

The Deliverance of Evil: Utopia and Evil

This chapter traces the problem of evil in utopia from Thomas More to the Marquis de Sade. Utopian thought recognizes human imperfection and the basic dualism in human nature. Utopias are discourses on human nature and the possibility of a better human society rather than simply blueprints of perfection, indeed they imagine ‘an imperfect utopia, or, differently put, a utopia suited for imperfect creatures.’ The question that arises in utopian thought is not if evil exists but how to deliver us from evil.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan
The proper study of mankind is man
(Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*)

One of the primary preoccupations of utopian thought is the relationship between the individual and society. Thus, ‘to know thyself’, including one’s propensity for good and evil and to study ‘mankind’ is the necessary foundation for utopian thinking and a continuous process towards better statesmanship:

Once he [the human being] has grasped himself and established what is his, without expropriation and alienation, in real democracy, there

arises in the world something which shines into the childhood of all and in which no-one has yet been: *Heimat* (Bloch 1986: 1376).

According to Ernst Bloch, human utopian desire is determined by the desire for *Heimat*, not the nostalgic return to an irrecoverable home, past or childhood, but the path towards an unalienated existence. Bloch's messianic version of the Marxist idea of alienation presumes a truthful 'self-encounter' which as the proactive, confirmatory fight for 'real democracy' prepares the utopian community to come. This utopian desire is then a spiritual, intellectual and political one:

This intending toward a star, a joy, a truth to set against the empirical, beyond its satanic night and especially beyond its night of *incognito*, is the only way still to find truth, the question about us is the only problem, the resultant of every world-problem, *and to formulate this Self- and We-Problem in everything, the opening, reverberating through the world, of the gates of homecoming, is the ultimate basic principle of utopian philosophy.*" (Bloch 2000: 206, emphasis in original)

One common and continuous objection to the possibility of utopia is the conviction of the irredeemability of human nature (Hannah Arendt) and the existence of evil. Thus, the cause of the failure of utopia *per se*, as anti-utopians such as Jacoby and Gray have recently argued, is its failure to consider human imperfection. Utopian thought in this sense is interpreted as universal to the point of totalitarian and dictatorial. However, neither the genre's founder, Thomas More, nor seventeenth-and eighteenth-century followers, nor Ernst Bloch could claim absolute perfection and universality

as invariable principles. This chapter suggests that Utopian thought recognizes human imperfection and the basic dualism in human nature: *bonum et malum*. Utopias are discourses on human nature and the possibility of a better human society rather than simply blueprints of perfection, indeed they imagine ‘an imperfect utopia, or, differently put, a utopia suited for imperfect creatures.’ (Griswold 1998: 302). If utopia did not acknowledge human potential for evil, there would be no need for totalitarian and authoritarian utopias and dystopias. The question that arises in utopian thought is not if evil exists but how to deliver us from evil.

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil (Genesis 3:22)

Utopia’s premise is that humans were created essentially good but at some point fell from grace. In the following, I will consider in broad terms two narratives of the Fall and their consequences for utopian thought. Firstly, I will explore the consequences of the historical Fall and the emergence of the utopia of realized eschatology and the ethnographic utopia as two examples of how moral atonement in a spiritual and material sense could be achieved. Secondly, I will investigate the consequences of the existential Fall and its utopian possibilities in educational utopias.

The long and complex history of sources of the doctrines of the Fall and the Original Sin cannot be illuminated in this short chapter. Suffice it to remind us that the historical Fall as described in *Genesis* Book 3 is the first scriptural source of the Fall but its significance is now seen as mythical and

historical (see Paul Ricoeur, Wiley: 13-55). The *New Testament* recorded the teachings of Paul (*Romans* 5:12-21), 1 *Corinthians* 15:22 and *Psalms* 51:5 which considered the consequences of the Fall as cosmological and ontological significant; ‘Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all man, because all sinned’ (*Romans* 5:12). Within the different Christian doctrines, though differing here in their interpretation of the Scriptures, the Original Sin can be redeemed. Particularly important to utopian thought is the moral influence atonement doctrine (Abelard) which teaches that moral atonement is effected through the teachings and example of Jesus, the Christian Church he founded, and the inspiring effect of his martyrdom and resurrection. Moral influence atonement doctrine paths the way for the utopia of realized eschatology and simple living. Let us with the founder of the genre, Thomas More.

