

Since he left us, onward-bound?
 Would that he might return!
 Then should we learn
 From the pricking of his chart
 How the skyey roadways part.
 Hush! does not the baby this way bring,
 To lay beside this severed curl,
 some starry offering
 Of chrysolite or pearl?

Ah, no! not so!
 We may follow on his track,
 But he comes not back.
 And yet I dare aver
 He is a brave discoverer
 Of climes his elders do not know.
 He has more learning than appears
 On the scroll of twice three thousand years,
 More than in the groves is taught
 Or from furthest Indies brought;
 He knows, perchance, how spirits fare,—
 What shapes the angels wear,
 What is their guise and speech
 In those lands beyond our reach,—
 And his eyes behold
 Things that shall never, never be to mortal hearers told.

EDMUND C. STEDMAN.

SYSTEM OF ECONOMICAL CONTRADICTIONS:

OR,

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MISERY.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY THE EDITOR.

INTRODUCTION.

BEFORE entering upon the subject-matter of these new memoirs, I must explain an hypothesis which will undoubtedly seem strange, but in the absence of which it is impossible for me to proceed intelligibly: I mean the hypothesis of a God.

To suppose God, it will be said, is to deny him. Why do you not affirm him?

Is it my fault if belief in Divinity has become a suspected opinion; if the bare suspicion of a Supreme Being is already noted as evidence of a weak mind; and if, of all philosophical Utopias, this is the only one which the world no longer tolerates? Is it my fault if hypocrisy and imbecility everywhere hide behind this holy formula?

Let a public teacher suppose the existence, in the universe, of an unknown force governing suns and atoms, and keeping the whole machine in motion. With him this supposition, wholly gratuitous, is perfectly natural; it is received, encouraged: witness attraction—an hypothesis which will never be verified, and which, nevertheless, is the glory of its originator. But when, to explain the course of human events, I suppose, with all imaginable caution, the intervention of a God, I am sure to shock scien-

tific gravity and offend critical ears: to so wonderful an extent has our piety discredited Providence, so many tricks have been played by means of this dogma or fiction by charlatans of every stamp! I have seen the theists of my time, and blasphemy has played over my lips; I have studied the belief of the people,—this people that Brydaine called the best friend of God,—and have shuddered at the negation which was about to escape me. Tormented by conflicting feelings, I appealed to reason; and it is reason which, amid so many dogmatic contradictions, now forces the hypothesis upon me. *A priori* dogmatism, applying itself to God, has proved fruitless: who knows whither the hypothesis, in its turn, will lead us?

I will explain therefore how, studying in the silence of my heart, and far from every human consideration, the mystery of social revolutions, God, the great unknown, has become for me an hypothesis,—I mean a necessary dialectical tool.

I.

If I follow the God-idea through its successive transformations, I find that this idea is preëminently social: I mean by this that it is much more a collective act of faith than an individual conception. Now, how and under what circumstances is this act of faith produced? This point it is important to determine.

From the moral and intellectual point of view, society, or the collective man, is especially distinguished from the individual by spontaneity of action,—in other words, instinct. While the individual obeys, or imagines he obeys, only those motives of which he is fully conscious, and upon which he can at will decline or consent to act; while, in a word, he thinks himself free, and all the freer when he knows that he is possessed of keener reasoning faculties and larger information,—society is governed by impulses which, at first blush, exhibit no deliberation and design, but which gradually seem to be directed by a superior power, existing outside of society, and pushing it with irresistible might toward an unknown goal. The establish' ment of monarchies and republics, caste-distinctions, judicial institutions, etc., are so many manifestations of this social spontaneity, to note the effects of which is much easier than to point out its principle

and show its cause. The whole effort, even of those who, following Bossuet, Vico, Herder, Hegel, have applied themselves to the philosophy of history, has been hitherto to establish the presence of a providential destiny presiding over all the movements of man. And I observe, in this connection, that society never fails to evoke its genius previous to action: as if it wished the powers above to ordain what its own spontaneity has already resolved on. Lots, oracles, sacrifices, popular acclamation, public prayers, are the commonest forms of these tardy deliberations of society.

This mysterious faculty, wholly intuitive, and, so to speak, super-social, scarcely or not at all perceptible in persons, but which hovers over humanity like an inspiring genius, is the primordial fact of all psychology.

Now, unlike other species of animals, which, like him, are governed at the same time by individual desires and collective impulses, man has the privilege of perceiving and designating to his own mind the instinct or *fatum* which leads him; we shall see later that he has also the power of foreseeing and even influencing its decrees. And the first act of man, filled and carried away with enthusiasm (of the divine breath), is to adore the invisible Providence on which he feels that he depends, and which he calls God,—that is, Life, Being, Spirit, or, simpler still, Me; for all these words, in the ancient tongues, are synonyms and homophones.

"I am Me," God said to Abraham, "and I covenant with Thee." . . . And to Moses: "I am the Being. Thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, 'The Being hath sent me unto you.'" These two words, the Being and Me, have in the original language—the most religious that men have ever spoken—the same characteristic.¹ Elsewhere, when Ie-hovah, acting as law-giver through the instrumentality of Moses, attests his eternity and swears by his own essence, he uses, as a form of oath, *I*; or

¹ *Ie-hovah*, and in composition *Iah*, the being; *Iao*, *iohpter*, same meaning; *he-ish*, Heb., he was; *ei*, Gr., he is, *ei-nai*, to be; *an-i*, Heb., and in conjugation *ih-i*, me; *ego*, *io*, *ich*, *i*, *me-i*, *me-o*, *i-tibi*, *te*, and all the personal pronouns in which the vowels *i*, *e*, *ei*, *oi*, denote personality in general, and the consonants *m* or *n*, *s* or *t*, serve to indicate the number of the person. For the rest, let who will dispute over these analogies; I have no objections: at this depth, the science of the philologist is but cloud and mystery. The important point to which I wish to call attention is that the phonetic relation of names seems to correspond to the metaphysical relation of ideas.

else, with redoubled force, *I, the Being*. Thus the God of the Hebrews is the most personal and wilful of all the gods, and none express better than he the intuition of humanity.

God appeared to man, then, as a me, as a pure and permanent essence, placing himself before him as a monarch before his servant, and expressing himself now through the mouth of poets, legislators, and soothsayers, *musa, nomos, numen*; now through the popular voice, *vox populi vox Dei*. This may serve, among other things, to explain the existence of true and false oracles; why individuals secluded from birth do not attain of themselves to the idea of God, while they eagerly grasp it as soon as it is presented to them by the collective mind; why, finally, stationary races, like the Chinese, end by losing it.¹ In the first place, as to oracles, it is clear that all their accuracy depends upon the universal conscience which inspires them; and, as to the idea of God, it is easily seen why isolation and *statu quo* are alike fatal to it. On the one hand, absence of communication keeps the mind absorbed in animal self-contemplation; on the other, absence of motion, gradually changing social life into mechanical routine, finally eliminates the idea of will and providence. Strange fact! religion, which perishes through progress, perishes also through quiescence.

