
LEIBNIZIAN OPTIMISM AND THE SCIENCE OF FELICITY

Pierre Beaudry, 7/26/2019

FOREWORD

What does it mean to be optimistic? Does it mean that everything is possible? For example, is it possible to have, as Leibniz said, a coincidence between *reason* and *power* as opposed to a coincidence between *money* and *power*? Wow! That's a total impossible contradiction, because this would imply that mankind is capable of achieving a state of *happiness* without being fixated on money. And everybody knows that is impossible. Or is it? How can anyone be optimistic when confronted with such impossibilities? Benoit Odille from Solidarité & Progrès has a humorous answer to such a question.¹



¹ See the vidéo of Solidarité & Progrès by Benoit Odille: [Vidéo : La croissance infinie : c'est pas impossible.](#)

INTRODUCTION

All axiomatic ideas are Platonic and Lydian in character, because they are all generated as quadratic products of transformation of the human mind by acting to bring the future into existence; that is, by bringing together *self-consciousness*, *willfulness*, *imaginative planning for the future*, and *daring execution of that plan for the benefit of others*.

When all four of these conditions are assembled into an act of discovery of principle, they produce in the mind an axiomatic change which takes place in a coincidence between *reason* and *power*, and the result is a definite increase in energy-flux-density inside of your mind; that is, a negentropic increase in your power of thinking as Lyndon LaRouche demonstrated. However, this happens only *when you internalize the minds of others for their benefits*.

This coincidence between *my mind and the minds of others* is the central feature of what Gottfried Leibniz identified as the most important subject of *Felicity*, because such a coincidence between pain and joy can only take place on condition that one accepts suffering *for the benefit of others*. (See the sculpture of “*Prometheus bound*” by Nicholas-Sébastien Adam)² Thus, *Felicity* is also known as the *pursuit of happiness*, the principle established as the preamble of the American Constitution.

The opposition to be resolved between *reason* and *power*, as Leibniz called for, requires the above four steps to be harmonized into a single process. Such a principle of the *pursuit of happiness* was established in direct and explicit opposition to the principle of *property* developed by John Locke for the Constitution of the Confederate States of the Carolinas.

The conflict between *reason* and *power* in the governance of human affairs is represented by the current opposition between the paradigm of Anglo-Dutch free-trade liberalism and the paradigm of the fair-trade American System of Political Economy that Chinese President, Xi Jinping, adopted for his daring policy

² See my report : [THE LEGACY OF LYNDON LAROUCHE WITH AMPÈRE AND FRESNEL](#)

of the *One Belt One Road of the New Silk Road*. What is necessary, however, to accomplish that policy is the participation of all nations.

An early opposition to such a policy was brought into the world by the Venetian theologian of liberal free-trade economics, Paolo Sarpi (1552-1623), who had created for the English and the Dutch East India Companies an exclusive world looting principle which directly reflected the opposition between the imperial principle of *pursuit of domination* and the republican principle of *enjoyment of liberty* as was developed by Machiavelli (1469-1527) in his *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius*.

Machiavelli had introduced a fresh new approach to the defense of the principle of *agape* based on the superiority of a government ruled by the merit of the people rather than ruled by the self-appointment of families (oligarchies). The following texts of Leibniz on *Felicity* are inscribed in that same Machiavellian tradition, which itself stems from the legislation of Solon of Athens (c. 630-c. 560). This is the Solon-Machiavelli-Leibnizian tradition that Lyndon LaRouche restored with his New Bretton Woods system in conformity with the intention of FDR and of the fore-fathers of the American System.

Here, the deeper epistemological implications for a true *science of felicity*, as for instance expressed in the Peace of Westphalia, are based on the search for a solution to the Cusa paradox of the *coincidence of opposites*. But, *felicity* cannot exist without internalizing what someone else is thinking. Therefore, challenge yourself with what Leibniz wrote on the political significance of putting yourself in *the place of others*:

“*The place of others* is the real point of perspective in politics as well as in morality. And the precept of Jesus Christ of putting yourself in the position of others does not serve only the purpose of which our Lord speaks; it is first applied to morality, to know our duty with respect to our neighbor, but also it is applicable in politics, in order to know the views that our neighbor may have of us. One never gets a better entry point [into someone else's mind] than when one puts oneself in the place of others, or when one becomes an advisor or minister of state of a suspicious or enemy prince. One

then internalizes what he could be thinking and be undertaking, and what one might advise him.

