

“On the Continually Increasing Perfection of the World”¹

Translated by Donald Rutherford

When everything is taken into account, I believe that the world increases continually in perfection and does not return in a circle as though through a cycle. For in that case a final cause would be missing. And although there is no pleasure in God, there is nonetheless this analogue of pleasure, that he rejoices eternally in a succession of decrees. Yet there would be no pleasure, only a stupor, if I were to persist in the same state, however elevated. Happiness demands a perpetual progress to new pleasures and new perfections. Of course, in God all things are, as it were, present, and he embraces all things together in himself, though their execution requires time; but this must not bring about the most perfect state at once, for otherwise there would be no further change, or lead from equal state to equal state, for otherwise there would be no scope for acting. The universe is like a plant or an animal in so far as it tends toward maturity. But there is this difference, that it never reaches the highest degree of maturity, and also never regresses or declines.

¹ LH IV 8 Bl. 88. A VI.4, N. 322, p. 1642 (Latin). The Akademie editors date this text between March 1689 and March 1690, during Leibniz’s Italian journey.