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Cultural Traditions II

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A Clash of Ideologies

Candide is a very influenced mind, especially when it comes to those he sees as authority figures. Therefore, I have chosen to insert another philosopher for him to blindly follow around and soak in his teachings, so I choose the philosopher, Rousseau. This is because Candide throughout the entire book jumps from mentor to mentor in hopes that they will tell him the secret to happiness similar to how a child blindly follows their parents and teachers because they are seen as all-knowing in the eyes of the innocent child. There are multiple occasions in the book where the author references Candide’s innocence including a line where Cacambo, his master at the time, commented “you are surprised at everything” (Voltaire 430). This obvious blind faith will help me further along with my scene because there will be less hesitation with Candide following Rousseau; he will just be seen as another authority figure to follow and listen to in hopes that Rousseau’s teachings will bring him closer to his idea of happiness which is a life with Cunégonde.

Rousseau is an out-of-the-box thinker and has a great mind. Therefore, I believe he will be a perfect fit for the scene I created. The main point of Rousseau’s Social Contract that I will be focusing on is him talking about the first societies to gain Candide’s trust because based on all of Candide’s old masters all had a backstory that gave them authority. I also want to shift to points five and six, “We Must Always Go Back to a First Agreement” and “The Social Compact,” respectively. I feel Rousseau would talk about how we have to access our government that we are enslaved to with this quote in mind “Ruling a society will always be a quite different thing from subduing a multitude. If one man successively enslaved any number of scattered individuals, all I can see there is a master and his slaves, and certainly not a people and its ruler” (Rousseau 6). Rousseau talks about how we spend our entire lives switching who owns us, from parents to the government. This parallels how Candide de jumps from master to master in the way that his mind does not belong to him, but to those leading him.

The first reason I decided to put Rousseau in Candide was that Candide is scouring the globe to find what he believes is his happiness while Rousseau is all about challenging those in the position of authority and thinking for yourself. "Oh! my dear Cunégonde! must I leave you just at a time when the Governor was going to sanction our nuptials? Cunégonde, brought to such a distance what will become of you?" (Voltaire 426). He is separated from her and is constantly thinking about her because he thinks she will make him happy. His mind is enslaved by his masters and his heart by Cunegonde. At the end of the book, Candide figures out that you must make your own happiness and that happiness is not always what you first strive for. “Find a form of association that will bring the whole common force to bear on defending and protecting each associate’s person and goods, doing this in such a way that each of them, while uniting himself with all, still obeys only himself and remains as free as before.” (Rousseau 6). To be happy we must have a social contract, and this is Rousseau’s idea of a social contract. The agreement of a social contract allows everyone to have the ability to make their own happiness because their body or mind is not enslaved by a higher power.

The second reason I believe Rousseau would work with Candide is Rousseau teaches about how we need to keep evaluating and reshaping our lives, what Candide does this with each new philosopher. “Indeed, if there were no prior agreement, what would give the minority any obligation to submit to the choice of the majority (unless the election was unanimous)? A hundred men want to have a master; what gives them the right to vote on behalf of ten who don’t? The law of majority voting is itself something established by agreement, and it presupposes that on at least one occasion there was a unanimous vote.” (Rousseau 6). Rousseau talks about how we have agreed with everything in our lives, and we must look back on those agreements and reshape them to keep us alive and not controlled by others. Candide, every time he meets someone new, they reshape and make him have a new view of the world and those in charge.

XVIII

What they saw in the Country of El Dorado

Candide and Cacambo reached the gates of El Dorado and looked around admiring the view around them. They saw the “public edifices raised as high as clouds, the marketplaces ornamented with a thousand columns, the fountains of spring water, those of rose water, those of liqueurs drawn from sugarcane, incessantly flowing into the great squares, which were paved with a kind of precious stone, which gave off a delicious fragrancy like that of cloves and cinnamon” (Voltaire 436). Candide wanted to explore every avenue of El Dorado. He wanted to know about the justice system and all the inner workings of this strange new place.

As they were venturing through the streets of El Dorado, an officer came up to them and stopped them where they stood.

“’The custom,’ said the great officer, ‘is to embrace the King, and to kiss him on each cheek.’

