Sloth[1]

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Since this is the last lecture in the series about The Seven Deadly Sins, it might be a good idea to stand back and think for a moment about the point of such a list. That seven is a good, mystical number obviously makes us suspicious about any claim (if one was ever made) that the list of the deadly sins was arrived at by the exercise of pure reason. It is not difficult to add to them. Why is cruelty not a specific deadly sin? Cruelty does not obviously come under wrath, nor, for that matter, under pride, envy or lust. Aquinas lists cruelty (*ferocitas*) as a sin against temperance.[2] He distinguishes it from ferocity and savagery (*saevitia* and *feritas*), which are 'bestial' vices. Cruelty, for Aquinas, is the vice of excessive severity in punishment. Its opposing virtue is clemency—the rational tempering of punishment—which Aquinas considers to be part of temperance. These are fairly persuasive distinctions. Yet Aquinas's idea of cruelty seems to have little if anything to do with the sort of cruelty that has most caught the attention of the modern world, which was touched on by Nietzsche—the deliberate infliction of pain upon another for pleasure. This was philosophised upon even more interestingly by Jean-Paul Sartre as being part of a project to reduce the Other to objecthood, revealing and at the same time cancelling his freedom. That would seem a good candidate for an additional deadly sin.

Perhaps, though, we should think about the deadly sins as a sort of mirror image of the virtues—as these appear, for instance, in Aristotle. It is a common objection to Aristotle's—and Aquinas's—list of the virtues that taken *in toto*, they apparently claim to define or characterise the good life for just any rational person. If some of the virtues—*eutrapelia* (ready wit) for instance—do not seem undeniably essential to the good life for man, and if certain others—magnificence and magnanimity (or *megalopsychia*)—seem appropriate and possible only for those few who are in an extremely grand position in society (not to slaves, perhaps not to women, conceivably not to citizens of the Great King), there remain at least what later came to be called the 'cardinal' virtues: courage, temperance, practical wisdom and justice, for which the claim was made that these, taken together, are necessary both for moral goodness and for happiness.

There is a liberal objection to that list of the cardinal virtues, classically expressed by Isaiah Berlin, that no one set of alleged goods

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(or, by implication, good dispositions) can account for all our possible serious choices, all the possible tastes and all the reasonable desires of men as multifarious, idiosyncratic, rebellious, contrary and polymorphously perverse creatures as (thank goodness) we are.

Yet the scholastic argument for the cardinal virtues always had plausibility. Someone who is brave without justice might well be a tyrant (Cromwell is described by Clarendon, in *The History of the Rebellion*, as "a brave, bad man"); without practical wisdom he might be a reckless danger to himself and to others. Without temperance—well, I am not sure about that: without temperance he might win the Victoria Cross.

But the cardinal virtues (and in saying this I am drawing upon some thoughts of Martha Nussbaum in *The Fragility of Goodness*)[3] do seem to define something exceptionally solid and strong at the heart of human character and personality—some adamantine residue that it would take an extraordinary catastrophe to smash, so that if it were smashed it would be hard to think of any coherent personality surviving at all. In reflecting on what sort of catastrophe that might be, we might think of Priam, who has had all his many sons killed, and yet retains in the midst of his grief, courage, presence of mind and self control.[4]

The analogy of the deadly sins with the cardinal virtues would be that (like mortal sins in the words of the old Penny Catechism) they 'kill the soul'. They have a negative power analogous to the positive power of the cardinal virtues.

Thought along these lines does begin to suggest an internal coherence among the Seven Deadly Sins that gets away from number mysticism. The man of a settled envious character—who hates the spiritual, not to mention material, good of another or of all others—must be deeply perverse. His is a disinterested hatred, aiming at no good for himself, but merely at evil for others—if only in the sense that he would deny them some good just because it is a good for them, even if there is no question of its being a possible good for himself Lovelace, in Richardson's *Clarissa*, is possessed by an envious hatred of Clarissa's chastity, which mingles with and leads to his desire to destroy it just because he can also see its beauty. Lovelace's lust is also envious—a desire, not to possess something, but to dirty and destroy that which, undestroyed and immaculate, is the very origin of his desire. This fits quite well with Proust's belief that it is not love that generates jealousy, but jealousy that creates (erotic) love; and with Sartre's pessimistic picture of sexual love as an intention to capture and abrogate the freedom of the other, this desire being involved in the desperate contradiction that it is only when the other freely offers love that the gift seems worth having. So Richardson's Lovelace has a Satanic character.