“This fiction excites our thoughts and it has given me more than once the ability to forecast exactly what was going on elsewhere. In fact, it is possible that the neighbor may not be so ill-intentioned or even so clear-sighted as I thought he was, but, the safest in politics is always to be prepared for the worst; that is to say, when there is a need to be cautious and be preventive, as when things have to be considered favorably in a moral case where one might risk being prejudicial and offend others.”³

In his “Ode to Joy” Beethoven celebrated the same idea of internalizing the *place of others* that Schiller had originally identified in the “Ode to Freedom”, because, in the political geometry where “beggars are a prince’s brother,” joy is the name of freedom.

Therefore, the idea of republican freedom, for Schiller, Beethoven, and Leibniz, is not the freedom to do what one wishes; it is the resolution of the paradox of *freedom and necessity*, the unity of the subjective and the objective, the bond of difference between you and me; that is, the freedom that could not exist without the commitment to free all of mankind from the brutal bondage of oligarchism. That’s where the Leibniz idea of *felicity* comes from; that is, from the universal self-subsisting individuality of Schiller’s “*Selbstständigkeit*”

Although the political application of this principle had been attempted many times throughout history, it was revived systematically in France by the Leibniz influenced Monge-Carnot Ecole Polytechnique during and after the period of the French Revolution. The idea of “*félicité*” posed the anomaly of paradoxical thinking as the solution to the conflicting alternative between internal force and external force, as this was exemplified in physics by the works of François Arago, Léon Foucault, Augustin Fresnel, and Jean-Marie Ampère; that is, the application of the Leibnizian *vis viva* principle (living force), as an internal motive force of

³ G. W. Leibniz, *Textes Inédits*, Volume II, d’après les Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque provinciale de Hanovre, publiés et annotés par Gaston Grua, Tome II, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1948, p. 700. (Translated by Pierre Beaudry)

balance between *reason* and *power*. Such an application also has the power of correlating the creative activity of the human mind with the potential of energy-flux density that Ampère attributed to the interaction between electricity and magnetism.⁴

Over thirty years ago, Lyndon LaRouche summarized the geometrical constructive method of elaborating such a negentropic constraint for energy-flux density combined with energy-density of an economic platform as it will be required for the least action power of the Mars exploration project:

“For the reader who insists on having the nature of this power-constraint identified, we summarize. The construction begins as follows. We define the physical space-time of electromagnetic action in terms of conical, rather than linear or simply cylindrical electromagnetic coordinates: electrical moment, magnetic moment, and frequency of each, respectively. The least-action character of each coordinate is expressed as the quality of coherence of frequency of isoperimetric, self-similar-spiral rotation in each coordinate. This situates electromagnetic least action in a constructive-geometric space corresponding to the complex domain of Riemann, et al. This implies the elaboration of the multiple connection among the three conical *self-similar-spiral action* coordinates.

“Thus, the three-coordinate relationship is elaborated with respect to historical time.

“Such a multiply-connected domain is characterized by the generation of increasing cumulative density of geometrically determined mathematical discontinuities (singularities). This generation is *harmonically ordered* within the Gauss-Riemann domain so constructed; in the same spirit that physical space-time is harmonically ordered in the work of Kepler. To this, an elaboration of Georg Cantor’s most crucial theorem applies: the implicit enumerability of the increase of density of mathematical discontinuities per arbitrarily small interval of action of an axiomatically nonlinear form of continuing process.

⁴ See my report: [THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL REVOLUTION OF ANDRÉ-MARIE AMPÈRE](#).

