

A NEW PROUDHON LIBRARY



THE PHILOSOPHY OF
PROGRESS

— PROGRAM —



PRINCIPLES OF THE
PHILOSOPHY OF PROGRESS

BY

PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON.



WORKING TRANSLATION BY
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FROM THE 1868 EDITION,



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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The WORKING TRANSLATIONS presented here are part of an attempt to establish an edition of the major works of PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON. The goal is not simply to provide individual translations, but to provide a collection of translations that work well together to ease the task of the student of Proudhon's thought. A later stage will involve considerable annotation, including some attempts to connect the various works, but the connections have to be discovered before they can be noted, so it has been necessary simply to prepare as great a volume of relatively clean draft translations as possible as quickly as possible. At present, the raw materials for the NEW PROUDHON LIBRARY project amount to well over a million words of new translation, together with the drafts that I have accumulated since starting to translate Proudhon's works in 2006.

The present volume, THE PHILOSOPHY OF PROGRESS, was intended to form a philosophical summary of Proudhon's work and method in 1851. It is arguably one of his most accomplished works, exploring the key concepts in Proudhon's intellectual toolkit with considerable clarity and brevity, while also providing some fine rhetorical flashes. It is also useful as something like a rough draft of the sections of JUSTICE IN THE REVOLUTION AND IN THE CHURCH dedicated to general philosophical and social-scientific theory, particularly the Program with which Proudhon began the 1860 revision and expansion of that work.

Written in the prison of Sainte-Pélagie, in response to a request from a journalist engaged in a study of socialism, the work was not published as intended in 1851 because of the coup d'état of December 2, but did eventually see revision and publication in 1853. The extent of the revision is still unclear to me. There are two related manuscripts in the collection at Besançon, which will have to be more fully explored at a later date. I have included draft translations of two letters from M. Romain-Cornut, whose request for clarification of Proudhon's system inspired the work.

I have paired the text with another, drawn from the *Economy* manuscripts written in roughly the same period. Despite the similarities in titles, this examination of the "Principles of the Philosophy of Progress" is focused more directly on the concept of *collective force*, which played such an important role in Proudhon's social science, but readers are encouraged to treat the two texts as part of the same work of clarification. In addition, I have added one more short text, "New Propositions Demonstrated In The Practice Of Revolutions," which presents another kind of summary from the same period and set of manuscripts.

— Shawn P. Wilbur

December 9, 2023.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF
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FOREWARD.

France has exhausted the principles that once sustained it. Its conscience is empty, just like its reason. All the famous writers that it has produced in the last half-century, — the de Maistres, the Chateaubriands, the Lamennais, the de Bonalds, the Cousins, the Guizots, the Lamartines, the Saint-Simons, the Michelets, Catholics, eclectics, economists, socialists and members of parliament, — have not ceased to predict that moral collapse which, thanks to God's mercy, man's foolishness and the necessity of things, has finally arrived. The philosophers of Germany have echoed the prophets of France, so that finally the destiny of our homeland has become common to all the old world; for it is written that as French society is, so shall the human race become.

— The Church, which we once boasted was the firstborn, is no longer anything but an institution of convenience for us, protected more by the police than by sympathy. Take away the secular arm and the State subsidy, and what would become of that Gallic Church, the last fortress of Christendom, now fallen to the ultramontanes, the glory of which made Bossuet tremble?...

A man, after having read the profession of faith of the vicar of Savoy, the sermons of Robespierre, the Catechism of the freemasons, the *Paroles d'un Croyant*, the *Lettres sur la Religion* of M. Enfantin, the *Histoire de la Révolution* of M. Bûchez, and the preamble of the Constitution of 1848, might say to himself: This country has a need for church-wardenships that will be satisfied at any price. Bring back the Jesuits!—That is why we are still, after February, of the religion of our fathers... That makes you murmur: it is repugnant to you that the religion of thirty millions of souls, a thing so holy, remains at the discretion of a head of State, himself perfectly disinterested in the question. What could you have done better? I'll give you a hundred guesses.

