
RAPHAEL'S 'TRANSFIGURATION': HOW TO TRANSFORM THE TRAGIC INTO THE SUBLIME

Pierre Beaudry, 1/16/2021

FOREWORD

Understanding the difference between democracy and fascism is necessary in order to understand and solve the crisis of today's political world. Raphael introduced a similar polemic into artistic composition five hundred years ago, in 1520, with his last painting, *The Transfiguration*.

Raphael's painting depicts two opposite stories in one, taken from the Gospels of Matthew 17 and Mark 9: The transfiguration of Christ through the glorious light of salvation in the upper part, and the disfigured story of a world gone mad, depicted through the darkness of a young boy possessed by the devil, in the lower part. The timeless problem this painting poses to the spectator is how reason and faith can be unified together to solve the tragic crisis of a world gone mad.

The questions which this painting poses are: Why did Raphael paint the two subjects as one? Why can't the apostles cure the possessed child? And, why is it that only the power of an *axiomatic change* can accomplish such a task? The answer cannot simply be found in the book either, as Matthew shows in the left lower corner, as if to intimate to the observer to stay out of it, because only a Christ-like action is capable of solving the problem.

This polemical method of artistic composition was very courageous on the part of Raphael, because it depicts how difficult it is to cure a sick society by showing that the solution cannot be found within the sick society itself. The solution can only come from outside the box, so to speak, and from a higher spiritual domain than that of religion.

THE TRANSFIGURATION



Raphaël Sanzio, The Transfiguration, 1517-1520.

The iconography of Raphael's *Transfiguration* shows a division between two groups of people and the two biblical events which took place one after the other according to both Matthew 17: 1-20, and Mark 9: 2-29: First, the transfiguration of Christ, and secondly, the failure of the Apostles to heal a young boy possessed by the devil.

- 1) Above is the transfiguration of Christ who is located in the center, the body, and the surface of a triply-connected sphere of light rotating on the top of Mount Tabor, with Moses on his left and Elijah on his right, and with Peter, John, and James at his feet in the bottom part of the same sphere. The two figures outside of the sphere, on the extreme left, are the two Christian martyrs, Justus and Pastor to whom the painting was dedicated.¹
- 2) The scene below is completely separated and divided into two parts. The left part includes the other nine apostles, and the right part includes the family and supporters of a young possessed boy who is brought to the apostles for help. The pulsating double motion of those two groups is best expressed by the ambivalence of Cusa's dynamic of an *enfolding-unfolding* process and is represented by the opposite *forward and backward* motions of apostles Philip and Andrew, who express concretely the attempted but failed *coincidence of opposites* between *enfolding and unfolding* the tragic situation.

The hypothesis I am following on this matter involves the difference between religion and spirituality, faith and reason, and oligarchy and republic, because this difference is also the fundamental difference which separates blind faith from creative thinking. Remember what apostle Mark said: "For he who believes, everything is possible" (Mark, 9: 23.) In the last pages of the report that I wrote on this painting ten years ago, I made the following conclusion:

¹ The painting was commissioned to be an altarpiece for the French Cathedral of Narbonne by the Bishop of Narbonne, Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, the future Pope Clement VII. The work was left unfinished at Raphael's death and was completed by Giulio Romano and Giovanni Francesco Penni.

“Raphael’s *Transfiguration* reflects such an experiment as if the scene were projected through the Noosphere of the “glory of God.” The idea is that of a caustic image of axiomatic change that is too luminous and too bright to be seen with physical eyes, but of which only the eyes of the mind can see the “universal harmony” through the cusp of an evolute inversion (Monge’s *développée de rétrogression*).

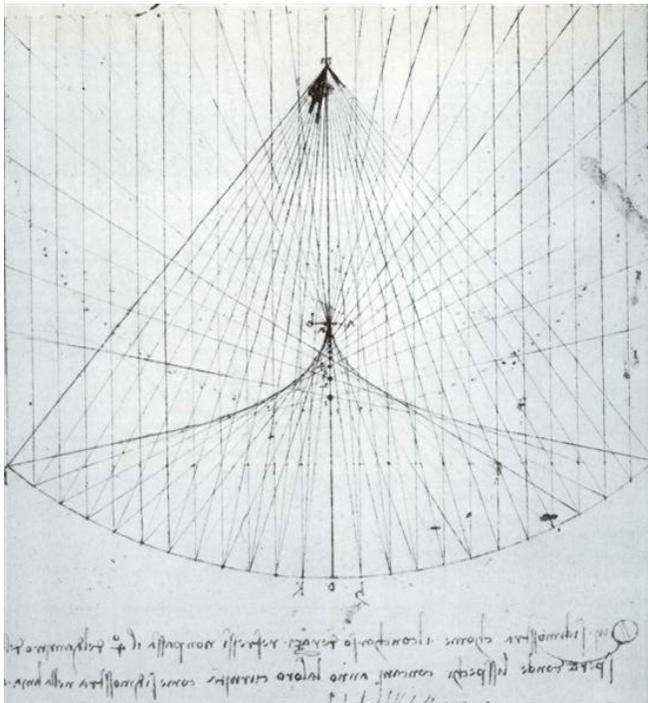
“In contrast with the blinding light of Christ, the epileptic boy calls attention to the same caustic image by inversion, but this time, formed with dark rays, as if generated through a black hole. In a way, one is the negative caustic image of the other. In a similar manner, for Raphael, once that Leonardo least action principle was discovered and understood [as a caustic], the division between the two levels of his fresco could be resolved by turning the tragic existential moment into a sublime moment.”²