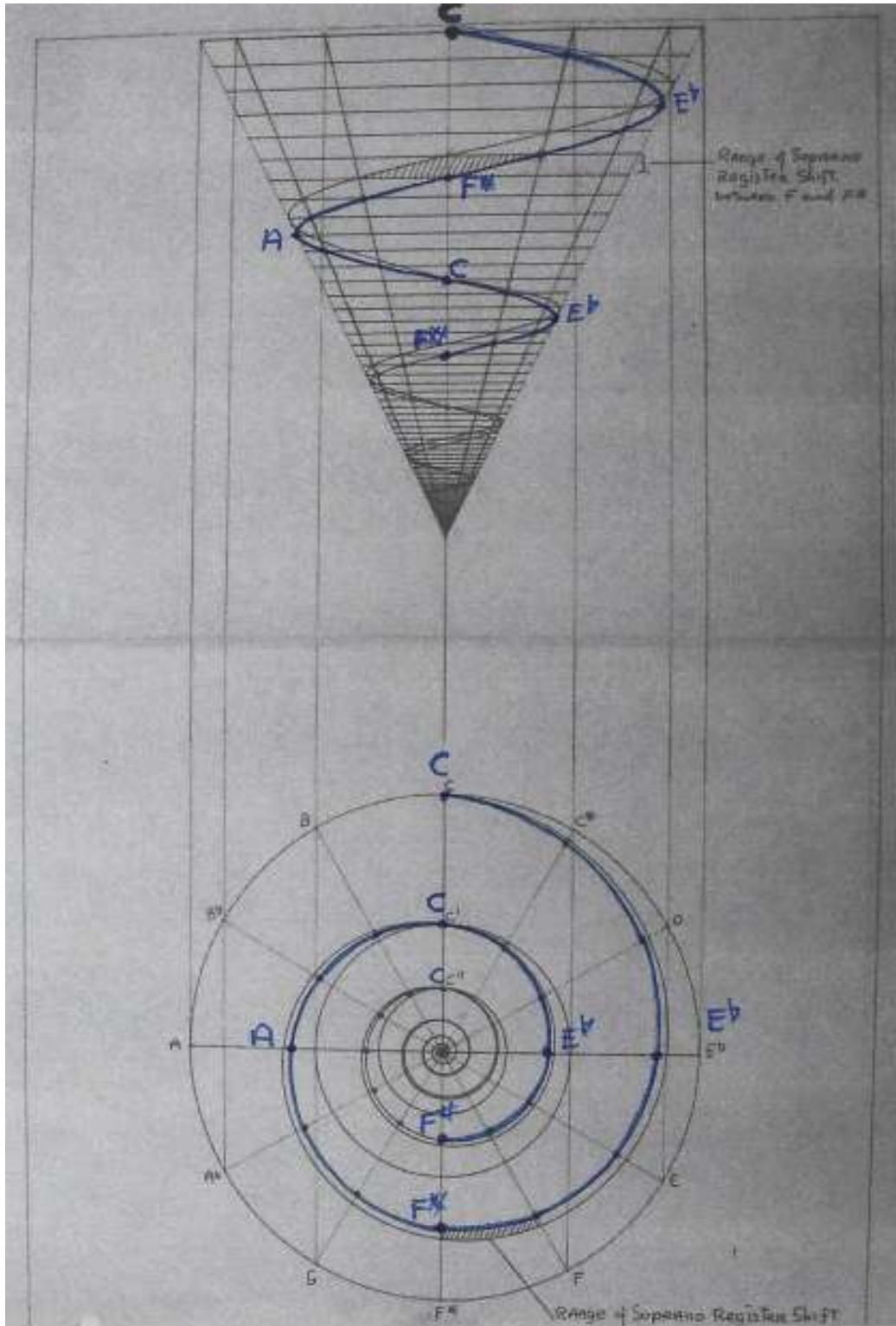
“Such an increase of density of singularities is a measure of negentropy, as we define it in physical economy. So, our definition of power is geometrically conformal with our definition of productivity (potential population-density). Thus, the causal correlation among the technological progress, power-constraints, and increases in productivity, is made susceptible of intelligible representation as a measurable relationship.”⁵

This increase in power of the human mind can be expressed metaphorically by the Lydian principle of the voice register shift in Bel Canto Singing and constructed geometrically with the Gauss arithmetic/geometric mean of the conical spiral action.

The logarithmic and arithmetic spirals correspond to the Gauss idea of the Arithmetic/Geometric Mean as applied to the voice register shift of the Soprano and tenor voices. There are three such right angle spiral divisions in the well-tempered musical system corresponding to the six human voices: F#ACEb, GBbC#E, and AbBDF. Their epistemological value is to set the pathway for the creative process in both art and science.

What happens in this Lydian process of transformation is what Lyndon LaRouche and Gottfried Leibniz called the “dynamics” of joy, or Felicity; that is to say, the *vis viva* transformative effect of how an idea impacts and changes human society as a whole. Like Percy B. Shelley identified in his “*Defense of Poetry*,” the joyous living force of an axiomatic idea is capable of making the whole of mankind change for the better in spite of its backward tendencies.

⁵ Lyndon LaRouche, [Big Payback From Mars Colony Mission](#), first published in EIR on October 21, 1988, last published on July 26, 2019.



Right angle Lydian divisions of the arithmetic-logarithmic spiral: F#ACEb. Spiral construction by Mark Fairchild.

FELICITY (1684-1698 ?) by G. W. Leibniz

[This first version of Leibniz's *Felicity* was translated by Patrick Riley and published in *Leibniz Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 82-84. Version B, which follows immediately after, originally appeared in Gaston Grua, G. W. Leibniz, *Textes Inédits*, Paris, 1948, (2 vols.) translated by the author.]

