly steered vessels, are in their modern versions "brilliances of theorising" (ibid., p. 163). Stephen is called on to make a choice between the universal and the social, represented by Plato and Aristotle. His companions are in favour of "contact with the eternal wisdom" (ibid., p. 152) and of the modern Platonistic Theosophy of Helena Blavatsky (HPB). Stephen mocks this:

"The life esoteric is not for ordinary person.  
O.P. must work off bad karma first. Mrs.  
Cooper Oakley once glimpsed our very  
illustrious sister H.P.B.'s elemental...  
You naughtn't to look, missus, so you  
naughtn't when a lady's ashowing of  
her elemental." (ibid., p. 152)

He does not say he believes in Scylla over Charybdis. Such a choice, if it were to be made - the Homeric parallel points out - would be destructive, would also deny that alternative 'absolute' claims can be avoided and resisted. Stephen willfully and comically refuses to be persuaded into his own destruction. But navigating in such a way brings its own dangers: exile and wandering. But an exile and a wandering that are authoritatively underpinned in their echoing of a founding myth or fiction.

Before the modern Odysseus can undergo the ordeal of passing the Sirens unmolested, Joyce adds an episode not included in the Homeric original ('Wandering Rocks'). The point here seems to be that the world can go on without much of a mythic precedent, but the way in which it goes on is overly episodic and aimless. One needs a foundation or a foundation of a certain type for there to be significance, for there to be a sharing that is properly held in-common. This is not to say that mythic foundation is totally lacking. The Wandering Rocks do feature in the 'Odyssey' but only as a place that is talked about. Joyce's solution to this lack of adventure is a calmative decentering of the 'action'. No single character dominates the episode. There is a proliferative democracy about the section that is absent elsewhere in the book. Everyone we have previously met or heard about is involved, either as a participant and/or as someone spoken about.

Everyone shares in waiting - for someone or something else deferred within the episode itself, or just aimlessly. The characters are between things, en route from one terminus to another, suiting the anodyne time in the middle of the day. We see Father Conmee go from the presbytery to Clongowes school, where he is rector. Boylan is preparing for his afternoon with Molly and putting off business at the Ormond bar with Lenehan until the assignation is over. Bloom - who similarly awaits that day's prophesied consummation of the affair - is idly choosing books for Molly, who waits for Boylan with her husband's uneasy knowledge. We find Stephen wandering without purpose through Dublin, meeting his sister Dilly and an old friend (Artifoni). Both of the latter are waiting for someone or something: Dilly for her father, Simon Dedalus, to ask for money; Artifoni for a tram to take him to the music class he teaches. Finally, all are part of the audience that witnesses the passage of the viceregal carriages: the spectacle of Empire parading itself before a series of episodic figures, who thereby lack their previous significance.

The spectacle of the viceregal carriages (which, tentatively, could be identified with the Wandering Rocks) can be said to represent a denial of cultural difference as significant. As such, the spectacle is the agency by which Homeric significance is subtracted. Both as it is apocryphal and as this itself introduces the possibility of a replacement (say of Homer by the viceregal carriages), the episode functions as a reminder of the risks that a community can run if it relies too much for its significance upon fictive instead of active sources. The Homeric Wandering Rocks are a distant danger, only avoidable via a confrontation with

another danger (Scylla and Charybdis). The apocrypha of 'Wandering Rocks' being over, Joyce takes us to the 'Sirens' episode, where Homeric significance is underlined.

The Sirens of the 'Odyssey' sing songs that no one living has heard. Passing sailors are lured to their island, where they eventually die of starvation. Essentially, their song is an invitation to forget one's primary purpose. In Odysseus' case, this purpose is one of homecoming, of returning to Ithaca. The hero, out of sheer curiosity, wants the distinction of hearing the Sirens' music while ensuring that he does not succumb to temptation. This he does by having himself tied to the mast of his ship. Odysseus thus both exposes himself and continues to make this exposure as safe as possible. He orders his crew to stop their ears with wax, so they can safely ignore the Sirens while rowing past them, onto a supposedly safe haven on Helios' island of Trinacria. As an episode in its own right (ie, as not primarily naming a determinate and easily identifiable set of 'Homeric' characters), Joyce's 'Sirens' chapter also sings an 'unheard' song. That is, it shares music out between its form and its content. The Homeric significance of the entire book of adventures, itself mostly unapparent to the characters themselves, shines through in the structure and the substance of the episode. The chapter starts with a list of phrases that recur throughout in a more developed and varied format, as in:

"Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons,  
steelyringing.

....

"Bronze by gold, miss Douce's head by  
miss Kennedy's head, over the crossblind  
of the Ormond bar heard the viceregal  
hoofs go by, ringing steel." (ibid, pp. 210 & 211).

Misses Douce and Kennedy, barmaids at the Ormond (where, ironically, no one who is tempted to go in is likely to die from lack of food), are the first Sirens we encounter. Instead of forgetfulness (never very possible or long-term in a modern city), the temptations involved here are lust and alcoholic intoxication. As they see the viceregal coaches go by their window, they talk about one of the occupants as indeed being tempted:

"- Look at the fellow in the tall silk.  
- Who? Where? gold asked more eagerly.

- In the second carriage, miss Douce's wet lips said, laughing in the sun. He's looking. Mind till I see....
- He's killed looking back" (ibid., p. 211)

Although the silkhatted occupant of the second carriage does not succumb to temptation, stop his vehicle and enter the Ormond (thus resisting lust), his suppression of his own instincts is a kind of defeat - a victory for the Sirens, whose power over passing travellers is thus emphasised. The silkhatted occupant of the second carriage has social obligations and duties which prevent him from doing what he likes. He does not risk death in passing the Ormond, only ridicule. The initial identification of miss Douce and miss Kennedy with the Sirens is augmented by their position, cowering "under their reef of counter" (ibid., p. 212). This parallel continues when they remember seeing Bloom one evening at the Antient Concert Rooms:

- "- O greasy eyes! Imagine being married to a man like that! (miss Kennedy) cried. With his bit of beard... .
- Married to the greasy nose! (miss Douce) yelled... .
- Married to Bloom, to greasabloom." (ibid., p. 214).

Instead of intentionally enticing Bloom, the modern Sirens feel only contempt for him. Joyce's hero does not hear this part of their song. He is hungry and decides on the Ormond, where he sits with Ritchie Goulding while Simon Dedalus and Ben Dollard run through their repertoire of sentimental ballads.

As Odysseus is tied to the mast of his ship, so Bloom is tied to Goulding while they eat "married in silence". Goulding's "Rhapsodies about damn all" (ibid., p. 244) keep Bloom away from the singers. A bore, then, is the modern equivalent of being restrained. But it is a voluntary restraint, both as Bloom cannot bring himself to be rude to Goulding and as Bloom provides himself with the consolation that the music can be heard "better here than in the bar" (ibid., p. 226). Unlike Odysseus, bound by a rope to a mast, Bloom as the modern equivalent of the Greek hero is not tempted to join the Sirens in the other part of the Ormond, preferring the acoustic pleasure of hearing their music from farther away. He remains as physically distant from the singers as does Odysseus. In an apparent reversal of the Homeric episode, where one hears while the rest cannot, Joyce's version has everyone listening bar one: the hard-of-hearing

waiter, Pat, who does not stop serving food and alcohol. The singers meanwhile invite themselves to give up, to submit, internalising the Sirens' role. Bloom, who does not sing, is their audience. In listening, he is invited to submit, to be absorbed into the occasion. But as well as Goulding's company, he has internal resources of humour and association to guard him against assimilation, against defeat:

"Lionel's song. Lovely name you have...  
Thou lost one. All songs on that theme ...  
Let people get fond of each other: lure them on.  
Then tear asunder. Death. Explos. Knock on  
the head ... . Dignam. Ugh, that rat's tail wriggling!  
Five bob I gave ... . Gone. They sing. Forgotten.  
I too. And one day she with. Leave her: get  
tired. Big spanishy eyes goggling at nothing.  
... . O, look we are so! Chamber music. Could  
make a kind of pun on that. It is a kind of  
music I often thought when she. Acoustics  
that is. Tinkling ...  
All gone. All fallen. At the seige of Ross his  
father, at Gorey all his brothers fell. To Wexford,  
we are the boys of Wexford, he would. Last  
of his name and race.  
I too. Last of my race. Milly young student.  
... . No son. Rudy." (ibid., pp. 226-234).

Unlike the Sirens, who sing in order to influence forgetting in others, Dedalus et al only succeed in forgetting themselves. In the very act of making associations, Bloom escapes from a potential state of entertained amnesia (as in 'Lotus Eaters') and towards a sense of relation. The Sirens, again, do not succeed in their attempt to make Odysseus forget.

As Bloom leaves the Ormond, abandoning Ritchie Goulding just before the music finishes, one other thing helps to 'keep his mind off': his imminent flatulence. He says, "Gassy thing that cider: binding too. Wait. Postoffice near Reuben J's... . Get shut of it" (ibid., p. 236). The relief of this pressing need concludes the episode, as the winds carry Odysseus past the Sirens and on to new perils on Trinacria. Again, safe passage and progress arrive via comedy. It also forms the end of Bloom's period of passivity and the beginning of assertion, which is signalled by the juxtaposition of his flatulence with a patriotic song. Instead, though, of graduating to Trinacria, Bloom's heroic resistance to stasis and submission has to be further tested. The

modern Odysseus has yet to face the Cyclops - where his subversion of the Sirens' songs, as so much bad air waiting to be expelled, will be consciously and severely examined.