In 1516 Thomas More (1478-1535), advisor to King Henry VIII, Catholic martyr and saint published his most controversial book, *De Optimo Reipublicae Statu deque nova insula Utopia Libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus (Of the best state law and of the new island Utopia, truly a golden booklet, as pleasant as it is cheerful)*, now known as *Utopia*. It was conceived during More’s appointment in 1515 as a delegate to a conference on Anglo-Flemish commerce which More’s humanist friends Erasmus, Peter Giles and Jerome Busleyden attended. More famously composed Book II, *Discourse on Utopia*, first and concluded it in 1516 with Book I, *Dialogue of Counsel*. The book’s unusual structure and composition, the title’s pun on ‘no-place’ and ‘good-place’, the use of ambivalent

rhetorical strategies (*litotes*) and double-coding of the place and character names creates a truly open text that reflects critically on the possibility of a 'best state of a commonwealth'.¹

Book I records the political and social ailments of early modern Europe through the eyes of the fictitious sailor Raphael Hytholdaeus in debate with Thomas More, Peter Giles and Jerome Busleyden. It echoes principal humanist debates on the best state government, civic self-government, social equality, political wisdom in the light of the development of absolutism and early capitalism. Whereas in Book I, England is seen as held in the clutches of agrarian capitalism 'where sheep are devouring men', the Utopians in Book II recognize the true value of material goods and class distinction: 'for how fine soever that thread may be, it was once no better than the fleece of a sheep, and that sheep was a sheep still for all its wearing it.' Some of these issues were also discussed by More's friends and contemporaries such as Erasmus in *Adages (Chiliades Adagiorum)*, 1502-32) or his *The Praise of Folly* (1511). The paradigm governing the *Adages* was the principle of *amicorum communia omnia* ('Friends hold all things in Common'), the spirit of true community that we also find in *Utopia*. Since its conception, the multifaceted ambiguity of *Utopia* has puzzled philosophers and readers alike. One paradox important to our investigation is that a committed Christian such as Thomas More created a seemingly secular and proto-communist commonwealth based on principles of social justice (see Bradshaw for an excellent discussion). In *Utopia*, moral transformation of mankind is dialectically entwined with political and structural transformation. Utopia's architectural symmetry and uniformity reflects and at the same time enforces social engineering and secular governance. The fifty-four 'large and faire cities, or shiere towns,' on

More's island are uniform and well ordered. The political structure of the island of Utopia is a commonwealth by direct representation, the society is composed of kinship households and the state provides extended academic and vocational education. There is no private property: the houses are easily accessible and their doors are never locked. The market squares and the dining halls allow for communal rituals, communication and political debates. However, Utopia is not Paradise on earth. The 'utopian paradox' of high crime and death penalty, slavery, restriction on travel, a strict military ethos, euthanasia and an unforgiving patriarchal system within the kinship households undermines the idea of class and gender equality and social progressiveness. The satire and rhetorical ambivalence undercuts the idea that *Utopia* is a simplistic 'Golden Handbook' for change. The dialogue between Book I and II, the multiple perspectives in Book II and finally, the unreliability of Hythloday as the 'nonsense peddler' turn the text into a satirical musing on Utopian possibilities. As the fictional More closes his account, 'I cannot perfectly agree to everything he [Hythloday] has related; however, there are many things in the Commonwealth of Utopia that I rather wish, than hope, to see followed in our governments.'