Notice further that, in attributing to the vague and (so to speak) objectified consciousness of a universal reason the first revelation of Divinity, we assume absolutely nothing concerning

¹ The Chinese have preserved in their traditions the remembrance of a religion which had ceased to exist among them five or six centuries before our era. (See Pauthier, "China," Paris, Didot.) More surprising still is it that this singular people, in losing its primitive faith, seems to have understood that divinity is simply the collective *me* of humanity: so that, more than two thousand years ago, China had reached, in its commonly-accepted belief, the latest results of the philosophy of the Occident. "What Heaven sees and understands," it is written in the *Shu-king*, "is only that which the people see and understand. What the people deem worthy of reward and punishment is that which Heaven wishes to punish and reward. There is an intimate communication between Heaven and the people: let those who govern the people, therefore, be watchful and cautious." Confucius expressed the same idea in another manner: "Gain the affection of the people, and you gain empire. Lose the affection of the people, and you lose empire." There, then, general reason was regarded as queen of the world, a distinction which elsewhere has been bestowed upon revelations. The *Tao-te-king* is still more explicit. In this work, which is but an outline criticism of pure reason, the philosopher Lao-tse continually identifies, under the name of TAO, universal reason and the infinite being; and all the obscurity of the book of Lao-tse consists, in my opinion, of this constant identification of principles which our religious and metaphysical habits have so widely separated.

even the reality or non-reality of God. In fact, admitting that God is nothing more than collective instinct or universal reason, we have still to learn what this universal reason is in itself. For, as we shall show directly, universal reason is not given in individual reason; in other words, the knowledge of social laws, or the theory of collective ideas, though deduced from the fundamental concepts of pure reason, is nevertheless wholly empirical, and never would have been discovered *a priori* by means of deduction, induction, or synthesis. Whence it follows that universal reason, which we regard as the origin of these laws; universal reason, which exists, reasons, labors, in a separate sphere and as a reality distinct from pure reason, just as the planetary system, though created according to the laws of mathematics, is a reality distinct from mathematics, whose existence could not have been deduced from mathematics alone: it follows, I say, that universal reason is, in modern languages, exactly what the ancients called God. The name is changed: what do we know of the thing?

Let us now trace the evolution of the Divine idea.

The Supreme Being once posited by a primary mystical judgment, man immediately generalizes the subject by another mysticism,—analogy. God, so to speak, is as yet but a point: directly he shall fill the world.

As, in sensing his social me, man saluted his *Author*, so, in finding evidence of design and intention in animals, plants, springs, meteors, and the whole universe, he attributes to each special object, and then to the whole, a soul, spirit, or genius presiding over it; pursuing this inductive process of apotheosis from the highest summit of Nature, which is society, down to the humblest forms of life, to inanimate and inorganic matter. From his collective me, taken as the superior pole of creation, to the last atom of matter, man *extends*, then, the idea of God,—that is, the idea of personality and intelligence,—just as God himself *extended heaven*, as the book of Genesis tells us; that is, created space and time, the conditions of all things.

Thus, without a God or master-builder, the universe and man would not exist: such is the social profession of faith. But also without man God would not be thought, or—to clear the interval—God would be nothing. If humanity needs an author, God

and the gods equally need a revealer; theogony, the history of heaven, hell, and their inhabitants,—those dreams of the human mind,—is the counterpart of the universe, which certain philosophers have called in return the dream of God. And how magnificent this theological creation, the work of society! The creation of the *démourgos* was obliterated; what we call the Omnipotent was conquered; and for centuries the enchanted imagination of mortals was turned away from the spectacle of Nature by the contemplation of Olympian marvels.

Let us descend from this fanciful region: pitiless reason knocks at the door; her terrible questions demand a reply.

"What is God?" she asks; "where is he? what is his extent? what are his wishes? what his powers? what his promise?"—and here, in the light of analysis, all the divinities of heaven, earth, and hell are reduced to an incorporeal, insensible, immovable, incomprehensible, undefinable I-know-not-what; in short, to a negation of all the attributes of existence. In fact, whether man attributes to each object a special spirit or genius, or conceives the universe as governed by a single power, he in either case but supposes an unconditioned, that is, an impossible, entity, that he may deduce therefrom an explanation of such phenomena as he deems inconceivable on any other hypothesis. The mystery of God and reason! In order to render the object of his idolatry more and more *rational*, the believer despoils him successively of all the qualities which would make him *real*; and, after marvellous displays of logic and genius, the attributes of the Being *par excellence* are found to be the same as those of nihility. This evolution is inevitable and fatal: atheism is at the bottom of all theodicy.

Let us try to understand this progress.

God, creator of all things, is himself no sooner created by the conscience,—in other words, no sooner have we lifted God from the idea of the social me to the idea of the cosmic me,—than immediately our reflection begins to demolish him under the pretext of perfecting him. To perfect the idea of God, to purify the theological dogma, was the second hallucination of the human race.

The spirit of analysis, that untiring Satan who continually questions and denies, must sooner or later look for proof of

religious dogmas. Now, whether the philosopher determine the idea of God, or declare it indeterminable; whether he approach it with his reason, or retreat from it,—I say that this idea receives a blow; and, as it is impossible for speculation to halt, the idea of God must at last disappear. Then the atheistic movement is the second act of the theologic drama; and this second act follows from the first, as effect from cause. "The heavens declare the glory of God," says the Psalmist. Let us add, And their testimony dethrones him.

Indeed, in proportion as man observes phenomena, he thinks that he perceives, between Nature and God, intermediaries; such as relations of number, form, and succession; organic laws, evolutions, analogies,—forming an unmistakable series of manifestations which invariably produce or give rise to each other. He even observes that, in the development of this society of which he is a part, private wills and associative deliberations have some influence; and he says to himself that the Great Spirit does not act upon the world directly and by himself, or arbitrarily and at the dictation of a capricious will, but mediately, by perceptible means or organs, and by virtue of laws. And, retracing in his mind the chain of effects and causes, he places clear at the extremity, as a balance, God.

A poet has said,—

Par delà tous les cieux, le Dieu des cieux réside.

Thus, at the first step in the theory, the Supreme Being is reduced to the function of a motive power, a mainspring, a cornerstone, or, if a still more trivial comparison may be allowed me, a constitutional sovereign, reigning but not governing, swearing to obey the law and appointing ministers to execute it. But, under the influence of the mirage which fascinates him, the theist sees, in this ridiculous system, only a new proof of the sublimity of his idol; who, in his opinion, uses his creatures as instruments of his power, and causes the wisdom of human beings to redound to his glory.

Soon, not content with limiting the power of the Eternal, man, increasingly deicidal in his tendencies, insists on sharing it.

If I am a spirit, a sentient me giving voice to ideas, continues the theist, I consequently am a part of absolute existence; I am

free, creative, immortal, equal with God. *Cogito, ergo sum*,—I think, therefore I am immortal: that is the corollary, the translation of *Ego sum qui sum*: philosophy is in accord with the Bible. The existence of God and the immortality of the soul are posited by the conscience in the same judgment: there, man speaks in the name of the universe, to whose bosom he transports his me; here, he speaks in his own name, without perceiving that, in this going and coming, he only repeats himself.

The immortality of the soul, a true division of divinity, which, at the time of its first promulgation, arriving after a long interval, seemed a heresy to those faithful to the old dogma, has been none the less considered the complement of divine majesty, necessarily postulated by eternal goodness and justice. Unless the soul is immortal, God is incomprehensible, say the theists; resembling in this the political theorists who regard sovereign representation and perpetual tenure of office as essential conditions of monarchy. But the inconsistency of the ideas is as glaring as the parity of the doctrines is exact: consequently the dogma of immortality soon became the stumbling-block of philosophical theologians, who, ever since the days of Pythagoras and Orpheus, have been making futile attempts to harmonize divine attributes with human liberty, and reason with faith. A subject of triumph for the impious! . . . But the illusion could not yield so soon: the dogma of immortality, for the very reason that it was a limitation of the uncreated Being, was a step in advance. Now, though the human mind deceives itself by a partial acquisition of the truth, it never retreats, and this perseverance in progress is proof of its infallibility. Of this we shall soon see fresh evidence.