The Cyclopean ordeal in the 'Odyssey' is narrated by Homer's hero to his hosts the Phaeacians. Polyphemus, as a typical Cyclops, is a one-eyed monster with a fondness for alcohol, a "wild man, ignorant of civility" (5, p. 135). Finding themselves cast ashore in the country of the Cyclopes, Odysseus and his crew are subjected to contempt and violence. Threatened with Zeus' anger if he refuses to abide by the laws of hospitality, Polyphemus' response is a dismissive one. As "wandering rogues" (ibid, p. 136), according to the Cyclops, Homer's protagonists are fair game. The notion of decent treatment is a redundancy. Polyphemus recognizes only his own appetites and impulses, scorning all other evaluations. He starts to eat his way through Odysseus' crew, intending to cannibalise them all eventually. Odysseus' first impulse, on seeing the Cyclops asleep, is to kill him, but he refrains from this - not for ethical but for narrowly rational reasons:

"if I killed him  
We perished there as well, for we could never  
move his ponderous doorway slab aside.  
So we were left to groan and wait for morning"  
(ibid., p. 138)

Waiting to be eaten, Odysseus hatches a plot to defeat the Cyclops and effect his and his crew's escape from the cave where they are imprisoned, fashioning a spear out of a discarded fragment of wood and planning to blind the Cyclops when the opportunity arises, with help from four of his crew. He offers Polyphemus strong wine, which the monster accepts. On request, Odysseus tells the Cyclops that his name is "Nohbdy" (ibid., p. 140). Unaware of the ruse, Polyphemus keeps drinking and falls asleep among his flock of sheep. Then, with his four volunteers, Odysseus heats the point of the spear in the embers of a fire and drives the point into Polyphemus' eye, blinding him completely.

In the ensuing confusion the heroes start to bind themselves underneath the monster's rams so that when the stone is rolled away from the cave they are able to get free, while at the same time avoiding discovery

by Polyphemus' fellow countrymen. Odysseus' blinded tormentor calls for help from the other Cyclopes. However, they refuse to lend him their aid because his request is based upon an apparent absurdity: on being asked who blinded him, Polyphemus answers "Nohbdy".

Against the advice of his crew, on reaching his ship, Odysseus cannot help himself from defiantly revealing to Polyphemus who really blinded him. Enraged by this and humiliated at his defeat by a physically weaker opponent, the Cyclops breaks off the top of a mountain and hurls the rock in the direction of Odysseus' voice. Though the resultant wave damages the hero's ship, the rock does not make contact. Realizing that his blindness makes violence an ineffective way of dealing with Odysseus, the Cyclops call upon his father Poseidon to avenge him by ensuring that the heroes either never return to Ithaca or die in the attempt. This curse ultimately defers the homecoming, by sending Odysseus through the Aeolian disaster, to Circe, Scylla and Charybdis and Calypso.

In the Dublin of 1904, the Cyclops' cave is Barney Kiernan's bar, as effective a prison as any monster's dungeon. Bloom is looking for Martin Cunningham, so he can talk to him about financial provision for Dignam's widow. At first he is ignored, but while he waits for Cunningham Hynes tries to cajole him into having a drink. Bloom refuses alcohol but accepts a cigar. The conversation that follows touches upon the exercise of state power, Irish colonial history, Bloom's business with Cunningham, the Gaelic sports revival, a recent boxing match, the concert tour organized by Boylan on which Molly Bloom is scheduled to sing, an impending libel case, the relationship between ethnicity and exploitation and the victimisation of Ireland by foreign interests.

As the exploration of these topics develops within the chapter, Joyce's hero is mocked, traduced, dismissed and scapegoated. He is held prisoner by hospitality (his acceptance of the cigar) and accusation. The most vocal and overt representative of the movement from mockery to hatred is "the citizen" (Polyphemus). The latter's chauvinism angers Bloom, who, before temporarily leaving the scene to look for Cunningham

at the court house, repudiates all talk of nationalism as a means of understanding the human past and present. After he leaves, those who are left in Kiernan's bar talk about him.

First this centres around his supposed good fortune in backing the winner of the Gold Cup (Throwaway), an entirely erroneous assumption. Then there is the apocryphal tale often told about Bloom: that he gave Arthur Griffith the idea for Sinn Fein. Momentarily taken aback by this story, they talk in scurrilous and contemptuous terms of Bloom's family history, of 'who he is': his dead father's change of name from Virag to Bloom, his dead son Rudy and of Molly, whose infidelities achieve the status of a common (but spurious) knowledge. Bloom returns and talks to Cunningham.

The erroneous assumption that Bloom has had a big win on the horse race provokes anger and intimidation, as Joyce's hero finally leaves Kiernan's with Martin Cunningham in a horse-drawn cab. Bloom responds assertively to the anti-semitism, designating the citizen's God as a Jew. Enraged, the modern Polyphemus grabs hold of an empty biscuit tin and throws it after Bloom and Cunningham's retreating carriage, missing it completely. Having failed in violence, he sends the dog he has with him (Garryowen) chasing the gradually disappearing vehicle. Bloom's part in the preceding conversation and his concluding assertion send him off to begin his homeward journey, after the decisive encounter with the modern Nausicaa, Gerty MacDowall.

The Cyclopean stylisations of the present chapter tell us of disablement. The Cyclops is one-eyed. For him it is a natural state, one which he takes for granted. So with the citizen, though his one-eyedness is figurative, emerging as stupidity, violence: the insistence upon common origin as a basis for acceptance, the insistence upon absorption, assimilation, consanguinity, the denial of difference. Community, though, exerts its influence, albeit subversively. The citizen is a political cannibal - he attempts to eat or kill what is different. In trying to do this he imprisons those he victimises, those people who are 'cast up' on his shores. He is powerful and his kind are everywhere. But he is stupid. Stupidity is fatal.

The Cyclopes are everywhere, signalled by the recurrence of "eye", "eyes" and "see" in the episode and also the vulnerability to complete blindness that each participant risks, more so in that they only have one eye to begin with.

In the first sentence of the episode, Simon Dedalus says that "a bloody sweep came along and he near drove his gear into my eye" (1, p. 240). In the context of so precisely organized and written a book as is 'Ulysses', the usage points us in a Cyclopan direction. In other words, it is as if the narrator only has one eye: he does not specify whether it is the right or the left that was endangered in his encounter with the sweep. The "my eye" referred to seems to be the only one Dedalus has. This space of significance is also apparent when we first meet the citizen. Dedalus reports, with seeming inconsequentiality, that "he rubs his hand in his eye" (ibid., p. 243). Given the expectation of metaphoric displacement that is set up throughout the book, the usage again exists as a Cyclopan signal. In an indirect and homonymic way, the recurrence of "says I" (ibid., pp. 240 onwards) in the narrator's speech indicates an ontological extrapolation. That is, the 'way of seeing' implied by "my eye" translates into a 'way of being': an ontological 'one-eyedness'. But, incredibly enough, this does not emerge as an atomism. Here are the Cyclopes, the idiotic savages who deny difference but in so doing underline their exposure to the archetypal, to myth, to the supposed destroyers of community.

Bloom has a habit of saying "don't you see" and "you see" (ibid., eg. p. 257). This broadens out the motif of visual perception, making it primarily a matter of comprehension. We usually say "don't you see" when we are trying to communicate with an unresponsive recipient, one who lacks understanding of a basic problem or issue. That is, "don't you see" exists as a plea for what we take to be a matter of common sense. Moreover, Bloom's repetition of the phrase throughout the episode gestures towards a lack of confidence as to his listeners' ability to understand, as if they cannot "see" fully. That is, Bloom implies that the Cyclopan audience to whom the "don't you see's" are addressed require that the obvious be made explicit.

Again and again, though, Bloom finds himself up against those who cannot fully comprehend. Finally, his business done, he escapes. But not without insulting the Cyclops. In this, both camps carry on the roles of

Odysseus and the monster. There is a connection, though, both in the fact of their struggle and of their archetypal nature.

If we were to attend just to the literal facts of the episode, ignoring its humour, subversion and its reference to mythic authority, we would only be able to see a drunken quarrel. But the mythic resonance, albeit discordant - interrupted by an insistent modernity - gives it a more profound meaning, despite the fact that this same 'resonance' is to all intents and purposes absent. Community is done here, in a sense that is close to a recurrence that imitates instead of copies. That the participants are not conscious of the parallels they represent underscores this further.

As Odysseus adopts the strategy of assuming a non-identity ('Nohb'dy') in his preparations for escape, so Bloom becomes 'nobody' in the citizen's eyes because of what he says about nationhood and community. Instead of a 'non-identity' being part of Bloom's specific intention, the ascription of 'nobody' comes from outside him, from the community (of Cyclopes) that he deals with. This is shown in the exchange that takes place between Bloom, Ned Lambert, Joe Hynes and the citizen:

" - A nation? says Bloom. A nation is th same  
people living in the same place.  
- By God, then, says Ned, laughing, if that's so  
I'm a nation for I'm living in the same place  
for the past five years.  
So of course everyone had the laugh at Bloom  
and says he, trying to muck out of it:  
- Or also living in different places.  
- That covers my case, says Joe.  
- What is your nation if I may ask? says the citizen.  
- Ireland, says Bloom. I was born here. Ireland.  
The citizen said nothing only cleared the spit out  
of his gullet and, gob, he spat a Red bank oyster out  
of him right in the corner." (1, p. 272).