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In *Paradise Lost*, Milton represents Satan, when he first sees Adam and Eve in Paradise, as filled with envious rage at their bliss, which is also an implied sexual jealousy, a sense of exclusion from their blissful love of one another.

The sin of envy does, therefore, seem radical, and when we reflect on it we are naturally led to reflect on the sin of lust as well—and to do so in a way need not be open to the charge that this way of thinking is too scholastic and facile.

I suppose that, similarly, lust, if this an habitual objectification of the other whom we desire, becomes a concentration on the flesh that is less than human. We could regard this as akin to gluttony. Indeed, a sexual gluttony would be worse than merely a forbidden desire, because it would preclude our human ability to turn sexual desire into love of a person. Paolo and Francesca, in Dante's First Circle, are not sexual connoisseurs or gluttons. That is why they are not in a lower circle—their offence is one of the least of the mortal sins.

Anger and pride are different. For Aristotle they are virtues—at least, anger with the right object, in the right way, at the right time, to the right amount is the virtue of 'proper temper'. And the most delicious part of the *Summa* is where St Thomas struggles manfully to appropriate Aristotle's praise of the Proud Man—the *megalopsychos* who has all the virtues, knows that he has them, uses irony in talking to his inferiors, prefers beautiful and useless possessions to useful, ordinary ones, prefers to remember benefits he has conferred and to forget those he has received, wonders at hardly anything since 'to him few things are great', has a deep voice and moves slowly. For Aristotle anger springs from the 'spirited' part of the soul which answers to rational considerations and the commands of the *logos*, is a 'part' of courage (to use later, scholastic language), and implies a certain equality amongst people. It is (in Aquinas's words) connected with revenge and punishment, and, hence, justice. It is necessary to moral goodness.

Pride—at least proper pride, as distinct from vainglory—is also morally good. It is a proper self-valuing that goes with an equal valuing of what is good or great in others. It inhibits us from doing what is base and disgusting, inspires just courage and includes a noble desire to revenge ourselves and avenge others.

But these Aristotelian—and Thomist—virtues can, of course, give rise to evils when they are perverted or excessive, when, for instance, they break free from justice or self-control. Milton, in *Lycidas*, calls ambition "that last infirmity of noble mind"; and the wrath of Achilles is described by Homer, in the opening lines of the *Iliad*, as "that baneful wrath which brought countless woes upon the Achaeans, and sent forth

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to Hades many valiant souls of warriors, and made themselves to be a spoil for dogs and all manner of birds...".

You can draw a picture, then, of virtues (as Aristotle .would judge them to be) of anger and pride which, when turned into sin, have a dangerous, even Satanic grandeur. So it is plausible that such human greatness can turn into deadly sin. The scheme of the deadly sins has, therefore, a certain inner coherence analogous to that of the cardinal virtues.

Now, sloth: In chapter xxvi of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* Gibbon describes 'the manners of the pastoral nations' and, in particular, of the Huns. He writes of 'the savage tribes of mankind' as they 'approach nearer to the condition of animals.' He goes on: 'In every age the immense plains of Scythia or Tartary have been inhabited by vagrant tribes of hunters and shepherds, whose indolence refuses to cultivate the earth, and whose restless spirit disdains the confinement of a sedentary life.' A little later he says: 'The pastoral life, compared with the labours of agriculture and manufactures, is undoubtedly a life of idleness; and as the most honourable shepherds of the Tartar race devolve on their captives the domestic management of the cattle, their own leisure is seldom disturbed by any servile or assiduous cares. But their leisure, instead of being devoted to the soft enjoyments of love and harmony, is usefully spent in the violent and sanguinary exercise of the chase... .They excel in the dexterous management of the lance... .But the exploits of the hunters of Scythia are not confined to the destruction of timid or innoxious beasts: they boldly encounter the angry wild boar when he turns against his pursuers, excite the sluggish courage of the bear, and provoke the fury of the tiger as he slumbers in the thicket.'

