Theodicy and Reason
Logic, Metaphysics, and Theology in Leibniz's *Essais de Théodicée* (1710)
edited by Matteo Favaretti Camposampiero, Mattia Geretto, and Luigi Perissinotto

Tales of Destiny
Logic and Rhetoric in Leibniz's Myths for Theodicy

Stefano Di Bella
(Università degli Studi di Milano, Italia)

Abstract Leibniz's theodicean arguments also make room for narrative structures such as stories or fables. Does this move simply meet the rhetorical needs of a popular exposition, or does it express some deeper constraint to illustrate through a narrative structure what cannot be wholly captured by the resources of demonstrative reason? A comparative analysis of two relevant texts – the fable of Sextus at the end of *Theodicy* and the less-known tale in *De libertate, fato, gratia Dei* – reveals the variety of images (music, books, buildings etc.) used by Leibniz to represent the original choice among different series of things, or worlds. These narrative texts actually provide valuable indications about Leibniz's view on such crucial topics as counterfactuals, world-bound individuals, the structure of individual and universal history, and its representation.

Keywords Fables. Possible Worlds. Divine Choice.

The history of philosophy presents us with several examples of thinkers who did not refrain from relying on sophisticated rhetorical tools when confronted with the problems of communication, all the while claiming to pursue the austere ideal of a scientific style in philosophizing, inspired by logical or geometrical rigour.

In Leibniz this move is overtly pursued without any embarrassment, especially in his exoteric and popular writings, of course. Together with other stylistic means – like inserting anecdotes, or digressions into a doctrinal exposition – he sometimes resorts to true narrative pieces, be they called apologues or fables or tales. It is thus no surprise that a 'popular' work like the *Theodicy*, which arose in the context of court conversation at the request of a princess, written in French and addressed to a wide and educated public, concludes its brilliant exposition with a refined literary tale (cf. *Théodicée*, § 405-17, GP VI, pp. 357-365). Leibniz himself is eager to justify this choice:

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> I thought to stop here, after satisfying […] all objections by Mr. Bayle […] but Valla's dialogue on free will against Boethius came to my mind […] and I thought that it was worth summarizing it, by preserving its dialogical form, and then continuing from where it left off, continuing with his fiction. And this much less with the mere aim of making the topic more pleasant, than of explaining myself, at the very end of my discourse, in the clearest and most popular way. (*Théodicée*, § 405, GP VI, p. 357)

According to him, therefore, the aim of the 'fable' is not only entertainment, but clarification. Moreover, it would be a mistake to think that such 'little stories' (*historiettes*) can be only found in the context of Leibniz's popular expositions. Indeed we can even find a kindred tale – more developed and literarily embellished – in the final part of one of the most extensive and engaged private drafts on theodicean topics from the Eighties, the *De libertate fato gratia Dei*.[1] In this Latin text, after discussing the classic difficulties of the topic in a highly technical manner, he concludes with an 'apologue', which appears as a free variation on the mythological story of Deucalion and Pyrrha, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

In both types of texts, then, Leibniz somehow unpredictably passes to the narrative mode just after the peak of his argumentative effort. I wish to advance the hypothesis that this stylistic shift, far from being only a mere rhetorical device modelled on the different persuasive and communicative needs of different audiences, somehow responds to some internal requirements of the matter, as it is perceived by Leibniz. Perhaps, the comparison with Plato's philosophical usage of myth might be illuminating.[2] Similar to the author of *Phaedo*, Leibniz's shift from the argumentative to the narrative mode might highlight that the resources of argumentation have been fully exploited, and human reason is not able to further elucidate by its purely conceptual means the last mysteries of both the world and life; or at least, there is the need of somehow making the truths that are established by way of abstract reasoning, yet far from our experience, more concrete and plastic. Hence, the recourse to the 'myth' – a kind of 'tale of reason', that is to say, a product of imagination full of rational sense, leading us beyond the boundaries of finite intellect. I will try to prove this hypothesis by a comparative study of the two paradigmatic texts I have referred to here. While the *Theodicy* tale is well known, the other one is less available. This is why I provide a translation of it below.

1 First published by Grua, I, pp. 318-322, now in A VI, 4, pp. 1607-1612.

2 The literature on the significance of myth in Plato's philosophy is, of course, very large. See also, for the eschatological imaginery in classical and Christian sources, Singleton's (1954) comparative remarks on Plato and Dante.

1 Two Tales

First of all, I give a brief summary of the two tales. At the end of the *De libertate fato gratia Dei* Leibniz freely recreates the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha – the married couple who survived the deluge and were charged by the Gods with the task of repopulating the earth by changing stones into human beings. Leibniz imagines that the stones do not immediately become living beings, but only statues with a human form. Moreover, they turn out to be partitioned into different groups, each one being in competition with the others in the hopes of being chosen by Deucalion and Pyrrha to be able to live. With this aim, each group, animated by music, represents its future existence as a dancing and singing choir, to entice Deucalion to choose it. After a laborious deliberation, Deucalion and his wife make their choice. Many years later, they die and are sent to the Elysium, as honest and pious persons. But an immense protest explodes among the damned souls in hell, who attribute the responsibility for their present misery to Deucalion and Pyrrha's choice. A judgment is organized; the pros and cons of the earlier deliberation are weighed by Themis' infallible balance, which in the end confirms the rightfulness of Deucalion's and Pyrrha's choice, and then acquits them of any accusation. The damned, however, continue accusing the gods themselves for having submitted to Deucalion certain alternatives to choose from, instead of having provided better ones. At this point, the blessed are allowed by the gods to see the 'archives' of all possible stories and grasp their internal and mutual connections. Finally, all must admit that the arrangement of our world is the best one could desire.

The *Theodicy* tale, as we have seen, presents itself as the continuation of Valla's *Dialogue* on free will (1934). Valla imagined that Sextus Tarquinius – the man who would rape Lucretia and provoke the fall of Roman monarchy – is told by Apollo's oracle about what he will go on to do. To counter Sextus' remonstrance for his unfortunate destiny, Apollo shows him that the foreknowledge does not determine his future deeds. Sextus, however, still laments with Jupiter for having created him with such an evil will. And Valla's tale left off there, without providing any answer to the last complaint. Now this is where Leibniz picks up, imagining that Sextus goes to Jupiter's temple. Invited by Jupiter to give up his claim to Rome's crown, he refuses and moves towards his destiny. Theodorus the priest, however, is still perplexed about Jupiter's goodness. Thus he is sent to Pallas, who introduces him into the Palace of Destinies, where each apartment represents a world. In each of them Theodorus can see a different Sextus with his different story – one with this destiny, one with another destiny, happy or unhappy. The apartments are organized into a pyramidal structure, and their perfection increases as one approaches the top. The harvest apartment turns out to be the most perfect of all. But precisely in that very apartment – which is nothing but our actual world – Theodorus

sees *our* Sextus, on his way to Rome to become guilty and forced to exile. Theodorus is therefore persuaded that Jupiter's choice, determined by Pallas' wisdom, was the best possible one.

2 The Judgement: taking God(s) to Court

2.1 Humans Accused: Being Responsible for Her/His World

As is well known, the term 'theodicy' is a neologism coined by Leibniz himself, its proper meaning being 'justification of God'. The linguistic form brings with it the typically modern form of the problem, which the ending of the biblical book of Job held as unacceptable: meaning, the act of taking God to court. The first tale makes this epoch-making move fully explicit. We are faced with a true trial, indeed, described by the juridical language Leibniz was familiar with. One can hear here also the echo of some extraordinary trial of ancient myth and tragedy, which involved the gods. Needless to say, the recourse to ancient mythology – hence, the transfer from Christian God to classical gods – helps to veil or attenuate the impact of this audacious move.