At first Bloom's statements seem overly simplistic, naive even. Lambert's and Hynes' mockery of the definition of a nation - as turning each individual into a hegemonic unit - seems to be justified. Bloom's

initial remarks appear to serve as an endorsement of a simple, atomistic individualism. But this conclusion only appears if we proceed from 'Cyclopean' premisses - community as belief or as myth or as common ethnicity - which forget that "the atom is a world" (4, p. 4). Bloom says nothing about origins or myth, nothing about belief. He doesn't appropriate to himself any sense of belonging. If we take 'belonging' seriously, like the citizen, Bloom belongs nowhere. He is 'nobody', lacking an identity. Ironically, this serves to accenuate his *Odyssean* identity (as 'Nohb'dy'). He is 'nobody' to the citizen as Odysseus is "Nohb'dy" to Polyphemus.

It is as if Odysseus were to say to Polyphemus, "I am from the island of the Cyclopes. I was born here'. By the citizen's way of it Bloom cannot say this legitimately. Again ironically, he cannot be truly 'Irish' since he lacks the essential feature: a Cyclopean way of seeing. To say, 'I am Irish' and to be accepted by the citizen, Bloom would have to mutilate or deny a part of himself. To make sense of Bloom's assertion that Ireland is 'his' nation, we have to make a leap that the citizen obviously doesn't. The citizen assumes, in his remarks upon "lost tribes" and ethnicity and upon "our greater Ireland beyond the sea" that community means the participation in a common being. It requires more than the supposedly mere fact of 'being born'. Bloom denies this. Instead, his remark in justification of claiming Irish nationhood, "I was born here", reverses the terms of the citizen's assumption. Ireland as the place of community is "the place of a specific existence, the existence of being-in-common, which gives rise to the existence of being-self." (ibid., p. xxxvii).

Bloom does not and cannot enter in to a 'common being'. But his singularity, the specificity of his existence, only emerges through the relationship he has with those around him. The fact that this relationship speaks of exclusion, of a being that is peripheral, dismissed, should not be interpreted as denoting a lack of community. If we interpret Bloom's position in this way, we are led back into saying that what is lacking (as it can be styled as 'community') is a common being, a kind of religio-ethnic communion. Bloom's singularity denotes a simultaneous sharing. The 'in-commonness' is not substantive, not a matter of belonging but one of exemplification - both with reference to Bloom and the Cyclops. That

is, they both bear a definite relation to what is absent (myth) as a matter of how their existence is 'done', an existence that remains defiantly modern.

His moment of assertion over, Bloom rides off in the cab to see Dignam's widow, only to reappear in an initially anonymised manner in the 'Nausicaa' episode, where, through the intercession of Gerty MacDowall, he is finally set upon a homeward course. The key here is the notion of 'intercession': the place that the divine occupies is one which serves to dramatise rather than influence directly.

In Homer's epic, the comparable episode occurs near the beginning - after Odysseus, on leaving Calypso, has survived being shipwrecked yet again. Not knowing where he is, Odysseus - naked, tired, in danger of dying from exposure - constructs a makeshift bed and lies down to sleep and protects himself against the worst of the weather. The hero's goddess/ally appears in the princess Nausicaa's dream and makes a prophecy of marriage which is conditional upon her going down to the shore to wash her linen. It is an obviously manipulative tactic that is employed by Pallas Athena: to ensure her client's welfare. Following the dream, Nausicaa:

"fetched all her soiled apparel  
to bundle in the polished wagon box" (5, p. 91)

She then goes down to the shore, accompanied by two handmaidens, ostensibly to do her laundry but really to see if the goddess's prophecy will come true. Pallas Athena intercedes again. As Homer says:

"the grey-eyed goddess Athena made (Nausicaa) tarry,  
So that Odysseus might behold her beauty  
and win her guidance to the town." (ibid., p. 92)

The princess and her servants play ball on the beach. At a certain point in the game, the ball hits the sleeping Odysseus, who wakes up and emerges from the undergrowth where he has been lying. On seeing

him the handmaids run away. But Nausicaa, being of royal lineage, confronts the stranger - imagining him to be the prospective husband foretold by Pallas Athena. Nausicaa is not frightened off by Odysseus, who modestly covers himself while talking to her. The hero flatters the princess, who introduces herself. Odysseus keeps his true identity a secret. When all the signs of shipwreck and physical distress have been washed away and cosmeticised:

"Athena lent a hand, making (Odysseus) seem  
taller, and massive too, with crimping hair  
in curls like petals a wild hyacinth,  
but all red-golden" (ibid., p. 95)

Nausicaa is suitably impressed by this heroic transformation and invites Odysseus back to her father's palace. However, instead of allowing Odysseus to follow her into the town and thence to the palace of Alcinous, she gives him directions - not wanting the social disapprobation that would inevitably follow on her appearance at home with a strange man. Odysseus agrees with this strategy:

"I myself should hold it shame  
for any girl to flout her own parents,  
taking up with a man before her marriage" (ibid., p.97)

After Nausicaa leaves in the direction of her father's palace, Odysseus rests in a grove dedicated to Pallas Athena. He prays to his protectress (who is never very far away):

"Hear me, unwearied child of royal Zeus!  
O listen to me now - thou so aloof  
While the Earthshaker wrecked and battered me.  
May I find love and mercy among these people."  
(ibid., p. 98)

Coming to Alcinous' palace after Nausicaa, being accepted there and enjoying the hospitality that is offered, Odysseus reveals his true identity and tells the assembled Phaeacian court the full story of his adventures. After the hero has finished the telling of his life story, he is offered homeward passage - back to his kingdom, Ithaca, his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus. This episode, then, is the terminal point of the 'Odyssey', when the hero progresses: from a life of wandering to one that centrally involves belonging and acceptance. A similar movement occurs in 'Ulysses', when Bloom encounters the modern Nausicaa in the shape of Gerty MacDowall and where the Homeric themes of intercession, hospitality and

homecoming are subverted and made into a matter of the modern experience that speaks of community, that finds its voice.

In 'Ulysses', the theme of divine intercession is split up into two distinct parts. The first concerns the ways in which the divine is translated into a modern expression. The second concerns the guidance that is provided by this expression. The hospitality that Odysseus enjoys at the court of Alcinous is transposed to a kind of contact that is deferred - based not upon conversation or anecdote but upon a mutually selective/exclusive observation and response. This 'contact' is locatable in the masturbation of Bloom and Gerty MacDowall, which provides the climactic moment of the episode.

Parenthetically, Bloom's masturbation - as we shall see - functions to provide him with immunity to the temptations of the 'Circe' episode and conditions his ability to save Stephen Dedalus (his Homeric son) from ignominy and arrest. Simultaneous with its achievement, orgasm provides the homeward route - though this route is not without its distractions and frustrations.

The first indication that we are dealing in this episode with intercession and guidance (however inadvertent) comes at the beginning when we are shown:

"the quiet church whence there streamed  
forth at times upon the stillness the voice of  
prayer to her who is in her pure radiance a  
beacon ever to the stormtossed heart of man,  
Mary, star of the sea." (1, p. 284)

As the episode progresses and Bloom and Gerty become more aware of one another's presence, "the voice of prayer" keeps intruding on their discrete liaison. The 'voice' becomes plural and they sing "in supplication to the Virgin most powerful, Virgin most merciful" (ibid., p. 291). The ritual of the Mass fades in and out of the scene, the language floating out of "the open window of the church beseeching the "spiritual vessel ... honourable vessel ... vessel of singular devotion" to come to the aid of those assembled therein. The "most pious Virgin's intercessory power" is explicitly invoked (ibid., all quotes, p. 292). She

is the "refuge of sinners. Comfortress of the afflicted" (ibid., p.294). The juxtaposition of the Mass with the awakening of sexual interest between the two protagonists becomes ever more immediate, ending with the appropriation of divine attributes by Gerty herself:

"Queen of angels, queen of patriarchs, queen of prophets, of all saints, they prayed, queen of the most holy rosary ... Gerty could see without looking that he never took his eyes off of her and then Canon O'Hanlon handed the thurible back to Father Conroy and knelt down looking up at the Blessed Sacrament and the choir began to sing the *Tantum ergo* and she just swung her foot in and out in time as the music rose and fell ....

.....

She put on her hat so that she could see from underneath the brim and swung her buckled shoe faster for her breath caught as she caught the expression in his eyes. He was eying her as a snake eyes its prey. Her woman's instinct told her that she had raised the devil in him ....

.....

His dark eyes fixed themselves on her again, drinking in her every contour, literally worshipping at her shrine." (ibid., pp. 295 & 296).

The Mass defines the general situation as one whose theme is intercession. The existence, the full Presence of the Divine, is not an intelligible issue. Rather, 'Presence' per se is transformed in the journey from myth to modernity and back again to one that is attenuated, suborned, hardly there. But it is important, vitally so, for the meaning of 'community' to emerge. The Divine is present only insofar that the Mass being said triggers off associations in the mind of Gerty and provides contact with Bloom and with the archetypal nature of the ensuing encounter.

The choice of "stormtossed" is decisive in that it locates the ensuing scene as one which has Homeric precedent and as one that involves a process of rehabilitation. As Odysseus has been washed ashore after his maritime exertions, so Bloom comes to Sandymount strand after the vicissitudes of his long day. But Bloom's position is not exactly that of Odysseus. There is no divinity to whom he can make direct appeal. However, as we hear the Mass being said, so does he and this is a matter merely of him being in a particular place at a particular time, coincidental with Gerty. There is no special medium through which

disparate and singular agents are brought into contact. The Mass dramatises rather than governs the encounter that develops.

