A NOTE ON LEIBNIZ'S CONCEPTION OF 'FELIX CULPA'

by Pierre Beaudry, 1/12/2017

INTRODUCTION

> *"It will therefore sufficiently refute the objection to show that a world with evil may be better than a world without evil. But I have gone still further in the work, and have even shown that this universe must be indeed better than every other possible universe.* (Gottfried Leibniz, [Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil](#), The Project Gutenberg, p. 378)

On New Year's Eve, the LaRouche Policy Committee proposed a reflection on Leibniz's **Theodicy** as a New Year's resolution. That is an excellent suggestion, because the year 2017 is the year of a world axiomatic change for global development, and such a development will not take place without resolving the political dimension of the Augustinian paradox known as "*felix culpa*."

There is no work by Leibniz more provocative than the section of his **Theodicy** in which he refers to "*felix culpa*," because this "*wonderful sin*" paradox, which Pope John Paul II had put at the center of his apostolic work, is the proof that evil is not only necessary for mankind, but essential for the development of the highest good in the universe. This is also the reason why "*post-truth politics*" have become necessary to get to the truth, today. In fact, a "*post-truth*" is

not falsification of the truth; it is a repetition of a lie which ends up destroying itself.

As Saint Augustine understood the matter, evil is not something that exists in itself; evil is the lack of good and, more often than not, it manifests itself in the fact that man prevents the good from growing. As he wrote in his ***Enchiridion***: "Nevertheless, while no one maintains that good and evil are not contraries, they can not only coexist, but the evil cannot exist at all without the good, or in a thing that is not a good. On the other hand, the good can exist without evil." (Saint Augustine, ***Enchiridion***, Chapter IV, art. 14.)

For instance, evil is the lack of human determination to bring water to the desert. So, the best way to root out evil from a desert is to bring irrigation development and make food grow for a hungry world. An example is the case of the Lake Chad region of Africa as presented by Claudio Celani in ***Transaqua: A dream Is Becoming Reality***, EIR, January 6, 2017. In other words, from the vantage point of Augustine, evil can be easily understood as the lack of the good, the lack of development, the lack of perfectibility of mankind. Similarly, in the case of music, evil is the lack of harmony; that is, the lack of resolution of a dissonance. Now, take that idea with you and make the following epistemological leap.

1. WHY DOES KNOWLEDGE OF CAUSALITY REQUIRE EVIL?

The point is not that we should increase evil in the world in order to make people happier. Evil doesn't work that way. The point to understand is that happiness is not possible without a necessary dose of evil. The way to be made aware of this truth is by discovering the relationship which exists between evil and causality. How can evil be useful for generating knowledge of causality in the world? This begs the inverse of that question: ***"How can the knowledge of how the world works exist without understanding the role of evil in it?"*** This last question is easier to answer because if you don't realize that the British Empire is the evil which runs present world affairs, and you don't identify it publically for what it is, you will not be able to change anything for the better in this world.

The irony, here, is that you don't have any choice in the matter, because mankind has to change, and change implies the recognition of a specifically acknowledged evil within the good. However, man is free to choose which pathway to take; man is not predestined to a single preestablished pathway. The problem is that most people tend to take the pathway which is the most pleasurable or the least painful for them. And, that is where they go wrong, because such an easy pathway will never lead them to a better future. The path of least-resistance is not the path of least-action. The best way to understand that is to comprehend how musical dissonances get resolved and how evil can be turned into good.

As Leibniz reminded us, the necessary sin of Adam is that he had no choice in the matter; he had to change. He had to find the way to resolve the crisis of future humanity. However, he made the wrong choice when he decided to take the road to increasing his pride as opposed to increasing his love of mankind. This is the reason why the Roman Catholic Church celebrates the death and resurrection of Christ in the form of a wonderful irony during the Easter Mass, when they sing: ***"O Necessary sin of Adam, which was blotted out by the death of Christ! O Happy fault (felix culpa), which gave us such a great Redeemer!"*** (Leibniz, ***Theodicy,*** p. 129)

Here, Christians might be shocked by the irony of such an axiomatic change, because it is not obvious how such an outrageous unity of opposites could ever be internalized to improve the human mind. Although the Gregorian chant of the ***Exsultet*** does not express the appropriate wrenching of the soul for such an axiomatic moment, the question remains: "How can such a paradoxical singularity bring salvation to the human soul?"

This is generally understood as the mystery of the Resurrection; that is, as the Renaissance of humanity represented by Christ bursting the bonds of death by rising from the grave. This is also the transformation of the greatest liberating action to freely giving one's life for the benefit of others. The mystery truly lies in understanding how one can win by losing.

Granted that "***felix culpa"*** is not an easy ***Gordian knot*** to undo. Why did God choose to create the course of the world as He did? Why, indeed, would God

have chosen to create a world that includes evil? Why is this evil world the best of all possible worlds? Leibniz's reasoning was as follows:

OBJECTION I

"Whoever does not choose the best course is lacking either in power, or knowledge, or goodness. God did not choose the best course in creating this world. Therefore God was lacking in power, or knowledge, or goodness.