This epistemological caustic experiment is simple, but it is also excruciatingly difficult, because it is a life and death question for anyone who internalizes this subject matter as a matter of truth by reason and by faith. It poses the question of how to go from the madness of today’s society to a new Renaissance as Leibniz recommended using a metaphor of mirroring the image of a caustic of light:

“From this it follows inexorably that charity (*agape*), the love of God above all, and true contrition, on which the assurance of blessedness depends, is nothing other than the love of the public good and of universal harmony; or rather, on that account, the glory of God and understanding are the same, and how great it is in itself to make greater, for there is no more distinction between universal harmony and the glory of God, than between body and shadow, person and picture, between a direct and reflected ray of light, since the one is what is in fact, the other what is in the soul of him who knows it. For God creates rational creatures for no other reason but that they should serve as a mirror, in which His infinite harmony would be infinitely

² Pierre Beaudry, [RAPHAEL SANZIO: THE CATENARY/TRACTRIX PRINCIPLE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION](#), 7/21/2009.

multiplied in some respects. From which must arise in due course the completed knowledge and love of God, in the beatific vision or the incomprehensible joy which the mirroring, and to a certain degree the concentrating of the infinite beauty in a small point in our souls, must bring with it. And thus, a burning mirror or burning glass is the natural image here.”³



Leonardo drawing of a caustic in a concave mirror and Raphael's drawing of Philip and Andrew

Raphael reproduced here a most beautiful sublime moment following Leonardo's precept of "showing the concept of the soul by the attitudes of the body."⁴ Raphael portrays Philip and Andrew looking inside the domain of a tragic world gone mad, while all of the other apostles and people are distraught to various degrees. Everyone is pointing to the child and to the transfigured Christ, while the truth and the solution to the riddle resides elsewhere.

³ Quoted in *The Real Political Economy of the American Revolution*, EIR, 1977, p. 217.

⁴ *Les Carnets de Leonard de Vinci*, Volume II, Gallimard, Paris, 1942, p. 229

Philip and Andrew are the only two figures who show understanding and compassion for the boy's deranged state, and who approach him with patience and attention. The impressions that Raphael gave to all of the other faces and hand gestures of the apostles and people is loud and clamoring, indicating by their mannerism that no one is even coming close to figuring out how to solve the crisis of the young boy, because no one is making the *voluntarist* effort of understanding how to turn the madness of human society into sanity; that is, how to elevate the human species *willfully* to a higher moral state of spirituality beyond religion and by inverting the action of their caustic minds into a surface of epistemological negative curvature.

Philip and Andrew's facial and hand expressions tell the whole story of what is missing.⁵ Although their attempt will not succeed, both *voluntarist* actions are expressed in what is required to solve the problem; one is going forward (*enfolding agape*) and the other is moving wisely backward (*unfolding sophrosyne*), both expressing the same love and compassion for mankind as if it were the motion of a single action. Such a paradoxical *coincidence of opposites* is the method by means of which all human problems can be resolved. This is the form of transfiguration that the world requires today, for "...he who believes, everything is possible" (Mark, 9: 23.)

FASCISM WITH A DEMOCRATIC FACE

What Raphael's *Transfiguration* suggests to the astute observer who is looking for what is not there, that is to say, looking either for what is there, and should not be, or looking for what should be there, but is missing. That is the irony of what has been happening to the United States people since January 6, 2021. People have been witnessing a new Reichstag Fire or 9/11 scenario of how fascism is about to become democratically accepted by the U. S. Congress. As Prince Charles said in last year's Davos meeting of central bankers: "All we need is for people to want it."