1. Virtue is the habit of acting according to wisdom. It is necessary that practice accompany knowledge.
2. Wisdom is the science of felicity, [and] is what must be studied above all other things.
3. Felicity is a lasting state of pleasure. Thus, it is good to abandon or moderate pleasures which can be injurious, by causing misfortunes or by blocking [the attainment of] better and more lasting pleasures.
4. Felicity is a knowledge or feeling of perfection, not only in ourselves, but also in others, for in this way some further perfection is aroused in us.
5. To love is to find pleasure in the perfection of another.
6. Justice is charity or a habit of loving conformed to wisdom. Thus, when someone is inclined to justice, one tries to produce good for everybody, so far as one can, reasonably, but in proportion to the needs and merits of each: and even if one is obliged sometimes to punish evil persons, it is for the general good.
- 6a. Now, it is necessary to explain the feeling or the knowledge of perfection. The confused perception of some perfection constitutes the pleasure of sense, but this pleasure can be [productive] of greater imperfections which are born of it, as a fruit with a good taste and a good odor can conceal a poison. This is why one must shun the pleasures of sense, as one shuns a stranger, or, sooner, a flattering enemy.
7. Knowledge is of two kinds, that of facts and that of reasons. That of facts is perception, that of reasons is intelligence.
8. Knowledge of reasons perfects us because it teaches us universal and eternal truths, which are manifested in the perfect Being. But knowledge of facts is like that of the streets of a town, which serves us while we stay there, [but] after [leaving] which we don't wish to burden our memory any longer.

- 8a. The pleasures of sense which most closely approach pleasures of the mind, and are the most pure and the most certain, are that of music and that of symmetry, the former [being pleasure] of the ears, the latter of the eyes; for it is easy to understand the principles [raisons] of harmony, this perfection which gives us pleasure. The sole thing to be feared in this respect is to use it too often.
9. One need not shun at all pleasures which are born of intelligence or of reasons, as one penetrates the reason of the reason of perfections, that is to say as one sees them flow from their source, which is the absolutely perfect Being.
10. The perfect Being is called God. He is the ultimate reason of things, and the cause of causes. Being the sovereign wisdom and the sovereign power, he has always chosen the best and acts always in an orderly way.
11. One is happy when he loves God, and God, who has done everything perfectly, cannot fail to arrange everything thus, to elevate created beings to the perfection of which they are capable through union with him, which can only exist in the mind.
12. But one cannot love God without knowing his perfection or his beauty. And since we can know him only in his emanations, there are two means of seeing his beauty, namely in the knowledge of universal truths (which explain [their own] reasons in themselves), and in the knowledge of the Harmony of the Universe (in applying reasons to facts). That is to say, one must know the marvels of reason and the marvels of nature.
13. The marvels of reason and of eternal truths which our mind discovers in itself [are essential] in the sciences of reasoning about numbers, about figures, about good and evil, about justice and injustice.
14. The marvels of physical nature are the system of the universe, the structure of the bodies of animals, the causes of the rainbow, of magnetism, of the ebb and flow [of the tides], and a thousand other similar things.
15. One must hold as certain that the more a mind desires to know order, reason, the beauty of things which God has produced, and the more he is moved to imitate this order in the things which God has left to his direction, the happier he will be.
16. It is most true, as a result, that one cannot know God without loving one's brother, that one cannot have wisdom without having charity (which is the real touchstone of virtue), and that one even advances one's own good in

working for that of others: for it is an eternal law of reason and of the harmony of things that the works of each [person] will follow it. Thus the sovereign wisdom has so well regulated all things that our duty must also be our happiness, that all virtue produces its [own] reward, and that all crime punishes itself, sooner or later.

FELICITY (c. 1694) by Gottfried Leibniz,

[This second version of Leibniz's *Felicity* was not included in the current English translation by Patrick Riley, *Leibniz Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, Second Edition, 1988. This original French text was published in G. W. Leibniz, *Textes inédits*, d'après les Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque provinciale de Hanovre, publiés et annotés par Gaston Grua, Tome II, Presses Universitaires de France, 1948, pp. 579- 584. Translated by PB.]

VIRTUE is the habit of acting in accordance with wisdom, because it is necessary that practice accompany knowledge, in order that the exercise of good actions become easy, natural, and turn to habits, so that such habits become a second nature.

WISDOM is the science of Felicity. This is what we must study above all other things, because nothing is more desirable than Felicity. That is the reason why we must always have our mind on top of the matter we are dealing with, that we always think about the main point, that is, that we often reflect on the intention or the objective to be reached, [*dic cur hic, respice finem, sans*], and that we say to ourselves, from time to time: "What am I doing? What is the purpose of this? Let's get to the main point." Thus, we would avoid wasting time with futilities or whatever becomes futility when we indulge in it for too long.