The ancient monarchy could compare itself to a marriage contracted under the regime of joint property, which, because of disagreement between the couple, has been converted into paraphernal marriage. It was thought that if the husband was made the simple administrator of the wife's goods, the harmony would be perfect and imperturbable between them. Every year, with great pomp, the king came to present his accounts to the nation, which, for its part, through its representatives, gave quittance to the king. From that ceremonious and solemn meeting was born, in the natural way, the Law, the third person of the constitutional trinity. But, whatever precautions were taken, the dialogue constantly ended in dispute. — That's not it, the man doggedly insists. Peace can only exist in the household if the wife obeys without speaking, and the husband speaks by signs. And besides, today it is really just a matter of negotiation!... Now we are married, as they say in the suburbs, in the *thirteenth*, morganatically.

Democracy, as it was formulated by the acts of 1793 and of 1848, has

succumbed to the logic of its application. Who would dare to affirm today, in the sense of the *Réforme*, popular sovereignty, universal and direct suffrage? Seven times in eight years the people have been called upon to manifest their will, to act as sovereign; seven times they have responded, like Thiers: *The people reign and do not govern!*

The Bourgeoisie! What did they demand in '89? Sieyès has said it: *Everything!* They didn't try to hide it. Once the aristocracy was dispossessed and the national property put up for sale, the bourgeoisie cried that the revolution was accomplished, that there was only anarchy beyond. They have favored every traitorous government, betraying order in the very act of preserving and establishing it... What has it demanded since 1830? Grants, awards, positions, monopolies, privileges, bonus shares, concessions, canals, mines and railroads, which is to say, still and always: EVERYTHING. Whatever government is given to it, monarchy, republic or empire, it takes hold of with both hands. Without it, the people would not have the *Right to Work*, invoked for the first time by Malouet, a bourgeois of '89. To better take hold of everything, the bourgeoisie takes credit for a socialist idea, forms in companies, places itself under the patronage of the State, which it makes its organizer, contractor and provider. As for producing itself, by labor and genius, agricultural, mercantile or industrial conquest, it no longer remembers how. To that degenerate bourgeoisie, the least enterprise seems a revolution. To flatten a molehill, it would borrow the hoe from the State. Only the rate of its unearned income does not frighten it. Income! That is its *Positivism*: it invented it before M. Comte.

The Bourgeoisie is sick with *gras-fondu*: as an institution, it has ceased to exist in the political and social orders. That word, which no one hears anymore, has been replaced by *capital*, a term of avarice, and in opposition to capital, we have a term of envy, the *salarial*. The *salarial* is the revolutionary level, invented by *capital*. These two watch-words have entered into the language of the people. That is why nothing is accomplished! Capital, like wages, is from now on at the discretion of the prince; and now that the prince borrows all stability from the people, there is nothing stable, neither religion, nor government, nor labor, nor property, nor confidence.

Thanks to the modern eclectics, we have no philosophy. Thanks to the novelists and the romantics, we are at the end of literature. The dancers have put us off statuary, and the milliners off painting. Nowadays, in the homeland of taste, we make books, paintings, marble statues, the way we make brass decorations or armchairs: articles from Paris, for trans-Atlantic export.

While stockjobbing, organized with privilege, justifies the theory of Malthus and Dupin, and makes us doubt more and more the reality of an economic science, the central prerogative, always invasive, crushes the institutions, unceasingly undermines, modifies and repeals a system of laws that have lasted hardly fifty years! Justice, blind by trade, knows nothing of what happens at the Bourse, and, if she knew, could do nothing. While wild boars and bears devastate

the fields of the nation, she chases toads and lizards. Property, more inept still, applauds despotism and, saved from insults from below, believes that no decree from on high can await it. Ha, ha! You have crushed anarchy; you will have the State in all its glory.

Struck to the heart, the old dynastic parties have lost, along with an understanding of facts, an awareness of their position: so annoyed by the coup of December 2 that they regret not having made it themselves. The same frenzy of absolutism possesses them: do they believe, by this trade-jealousy, to inspire in the people an envy of the “haves”?