Interestingly enough, however, in the *De libertate* the accused are not the gods directly, but two humans, Deucalion and Pyrrha. They are taken as responsible for the original choice of this human world and history. Admittedly, they try to share their responsibility with the gods, calling them as witnesses for their own defence; and underneath the attack directed against the two consorts emerges a deeper layer of the accusation, which is directed toward the Heaven. At least in a first stage, however, the gods, far from imposing their presence or will, seem eager to remain in the background as much as possible, as interested but impartial spectators. On closer inspection, the choice of focusing attention on the two human figures emphasizes the fact that the judgment takes place within a common field, which is the same for humans and gods. Also the judges are not properly gods, but other men, or at most the heroes who already played that role in ancient mythology (like Minos or Rhadamanthys). All this matches well with Leibniz's firm persuasion of a common right valid for all rational beings – the *jurisprudence universelle* – that univocally rules both divine and human actions.

But the central role assigned to the mortals even for the originary choice may express another element: the moral responsibility of man with respect to creation. For Leibniz, the good and pious person is called to give her assent to the world created by God – this assent being the true key for the good life and happiness. Thus, at least since the *Confessio philosophi*, Leibniz's constant intuition has been that a discontented creature can-

not be a good and faithful subject of God (see *Confessio philosophi*, A VI, 3, pp. 140-141). But then, the good person becomes, by this very fact, responsible for creation itself, and ideally called, in the name of God, to give an account of her judgment. The situation is tricky, insofar as in this case there is no easy way to take himself outside the scope of his own judgement. Thus Deucalion is called to respond for his own choice, and is unexpectedly transformed from a wise judge into an accused, for whom punishment is invoked.

2.2 The Image of Balance: a Justice Without Judges

More generally, it is difficult to find judges who are not engaged in the litigation; even the human champions of wisdom and justice, Lycurgus and Solon, who rushed to Deucalion's aid, have been moved by their gratefulness towards the accused, whom they owe their happy destiny. But then we can understand why «the judges themselves, who were inclined to agree with the happy souls, were hesitating to pronounce their sentence, in order not to appear to favour themselves» (A VI, 4, p. 1610). In Leibniz's tale the need is already present, which will be expressed by the Kantian requirement of disinterestedness, and represented by Rawls' thought experiment of the 'veil' of ignorance.

But here, it seems that we are in a deadlock: neither gods nor just men seem able to arbitrate, being suspected of partiality. The solution is looked for in some impersonal standard, expressed by the image of balance. Justice is an objective measure, ruling gods as well as men. To symbolize this, Leibniz clearly makes usage here of a classical image – the weighing of destinies which even imposes itself on Jupiter's will. Besides and before this mythological antecedent, however, the image was rooted in two seminal fields of his reflection, I mean the juridical and the physical one. Therefore this has not simply to do with a rhetorical figure, but rather with a true explanatory model, taken from the statical-mechanical context to offer an important key for the understanding of Leibniz's view on the principle of reason and several of its different applications. Consider, for instance, the usage of this model of balance in his criticism of the alleged freedom of indifference in the problem of free will, with the treatment of psychological motives on the model of mechanical impulses.[3] The same complex of ideas, with its characteristic blurring of causes and reasons, is efficaciously expressed in our story by the description of Themis' balance as a tool which is apt to measure «not bodies, but the causal factors

3 See e.g. the discussion with Clarke, GP VII, pp. 381, 389, 391-392. For a thoroughgoing analysis of Leibniz's usage of the balance model, see Dascal 2005.

[*momenta*]» – these *momenta* should be ideal factors, reasons or motives, rather than proper causes.

The same model, inspired by the study of statics, lies also at the core of the 'metaphysical mechanism', represented by a system of falling bodies. As is well known, even this mechanism was nothing but a scientific simile for the divine choice among possible things. But this is the same idea, again, which is dramatically expressed by the mythological simile of the *De libertate* tale. Needless to say, each choir represents a set of possibles; their competing supplications to Deucalion in order to be permitted to live is the narrative counterpart of the famous 'striving' of possibles towards existence.[4] And finally, the decisive recourse to the balance suggests that the creative decree is infallibly or mechanically determined by the objective calculus of the respective 'weights', that is to say of the respective quantity of perfection of the different sets.

It is worth noting that the weighing by the divine balance, which is applied here to the actual world, is then exported to the comparative consideration of all possible worlds: they are also 'weighed' by the 'balance' (*statera*).

2.3 The Accusers and Their Charges

A few words are in order concerning the role of the accusers. They are icastically characterized by the hendiadys 'miserable and bad' – a true equivalence for Leibniz, for whom the bad person is ultimately the one who does not accept the actual order of the universe.[5] In the *De libertate* the accusation is raised by a collective subject – the damned. In the dramatic fiction of the *Theodicy*, instead, an individual destiny is in the fore, with Sextus's protest against his own fate. As we shall see, this difference will reflect a slightly different approach to the problem. In order to see this, let me better consider the object of judgment, and the charges which are successively levelled.

There are different stages, or layers of judgment in our two stories. In general, the judgement which is officially displayed in Deucalion's trial, or in Pallas' apology for Jupiter, turns out to be nothing but the dramatic repetition of an earlier original judgment which has been taken by gods or humans at the beginning – or better, in an atemporal prologue of creation – and which they are now called to justify. Both judgments present

4 I consider the idea of the 'striving possibles', in its turn, as nothing more than a metaphysical metaphor of the deliberation that takes place within the divine intellect. In this sense, the balance is a metaphor of a metaphor – or, if we prefer, an alternative metaphor, more literary while the other being more physical.

5 As is well known, the biblical devil plays this role of accuser also in the story of Job.

the typical form of a deliberative procedure – the second one simply makes explicit and verifies the first one. The levels of justification, however, are multiple. In the *Theodicy* tale, where gods are directly challenged, we are faced with the progressive revelation of the one divine choice, in the more complex structure of the *De libertate* the split into a human and a divine trial implies a more marked distinction of two levels of judgement. Interestingly, Deucalion and Pyrrha are not actually accused for having chosen this 'series of things' *rather than* another one. Certainly we know that they have comparatively considered the alternative possibilities (the many choruses). The damned, for their own part, seem also ready to admit that their adversaries have chosen the 'best' world, relatively speaking. Only, they claim that the price paid – namely, their own unhappiness – was too high. The true issue at stake, therefore, is the opportunity of whether to create or not: «The whole issue debated and submitted to the judges was about whether it is better that wicked and unhappy persons do not exist, or that the blessed do exist, and whether it is preferable to avoid evils or to obtain goods» (A VI, 4, p. 1610). This sounds like a moral/existential version of the celebrated radical question: «Why is there something rather than nothing?», which we could reformulate as: «Why *should* anything exist…?».[6] In equilibrium there is the unhappiness of the damned on the one hand, and the happiness of the blessed on the other – both being part of the world that has been finally chosen; the goods and evils weighed seem to be precisely those of the actual world. It is worth noting that in the dispute some standard theodicean arguments, abundantly exploited by Leibniz himself, are intensively questioned: such is the case with the emphasis on the role of dissonances in harmony – which is directly inspired by musical theory. The argument is vigorously challenged by the damned through the same shift from an objective, holistic approach to their own, typically subjective and intentionally 'partial': the objective compensation of evils and goods cannot be appreciated or justified from the point of view of all subjects, just insofar as they are unequally distributed among different subjects (cf. *De libertate*, A VI, 4, p. 1611).

