

1. Places of pure pain

In his book *The Myth on the Golden Age in the Renaissance*, Harry Levin outlined a model of primitivism and millennialism which is worth recalling:

“Standing here and wishing to be there, we are given a choice, at least by imagination; we may opt for some distant part of the world, a terrestrial paradise, or for an otherworld, a celestial paradise. Living now and preferring to live then, we are not likely to get beyond an imaginative exercise; but again we are faced with a double opposition. If we reject the present, we must choose between the past and the future, between an Arcadian retrospect and a Utopian prospect. The spatial and the temporal distances may prolong one another, as they do in exotic imaginings that took place far away and long ago. Both of them fall within the orbit of primitivism. On the other hand, both the expectation of an afterlife and, on a more worldly plane, the resolve to build a heaven on earth through social planning share a common expectancy, which may be viewed as chiasm or millennialism”(Levin, 1969: 8).

Levin’s model is a good reminder of the fact that the ideas of progress, millennialism, primitivism, and utopia have tightly intertwined histories. Since we are permanentlyunsatisfied with the *here and now* of our present condition, we have built paradises. We have placed them in an *elsewhere* more or less distant from where we live our lives, such as the happy and pristine islands of the Pacific or those countries in which equality, fraternity, and a “new man” were supposedly emerging. We have also devised imaginary places that have to do primarily with the past or the future: paradises have been placed at the beginning of history or have been expected to reappear or manifest themselves in all their glory only at the end of history. Generally, the tendency is to place hells or places of pure suffering not at the beginning of time, but at its end. The end of the process, the final hell or the Kingdom of the Beast, has often been viewed as a temporary stage or a necessary step toward a more or less remote final redemption.

It is with a much lower intensity that we speak of places where there is no suffering or places of pure suffering with respect to our present condition: this happens because the here and now of the present time, as we all know from our personal experience to varying degrees, is a mixture of serenity and suffering. We use the expression “artificial paradise” very often, and when we say “this is a paradise” we are always aware that we are only speaking metaphorically. Such an inextricable

mixture of suffering and serenity (when the suffering is not excessive) is really the best that life can offer to us.

As for hells or places of pure suffering located in the present time, we have been definitely more efficient. In fact, for a great number of human beings the expression “this is hell” was not a metaphor. In the course of history, even in our own history, we have erected many places of pure or nearly pure suffering. It would be easy enough to quote medieval or modern descriptions of infernal places. Most of us, however, have read Primo Levi’s *If This Is a Man* and many of us have read Jean Améry’s *At the Mind’s Limits*, a book that Levi wanted to see translated into Italian. In the concentration camp universe, hell and the present time became almost the same thing. So much so that by dedicating one’s life to giving others personal testimony of the real and not imaginary existence of those hells, that same life becomes unbearable and suicide appears, as probably happened to Primo Levi and as certainly happened to Jean Améry, as the only acceptable solution.

One point needs to be emphasized: hells do not originate only from the demonic temptations of power or a spasmodic will to power or the belief in the existence of groups of people (viewed as subhuman) that must be exterminated as enemies of civilization, of progress and any kind of moral value. Hells often arise from attempts to build paradises on earth. Each of those numerous and repeated attempts has invariably resulted, even in the twentieth century, in the creation of an infernal place. The fact that such infernal places were regularly conceived as a painful but necessary step towards a future heaven does not in any way render them less infernal nor was of any consolation to the victims. The pursuit of perfection, as Sir Isaiah Berlin has repeatedly reminded us, inevitably turns into a recipe for bloodshed. And things do not improve if the recipe is rooted in the purity of the heart and the noblest intentions.

I will not deal, here, with the present or future heavens and their joys. Nor will I mention the sufferings that paradise-builders have caused or are still causing. I will touch on some aspects of the issue of pain dating back only three centuries from now, but belonging to a world that has become, as regards this particular issue, almost alien to our own. To embark in a journey into the past – Descartes has written – is like travelling to a foreign country. One of the tasks of historians – who in this aspect resemble anthropologists – is to provide, simultaneously, the sense of our closeness to the past and our distance from it. For this reason, it is necessary to dedicate a brief digression to the conceptions of hell elaborated within our Jewish-Christian tradition.