FELICITY is a durable state of pleasure and contentment: joy. However, several pleasures, especially the more sensual, cause pains that are much greater and persist much longer in their wake, or block greater and longer lasting pleasures. The role of wisdom is to provide us with the true means and the necessary

precautions and distinctions to acquire Felicity. We must distinguish between joy and pleasure: one can have joy in the midst of pains; we must also consider that joy is always accompanied with contentment, but it says something more. That is why our joy and our pleasure must not have unpleasant aftermaths and must not plunge us in a greater and longer sadness afterwards. It is that selection of joys and pleasures, and of the means of acquiring them, by avoiding sadness, which represents the science of Felicity. Several pleasures, mainly the more sensual, cause much greater and much longer pains or block access to greater and more durable pleasures. This is why moderation must be advocated. On the other hand, there are pains, which are extremely useful and instructive. Thus, it is in such choices and in the means of obtaining or avoiding them that lies the science of Felicity.

JOY is the total pleasure, which results from everything that the soul feels simultaneously. This is the reason why one can have joy in the middle of great sufferings; when the pleasures that are felt simultaneously are much greater and much more capable of affecting such pains, or when they are great enough that they are capable of eliminating them, as demonstrated by the case of this Spanish slave who, after having slain the Carthaginian who had killed his master, did not feel any joy and mocked the torments his executioners had invented for him.

PLEASURE is the sentiment of some perfection, and this pleasure causing perfection can be found not only in ourselves, but also in others, elsewhere. For when we become aware of it, this recognition excites some perfection in us, because the representation of perfection is also perfection. This is why it is good to make one familiar with objects that have a lot of it. And we must avoid hatred and envy, which block us from discovering pleasure in [promoting] the good of others and enjoying it.

TO LOVE is to discover pleasure in the Felicity of others. Thus, it is nothing else but a benevolence, which is disinterested. So, the habit of loving someone else is nothing else but the **BENEVOLANCE** by means of which we want the good of others, not for any profit for us, but because it pleases us by itself, because it is pleasant in itself.

CHARITY is general benevolence. And JUSTICE is charity in conformity with wisdom. Thus, when we are in the humor of wanting and of doing everything in our power to make everybody happy, we possess charity; and when it is well regulated by wisdom, in a manner such that no one could complain about it, what is produced is the virtue called justice; [the which exists] in a manner such that we refrain from doing any harm to someone, without necessity, and we rather do good, as much as possible, but most of all where it is best bestowed in the most perfect, and most agreeable manner. The best way of sensing perfection is through the knowledge of perfections and through their principles.

There are two sorts of knowledge, that of facts, which is called PERCEPTION, and that of principles, which we call, INTELLIGENCE. Perception is for particular things, intelligence is for universals and eternal truths. And this is why the knowledge of principles perfects us forever and makes us bring everything to the final reason of things or to their sovereign cause, that is to say, to the Perfect Being which is the source of all perfections and of all things; in a word, to God, who is the source of Felicity.

But, the knowledge of facts is like that of streets in a town, which help us while we are in it, but with which we no longer want to burden our memory after we have left. However, the pleasure in the knowledge of reasons is much more estimable than the one of learning facts. And the facts that are more important to consider are those, which pertain to things that contribute the most to liberating our minds so that we can reason justly and act in accordance with reason. Such are the facts the knowledge of which is of service for the ordering of one's life and for the use of one's time; for the practice of virtue; for the care of one's health, because illnesses prevent us from acting and from thinking; for the art of living among other human beings, because of all of external things nothing is more helpful to the Felicity of man than man himself, since we all have the same true interest. Thus, we must profit from their assistance in the knowledge of truth, seek the virtuous and wise men, and, when necessary, try to exercise [our patience] on others without being stricken with pain by it. (G. W. Leibniz, *Textes inédits*, d'après les Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque provinciale de Hanovre, publiés et annotés par Gaston Grua, Tome II, Presses Universitaires de France, 1948, pp. 579- 584.)

NOTE ON THE PLACE OF OTHERS

The place of others is the real point of perspective in politics as well as in morality. And the precept of Jesus Christ of putting yourself in the position of others does not serve only the purpose of which our Lord speaks; it is first applied to morality, to know our duty with respect to our neighbor, but also it is applicable in politics, in order to know the views that our neighbor may have of us. One never gets a better entry point [into someone else's mind] than when one puts oneself in the place of others, or when one becomes an advisor or minister of state of a suspicious or enemy prince. One then internalizes what he could be thinking and be undertaking, and what one might advise him.