How to resolve this paradox? I would suggest that *Utopia* needs to be contextualized within Christian Humanism and Augustinian philosophy. Thomas More adheres to the Augustinian principles that good and evil are part of human nature. The concept of Original Sin is relevant but made solely mankind's responsibility. Whilst natural evil cannot be influenced or prevented, moral evil is caused by the will of man who chose to deviate from the path of perfect goodness. Thus *Utopia*'s ruling principle is virtue, its prime evil in Book I, pride, 'the chief and progenitor of all plagues'. Virtue is 'life ordered according to nature...' and governed by reason.

But now, sir, they think not felicity to rest in all pleasure, but only in that pleasure that is good and honest, and that hereto as to perfect blessedness our nature is allured and drawn even of virtue, whereto only they that be of the contrary opinion do attribute felicity. (More 1991:85).

Part of the virtue, honesty and felicity is the absence of greed and pride brought about by private property, a significant moral evil. Book II of *Utopia* thus imagines a Pelagian fantasy of a quasi-monastic society without private property and evil. But the absence of sin is not necessarily a ‘sign of historical hopefulness’ (Shklar: 370). One of the criticisms that *Utopia* often receives is its seemingly totalitarian structure of control. Evil is a fact, surveillance and capital punishment even on the island of Utopia underpin the Utopian social engineering project. One could indeed argue that the foundation of Utopia was an act of pride (and colonialism) by King Utopus. So, social engineering itself is not enough to achieve utopia. As Bradshaw has identified in Erasmus’ work, ‘grace will perfect nature *only* if nature as disposed itself, by moral endeavour, to receive grace.’ (p.11) We return back to the idea that (self-)knowledge is the path to utopia. This is perhaps also why the Utopian citizens need to undergo the process of conversion:

But after they heard us speak of the name of Christ, of His doctrine, laws, miracles, and of the no less wonderful constancy of so many martyrs , whose blood willingly shed brought a number of nations throughout all parts of the world into their sect, you will not believe

with how glad minds they agreed unto the same, whether it were by the secret inspiration of God, or else for that they thought it nighest unto that opinion which among them is countest the chieftest. Howbeit, I think this was no small help and furtherance in the matter, that they heard us say that Christ instituted among His all things common, and that the same community doth yet remain amongst the rightest Christian companies. (More 1991: 119).

What distinguishes the Utopians in Book II from the proud politicians in Book I is the moral openness and curiosity. As Bradshaw suggests ‘[i]t was a response that combined critical judgment with openness to change’ – the essence of any utopian project (Bradshaw: 26).

"Behold, I make all Things New"(*Revelations* 2 1: 5).

One of the paradigmatic consequences of the doctrine of the historical Fall is the theology of realized eschatology (see Dodd 1953). Realized Eschatology strives to create a Heaven on Earth or at least facilitates and prepares the second coming of Christ. Thus, in this framework, socio-political thinking and millennial ideas converges in either collective vision or personal endeavours, or four types according to Collins; the 'political', 'cosmic', 'personal' and 'realized' to deliver the world from evil (Collins: 330-337). A cluster of collective endeavours appeared during the English Civil Wars with groups such as the Levellers, Diggers and Fifth Monarchists who place the concept of social and political evil within the context of millennial enthusiasm. The prophet Mary Cary explores this in her visionary text, *A New and More*

Exact Mappe; or, Description of New Jerusalems Glory (1651). Cary brings together the millennial ideal of a just society with the pragmatic political questions surrounding the establishment of the English republic.

Christian Church fellowships such as the Amish, the Mennonites, the Shakers, the Bruderhof community, the Harmony Society and in the nineteenth century, the Tolstoyian movement and the American Oneida community followed closely the exemplary ministry of Jesus and too, prepared the second coming of Christ with very concrete communitarian experiments. As Snook has suggested, these communities are guided by the ‘rhetoric of reversal’ guided by the teachings of Christ. These reverse ‘our normal seeing of the world by telling parables of God’s way of living and ruling’ (Snook: 81). He continues to argue that the ‘victory of the spirit of God over evil can only happen through the reversal, or conversion, of the human heart...’ (Snook: 93). Anticipating the Liberation Theology of the twentieth century, realized eschatology locates evil in social and political injustice brought about by the sins of pride and greed.