2. On Hell and its decline: a digression

“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt” (*Daniel*, 12: 2). “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his [of the Son of Man] voice and come out – those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned” (*John*, 5: 28-29). On the eternity of hell there are, in the Bible, some crucial passages. The most well-known is *Matthew* 25, 31-46:

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me’. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life”.

However, in his *De principiis*, written in the first half of the third century AD, Origen wrote that at the end of time all men will be saved. This argument was condemned at the Council of Alexandria, in the year 400. The ninth anathema of Justinian’s edict against Origen, signed at the Council of Constantinople in 543, read: “Whoever says or thinks that the punishments of demons and the

wicked will not be eternal, that it will have an end and that there will be an *apokatastasis* of demons and the wicked, let him be anathema” (Walker 1964: 21). Open attacks to the eternity of Hell reappeared only in the course of the seventeenth century with the Socinians and the English and German Millenarians, and the dispute involved famous thinkers such as Henry More, Thomas Burnet, Pierre Bayle, Samuel Clarke, and Wilhelm Leibniz. Through one of those complicated processes typical of the history of ideas, the West gradually witnessed what D.P. Walker has called the “decline of hell” (Walker 1964).

In the world or in the cultural worlds to which I shall hereafter refer, regardless of the decline of hell, three things happened: 1) pain was closely linked to the notion of guilt; 2) the representation of pain was seen as necessary for the education and the salvation of the soul; 3) the fear of suffering was considered an essential part of education or, to put it in modern words, as “pedagogically valuable”. To these three different elements and beliefs we should add the very important fact that the philosophers and intellectuals of the time were very familiar with the biblical text, which was often quoted by heart. For Francis Bacon and John Milton, for Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton, the reading and the interpretation of the Bible were not marginal, but essential elements of culture. The books most frequently cited by both Bacon and Newton were the *Psalms*, the *Book of Daniel* and the *Apocalypse* of John. In these texts, as everyone knows, there are representations of individual and collective pain that reach peaks of extraordinary intensity and efficacy:

I am worn out from my groaning.
All night long I flood my bed with weeping
and drench my couch with tears.
My eyes grow weak with sorrow;
they fail because of all my foes. (*Psalms* 6: 6-7)

I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.
My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death. (*Psalms* 22: 14-15)

When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” I

looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth. (*Revelation 6: 7-8*)

3. The power of images and the art of memory

For many years, I have studied the arts of memory between the sixteenth and the early eighteenth century, and I have published two books on this topic. The first is entitled *Clavis universalis. Arti della memoria e logica combinatoria da Lullo a Leibniz* [Clavis Universalis: logic and the arts of memory from Lullo to Leibniz], and was published in Milan by Ricciardi in 1960 and then republished by Il Mulino in Bologna in 1983 and 1988. It has been translated into Japanese, Spanish, and French. In 2000, the book was also published in the United States by The University of Chicago Press with the title *Logic and the Art of Memory: The Quest for a Universal Language* (tr. with an introduction by Stephen Clucas). The second is entitled *Il passato, la memoria, l'oblio* [The Past, the Memory, and the Oblivion], and it was published by Il Mulino in 1991 and again, in a new edition, in 2000. This self-advertising interlude, for which I deeply apologize to the readers, only serves as an introduction to the (quite unusual) context from which I will draw the following remarks.

It is in such context that a long history unfolds, beginning in Greece with Simonides of Ceos and – passing through the writings of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Ramon Lull and the great encyclopaedists of the seventeenth century – coming to an end during the century of the Enlightenment. Among the philosophers and intellectuals who dealt with the tradition of the *art of memory* we find not only Cornelius Agrippa and Giordano Bruno, but also Bacon, Descartes, Comenius, and especially Leibniz. In the manuscripts and books about memory, which fill libraries across Europe, we come across notions regarding *artificial memory* as opposed to *natural memory*, and notions of *images* and *places*. Images, in order to be firmly imprinted in memory, needed to be mentally *located* within certain “places”. To be able to *remember* – the old masters of the art taught – one had to mentally walk along a predetermined path and, as the locations previously established were reached, recall (until they had become familiar) the images placed in such locations. Each of these images was related to a notion or a concept.