In making himself like God, man made God like himself: this correlation, which for many centuries had been execrated, was the secret spring which determined the new myth. In the days of the patriarchs God made an alliance with man; now, to strengthen the compact, God is to become a man. He will take on our flesh, our form, our passions, our joys, and our sorrows; will be born of woman, and die as we do. Then, after this humiliation of the infinite, man will still pretend that he has elevated the ideal of his God in making, by a logical conversion, him whom he had always called creator, a saviour, a redeemer.

Humanity does not yet say, I am God: such a usurpation would shock its piety; it says, God is in me, IMMANUEL, *nobiscum Deus*. And, at the moment when philosophy with pride, and universal conscience with fright, shouted with unanimous voice, The gods are departing! *excedere deos!* a period of eighteen centuries of fervent adoration and superhuman faith was inaugurated.

But the fatal end approaches. The royalty which suffers itself to be limited will end by the rule of demagogues; the divinity which is defined dissolves in a pandemonium. Christolatry is the last term of this long evolution of human thought. The angels, saints, and virgins reign in heaven with God, says the catechism; and demons and reprobates live in the hells of eternal punishment. Ultramundane society has its left and its right: it is time for the equation to be completed; for this mystical hierarchy to descend upon earth and appear in its real character.

When Milton represents the first woman admiring herself in a fountain, and lovingly extending her arms toward her own image as if to embrace it, he paints, feature for feature, the human race.—This God whom you worship, O man! this God whom you have made good, just, omnipotent, omniscient, immortal, and holy, is yourself: this ideal of perfection is your image, purified in the shining mirror of your conscience. God, Nature, and man are three aspects of one and the same being; man is God himself arriving at self-consciousness through a thousand evolutions. In Jesus Christ man recognized himself as God; and Christianity is in reality the religion of God-man. There is no other God than he who in the beginning said, *ME*; there is no other God than *THEE*.

Such are the last conclusions of philosophy, which dies in unveiling religion's mystery and its own.

II.

It seems, then, that all is ended; it seems that, with the cessation of the worship and mystification of humanity by itself, the theological problem is for ever put aside. The gods have gone: there is nothing left for man but to grow weary and die

in his egoism. What frightful solitude extends around me, and forces its way to the bottom of my soul! My exaltation resembles annihilation; and, since I made myself a God, I seem but a shadow. It is possible that I am still a *me*, but it is very difficult to regard myself as the absolute; and, if I am not the absolute, I am only half of an idea.

Some ironical thinker, I know not who, has said: "A little philosophy leads away from religion, and much philosophy leads back to it." This proposition is humiliatingly true.

Every science develops in three successive periods, which may be called—comparing them with the grand periods of civilization—the religious period, the sophistical period, the scientific period.¹ Thus, alchemy represents the religious period of the science afterwards called chemistry, whose definitive plan is not yet discovered; likewise astrology was the religious period of another science, since established,—astronomy.

Now, after being laughed at for sixty years about the philosopher's stone, chemists, governed by experience, no longer dare to deny the transmutability of bodies; while astronomers are led by the structure of the world to suspect also an organism of the world; that is, something precisely like astrology. Are we not justified in saying, in imitation of the philosopher just quoted/ that, if a little chemistry leads away from the philosopher's stone, much chemistry leads back to it; and similarly, that, if a little astronomy makes us laugh at astrologers, much astronomy will make us believe in them?²

¹ See, among others, Auguste Comte, "Course of Positive Philosophy," and P. J. Proudhon, "Creation of Order in Humanity."

² I do not mean to affirm here in a positive manner the transmutability of bodies, or to point it out as a subject for investigation; still less do I pretend to say what ought to be the opinion of *savants* upon this point. I wish only to call attention to the species of scepticism generated in every uninformed mind by the most general conclusions of chemical philosophy, or, better, by the irreconcilable hypotheses which serve as the basis of its theories. Chemistry is truly the despair of reason: on all sides it mingles with the fanciful; and the more knowledge of it we gain by experience, the more it envelops itself in impenetrable mysteries. This thought was recently suggested to me by reading M. Liebig's "Letters on Chemistry" (Paris, Massana, 1845, translation of Berlet-Dupiney and Dubreuil-Hellion).

Thus M. Liebig, after having banished from science hypothetical causes and all the entities assumed by the ancients,—such as the creative power of matter, the horror of a vacuum, the *esprit recteur*, etc. (p. 22),—admits immediately, as necessary to the comprehension of chemical phenomena, a series of entities no less obscure,—vital force, chemical force, electric force, the force of attraction, etc. (pp. 146, 149). One might call it a realization of the properties of bodies, in imitation of the psychologists' re-

I certainly have less inclination to the marvellous than many atheists, but I cannot help thinking that the stories of miracles,

alization of the faculties of the soul under the names liberty, imagination, memory, etc. Why not keep to the elements? Why, if the atoms have weight of their own, as M. Liebig appears to believe, may they not also have electricity and life of their own? Curious thing! the phenomena of matter, like those of mind, become intelligible only by supposing them to be produced by unintelligible forces and governed by contradictory laws: such is the inference to be drawn from every page of M. Liebig's book.

Matter, according to M. Liebig, is essentially inert and entirely destitute of spontaneous activity (p. 148): why, then, do the atoms have weight? Is not the weight inherent in atoms the real, eternal, and spontaneous motion of matter? And that which we chance to regard as rest,—may it not be equilibrium rather? Why, then, suppose now an inertia which definitions contradict, now an external potentiality which nothing proves?

Atoms have weight, M. Liebig infers that they are *indivisible* (p. 58). What logic! Weight is only force, that is, a thing hidden from the senses, whose phenomena alone are perceptible,—a thing, consequently, to which the idea of division and indivision is inapplicable; and from the presence of this force, from the hypothesis of an indeterminate and immaterial entity, is inferred an indivisible material existence!

For the rest, M. Liebig confesses that it is *impossible for the mind to conceive of* particles absolutely indivisible; he recognizes, further, that the *fact* of this indivisibility is not proved; but he adds that science cannot dispense with this hypothesis: so that, by the confession of its teachers, chemistry has for its point of departure a fiction as repugnant to the mind as it is foreign to experience. What irony!

Atoms are unequal in weight, says M. Liebig, because unequal in volume: nevertheless, it is impossible to demonstrate that chemical equivalents express the relative weight of atoms, or, in other words, that what the calculation of atomic equivalents leads us to regard as an atom is not composed of several atoms. This is tantamount to saying that *more matter* weighs more than *less matter*; and, since weight is the essence of materiality, we may logically conclude that, weight being universally identical with itself, there is also an identity in matter; that the differences of simple bodies are due solely, either to different methods of atomic association, or to different degrees of molecular condensation, and that, in reality, atoms are transmutable: which M. Liebig does not admit.

"We have," he says, "no reason for believing that one element is convertible into another element" (p. 135). What do you know about it? The reasons for believing in such a conversion can very well exist and at the same time escape your attention; and it is not certain that your intelligence in this respect has risen to the level of your experience. But, admitting the negative argument of M. Liebig, what follows? That, with about fifty-six exceptions, irreducible as yet, all matter is in a condition of perpetual metamorphosis. Now, it is a law of our reason to suppose in Nature unity of substance as well as unity of force and system; moreover, the series of chemical compounds and simple substances themselves leads us irresistibly to this conclusion. Why, then, refuse to follow to the end the road opened by science, and to admit an hypothesis which is the inevitable result of experience itself?

M. Liebig not only denies the transmutability of elements, but rejects the spontaneous formation of germs. Now, if we reject the spontaneous formation of germs, we are forced to admit their eternity; and as, on the other hand, geology proves that the globe has not been inhabited always, we must admit also that, at a given moment, the eternal germs of animals and plants were born, without father or mother, over the whole face of the earth. Thus, the denial of spontaneous generation leads back to the hypothesis of spontaneity: what is there in much-derided metaphysics more contradictory?