As in the 'Odyssey', we are given the point of view of the 'princess'. The religious service intrudes upon Gerty's awareness of Bloom. There is no gap between the choir who "sing the *Tantum ergo*" and the gradual self-exposure of Gerty. The voices, moreover, would seem to want to influence an idea of purity, of spirituality. Instead, as Gerty swings "her buckled shoe faster", she finds herself aroused on seeing Bloom "eying her as a snake eyes its prey". Unlike Homer's Nausicaa, whose encounter with the modestly covered but otherwise naked Odysseus goes according to the divine plan, achieving the purpose of saving the hero from dying of exposure, Gerty manages to provoke the immodest but fully clothed Bloom into exposing himself. The deviousness of Pallas Athena's scheme is reflected in Bloom's discretion when it comes to public masturbation. Finally, there is the somatic appropriation of divine attributes. Bloom's response to Gerty, filtered through the latter's consciousness as "literally worshipping at her shrine", makes the appropriation explicit.

Without the mimetic properties of the Mass that is being sung, the episode would not have the same intercessory significance. Inadvertently, Gerty makes the connection. There is the movement from the language of the Mass, evident in the earlier passages, to "shrine". Instead of a concentration on the divine itself as a focus of intercession, the movement here mentioned identifies the concentration as being within the encounter between Bloom and Gerty itself, between people who do not know one another and who remain separated after they have met. The connection they achieve, in no sense altruistic, is a matter of their existence inasmuch as it is held in common. The notion of divine intervention, as it comes down to us from the literal readings of Homer and the Catholic Church, is interrupted in that such a literality is no longer available. Divine influence is subverted. The achievement of a transcendence, a communion, a direct line of communication with the divine, is not possible. This is underscored by the sexual nature of the meeting between Bloom and Gerty. Yet the divine is the medium through which the matter of their existence in common is affirmed, both as they are modern and as they act out archetypal roles without being conscious of so doing.

Odysseus' ship lands on the shores of Aeaea after its narrow escape from Polyphemus' boulder and his father Poseidon's anger. It is an accidental landfall, in a region unknown to Homer's protagonist. Unsure of the reception he will receive, the hero sends some of his crew ashore to reconnoitre the area and to bring back provisions if any can be found. Eventually, after waiting on board ship a long time, one of the scouting party returns and tells of his escape from the island's ruler Circe. Circe has transformed the dispatched patrol into swine. Odysseus goes inland, leaving Eurylocus on the boat, and meets the god Hermes, who provides him with advice on how to deal with Circe and with a magical root, moly, which contraindicates both her bewitching influence and any poisons that she may administer. Hermes remarks to Odysseus that if he does not follow divine guidance to the letter he will be "unmanned" (5, p. 156). The hero, thus armed, then goes to confront Circe and the four nymphs who wait upon her.

When Circe's drugged wine does not work and Odysseus threatens her, she knows exactly who she is dealing with. She says, "Odysseus then you are, O great contender" (ibid., p. 157). Having been recognized, Odysseus then sleeps with Circe but remains "oppressed" (ibid., p. 158). He answers her anxiety about this with:

"Where is the captain who could bear to touch  
this banquet, in my place? A decent man  
would see his company before him first" (ibid.)

Thus manipulated by Odysseus, Circe complies with his implicit request in the name of 'decency' and releases his companions from their transformed state. They become men again and proceed to enjoy the banquet that is offered them. Odysseus, as a "master mariner and soldier" (ibid., p. 159) according to Circe, is ultimately victorious. The Homeric hero then goes back to his ship to invite the rest of the remaining crew to the banquet. On seeing Odysseus alive, the shipbound crew are overcome by emotion and greet their commander with:

"their faces wet with tears as if they saw  
their homeland" (ibid.).

After an extended period, during which time Odysseus and his crew enjoy Circe's hospitality to the fullest extent, losing one of their number (Elpenor) in a drunken accident, the hero begins reluctantly to tire of Acaea and asks Circe where he can find the best advice on a homeward route. With regret, Circe gives him instructions which allow him passage into Hades - where the hero will talk with the shades of the past and will find out from Tiresias the route homewards, between Scylla and Charybdis. The results of this adventure have already been described, with the hero and his crew suffering shipwreck, loss and the frustration of their hopes of return. In 'Ulysses', although the comparable episode characteristically parallels the Homeric version, the details of the hero's passage, of the transformation of his companions, of his own resourcefulness in saving them and the ultimate outcome diverge considerably.

Bloom shows a particular fatherly interest in the welfare and foreseeable prospects of Stephen Dedalus. Like Odysseus, he is uneasy, wary of his reception. After a series of humiliating encounters with anonymous strangers and with characters who have figured in the day up until the start of the 'Circe' episode (among them are Cissy Caffrey, Gerty MacDowall, Alf Bergan and Mrs. Breen), he says (to the latter):

"Don't attract attention. I hate stupid crowds.  
I am not on pleasure bent. I am in a grave  
predicament." (1, p. 365).

It is difficult at this stage to say what brings him at this late hour to Dublin's red light district. He could simply be excusing his presence there to Mrs. Breen, who knows Molly and who mockingly teases him. Indeed, it seems that the reasons for his diversion into nighttown are far from clear to Bloom himself. As Mrs. Breen "fades from his side" (ibid, p. 367) and Bloom "walks on towards hellsgates" (ibid.), the Joycean hero reflects on the contingency of his present circumstances:

"Wildgoose chase this. Disorderly houses. Lord knows where they have gone. Drunks cover distance double quick. Nice mixup. Scene at Westland row. Then jump in first class with third ticket. Then too far. Train with engine behind. Might have taken me to Malahide or a siding for the night or collision. Second drink does it. Once is a dose. What am I following him for? Still, he's the best of that lot. If I hadn't heard about Mrs. Beaufoy Purefoy I wouldn't have gone and wouldn't have met. Kismet." (ibid., p. 369).

In these reflections, we get a glimpse of how crucial contingency is in the modern scene, how it is essential in order that the voice of community be heard and, ultimately, how this contingency exists in common with the mythic notion of fate.

What drives Bloom on in his "wildgoose chase"? Bloom's present "grave predicament" is seen in terms, initially at least, of accident and is compared with another "mixup" involving an unforeseen journey. Unlike Odysseus, Bloom is not duty bound to search for subordinates. Bloom's focus is upon Stephen alone, but he does not know why he is following him. Nevertheless, there is something that fills this explanatory gap. It occurs in the movement between "What am I following him for?" and the concluding word of the passage consequent upon the conditional, "If I hadn't ... I wouldn't".

Accident or contingency is here translated into a notion akin to 'unpredictability' - an unpredictability that is not random or incongruent but which fulfils "Kismet" or fate. Here Bloom answers his own earlier question, "Why am I following him?", with a statement that makes fatedness synonymous with an 'accident' that is nevertheless prefigured. If we look for a conventionally-definable connection between Stephen and Bloom, we will only be able to present it as a simple coincidence. As "Kismet", the connection that emerges is one of a consanguinity that is legitimate. Being participants in this 'fatedness' or ineluctability gestures towards a connection between Bloom and Stephen that is more than contemporary, more than between one individual and another. That is, they thereby become archetypal, unconsciously patched-in to the myth from where they derive their mutual significance and from which they share their 'being'.

Community, therefore, is given to Stephen and Bloom "with being and as being, well in advance of all (their) projects, desires and undertakings" (4, p. 35). This does not mean that the sharing Bloom and Stephen experience is realizable within a self-consciously archetypal framework. A conscious 'archetypal framework' would amount to a communion, a homogenisation.

They both remain unaware of their Homeric relation, the sharing that takes place on this significant level. The central fact of community means that this 'sharing' cannot but take place within the relationships that exist contemporaneously, immediately: that the myth, the divine, all of the substantive features of the resource in question, must be interrupted. Indeed, it is this fact that underlines the archetypal nature of the relationship that exists between them, as one that escapes "the relationships of society ('father' and 'son', 'commander' and 'subordinate').

Homer's Aeaea is a dangerous, transformative space - one wherein men are turned into swine who retain a consciousness of being human. Odysseus is, along with Eurolycus, the only one who, in encountering Circe, avoids transformation. This he achieves through the use of a magical talisman provided by the god Hermes. Joyce's redaction is both more mundane and more realistic in its depiction of debasement and immunity. A swine is a common animal metaphor for someone sunk in depravity and appetitive excess. In nighttown, giving in to temptation, Stephen and his companions can be said to sink to the level of 'swine'. Unlike in the 'Odyssey', this transformation is one of consciousness not of external appearance. The terms of the Homeric transformation have been reversed. Among repeated references to pigs throughout the episode (Bloom is carrying a pig's crubeen and a trotter and later he says, "I have been a perfect pig", *ibid.*, p. 449), porcine qualities of mind (appetitive self-obsession/solipsism) are also referred to, as in:

"You hig, you hod, you dirty dog!  
You think the ladies love you!" (*ibid.*, p. 405).

The transformation (which has 'swine' as its referent), actual and literal in Homer, is turned into a possible danger to Stephen and his companions: that of contracting syphilis. The 'swine' parallel is decisively contemporary, if a little anachronistic. Joyce took 'syphilis' to derive from 'su philos' ('swine-love'). Bloom's mission is not simply to reverse an already achieved transformation. It is also preventative.