This fiction excites our thoughts and it has given me more than once the ability to forecast exactly what was going on elsewhere. In fact, it is possible that the neighbor may not be so ill-intentioned or even so clear-sighted as I thought he was, but the safest in politics is always to be prepared for the worst; that is to say, when there is a need to be cautious and be preventive, as when things have to be considered favorably in a moral case where one might risk being prejudicial and offend others. However, morality itself is in conformity with that political outlook, when the harm we fear is great, that is to say, when the claim to security or the guaranty does not cost more harm than the injury, and there is an *actio damni infecti* (action threatened injury) of natural right. Thus, commutative jurisprudence, <or conservative if you prefer,> lends a hand by securing the rights of everyone.” (Leibniz, Op. Cit., p. 700.)

Deux versions originales de Leibniz sur la félicité.

Version A.

LA FÉLICITÉ 1684-1698 ?

par G. W. Leibniz

1. La *vertu* est l'habitude d'agir selon la sagesse. Il faut que la pratique accompagne la connaissance.
2. La *sagesse* est la science de la félicité, c'est à dire qu'on doit étudier sur toute choses.
3. La *Félicité* est un état durable de [contentement] plaisir. <Ainsi il est bon de quitter ou de modérer quelques plaisirs, qui peuvent nuire dans la suite en causant des douleurs ou en empêchant des plaisirs meilleurs et plus durables.>
4. Le *plaisir* est une <connaissance ou> [Un] sentiment de la perfection [ou ordre] non seulement en nous, mais aussi en autrui, car alors on excite encore quelque perfection <en nous>.
5. Aimer c'est trouver un plaisir dans la perfection d'autrui.
6. La justice est une charité <ou habitude d'aimer> conforme à la sagesse. Ainsi quand on est porte à la justice, on tache de procurer du bien à tous, autant qu'on le peut, raisonnablement, mais à proportion des besoins et mérites d'un chacun ; et même si on est aussi obligé quelques fois de punir les méchants, c'est pour le bien général.

Il faut maintenant expliquer le sentiment ou la connaissance et la perfection. La perception confuse de quelque perfection fait le plaisir des sens, mais ce plaisir peut être d'imperfections plus grandes qui en naissent, comme un fruit de bon goût et de bonne odeur peut cacher un venin. C'est pourquoi il faut se défier des plaisirs des sens, comme on se défie d'un inconnu ou plutôt d'un ennemi qui flatte.

[6] Les connaissances sont de deux sortes, celles des faits et celles des raisons. Celle des faits est perception, celle des raisons est intelligence.

- 7 La connaissance des faits nous sert, mais la connaissance des raisons nous perfectionne.
- 8 La connaissance des raisons nous perfectionne parce qu'elle nous apprend des vérités universelles et éternelles, qui expriment l'Être parfait. Mais la connaissance des faits est comme celle des rues d'une ville, qui nous sert pendant qu'on y demeure, après quoi on ne veut plus s'en charger la mémoire.
- [8] Le plaisir de l'esprit consiste dans la connaissance des perfections par leurs raisons, c'est à dire dans la connaissance de l'Être parfait qui est la dernière raison des choses, et de ses émanations.
- [8] Les plaisirs des sens qui approchent le plus les plaisirs de l'esprit < et sont les plus purs et les plus surs >, sont ceux de la musique, et ceux de la symétrie, les uns des oreilles, les autres des yeux, car il est aise de comprendre les raisons de l'harmonie ou de cette perfection qui nous y donne du plaisir. La seule chose qu'on y peut craindre, c'est d'y employer trop de temps.
- 9 On ne doit point se défier des plaisirs qui naissent de l'intelligence ou des raisons, lorsqu'on pénètre la raison de la raison des perfections, c'est à dire lorsqu'on les voit découler de leur source qui est l'Être absolument parfait [qu'on appelle Dieu].
- 10 L'Être parfait s'appelle Dieu. Il est la dernière raison des choses, et la cause des causes. <Étant la souveraine sagesse et la souveraine puissance>, il a toujours choisi le meilleur et agit toujours par ordre.
- 11 On est heureux quand on aime Dieu, et Dieu qui a tout fait en perfection [l'a ordonné ainsi] < ne pourrait manquer de l'ordonner ainsi pour élever les créatures a la perfection dont elles son capables par l'union avec lui, qui ne peut consister que dans l'esprit. >
- 12 Mais on ne saurait aimer Dieu sans connaître ses perfections ou sa beauté. Et comme nous ne le saurions connaître que par des émanations, il y a deux

moyens de voir sa beauté, savoir dans la connaissance des vérités éternelles [qui consistent dans les raisons, nombres, figures, ordres, changements] <expliquant les raisons en elles-mêmes>, et dans la connaissance de l'Harmonie de l'Univers en appliquant les raisons aux faits. C'est à dire qu'il faut connaître les merveilles de la raison [ou de l'esprit] et les merveilles de la nature.