In the eighteenth century it was particularly Swedenborg whose realized eschatology influenced utopian thought and intentional communities into the nineteenth century. Mankind, according to Swedenborg has a hereditary inclination for evil that can be overcome by will. Hereditary evil, according to Swedenborg:

consists in willing and hence in thinking evil. Hereditary evils begin in the will itself, and in the thought, thence derived and being the very conatus or endeavour that is therein, and which adjoining itself even when the person is doing what is good (*Arcana Coelestia*, quoted in Dibb: 212).

Swedenborg proclaimed that the Second Coming of Christ had already happened and was only revealed to him through the Holy Spirit. Following his divine inspiration, he planned on establishing a new community, a New Jerusalem to be built on earth based on his understanding of virtue and goodness (see Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Last Judgment and Babylon Destroyed. All the Predictions in the Apocalypse are at This Day Fulfilled* (1758). Swedenborg inspired his fellow Swedes Wadström and Nordenskjöld to a *Plan for a Free Community upon the Coast of Africa under the Protection of Great Britain; but Intirely. Independent of All* (1789). This scheme was motivated by the French Revolution and the anti-slavery movement in Britain and Olaudah Equiano's plans to resettle slaves to Sierra Leone.

In an appendix to the *Plan*, a number of articles for governance of the colony are proposed as well as a general invitation to apply for the scheme attached. Suffrage for all adult males, the abolition of slavery and universal social equality are guiding principles. However, the *Plan's* the political intentions go beyond the question of abolition, for, as the authors ask, 'To what purpose is Spiritual Liberty without Civil Liberty?' (*Plan*: xi). Central to the argument is the conceptualization of moral evil as political and social inequality rooted in 'the Lust of Dominion' and 'the Lust of Possession' (*Plan*: x). Whilst Africans are literally enslaved, Europeans are suffering under the 'abject servility to innumerable monied Tyrant' (*Plan*: iv-v). Furthermore, as Swedenborg has argued in his tract, *True Christian Religion* (1786), he identified a pre-lapsarian grace and spirituality in Africa which the Europeans have lost. Thus he speaks of the Africans as 'interior' human beings 'guided by 'virtue of an elevated Spirit' opposition to the 'external'

thus sensual and superficial qualities of corrupted Europeans (Swedenborg 1786: 701-2).

The convergence between realized eschatology and utopian primitivism results in Swedenborg designing a pessimistic conjectural history of mankind consisting of 4 Ages described as separate *Ecclesia*.

There have been in general four churches (*quatuor Ecclesiae*) on this earth since its creation....The first church (*Prima Ecclesia*), which may be called the Most Ancient Church (*Antiquissima*), came into existence before the flood, and its ending or departure is described by the flood. The second church (*Altera Ecclesia*), which may be called the Ancient Church (*Antiqua*), was in Asia and in parts of Africa; this came to an end and perished as the result of idolatrous practices. The third (*Tertia Ecclesia*) was the Israelite Church (*Israelitica*), begun by the proclamation of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, and continued through the Word written by Moses and the Prophets. This came to an end and terminated as the result of profaning the Word, a process which reached its full development at the time the Lord came into the world. That was why they crucified Him who was the Word. The fourth (*Quarta Ecclesia*) is the Christian Church (*Christiana*) founded by the Lord by means of the Evangelists and the Apostles.... (Swedenborg, 1786: 760).

Swedenborg's New Jerusalem seeks to return to the principles of the *Prima Ecclesia* modeled on the spiritual elevation of African tribes, a pre-lapsarian spiritual holism lost in the Fall.

