

## Leibniz: On natural law (summer 1678 – winter 1680/1)

[A VI 4, p2761]

*Justice* is correctly regulated charity, or virtue serving reason with regard to the disposition of man towards man.

*A good man* is one who is endowed with justice, and therefore one who seeks the common good insofar as he can.

*A benefit to society* is that which brings about more good to one person than harm to another.

*A detriment to society* is that which brings about more harm to one person than good to another.

*Good* for someone is that which bestows more joy than sadness on him.

*Harmful* for someone is that which bestows more sadness than joy on him.

*Happiness (misery)* is durable joy (sadness).

*A reward* is the good done to a private citizen by the will of society on account of the good done for society by the will of that private citizen.

*A punishment* is the harm done to a private citizen by the will of society on account of the harm done to society by the will of that private citizen.

[A VI 4, p2762]

*A duty* is a good done for society by the will of a private citizen acting according to prudence; therefore it ought to be such that one who thinks properly can be enticed to perform duties by rewards and punishments.

*Forbidden* is a harm done to society by the will of a private citizen acting against prudence; therefore it ought to be such that one who thinks properly can be prevented from doing forbidden actions by rewards and punishments.

[Marginal note]:

There is no obligation to do the impossible.

For the impossible cannot be achieved by rewards or punishments.

Everything necessary is permitted, i.e. necessity is not subject to law.

For what is necessary cannot be impeded in any way, and hence not by rewards or punishments.

Just as what is necessary, contingent, possible or impossible are interconnected, likewise what is a duty, what is not a duty, what is permitted and forbidden are interconnected.

For a duty is nothing other than what is necessary for a good man, and what is forbidden is nothing other than what is impossible for a good man. But a good man is one whose charity is correctly regulated, i.e. he who seeks the common good as much his own safety allows.

Hence it is evident that all modal theorems can be transposed here, and many new propositions about justice and injustice can be derived. The same theorems can be repeated not only in relation to a good man, but also in relation to a prudent man.

*Free* is that which is neither a duty nor forbidden. Every thing is assumed free.

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