- 13 Les merveilles des raisons et des vérités éternelles que notre esprit trouve en lui même dans les sciences de raisonner des nombres, des figures, du bien ou mal, du juste et injuste.
- 14 Les merveilles de la nature corporelle sont le système de l'univers, la structure du corps des animaux, les causes de l'arc-en-ciel, de l'aimant, du flue et reflue, et mille autres choses semblables.
- 15 Il faut tenir pour assuré que plus un esprit désire connaître l'ordre, la raison, la beauté des choses que Dieu a produites, et plus il est porté à imiter cet ordre dans les choses que Dieu a abandonnées à sa conduite, plus il sera heureux.
- 16 Il est très vrai, par conséquent, qu'on ne saurait aimer Dieu sans aimer son frère, qu'on ne saurait avoir la sagesse sans avoir la charité < c'est la pierre de touche de la véritable vertu >, et même qu'on avance son propre bien en avançant celui des autres, car c'est une loi éternelle de la raison et de l'harmonie des choses que les œuvres d'un chacun le suivront. [La pierre de touche de la véritable piété est le désir de procurer du bien. On ne l'a point quand on n'a point un désir ardent]. Ainsi la souveraine sagesse a si bien réglé toutes choses que notre devoir doit faire aussi notre bonheur, que toute vertu produit sa récompense, et que tout crime se punit tôt ou tard.

Version B.

LA FÉLICITÉ (c. 1694)

par G. W. Leibniz

La VERTU *est l'habitude d'agir selon la sagesse*, car il faut que la pratique accompagne la connaissance, afin que l'exercice des bonnes actions nous devienne aisé et naturel <, et passe en habitude >, puisque la coutume est une autre (seconde) nature.

La SAGESSE *est la science de la Félicité*. C'est ce qu'on doit étudier plus que toute autre chose, puisque rien n'est plus désirable que la Félicité. < C'est pourquoi il faut tâcher de faire en sorte que notre esprit soit toujours au-dessus de la matière dont il est occupé, qu'il [pense toujours au grand point] fasse souvent des réflexions sur la fin ou le but de ce qu'il fait, [*dic cur hic, respice finem, sans*] < en se disant à soi-même de temps en temps : 'Que fais-je ? A quoi bon cela ? Venons au [fait] grand point.' Ainsi on se gardera de < s'amuser à des bagatelle ou à ce qui devient bagatelle quand on y est trop adonne.>

La FÉLICITÉ *est un état durable de [plaisir] [contentement] joie*. [Ainsi] [Mais plusieurs plaisirs, surtout les plus sensuels, causant des douleurs bien plus grandes ou bien plus longues dans la suite, ou empêchant des plaisirs plus grands ou plus durables, c'est à la science de la félicité de nous donner les vrais moyens et les précautions et distinctions nécessaires, pour l'acquérir.] [Il faut distinguer entre joie et plaisir : on peut avoir de la joie au milieu des douleurs ; il faut considérer aussi que la joie est toujours accompagnée de contentement, mais elle dit quelque chose de plus.] C'est pourquoi il faut que notre joie < et notre plaisir > n'ait point de mauvaises suites [et ne nous plonge point par après dans [une tristesse bien plus grande et bien plus longue] une tristesse et douleur bien plus grande ou plus durable. C'est dans ce choix de joies et de plaisirs < et dans les moyens de les obtenir ou d'éviter la tristesse > que consiste la science de la félicité.

Plusieurs plaisirs [sur tout les plus sensuels] causent des douleurs bien plus grandes et bien plus longues ou empêchent des plaisirs plus grands et plus durables. [Ainsi il faut se modérer] < Et il y a des douleurs ou peines qui sont extrêmement utiles et instructives. Ainsi c'est dans leurs choix, et dans le moyen de les obtenir ou de les éviter que consiste la science de la félicité.>

La JOIE *est le plaisir total qui résulte de tout ce que l'âme sent à la fois.* C'est pourquoi on peut avoir de la joie au milieu de grandes douleurs, lorsque les plaisirs qu'on sent en même temps sont [beaucoup plus grands et capables d'affecter ces douleurs] < assez grands et capable de les effacer > : comme dans {chez) cet esclave espagnol qui, ayant tué un carthaginois meurtrier de son maître, ne se sentit point de joie et se moqua des tourments que les bourreaux purent inventer.

Le PLAISIR *est le sentiment de quelque perfection,* < et cette perfection qui cause du plaisir peut se trouver non seulement en nous, mais encore [dans les autres] ailleurs. Car lors que nous nous en apercevons, cette connaissance même excite quelque perfection en nous, parce que la représentation de la perfection en est une aussi. C'est pourquoi il est bon de se familiariser avec des objets qui en ont beaucoup. Et il faut éviter la haine et l'envie qui nous empêchent [de trouver du plaisir dans le bien d'autrui] d'y prendre plaisir.