Bloom is able to avoid pig-like excess and also its consequence, syphilis. What confers exemption upon him is not the possession of a divinely-sourced inspiration/resource. It is far more realistic, far more in

keeping with a world from where the divine as a possibility has withdrawn. To use a Joycean word it is somatic, sourced entirely within Bloom's singular being and singular experience. As Joyce himself put it, Bloom's invulnerability is provided for by "indifference due to masturbation, pessimism congenital, a sense of the ridiculous, sudden fastidiousness in some detail, experience" (2, p. 497). In other words, nothing outside the community he finds himself within can provide for his protection and even then the 'protection' that this provides is inadvertent, fortuitous and entirely contingent. That is, it could be otherwise (which is not the case with any advice and help given by a god).

Although Bloom is resistant to a porcine transformation, this does not make him immune to transformation per se. Neither does his 'resistance' make the modern Circe (Bella Cohen, a brothel madam) rescue his companions nor does it make them compliant, ready to offer the hero any help and advice that is demanded of her. Instead, Bloom is assaulted and humiliated. He shifts gender and age, is engulfed in externalisations of his fantasies (rulership, public acclamation, heroism) and fears (of public disgrace, of being used as a minion by Molly and Boylan, of having his previous sexual conduct made known in an open forum). These shifts and externalisations bear witness to community - as a nightmarish and Utopian burlesque, arbitrary with reference to the justification of its processes of labelling and unstoppable in its activities.

Bloom takes on all the roles assigned within a community in the 'Circe' episode. He is leader, victim, criminal. He is a man . He is a woman. He is a grown man. A schoolboy. All of the "relationships of society" are exhaustively inventoried - not with reference to a group but in connection with one single social agent. In a very short space of time, Bloom turns from a national saviour to despised victim.

Nothing is consistent, continuous but persecution and conventionality. Where Bloom escapes from both is locatable in the fact of his apparently inexplicable search for Stephen Dedalus, which denotes a community not dependent upon the convenient fictions of scapegoats, victims, leaders or easy communal categorisations. It is where "Jewgreek is greekjew. Extremes meet" (ibid., p. 411). The extremes of myth

and modernity, the allround man and the nascent artist, mundane reality and surrealist nightmare, difference and similarity.

Joyce returns to the Homeric order of his hero's experience in travelling homewards after the Circean interruption and gives us the calmative and relatively anodyne 'Eumaeus'.

Put ashore on Ithaca by the Phaeacians, Odysseus does not recognize his home island after so long an absence. Transformed by Pallas Athena into an older, uglier man, he is able to pass inland unmolested. He meets his servant Eumaeus, the Keeper of the Royal Swine, who offers him hospitality in his hut overlooking the palace citadel. Simultaneously, Pallas Athena appears to Telemachus and advises him to go back to Ithaca. He obeys and leaves the court of Menelaus where he has been staying since his father left Calypso behind and found himself among the Phaeacians. On the way to Ithaca, Telemachus meets a stranger, Theoklymenos, a fugitive from the Akhaians, who asks him for passage on his ship. Telemachus agrees and they set sail. He tells Theoklymenos who he is. But he is still unaware of his father's whereabouts and still does not know whether he is alive or dead:

"my father is, or once he was, Odysseus.  
But he's a long time gone, and dead, maybe" (5, p. 248)

Meanwhile Odysseus (who retains his anonymity at this stage) enjoys the swineherd's hospitality and gleans what he can of news of the court, of the suitors and of their political machinations. Among other things, Eumaeus tells the disguised Odysseus of his own noble origins, prior to being captured by a raiding party and being brought to Ithaca as a slave. Eventually, Telemachus appears and is recognized on sight by the swineherd. The hero's son is chided by Eumaeus, as:

"How rarely, anyway, you visit us,  
your own men, and your own woods and pastures!  
Always in the town, a man would think  
you loved the suitors' company, those dogs!"  
(ibid., p. 260).

After greeting Telemachus, Eumaeus moves the conversation on to talk of his other guest who presently shares his hut (Odysseus). The swineherd is under the impression that Odysseus is an escaped fugitive, a Cretan in need of Telemachus' protection. Eumaeus asks the young man if he would be willing to act as the stranger's aide. Diffidently, Telemachus answers by saying:

"I am not old enough  
or trained in arms. Could I defend myself  
if someone picked a fight with me?" (ibid., p. 261)

Finally, after hearing his son speak of the crisis in the Ithacan palace, where Penelope:

"is in a quandary, whether to stay with me  
as mistress of our household, honouring  
her lord's bed, and opinion in the town,  
or take the best Akhaian who comes her way -  
the one who offers most" (ibid., pp. 261-262)

Odysseus, retransformed by Pallas Athena, is welcomed back home by Telemachus. The latter, on being exposed to this magical restoration of what appears to be his father's image and likeness, thinks that a god stands before him.

Father and son then quickly get down to the business of plotting the restoration of legitimate political power in Ithaca, which involves planning violent action against the usurpers/suitors in the palace and their allies elsewhere on the island.

In 'Ulysses', 'Eumaeus' is a transitional episode - between the apocalypse of 'Circe' and the denuded and rationalised calm of 'Ithaca'. In other words, unlike in the 'Odyssey', 'Eumaeus' does not take place precisely on the home scene as this scene has been portrayed previously as Bloom's house at 7 Eccles street. Bloom keeps wandering. However, on a deeper level, 'Eumaeus' does see Bloom 'at home'. In a way, he has been 'at home' throughout the book. That is, the Ithaca of the 'Odyssey' changes its terms of reference. Instead of being solely equivalent to 7 Eccles street, it is also represented as Ireland/Dublin. This is first denoted by the collapse of epic distances, which strategy is adopted throughout the book but becomes more explicit here.

Far from having to cross a Mediterranean-like distance, Bloom and Stephen walk from Nighttown to "the cabman's shelter ... hardly a stones throw away near Butt bridge" (1, p. 501). This, then is the modern equivalent of a long sea voyage. The city is everywhere, as are the opportunities for wandering and adventure. Bloom does not leave Dublin, whereas Odysseus must leave Ithaca in order to return there. As the world narrows, so the space it makes for itself becomes more intensified, qualitatively varied within a very limited space. To have the adventures he has, Odysseus must leave his home island far behind, not just his palace. All Bloom has to do is to step outside the door of his house. Everything is "hardly a stonethrow away", even the exact point from where the hero can make plans for his return to the domestic scene. Also, as Odysseus hears news of the palace from Eumaeus and his companions, so Bloom overhears talk of the state of the nation. The house on Eccles street and its adulterous inhabitants are not referred to by those present, apart from Bloom and Stephen. In an additional sense, then, Ithaca is Ireland. Extremes meet. The keeper of the cabman's shelter is "said to be the once famous Skin-the-Goat, Fitzharris, the invincible" (ibid., p. 508) who took part in the politically-motivated Phoenix Park murders. He drove the cab occupied by the assassins. Skin-the-Goat (who, as the keeper of the shelter, functions as Eumaeus) discusses imperial politics, as in:

"There would be a fall and the greatest fall  
in history. The Germans and the Japs were going  
to have their little lookin, he affirmed. The Boers  
were the beginning of the end. Brummagem  
England was toppling already and her downfall  
would be Ireland, her Achilles heel" (ibid., p. 523)

Unlike the citizen, who knows of Bloom and his domestic difficulties, Skin-the-Goat, who does not (as neither does Eumaeus suspect that the 'stranger' he encounters is his master Odysseus), confines himself to a discussion centred around the balance of power in the world at large. Ireland's legitimate holders of political power, like Ithaca's, have been usurped by a foreign power. However, he can see the day when Ireland will reassert itself against this power, as Odysseus will against the suitors of Penelope. The sense of Homeric/modern equivalence is underlined by the allusion to Achilles, an epic hero, whose vulnerability is said to mirror England's own. Unlike Odysseus' troubles, Bloom's own are entirely personal. That is, political usurpation does not translate directly into domestic usurpation. In the 'Odyssey', the sources are

the same for both. In 'Ulysses' they emerge, along with community itself, from entirely incongruous origins.

The roles that Stephen and Bloom assume in the episode, as elsewhere in the book, possess a similar complexity to that which applies to the general scene of the chapter. As with Telemachus, Stephen is 'absent' at the start, being a "taciturn and, not to put too fine a point on it, not yet perfectly sober companion" (ibid., p. 502). Again, there is a transition - from the literal absence in the 'Odyssey' (Telemachus at the court of Menelaus in Sparta) to one in Joyce's version which is close to being 'not all there'.

As Stephen becomes more aware, less drunken, more fully 'present' in the episode, he begins to engage with Bloom, begins a dialogue of sorts. While they remain, singularly, Bloom the cuckolded advertising canvasser and Stephen the penurious and ambitious writer, they also begin to share - the space where they find themselves, their opposed opinions and experiences and "meaning glances, in a religious silence of the strictly *entre nous* variety" (ibid., p. 514). Bloom does not announce himself to Stephen, as Odysseus does to Telemachus. Instead, knowing that his companion's physical condition is not of the best and also knowing that he has nowhere to stay that night, Bloom "in orthodox Samaritan fashion" (ibid, p. 501) keeps an eye on him and thereafter invites him back to 7 Eccles street. The apparently prosaic nature of the connection that develops between Bloom and Stephen is made deeper by the latter's wilfully 'Telemachian' ignorance as to his father's whereabouts and condition of life. There are two passages in the episode which provide both the bona fide of this claim and which indicate that the 'father-son' relationship that is identified operates not on the level of essential but deferred connection between Bloom and Stephen but is locatable as 'community' itself. That is, Bloom and Stephen do not 'become' father and son - even as they exist as Odysseus and Telemachus. What is manifested and expressed in their meeting, rather, is community, the sharing-out of singularities.