Let it not be thought, however, that I deny the value and certainty of chemical theories, or that the atomic theory seems to me absurd, or that I share the Epicurean opinion as to spontaneous generation. Once more, all that I wish to point out is that, from the point of view of principles, chemistry needs to exercise extreme tolerance, since its own existence depends on a certain number of fictions, contrary to reason and experience, and destructive of each other.

prophecies, charms, etc., are but distorted accounts of the extraordinary effects produced by certain latent forces, or, as was formerly said, by occult powers. Our science is still so brutal and unfair; our professors exhibit so much impertinence with so little knowledge; they deny so impudently facts which embarrass them, in order to protect the opinions which they champion,—that I distrust strong minds equally with superstitious ones. Yes, I am convinced of it; our gross rationalism is the inauguration of a period which, thanks to science, will become truly *prodigious*; the universe, to my eyes, is only a laboratory of magic, from which any thing may be expected. . . . This said, I return to my subject.

They would be deceived, then, who should imagine, after my rapid survey of religious progress, that metaphysics has uttered its last word upon the double enigma expressed in these four words,—the existence of God, the immortality of the soul. Here, as elsewhere, the most advanced and best established conclusions, those which seem to have settled for ever the theological question, lead us back to primeval mysticism, and involve the new data of an inevitable philosophy. The criticism of religious opinions makes us smile to-day both at ourselves and at religions; and yet the *résumé* of this criticism is but a reproduction of the problem. The human race, at the present moment, is on the eve of recognizing and affirming something equivalent to the old notion of Divinity; and this, not by a spontaneous movement as before, but through reflection and by means of irresistible logic. I will try, in a few words, to make myself understood.

If there is a point on which philosophers, in spite of themselves, have finally succeeded in agreeing, it is without doubt the distinction between intelligence and necessity, the subject of thought and its object, the *me* and the *not-me*; in ordinary terms, spirit and matter. I know well that all these terms express nothing that is real and true; that each of them designates only a section of the absolute, which alone is true and real; and that, taken separately, they involve, all alike, a contradiction. But it is no less certain also that the absolute is completely inaccessible to us; that we know it only by its opposite extremes, which alone fall within the limits of our experience; and that, if unity only can win our faith, duality is the first condition of science.

Thus, who thinks, and what is thought? What is a soul? what is a body? I defy any one to escape this dualism. It is with essences as with ideas: the former are seen separated in Nature, as the latter in the understanding; and just as the ideas of God and immortality, in spite of their identity, are posited successively and contradictorily in philosophy, so, in spite of their fusion in the absolute, the *me* and the *not-me* posit themselves separately and contradictorily in Nature, and we have beings who think, at the same time with others which do not think.

Now, whoever has taken pains to reflect knows to-day that such a distinction, wholly realized though it be, is the most unintelligible, most contradictory, most absurd thing which reason can possibly meet. Being is no more conceivable without the properties of spirit than without the properties of matter: so that if you deny spirit, because, included in none of the categories of time, space, motion, solidity, etc., it seems deprived of all the attributes which constitute reality, I in my turn will deny matter, which, presenting nothing appreciable but its inertia, nothing intelligible but its forms, manifests itself nowhere as cause (voluntary and free), and disappears from view entirely as substance; and we arrive at pure idealism, that is, nihilism. But nihilism is inconsistent with the existence of living reasoning—I know not what to call them—uniting in themselves, in a state of commenced synthesis or imminent dissolution, all the antagonistic attributes of being. We are compelled, then, to end in a dualism whose terms we know perfectly well to be false, but which, being for us the condition of the truth, forces itself irresistibly upon us; we are compelled, in short, to commence, like Descartes and the human race, with the *me*; that is, with spirit.

But, since religions and philosophies, dissolved by analysis, have disappeared in the theory of the absolute, we know no better than before what spirit is, and in this differ from the ancients only in the wealth of language with which we adorn the darkness that envelops us. With this exception, however; that while, to the ancients, order revealed intelligence *outside* of the world, to the people of to-day it seems to reveal it rather *within* the world. Now, whether we place it within or without, from the moment we affirm it on the ground of order, we must admit

it wherever order is manifested, or deny it altogether. There is no more reason for attributing intelligence to the head which produced the "Iliad" than to a mass of matter which crystallizes in octahedrons; and, reciprocally, it is as absurd to refer the system of the world to physical laws, leaving out an ordaining ME, as to attribute the victory of Marengo to strategic combinations, leaving out the first consul. The only distinction that can be made is that, in the latter case, the thinking ME is located in the brain of a Bonaparte, while, in the case of the universe, the ME has no special location, but extends everywhere.

The materialists think that they have easily disposed of their opponents by saying that man, having likened the universe to his body, finishes the comparison by presuming the existence in the universe of a soul similar to that which he supposes to be the principle of his own life and thought; that thus all the arguments in support of the existence of God are reducible to an analogy all the more false because the term of comparison is itself hypothetical.

It is certainly not my intention to defend the old syllogism: Every arrangement implies an ordaining intelligence; there is wonderful order in the world; then the world is the work of an intelligence. This syllogism, discussed so widely since the days of Job and Moses, very far from being a solution, is but the statement of the problem which it assumes to solve. We know perfectly well what order is, but we are absolutely ignorant of the meaning of the words Soul, Spirit, Intelligence: how, then, can we logically reason from the presence of the one to the existence of the other? I reject, then, even when advanced by the most thoroughly informed, the pretended proof of the existence of God drawn from the presence of order in the world; I see in it at most only an equation offered to philosophy. Between the conception of order and the affirmation of spirit there is a deep gulf of metaphysics to be filled up; I am unwilling, I repeat, to take the problem for the demonstration.

But this is not the point which we are now considering. I have tried to show that the human mind was inevitably and irresistibly led to the distinction of being into me and not-me, spirit and matter, soul and body. Now, who does not see that the objection of the materialists proves the very thing it is

intended to deny? Man distinguishing within himself a spiritual principle and a material principle,—what is this but Nature herself, proclaiming by turns her double essence, and bearing testimony to her own laws? And notice the inconsistency of materialism: it denies, and has to deny, that man is free; now, the less liberty man has, the more weight is to be attached to his words, and the greater their claim to be regarded as the expression of truth. When I hear this machine say to me, "I am soul and I am body," though such a revelation astonishes and confounds me, it is invested in my eyes with an authority incomparably greater than that of the materialist who, correcting conscience and Nature, undertakes to make them say, "I am matter and only matter, and intelligence is but the material faculty of knowing."

What would become of this assertion, if, assuming in my turn the offensive, I should demonstrate that belief in the existence of bodies, or, in other words, in the reality of a purely corporeal nature, is untenable? Matter, they say, is impenetrable—Impenetrable by what? I ask. Itself, undoubtedly; for they would not dare to say spirit, since they would therein admit what they wish to set aside. Whereupon I raise this double question: What do you know about it, and what does it signify?

1. Impenetrability, which is pretended to be the definition of matter, is only an hypothesis of careless naturalists, a gross conclusion deduced from a superficial judgment. Experience shows that matter possesses infinite divisibility, infinite expansibility, porosity without assignable limits, and permeability by heat, electricity, and magnetism, together with a power of retaining them indefinitely; affinities, reciprocal influences, and transformations without number: qualities, all of them, hardly compatible with the assumption of an impenetrable *aliquid*. Elasticity, which, better than any other property of matter, could lead, through the idea of spring or resistance, to that of impenetrability, is subject to the control of a thousand circumstances, and depends entirely on molecular attraction: now, what is more irreconcilable with impenetrability than this attraction? Finally, there is a science which might be defined with exactness as the *science of the penetrability of matter*: I mean chemistry. In fact, how does what is called chemical composition differ from

penetration? . . . In short, we know matter only through its forms; of its substance we know nothing. How, then, is it possible to affirm the reality of an invisible, impalpable, incoercible being, ever changing, ever vanishing, impenetrable to thought alone, to which it exhibits only its disguises? Materialist! I permit you to testify to the reality of your sensations; as to what occasions them, all that you can say involves this reciprocity: something (which you call matter) is the occasion of sensations which are felt by another something (which I call spirit).