What! Bourbon, eldest son of France, you still harbor a grudge against the Revolution! You have not been able to reconcile yourself with ‘89! The brave bourgeoisie makes you afraid: Mounier seems to you a red, Mirabeau a terrorist, Chateaubriand an atheist! As hostile to the charter as your grandfather, it is still from the *lit de justice* of June 23, 1789 that you draw hope for a third restoration! You know, however, that your sire, Henri IV, became king of France for a sally: *Paris is well worth a mass*, he said. He thought that much of the preaching. Do you not believe that Paris is also well worth liberty?...

And you, gentlemen of Orleans, who should have been for France, according to the phrase of Lafayette, *the best of republics*; you, whom alone the bourgeois will not restore, have you not a single word for the poor laborer? Socialism was born under your father: the old king would have been only too happy, if he had thrown to the devil the 150 million for his fortresses! Is your title also at odds with our aspirations? Listen to the popular bid: *Twenty-five million!* Are you not humbled at all by this?

Let us not speak of the republicans. We know — alas! — that adversity has not discouraged their respect for right, and that there will never have been anything among them but lost children who take for their rallying cry *dictatorship*, with Pompey, instead of Caesar, for dictator.

France believes only in force, obeys only instincts. It has no more indignation; it seems to find it good not to think. With such a people, such a government! The government, which no inspiration from the country illuminates, does not reflect any idea back to the country. It advances as the spiritualists’ tables turn, without visible impulsion: one can define it as a spontaneity. Thus it is seen that after the great crises, the horror of discussions and systems becomes such that the governed and the governing, the vanquished parties and the vanquishing, everyone, again and again, close their eyes and cover their ears at the mere appearance of an idea. Superstition and suicide: these two words summarize the moral and intellectual state of the masses. The direction of business is in the hands of the practitioners and the *men of action*; hold back once more the ideologues! One speaks of the isolation of the present power in the midst of silent populations: the fact is that the populations have nothing to say to power. They return to it its place in the heavens; they believe in its vocation, in its predestination, just as they believe in themselves. Let it speak and its word

will be taken for law. *Ita jus esto!* said the Latin plebs. The revolution protects its elect: that is the truth about the communications between the country and the government. Will the dawn arrive soon? We know nothing of it, but we do not doubt it.

Foreign policy is like domestic opinion. It seeks itself, awaiting the stroke of destiny, writing notes that would be called lacking in good faith, if they were not totally without sense. The signatory powers of the treaty of Westphalia and of the Holy Alliance no longer believe in European equilibrium. Against the west in revolution, they invoke oriental barbarism, the war of the races, the absorption of nationalities. No more Poland! No more Italy! No more Hungary! Soon, no more Turkey! Haven't they said in a whisper: No more France! Oh, tocsin of 92! .. Diplomacy goes like speculation and the season. Encouraged by the rain, the czar makes a gesture at the emperor, who refuses it: fire mounts to the face of the soldier. But he, eye fixed on the hand of the Bourse, perhaps he waits for the hour to sound on the chauvinism of the bourgeois.

The papacy, however, believes itself returned to its good old days,—not to the days of Leo X, but to those of Innocent III. It dreams of inquisition and crusade. The expedition of Rome against the democrats is not enough for it, it requires an expedition to Jerusalem against the Muslims and the Greeks. It is for this reason that it fans, like a flame, the question of the holy sites: *Forward, Gaulois and Francs!* We would not be surprised if this race of fighters began to shout, as in the past: *God wills it!* Distribute to them, Holy Father, your scapulars and your rosaries: they will not bring back relics to you.

There reigns over all of Europe a solemn shadow, like the darkness with which the oracles were surrounded, in the depths of their oak woods and in their caves. Watch out, Napoleon! Prepare yourselves, Guillaume, Ferdinand, Nicolas, and the whole company of the crowned! And you, popes and pontiffs, prepare your *Kyrie eleison* and your *Requiem*. For the spirit of the nations no longer inhabits the rostrums; it has left the mouth of the orator and the pen of the writer. It marches with the soldier, carried like a glint at the point of his bayonet.

However, it is certain that the French speech, ushered in by the old monarchy, cannot perish, any more than the nation can subsist without unity and without right.

It is certain that the democracy, which is nothing else, after all, than the party of movement and liberty, cannot be erased from history for the aberrations and naivety of 1848.