In response to Bloom's polite inquiry about Stephen's father, the latter says:

"- I believe he is in Dublin somewhere, (he)  
answered unconcernedly. Why?" (ibid., p. 507)

Later on, when Stephen is more aware of his surroundings, a sailor asks his name. On receiving a reply, the younger man's interlocutor goes on with:

"- You know Simon Dedalus? he asked at length.  
- I've heard of him, Stephen said.  
Mr. Bloom was all at sea for a moment, seeing  
the others evidently eavesdropping too." (ibid., p. 509)

Completing the picture, we are given a portrayal of Stephen as he is seen through Bloom's eyes, "the image of his mother " (ibid., p. 541). Like Telemachus, then, he lacks a father - not because this father does not exist but because he has been hitherto absent from his son's life. Bloom does not step in to fulfil this role, much as he fantasises about doing so. Stephen's studied indifference to family ties (particularly those of father to son) disbars this possibility. Stephen is resistant to even the most disinterestedly polite and conventional questions concerning his father. Nothing vitally depends on a recovery of contact between father and son. Instead, Stephen deals with someone who escapes the designation. That is, someone who cannot be thought of as his father, merely an acquaintance - someone he has come across in the course of the day.

Odysseus and Telemachus return to the prior condition of father-son - prior, that is, to the father's wandering. There is no such recovery of contact in 'Ulysses', or at least not of the same kind. True, the level of contact between the two men deepens into something like friendship, like the relationship between helper and helped. But there is nothing immanent or essential about the contact thus established, except on a mimetic, archetypal level. Although at one stage in 'Eumaeus', Joyce drops his methodological guard to make some indirectly substantive points about community and agency.

Stephen denies that community can be thought of as 'belonging-to' a matrix of essential relations (that of son to father being one of these). Instead, he reverses the terms of his equation, giving priority to the singular agent - who no longer 'belongs-to' a community in order to achieve agency but who is made

singular (ie, made into something sharable) by virtue of the community that 'belongs' to him/her. This is made explicit in an exchange between Bloom and Stephen:

- "- You suspect, Stephen (said), that I may be important because I belong to the *faubourg Saint Patrice* called Ireland for short.
- I would go a step farther, Mr. Bloom insinuated.
- But I suspect, Stephen interrupted, that Ireland must be important because it belongs to me.
- .....
- Stephen, patently crosstempered, repeated and shoved aside his mug of coffee ... adding:
- We can't change the country. Let us change the subject" (ibid., p. 527).

As he himself says, Stephen is not "important" (singular, unique, significant) *because* he "belongs" to Ireland: community (expressible, say, in terms of 'fatherland' or 'family home') does not enter in as a guarantee of specialness or significance which is separable from any given agent. Rather, a given agent (ie, Stephen) bestows his/her own importance upon community itself: community belongs to the singular agent, not vice versa. What this can be taken to mean is that community, as it 'belongs', is also *derivable from* such a singular agent. Community is not imposed. Rather, it emerges. Such an emergence cannot really take place if one views community as something that appropriates difference.

For community to emerge, there must be a simultaneous affirmation of difference - which is what is shared, what happens between singular agents ineluctably. The relationship between Simon and Stephen Dedalus, as that which applies analogously between Stephen and Ireland, cannot be sustained as 'community' because it appropriates singularity. The relationship between Bloom and Stephen, on the other hand, expresses community because no guarantees of 'belonging-to' one are assumed. Instead of changing their relationship, the unalterability of community merely changes "the subject". That the connection between Bloom and Stephen is a tenuous one is underlined by the homonymy of "step farther" (stepfather). But this does not mean that it is thereby inauthentic, unsustainable. Rather, it means that community (as simultaneous with a 'relationship-between') cannot be reduced to essentials, to a consistent or immanent reality. This is taken much further in the following two episodes, which see Stephen and Bloom arriving

back 'home' at 7 Eccles street ('Ithaca'), the younger man's departure and Bloom's victory over Boylan and Molly's final words of affirmation in the 'Penelope' episode.

In the 'Odyssey', the hero's return to his palace is carefully plotted - there being a danger of assassination at the hands of Penelope's suitors. Together with his son, Odysseus lays meticulous plans for the assassination of these suitors at an archery contest to be held within the palace walls. Disguised, so as no one suspects his true identity, Odysseus obtains his bow and strings it as only he can. Meanwhile, Telemachus has hidden the swords and shields of the suitors. On winning the contest, Odysseus then proceeds to kill his rivals. After this, he confronts a Penelope who does not recognize him but who is prepared to establish Odysseus' identity as her husband and the legitimate ruler of Ithaca with a series of detailed questions concerning their life together. On noticing that the marital bed has changed places, Odysseus convinces Penelope that he is indeed her husband. No one else has had unsupervised or unchaperoned access to the bedchamber where their conversation takes place. So anyone knowing of the rearrangement must have had a previously intimate connection with the lady of the house. Both Penelope's sexual fidelity and Odysseus' identity are affirmed. The hero is finally home, finally established within the community he left twenty years previously.

Joyce chose to end 'Ulysses' with two very distinct voices. They can nevertheless be read as all of a piece, 'Ithaca' providing the introduction to the affirmation contained in 'Penelope', providing for its possibility in the same way as Odysseus' answers to his wife's questions provide him with final access to Ithaca.

In a letter to his friend Frank Budgen, dating from the end of February 1921, Joyce says that he is "writing Ithaca in the form of a mathematical catechism" (2, p. 501). In the same letter, Joyce says of the final episode of 'Ulysses' that it is "the indispensable countesign to Bloom's passport to eternity" (ibid.). 'Ithaca' and 'Penelope' were therefore intended to be counterparts. The sense of this is underlined if we take Joyce at his word when he says of the former episode that it is a "catechism".

'Ithaca' takes the form of a rigorous question-and-answer session. As Bloom and Stephen talk and drink cocoa, we are given an objectified series of exhaustively detailed and prolix reports on their relative states of mind, their (sometimes divergent) opinions, their pasts and the domestic environment in which they find themselves. Nothing is left out, even the most apparently irrelevant detail, amounting to an inventory of experience past, present and future, personal and impersonal.

The kinds of questions that are asked (and answered) range from an inquiry into the "parallel courses" (1, p. 544) followed by Bloom and Stephen on their way to 7 Eccles street, to the "supererogatory remarks of special hospitality" (ibid., p. 553) shown by Bloom to Stephen, to the "points of contact" (ibid., p. 564) existing between the Irish and Hebrew languages and the source of the tapwater Bloom boils in the kettle to make cocoa. As a "catechism", though, the episode in question is not solely explicable in this formal sense. To be a catechism in a fuller sense, the question-and-answer session must be purposive. That is, the instruction that is received and exemplified is a preparation for acceptance.

In its narrowly religious sense, this acceptance is one by the Church, so that one can participate in the Eucharist in the act of Communion. So that one can belong, in receiving the consecrated elements of bread and wine offered in the Sacrament. In Joyce's usage, the "catechism" of 'Ithaca' is somatically-ordered, paying no attention to hypostasis or Communion. Instead of showing an essential nature, 'Ithaca' opens out towards an exchange of thoughts, emotions and experiences, a sharing-in-common of all that is asked about in the movement of the "catechism" and one that is Eucharistically sexualised in the final episode, when Bloom resumes his place in his wife's affections. This is first denoted formally: the structure and range of the episode precludes the reduction of Bloom and Stephen (and the world they inhabit) to a series of essentially similar and easily-enumerated properties. Secondly, and more importantly, despite the overwritten precision of the language, the substantive range of 'Ithaca' (as it is all-inclusive) excludes a sense of foundation that is narrowly reductive. Nevertheless, as in the 'Odyssey', the questions and answers (as they go to make up a "catechism") are necessary preconditions for the emergence of the final form that community takes, of a sharing/acceptance that is prepared for. This does not operate on a self-conscious level.

We are not given direct access to what Bloom and Stephen have to say. Neither is conscious of participating in a catechistic enterprise. The narration, as has been said, is objectified. In other words, the 'preparation of acceptance' operates on a Homeric level, outside the consciousness of the participants.

Odysseus must fulfil certain conditions before Penelope acknowledges him as the legitimate ruler of Ithaca and her rightful husband. First, he has to obtain entry into the palace, relying on Telemachus to disarm the suitors. Then he has to carry out his plan of violence against these suitors, using the archery contest as a convenient pretext. Having slaughtered his rivals, the hero then has to answer Penelope's questions before his identity and his role are confirmed. In 'Ulysses' there is not the same sense of obligation, but Bloom has to pass through the "catechism" before he can obtain the necessary "countersign".

Lacking a house key, Bloom answers the problem of access to 7 Eccles street by a "stratagem" (ibid., p. 546). He lifts himself over the railings in front of his house and jumps down towards an unlocked "area door" (ibid.), raising the latch and gaining "retarded access to the kitchen through the subadjacent scullery" (ibid.). What follows upon this, in the objectified reportage of the conversation between the two men, is a confirmation of Bloom's identity separate from Stephen's and as it is closely tied in with 7 Eccles street and the subjects therein discussed.