2. But what, then, is the source of this supposition that matter is impenetrable, which external observation does not justify and which is not true—and what is its meaning?

Here appears the triumph of dualism. Matter is pronounced impenetrable, not, as the materialists and the vulgar fancy, by the testimony of the senses, but by the conscience. The *me*, an incomprehensible nature, feeling itself free, distinct, and permanent, and meeting outside of itself another nature equally incomprehensible, but also distinct and permanent in spite of its metamorphoses, declares, on the strength of the sensations and ideas which this essence suggests to it, that the *not-me* is extended and impenetrable. Impenetrability is a figurative term, an image by which thought, a division of the absolute, pictures to itself material reality, another division of the absolute; but this impenetrability, without which matter disappears, is, in the

* Chemists distinguish between *mixture* and *composition*, just as logicians distinguish between the association of ideas and their synthesis. It is true, nevertheless, that, according to the chemists, composition may be after all but a mixture, or rather an aggregation of atoms, no longer fortuitous, but systematic, the atoms forming different compounds by varying their arrangement. But still this is only an hypothesis, wholly gratuitous; an hypothesis which explains nothing, and has not even the merit of being logical. Why does a purely *numerical* or *geometrical* difference in the composition and form of atoms give rise to *physiological* properties so different? If atoms are indivisible and impenetrable, why does not their association, confined to mechanical effects, leave them unchanged in essence? Where is the relation between the cause supposed and the effect obtained?

We must distrust our intellectual vision: it is with chemical theories as with psychological systems. The mind, in order to account for phenomena, works with atoms, which it does not and can never see, as with the *me*, which it does not perceive: it applies its categories to every thing; that is, it distinguishes, individualizes, concretes, numbers, compares, things which, material or immaterial, are thoroughly identical and indistinguishable. Matter, as well as spirit, plays, as we view it, all sorts of parts; and, as there is nothing arbitrary in its metamorphoses, we build upon them these psychologic and atomic theories, true in so far as they faithfully represent, in terms agreed upon, the series of phenomena, but radically false as soon as they pretend to realize their abstractions and are accepted literally.

last analysis, only a spontaneous judgment of inward sensation, a metaphysical *a priori*, an unverified hypothesis of spirit.

Thus, whether philosophy, after having overthrown theological dogmatism, spiritualizes matter or materializes thought, idealizes being or realizes ideas; or whether, identifying *substance* and *cause*, it everywhere substitutes *FORCE*, phrases, all, which explain and signify nothing,—it always leads us back to this everlasting dualism, and, in summoning us to believe in ourselves, compels us to believe in God, if not in spirits. It is true that, making spirit a part of Nature, in distinction from the ancients, who separated it, philosophy has been led to this famous conclusion, which sums up nearly all the fruit of its researches: In man spirit *knows itself*, while everywhere else it seems *not to know itself*.—"That which is awake in man, which dreams in the animal, and sleeps in the stone," said a philosopher.

Philosophy, then, in its last hour, knows no more than at its birth: as if it had appeared in the world only to verify the words of Socrates, it says to us, wrapping itself solemnly around with its funeral pall, "I know only that I know nothing." What do I say? Philosophy knows to-day that all its judgments rest on two equally false, equally impossible, and yet equally necessary and inevitable hypotheses,—matter and spirit. So that, while in former times religious intolerance and philosophic disputes, spreading darkness everywhere, excused doubt and tempted to libidinous indifference, the triumph of negation on all points no longer permits even this doubt; thought, freed from every barrier, but conquered by its own successes, is forced to affirm what seems to it clearly contradictory and absurd. The savages say that the world is a great fetich watched over by a great manitou. For thirty centuries the poets, legislators, and sages of civilization, handing down from age to age the philosophic lamp, have written nothing more sublime than this profession of faith. And here, at the end of this long conspiracy against God, which has called itself philosophy, emancipated reason concludes with savage reason, The universe is a *not-me*, objectified by a *me*.

Humanity, then, inevitably supposes the existence of God: and if, during the long period which closes with our time, it has believed in the reality of its hypothesis; if it has worshipped the inconceivable object; if, after being apprehended in this act

of faith, it persists knowingly, but no longer voluntarily, in this opinion of a sovereign being which it knows to be only a personification of its own thought; if it is on the point of again beginning its magic invocations,—we must believe that so astonishing an hallucination conceals some mystery, which deserves to be fathomed.

I say hallucination and mystery, but without intending to deny thereby the superhuman content of the God-idea, and without admitting the necessity of a new symbolism,—I mean a new religion. For if it is indisputable that humanity, in affirming God,—or all that is included in the word *me* or *spirit*,—only affirms itself, it is equally undeniable that it affirms itself as something other than its own conception of itself, as all mythologies and theologies show. And since, moreover, this affirmation is incontestable, it depends, without doubt, upon hidden relations, which ought, if possible, to be determined scientifically.

In other words, atheism, sometimes called humanism, true in its critical and negative features, would be, if it stopped at man in his natural condition, if it discarded as an erroneous judgment this first affirmation of humanity, that it is the daughter, emanation, image, reflection, or voice of God,—humanism, I say, if it thus denied its past, would be but one contradiction more. We are forced, then, to undertake the criticism of humanism; that is, to ascertain whether humanity, considered as a whole and throughout all its periods of development, satisfies the Divine idea, after eliminating from the latter the exaggerated and fanciful attributes of God; whether it satisfies the perfection of being; whether it satisfies itself. We are forced, in short, to inquire whether humanity *tends toward* God, according to the ancient dogma, or is itself *becoming* God, as modern philosophers claim. Perhaps we shall find in the end that the two systems, despite their seeming opposition, are both true and essentially identical: in that case, the infallibility of human reason, in its collective manifestations as well as its studied speculations, would be decisively confirmed.—In a word, until we have verified to man the hypothesis of God, there is nothing definitive in the atheistic negation.

It is, then, a scientific, that is, an empirical demonstration of the idea of God, that we need: now, such a demonstration has

never been attempted. Theology dogmatizing on the authority of its myths, philosophy speculating by the aid of categories, God has existed as a *transcendental* conception, incognizable by the reason, and the hypothesis always subsists.

It subsists, I say, this hypothesis, more tenacious, more pitiless than ever. We have reached one of those prophetic epochs when society, scornful of the past and doubtful of the future, now distractedly clings to the present, leaving a few solitary thinkers to establish the new faith; now cries to God from the depths of its enjoyments and asks for a sign of salvation, or seeks in the spectacle of its revolutions, as in the entrails of a victim, the secret of its destiny.

Why need I insist further? The hypothesis of God is allowable, for it forces itself upon every man in spite of himself: no one, then, can take exception to it. He who believes can do no less than grant me the supposition that God exists; he who denies is forced to grant it to me also, since he entertained it before me, every negation implying a previous affirmation; as for him who is in doubt, he needs but to reflect a moment to understand that his doubt necessarily supposes an unknown something, which, sooner or later, he will call God.