In Leibniz's remake of Deucalion's tale, the (provisory) solution of this dialectic emphasizes a properly Christian theme, i.e. the idea that the crucial circumstance for both the evaluation of the alternative stories or worlds, and the relative amount of good within our world is God's incarnation. It is this unique and incomparable fact that makes the actual world and actual mankind the most desirable ones; and this fact is tightly bound to the original sin, hence to what makes the actual world so awful in many

6 For a questioning as much radical of the concept of existence and its value, see Leibniz's discussion with Eckard: «Although it is doubtful, whether it is worthier not to exist, than to exist in the state of greatest misery» (*Leibniz to Eckard*, GP I, p. 221).

respects. In doing this Leibniz is connecting to the venerable Patristic theme of the *felix culpa*.[7]

Still, the answer seems to be unsatisfying from the point of view of the complaint of the damned. It is, in fact, an objective answer (the outcome of the objective calculus of goods and evils in the world) which seems to elude their subjective query: why should I serve the happiness of another at the cost of one's unhappiness? We can suppose from his other works that Leibniz's final answer would have been in terms of his radical view concerning personal identity: you cannot complain about what you are, because were you been different, you would not have existed at all. But this strategy is not made explicit here. In any event, the complaint of the damned in Deucalion's trial was somehow already beyond this possible line of defence. What they seemed to prefer, in fact, was having never existed at all.

Their second query, however, goes in another direction. Once Deucalion's choice had been justified, indeed, they proceed to charge the gods with having submitted only certain objects to be chosen. Why do not offer also a world where the same degree of happiness would not be accompanied by any misery? The question does not solely oblige to take into account the plurality of alternative worlds; it puts into discussion the 'givenness' of the worlds that are presupposed, as well as their internal structure. Accordingly, the reply will consist in conceding a closer look into the holistic internal connection of all things belonging to the same world. Within this context, this or that wicked person is taken or left *en bloc* with the whole 'series of things' to which it belongs. Leibniz reproduces here a key principle for his theodicean strategy in his writings from the Eighties, usually illustrated there by the Scriptural example of Judas, and here instead by a mythological character: God does not decree that Busiris kills his guests; He only decrees that this series of things (namely, the best one) does exist, to which Busiris the bandit and killer belongs.

The same idea will be at the core of Theodore's vision in the *Theodicy* tale. But the question is posed there from a counterfactual point of view: what would have happened, had Sextus not rejected Jupiter's advice, and had he not raped Lucretia? Thus, the worlds will be construed – or at least, explored – on the basis of a determinate counterfactual question. I will consider closer this view of possible worlds below; for now, I pass to briefly consider the gods in the role of accused.

7 Leibniz refers explicitly to the occurrence of this *dictum* in the Easter liturgy in *Théodicée*, § 10 (GP VI, p. 108).

2.4 Divine Accuseds: the Benefits of Polytheism

When gods are directly challenged, they are not properly convened before the court, because there is no court able to judge their case, as we have seen. What the gods can do, however, is to permit men to contemplate to the arcanum of their decisions; differently than Job's God, they are ready to provide a reason for them. And the reason is not to be found in their pure will, but in the contemplation of the object of this will. This is the case in both tales; in the *De libertate*, however, the exhibition of divine wisdom leaves the divine characters entirely concealed, also in this phase of the story; in the *Theodicy* fable, instead, Apollo, Jupiter, Pallas appear as the dramatic actors.

Descartes had also referred to mythological gods in a polemical way, in order to represent the view of theological univocity from which he was eager to distance himself dramatically. In his famous letter to Mersenne of April, 1630,[8] where he introduces his thesis of the divine creation of the eternal truths, he compares the Scholastic God – who cannot help finding these truths as something 'already made' in His own intellect, independently of His will – to the ancient Jupiter, bound to the 'Styx and destinies'. Interestingly enough, Pierre Gassendi, ignoring the true stance of his interlocutor on this topic and impressed by the apparently Platonist theory of essences of the *Fifth Meditation*, reproaches Descartes himself for assimilating God the Allpowerful to a pagan divinity. And Descartes, when replying to this objection, does not refrain from referring, this time positively, to Jupiter's self-compelling promises in order to express the hypothetical necessity by which the true God Himself is bound to His own decrees, once having established them.[9]

In a sense, Leibniz's imagery is a development of this theme. In general he has no problem in relying on that mythological world. He might easily subscribe to Valla's explanation regarding his choice of employing such characters. According to Valla, the polytheistic imagination, by distributing the different powers and aspects of divine nature into different subjects and characters, can help to express (if not to make more easily conceivable), in a mythical way, the distinction among the divine attrib-

8 «Indeed to say that these truths are independent of God is to talk of hi mas it were Jupiter or Saturn and to subject him to the Styx and the Fates» (AT I, p. 145; CSM III, p. 23; cf. Marion 1996).

9 «Just as the poets suppose that the Fates were originally established by Jupiter, but that after they were established he bound himself to abide by them, so I do not think that the essences of things, and the mathematical truths which we can know concerning them, are independent of God. Nevertheless I do think that they are immutable and eternal, since the will and decree of God willed and decreed that they should be so» (*Fifth Replies*, AT VII, p. 380; CSM, p. 261).

utes, which is far more difficult to conceive within the absolute simplicity of the unique God:

> The virtue of this tale is the following: given that God's wisdom cannot be really separated from His will and power, I would separate them through this simile of Apollo and Jupiter; and what one could not conceive in one and the same God, would become conceivable in two gods, each one having his determinate nature. (Valla 1934, p. 38; transl. mine)

In a theological view like Valla's, or Decartes', however, which emphasizes divine simplicity and relativizes the distinction among divine attributes to our way of conceiving, the merely fictional and heuristical character of the simile should be stressed. In Leibniz's approach, on the contrary, the image can be taken more seriously, insofar as his theology allows for a far more robust distinction among divine attributes, and for their consequent hierarchical order. Thus the polytheistic view of divinity can with no harm provide an imaginative aid in conceiving of the plurality of divine attributes.

This is the sense of the personal intervention of the different gods in the *Theodicy* tale. Leibniz makes the philosophical-theological interpretation of these figures explicit. As far as the characters of Valla's *Dialogue* are concerned, their reading is quite simple and clear: Apollo does symbolize the divine intellect or knowledge – better, its specification as foreknowledge, whereas Jupiter represents the divine will, or God's providence. In Leibniz's prosecution of the story, a third actor – namely, Pallas – appears, and this corresponds to a more complex theological framework. The divine (fore)knowledge, in fact, thus far represented by Apollo alone, is now split into two divinities, i.e. Apollo himself and Pallas.

Now, according to Leibniz's explanation, the former represents God's 'knowledge of vision' (*scientia visionis*), whereas the latter represents His 'knowledge of simple intelligence' (*scientia simplicis intelligentiae*).[10] Reference is made, of course, to some technical concepts of the sophisticated theory of divine knowledge which had been elaborated by Scholastics, especially in connection with the arduous problem of the divine foreknowledge of contingent futures. Within this tradition, the objects of the science of vision are all actually existing things, i.e. the things that are part of the actual world – be they present, past or future ones. The science of simple intelligence, instead, embraces the pure possibles as such, even those which are never actualized: hence the plurality of possible worlds falls within its scope.