It is certain that the bourgeoisie have a political and social mission to fulfill toward the proletariat. Would you like it better, leaving to Caesar the task of nourishing the electors of Caesar, to eternalize by his egoism the power of a retrograde multitude, and destitute the countries of their liberties?

It is certain, finally, that Europe is a federation of states rendered solidary by their interests, and that in that federation, inevitably brought about by the development of commerce and industry, the priority and predominance of

initiative belongs to the west. That predominance,—obtained by Louis XIV and Napoleon, as long as they acted, the first in the name of the principle of nationalities posited by Henri IV and Richelieu, the second in the name of the French Revolution, in the interest of our preservation, much more than that of our glory, — commands us to seize it once again. Should we, to this end, proceed by the road of conquest or that of influence? Should the head of the French state be the president of the European republic, or do you prefer to allow him to pursue the chance to be its monarch, at the risk of a third invasion and the rending of the homeland?...

What am I saying? If there is one thing obvious to every observer, it is that France profits at this moment only by the very ideas that it has proscribed; it is that modern civilization, boiling with traditions and examples, is irrevocably committed to the path of revolution, where neither the historical precedents, nor the written law, nor the established faith can guide it any longer.

Thus it is necessary that royalists and democrats, bourgeois and proletarians, French, Germans and Slavs, set themselves to seek the unknown principles that govern them. It is necessary to substitute for the empirical formulas of 1648, 1789, 1814 and 1848, an idea, *prior and superior*, which would have nothing to fear from diplomatic and parliamentary sophisms, bourgeois failures and plebeian hallucinations. It is necessary, humanity aspiring to know and not being able to believe, to determine its route *a priori*, to write history before the facts are accomplished! Do we want to be governed by science or abandoned to fate?

Every era is ruled by an idea, which is expressed in a literature, developed in a philosophy, and embodied, if need be, in a government. There was, in the secret thought of 1848, as in that of 1793, 1814 and 1830, the stuff of a democracy, of a dynasty perhaps: that thought has been spurned... like a cornerstone cut by bad masons. We will not cease to reproduce it, and whoever will be the standard-bearer of French destinies, prince or tribune, we proclaim it, with a growing faith and energy: *It is by this sign that you will overcome!*

I am asked: What do you publish about the present situation?

Here is the situation: our task is to face up, by reflection, to the necessity of things; it is to begin again our social and intellectual education; and as a party founded on the very nature of the human mind cannot perish, it is to give to democracy the idea and the flag that it lacks.

Up to the present, the democracy has followed the forms of monarchic government, monarchic politics and monarchic economics. This is why the democracy has always been only a fiction, incapable of constituting itself. It is time that it learns to think for itself; that it posits the principle that is proper to it, and by affirming itself in a positive manner, carries to completion the system of social ideas.

The two letters that you are going to read were written at the end of 1851. They should have appeared in *La Presse*, in response to the questions of a learned critic, M. ROMAIN-CORNUT, but the coup of December 2 occurred.—They can

be regarded as the author's philosophical and social profession of faith.

Nothing persists, said the ancient sages: *everything changes, everything flows, everything becomes*; consequently, everything remains and everything is connected; by further consequence the entire universe is opposition, balance, equilibrium. There is nothing, neither outside nor inside, apart from that eternal dance; and the rhythm that commands it, pure form of existences, the supreme idea to which any reality can respond, is the highest conception that reason can attain.

How then are things connected and engendered? How are beings produced and how do they disappear? How is society and nature transformed? This is the sole object of science.

The notion of Progress, carried into all spheres of consciousness and understanding, becoming the basis of practical and speculative reason, must renew the entire system of human knowledge, purge the mind of its last prejudices, replace the constitutions and catechisms in social relations, teach to man all that he can legitimately know, do, hope and fear: the value of his ideas, the definition of his rights, the rule of his actions, the purpose of his existence...

The theory of Progress is the railway of liberty.

Before publishing, with the procession of proofs that it requires, the ensemble of our views on these high questions, we have thought it necessary to consult the public and our friends on the sequence to give to our researches. We dare to hope that criticism will not be lacking for this first sample: we will be happy if, informed by salutary advice, we are able to lift a corner of the veil that steals the light from us!...