In order to give you a rough idea of how the art of memory “worked”, I will not resort to an ancient philosophical or mnemonic text, but to the words of a great neurophysiologist of the twentieth century. In the 1920’s, Aleksandr Luria begun treating Mr. S., a patient afflicted by an excess of memory. Mr. S. was able to repeat, even in reverse order, a long list of words of any kind which had been read to him a week, a month, a year or many years before. As Luria wrote, S. was able to experience “a word’s taste and weight”, and was capable of retaining extraordinarily lively images.

When S. read through a long series of words, each word would elicit a graphic image. And since the series was fairly long, he had to find some way of distributing these images of his in a mental row or sequence. Most often (and this habit persisted throughout his life), he would “distribute” them along some roadway or street he visualized in his mind. Sometimes this was a street in his home town, which would also include the yard attached to the house he had lived in as a child and which he recalled vividly. On the other hand, he might also select a street in Moscow. Frequently he would take a mental walk along that street [...] and slowly make his way down, “distributing” his images at houses, gates, and store windows. (Luria 1968: 32; cf. Rossi 1991: 42-43)

Mr S. transforms a series of *words* in a series of *images*. The key to deciphering the reason behind the few mistakes he made in remembering does not lie in the psychology of memory, but in the psychology of perception:

I put the image of the pencil near a fence... the one down the street, you know. But what happened was that the image fused with that of the fence and I walked right on past without noticing it. The same thing happened with the word *egg*. I had put it up against a white wall and it blended in with the background. How could I possibly spot a white egg up against a white wall? (Luria 1968: 36)

4. The palaces of memory and the casuistic mode of thinking

The so-called “Ciceronian art of memory” – which was *totally unknown* to both Mr. S. and the great scientist who examined him for many years – worked and still works (for example, in advertising courses) in the way I have just described. But the art of memory, in its long history, has undergone

many *transformations* and even *transfigurations*. One of such transfigurations occurred in the works of the seventeenth-century Jesuits and in the culture of the Baroque age. In that culture, the orderly palace of memory (to which many authors of the two preceding centuries had devoted their mental energies) started to look more like an amazing labyrinth, a cabinet or museum of rare and curious objects, populated by an endless amount of items and images of items. Such labyrinth tended to reproduce itself. It grew on itself, it increased by some sort of exponential accumulation of things and symbols of things. In some cases, it ended up looking as a sort of nightmare: compared to the halls of a museum built by Athanasius Kircher, the rooms of the Vittoriale may appear semi-deserted and almost deprived of furnishings.

The labyrinth took two forms: one was spatial or relative to the outside world, the other was temporal or relative to the world of consciousness or interiority. The first concerned the *globus mundi*, the second the *globus intellectualis*. Two labyrinthine universes emerged, the one coexisting next to the other, and often reciprocal exchanges occurred between the two. On the one hand we have the *Wunderkammer* (or cabinets of wonder), the construction of a miniature universe, the collection and classification of objects, plants, animals, fossils, paintings, sculptures, medals, exotic objects, and relics (Pomian 1982). On the other hand, we have the Jesuit *examination of conscience*, which required a full cataloging and a number of hard trials for memory: it consisted in the recollection, in all its intricate and minute details, of a world of actions, thoughts, intentions, affections, passions, and memories that had populated the soul at a given time.

To the grand *theaters of the world* and the *collections* that evoke awe and wonder corresponded, from this point of view, the giant *manuals* consisting of several folio volumes that classified in hundreds of paragraphs and thousands of sections and subsections all possible events and life situations. Incidentally, it may be noted that the *casuistic method* has been compared to the *clinical method* in the sense that they both tend, preliminarily, to the construction of a reliable taxonomy of well-analyzed typical cases that may serve as paradigmatic objects when dealing with new or uncertain cases. The authors of these remarks also believe that, today, casuistry is enjoying a “great revival” in all the discussions taking place in the field of bioethics and medical ethics (although those involved in such discussions are not even remotely aware of the existence of such *revival*) (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988: 257).