10 «If Apollo has represented aright God's knowledge of vision, I hope that Pallas will have not discreditably filled the role of what is called knowledge of simple intelligence (that which embraces all that is possible), wherein at last the source of things must to be sought'» (*Théodicée*, § 417, GP VI, p. 365).

Keeping this reading in mind, let me briefly consider the relationship between the corresponding characters in the tale. As we may expect, the prominent role in explaining Jupiter's choice is given to Pallas. She holds the key for both her father's decrees and her brother's consequent predictions, because she offers the preliminary vision of all possible worlds, infallibly determining the former's choice and all its consequences. She actually is, therefore, the last instance to which people looking for the definitive reason of things can appeal. In this way, a fundamental principle of Leibniz's theodicy – that is to say, the ideal priority, within God Himself, of rational wisdom over the will – is firmly restated. Each deviation from the plan of the most perfect world would have provoked an outrage in Pallas.

Incidentally, in Christian Trinitarian theology, the issue did not reduce itself to a metaphysical dialectic between different divine attributes, insofar as the divine wisdom, which contains the plan for creation, was ultimately identified with a divine Person – the Son, playing the role of the divine Word. Thus, in Malebranche's rational theology, each violation of wisdom in the rational plan for the universe would have resulted in an offense to the divine Word.[11]

In Leibniz, instead, the transcription of the ancient myth remains within the limits of a metaphysics of divine attributes. In any event, the important fact is that the determination of divine will is still conceived as internal to God, Pallas being nothing but Jupiter's intellect. But Leibniz's usage of mythical images sometimes goes even further in the earlier tale of the *De libertate*, where he seems to recognize even some constraint on the creative decree, which would depend on the 'Parcae'. When detailing there the interesting image of the musical scores (more on this below), in fact, he points out that some elements of the music are written by the Parcae in diamond, while others are given by Jupiter himself in golden letters. Now, the image of the Parcae clearly belongs to the same family of the 'Styx and destinies', which had been vehemently rejected by Descartes: that is to say, to those well-known figures and episodes in ancient mythology which adumbrated the invincible power of a fate external to Jupiter's will (or to divine will in general) and capable of imposing itself on it. Leibniz does not hesitate in bringing back and legitimating some aspects of this view, insofar as he depicts the contribution of the Parcae, shaped by necessity, as complementary to the one that is due to Jupiter's free will.[12] Admittedly, this necessity cannot be located, according to Leibniz, anywhere except in the divine intellect; but certainly it is

11 See for this topic the *Traité de la nature et de la grâce* (1680).

12 «The notes on the score were written in part in diamond by the Parcaes' hands, part in gold by Jupiter. And from the Parcae some necessary and unchangeable properties of the harmonic numbers came, whereas Jupiter seemed to have chosen at will the key and a few other elements of the song» (A VI, 4, p. 1608).

an image that aims to suggest a necessary element somehow limiting the space of divine freedom.[13] In any event, the details of the image clearly suggest a precise stratification within the structure of a single world, to which I will return below.

So far we have considered the 'actors' responsible for the divine choice. In order to understand better this choice, it is time to analyse in more detail its objects – that is to say, the images by which our tales try to capture the idea of alternative series of things, or equivalently of possible worlds – according to the slightly different terminologies employed, respectively, in the *De libertate* and in the *Theodicy*.

3 Possible Worlds: a Gallery of Images

3.1 The Scene of World Theatre: Statues, Choirs and Music

A rich variety of images for possible worlds is mobilized in the two tales – some rather traditional, others more original. In each case, we are invited to contemplate one central vision: the review of choruses in the *De libertate*, the Palace of destinies with its apartments in the *Theodicy*. Moreover, in each case a directly sensible element (something one can see or hear, without any further description or explanation) is doubled by a linguistic component made of words, be they spoken or written, which accompanies the perceived content with an explicit description. This element practically provides an explicit narration that is itself still part of the dramatic representation.

Within this common framework, the two representations exhibit a partially different register, insofar as in Deucalion's story (at least in its first half) the auditory metaphors are prevailing (even if they are far from exclusive), whereas in Theodorus' tale the central aspects are decidedly visual. In the first tale different choruses represented the possible courses of human history, each identified by its characteristical musical style and melody. Also resorting to words, or to explicit narration, was bound to the oral dimension: Deucalion and Pyrrha can hear the choruses singing and telling their respective future or possible histories.

Already in this context, however, the descriptive/narrative element makes reference also to a form of inscription, which is fully coherent, however, with the general musical metaphor. The 'tables' which appear

13 This image of the *De libertate* tale – alluding to the necessity of some harmonic proportion – seems directly reminiscent of the view expressed in the letter to Magnus Wedderkopf (May 1671), where the necessity of the harmony as the object of divine intellect was emphasized. See A II, 1, pp. 117-118.

to accompany the performances of choruses are, in fact, musical scores. Two remarks are in order concerning this interesting image.

Firstly, the fact that each chorus has its own musical style expresses its internal coherence. The statues of each chorus are not merely juxtaposed, but they belong together in forming a perfect whole, where no element can be subtracted or arbitrarily changed. Thus, the image suggests that a Leibnizian world is not the more or less arbitrary outcome of a piecemeal arrangement, but it possesses the admirable unity of a work of art. To this effect in a letter to Arnauld we find the simile of choruses used to illustrate the pre-established harmony.[14]

Secondly, I have already hinted above to the stratification, or to the different layers Leibniz individuates in them. Now, they seem to find precise correspondences within the musical theory, so that the mythological duality (Parcae-Jupiter) is doubled by a comparison between different musical elements. It is no surprise, in the great age of baroque polyphony and in a philosophy largely inspired by an all-embracing concept of harmony, to find a developed musical metaphor of the structure of the world order. In the first (deleted) occurrence of this theme, the necessary rules dictated by the Parcae are likened to the 'harmonic numbers' – we could say, to the mathematical laws of harmony that constitute the necessary underpinning of every creative development. They are written 'in diamond' and explicitly qualified by immutability and unshakeable necessity. Beyond the metaphorical, they designate a logically necessary framework, presumably valid for all possible worlds.[15] The contribution of divine will and wisdom ('Jupiter's golden finger') to the world order, instead, is represented by the choice of a key and (maybe) of a tonality, or even of a melodic theme. It is a contingent and wise element: the text qualifies it as 'arbitrary' – which should be taken, of course, not in the sense of arbitrariness, but of the artistic freedom, always bound by inner constraints and by a kind of axiological necessity.

14 «Finally, using a comparison, I would like to say that the harmony between the body and the soul is similar to different orchestras or choirs that – separated one from another – play their part or sing and that they are disposed in such a manner that they cannot hear or see each other, but nevertheless perfectly harmonize if everyone is just following its part. Whoever hears them all at once will detect a miraculous harmony that is even more astonishing as if they had some connection one to another» (GP II, p. 95). When used as a simile for pre-established harmony, however, the choruses are thought of as included within a unique world; whereas in the *De libertate* each chorus represents a closed world. In the example made to Arnauld, indeed, all choruses are supposed to sing according to the same music, while in the *De libertate* each one sings its own music.