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PROGRESS

Usus et impigra simul riperimentia mentis
Paulatim docuit pedelentim progredientes.

LUCRETIUS, *De naturâ rerum*, lib v.

FIRST LETTER

OF THE IDEA OF PROGRESS

Sainte-Pélagie, November 26, 1851.

MONSIEUR,

Before reporting to the public on my various publications, you wish, for greater exactness, to ask me how I envision the whole, how I understand the unity and the connections.

This desire on your part, monsieur, could not be more legitimate, and the question is as just as it is fair. There is no doctrine where there is no unity, and I would not merit an hour of investigation, as a thinker or as a revolutionary, if there was not something in the multitude of propositions, which are sometimes very disparate, which I have by turns sustained and denied, something which connects them and forms from them a body of doctrine. In times past, one asked a man, wandering far from his home: What is your God? What is your religion?... It is the least that one could demand of a newcomer, to know what, in the last instance, is his principle.

I do not know how to thank you enough, sir, for that high impartiality, for that good faith in critique, which makes you seek before everything else, not the weakness of the writer, — it is only too obvious, — but his true thought, the exact value of his assertions. In all judicial operations it is necessary, before pronouncing the sentence, to listen to the defendant: the most just judgment is that which results from the testimony and confessions of the accused.

I am going, sir, to try to satisfy your demand, or, rather, I am going to give myself up, bound hands and feet, to your justice, by presenting to you here, not a defense, but a general confession. Take me then, if you can, by my testimony. I will not have the right to appeal your sentence.

That which dominates all my studies, its principle and aim, its summit and base, in a word, its reason; that which gives the key to all my controversies, all my disquisitions, all my lapses; that which constitutes, finally, my originality as a thinker, if I may claim such, is that I affirm, resolutely and irrevocably, in all and everywhere, *Progress*, and that I deny, no less resolutely, the *Absolute*.

All that I have ever written, all that I have denied, affirmed, attacked, and combated, I have written, I have denied or affirmed in the name of one single idea: Progress. My adversaries, on the contrary—and you will soon see if they are numerous—are all partisans of the absolute, *in omni génère, casu et numero*, as Sganarelle said.

What then is Progress?—For nearly a century everyone has talked about it, without Progress, as a doctrine, having advanced a step. The word is mouthed: the theory is still at the point where Lessing left it.¹

¹ The idea of Progress is not new. It had not escaped the ancients. (See *de l'Idée du Progrès*, by JAVERY, 1 vol. in-8", Orléans, 1850.) Plato and the stoics, Aristotle, Cicero and a crowd of others, not counting the poets and mythologists, clearly understood it. Among the moderns, it was expressed by Pascal and sung, as it were, by Bossuet, in his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, composed in the imitation of Daniel and de Florus. It was reproduced, with new force, by Lessing, served as motto for the sect of the Illuminati of Weisshaupt, and comprised, in the epoch of the French Revolution, the originality of Condorcet. But it is above all in our century that it has been posited with brilliance. All the socialistic schools have invoked it as the principle of their critique, and up to a certain point have made it a part of their systems. We know the historical division of Saint-Simon: *Theocracy, Feudalism* or governmentalism, *Industry*;—that of August Comte: *Religion, Metaphysics* or philosophy, and *Positivism*;—that of Fourier: *Edenism, Savagery, Patriarchy, Barbary, Civilization, Guarantism, Harmony*. Progress has served Pierre Leroux to rejuvenate the dogma of metempsychosis and, an even stranger thing, Bûchez believes he has found there the last word of Catholicism. It would be useless to enumerate, not just all the writers, but all the theories, all the sects and schools prevailed over by the idea of Progress. Democracy in its turn has taken hold of it, without suspecting that such an acquisition was as incompatible with its official doctrines as with theology itself. We have not forgotten the *Revue du Progrès*, produced by Louis Blanc until around 1840. Very recently, another democratic writer, Eugène Pelletan, has taken it for the subject of a publication that lacks, it is said, neither philosophy nor interest. Under the name of *Absolute Liberty*, it is still Progress that is affirmed by the editor in chief of *la Presse*, M. de Girardin. Finally, there are none even among our most bitter conservatives who do not claim Progress: though in their language, Progress, opposed to the Revolution, indicates a movement so slow that it is the equivalent of stasis.