The *Resolutiones morales* of Antonius Diana, published in Palermo between 1629 and 1654, occupied ten volumes and dealt with no less than twenty thousand possible cases. The *Institutiones*

morales, by Juan Azor, printed in Rome between 1610 and 1611, numbered 3,800 pages. In a large taxonomy of the universe of human behaviors, the old alphabetical order was abandoned and classifications which referred to the Ten Commandments or the seven deadly sins were adopted. The essence of the *casuistic way of thinking* lies in a sort of slow and continuous transition from the most obvious cases to the most obscure ones, from the simplest to the most complicated ones (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988: 252). Such transition implied the introduction of increasingly extensive and detailed references to particular circumstances of life and specific motivations. In these treatises, all possible vicious or virtuous behaviors were considered worthy of attention: the behaviors ranged from innocent dancing to brutal murder, from an innocent kiss and caress to much more complicated and gloating kisses and caresses, from the sexual behavior of the married couple to the lawfulness, for a wife, to deny herself to a husband who had the most immoderate claim to have more than three intercourses per night. In the labyrinthine world of casuistry, as well as in the theaters of the world wishing to reflect the entire universe in order to allow a memorization of it, nothing could be left out and nothing was left to chance. No question should go unanswered: is it lawful for a servant to saddle the horse of a master who goes to a date with the (supposed) intention of committing adultery?

5. The sight of imagination

In Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (1535) memory is viewed 1) as an indispensable aid to prayers and meditations; 2) as a necessary tool for the examination of conscience; 3) as a kind of storehouse of sacred images from which to draw in the course of meditation. The *composición viendo el lugar* (visual composition of place) consisted in *ver con la vista de la imaginación* (seeing with the eyes of imagination) the "corporeal place, as for instance, a temple or mountain in which Jesus Christ or Our Lady is found" (Loyola 1914: 35-36). The *composición* can generate images so intense as to give the impression that they could be seen, touched, perceived by each of the five senses: those images can be so powerful as to arouse emotions, cause tears, trembling, and physical discomfort.

The *vista de la imaginación* allowed one to see, as it is argued in the fifth exercise of the first week, the length, the width, and the depth of Hell. *Seeing*, however, was not enough: imagination allowed

one to touch and perceive sounds, tastes, and smells. For this reason, Hell must be considered or “meditated” five times, in relation to each of the five senses:

The first Point will be to see with the sight of the imagination the great fires, and the souls as in bodies of fire. The second, to hear with the ears wailings, howlings, cries, blasphemies against Christ our Lord and against all His Saints. The third, to smell with the smell smoke, sulphur, dregs and putrid things. The fourth, to taste with the taste bitter things, like tears, sadness and the worm of conscience. The fifth, to touch with the touch; that is to say, how the fires touch and burn the souls. (Loyola 1914: 45-46)

Here, the ancient art of memory appears to be enhanced and incorporated in a religious context. As in a large and provocative theater, the scenes of the sacred history, the life, passion and death of Jesus became living realities. To escape sin and save their souls, men must learn to live every day with those images. They have to make them the subject of *spiritual exercises*. Figurativity and images lay at the heart of the universe.

6. Petrarch, death, and the senses of the mind

There is no need to insist too much, as many authors have done, on the sight of imagination, the senses of the mind, and on figurativity as categories that are typical and characteristic of the age of the Baroque. Not because this claim is untrue, but because many have thought that those categories were exclusively Baroque – as if the age of the Baroque somehow had the exclusive monopoly of “corporeal images”, as if the idea of an imaginative sight really emerged for the first time in history in the seventeenth century as a previously unknown dimension. The idea of sight as a privileged sense had already been connected by Cicero to the retentive capacity of memory:

The keenest of all our senses is the sense of sight, and consequently perceptions received by the ears or by reflexion can be most easily retained in the mind if they are also conveyed to our minds by the mediation of the eyes. (*De oratore*, II, 37, 357)

