An Analytic Review of Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire's *Candide or Optimism* (1759; English translation, Sylvain Sauvage 1939) with assistance from Renée Waldinger's edited volume, *Approaches to Teaching Voltaire's Candide* (1987)

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[numbers in square brackets refer to the pages cited in the novel of Sauvage Translation]

There are many philosophical insights that can be learnt from Voltaire's *Candide*, but a basic paradigm is usually placed in three ways: optimism (which is part of the original title, '*Candide, ou l'Optimisme*') or formally Leibnitz's 'best of all worlds' thesis; pessimism or formally Pierre Bayle's skepticism and what Voltaire interprets as the Manichaean thesis; and what I believe is the synthetic resolution into Epicurus' Garden school and motif, or what other literary authorities have identified in the eighteenth century landscape architecture movement: Hence –

Pangloss: "I am still of my first opinion...for after all I am a philosopher; and it would be unbecoming for me to recant, since Leibnitz could not be in the wrong and pre-established harmony is the finest thing imaginable, like the plemum and subtle matter" [137];

Martin: "He [the devil] is so deeply concerned in the affairs of this world...that he may very well be in me, as well as in everybody else; but I own to you that when I cast on this globe, or rather on this little ball, I cannot help thinking that God has abandoned it to some malignant being." [88-89; but here using 1918 translation in Project Gutenberg EBook of Candide, 100] AND "I foresaw... that your gifts would soon be wasted, and would only make them the more miserable. You and Cacambo were once bloated with millions of piastres and you are no happier than Friar Giroflée and Paquette." [144]

Candide: "You are right...for, when man was placed in the Garden of Eden, he was placed there *ut operaretur sum*, to dress it and to keep it; which proves that man was not born for idleness...we must cultivate our garden" (*il faut cultiver notre jardin*). [146, 147].

What follows is a philosophical description of the central ideas in these schemas. In the three cases, we have a revealing mixture of theology, mathematics, and philosophy of science. None of these stances are philosophically satisfying, in that the various arguments can only account for one frame of the *horizon worldview* (the sum of all worldviews; this is my original term).

Leibniz's Monadology

Gottfried Leibniz's best known work was the Monadology (*La Monadologie*, 1714). The German and Latin editions were done by Christian Wolff and others which led to a major school of western philosophy. The philosophy arising from the concept of 'Monad' has to be conjoined with Leibniz's other major work. He inserted references into *La Monadologie* the paragraphs of his *Théodicée* ('Theodicy', i.e. a justification of God). The *monad* is, from the Latin, an ultimate atom, or simple, unextended point; something ultimate and indivisible. For Leibniz, the concept surmised that there are indefinitely many substances individually 'programmed' to act in a predetermined way, each substance being coordinated with all the others.

The idea of each such substance is the pre-established harmony which solved the mind-body problem, but at the cost of declaring any interaction between substances a mere appearance. Every 'substance' affects only itself, but all the substances (both bodies and minds) in the world, nevertheless, seem to causally interact with each other because they have been programmed by God in advance to 'harmonize' with each other. It is not difficult to see the step then to 'the best of all possible worlds' thesis, which Leibniz explained in the *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal* (*Essays of Theodicy on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil,*1710). Leibniz outlined his perfect world theory *The Monadology*, stating the argument in five statements:

1. God has the idea of infinitely many universes.
2. Only one of these universes can actually exist.
3. God's choices are subject to the principle of sufficient reason, that is, God has reason to choose one thing or another.
4. God is good.
5. Therefore, the universe that God chose to exist is the best of all possible worlds.

The Leibniz's schema was matched as an antithesis from Pierre Bayle.

Bayle's assumed Manichaeism and Skeptical Trilemma

In *Candide*, Voltaire emphasised the philosophical Manichaeism which allegedly arose from Pierre Bayle's schema. The connection is in a reasonable interpretation of Voltaire's for the Baylean schema, literalised in the character of Martin, but it was most likely not a connection that Bayle would had recognised. Bayle had the Chair of philosophy at the Protestant Academy of Sedan, and also the professorship of philosophy and history at the École Illustre in Rotterdam. He was buried in Rotterdam according to the rites of the Walloon Church.

Manichaeism is an elaborate dualistic cosmology describing the struggle between a good, spiritual world of light, and an evil, material world of darkness. The theoretical part of the problem of evil (the Theodicy) denies the omnipotence of God and postulating two opposite powers. A key belief in Manichaeism is that the powerful, though not omnipotent good power (God), was opposed by the eternal evil power (devil). Humanity, the world and the soul are seen as the byproduct of the battle between God's proxy, Primal Man, and the devil. The human person is seen as a battleground for these powers: the soul defines the person, but it is under the influence of both light and dark. The theatre of this battle is 'the world' and the human body. Neither the Earth nor the Flesh is intrinsically evil, but rather possessed portions of both light and dark. Natural phenomena (such as rain) were seen as the physical manifestation of this spiritual contention. Therefore, the Manichaean worldview explained the existence of evil by positing a flawed creation in the formation of which God took no part and which constituted rather the product of a battle by the devil against God.