But if I possess, through the fact of my thought, the right to suppose God, I must abandon the right to affirm him. In other words, if my hypothesis is irresistible, that, for the present, is all that I can pretend. For to affirm is to determine; now every determination, to be true, must be reached empirically. In fact, whoever says determination, says relation, conditionality, experience. Since, then, the determination of the idea of God must result from an empirical demonstration, we must abstain from every thing which, in the search for this great unknown, not being established by experience, goes beyond the hypothesis, under penalty of relapsing into the contradictions of theology, and consequently arousing anew atheistic dissent.

III.

It remains for me to tell why, in a work on political economy, I have felt it necessary to start with the fundamental hypothesis of all philosophy.

And first, I need the hypothesis of God to establish the authority of social science.—When the astronomer to explain the system of the world, judging solely from appearance, supposes, with the vulgar, the sky arched, the earth flat, the sun much like a football, describing a curve in the air from east to west, he supposes the infallibility of the senses, reserving the right to rectify subsequently, after further observation, the data with which he is obliged to start. Astronomic philosophy, in fact, could not admit *a priori* that the senses deceive us, and that we do not see what we do see: admitting such a principle, what would become of the certainty of astronomy? But the evidence of the senses being able, in certain cases, to rectify and complete itself, the authority of the senses remains unshaken, and astronomy is possible.

So social philosophy does not admit *a priori* that humanity can err or be deceived in its actions: if it should, what would become of the authority of the human race, that is, the authority of reason, synonymous at bottom with the sovereignty of the people? But it thinks that human judgments, always true at the time they are pronounced, can successively complete and throw light on each other, in proportion to the acquisition of ideas, in such a way as to maintain continual harmony between universal reason and individual speculation, and indefinitely extend the sphere of certainty: which is always an affirmation of the authority of human judgments.

Now, the first judgment of the reason, the preamble of every political constitution seeking a sanction and a principle, is necessarily this: *There is a God*; which means that society is governed with design, premeditation, intelligence. This judgment, which excludes chance, is, then, the foundation of the possibility of a social science; and every historical and positive study of social facts, undertaken with a view to amelioration and progress, must suppose, with the people, the existence of God, reserving the right to account for this judgment at a later period.

Thus the history of society is to us but a long determination of the idea of God, a progressive revelation of the destiny of man. And while ancient wisdom made all depend on the arbitrary and fanciful notion of Divinity, oppressing reason and conscience, and arresting progress through fear of an invisible master, the

new philosophy, reversing the method, trampling on the authority of God as well as that of man, and accepting no other yoke than that of fact and evidence, makes all converge toward the theological hypothesis, as toward the last of its problems.

Humanitarian atheism is, therefore, the last step in the moral and intellectual enfranchisement of man, consequently the last phase of philosophy, serving as a pathway to the scientific reconstruction and verification of all the demolished dogmas.

I need the hypothesis of God, not only, as I have just said, to give a meaning to history, but also to legitimate the reforms to be effected, in the name of science, in the State.

Whether we consider Divinity as outside of society, whose movements it governs from on high (a wholly gratuitous and probably illusory opinion); or whether we deem it immanent in society and identical with that impersonal and unconscious reason which, acting instinctively, makes civilization advance (although impersonality and ignorance of self are contrary to the idea of intelligence); or whether, finally, all that is accomplished in society results from the relation of its elements (a system whose whole merit consists in changing an active into a passive, in making intelligence necessity, or, which amounts to the same thing, in taking law for cause),—it always follows that the manifestations of social activity, necessarily appearing to us either as indications of the will of the Supreme Being, or as a sort of language typical of general and impersonal reason, or, finally, as landmarks of necessity, are absolute authority for us. Being connected in time as well as in spirit, the facts accomplished determine and legitimate the facts to be accomplished; science and destiny are in accord; every thing which happens resulting from reason, and, reciprocally, reason judging only from experience of that which happens, science has a right to participate in government, and that which establishes its competency as a counsellor justifies its intervention as a sovereign.

Science, expressed, recognized, and accepted by the voice of all as divine, is queen of the world. Thus, thanks to the hypothesis of God, all conservative or retrogressive opposition, every dilatory plea offered by theology, tradition, or selfishness, finds itself peremptorily and irrevocably set aside.

I need the hypothesis of God to show the tie which unites civilization with Nature.

In fact, this astonishing hypothesis, by which man is assimilated to the absolute, implying identity of the laws of Nature and the laws of reason, enables us to see in human industry the complement of creative action, unites man with the globe which he inhabits, and, in the cultivation of the domain in which Providence has placed us, which thus becomes in part our work, gives us a conception of the principle and end of all things. If, then, humanity is not God, it is a continuation of God; or, if a different phraseology be preferred, that which humanity does to-day by design is the same thing that it began by instinct, and which Nature seems to accomplish by necessity. In all these cases, and whichever opinion we may choose, one thing remains certain: the unity of action and law. Intelligent beings, actors in an intelligently-devised fable, we may fearlessly reason from ourselves to the universe and the eternal; and, when we shall have completed the organization of labor, may say with pride, The creation is explained.

Thus philosophy's field of exploration is fixed; tradition is the starting-point of all speculation as to the future; utopia is for ever exploded; the study of the *me*, transferred from the individual conscience to the manifestations of the social will, acquires the character of objectivity of which it has been hitherto deprived; and, history becoming psychology, theology anthropology, the natural sciences metaphysics, the theory of the reason is deduced no longer from the vacuum of the intellect, but from the innumerable forms of a Nature abundantly and directly observable.

I need the hypothesis of God to prove my good-will towards a multitude of sects, whose opinions I do not share, but whose malice I fear:—theists; I know one who, in the cause of God, would be ready to draw sword, and, like Robespierre, use the guillotine until the last atheist should be destroyed, not dreaming that that atheist would be himself;—mystics, whose party, largely made up of students and women marching under the banner of MM. Lamennais, Quinet, Leroux, and others, has taken for a motto, "Like master, like man;" like God, like people; and, to regulate the wages of the workingman, begins

by restoring religion;—spiritualists, who, should I overlook the rights of spirit, would accuse me of establishing the worship of matter, against which I protest with all the strength of my soul;—sensualists and materialists, to whom the divine dogma is the symbol of constraint and the principle of enslavement of the passions, outside of which, they say, there is for man neither pleasure, nor virtue, nor genius;—eclectics and sceptics, sellers and publishers of all the old philosophies, but not philosophers themselves, united in one vast brotherhood, with approbation and privilege, against whoever thinks, believes, or affirms without their permission;—conservatives finally, retrogressives, egotists, and hypocrites, preaching the love of God by hatred of their neighbor, attributing to liberty the world's misfortunes since the deluge, and scandalizing reason by their foolishness.

Is it possible, however, that they will attack an hypothesis which, far from blaspheming the revered phantoms of faith, aspires only to exhibit them in broad daylight; which, instead of rejecting traditional dogmas and the prejudices of conscience, asks only to verify them; which, while defending itself against exclusive opinions, takes for an axiom the infallibility of reason, and, thanks to this fruitful principle, will doubtless never decide against any of the antagonistic sects? Is it possible that the religious and political conservatives will charge me with disturbing the order of society, when I start with the hypothesis of a sovereign intelligence, the source of every thought of order; that the semi-Christian democrats will curse me as an enemy of God, and consequently a traitor to the republic, when I am seeking for the meaning and content of the idea of God; and that the tradesmen of the university will impute to me the impiety of demonstrating the non-value of their philosophical products, when I am especially maintaining that philosophy should be studied in its object,—that is, in the manifestations of society and Nature?

I need the hypothesis of God to justify my style.