This statement of Cicero was certainly known to Petrarch, who was regarded by many theorists of

the *Ars memorativa* as a master of memory and was thought to have contributed greatly to the development and growth of the art (Rossi 1991: 68-70, 89-90). Petrarch also emphasized the fact that things seen cling closer to our remembrance than things heard: *tenacior esse solet visorum quam auditorum recordatio*. In addressing such issues, Petrarch takes us back to a cultural dimension (essentially foreign to us) in which the representation of pain and death was considered necessary to the education of the soul and the representation of suffering was seen as an essential part of education. The word *death*, Petrarch wrote in the first dialogue of his *Secretum*, sounds hard and gloomy to the ear. But - he goes on - even in a time like this, in which good manners have almost disappeared, some pious and devout religious orders have rightly preserved the custom to attend the washing of the bodies of the dead while they are prepared for burial. This custom has a purpose: to ensure that “this sad and pitiable spectacle to the eyes remains forever in the memory of the survivors”. The “visual images” in the *Secretum* show the extraordinary acuteness of Petrarch’s imaginative vision and have nothing to envy, in terms of strength and intensity, to those found in the seventeenth-century texts:

Hearing that word [death] but lightly, or allowing the remembrance of it to slip quickly from our mind won’t do. No, we must take time to realize it. We must meditate with attention thereon. We must picture to ourselves the effect of death on each several part of our bodily frame, the cold extremities, the breast in the sweat of fever, the side throbbing with pain, the vital spirits running slower and slower as death draws near, the eyes sunken and weeping, every look filled with tears, the forehead pale and drawn, the cheeks hanging and hollow, the teeth staring and discolored, the nostrils shrunk and sharpened, the lips foaming, the tongue foul and motionless, the palate parched and dry, the languid head and panting breast, the hoarse murmur and sorrowful sigh, the evil smell of the whole body, the horror of seeing the face utterly unlike itself all these things will come to mind and, so to speak, be ready to one’s hand, if one recalls what one has seen in any close observation of some deathbed where it has fallen to our lot to attend. For things seen cling closer to our remembrance than things heard. (Petrarch 1911)

Such “strong” visual images are devised in order to allow a “long-term” memorization of them (to put it in modern words). Unlike the other occasional images, they remain forever at hand without there being any need to engage in that form of *reminiscentia* which must - “almost by syllogizing” - draw on the great storehouse of memory. Petrarch speaks of “writing” and “imprinting” things in the soul, of “notes” that hold the sentences “almost with hooks”, so that the sentence comes up spontaneously, in the same way that the medical experts immediately associate the name of the

disease with the name of the remedy. There is no need to think that Petrarch wrote an *Ars memorativa* that went lost. It should not come as much of a surprise that a long and tenacious tradition (which began with Johannes Romberch in 1520 and ended during the second half of the eighteenth century) saw Petrarch as one of the great masters of the art of memory. On this point, Frances A. Yates was perfectly right: there is an aspect of the production of Petrarch for which he was admired in the age of memory, but that has been completely forgotten by modern scholars (Yates 1956: 893-894 and cf. Rossi 1991: 89-90).

7. Feeling the pain of Hell

After this brief encounter with the author of *Il canzoniere* we can go back to the Jesuits. In his *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, James Joyce makes us attend one of the sermons given by a Jesuit aimed at introducing Hell to the “senses of the mind”. That Jesuit, not by chance, referred to the “composition of place” (which was a technical term typical of the *ars memorativa*) and described imagination as the mind’s ability to “feel”:

This morning we endeavoured, in our reflection upon hell, to make what our holy founder calls in his book of spiritual exercises, the composition of place. We endeavoured, that is, to imagine with the senses of the mind, in our imagination, the material character of that awful place and of the physical torments which all who are in hell endure (Joyce 2004: 111)

Among the senses, we find the sense of smell:

The horror of this strait and dark prison is increased by its awful stench. All the filth of the world, all the offal and scum of the world, we are told, shall run there as to a vast reeking sewer when the terrible conflagration of the last day has purged the world. The brimstone, too, which burns there in such prodigious quantity fills all hell with its intolerable stench; and the bodies of the damned themselves exhale such a pestilential odour that, as saint Bonaventure says, one of them alone would suffice to infect the whole world. The very air of this world, that pure element, becomes foul and unbreathable when it has been long enclosed. Consider then what must be the foulness of the air of hell. Imagine some foul and putrid corpse that has lain rotting

and decomposing in the grave, a jelly-like mass of liquid corruption. Imagine such a corpse a prey to flames, devoured by the fire of burning brimstone and giving off dense choking fumes of nauseous loathsome decomposition. And then imagine this sickening stench, multiplied a millionfold and a millionfold again from the millions upon millions of fetid carcasses massed together in the reeking darkness, a huge and rotting human fungus. Imagine all this, and you will have some idea of the horror of the stench of hell. (Joyce 2004: 105-106)