Gibbon is making an interesting social or anthropological point in so far as he is suggesting that our notions of work and leisure are importantly cultural constructs. The furious chase of wild beasts by the Scythians is what they do when they are not purely idle—but their idleness is not what civilised people would describe as leisure. In fact he seems to be suggesting that amongst the Scythians (leaving out the slave-captives) there is neither work nor leisure. Presumably there must be some grounds at least for thinking that sloth also might be a cultural construct, rather than simply a psychological or moral feature of individual persons that can be easily identified.

But let us put that aside for the moment and consider sloth in exactly that way—as a feature of individuals. The scholastics are very interested in giving an account of the psychology—moral psychology, one might say—of sloth. I suppose that this is because they think that sloth must imply a mental attitude, or that for the slothful person the world presents a specific sort of intentional object.

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The analogy here would be the intentionality of the world to someone with a particular virtue. The brave soldier in a dangerous battle might have the attitude of seeing how dangers are to be overcome, seeing how his wounded comrades need help, looking for points of weakness in the enemy—rather than constantly rehearsing in his mind all the undoubted dangers. He would actually see possibilities of action—and, indeed, safety — that the coward would not see. I take it that Aristotle's belief that deliberation enters into courage might mean something like that.

There is a passage in *Being and Nothingness* where Jean-Paul Sartre discusses physical fatigue. He describes a party of young men out on a healthy hike, in which one of them falls by the wayside with fatigue:

> I start out on a hike with friends. At the end of several hours of walking my fatigue increases and finally becomes very painful. At first I resist and then suddenly I let myself go, I give up, I throw my knapsack down on the side of the road and let myself fall down beside it. Someone will reproach me for my act and will mean thereby that I was free—that is, not only was my act not determined by any thing or person, but also I could have succeeded in resisting my fatigue longer, could have done as my companions did and reached the resting place before relaxing.[6]

Sartre goes on to describe what it would be not to be, thus, a "sissy." He says that to be a "sissy" "is not a factual given" and "is only a name given to the way in which I suffer my fatigue."[7] And how does Sartre define the way in which he suffers his fatigue?—by a contrast with the way in which his non-sissy companions suffer theirs:

> If I question one of my companions, he will explain to me that he is fatigued, of course, but that he *loves* his fatigue; he gives himself up to it as to a bath; it appears to him in some way as the privileged instrument for discovering the world which surrounds him, for adapting himself to the rocky roughness of the paths, for discovering the "mountainous" quality of the slopes. In the same way it is this slight sunburn on the back of his neck and this slight ringing in his ears which will enable him to realize a direct contact with the sun. Finally the feeling of effort is for him that of fatigue overcome. But as his fatigue is nothing but the passion which he endures so that the dust of the highways, the burning of the sun, the roughness of the roads may exist to the fullest, his effort (i.e, this sweet familiarity with a fatigue which he loves, to which he abandons himself and which nevertheless he himself directs) is given as a way of appropriating the mountain, of suffering it to the end and being victor over it.'[8]

He concludes: "Thus my companion's fatigue is lived in a vaster project of a trusting abandon to nature, or a passion consented to in order that it may exist at full strength, and at the same time a project of sweet mastery and appropriation. It is only through this project that the fatigue

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will be able to be understood and that it will have meaning for him."[9]

These are rather long quotations from Sartre—but I hope they make their point. The central point is (I take it) that mental attitudes are intentional, that is to say, boredom, curiosity, depression, lassitude, perhaps even tiredness (which is part of what Sartre is talking about) imply an orientation or project towards the world as the field for our actions, as inviting us to action. And even our sense of our own bodies may be mediated by a sense of external objects. So Sartre thinks that a sense of fatigue overcome is also a way of appropriating the mountain.

I find in that passage an excellently suggestive description of how what we might commonsensically assume are purely bodily states have a mental component — so that we cannot fully describe the bodily states without bringing in the mental component. It suggests at the same time that a mental state (boredom, perhaps) naturally goes with, and perhaps has to imply dispositions of the body.