Candide and Cacambo threw themselves round his Majesty's neck” (Voltaire 436).

“I am King Rousseau, what has brought you to me in El Dorado?” greeted the King.

“We are just passing through so I can get back to my dearest Cunegonde” replied Candide.

King Rousseau hummed in amusement. “You must come to dinner and tell me all about this Cunegonde. She must be something if she wills you to leave El Dorado.”

Candide gave a polite nod and turned to leave the room. Following him was Cacambo and a guard assigned to show them around the city.

“What shall you like to see?” asked the guard.

Candide asked about what he wanted to see since he stepped foot in the city. “Can I see the court of justice, the parliament?”

“We have none, there is no need. We have no lawsuits, no prisons, or crime. There is no need for anyone to enforce the law as there are no crimes. We do have something that gives me great pleasure and that is our place of science.” He led them to a great long gallery filled with many instruments to perform feats of mathematics and physics. After scrambling about the city for the length of the afternoon, they set off to meet back at the royal palace, where they were once again greeted by the guards they first saw when they stepped into the palace for the first time earlier that morning.

There in the palace sat King Rousseau at a long table filled with food. Along this table sat several ladies. Candide and Cacambo pulled out chairs and took their places along the table.

“Now enlighten me,” King Rousseau broke the silence, “what is so enduring about this Cunegonde that would make you want to leave this paradise?”

Candide simply replied, “Cunégonde is my love, and we shall be married. I must be reunited with her.”

XIV

King Rousseau’s Philosophy

“It seems to be that you are putting much of your own happiness in this woman Cunegonde. That is a dangerous notion to have. The more you rely on others the more enslaved to them you become. I should know, I am more enslaved than anyone here.”

“How do you figure that?” asked Cacambo.

“Well, I am a king, am I not?” responded Rousseau. “And as a man is bound and enslaved to those he works for; a king is too. I am enslaved to all my subjects for it is my job to provide them with all they would need to be happy. In return, they give me their agreement of servitude to me. Do you see, the world is a circle of those working for each other? So, the same way you have become enslaved to this Cunegonde, I am enslaved with the worry of my subjects.”

“Why, if you feel enslaved by these people, rule over them?” asked Cacambo. “Would not you feel much lighter if you freed yourself from this burden of others?”

“Why would I trade one master for another?” answered King Rousseau. “Now that we have finished dinner, let me show you around, I shall prove to you how magnificent a kingdom this El Dorado is. Maybe then, you will see the light and stay.”

XV

Candide, Cacambo, and King Rousseau walk around El Dorado

As they walked around El Dorado, King Rousseau pointed out the vast achievements that made El Dorado a place of legend.

“See,” said King Rousseau, “there are many reasons to stay here. Why do you keep insisting on leaving? El Dorado is the pinnacle of the perfect place to live.”

“El Dorado has many accomplishments, but why shall I stay here and leave my Cunegonde? What role shall I play in this land?” Candide retorted.

“You have seen the state of other countries; how other kings rule, the vile way people live and the morals they believe in. El Dorado is a great contrast.” King Rousseau explained. “You have seen the slavery, the failure of those governments. You know truly that this is the ideal place to be. Everyone here has agreed, why are you so defiant? That agreement, you see, is what makes government work. Everything in this life is based on a mutual agreement of sorts.”

“How do you see that?” asked Cacambo.

“Well, if you truly want to know, the way El Dorado works is that my subjects get to live in this paradise of El Dorado, and in return, they give me their loyalty and promise to do no crime or disobey. They live by a moral code set by me and in return, they get a perfect place to live. This is why you should not leave and find Cunegonde but should stay here.”

“What would happen if I were to leave?” asked Candide.

“You would not be allowed to return, but both you and your friend Cacambo must make the decision for yourself. You shall not become shackled to one another any longer.” Stated King Rousseau “Once you have made your decision, you are free to do as you please. Now I must be going, I have subjects to attend to. Goodnight, and choose wisely.”

With those final words, King Rousseau left them to ponder what had been said and to choose what they truly desired.

Work Cited

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. On The Social Contract.

Voltaire. Candide. The Modern Library, 1918.