⁵ The 1977 restoration of *The Transfiguration* by so-called Vatican experts unfortunately partly blacked out the *coincidence of opposites* of the two pairs of hands that Raphael required the spectator to discover.

Take a good long look at what is going on in the U. S. Congress and ask yourself: What is wrong with that picture? What is missing? What is happening to democracy? What is wrong with this theatrical process of a second impeachment of President Donald Trump? What is it that 99% of the people are not able to see? Let me put the question differently: What is behind the taking down of the President of the United States? Don't look at the effect, look at the cause.

What must be understood in the current world strategic situation is that if the Democratic Party has its way in the U. S. Congress, it will not only lead the country to fascism under a democratic guise, but it will also lead the world to World War III by endorsing the "Great Reset" financial swindle which is about to be introduced in the international banking system meeting of January 25-29, 2021 in Davos, Switzerland. This is what LaRouche once called: "Fascism with a democratic face." What is the purpose of that new "democratic" policy? The answer is the reduction of the world population by six billion people.

What has to be understood is the following: The British Oligarchy is attempting to destroy the American Constitutional Republic by imposing a dictatorship of the "little me" over the general interest of mankind. It is as simple as that. It is precisely the opposite which must happen if America is to survive as a Republic. The oligarchical form of democracy, which insists on calling for "*my rights first*", must be changed into a form of democracy which calls for "*the rights of others first*". That's the only moral thing to do, as it was done at the Peace of Westphalia of 1642.

The American Republic must be recognized as embodying the form of a democratic principle which states: *He, who comes second, that is the forgotten man, must be made to come first*. Why is this change warranted? The reason is because the oligarchical form of democracy that the British Empire has always attempted to impose on the United States is a childish form of celebration of the *ego*, while the republican form of democracy is an adult orientation whose aim is the common good and the general welfare of all of mankind. As Helga Zepp-LaRouche stated in her weekly webcast:

“... the problems of the world are so many, that if the largest countries of this planet are not cooperating to solve them, I mean, that is the test of our morality, it is the test of our human identity as a creative species, and we are not somehow pigs that fight for the best place at the trough; but we are a species of creative reason, and if we sponsor and encourage the creativity of the other, the other human being, the other nation, it comes back a zillion times to us and it makes our own life and perspective better. So we have to change the thinking about these questions in a fundamental way.”⁶

CONCLUSION

The issue before the American people today is: How can the citizen fulfill the task of shaping the constitutional democratic republic of the future United States of America? In his book, [*The Economics of the Noosphere*](#), Lyndon LaRouche formulated the same question, albeit in a more precise manner and with the willful intention of changing the universe as a whole. He first formulated his question in a more restricted manner by asking: “*How shall we, then, select only those aspects of implicitly revolutionary, ‘free-will’ changes in the axioms governing policy-making, which represent a positive factor in the shaping of history?*” His answer was the following:

“Thus, the direction being taken by a society, is often flanked by the swamps defined by such lunatic extremes as either arbitrary, existentialist kinds of choices, or capitulation to fatalism. There are discoverable pathways, leading upward from such perilous terrain, as that into which careless opinion has presently misled most nations. The point is, to know how to instruct free will in selecting society’s appropriate, *axiomatic* choices of historic pathway.

“This view and practice of the making of history, is what I have defined as a scientific basis for the application of the *voluntarist* method. It is the use of that method, so refined, which must be mastered, and applied, if civilization is to escape the horror which presently besieges us. In this

⁶ Helga Zepp-LaRouche, [*We Are Sitting on a Powder Keg: It's Not Just About Vote Fraud*](#), The LaRouche Organization, January 13, 2021.

report, I situate that voluntarist method, from the vantage-point of Leibniz's development of his notion of *monadology*.

“At a time when all influential policy-shapers who are *not* philosophical voluntarists, will tend to behave as bunglers, the following question is posed: *by means of what voluntarist intervention, by the rest among us, can the necessary change in direction be brought into play?*”⁷

In his book, LaRouche provides the historical overview and background of how *axiomatic changes* are made in history by only a few for entire societies. The case he went through is the *axiomatic change* brought to Europe after the Dark Age by Henry VII (Richmond) in England, by Jeanne d'Arc and Louis XI in France, by Nicholas of Cusa, Brunelleschi, Leonardo and Raphael in Italy, and by those few who brought down the Venetian legacy in order to secure all of Modern European achievements, including the advent of the American Revolution and the more recent contributions made by Charles de Gaulle and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

So, are you willing to take on a similar task?

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⁷ Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. [*The Economics of the Noosphere*](#), EIR News Service, Inc., Washington D. C., 2001, p. 106-107.