ANSWER

"I deny the minor, that is to say, the second premise of this syllogism, and the opponent proves it by this

PROSYLLOGISM

"Whoever makes things in which there is evil, and which could have been made without any evil, or need not have been made at all, does not choose the best course. God made a world wherein there is evil; a world, I say, which could have been made without any evil or which need not have been made at all. Therefore God did not choose the best course.

ANSWER

"I admit the minor of this prosyllogism, for one must confess there is evil in this world which God has made and that it would have been possible to make a world without evil or even not to create any world since its creation depended upon the free will of God. But, I deny the major, that is the first of the two premises of the prosyllogism and I might content myself with asking for its proof. In order, however, to give a clear exposition of the matter, I would justify this denial by pointing out that the best course is not always that one which tends toward avoiding evil, since it is possible that the evil may be accompanied by a greater good. For example, the general of an army will prefer a great victory with a slight wound to a state of affairs without wound and without victory. I have proved this in further

detail in this work by pointing out through instances taken from mathematics and elsewhere that an imperfection in the part may be required for a greater perfection in the whole. I have followed therein the opinion of Saint Augustine who said a hundred times that God permitted evil in order to derive from it a good, that is to say, a greater good. And Thomas Aquinas says that the permission of evil tends toward the good of the universe. I have shown that among older writers the fall of Adam was termed "felix culpa," a fortunate sin, because it had been expiated with immense benefit by the incarnation of the Son of God, for He gave to the universe something more noble than anything there would otherwise have been amongst created beings. For the better Understanding of the matter, I added, following the example of many good authors, that it was consistent with order and the general good for God to grant certain of His creatures the opportunity to exercise their freedom, even when He foresaw that they would turn it to evil, for God could easily correct the evil and it was not fitting that in order to prevent sin, he should always act in an extraordinary way. It will therefore sufficiently refute the objection to show that a world with evil may be better than a world without evil, but I have gone still further in the work and have even shown that this universe must indeed be better than every other possible universe." (Gottfried Leibniz, ***Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil,*** The Project Gutenberg, p. 377-378)

Why, then, must a world which includes evil be the best of all possible worlds? How can you demonstrate such a paradoxical idea to be true? First, you have to look for what is not there; that is, you have to look for what is missing the most in the world, today. And what is missing is development and scientific progress. The other thing that is missing is the understanding of God's Plan. Was God wrong in creating a world which is not perfect? Was the lack of development a part of His Plan? No one can answer that unless one understands God's intention. But, how can anyone know what God's intention is? Let's say that God's plan, at best, is to have a world which is constantly perfecting itself. How can evil be part of such a plan for the perfectibility of the world? How can evil help the world to

become more perfect? Why must the best of all possible worlds have evil in it in order to grow? Let's see if we can find some answers in the musical domain.

2. HOW CAN DISSONANCE CREATE HARMONY?

> ***"Likewise one may say that the consequent, or final and total, divine will tends towards the production of as many goods as can be put together, whose combination thereby becomes determined, and involves also the permission of some evils and the exclusion of some goods, as the best possible plan of the universe demands."***

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Leibniz, ***Theodicy***, p. 383