Quick now, here, now, always—
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well

(T.S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding').

If Paradise was lost then surely it could be found. The desire to return to a pre-lapsarian grace has informed ethnographic utopias that propose the return to original innocence, virtues and simple existence as found in primitive societies of newfound lands. The idea of simple living, echoed by Christian and monastic traditions, derived its justification from a) the exemplary ministry of Jesus; b) a pessimistic conjectural history of humanity, in which innocent humans were rendered corrupt by society and civilization. The temptations of wealth and the evils of material luxuries have, in this framework, spiritual, ontological and socio-political consequences. The recreation or rediscovery of Eden, a trope that is prevalent in utopias, is on the surface a geographical endeavor but essential is a spiritual return, a moral regeneration.

The Irish monk, Saint Brendan documented his seven-year search for the earthly Paradise in the *Navigatio of Saint Brendan* (ca 900 AD). The settlement of America was recorded as the discovery of Eden, Paradise, Canaan and a chiliastic 'new Heaven and a new Earth', even the later Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1720) and the writings by the Shaker Ann Lee described America as Eden. Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* echoes Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589) and reflects Walter Raleigh's journey to, and disastrous colonization of Guiana. Gonzalo's famous micro-Utopia in *The Tempest*, 'Had I plantation of this isle, my lord,/And were the king on't, what would I do?', borrows from the 1609 Bermuda pamphlets but also paraphrases Michel Montaigne's primitivist argument on natural justice and virtue made in his

essay 'On Cannibals' (1580). Michael Drayton's poem 'Ode to the Virginian Voyage' (1606), borrows from Hakluyt, projects 'Earth's onely Paradise' onto the New World but at the same time calls upon 'You brave heroic minds,/Worthy your country's name' to refuel England's eminence in the colonization of America. Vasco de Quiroga (ca 1470-1565), translator and passionate disciple of *Utopia*, attempted on several occasions to realize More's blueprint in Mexico. His hospital-pueblos of Santa Fe and the free Indian communities in Lake Pátzcuaro were highly successful until the prohibition of slavery was lifted by Charles V in 1534. Quiroga's book *Información en derecho (Information on the Law, 1535)* projects the Utopian vision of a Christian State onto the New World. Similarly to More and Montaigne who were disenchanted by some aspects of European society, Quiroga hails the native justice and virtue of Mexican Indians as exemplary and sketches out the scheme of an elective Christian monarchy to govern the Mexican Indians freely and peacefully without colonial force and intervention. Both de las Casas and Quiroga pre-empted the eighteenth-century Jesuit Utopian colonies ('Reduccionen') in Paraguay which sought to reconcile primitive Christianity and ethnic primitivism.

In the seventeenth century, historical pessimism created utopias that idealized the 'state of nature' and defined society and civilization as progressive alienation from an original good – they thus opposed Hobbes's anti-social notion of the 'natural' man. Here utopia again promised the regeneration of society to its original state of innocence and peace. Utopias such as Denis Vairasse's *History of the Sevarites* (1675) or Gabriel de Foigny's *La Terre Australe connue (The Southern Land Known, 1676)* document simple, virtuous and self-sufficient communities in the Antipodes. Aphra Behn's description of the Indians in Surinam in *Oroonoko* (1688)