The images of the sufferings of Hell had to go through all the five senses. The passage I just quoted referred only to the sense of smell. The lake of fire in Hell had to do with the sense of touch:

And this terrible fire will not afflict the bodies of the damned only from without, but each lost soul will be a hell unto itself, the boundless fire raging in its very vitals. O, how terrible is the lot of those wretched beings! The blood seethes and boils in the veins, the brains are boiling in the skull, the heart in the breast glowing and bursting, the bowels a red-hot mass of burning pulp, the tender eyes flaming like molten balls. (Joyce 2004: 106-107)

At the end of the sermon, Stephen Daedalus “came down the aisle of the chapel, his legs shaking and the scalp of his head trembling as though it had been touched by ghostly fingers. [...] And at every step he feared that he had already died, that his soul had been wrenched forth of the sheath of his body, that he was plunging headlong through space” (Joyce 2004: 109).

In the imagination and common sense of our time, Christ’s face is as sweet and delicate as that depicted in the many oleographs dedicated to the heart of Jesus and is quite similar to the face that both Norman Jewison and Franco Zeffirelli imagined and chose - respectively - for their *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1973) and *Gesù di Nazareth* (1977). Only Pier Paolo Pasolini, in his *Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964), seemed to remember that there were images of that face a little less suffused with sweetness, kindness and indulgence, as for example the face of Christ in Piero della Francesca’s *Resurrection* in Sansepolcro or in Michelangelo’s *Last Judgement* in Rome. In these images, Christ appears also as a judge: he is the one who drove out the merchants from the Temple, who has descended into the realm of the dead and has come back from it to judge the living and the dead, to separate the sheep from the goats and the wheat from the chaff. As in the preaching of John the Baptist, who announced his coming: “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire”

(*Matthew* 3: 12); as yet in *Matthew* 5: 22: “But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Stupid’, is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of Hell”; as it was, finally, in the prophecy of Daniel in the Old Testament: “A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened” (*Daniel* 7: 10). Those books of memory contained all the acts performed by every single human being from the beginning of time.

Despite the many atrocities committed in the twentieth century, it is also possible that the second half of the twentieth century will be remembered (as regards Western Europe) as the era of universal forgiveness, of total understanding, of cosmic justification, of guaranteed indulgence, of the total absence of repression. In such a world, panting characters run around abusing their neighbor with a microphone in their hand, asking survivors of tragedies, while the blood of the victim is still dripping, if they are willing to forgive unconditionally and immediately. It seems very often that no one should be held responsible for his actions and therefore considered worthy of punishment.

Taking this, above all, into account, I would never dare to go beyond the sense of smell and the very brief mention to the sense of touch and continue to quote texts from the past that could further disturb our sensitive minds.

Bibliography

In an essay that dates back to 1962, James B. Thrane identified, in all probability, Joyce’s direct source: he printed in parallel columns the text of *Dedalus* and that of Father Giuseppe Pinamonti (1632-1703). Pinamonti, born in Pistoia from an aristocratic family, joined the Society of Jesus in 1647 and for more than twenty years was close to the famous Father Paolo Segneri. Pinamonti’s book *L’inferno aperto al cristiano perché non v’entri. Considerazioni delle pene infernali proposte a meditarci per evitarle* [Hell Opened to Christians, to Caution Them from Entering into It] was published for the first time, anonymously, in 1688 in Bologna. The text was subsequently published many times and was translated into Latin, French, German, Spanish and Portuguese. It was

published in English in 1715 in London and, in the following hundred years, was published in at least six editions. In Thrane's essay (which was pointed to me by Aldo Celli) there is no reference whatsoever to the topic of memory and the art of memory. I think that the meaning of the expression *composition of place* (which appears in the quotation from Joyce that opens paragraph 7 above) is, to this day, completely obscure even to the most refined specialists of Joyce (Pinamonti 1706; Pinamonti 1715; Thrane 1962).

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