Despite all these studies, it can be said that within philosophy Progress remains in the state of a simple phenomenon: as a principle, it has not entered into the speculation. It is still neither a truth nor a mere error. As long as it had been conceived as the very being of beings, we had hardly seen there anything but an accident of creation or a march of society towards a culminating and definitive state, which each had tried to predict or describe, according to his individual aspirations, in the fashion of the legislators and utopians in all eras.

What is the Absolute, or, to better designate it, *Absolutism*? — Everyone repudiates it, nobody wants it anymore; and yet everyone is Christian, protestant, Jew or atheist, monarchist or democrat, communist or Malthusian: everyone, blaspheming against Progress, is allied to the Absolute.

If, then, I could once put my finger on the opposition that I make between these two ideas, and explain what I mean by Progress and what I consider Absolute, I would have given you the principle, secret and key to all my polemics. You would possess the logical link between all of my ideas and you could, with that notion alone, serving for you as an infallible criterion with regard to me, not only estimate the ensemble of my publications, but forecast and signal in advance the propositions that sooner or later I must affirm or deny, the doctrines of which I will have to make myself the defender or adversary. You would be able, I say, to evaluate and judge all my theses by what I have said and by what I do not know. You would know me, *intus et in cute*, such as I am, such as I have been all my life, and such as I would find myself in a thousand years, if I could live a thousand years: the man whose thought always advances, whose program will never be finished. And at whatever moment in my career you would come to know me, whatever conclusion you could come to regarding me, you would always have either to absolve me in the name of Progress, or to condemn me in the name of the Absolute.

Progress, in the purest sense of the word, which is the least empirical, is the movement of the idea, *processus*; it is innate, spontaneous and essential movement, uncontrollable and indestructible, which is to the mind what gravity is to matter, (and I suppose with the vulgar that mind and matter, leaving aside movement, are something), and which manifests itself principally in the march of societies, in history.

From this it follows that, the essence of mind being movement, truth, — which is to say reality, as much in nature as in civilization, — is essentially *historical*, subject to progressions, conversions, evolutions and metamorphoses. There is nothing fixed and eternal but the very *laws* of movement, the study of which forms the object of logic and mathematics.

The vulgar, by which I mean the majority of the learned as well as the ignorant, understand Progress in an entirely utilitarian and material sense. The accumulation of discoveries, the multiplication of machines, the increase in general well-being, all by the greatest extension of education and improvement of methods; in short, the augmentation of material and moral wealth, the participation of an always greater number of men in the pleasures of fortune and of the mind: such is for them, more or less, Progress. Certainly, Progress is this as well, and the progressive philosophy would be short-sighted and bear little fruit, if in its speculations it began by putting aside the *physical, moral and intellectual improvement of the most numerous and poorest class*, as Saint-Simon's formulas said. But all of that only gives us a restricted expression of Progress, an image, a symbol, (how shall I say it?) a product: philosophically,

such a notion of Progress is without value.

Progress, once more, is the affirmation of universal movement, consequently the negation every immutable form and formula, of every doctrine of eternity, permanence, impeccability, etc., applied to any being whatever; it is the negation of every permanent order, even that of the universe, and of every subject or object, empirical or transcendental, which does not change.

The Absolute, or absolutism, is, on the contrary, the affirmation of all that Progress denies, the negation of all that it affirms. It is the study, in nature, society, religion, politics, morals, etc., of the eternal, the immutable, the perfect, the definitive, the unconvertible, the undivided; it is, to use a phrase made famous in our parliamentary debates, in all and everywhere, the *status quo*.²

Descartes, reasoning unconsciously according to the prejudices of the old metaphysics, and seeking an unshakable foundation for philosophy, an *aliquid inconcussum*, as it was said, imagined that he had found it in the self, and posited this principle: *I think, therefore I am; Cogito, ergo sum*. Descartes did not realize that his base, supposedly immobile, was mobility itself. *Cogito, I think* — these words express movement; and the conclusion, according to the original sense of the verb *to be, sum, ειναι, ου πιν, (haiah)*, is again movement. He should have said: *Moveor, ergo fio, I move, therefore I become!*