anticipated Jacques Rousseau's paean to the innocence, simplicity and peaceableness of the 'noble savage'. The projection of utopian hope and nostalgic desire onto the New World continued in the eighteenth-century. These utopias promoted domestic, self-sufficient agricultural economies, recreating the true meaning of Paradise as walled garden (Greek παράδεισος (*parádeisos*) or orchard (Hebrew פֶּרְדִּים (*pardes*) and a simple life. Henry Mackenzie in *The Man of the World*, (1773), Lesage's *Les Aventures de M. Robert Chevalier, dit de Beauchêne, capitaine de flibustiers dans la Nouvelle-France* (1732), Abbé Prévost's great philosophical novel, *Le Philosophe anglais, ou histoire de Monsieur Cleveland* (1731-39) and Louis Armand de Lom d'Arc' Baron de La Hotan's three part *Nouveau Voyages de MR. Le Baron de Lahontan dans L'Amerique septentrionale* (1703) idealize the exemplary simplicity of the Native American societies. Another, more conspicuous but real-life community was founded by Christian Gottlieb Priber in America. Priber left Germany in 1735 to found a city state named Paradise, for prisoners, criminals and slaves amongst the Cherokee nation. Priber sought, if unsuccessfully, to imitate the simple and more 'natural' lifestyle of the North American Indians, a lifestyle he encountered as a former captive of Indians himself.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, Pacific explorations moved Edenic projections onto the South Sea Islands. Denis Diderot's *Supplement to Bougainville's 'Voyage'* (1772) made a case for the simple, natural ways of a South Sea Island culture and rejected the idea of progress. In the Platonic dialogue of the Supplement, Diderot emphasises the validity and superiority of the Tahitian state natural law and morality that seems to make religious and civil law somewhat superfluous:

... if morality were based on men's external relations with one another, religious laws would be superfluous and civil law would merely articulate the law of nature. [...] Or, if it's judged necessary to retain all three, the last two should be strictly patterned on the first which we carry with us engraved in our hearts, and which is always the strongest (Diderot 1992: 67).

According to Diderot, man is naturally good and evil but his adherence to natural law, will prevent moral evil. The natural code is accessible to man via reason, moral evil thus is man's own and mankind's collective responsibility (Diderot *Encyclopédie*: 19). The return to the (natural) simplicity of a society ruled by natural law will enhance man's natural ability to moral good and prevent political abuses of power and government. The Tahitian society in the *Supplement* represents the early stages of Diderot's pessimistic conjectural history of human civilisation, but one that cannot be recovered anymore. The solution that Diderot ultimately proposed is the social contract that is, as suggested in the above quotation, based on the law of nature as a moral and civic guide line.

‘the best of all worlds’ (Leibnitz)

My brief discussion above has indicated that whilst writers and philosophers who struggled with the question of evil within a theological context, also brought the question into the realm of the socio-political. Enlightenment philosophies shifted the question of evil again, this time into the realm of

ethics and psychology. The two Enlightenment standpoints vis-à-vis the question of evil differed in their demand to either make evil intelligible (Rousseau) or accept it as unintelligible (Voltaire, Neiman: 8). This debate was particularly fervent in the aftermath of the Earthquake of Lisbon (1755) when the optimistic stance of Leibnitz to assume that all of God's actions happen for the best was queried. Voltaire's *Candide, ou l'Optimisme* (1759) lampoons Leibnitz's optimism and faith that the causal link between natural evil and moral evil will become apparent to us eventually. In this vein, Pangloss repeatedly asks: 'How can a benevolent God permit this terrible evil to happen?' Voltaire argued in his *Lettres Philosophiques* (1733), especially in his piece on Pascal, the need to revise the doctrine of original sin and the idea of human greatness that is only possible in man's original condition in the Garden of Eden or some remnant of that blissful state in fallen humanity. It is possible to imagine a better world but the concept of Paradise or utopia as a state of constant and unchangeable happiness and tranquillity is, according to Voltaire, mere *ennui*, and counteracts the principle of perfectibility:

Once again, 'tis impossible for mankind to continue in that suppos'd lethargy; 'tis absurd to imagine it, and foolish to pretend to it. Man is born for action, as the fire tends upwards, and a stone downwards (Voltaire 1994: 137).