15 Actually, the metaphor refers to an element (the 'harmonic numbers') whose necessity is at most an aesthetical one. Still, one should remember the mathematical nature of musical harmony, which was much more commonly emphasized in the tradition. See also note 13, for the necessity of the ideal relations in God's intellect.

It is worth observing, thirdly, that the image of musical scores appeared in a first draft within the description of choirs themselves, in the scenography of the first judgement; but it was then deleted by Leibniz and moved to the second judgment, where the gods come directly to the fore and allow access to the supreme vision.[16] While the choirs are taken again into account and reanimated, the new, properly focused, element is precisely the vision of the 'tables'. Only when reading – or somehow 'seeing' – the deep structure of the music of each chorus, inscripted in them, one is able to grasp the internal connections that determine the coherence and compactness of each world. Leibniz seems here to contrast an initial level in the perception of harmony – a more superficial or sensible one, hence still confused – with a second level, where we have a look into the intelligible texture underpinning of the melody we hear. This representation of two levels in our understanding of the world and in the perception of its beauty parallels the traditional aspects of musical experience, insofar as music was conceived as the aesthetical reverberation of an underlying rational structure.[17]

The auditory aspect, however, should not conceal the fact that the image of choruses also has a powerful visual significance. Before being animated, the choruses offer to the reader's phantasy the vivid vision of a huge multitude of statues, subdivided into innumerable groups, each one representing all the individuals of a world. When the sculptures are animated, the spectacle assumes a dynamical dimension. Now we are able to understand that the different aspects – visual, musical, narrative – should be considered all together. Dance, music, and dramatic story co-operate exactly as they do in the art of theatre. As we know, the idea of the 'mundane theatre' was an ancient one, well represented at the very heart of the Baroque culture. God is the great Author, who contemplates this majestic scenography and the dramatic unfolding of the infinitely complex plot. We know that elsewhere Leibniz compares God's knowledge of a world to an 'ichnographic view',[18] surpassing and including every perspectival approach to the same scene. One can imagine that

16 For the first occurrence of this idea, see note 12 above. In the final version, it is embodied with the image of the tables: «a golden score hovered upon each chorus, and the rules written by the Parcae in eternal diamond were contained by it; and these rules, few in number, predetermined all future movements and actions of their chorus, as soon as the supreme god had added the golden key by his own hand» (A VI, 4, pp. 1611-1612).

17 It is needless to mention the ancient Pythagorean-Platonic tradition of the 'harmony', still very influential in Renaissance and early modern, nor to many religious traditions and mythologies, where divine creation is described as operated through a song. For Leibniz's relation to these traditions, see Haase [1965] 1982. On Leibniz's reflections on musical theory, see Biller 1990; Erle 2005.

18 Study for a letter to des Bosses, GP II, p. 438.

the choruses and tables of the tale provide the men with a *raccourci* of this synoptic vision.

In any event, the dynamical-historical aspect of these mythical cosmological views should remind us that the narrative and fictional dimension is a constitutive one for Leibniz's modal intuitions. The well-known 'novel argument'[19] for unrealized possibilities shows that the idea of a story, or better of a fiction, is – from both the chronological and conceptual point of view – the original matrix for his idea of possible worlds.

3.2 Palaces, Books and Libraries

The contemplation of the 'music scores' introduces to another kind of image, where the visual aspect is finally prevailing. The appearance of the tables, in fact, is accompanied by an extraordinary splendour – an image reminiscent of Dante's *Paradiso* – where the stories corresponding to the inscriptions become somehow visible 'like in a mirror'. Also the comparison of the divine intellect to a mirror was codified by a long tradition. It was something more than a literary metaphor; at least, as a metaphor it was embodied with the technical descriptions of divine knowledge, and therefore commonly adopted by middle knowledge theorists.

The *Theodicy* tale, for its own part, all takes place within the register of seeing, insofar as it presents us with a true 'vision', which is disclosed to Theodorus. Pallas, we remember, represents the science of simple intelligence, or more widely the divine intellect as such. As is well known, this is for Leibniz the *pays des possibles*, that is to say the true seat of the framework of possible worlds. In the tale, all of this is fundamentally represented by architectonic models: the majestic palace of destinies, whose apartments represent the worlds. In the unfolding of this vision, the palace reveals its pyramidal shape. As we know, the pyramid symbolizes the organization of worlds into a hierarchical scale of perfection, implying that there is *the* best possible world, hence a maximum point in the hierarchy, whereas, on the other hand, the scale descends without any end (cf. *Théodicée*, § 416, GP VI, p. 364).

Just as in the *De libertate*, the sensorial component is paralleled by a linguistic element, this time a true inscription: we are faced, in fact, with writings. Each apartment contains a library – i.e. the description of its story. The dependence of this image on a rich heritage stemming from the religious tradition hardly needs to be stressed; there is nothing especially original here, except a numerical aspect: each inhabitant of each apartment is marked by a number, which corresponds to a book in the library.

19 See e.g. *De libertate, contingentia et serie causarum*, A VI, 4, pp. 1653-1654.

An immense codification is adumbrated, evoking the Leibnizian dream of a quasi-mathematical 'science of the individuals'.[20] More interestingly, Leibniz says that Theodorus, by pointing to a certain page and a certain line in each book can successively expand in a progressively detailed manner a moment in the life of Sextus – or better, of each of the several 'Sextuses'.[21] Of course, the reading of the book is always paralleled by a tridimensional vision of the corresponding story, expressing the perfect correspondence between fact and description.

The same image can be found in a quite peculiar Leibnizian text of a few years later: the *Apokatastasis* fragment, where the correspondence between the factual history and its description is expressed by the image of an enormous library containing the whole history of the human kind.[22] As is well known, in the *Apokatastasis* fragment, the idea of library serves to illustrate the problem of the limits of combinatorial possibility (how to construe all possible discourses or stories) and – via the presupposed correspondence with reality – the possible closure of human history. In this context, the possibility of successive levels of finer-grained description does not only express the different levels of abstraction typical of our knowledge, but is also very relevant for the final solution of the combinatorial problem. Only the infinite detail of reality, in fact, prevents it from being captured by the finite resources of our descriptive devices, thus leaving a new room that is always open beyond the apparent closure of our knowledge. Thus, despite surface appearances, the same (qualitatively indiscernible) individual cannot reappear in any other state of the world. The same intuition, as we shall see, is at work in the synchronical consideration of possible Sextuses in the *Theodicy* tale.

The image of the 'archives' – that is, of a kind of 'library of libraries' – already appeared as the object of the final contemplation in the *De libertate* (cf. A VI, 4, p. 1612).

Leibniz's metaphysics of possible worlds, captured by the image of the library, availed itself of the reality of divine intellect to assign to the worlds

20 «You have seen a number on the forehead of Sextus. Look in this book for the place it indicates. Theodorus looked for it, and found there the history of Sextus in a form more ample than the outline he had seen» (*Théodicée*, § 415, GP VI, p. 363). The association of an individual's face with a number reminds the suggestive passage of *Discourse of Metaphysics*, § 6, alluding to the possibility of capturing the contour of every human face by a corresponding geometric curve and its generating rule (see A VI, 4, p. 1538).

21 «Put your finger on any line you please, Pallas said to him, and you will see represented actually in all its detail that which the line broadly indicates. He obeyed, and he saw coming into view all the characteristics of a portion of the life of that Sextus» (*Théodicée*, § 415, GP VI, p. 363).