From that double and contradictory definition of progress and the absolute is first deduced, as a corollary, a proposition quite strange to our minds, which have been shaped for so long by absolutism: it is that the truth in all things, the real, the positive, the practicable, is what changes, or at least is susceptible to progression, conciliation, transformation; while the false, the fictive, the impossible, the abstract, is everything that presents itself as fixed, entire, complete, unalterable, unfailing, not susceptible to modification, conversion, augmentation or diminution, resistant as a consequence to all superior combination, to all synthesis.

So the notion of Progress is provided to us immediately and before all experience, not as what one calls a criterion, but, as Bossuet says, as a favorable prejudice, by means of which it is possible to distinguish, in practice, that which it may be useful to undertake and pursue, from that which may become

² Why is despotic government also called *absolute*? It is not only because the prince or despot puts his will above the will of the nation, his good pleasure in the place of the law.

Personality and arbitrariness in power are only a consequence of absolutism. Government is called absolute, first because it is in its nature to concentrate, either in a single man, in a committee or in an assembly, a multiplicity of attributions, the essence of which is to be separated or seriated, according to a logical *deduction*; in the second place, because once that concentration is carried out, all movement or Progress becomes impossible in the State, and thus in the nation. Are the kings not called the representatives of God?... It is because they affect, like that alleged absolute being, universality, eternity and immutability. — The people, on the contrary, all division and movement, are the incarnation of Progress. This is why democracy is averse to authority: it returns to it only by delegation, a middle term between liberty and absolutism.

dangerous and deadly, — an important thing for the government of the State and of commerce.

Indeed, among the many projects of amelioration and reform that are produced daily in society, it is unquestionable that some are found useful and desirable, while others are not. Now, before experience has decided, how can one recognize, a priori, the better from the worse, the practical thing from the false speculation? How do you choose, for example, between property and communism, federalism and centralization, direct government by the people and dictatorship, universal suffrage and divine right?... These questions are all the more difficult since there is no lack of examples of legislators and of societies that have taken for a rule one or the other of these principles, and since all the contraries find their justification equally in history.

For me, the response is simple. All ideas are false, that is to say contradictory and irrational, if one takes them in an exclusive and absolute sense, or if one allows oneself to be carried away by that sense; all are true, susceptible to realization and use, if one takes them together with others, or in evolution.

Thus, whether you take for the dominant law of the Republic, either property, like the Romans, or communism, like Lycurgus, or centralization, like Richelieu, or universal suffrage, like Rousseau, — whatever principle you choose, since in your thought it takes precedence over all the others, — your system is erroneous. There is a fatal tendency to absorption, to purification, exclusion, stasis, leading to ruin. There is not a revolution in human history that could not be easily explained by this.

On the contrary, if you admit in principle that every realization, in society and in nature, results from the combination of opposed elements and their movement, your course is plotted: every proposition that aims, either to advance an overdue idea or to procure a more intimate combination, a superior agreement, is advantageous for you, and is true. It is in-progress.

For example, moral philosophy and the experience of societies have not pronounced in a definitive manner on the question of whether or not, in a perfected legislation, divorce is allowed. One never fails to cite in this connection the examples of the Romans, the Greeks, and the Orientals, the sentiments of the Greek Church and the Reformed Church, the authority of Moses and of Jesus Christ himself. Before that mass of testimonies, one asks what the opinion of France, and of other countries ruled by catholic discipline, matters. — I admit, for myself, that I am not much moved by that argumentation, which it would be as easy to make serve in the defense of polygamy, indeed even of promiscuity. The ancient socialists, like several among the moderns, did not abstain from this. I do not ask myself what has been in past centuries, and what is still in most nations, the state of woman, in order to deduce by comparison what it would be suitable to bring about among us; I seek that which is on its way to becoming. Is the tendency to dissolution or to indissolubility? That is the question for me. Now, it appears obvious to me, independent of considerations of domestic

