
NEW YEAR MESSAGE for 2021

by Pierre Beaudry, 1/4/2021

In this period of conflicts and upheaval it is useful to look back at how Gottfried Leibniz encountered similar difficulties in his attempts to forge an ecumenical alliance among Europe, Russia, and China. The issue that Leibniz addressed was a matter of axiomatic change.

Here is how Leibniz addressed his personal situation in a 1712 letter to Peter the Great, Tsar of Russia, at the time when he was in the process of building his Academy of Arts and Science for the benefit of both the Western and the Eastern part of our planet. Leibniz wrote:

“Although I have very frequently been employed in public affairs and also in the judiciary system and am consulted on such matters by great princes on an ongoing basis, I nevertheless regard the arts and the sciences as a higher calling, since through them the glory of God and the best interests of the whole human race are continuously promoted. For in the sciences and the knowledge of nature and art, the wonders of God, his power, wisdom, and goodness are especially manifest; and the arts and sciences are also the true treasury of the human race, through which art masters nature and civilized peoples are distinguished from barbarian ones. For these reasons I have loved and pursued science since my youth. . . . The one thing I have been lacking is a leading prince who adequately embraced this cause. . . . I am not a man devoted solely to his native country, or to one particular nation: On the contrary, I pursue the interests of the whole human race because I regard heaven as my fatherland and all well-meaning people

as its fellow citizens. . . . To this aim, for a long time I have been conducting a voluminous correspondence in Europe, and even as far as China; and for many years I have not only been a fellow of the French and English Royal Societies but also direct, as president, the Royal Prussian Society of Sciences.”¹

During the first decades of the eighteenth century, Leibniz addressed the characteristics of men of different nations and discussed the desirable inclination that most human beings have toward the benefit of other peoples from around the world to be the source of true happiness for all of mankind. This is truly the basis for the unity of all divisiveness in the world today: the self-interest of each nation should be developed for the ecumenical benefit of all other nations.

The ecumenical pathway to this desirable form of happiness has already been traced for us by Cardinal Jules Mazarin's Peace of Westphalia and by Gottfried Leibniz, with the purpose of rediscovering the Platonic Good (*Agathon*), and also by Lyndon LaRouche who revived St. Paul's principle of *Agape* during these past 50 years.²

Leibniz considered the *benefit to others* to be central to the development of *self-interest* of every human being in a way that was similar to the principle of public morality in China. Quoting from Henri, Duc de Rohan's book: *De l'intérêt des princes et états de la chrétienté* (1638) Leibniz stated:

“*The princes command peoples, and interest commands the princes.*” It would be desirable for this to be true, for then we should listen the better to reason. But reason demands also that we be concerned with our satisfaction beyond merely mercenary interest; it orders us to strive for *happiness*, which is nothing but a state of enduring joy. And whatever achieves this is our true interest. [...]

“Our own good is without doubt the basis of our motives, but very often we find that not only our own advantage but even our pleasure is in the

¹ Quoted by Maria Rosa, Antognazza, [Leibniz: An Intellectual Biography](#), Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009, pp. 470-471.

² See my last report: [ON PLATO'S CONCEPT OF THE GOOD AND ON ST. PAULS CONCEPT OF AGAPE](#)

good of someone else; in the latter case, we should probably call this disinterested love, as I have shown in explaining the principles of justice in the Preface to my *Diplomatic Codex on the Rights of Nations*. So the happiness of someone else often becomes a part of our own. We shall find that virtue, or the habit of acting reasonably, is that which achieves the most that one could promise himself – a lasting pleasure.” [...]

“Our natural affections do indeed make up our contentment, and the more natural we are the more we are led to find our pleasure in the good of another. This is the basis of universal benevolence, charity, and justice. As I have said in the Preface to my *Codex*, cited above, justice is at bottom only charity which conforms to wisdom. It is only reluctantly, and for a greater good, that justice sometimes obligates us to do evil. Wisdom orders that this benevolence should have degrees, just as the air, though it extends all around our globe to a great height, has greater weight and density near us than it has in the higher atmosphere regions. In the same way, one can say that charity, which bears upon those who touch us most nearly should have the greatest intensity and force.”³

Thus, one's self-interest lies in the discovery of the happiness of others by means of the development of others. This paradoxical act of benevolence, however, is not that easily solved by altruism, because, as Leibniz noted earlier in his *Mantissa codicis juris gentium 1700*: “Who seeks the well-being of the beloved for its own sake, since we will nothing except for the sake of our own good?”⁴

That is the crux of the paradox. Whichever way you look at it, one doesn't work without the other and the self-interest of mankind cannot be achieved without the well-being of all human beings, and the well-being of the other cannot be obtained without the self-perfecting of one's self. No matter how much you chew on this, you cannot get away from the fact that your own self-interest depends on

³ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, edited by Leroy E. Loemker, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Second Edition, 1989, pp. 630-633. See also: Robert Trout, [*Life, Liberty, and The Pursuit of Happiness*](#), The Schiller Institute, reprinted from Fidelio Magazine, Vol. VI, No. I, Spring 1997.

⁴ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, p. 424.

the self-interest of others. In the *Mantissa codicis juris gentium*, Leibniz posed this question: “How can love be bestowed upon others?” And he answered as follows:

“I should answer that whatever is pleasant is sought for itself, as opposed, that is, to what is useful to the good ends of producing the well-being of another. I observe that such is the object of true love, since to love or to cherish is to be delighted by the happiness of the beloved and his perfections. I understood the following objection to have been made against this – that it is more perfect so to submit to God that you are moved by his will alone and not by your own delight. But we must recognize that this conflicts with the nature of things, for the impulse to action arises from a striving toward perfection, the sense of which is pleasure, and there is no action or will on any other basis. Even in our evil purposes we are moved by a certain perceived appearance of good or perfection, even though we miss the mark, or rather pay for a lesser good, ill sought, by throwing away the greater. Nor can anyone renounce (except merely verbally) being impelled by his own good, without renouncing his own nature. And so it is to be feared that the negation of self which certain false mystics teach, and the suspension of action and thought by which they assume that we find supreme union with God, may end at length in a doctrine of the mortality of the soul such as is thought by the Averroists and other old philosophers as well, to whom it seemed that minds do not persist after man’s death, except in an ocean of divinity from which the drops had once come forth.”⁵

The demands on oneself regarding the benefit to others is not an additional burden attached to the already difficult task of living; it is the very dynamic foundation of human life and of its fulfillment. It is the irony of this paradox which must be grasped, here, in the Leibniz idea of “happiness” and of the application of such a human right in the form of the “Pursuit of Happiness” asserted in the American Declaration of Independence.

The true understanding of the inalienable rights of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” is not the so-called “American dream” of making enough

⁵ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, p. 424-25.

money to own a piece of land and a house. That is nonsense. When you celebrate the “Pursuit of Happiness” on July Fourth, you celebrate the *happiness of the other*, because American Independence represents the benefit of all of the others that imperialist oligarchies rejected from around the world. Remember that *agape* does not begin at home; it begins in your neighbor’s home.

Happy New Year! May this be the year where your self-interest begins with benefitting your neighbor!

FIN