

Forgotten Thinkers: Emilie du Chatelet



Gabrielle Émilie Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, marquise du Châtelet 1706-1749

Discourse on Happiness:

In order to be happy, one must have freed oneself of prejudices, one must be virtuous, healthy, have tastes and passions, and be susceptible to illusions. . . . One must begin by saying to oneself, and by convincing oneself, that we have nothing to do in the world but to obtain for ourselves some agreeable sensations and feelings. The moralists who say to me, curb your passions and master your desire if you want to be happy, do not know the route to happiness. One is only happy because of satisfied tastes and passions . . . It is passions that one should ask of God, if one dared to ask him for something, and Le Notre was quite right to ask the pope for temptations rather than indulgences.

The first is to be resolute about what one wants to be and about what one wants to do. This is lacking in almost all men; it is, however . . . without it one swims forever in a sea of uncertainties, one destroys in the morning what one made in the evening.

Examine the Bible:

In Genesis 1:4 God divides the light from the shadows, as if the shadows were something and could be separated from the lights . . . It is very amusing to see 3 days and 3 nights marked by the morning and the evening before the sun was created. For it was only created on the 4th day.

In the end, God gained nothing by this detour [40 years in the desert] for one will see that the Israelites never stopped complaining in the desert and never stopped regretting [that they left Egypt].

It is curious that Jesus died in public and in full view but was resurrected in secret with no witnesses.

It is said in Mathew 1:18 that Mary found herself pregnant before Joseph and she had lived together; which with several other places in the gospel that tell of the brothers of Jesus Christs and that Jesus Christ was call the first born of Mary . . . she had other children by St. Joseph.

From Newton's Principia:

Every body that moves in any curve line described in a plane, and by a radius, drawn to a point either immovable, or moving forward with an uniform rectilinear motion, describes about that point areas proportional to the times, is urged by a centripetal force directed to that point.

CASE. 1. For every body that moves in a curve line, is (by Law 1) turned aside from its rectilinear course by the action of some force that impels it. And that force by which the body is turned off from its rectilinear course, and is made to describe, in equal times, the equal least triangles SAB, SBC, SCD, &c., about the immovable point S (by Prop. XL. Book 1, Elem. and Law II), acts in the place B, according to the direction of a line parallel to αC , that is, in the direction of the line BS, and in the place C, according to the direction of a line parallel to dD , that is, in the direction of the line CS, &c.; and therefore acts always in the direction of lines tending to the immovable point S. Q.E.D.

Other Key Works: *On Fire, Foundations of Physics*, Letters

Next Lecture: 21st April, **Forgotten Thinkers: Goethe**