The concept of degeneration that is posited here does not compare to Rousseau's negative anthropology but perceives the idea of perfection as stasis, perfectibility as a creative and modern desire for change. Accordingly, this desire for change is mirrored in the episodic nature of *Candide* where the protagonists travel through a range of utopias from the 'paradis terrestre' Thunder-Ten-Throckh to the fabled El Dorado only to

leave them at the end to find their utopias within themselves. The problem of evil (and utopian perfection) is answered by the practical application of Voltaire's philosophy of pragmatic optimism, 'il faut cultiver son jardin'. These texts do not reject utopia *per se* but reflect the necessity of continual transformation, the necessity of what Goethe came to call *Bildung*. It is therefore no coincidence that these utopias bear similarities to the *Bildungsroman* where individual evolution and growth is intertwined with social perfectibility.

The paradigmatic shift of evil to an ethical and psychological category opened possibilities for educational utopias that seek to fashion moral agents and responsible citizens. Elements of this educational stance can be found in Thomas More's *Utopia* and its underlying humanist ethical discourse.

An earlier Lutheran version of an educational utopia was proposed by the German theologian Johann Valentin Andreae. In his *Republicae Christinaopolitanae Descriptio (Christianopolis)* (1619), Andreae sought to renew 'the inner life of the Lutheran church' and society. The pattern of Andreae's fictitious community is succinctly described in the text as a 'republic of workers, living in equality, desiring peace, and renouncing riches.' It is based on principles of rationality, order and complete social control underpinned, similarly to *Utopia*, by a geometric city plan with a College in its centre. Andreae's targeted sins are Tyranny, Sophistry and Hypocrisy, variations on Pride and self-interest. Christianopolis's motto is: 'We have come from freedom to doing good.' Thus, the chief Magistrates Por, Sin, Mor represent the monotriad of Power, Knowledge and Love to banish evil. (Andreae 1999 35). Education is the principal political and social tool in Christianopolis. It is the basis of a superior society, consisting of

intellectually and morally exceptional citizens with a very distinctive political agenda: the education of the Utopian subject.

In his educational tract, *Emile* (1762) and in particular, the chapter on ‘The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar’, Rousseau argues quite radically that evil is man’s own doing and grace is obtained entirely by self-knowledge; ‘Providence hath left man at liberty, not that he should do evil, but good, by choice (Rousseau 2008:268). As indicated above, Rousseau was not convinced of the notion of progress and civilization. Indeed his second Discourse, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (*Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, 1754) argues that the progress of civilization has resulted in the alienation of human nature. The Fall has been a gradual and collective process (see Neiman: 45) and can only be reversed by nurturing and developing ‘amour de soi’ (love of self) against ‘amour propre’ (self-love). His educational utopia, *Emile*, is ultimately a project to develop this sociable and virtuous love of self into a moral being who freely decides to act morally:

The love of others springing from self-love, is the source of human justice. The whole of morality is summed up in the gospel in this summary of the law. (Rousseau 1963: 197)

The development and education of the main character Emile illustrates ‘the story of the development of one individual, the nature of the connection – or transition – between the state of nature and the state of society, the individual and the social – moral, goodness and virtue, natural freedom and mature liberty.’ (Gill 2010: 207) The ultimate aim is to educate different

kinds of citizens motivated by ‘amour de soi’ and natural freedom that form the basis of universal human justice.

‘Do as thou wouldst’ (Rabelais)

In opposition to the geometry of the Thomas More’s Utopia, the anarchistic utopia as devised by Rabelais in his Abbey of *Thelème* (1534) is ruled by an Arcadian primitivism that determines the constructed environment, social relations and organisation of private/domestic relations. Especially, the liberation of human sexuality (strictly regulated in the More’s utopia) is the main reason for the success of these Utopian societies. Rabelais’s *Abbey of Thelème* (1534) pre-empted the libertarian Utopianism of de Sade in declaring the absolute authority of the individual, governed only by his or her wishes and desires. ‘Do as thou wouldst’ is the motto of the Abbey.