[Dieu ?]

AIMER *c'est trouver du plaisir dans la félicité d'autrui.* [Ainsi ce n'est autre chose qu'une bienveillance qui n'est pas intéressée.] Ainsi *l'habitude d'aimer quelqu'un n'est autre chose que LA BIENVEILLANCE* par laquelle nous voulons du bien à d'autres, non pas pour le profit qui nous en revient, mais parce que cela nous [plait par lui-même] est agréable en soi.

LA CHARITÉ *est une bienveillance générale.* ET LA JUSTICE *est la charité conforme à la sagesse.* Ainsi, quand on est d'humeur à vouloir et à faire autant qu'il dépend de nous que tout le monde soit heureux, on a la charité ; et quand elle est bien réglée par la sagesse, < en sorte que personne

s'en puisse plaindre > , il en provient la vertu qui s'appelle justice, afin qu'on ne fasse point de mal à quelqu'un sans nécessité et qu'on fasse [plutôt] du bien < autant qu'on peut, mais surtout > la ou il est le mieux employé, [et parfait, et le plus aimable].

[La meilleure manière de sentir de la perfection est la connaissance des perfections par leurs raisons.]

Il y a deux sortes de connaissances, celle des faits < qui s'appelle PERCEPTION > et celle des raisons, qu'on appelle INTELLIGENCE. La perception est des choses singulières, l'intelligence a pour objet les universaux et les vérités éternelles et c'est pour cela que la connaissance des raisons nous perfectionne pour toujours et nous fait tout rapporter à la dernière raison des choses [ou souveraine cause, c'est à dire à l'Être parfait qui est la source des perfections et des choses] c'est à dire à Dieu, qui est la source de la félicité. Mais la connaissance des faits est comme celle des rues d'une ville, qui nous sert pendant qu'on y demeure, après quoi on ne veut plus s'en charger la mémoire. Ainsi le plaisir de connaître les raisons est bien plus estimable que celui d'apprendre des faits. Et les faits qu'il importe le plus de considérer sont ceux qui regardent les choses qui peuvent le plus contribuer à nous faire avoir l'esprit libre pour raisonner juste et pour agir suivant la raison. Tels sont les faits dont la connaissance sert à l'ordre qu'il faut avoir dans la vie, et dans l'usage du temps ; à l'exercice de la vertu ; au soin de la santé, parce que les maladies nous empêchent d'agir et de penser ; à l'art de vivre avec les autres hommes, parce que de toutes les choses extérieures [rien n'aide plus à la félicité de l'homme que l'homme] ce qui sert le plus l'homme est l'homme, tous ayant le même intérêt véritable. Ainsi il faut profiter de leur assistance pour la connaissance de la vérité, chercher les vertueux et sages et pouvoir pratiquer les autres au besoin sans en recevoir du mal. (G. W. Leibniz, *Textes inédits*, d'après les Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque provinciale de Hanovre, publiés et annotés par Gaston Grua, Tome II, Presses Universitaires de France, 1948, pp. 579- 584.)

NOTE SUR LA PLACE D'AUTRUI.

<La place d'autrui est le vrai point de perspective en politique aussi bien qu'en morale.> Et le précepte de Jésus Christ de se mettre à la place d'autrui ne sert pas seulement au but dont parle Notre Seigneur, c'est d'abord à la morale, pour connaître notre devoir envers notre prochain, mais encore à la politique, pour connaître les vues que notre voisin peut avoir contre nous. On n'y entre jamais mieux que lorsqu'on se met à sa place, ou lorsqu'on se fait conseiller et ministre d'État d'un prince ennemi ou suspect. On pense alors ce qu'il pourrait penser et entreprendre, et ce qu'on pourrait lui conseiller. Cette fiction excite nos pensées et m'a servi plus d'une fois à deviner au juste ce qui se faisait ailleurs. Il se peut, à la vérité, que le voisin ne soit pas si mal intentionné, ni même si clairvoyant que je le fais, mais le plus sur est de prendre les choses au pire en politique, c'est à dire lors qu'il s'agit de se précautionner et de la défensive, comme il faut les prendre au mieux en morale lorsqu'il est question de nuire et d'offenser autrui. Cependant la morale même permet cette politique, lorsque le mal qu'on craint est grand, c'est à dire que la prétention de la sureté ou caution ne cause pas de plus grand maux que le mal, et il y a une *actio damni infecti* de droit naturel. Ainsi la jurisprudence commutative, < ou si vous voulez conservative > y donne les mains, c'est à dire celle qui conserve à chacun ce qu'il tient. (Leibniz, Op. Cit., p. 700.)

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