22 See Leibniz 1991, with Fichant's very useful introduction. Here too we find the idea of different (progressively more detailed) levels of description of the same individual (or world) history. On the library metaphor of this Leibnizian text, see Blumenberg 1979, pp. 121-149.

their ontological status. As we know, some versions of present-day possible worlds metaphysics – which want to avoid a Lewisian-style commitment to the reality of possible worlds, without relying on the theological foundation – treat the worlds as sets of abstract beings, like propositions. And they find quite naturally the image of 'stories' or 'books' to express their intuitions. In general, the consideration of the rich stock of Leibnizian images, together with their correspondences in present-day literature on possible worlds, brings forth an invitation to reflect: maybe some images – far from being the subsequent clothing of some well-defined preexistent conceptual contents – turn out to be the true sources of those contents themselves; moreover, they continue to substantiate the core of such theories,[23] especially when their conceptual articulation is more elusive. I wish to consider a bit more closely some details of this complex relationship between inspiring image and conceptual theory, which we can find in our tales.

3.3 The Ambiguities of 'vision'

The complex, sometimes slippery relationship in the Leibnizian stories between imagining and conceptualizing about possible worlds turns out to be double-edged. On the one hand, we can see in Leibniz's images a case of the smoothing of conceptual tensions, ultimately a surreptitious masking of them; on the other hand, one can verify that the images in their detail exhibit an extremely precise expression of the relevant doctrinal aspects.

An example of the first case is the ambiguous role of visual metaphors, and in particular of the very notion of vision. This is another case like that of mirror, where an image or an experience, before being handled exactly as a poetic image with its suggestive or rhetorical power, is already incorporated in the (technical) language of the theory itself, as if it were a properly conceptual tool. 'Vision', in fact, was the technical label for a specific type of divine knowledge: as I have said above, the knowledge whose object is constituted by all actually existing things. Of course, the label of 'vision' was directly connected to the intuitive concept of divine knowledge as an all-embracing overview on the whole of things. This intuitive comparison with our act of vision had already been exploited in the ancient debates on foreknowledge in order to express and emphasize the purely contemplative dimension of foreknowledge itself, hence its noninterference into the things and events that are 'seen'. Nevertheless, the unfolding of the discussion within Christian theology had further clarified

23 I am not thinking, of course, of the mathematical modelizing of possible worlds, but of its metaphysical interpretations.

that, actually, the divine vision could not be taken as an analogy of our 'empirical' knowledge, nor could it be in any way dependent on its object. Thus ultimately, exactly the science of vision had been typically qualified as 'volitional knowledge', having its root in the divine will: God 'sees' all actual events only because He knows His own acts of will.

In contrast with this, the 'science of simple intelligence', having possibles as its objects, was considered a 'pre-volitional' one, i.e. one independent of divine will in principle, and rooted only in the eternal content of His intellect. Leibniz for his own part was explicit in indicating that Pallas with his Palace stands for this type of knowledge. In this case, the intuitive significance of the vision metaphor functions implicitly to reinforce the intention of the theory of the 'science of simple intelligence'. But then the notion of 'vision' conceals a subtle dyscrasia between the metaphorical significance intuitively suggested by the corresponding image (and experience) on the one hand, and the conceptual/technical significance of the theological 'science of vision' on the other: the former being independent of will, the latter dependent on it.

Moreover, the metaphorical significance, associated to the 'simple intelligence', and its generalization, corresponds to Leibniz's theodicean concern: namely, to show God as choosing among sets of possibilities somehow already constituted in His intellect. But here the point of difficulty is concealed: the possibilities considered, in fact, are contingent: possible stories, whose internal links are not necessary. As is well known, this was the typical field of the controversial 'middle knowledge': the divine knowledge of counterfactual conditionals, based on His knowledge of all possible stories. Now, the aim of middle-knowledge theorists was to recognize this type of knowledge as a pre-volitional one (with respect to God), but including the reference to human (possible) will. Therefore, God really turns out here to be a kind of 'looker-on', observing human decisions. And not accidentally, these theorists made large use of the *metaphor* of the divine mirror and of the vision of a multiplicity of possible worlds. As we have seen, Leibniz himself in the *Theodicy* employs the same imaginary (cf. *Théodicée*, § 42). We know, however, that ultimately he firmly rejects middle knowledge as an intermediate autonomous space between the two other types of divine knowledge. He does not accept the alleged dependence of God's knowledge on a possible act of human free will, in his view a blatant violation of the principle of reason. As a consequence, he aims at reducing the alleged middle knowledge to one of the two other types, to that of simple intelligence, as a matter of fact. This is the case in our tale, where Pallas is explicitly associated with 'simple intelligence'.

Behind the ambiguity of 'vision' we can detect Leibniz's permanent oscillation between, on the one hand, the emphasis on the compactness of a story or a world (with the aim of making God not directly responsible of all is contained in it), and, on the other hand, the need of recognizing

a role for His will (at least in the form of 'possible decrees') also for what concerns the inner structure of those stories and worlds. Focusing on the image of vision assures, in a way, the theodicean pay-off by concealing these unsolved conceptual tensions.

In the *De libertate* tale, already the first presentation of choruses clearly alluded to the impossibility of partial rearrangements of the given worlds (choruses), or of any piecemeal framing of them for the sake of their improvement: «there was always something missing in each chorus, *and had the oracle allowed it* [which was not the case] one would have taken that missing element from other choruses» (A VI, 4, pp. 1608-1609). The second stage in the revelation/evaluation of possible stories – namely, the stage expressed by the vision of the divine 'archives' – implies the possibility for humans of somehow intuiting the mutual interconnections that give the internal compactness to a world, and thus of having an account of that impossibility. We know, however, that the task of giving an account, by purely logical means, of the relations of compossibility/incompossibility needed by theodicean requirements, turns out to be a quasi desperate one. In this sense, the 'vision' does not provide any further explanation, but rather presents itself as an anticipation of the beatific vision of the *altitudo* of divine wisdom.

In any event, the recourse to visual images turns out to play a relevant rhetorical role which conceals the true tensions and the ambiguity of the model of possible worlds adopted by Leibniz. Also in the present-day metaphysics of possible worlds the incidence of the imaginative package is considerable. A closer recognition of the development of the images for possible worlds in the two tales can help us explore this aspect.

3.4 A Tale of World-Bound Individuals

I have said that visual metaphors tend to support the impression of a theodicean strategy based on a view of worlds as 'discovered', and how this could be partially misleading. One should not think, however, that the narrative illustration is only a rhetorical embellishment aimed at smoothing or concealing conceptual tensions. On the contrary, Leibniz's imaginative effort is very controlled from the point of view of theory. An attentive reading can confirm the precision by which some details of the myth reflect the subtlest aspects of his theory, sometimes even express them in a clearer way than doctrinal expositions. Thus, the indications of both tales leave no doubt concerning the vexed issue of trans-world identity. In full agreement with Leibniz's explicit indications in other contexts, the firm rejection of trans-world identity is clearly alluded to in both tales. Thus, the *De libertate* is eager to stress that each statue belongs to one chorus,

and no more.[24] The holistic interconnection revealed by the final contemplation of the divine Archive should implicitly account for this impossibility of belonging to more than one chorus.