In my ignorance of every thing regarding God, the world, the soul, and destiny; forced to proceed like the materialist,—that is, by observation and experience,—and to conclude in the language of the believer, because there is no other; not knowing whether my formulas, theological in spite of me, would be taken literally

or figuratively; in this perpetual contemplation of God, man, and things, obliged to submit to the synonymy of all the terms included in the three categories of thought, speech, and action, but wishing to affirm nothing on either one side or the other,—rigorous logic demanded that I should suppose, no more, no less, this unknown that is called God. We are full of Divinity, *Jovis omnia plena*; our monuments, our traditions, our laws, our ideas, our languages, and our sciences, all are infected by this indelible superstition outside of which we can neither speak nor act, and without which we do not even think.

Finally, I need the hypothesis of God to explain the publication of these new memoirs.

Our society feels itself big with events, and is anxious about the future: how account for these vague presentiments by the sole aid of a universal reason, immanent if you will, and permanent, but impersonal, and therefore dumb, or by the idea of necessity, if it implies that necessity is self-conscious, and consequently has presentiments? There remains then, once more, an agent or nightmare which weighs upon society, and gives it visions.

Now, when society prophesies, it puts questions in the mouths of some, and answers in the mouths of others. And wise, then, he who can listen and understand; for God himself has spoken, *quia locutus est Deus*.

The Academy of Moral and Political Sciences has proposed the following question:—

“To determine the general facts which govern the relations of profits to wages, and to explain their respective oscillations.”

A few years ago the same Academy asked, “What are the causes of misery?” The nineteenth century has, in fact, but one idea,—equality and reform. But the wind bloweth where it listeth: many began to reflect upon the question, no one answered it. The college of aruspices has, therefore, renewed its question, but in more significant terms. It wishes to know whether order prevails in the workshop; whether wages are equitable; whether liberty and privilege compensate each other justly; whether the idea of value, which controls all the facts of exchange, is, in the forms in which the economists have represented it, sufficiently exact; whether credit protects labor;

whether circulation is regular; whether the burdens of society weigh equally on all, etc.

And, indeed, insufficiency of income being the immediate cause of misery, it is fitting that we should know why, misfortune and malevolence aside, the workingman's income is insufficient. It is still the same question of inequality of fortunes, which has made such a stir for a century past, and which, by a strange fatality, continually reappears in academic programmes, as if there lay the real difficulty of modern times.

Equality, then,—its principle, its means, its obstacles, its theory, the motives of its postponement, the cause of social and providential iniquities,—these the world has got to learn, in spite of the sneers of incredulity.

I know well that the views of the Academy are not thus profound, and that it equals a council of the Church in its horror of novelties; but the more it turns towards the past, the more it reflects the future, and the more, consequently, must we believe in its inspiration: for the true prophets are those who do not understand their utterances. Listen further.

"What," the Academy has asked, "are the most useful applications of the principle of voluntary and private association that we can make for the alleviation of misery?"

And again:—

"To expound the theory and principles of the contract of insurance, to give its history, and to deduce from its rationale and the facts the developments of which this contract is capable, and the various useful applications possible in the present state of commercial and industrial progress."

Publicists admit that insurance, a rudimentary form of commercial solidarity, is an association in things, *societas in re*; that is, a society whose conditions, founded on purely economical relations, escape man's arbitrary dictation. So that a philosophy of insurance or mutual guarantee of security, which shall be deduced from the general theory of real (*in re*) societies, will contain the formula of universal association, in which no member of the Academy believes. And when, writing subject and object in the same point of view, the Academy demands, by the side of a theory of association of interests, a theory of voluntary association, it reveals to us the most perfect form of society, and

thereby affirms all that is most at variance with its convictions. Liberty, equality, solidarity, association! By what inconceivable blunder has so eminently conservative a body offered to the citizens this new programme of the rights of man? It was in this way that Caiaphas prophesied redemption by disowning Jesus Christ.

Upon the first of these questions, forty-five memoirs were addressed to the Academy within two years,—a proof that the subject was marvellously well suited to the state of the public mind. But among so many competitors no one having been deemed worthy of the prize, the Academy has withdrawn the question; alleging as a reason the incapacity of the competitors, but in reality because, the failure of the contest being the sole object that the Academy had in view, it behooved it to declare, without further delay, that the hopes of the friend of association were groundless.

Thus, then, the gentlemen of the Academy disavow, in their session-chamber, their announcements from the tripod! There is nothing in such a contradiction astonishing to me; and may God preserve me from calling it a crime! The ancients believed that revolutions announced their advent by dreadful signs, and that among other prodigies animals spoke. This was a figure, descriptive of those unexpected ideas and strange words which circulate suddenly among the masses at critical moments, and which seem to be entirely without human antecedent, so far removed are they from the sphere of ordinary judgment. At the time in which we live, such a thing could not fail to occur. After having, by a prophetic instinct and a mechanical spontaneity, *pecudesque locuta*, proclaimed association, the gentlemen of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences have returned to their ordinary prudence; and with them custom has conquered inspiration. Let us learn, then, how to distinguish heavenly counsel from the interested judgments of men, and hold it for certain that, in the discourse of sages, that is the most trustworthy to which they have given the least reflection.

Nevertheless the Academy, in breaking so rudely with its intuitions, seems to have felt some remorse. In place of a theory of association in which, after reflection, it no longer believes, it asks for a "Critical examination of Pestalozzi's system of

instruction and education, considered mainly in its relation to the well-being and morality of the poor classes." Who knows? perchance the relation between profits and wages, association, the organization of labor indeed, are to be found at the bottom of a system of instruction. Is not man's life a perpetual apprenticeship? Are not philosophy and religion humanity's education? To organize instruction, then, would be to organize industry and fix the theory of society: the Academy, in its lucid moments, always returns to that.

"What influence," the Academy again asks, "do progress and a desire for material comfort have upon a nation's morality?"

Taken in its most obvious sense, this new question of the Academy is commonplace, and fit at best to exercise a rhetorician's skill. But the Academy, which must continue till the end in its ignorance of the revolutionary significance of its oracles, has drawn aside the curtain in its commentary. What, then, so profound has it discovered in this Epicurean thesis?

"The desire for luxury and its enjoyments," it tells us; "the singular love of it felt by the majority; the tendency of hearts and minds to occupy themselves with it exclusively; the agreement of individuals AND THE STATE in making it the motive and the end of all their projects, all their efforts, and all their sacrifices,—engender general or individual feelings which, beneficent or injurious, become principles of action more potent, perhaps, than any which have heretofore governed men."

Never had moralists a more favorable opportunity to assail the sensualism of the century, the venality of consciences, and the corruption instituted by the government: instead of that, what does the Academy of Moral Sciences do? With the most automatic calmness, it establishes a series in which luxury, so long proscribed by the stoics and ascetics,—those masters of holiness,—must appear in its turn as a principle of conduct as legitimate, as pure, and as grand as all those formerly invoked by religion and philosophy. Determine, it tells us, the motives of action (undoubtedly now old and worn-out) of which LUXURY is historically the providential successor, and, from the results of the former, calculate the effects of the latter. Prove, in short, that Aristippus was only in advance of his century, and that his

system of morality must have its day, as well as that of Zeno and A Kempis.

We are dealing, then, with a society which no longer wishes to be poor; which mocks at every thing that was once dear and sacred to it,—liberty, religion, and glory,—so long as it has not wealth; which, to obtain it, submits to all outrages, and becomes an accomplice in all sorts of cowardly actions: and this burning thirst for pleasure, this irresistible desire to arrive at luxury,—a symptom of a new period in civilization,—is the supreme commandment by virtue of which we are to labor for the abolition of poverty: thus saith the Academy. What becomes, then, of the doctrine of expiation and abstinence, the morality of sacrifice, resignation, and happy moderation? What distrust of the compensation promised in the other life, and what a contradiction of the Gospel! But, above all, what a justification of a government which has adopted as its system the golden key! Why have religious men, Christians, Senecas, given utterance in concert to so many immoral maxims?