The connection here is to Bayle's philosophical skepticism which is complex to the point of being conflated. Bayle believed – and argued in *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (Historical and Critical Dictionary, 1674) – that truth cannot be obtained through reason and that all human endeavour to acquire absolute knowledge would inevitably lead to failure. Bayle's complete nullification of reason led him to conclude that faith is the final and only way to truth. Voltaire, in the prelude to his *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne* calls Bayle "*le plus grand dialecticien qui ait jamais écrit*", the greatest dialectician to have ever written. The connection here to the Manichaean worldview thus is the process of binary destruction that comes from Baylean mathematics. Two important technical concepts of Bayle draw out the connection, although it is badly conflated. Central is Bayle's skeptical trilemma. A trilemma is a difficult choice from three options, each of which is (or appears) unacceptable or unfavourable. There are two logically equivalent ways in which to express a trilemma: it can be expressed as a choice among three unfavourable options, one of which must be chosen, or as a choice among three favourable options, only two of which are possible at the same time.

The concept was not original to Bayle; it goes back to the British preacher Philip Henry in 1672, and later, apparently independently, by the preacher Isaac Watts in 1725, and even further as the ancient discourses on *dilemma*. And here is 'the thing' (the philosophical insight), the whole discourse goes to both theodicy and philosophical skepticism. Here are two trilemmas:

First, from Epicurus, as summarised by David Hume:

1. If God is unable to prevent evil, then he is not all-powerful.
2. If God is not willing to prevent evil, then he is not all-good.
3. If God is both willing and able to prevent evil, then why does evil exist?

Next, from C. S. Lewis's apologetics:

1. *Lunatic*: Jesus was not God, but he mistakenly believed that he was.
2. *Liar*: Jesus was not God, and he knew it, but he said so anyway.

[1. & 2. are impossible from the historical record; the hidden premise]

3. *Lord*: Jesus is God.

Today, the logic is generally rejected by professional theologians and philosophers. So, generally the conclusion is that the Manichaean worldview, along with the biblicalist/fundamentalist worldview, is logically flawed. That is a much bigger story than can be told here, but it does go to the central concept of Bayle's rejection of mathematical determinism; ironically for the Voltairean reading. Bayesian statistics provides a theoretical framework for incorporating subjectivity into a rigorous analysis: we specify *a prior* probability distribution, which might be subjective (including intuition, experience, or expert opinion), and thus the distribution, based on empirical data, has indeterminate factors. Voltaire's reflection on Martin's prediction, based on Bayesian probability, is that it is a very nice *retrospective* theory. It is the conclusion that Martin reaches, at the end of the novel, at the end of the great journey, but as if it was predictive. Hegel stated:

> "One more word about giving instruction as to what the world ought to be. Philosophy in any case always comes on the scene too late to give it... When philosophy paints its

gloomy picture then a form of life has grown old. It cannot be rejuvenated by the gloomy picture, but only understood. Only when the dusk starts to fall does the owl of Minerva spread its wings and fly." [Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Philosophy of Right (1820), Preface; translated by S W Dyde, 1896]

Epicureanism and Eighteenth Century Nationalism

Epicurus was an atomic materialist, following in the steps of Democritus. His materialism led him to a general attack on the concepts of superstition and divine intervention. As indicated above, here is one of the important sources for the theodicy in the Epicurean paradox or riddle of Epicurus or Epicurus' trilemma. An inscription on the gate to 'The Garden' school was recorded by Seneca the Younger in epistle XXI of *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*: "Stranger, here you will do well to tarry; here our highest good is pleasure." Epicureanism is one school of hedonism. Epicurus taught that what is pleasurable is morally good and what is painful is morally evil. Pleasure is the absence of suffering. Here, Epicurus is a stoic. All humans should seek to attain the state of *ataraxia*, meaning 'untroubledness', a state in which the person is completely free from all pain or suffering. Thus the human condition and worldview lived is neither a predetermined, harmonized, best of all worlds nor a post-determined probability based on subject preferences, which mathematically destroy the alternatives. It is a practical choice for the individual in a garden, a place of flourishing.

This is where Voltaire finishes the novel, but there is also much philosophically dissatisfying for the synthetic resolution. What demonstrates that dissatisfaction is how the eighteenth century Enlightenment took 'The Garden' quite literally, in the form of landscape architecture. Martha Nussbaum said the hero cult of Epicurus had operated as a 'Garden variety civic religion' [*The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, 2009, p. 119]. It is a good pun, but it is also insightful. What Nussbausm was referring to is the eighteenth century version in the concept of naturalism and 'natural religion'. Again, it is a bigger story than can be told here, and, again, we have complex ideas to the point of conflation, with the added confusion in the philosophical categories of 'religion' and 'secular'. There is a conflation in the thinking between metaphysical naturalism and methodological naturalism, which rose from the many paradigms of the eighteenth century Enlightenment. And the large volume of such discourses arose from Kant, and later Hegel, and their many interpreters.

Less understood at the time, but what became the major discourses in the twentieth century, and especially in this last two decades of the twentieth-first century, is how the concepts and the language of 'religion' and 'secular' had been grossly misunderstood from historical shifts in the semantics, and aligned with the creation of modern sociology (meaning in both phenomenological and analytic senses). This is the wider message of Patrick Henry in his chapter, 'The Modernity of Candide', from the Renée Waldinger's edited volume. Indeed, the book is a good source to open up the basic analysis now completed here.

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