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It may sound outrageous to say that evil is necessary for the development of mankind, but why is it true? The question is: "How can this evil be conceived?" I don't think the necessity of evil can be conceivable outside of understanding the principle of musical composition; that is, outside of learning how harmony comes out of dissonance. I am not advocating that dissonance rule the world. I am not saying either that what is dissonant is evil, but rather, that evil is the result of a dissonance that has not been resolved properly.
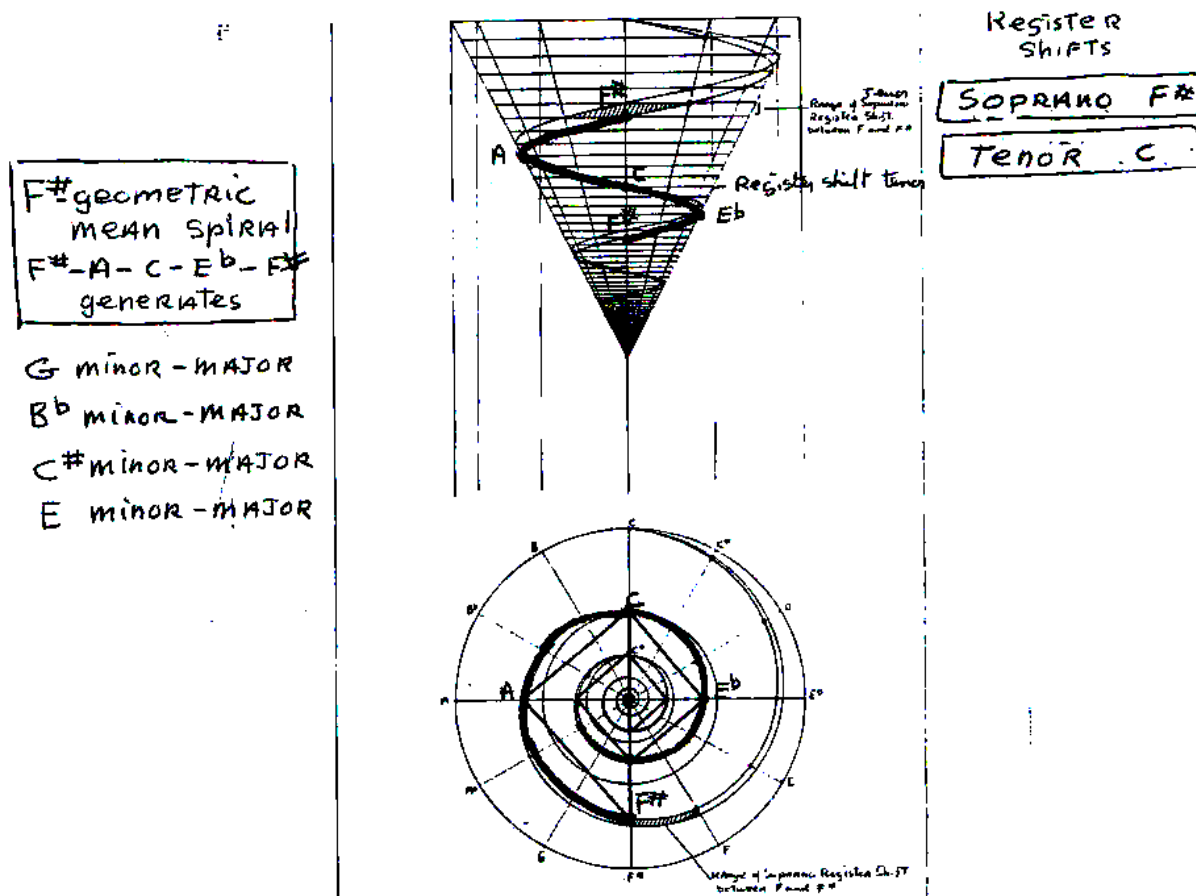
The secret of understanding the axiomatic function of dissonance lies not in the musical score itself, but in the manner in which a composer is able to go through the discontinuity of a dissonance by reaching beyond to a higher geometry. The composer, thus, is the performer and provider of change, because he is what he is communicating. In that sense, the creative mind is a performative mind.

One doesn't really know what will come out of such a discontinuity, but whatever comes out must be anticipated as a new harmonic resolution that had not existed before and generated that dissonance in the first place. In other words, the dissonance cannot remain without resolution, because it has no existence in and of itself, and the new and higher form of harmony must be different from the one that

preceded it and led to the dissonance that made it possible. In that sense, the musical dissonance is like an asteroid-belt-region representing a change of geometry within the solar system as a whole. Such a region cannot contain an actual planet within its orbital range, because it is a region of transformation like the F# region of the soprano and tenor voice register shift in Bel Canto classical music. Leibniz had a beautiful insight into this aspect of music whose harmonic transformations he considered to be part of a pre-established harmony as the virtues of rational creatures are already preexisting in the Mind of God before their existence. Leibniz wrote:

> *"Virtues are virtues only because they serve perfection or prevent the imperfection of those who are virtuous, or even of those who have to do with them. And they have that power by their nature and by the nature of rational creatures, before God decrees to create them. To hold a different opinion would be as if someone were to say that the rules of proportion and harmony are arbitrary with regard to musicians because they occur in music only when one has resolved to sing or to play some instrument. But that is exactly what is meant by being essential to good music: for those rules belong to it already in the ideal state, even when none yet thinks of singing, since it is known that they must of necessity belong to it as soon as one shall sing. In the same way virtues belong to the ideal state of the rational creature before God decrees to create it; and it is for that very reason we maintain that virtues are good by their nature."* (Gottfried Leibniz, [Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil](), The Project Gutenberg, p. 240)

Thus, the condition for preestablished harmony requires that dissonances be resolved for the purpose of perfecting humanity. My favorite example is Bach's *First Prelude in C-Major;* consider the way the score was composed by the inversion of the entire piece, from the end of the piece to the beginning, that is to say, from the resolution of three sets of minor third Lydian dissonances **C,Eb,F#,A**; **C#,E,G,Bb**; and **D,F,Ab,B**, whose purpose is to establish a lawful harmonic relationship among the Subdominant F, the Dominant G, and the tonic C.

Figure 1 Geometric mean spiral of **F#** generating the four key signatures of the next Lydians: **G, Bb, C#,** and **E.**

In other words, think for a moment, about what new powers the mind can achieve when it uses properly the restless intervals of **C-Eb-F#-A** rather than the naturally harmonic **C-E-G-C** and what it can lead your mind to discover. The purpose of such minor third dissonances is not to leave you hanging into an unresolved state, as the so-called "Devils intervals" are used by rock bands or similar noise makers. That's simply brainwashing. The point is to understand that the progress of the human mind depends on dissonances, because they are projected from a higher domain toward which these dissonances are to be resolved back into after having caused a change in your state of mind. That is the purpose of "*felix culpa*."

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