Aquinas discusses sloth (in Latin, *acedia*) under the heading of charity—that is to say, it is a sin against charity.[10]

It is clear that Aquinas and his predecessors had thought a lot about *acedia* —are, in effect, experts. *Acedia*, according to Cassian 'greatly troubles monks at noon. It strikes like a recurring fever; it lays the soul low with sultry fires at regular and fixed intervals.' Damascene (quoted by Aquinas) says that *acedia* 'is a kind of oppressive sorrow' (*tristitia aggravans*) which so depresses a man that he wants to do nothing.[11] *Acedia* is a kind of sorrow over spiritual good; it shrinks from spiritual good as laborious or irksome to the body.[12] Later Aquinas quote Isidore to the effect that despondency (*tristitia*) engenders 'spite, pusillanimity, bitterness and despair', while spiritual apathy (*acedia*) engenders 'idleness, drowsiness, verbosity, idle curiosity.'[13]

It is interesting that the abstract definitions of sloth are so confidently extended to these detailed bits of moral psychology, these quick portraits of one's monastic (or academic) colleagues caught in this particular sin against charity. Clearly for Aquinas *acedia* is a morbid state of soul, an intrinsically joyless state. I take it that the fundamental reason Aquinas calls it a sin against charity is because it is a sorrow over the spiritual good precisely as the divine good.

This mediaeval moral psychology is excellent so far as it goes. It gives a very persuasive account of sloth as a state of mind as well as of body; and also as a disposition to behave and react in various ways and not *just* a state of mind. But it is perhaps over-confident, and it reflects that delight in drawing up exhaustive, or at least definitive, lists that does not quite accord with modern taste. And what we might find especially interesting is that *acedia*—sloth, interpreted as spiritual

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apathy—far from being just a mediaeval speciality has powerfully entered modern consciousness in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I shall jump to the modern period via one more reference to Sartre, this time his *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions.*

Having characterised emotion as 'a specific manner of apprehending the world' Sartre goes on to give phenomenological descriptions of specific emotional states, including passive fear, active fear that expresses itself in flight, and passive sadness. Passive sadness bears a striking resemblance to what the scholastics described as *tristitia aggravans*. And what Sartre says fits with Aquinas on *acedia* as an undesirable (intrinsically undesirable, as I have interpreted him) state of mind.[14] There is 'muscular relaxation', 'paleness and cold at the extremities'; 'one turns away towards some corner to sit there motionless; one prefers twilight to full daylight, silence to sound, and solitude in one's own room to frequented roads and public places.'[15]

Notice how Sartre is gliding smoothly from a mediaeval account of the body to his own phenomenological description of my bodily and mental projects towards the world. At the same time Sartre argues that although such melancholy people sometimes say that they want to be alone with their sorrow, the actual cherishing of passive sadness is in fact rather rare. This wish for a private refuge comes from the fact that (in Sartre's words) 'the entire universe is bleak, and it is precisely in order to protect ourselves from its frightful, illimitable monotony that we make some place or other into a 'shelter'. That is the one differentiating factor in the absolute monotony of the world: a bleak wall, a little darkness to screen us from that bleak immensity.'

The little darkness that screens us from a bleak immensity is very much a property of some French *Symbolistes*—especially Baudelaire. *Ennui*—one of the sins mentioned in the Introduction to *Les Fleurs du Mal,* is essentially *accidie* or *acedia.* And in *Fuses* [Pléiade Vol 1 p 656] Baudelaire actually talks (mentioning both Seneca and Chrysostom) of 'l'acedia', the 'maladie des moines' and of *taedium vitae* —amongst sufferers from which he includes Nero.[16]

This leads us to reflect on the fact that *acedia*, far from remaining a purely scholastic idea of not much more than antiquarian interest, has passed, via seventeenth and eighteenth century ideas of melancholy, through Romanticism, to *Symbolisme* to become a representative late nineteenth and twentieth century allegory of the human condition. In other words it has developed—and genuinely developed—far beyond the applications Aquinas and others envisaged for it. But, if they thought of it as a capital sin which therefore merited damnation, the moderns have developed a Romantic and post-Romantic version of that as *poètes*

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maudits—Baudelaire, as Eliot discerned, is one of the most notable. *Acedia* develops into a cultural idea.