The Academy, completing its thought, will reply to us:—

"Show how the progress of criminal justice, in the prosecution and punishment of attacks upon persons and property, follows and marks the ages of civilization from the savage condition up to that of the best-governed nations."

Is it possible that the criminal lawyers in the Academy of Moral Sciences foresaw the conclusion of their premises? The fact whose history is now to be studied, and which the Academy describes by the words "progress of criminal justice," is simply the gradual mitigation which manifests itself, both in the forms of criminal examinations and in the penalties inflicted, in proportion as civilization increases in liberty, light, and wealth. So that, the principle of repressive institutions being the direct opposite of all those on which the welfare of society depends, there is a constant elimination of all parts of the penal system as well as all judicial paraphernalia, and the final inference from this movement is that the guarantee of order lies neither in fear nor punishment; consequently, neither in hell nor religion.

What a subversion of received ideas! What a denial of all that it is the business of the Academy of Moral Sciences to defend! But, if the guarantee of order no longer lies in the fear

of a punishment to be suffered, either in this life or in another, where then are to be found the guarantees protective of persons and property? Or rather, without repressive institutions, what becomes of property? And without property, what becomes of the family?

The Academy, which knows nothing of all these things, replies without agitation:—

“Review the various phases of the organization of the family upon the soil of France from ancient times down to our day.”

Which means: Determine, by the previous progress of family organization, the conditions of the existence of the family in a state of equality of fortunes, voluntary and free association, universal solidarity, material comfort and luxury, and public order without prisons, courts, police, or hangmen.

There will be astonishment, perhaps, at finding that the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, after having, like the boldest innovators, called in question all the principles of social order,—religion, family, property, justice,—has not also proposed this problem: *What is the best form of government?* In fact, government is for society the source of all initiative, every guarantee, every reform. It would be, then, interesting to know whether the government, as constituted by the Charter is adequate to the practical solution of the Academy's questions.

But it would be a misconception of the oracles to imagine that they proceed by induction and analysis; and precisely because the political problem was a condition or corollary of the demonstrations asked for, the Academy could not offer it for competition. Such a conclusion would have opened its eyes, and, without waiting for the memoirs of the competitors, it would have hastened to suppress its entire programme. The Academy has approached the question from above. It has said:—

The works of God are beautiful in their own essence, *justificata in semet ipsa*; they are true, in a word, because they are his. The thoughts of man resemble dense vapors pierced by long and narrow flashes. *What, then, is the truth in relation to us, and what is the character of certainty?*

As if the Academy had said to us: You shall verify the hypothesis of your existence, the hypothesis of the Academy which interrogates you, the hypotheses of time, space, motion, thought,

and the laws of thought. Then you may verify the hypothesis of pauperism, the hypothesis of inequality of conditions, the hypothesis of universal association, the hypothesis of happiness, the hypotheses of monarchy and republicanism, the hypothesis of Providence!

A complete criticism of God and humanity.

I point to the programme of the honorable society: it is not I who have fixed the conditions of my task, it is the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences. Now, how can I satisfy these conditions, if I am not myself endowed with infallibility; in a word, if I am not God or divine? The Academy admits, then, that divinity and humanity are identical, or at least correlative; but the question now is in what consists this correlation: such is the meaning of the problem of certainty, such is the object of social philosophy.

Thus, then, in the name of the society that God inspires, an Academy questions.

In the name of the same society, I am one of the prophets who attempt to answer. The task is an immense one, and I do not promise to accomplish it: I will go as far as God shall give me strength. But, whatever I may say, it does not come from me: the thought which inspires my pen is not personal, and nothing that I write can be attributed to me. I shall give the facts as I have seen them; I shall judge them by what I shall have said; I shall call every thing by its strongest name, and no one will take offence. I shall inquire freely, and by the rules of divination which I have learned, into the meaning of the divine purpose which is now expressing itself through the eloquent lips of sages and the inarticulate wailings of the people: and, though I should deny all the prerogatives guaranteed by our Constitution, I shall not be factious. I shall point my finger whither an invisible influence is pushing us; and neither my action nor my words shall be irritating. I shall stir up the cloud, and, though I should cause it to launch the thunderbolt, I should be innocent. In this solemn investigation to which the Academy invites me, I have more than the right to tell the truth,—I have the right to say what I think: may my thought, my words, and the truth be but one and the same thing!

And you, reader,—for without a reader there is no writer,—

you are half of my work. Without you, I am only sounding brass; with the aid of your attention, I will speak marvels. Do you see this passing whirlwind called SOCIETY, from which burst forth, with startling brilliancy, lightnings, thunders, and voices? I wish to cause you to place your finger on the hidden springs which move it; but to that end you must reduce yourself at my command to a state of pure intelligence. The eyes of love and pleasure are powerless to recognize beauty in a skeleton, harmony in naked viscera, life in dark and coagulated blood: consequently the secrets of the social organism are a sealed letter to the man whose brain is beclouded by passion and prejudice. Such sublimities are unattainable except by cold and silent contemplation. Suffer me, then, before revealing to your eyes the leaves of the book of life, to prepare your soul by this sceptical purification which the great teachers of the people,—Socrates, Jesus Christ, St. Paul, St. Rémi, Bacon, Descartes, Galileo, Kant, etc.,—have always claimed of their disciples.

Whoever you may be, clad in the rags of misery or decked in the sumptuous vestments of luxury, I restore you to that state of luminous nudity which neither the fumes of wealth nor the poisons of envious poverty dim. How persuade the rich that the difference of conditions arises from an error in the accounts; and how can the poor, in their beggary, conceive that the proprietor possesses in good faith? To investigate the sufferings of the laborer is to the idler the most intolerable of amusements; just as to do justice to the fortunate is to the miserable the bitterest of draughts.

You occupy a high position: I strip you of it; there you are, free. There is too much optimism beneath this official costume, too much subordination, too much idleness. Science demands an insurrection of thought: now, the thought of an official is his salary.

Your mistress, beautiful, passionate, artistic, is, I like to believe, possessed only by you. That is, your soul, your spirit, your conscience, have passed into the most charming object of luxury that nature and art have produced for the eternal torment of fascinated mortals. I separate you from this divine half of yourself: at the present day it is too much to wish for justice and at the same time to love a woman. To think with

grandeur and clearness, man must remove the lining of his nature and hold to his masculine hypostasis. Besides, in the state in which I have put you, your lover would no longer know you: remember the wife of Job.

What is your religion? . . . Forget your faith, and, through wisdom, become an atheist.—What! you say; an atheist in spite of our hypothesis!--No, but because of our hypothesis. One's thought must have been raised above divine things for a long time to be entitled to suppose a personality beyond man, a life beyond this life. For the rest, have no fears for your salvation. God is not angry with those who are led by reason to deny him, any more than he is anxious for those who are led by faith to worship him; and, in the state of your conscience, the surest course for you is to think nothing about him. Do you not see that it is with religion as with governments, the most perfect of which would be the denial of all? Then let no political or religious fancy hold your soul captive; in this way only can you now keep from being either a dupe or a renegade. Ah! said I in the days of my enthusiastic youth, shall I not hear the tolling for the second vespers of the republic, and our priests, dressed in white tunics, singing after the Doric fashion the returning hymn: *Change, ô Dieu, notre servitude, comme le vent du désert en un souffle rafraîchissant!* . . . But I have despaired of republicans, and no longer know either religion or priests.

I should like also, in order to thoroughly secure your judgment, dear reader, to render your soul insensible to pity, superior to virtue, indifferent to happiness. But that would be too much to expect of a neophyte. Remember only, and never forget, that pity, happiness, and virtue, like country, religion, and love, are masks. . . .