In the *Theodicy* tale, then, Leibniz, while using the ambiguous (or better, loose) language of the 'Sextuses', clearly indicates that a mere relation of similarity connects them. Not surprisingly, this culminating part of the tale is a privileged *locus* for those interpreters who are eager to assimilate the Leibnizian view to David Lewis' counterpart theory.[25] Moreover, Leibniz seems to suggest a true Lewisian-style interpretation of counterfactual claims. In the fable, Theodore explores the palace from the point of view of a determinate question concerning Sextus' destiny. And this implies the need for a selection of the relevant 'apartments' (worlds) in which he has to look. Although the worlds are 'discovered', and not stipulated, one needs to individuate the set of relevant worlds in order to give a truth value to the counterfactual statements concerning Sextus. And this is possible through the application of a controlled method of variation. As is well known, Pallas appeals to the concept of a geometric *locus*, to designate the subset of worlds which are identified by a certain condition. The more precise the condition becomes, the more the subset reduces, until the limit case of an antecedent condition so determined to capture a uniquely determined consequent is reached.[26] By this way – i.e., by reinforcing and making more precise the poetic image through the geometric comparison – Leibniz gives a very efficacious illustration of that blend of a semi-realistic view of worlds as holistic, already constituted wholes on the one hand, and of an operative procedure by methodical variation, which may be compared to D. Lewis' work on counterfactuals.

The difference from a Kripkean-style stipulative view is maintained, to the extent that Leibniz is always eager to stress that there is no counterfactual identity: the happy Sextus is only similar to our Sextus (presumably, the mate most similar to him in a certain world); the city of Corynth where

24 «Not one of them [of the statues] belonged to more than one chorus» (A VI, 4, p. 1608).

25 The most important parallel, as we know, van be found in the discussion on the 'possible Adams' in the correspondence with Arnauld. The literature on these topics (denial of counterfactual identity, counterpart-theoretical interpretation) is wide. I recall here only some seminal works: Mates 1971, 1986; Mondadori 1973, 1975.

26 «You learnt geometry in your youth, like all well-instructed Greeks. You know therefore that when the conditions of a required point do not sufficiently determine it, and there is an infinite number of them, they all fall into what the geometricians call a locus, and this locus at least (which is often a line) will be determinate. Thus you can picture to yourself an ordered succession of worlds, which shall contain each and every one the case that is in question, and shall vary its circumstances and its consequences. *But if you put a case that differs from the actual world only in one single definite thing and its results, a certain one of those determinate worlds will answer you. These worlds are all here, that is, in ideas*» (*Théodicée*, § 414, GP VI, pp. 362-363; italics mine).

he lives is only 'very similar' to 'our' Corynth.[27] This, incidentally, indicates that the variation, in metaphysical rigour, cannot be taken as purely local, as we are bound to assume for the sake of our epistemic interests: every change in one detail of a world involves a corresponding rearrangement of every other particular thing.

Moreover, Leibniz gives a valuable clue toward understanding the profound reason of this controversial (and counterintuitive) denial of counterfactual identity. He does not simply advance a question-begging inference from discernibility to numerical difference, but rather alludes to some constraint rooted in the causal structure of each story. Thus he stresses that, in the metaphysical rigour, different stories cannot share any common trait. A happy Sextus can be similar to – and, at least epistemically, indistinguishable from – ours for a trait of his story only with respect to finite knowledge; it will be already different, however, in some aspects that are hidden from us, but will unfold in the course of time. Two of the most powerful principles of Leibniz's metaphysics – Identity of Indiscernibles, Sufficient Reason – require that two divergent causal chains cannot perfectly overlap in any segment, otherwise they would not be able to explain their successive divergence. Therefore, two divergent stories will be different at least in some detail from their origin; and up to a certain point even if their difference were assumed to be imperceptible, it will unfold and emerge:

> I will show you some [of the apartments/worlds], wherein shall be found, not absolutely the same Sextus as you have seen (*that is not possible, he carries with him always that which he shall be*) but several Sextuses resembling him, possessing all you know already of the true Sextus, but *not all that is already in him imperceptibly, nor in consequence all that shall yet happen to him*.[28]

And this intuition corresponds exactly to what is assumed in the *Apokatastasis* fragment,[29] which simply shifts the focus of its application from the 'simultaneous' comparison of worlds to their cyclical repetition.

Therefore, the narrative exemplification preserves each important aspect of Leibniz's metaphysics of individuality. From Leibniz's myths we

27 «He goes to a city between two seas, *resembling* Corinth» (*Théodicée*, § 415, GP VI, p. 363; italics mine).

28 *Théodicée*, § 414, GP VI, p. 363 (italics mine).

29 «Although a previous period of world history could come back identical as regards its perceivable aspects, i.e. those which can be described by books, nevertheless it will not come back according to all of its aspects. There will always be some differences, in fact, although they are imperceptible and cannot be exhaustively described by any book» (Leibniz 1991, p. 72).

cannot certainly claim a rational solution to the conceptual aporias with which his metaphysical theory is faced. After all, the role of myth is also to trace a path where the resources of conceptual analysis can no longer be of assistance. Still, as a matter of fact much of the material from which interpreters try to reconstruct the details of Leibniz's theory of possible worlds is taken from a text like the *Theodicy* tale. Is it only an accident? Or maybe not, given that even the metaphysical arguments in the present-day theories of possible worlds and identity seem to share some 'family air' with science-fiction? Certainly, Leibniz's example still gives matter to reflect on the complex relationship between imagination, fiction and philosophical theory.

Appendix
From *De Libertate fato gratia Dei* (A VI, 4, pp. 1607-1612)

[…] And thus I reflected, looking for a better simile… Let us then imagine the following apologue: when Deucalion and Pyrrha, upon command of the oracle, had thrown the stones over their shoulders, men did not immediately arise, as poets claim, but instead statues in a human form emerged. And once Deucalion consulted the oracle again, the response was that the gods had granted him the power to give life to those statues of his choosing, provided only that he selects a whole group of statues who reacted to and were animated by the same type of music. It was thus to him to decide to which chorus of statues he would give life. Deucalion ordered for music to be sung in the Lydian style. Immediately some statues began to move, and when Deucalion's lyre stopped playing, they continued dancing to their own music and through their song they expressed all that they would do and accomplish should they be chosen to become human beings; and this is the way they incited Deucalion to choose them. Then music in the Phrigius style was played, and another group of statues danced, illustrating in a similar way their future life, if indeed they would to be chosen to live. And now a third chorus began, and a fourth and many others, until all statues had danced; *not one of them belonging to more than one chorus*.

[Most interesting was that while each chorus was dancing a unique musical score for each individual chorus appeared to Deucalion, each of which ruled the movements of the corresponding chorus. The notes on the score were written in part in diamond by the Parcaes' hands, part in gold by Jupiter. And from the Parcae some necessary and unchangeable properties of the harmonic numbers came, whereas Jupiter seemed to have chosen at will the key and a few other elements of the song. From the gold of magnanimous Jupiter, together with the gems of inexorable fate, a wonderful splendour shined, as if in a mirror, where all of the future events and experiences were represented of that chorus, and the whole aspect that human things would have, if it were chosen. Because of the tremendous variety of future events, all of which so admirably displayed, both visually and musically, Deucalion and his wife were equally as anxious as perplexed by the difficulty posed by their choice].[30]

One of the choruses prefigured a world of absolute innocence, but also deprived of great actions, being a bit weak due to its modesty and the simple life of its inhabitants; other ones were going to offer many examples either of force, or of intelligence, or of other virtues. But there was always something missing in each chorus, *and had the oracle allowed it*, one would have taken that missing element from other choruses. Among all

30 The text in brackets was deleted by Leibniz.

these choruses, there was one, in which big evils were predicted, namely a pollution extended to all human kind because of poisoned food, and then Thyestes' dinners, Edipus' marriage, Ixion's and Tantalus' tortures in hell. All these terrible things, however, were more than compensated for by the arrival of much better events, that is to say the descent to Earth of the supreme Jupiter himself, compassionate of the human conditions, and His conversation under human face, and the forgiveness of all crimes which brought forth a golden age and eternal peace, as well as the assimilation of the blessed souls to God, as big as possible.