So I now want to say something about the greatest English disciple of the *Symbolistes*, T.S.Eliot—who quotes Baudelaire in the first section of *The Waste Land*—for you can see a great part of Eliot's work as an extended treatment and exploration of *acedia* as *the* condition of modern consciousness, in a spiritual sense, a political sense, as part of our response to 'that vast panorama of futility and anarchy that is contemporary history',[17] and as a response to 'the anxiety of influence.'

I want to take as my text 'Gerontion'. 'Gerontion' is to be read as a poem of baffled or false spirituality. The 'present decay of eastern Europe' of which Eliot writes in *The Waste Land*—or, more generally, the state of Europe after the Great War, is central. Eliot, unlike such poets of the First World War as Wilfred Owen, did not write of 'the pity of war, the pity war distilled', but of the world after the War.

Gerontion—the 'little old man'—has not fought in the Great War, nor in any wars from classical antiquity. He is an old man being read to by a boy. He has not been at the hot gates (Thermopylae? Thebes?), nor fought knee-deep in the salt-marsh, heaving a cutlass.[18] He is being read to—possibly about such battles. They are not any battles of his youth—they are not even identifiable battles in time or place: *he* was not in the ships at Mylae.[19]

So: Aquinas had discussed *acedia*, spiritual apathy, as a sin against charity. The next sin he discusses is envy—again a vice of the passive, self-lacerating kind. *Acedia*, as one of the morbid states explored by Baudelaire is, one might say, the manful readiness to be damned that one finds not only in Baudelaire (Eliot wrote that Baudelaire was 'man enough for damnation'),[20] but in much of Eliot's poetry.

It especially pervades 'Gerontion'. The speaker comes forth as one with a keen sense of the spiritual good, from which he shrinks determinedly. Spiritual slackness emerges in lines of apathetic cosmopolitanism, following the opening lines that so vaguely suggest a vague sense of some European/military past:

> My house is a decayed house,
> And the Jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
> Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
> Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.
> The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;
> Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.[21]

Curious, that even that hint of anti-semitism (of which the recent book on Eliot by Anthony Julius[22] makes much—with some persuasiveness—in his discussion of the poem) partakes of the *tristitia*

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aggravans—here, you might say, shrinking from the spiritual bad, 'willing to wound and yet afraid to strike.'[23] For the speaker himself is fatiguedly cosmopolitan, as rootlessly cosmopolitan as anti-semites claimed Jews to be: note that routine use of 'merds'. He is as peevish as the 'peevish fire'—an 'old man/A dull head among windy spaces.'

Can one, perhaps, take him as a member of the 'wicked and adulterous generation' which 'would see a sign'? ("Etonnez moi"—as the ennui-ridden Diagelev demanded of the young Cocteau at their first meeting). The sign, as he well knows, is the paradoxical one of an absence and a presence. Eliot takes a hint from a nativity sermon of Lancelot Andrewes where Andrewes expresses his faith that the absence of a 'sign' leads to the sense of true mystery—a real miracle:

> 'Signs are taken for wonders. "Master, we would fain see a sign," that is, a miracle. And in this sense it is a sign to wonder at. Indeed, every word here is a wonder... *Verbum infans*, the Word without a word; the eternal Word not able to speak a word; a wonder sure. And... swaddled, a wonder too. He that takes the sea "and rolls it about with the swaddling bands of darkness"; he to come thus into clouts himself.'[24]

In the state of spiritual apathy, Christ the tiger is not Christ the saviour:

> In the juvescence of the year
> Came Christ the tiger.[25]

Later in the poem we have

> 'The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours.[26]

