

FELICITY

(c. 1694)

by G.W. Leibniz

[This **Version B**. of Leibniz's *Felicity* paper is missing from the current English translation by Patrick Riley, *Leibniz Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, Second Edition, 1988. The 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. The present **Version B** is translated and edited from the original French by Pierre Beaudry, Leesburg, VA. 4/9/2007.]

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, such that 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 last 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 lay 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 pain* 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 oneself 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 through their reasons.

{There are two sorts of knowledge, that of facts, which is called PERCEPTION, and that of reasons, which we call, INTELLIGENCE.} Perception is for particular things, intelligence is for universals and eternal truths. And this is why the knowledge of reasons perfect 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 not 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 on 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 getting hurt.

* Here the French editor misunderstood the meaning of Leibniz's intention by printing exactly the opposite, which is "ne se sentit point de joie," (did not feel any joy) instead of "ne se sentit point de peine" (did not feel any pain).

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