After a long deliberation, the husband and wife arrived at an agreement in the choosing of the chorus that promised all this, because it seemed that this would be the way the humans would have enjoyed of the closest relationship with the gods. Immediately all other statues, *as if they were resentful*, were broken down and reduced to the previous form of simple stones. But those who were elected – all that won this competition – received the full gamut of human nature. And thus mankind was propagated in the whole world, and the damages of deluge were rectified. Deucalion seemed to have fulfilled in the best possible way his task of restorer of human kind, and he enjoyed a good life on the earth, until death came to take both consorts together, now very aged and tired. And they had already passed the fatal Styges in Charon's boat, and went straight to the Elysian Fields, where the happy souls anticipate the heavenly goods. But then a grand disturbance exploded in the reign of Hades. You would have believed that the earth had been shaken by Enceladus, who fractured it and allowed it to be penetrated by the light of day, hated by the inhabitants of Hades; or you would have thought that someone was about to abduct Proserpine a second time from Dytes' thalamus, or that someone was attempting to remove the chained Cerberus. The vulture ceased to torment Titius, Ixion's wheel stopped for a while. Then, when all is silent, you were able to understand that the unhappy damned souls are complaining about Deucalion and Pyrrha as if they were the authors of all their ills, and they demand that the two be punished. They lament that having been transformed from stones into human beings was a sort of cruel gift, only leading to eternal torture, and thus seemed dissatisfied, unless Deucalion and Pyrrha were also damned. Pluto deferred such a significant issue to the three capital judges, Aecus, Minos and Rhadamantus. The married couple, struck by such a considerable and unforeseen threat, tried to defend themselves and cried, and protested that the gods were responsible for the oracle, first of all the saintly Themis, whose commands they obeyed; and they called Ovide and a Greek author of Metamorphoses as witness. But Deucalion could hardly utter these few words, and they were immediately overwhelmed by a confused clamour, as if he was trying to assign his own culpability to the gods, while instead they had given to him the power to choose, without indicting him what to choose.

While the judges were hesitating and they trying to adjourn the case, Lycurgus and Solon came – the former celebrated for his justice, the latter for his wisdom – having been sent by the souls of Elysium. When they received from the blessed the news concerning the judgment, in fact, they found it shameful that the memory of the wicked ones turned out to be sharper than the gratefulness of the good persons. Here a new and astonishing battle between the pious and the impious, the crimes and the virtues arose; part of this battle was described by our Prudentius in his *Psychomachia*, whose knowledge of it came from I do not know from where. Now, the whole issue before the judges was about whether it was preferable that wicked and unhappy persons do not exist, or that the happy and blessed exist, and whether it was worthier to avoid ills or to obtain goods. It would be impossible to embrace all that was said by the wisest and most eloquent men on behalf of both parties; maybe someone else will be able to better explain this all. Finally Jupiter, asked by Pluto, sent Themis' scale made from stars down from the Zodiac, so that the reasons and destinies of both sides could be weighed by it. The judges themselves, indeed, inclined toward the blessed, did not dare to pronounce their sentence, in order not to seem to favour themselves. The wonderful nature of that balance, however, is such that it does not evaluate the heaviness of bodies, but the relative force of the different arguments and reasons; words are the matter here, and once the reasons are stated, the pans of the scale are inclined proportionally with respect to their force. All were waiting in suspense; while the clerk of the court exposed the arguments of both sides, the balance inclined now in this direction, now in the other one, as if uncertain. On one side it was argued that, if pleasure is equal to pain, then it is better not to suffer than to take pleasure. On the other they replied that in music the dissonances corrected and compensated by art are preferable to a dull monotony of sound. To this it was countered that a mixture of perturbation and restoration can be justified if it concerns one and the same person, but not if the benefits are assigned to some persons, and the ills to others. It was answered that misery and happiness could not be combined in one and the same person. They replied again, however, that one could experience enough variety, without going to such extreme good and evil. And the dispute continued like so through several replies, until finally it was said that the happy condition that had been chosen [by Deucalion] was not just any, but it was precisely the one by which the Gods were united to humans, with respect to which every misery counts as nothing. And Deucalion had chosen this series of human events moved by this very consideration. These words had hardly been pronounced, when immediately the balance lowered to that side, as if a heavy weight had been placed on that pan. Thus Deucalion and Pyrrha, acquitted by Themis' infallible verdict, fulfilled their vows to the gods. But a loud murmur of the unhappy souls arose in the all of Hades, as if they

had only just now been damned; and blasphemies clearly echoed, directed toward the Gods, as if their greatness and joy, or Glory, were increased and rejoiced by the perpetual woe of the damned, so that their happiness stood out more conspicuously and were felt more acutely, by way of contrast. And they protested that it had been within the power of the gods to present to Deucalion, besides those series of human events that had been presented – and from which it should be admitted that he had chosen the best – other ones, where humans would have been no less, but even more happy, without the joy of the blessed being diminished by the misery of anyone else. While addressing their complaints to the gods, the anger of the impious became increasingly inflamed; but then a wonderful and unheard-of spectacle was offered to the blessed while they were enjoying in the Elysian fields, but they were also astonished by these tremendous questions. All sorts of statues that had danced before Deucalion returned. But now a golden score hovered upon each chorus, and the rules written by the Parcae in eternal diamond were contained by it; and these rules, few in number, predetermined all future movements and actions of their chorus, as soon as the supreme god had added the golden key by his own hand. And the force of the wonderful connection and linkage of so many songs arisen from so few musical notes – a force and connection that remains concealed in these notes, inscrutable by humans as long as they live on the earth, now clearly appears to those purified souls. Finally their minds are ravished into the depth of divinity and the archives of the Eternal Reason revealed themselves. Once admitted there, all of the musical scores, or all of the conceivable choruses that can be, that is to say all of the possible worlds – an infinite number – appeared, and the extramundane light of this secret region shined over; and by this light the inexpressible harmony not only of that which had happened and will happen, but also of all possible things, could be understood, so that finally they were able to understand – as if they had weighed the infinite worlds on the balance – that nothing better than what has actually been could have been found by the eternal and infinite wisdom. And they understood that it had not been decreed that some people were wicked and unhappy; but only that, once presented with the best series to choose, they were also allowed to exist, according to what followed from the rule of this series; nor was the issue debated in the Providential council, whether Busiris were going to kill his guests, but rather the issue was, whether this series of possible things was preferable or not, even if Busiris the killer were part of the series. The happy souls, being enlightened to these arcane secrets, and having penetrated the harvest things and intimately known the beauty and justice of their author, now confessed to be blessed. For us, however, is good to recognize in this earthy life, as if from from afar, those things whose overt contemplation will be counted, in the afterlife, among the supreme goods of eternity.

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