But here Christ the tiger (who is not even Blake's Tyger burning bright—a terrifying beauty set against darkness) is something itself within the darkness, himself devoured in the Catholic sacrament of the Eucharist. And the Catholic Eucharist peevishly suggests that mixing of cultures and races that Eliot so notoriously deprecated in the never to be reprinted *After Strange Gods*; Mr Silvero—some sort of cosmopolitan name (I feel it might be that of a part Indian, part Portuguese inhabitant of Catholic Goa)[27]; the Japanese who may be attending Mass in the splendour of some Roman or Venetian church—so different, one assumes, from anything he finds in Japanese Catholicism: .... Hakagawa, 'bowing among the Titians...'[28] The speaker, peevishly, implies, perhaps, that Hakagawa is blind to the Titians amongst which he bows; Hakagawa's enthusiastic Catholicism—the Catholicism, one presumes, of the missionary convert—is offensive to the little old man's spiritual apathy.

The images of the Eucharist are refracted into a despairing image of history—'that vast panorama of futility and anarchy that is

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contemporary history'. Something dark is intended. We have cosmopolitan Catholicism, with, also, some suggestion of sinister, secret rites—the pious practices all seem to be taking place in darkness (one critic has even suggested a Black Mass.)[29]

It is 'history' that is the occasion for a central passage of eloquence in the poem:

> After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
> History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
> And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
> Guides us by vanities. Think now
> She gives when our attention is distracted
> And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
> That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late
> What's not believed in, or if still believed,
> In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon
> Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with
> Till the refusal propagates a fear. Think
> Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices
> Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
> Re forced upon us by our impudent crimes.
> These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.[30]

The 'contrived corridors'[31] can be taken to allude to the Polish corridor, set up as one of the many ill-advised decisions of the Treaty of Versailles after the Great War, which for Hitler was one of the *casus belli* for the German invasion of Poland in 1939. The 'wilderness of mirrors' can be seen as alluding to the sensual vision in the celebrated passage of Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*—Sir Epicure Mammon's vision of a sexual paradise:

> Cut in more subtle angles to disperse
> And multiply my image as I walk
> Naked among my succubae...[32]

We may also think of the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles where the ill-fated treaty was deliberated on and signed,[33] where men were indeed 'guided by vanities', thinking that they could settle the peace of Europe for generations, as was done at the Congress of Vienna after 1815, but producing only an abortive settlement that lasted barely more than twenty years. This hall of mirrors also suggests a brothel, and history here has become a whore.

There is a possible suggestion of Cleopatra whom 'the holy priests praise when she is riggish' (i.e. wanton). The *acedia* is also a sort of sexual lassitude—a tired knowingness about sexual knowledge. The 'knowledge' after which 'what forgiveness?' seems a knowledge both related to the vast panorama of futility and anarchy that is contemporary history, and sexual

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knowledge. The sexual knowledge suggests an unspeakable sin, an unrepentable sin. (Final despair perhaps — a sin against the Holy Ghost). The spiritual apathy, in that passage, cancels faith, hope and charity. Christ the tiger at his Second Coming ('What rough beast, its hour come round at last/Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?')[34] is only judge or avenger, not Saviour, simply an object of dull fear.

The moments of eloquence in the poem are wonderfully mired in apathy—as lines Eliot uses from Middleton's *The Changeling* are turned from open, fearful guilt into something much more furtive and unacknowledged:

> O come not near me, sir, I shall defile you!
> I that am of your blood was taken from you
> For your better health; look no more upon't,
> But cast it to the ground regardlessly,
> Let the common sewer take it from distinction.[35]

Eliot has:

> I would meet you upon this honestly.
> I that was near your heart was removed therefrom
> To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.
> I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it
> Since what is kept must be adulterated?
> I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:
> How should I use them for your closer contact?[36]

A sexual sense that is not even guilt or disgust, but hopeless recollection, *acedia, tristitia aggravans*, spiritual apathy, dominates the poem—impotence, the approach of death—the lives of individual mortals so strangely set against the cosmic picture of the after-death. The almost final images of purification are a false, or despairing picture of salvation:

> De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs Cammel, whirled
> Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear
> In fractured atoms. Gull against the wind, in the windy
> Straits
> Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn,
> White feathers in the snow...[37]