Bloom is reminded of discussing "similar subjects during nocturnal perambulations in the past" (ibid., p. 545), of the "vigil of the anniversary of the decease of Rudolph Bloom (born Virag)" (ibid., p. 570) a year previously. When Stephen leaves Bloom's house, the older man is left alone downstairs, his hopes of establishing a continued connection with the younger man defeated. Bloom notices, like Odysseus does, that there are "alterations effected in the disposition of articles of furniture" (ibid., p. 579) in his living room. The rearrangements attest to Boylan's previous presence in the house. Unlike the Homeric suitors, Bloom's rival is no longer there, no longer present. All that remains is "circumstantial evidence" (ibid., p. 580). He does not need to remove his rival from his house, unlike Odysseus. Nor does he plot violence. Instead, Bloom looks through his private possessions, external confirmations of his identity, as in:

"A Vere Foster's handwriting copybook, property of Milly (Millicent) Bloom, certain pages of which bore diagram drawings marked *Papli*, which showed a large globular head with 5 hairs erect, 2 eyes in profile, the trunk full front with 3 large buttons, 1 triangular foot" (ibid., p. 592).

Bloom also looks out his birth certificate and the deed poll document that is evidence of his father's change of name from Virag to Bloom. There are also photographs: of Bloom and his father, of the hotel at Ennis where Rudolph Bloom committed suicide. There is Bloom's father's suicide note and a haggadah book. Bloom's whole past is concentrated in these artefacts, the material precincts of his inherited and maintained identity. But Bloom's purpose in doing this is not as immediately urgent as Odysseus'. Without these material proofs of his existence, he is still Bloom. He is still home. He will not be deprived of anything concrete, as Odysseus will, if he lacks this proof. Bloom's immediate purpose seems to be elegaic - a contemplation of loss rather than an attempt to regain what has been almost taken away from him. But we are not given access to Bloom's motive for going over the material remnants of his past. It seems to be less than clear to the modern hero himself why he is doing so.

Unlike Odysseus, Bloom does not have to rely solely on his own resources, his own memory, his own persuasiveness, to convince a disbelieving interlocutor that he is who he is. Indeed, the resources at Bloom's disposal come from outside of him - both in the sense of being materially independent and in the sense of being written, drawn or otherwise taken by another. Moreover, there is no need for him to go to his wife and present her with the assembled artefacts as 'proof'. She already knows who he is. So, like Odysseus, he is preparing himself for a confrontation with his wife's 'suitors', with the imminent reality of his own usurpation.

Bloom's actions look less elegaic and more like consolidation, more like a centering of the self in familiar surroundings. Counterfactually, we can say here that Stephen does provide some Telemachian 'help' here, albeit in a reversed sense. By refusing Bloom's offer of hospitality and by leaving the house, Stephen

inadvertently provides Bloom with the opportunity to indulge in the aforementioned 'centering'. Otherwise, Bloom would be reliant upon Stephen, he would be in a situation of dependence. Instead, out of contact with the contemporary world, Bloom looks back on what this world has acceded to him in the past. It is a very minimal sort of assertion, one that goes no way towards that kind represented by Homer's hero. But as 'assertion' it is one attribute that Bloom shares with his Homeric counterpart, one that is necessary for 'victory' over Boylan in a way that does not involve violence.

Odysseus massacres Penelope's suitors. He is then admitted to the royal bedchamber to be cross questioned and ultimately vindicated. In Bloom's case, the 'victory' occurs independently of him, without violence. He does think of revenge, though, as in:

"Assassination, never, as two wrongs did not make one right. Duel by combat, no. Divorce, not now. Exposure by mechanical artifice (automatic bed) or individual testimony (concealed ocular witnesses), not yet. Suit for damages by legal influence or simulation of assault with evidence of injuries sustained (selfinflicted), not impossibly" (ibid., p. 603).

Such possibilities are not open to Odysseus. Violence, the brutal annihilation of opponents, is the only answer. Bloom, as a modern, has more resources at his disposal, more with which to speculate, including an absurd and ignoble suit "for damages by legal influence". Violence is out of the question. Instead, modernity (as the temporal context wherein "legal influence" operates as an outgrowth of community) offers more possibilities, the multiplication of which - however - does not lead to action but to "equanimity" (ibid., p. 602). Adultery, unthinkable for a woman in the world Odysseus inhabits, is here quite common, quite amenable to influence, to anodyne philosophical speculation as to its probable outcome.

Instead, though, of acting on what modernity has to offer, Bloom remains inactive. The final reason for this is that he notices his wife's menstrual blood in the chamber pot under the bed: Molly is not pregnant. This, then, is the extent of the blood-letting in 'Ulysses', a blood-letting that occurs outside the hero's control.

Boylan has not supplanted Bloom. After a "catechital interrogation" (ibid., p. 605) by Molly on the general subject of Bloom's day, the hero falls asleep. Molly is left to herself, to have the final word in the Joycean epic. It is in this word that we find the conclusion of community, its ultimate expression. This also sees Bloom's triumph, founded upon Molly's final answer.

But before we can get to this, we can ask ourselves a difficult question: Where is community here? Bloom is alone, unconscious. His best efforts at connection have been defeated. He seems inadequate, absurd, too ordinary a figure to bear the responsibility that communal significance confers. He remains separated, an outsider, humiliated, exiled. Apparently so. But only if we approach the whole question of community from the standpoint of 'what constitutes?' That is, if we adopt a social epistemology that owes its founding assumptions to the need to make substantive points, as in Sade and Dostoevsky. We are dealing with a different set of questions here, one whose terms of reference lead out from modernity to confront the entirety of the human past in its mythical, archetypal aspects. Joyce interrupts these aspects and simultaneously provides an example of community. He interrupts in that Bloom does not copy Odysseus. He does not confront Boylan violently, or even directly. He does not, he cannot, re-establish a sense of connection, a sense of belonging that once accrued to him as a matter of course. Instead his existence, his being that continually dies away and comes back again, is one that connects him to the founding fictions of human civilisation, to myth. His sharing is one that does not restrict itself to the limits imposed by modernity, even when those limits are ineluctable, impassable, when they interrupt the continuous flow of mythic discourse. Bloom triumphs. But it is a triumph that is modern, comic, not conscious of itself because its 'self' - as a matter of existence - belongs elsewhere, belongs to a being that is held in common outside of any question of competence or control.

Homer's Penelope is the sexually and politically besieged wife, who remains scrupulously loyal to and anonymous in the absence of her rightful husband. Odysseus arrives on the scene just as she is about to submit to the victor of the archery contest that is to be held. With her remarriage, the whole of Ithaca will

pass into other hands. In this, she appears as a prized goal, an objective rather than an individual. However, once Odysseus has won the archery contest and reveals himself to her, she comes into her own. It is she who decides whether Odysseus' replies are satisfactory or not, whether he will always be mistakenly regarded as a usurper or as the legitimate ruler of Ithaca. After this, Penelope fades out of the picture as her husband wages war on the suitors' allies and emerges victorious. The last words, of reconciliation, are given to Pallas Athena in the form of Mentor. Peace and tranquility are restored, as is Odysseus.

Molly Bloom, Joyce's Penelope, is the adulterous wife of the modern hero. Far from being silent and submissive, she is given a chapter all to herself, the final word. There is no Pallas Athena to demand a cessation of hostilities. Bloom arrives on the scene only hours after Boylan, his only rival, has left. Also, unlike in the 'Odyssey', Bloom does not need to be 'reaccepted' in the sense that Molly knows everything about him already. Unlike Penelope, she does not doubt that it is her husband who now occupies the space beside her. Moreover, there has been no definitive break with Boylan. Bloom's admission to the bed where his wife lies appears to change very little or nothing in their relationship, which also appears to be scarcely relevant to 'community'. But this is so only in a simplistic sense. Molly may be sexually unfaithful with Boylan, but she remains emotionally loyal to Bloom, providing a version of fidelity that is more in keeping with the conditions modern urban life imposes and also one which is more realistic given the lack of sexual congress with Bloom. Alongside her mockery of him, "doing his highness to make himself more interesting" (ibid., p. 608), she likes that he is "polite to old women like that and waiters and beggars too hes not proud out of nothing" (ibid.). She is also protective of Bloom, saying of his associates that:

"they're not going to get my husband again  
into their clutches if I can help it making fun  
of him then behind his back ... because he  
has sense enough not to squander every penny  
piece he earns down their gullets and looks after  
his wife and family" (ibid., p.636).

Here, there is a distinct difference between how she thinks of Bloom and how she thinks of her lover Boylan. He is referenced as typical, of being hardly worthy of attention. His lovemaking is depersonalised, abstracted into a series of generalities surrounding the animality of the sexual act. Molly says at one point:

"like a Stallion driving it up into you

because that's all they want out of you  
with that determined vicious look in his  
eye" (ibid., p. 611).

The depersonalisation of Boylan is gestured at in the movement from "they" (ie, men-in-general) to "his" (Boylan). Bloom is not referred to in this way. He remains singular, unique, in much the same way as Odysseus remains so in comparison with the homogenous mass of Penelope's suitors. Nevertheless, though, Bloom is excluded sexually. This is the sense in which he has to be 'reaccepted': in a 'contest' between him and Boylan, which occurs in Molly's mind independently of both of them. This is where the 'final word' assumes a central importance, relatable not only to the (problematic) resolution of marital difficulty but also to community, to the relationship between the singular and the shared. In short, Penelope's reacceptance of Odysseus, of community's rescue from usurpation, a restoration of legitimacy, is inscribed within Molly's repeated use of "yes" as an 'answer' and as a mnemonic trigger. In this, it is neither as substantive nor as definite as Penelope's reacceptance of Odysseus, but it nevertheless expresses community in the most affirmative aspect that is available within modernity. To emphasise this claim, it is first necessary to turn to Derrida's work on "yes". Derrida, in enquiring into the usage of "yes" in 'Ulysses', says that it:

"must be taken for an answer. It is always in the form of an answer. It supervenes after the other, to answer a request or a quotation, at least implicit, of the other, even if this is the other in me, the representation in me of another word" (6, p. 34).