William Beckford’s Gothic Oriental tale *Vathek, an Arabian Tale* (1782) presents an Orientalist spin on this motto. Beckford’s imaginary geographies in *Vathek* are a hyperbolic and anti-utopian projection of political and erotic fantasies onto the East in the vein of the Orientalist writings of the eighteenth century. The equation of Muslim Empires with despotism figures was already presented in Montesquieu’s *De l’esprit des lois* (1748) and *Lettres persanes* (1721) and in conjectural anthropologies such as John Millar’s *The Origins of the Distinction of Ranks* (1781) and William Alexander’s *The History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time* (1779). The arbitrary power of the Sultan in Montesquieu

was to remind Europeans of the once powerful and expansionist Muslim empires and of the dangers of the abuses of absolute monarchy in Europe itself and used the Orient as a warning exemplum for the political evil of absolutism.

In *Vathek*, the particular focus of attention is the constitutional institutions of monarchy and sovereignty: they are presented as pride, corruption, gluttony and evil institutionalised in the character of Vathek the Caliph and his mother. At the end, the Caliph and his mother are condemned to eternally suffer in purgatory. However, as Lewis has suggested, ‘humor and horror are mixed in an effort to undermine the allure of both piety and impiety, good and evil, creating a sense of detachment from all values. If the only possible choice is between a laughable malice and an unappealing virtue, why bother choose?’ (Lewis: 14). Embedded in this Orientalist nihilism is assumption of the failure of the Enlightenment project.

Another take on the Enlightenment project and its Kantian principle of ‘Reason which is not led by another agency’ (Adorno and Horkheimer: 79) are the libertine writings by the Marquis de Sade consequently pushed the limits of this principle to its libertine limits. His nihilistic *Les 120 journées de Sodome* or *l'école du libertinage* (*The 120 Days of Sodom, or the School of Libertinism*, 1785) or *Justine ou Les Malheurs de la vertu* (*Justine, or The Misfortunes of the Virtue*, 1791) not only deny the existence of God but created a world based upon total human freedom. As an early precursor to the anti-utopia, de Sade identifies structural order and symmetry as we encountered in Thomas More as totalitarian and terroristic. All the above utopian imaginations presented to deliver mankind from evil are rejected by de Sade. He accepts the premise that mankind is equally capable of good and evil, that moral evil is a choice:

if it [Providence] places us in a situation where evil becomes necessary, and at the same time gives us the chance to commit it, it is because this evil serves the law of Providence as much as good does, and derives an equal benefit from both. It has created us all equal, but he who disrupts this equality is no more guilty than he who seeks to restore it. (de Sade: 28).

The balance between good and evil must be maintained, furthermore, in the Sadean unfettered existence, the choice of giving into evil might be in fact (and paradoxically) choosing the lesser evil:

however fair it may be, virtue is the worst option available, when it is too weak to combat vice, and that in a century that is thoroughly corrupt, the safe course is to do as the others (de Sade: 5).

In this framework, the Original Sin is perceived as an act of freedom. The alienation of the individual's autonomy and self-determination from the social context is a problematic interpretation of Kant's understanding of individual autonomy (see Adorno and Horkheimer 1988). The Kantian 'categorical imperative' is the moral foundation of the 'Kingdom of Ends', 'an association in which the freedom of each individual could coexist with that of every other individual without conflict or violence' (Dews: 19)

If Thomas More posited a utopian paradox that questioned the very utopian reasoning he presents in *Utopia*, de Sade unveils a similar incongruity in the utopian quest to resolve the question of evil: in order to correct human nature as a politically pragmatic gesture, to guide it towards

the moral good, does this then necessarily lead to the acceptance of the lesser evil? (see Pelinka: 167).

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¹ ‘Utopia’ stems from the Greek words οὐ *u* (‘not’) and τόπος *tópos* (‘place’), hence “no-place land”, but could also be read as the Latinization of Εὐτοπεία *eutopείa*, ‘good-place land’ .