Sloth, then, has become a picture of the varieties of despair. The *acedia* of the Eliot of *The Waste Land*, perhaps in all the stories in Joyce's *Dubliners*, where Dublin and Ireland is represented as a centre of paralysis, is not the sin of an individual. We can see it as a development of mediaeval moral psychology that analyses it as the sin of the individual; but essentially we understand it as our relation to

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patterns of history found not to be patterns at all, but 'things that other people have desired'—the faiths of others which we do not believe in, the anxiety of influence, *ennui*—

> And last, the rending pain of re-enactment
> Of all that you have done and been; the shame
> Of motives late revealed, and the awareness
> Of things ill done and done to others' harm
> Which once you took for exercise of virtue.
> Then fools' approval stings and honour stains.[38]

The 'indolence' and 'idleness' of 'the pastoral peoples' that Gibbon describes is pretty remote from the 'sloth' that comes to be discussed under the heading of *acedia*. It reflects merely a social structure in which there is no real distinction between idleness and leisure—no *otium* because there is no real *negotium*. Sloth as a deadly sin and, perhaps more interestingly, as a sort of constitutive despair, is a characteristic of civilisation, and not only of civilisation but of a culture that values and creates inwardness, self-consciousness and even (but this is just a tentative thought with which to end) the idea of a profound distinction between being and not being saved.

1 This was the last in a series of Lenten lectures, by various speakers, at Blackfriars, Cambridge.
2 *Summa* 2a2ae, 159,1.
3 Page 343.
4 We might also think, though, of King Lear whose lesser, if more believable catastrophe leads to madness.
5 C.f. *Summa* 2a2ae 129.3 Aquinas argues that *magnanimitas* thinks little of others in so far as they fall short of God's gifts, that the contempt of the magnanimous man is for reprobates, that he gets no pleasure out of the kindnesses of others 'unless he makes still greater return to them'—so that, in short, these qualities 'call not for censure but for super-abundant praise.'
6 *Being and Nothingness* pp. 453-4.
7 Sartre pp. 454-5.
8 Sartre p. 455.
9 Sartre *ibid.*
10 Blackfriars edition of the *Summa*, by the way, likes the translation 'spiritual apathy'. This is in keeping with a certain tendency to gloss rather than simply translate, but in this case it seems to me a very good translation.
11 2a2ae 35 1.
12 2a2ae 35 2.
13 2a2ae 35 4.
14 His account of it reminds one of the melancholy Jacques in *As You Like It.*
15 Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*, p. 68.
16 I am grateful for these examples to Dr Nicholas Hammond.
17 Eliot here is speaking of the order he sees Joyce imposing on that panorama in *Ulysses*.

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18 'Gerontion' 2-6.
19 'The Waste Land' 70.
20 'Baudelaire' *Selected Essays* p423. In the same paragraph, Eliot talks of Baudelaire's *ennui* as 'a true form of *acedia*, arising from the unsuccessful struggle towards the spiritual life.'
21 'Gerontion' 7-12.
22 T.S. Eliot, *Anti-Semitism and Literary Form*, Ch. 2.
23 Pope, 'Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot' 202.
24 Sermon 'Of the Nativitie', Christmas 1618 Lancelot Andrewes, *Sermons*, Ed. Storey, p 85.
25 'Gerontion' 18–19.
26 47.
27 21-22.
28 25.
29 cf. Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet* p 112.
30 32–46.
31 Cf. Kenner p 108.
32 112.
33 Kenner *Ibid.*
34 Yeats, 'The Second Coming' concluding lines.
35 V iii 149–53.
36 53–9.
37 66–70.
38 'Little Gidding' II.23 Pope, 'Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot' 202.

Christian Ministry and Christian People
Some Thoughts on Sacramental Theology

Natalie K. Watson

The title of this article could be considered misleading in many ways. It does not at first sight disclose what I am actually writing about, i.e. marriage and ordination as sacraments. It also makes one wonder whether the two parts of the title connected with the conjunction 'and' actually present an alternative: i.e. does Christian ministry refer to those in specific or ordained ministry while marriage refers to those who are not in Christian ministry? Or have they got more in common than one would expect? Maybe this article ought to be more aptly named: 'sacraments of commitment and commission' as that briefly describes

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