This insistence is intended as a rebuttal to those who see 'Penelope' simply as a monologue, or speech/writing that is unrelated to any other. Instead, "yes" implies an other, a response to that other who, however unspecified, remains present. For our present purposes, this opens out into community, into a sharing of singular difference with an other. "Yes" may indeed be an answer in itself, without need for further elaboration. As such, it confirms that one is responding, that one recognizes that an answer is expected. In Molly's case, the sense of 'answering' is complicated by the fact that it is initially unclear who she is saying yes to and by the fact that every time she says it she remembers her first lover, Lieutenant Mulvey, Boylan and Bloom himself. She also recalls her own private and unbroadcast reactions to the

people she has previously met and conversed with. "Yes" still centrally involves an Other or the memory of same, as in her recollection of her sexual awakening in Gibraltar:

"Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of  
the mountain yes when I put the rose in my  
hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall  
I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under  
the moorish wall and I thought well as him as  
another and then I asked him with my eyes to  
ask again yes and then he asked me would I  
yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I  
put my arms around him yes and drew him down  
to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes  
and his heart was going like mad and yes I said  
yes I will Yes" (ibid., pp. 643-644).

In this, we see Derrida's analysis borne out. Molly confirms her previous identity as a single girl in Gibraltar, a "Flower of the mountain". She answers her own question "shall I wear a red" and answers Mulvey's proposition affirmatively. Bloom appears as the lover who says "my mountain flower". The "yes" here, as elsewhere in the episode, is sexualised, as is Bloom's 'reacceptance'. As a response to a question or a request, "yes" simultaneously affirms the significance of the other, responds to what is outside the singular ego. Risking rejection by asking the question, other recognizes the singular ego as singular, as independent but sharable. In the passage, moreover, Molly, Mulvey and Bloom remain as they are. There is no merging into a common being, since if there was what need would there be of a response that could be otherwise? "Yes" is not guaranteed and it does not provide a comfortable closure. Bloom and Molly are not 'reunited' as Odysseus and Penelope undoubtedly are. Molly's final thoughts are directed towards Bloom, though it remains unclear to whom the final "Yes" is directed: to the remembered Mulvey or to her husband as a younger man (since "said" puts the passage in the past tense). Community, as the sharing-out of singularities, exists just as "yes" exists: as a supervention after the Other.

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## **Conclusion**

“The page that was blank to begin with is now crossed from top to bottom with tiny black characters - letters, words, commas, exclamation marks - and it's because of them the page is said to be legible. But a kind of uneasiness, a feeling close to nausea, an irresolution that stays my hand - these make me wonder: do these black marks add up to reality? The white of the paper is an artifice that's replaced the translucency of parchment and the ochre surface of clay tablets; but the ochre and the translucency and the whiteness may all possess more reality than the signs that mar them”

(Jean Genet, 'Prisoner of Love', p. 3)

Literature gives us community as a matter of being, not as a matter of discretely competent substantive decision. It leaves epistemology behind just as it does not participate in the process of measurement, addition and subtraction that happen as a matter of economic or professional activity. It contra-indicates all attempts to see it as such. We see such contra-indication in the work of Sade and Dostoevsky. Only in Joyce does literature assume the role we have assigned to it. This is difficult to accept initially. In concluding the thesis, we hope to reiterate and strengthen this position in the light of a serious objection to the entire enterprise.

What we have been moving towards - and this 'moving' is by no means completed - is a way of thinking. A way of thinking that tries to shrug off the weight of past conceptualisations and ambitions. It is part of what we mean when we say we wish to 'become contemporary'. However, we can foresee that our attempt to move away from overbearing theorisations of existence that occur, for example, in the work of Sade and Dostoevsky, is vulnerable to a certain objection.

We have already made reference to the attempt to "shrug off the weight of past conceptualisations" and herein lies the challenge. Given the fact that we arrive at Joyce as our final word on the subject of community, is this "final word" sufficient enough to counterbalance the apparently more 'weighty' claims made on behalf of human agency first by Sade and then by Dostoevsky? This is a serious charge, one that goes to the heart of what we have been attempting and it must be answered, if briefly, before we can conclude properly. An answer does suggest itself, though, if we style it in the manner of a threefold response:

- 1) We recognise the challenge as a valid one, taken on its own merits.
- 2) The validity of the challenge itself rests upon several assumptions about the constitution of 'weight' and the anxiety that surrounds 'weightlessness'. We try to provide a critical diagnosis of these assumptions which pre-empt the challenge.

3) We try to give a positive reading to 'weightlessness'. That is, not in terms of 'insufficiency' or 'lack of seriousness/engagement' but with reference to the way in which being-in-common can be 'done'.

The foundations of sharing do indeed become less and less tangible, possess less objectified reality, as we move from 'Nature' to 'Grace' to 'Myth'. All we seem to be left with is Genet's "ochre ...translucency ...whiteness", an absence of manifest significance in spite of the fact that the page "that was blank to begin with is now crossed from top to bottom with tiny black characters". We will now proceed to outline our three writers' work in a way that is antinomical, though not without clues as to where the argument contained in the exegesis will take us. It will try to bring out the assumptions behind the charge of 'weightlessness', to put it into perspective in terms of what has gone before in previous chapters.

With Sade we are on safe empirical ground. 'Nature' is a given fact, albeit given a destructive twist by the writer in question. Although it is severely flawed as a basis for community, it *is* a basis - one that has the visceral weight of a biological imperative. If all that concerns us is sufficiency, competence, undeniability, then Sade provides. Anything less tangible or absolute is dispensed with. Sade does disturb us, true. But it is a surface phenomenon. Fundamentally, he is a conservative. Any authority, in order for it to govern and order, must be absolute, physical, thoroughly Present. If not, then it loses all claim to be an authority in the first place.

In distinction, Dostoevsky realised that the sufficiency of competence is grossly inadequate in a value-laden world. Instead of emphasising certainty - the weight of natural conditions without which life could not continue - he 'lightens the load' considerably and opts for belief, altruism, Grace and Christian commitment. However, to take the weight metaphor a stage further, Dostoevsky's burden redistributes itself. That is, it does not lie still enough to form a foundation. It is too heavy. Its carrier balks against the pressure. The work it imposes cannot be done without imposing a moral blindness on oneself. Moreover, the choice is always there to *not* open, to accept, but to deny. Ultimately, it falls victim to the charge of

incompetence. At end, though, it does have the requisite 'weight' but without the abusive consequences of the burden adopted by his predecessor. The sense of 'weight' changes here. It is not so much tangible as ontological. As with Sade, though, anything less 'ontological' is caricatured and summarily dismissed.

In 'Ulysses', there is a weight - *lessness* - what Brendan Kenelly would call a 'lack of support' - in comparison to what has gone before. Apparently, it is all minutiae, interruption, epiphenomena. Underneath this are a series of parallels drawn with Homer's 'Odyssey'. Myth, perhaps the most ephemeral element in any given society, provides significance. In the absence of 'Nature' and 'God', social life - the day-to-day that was so derided by Sade and Dostoevsky - becomes archetypal. It is in the elaboration of this quality that forms both being and community. If we opt for anything more 'weighty' then we risk an attempt at communion, an overburdening.

It should be apparent by now that the process we have identified is one of evolution, of gain, not of denudation, of a loss of significance. As modernity develops, so our notions of the constitution and validation of community become considerably more sophisticated. This sophistication happens at the expense of 'weight'. We no longer - again to use Brendan Kenelly's terminology - honestly contain the ambition to possess absolute supports of one kind or another. We have to deal both with an absence of external guarantees (like 'Nature') that give us significance and with the (attenuated) absence of a Divine Presence whose business lies in precisely *not bestowing* such guarantees. Where does this leave the challenge we identified at the start of this conclusion?

We can take Genet's statement as extending itself towards the challenge in question here. His 'uneasiness' can be classified as sadeian. That is, it needs a certain 'weight' or 'support' in order to offset itself. The uneasiness comes of being deprived of Absolutes, of guarantees, of something that immediately impinges upon any given consciousness in any given situation. In Joyce, this simply does not happen. This is not to say that we ourselves are immune to such an uneasiness. The process of becoming contemporaneous with

Joyce is not without difficulty. Perhaps the most extreme form this difficulty takes happens when we try to resist the temptation to sabotage 'Ulysses' - and the thought of which it is a part - with the charge of lacking all significance because of its 'weightlessness'.

The charge is an old one. It dates back to when Wyndham Lewis first published 'Time and Western Man' in 1923 and is a common enough misinterpretation of Joyce's book. In reading, such an interpretation misses the archetypal insistence, the persistence of being within a series of apparently absurd and cluttered adventures. That this being is one which is held in common, is *communal* is missed because the role of myth is undervalued. Nothing but an absolute guarantee will do, a 'weightiness' that cannot be seriously maintained outside of an ethic of confinement, outside of a society too clumsy to conceive of anything else but pure competence and a discretionary common sense.

It should be clear by now that weightlessness is a virtue and not an admission of failure, especially if we refer back to the quote from 'Journey into Joy' that set the terms for our discussion of the notion of interruption. The charge of weightlessness, as a charge, borrows much from the 'common-sensical' reading of 'interruption'. To reiterate, what we are dealing with is an entirely new way of thinking, a way of thinking that includes notions of weight, importance and 'seriousness' as second-order symptoms rather than foundational necessities. In asking for 'weight', the challenge allies itself with Mulligan and his ambition to "Hellenise" Ireland, to make authority operative and Present when all that is needed is being.

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