interests, morals, dignity, justice, even happiness, that one can assert here that Latin monogamy, sustained and ennobled by Catholicism, shows a triumphant tendency to indissolubility; it appears to me that the Greek church has remained stationary on this point, that the Protestant church has been retrograde, and that the French code, with its exceptions for nullity, is still the most advanced expression of Progress. Let us add that the question of divorce, resolved in the affirmative, would imply a similar retrogradation of the whole political and social order, since at the end of the question of divorce there is another question of inequality, as one has seen from the Saint-Simonian theory. It is this that I call a *favorable prejudice*; since, for me, to ask if we will introduce divorce into our laws is to ask implicitly if we will return to feudalism by way of capitalism, if government will be despotic or liberal, in short, if we will be progressive or reactionary.

Such is then, in my opinion, the rule of our conduct and our judgments: there are degrees to existence, to truth and to the good, and the utmost is nothing other than the march of being, the agreement between the largest number of terms, while pure unity and stasis is equivalent to nothingness; it is that every idea, every doctrine that secretly aspires to prepotency and immutability, which aims to eternalize itself, which flatters itself that it gives the last formula of liberty and reason, which consequently conceals, in the folds of its dialectic, exclusion and intolerance; which claims to be true in itself, unalloyed, absolute, eternal, in the manner of a religion, and without consideration for any other; that idea, which denies the movement of mind and the classification of things, is false and fatal, and more, it is incapable of being constituted in reality. This is why the Christian church, founded on an allegedly divine and immutable order, has never been able to establish itself in the strictness of its principle; why the monarchic charters, always leaving too much latitude to innovation and liberty, are always insufficient; why, on the contrary, the Constitution of 1848, in spite of the drawbacks with which it abounds, is still the best and truest of all the political constitutions. While the others obstinately posit themselves in the Absolute, only the Constitution of 1848 has proclaimed its own revision, its perpetual reformability.⁵

With this understood, and the notion of Progress or universal movement introduced into the understanding, admitted into the republic of ideas, facing its antagonist the Absolute, everything changes in appearance for the philosopher. The world of mind, like that of nature, seems turned on its head: logic and metaphysics, religion, politics, economics, jurisprudence, morals, and art all appear with a new physiognomy, revolutionized from top to bottom. What the mind had previously believed true becomes false; that which it had rejected as false becomes true. The influence of the new notion making itself felt by all, and

⁵ Absolute government is thus, *a priori*, impossible. Also, the crime of the despots is much less in the perpetration of their idea than in their will to commit it: it is that powerless will that creates the *liberticide*.

more each day, there soon results a confusion that seems inextricable to superficial observers, and like the symptom of a general folly. In the interregnum that separates the new regime of Progress from the old regime of the Absolute, and during the period when intelligences pass from one to the other, consciousness hesitates and stumbles between its traditions and its aspirations; and as few people know how to distinguish the double passion that they obey, to separate what they affirm or deny in accordance with their belief in the Absolute from that which they deny or affirm in accordance with their support for Progress, there results for society, from that effervescence of all the fundamental notions, a pell-mell of opinions and interests, a battle of parties, where civilization would soon be ruined, if light did not manage to make itself seen in the void.

Such is the situation that France finds itself in, not only since the revolution of February, but since that of 1789, a situation for which I blame, up to a certain point, the philosophers, the publicists, and all those who, having a mission to instruct the people and shape opinion, have not seen, or have not wanted to see, that the idea of Progress being from now on universally accepted, — having acquired rights from the bourgeoisie, not only in the schools, but even in the temples, — and raised finally to the category of reason, the old representations of things, natural as well as social, are corrupted, and that it is necessary to construct anew, by means of that new lamp of the understanding, science and the laws.

Dimisit lucem à tenebris! Separation of positive ideas, constructed on the notion of Progress, from the more or less utopian theories that are suggested by the Absolute: such is, monsieur, the general thought that guides me. Such is my principle, my idea itself, that which forms the basis and makes the connections in all my judgments. It will be easy for me to show how, in all my controversies, I have thought to obey it: you will say if I have been faithful.

II.

Thus I maintain, and it is one of my most unshakable convictions, that with the notion of Progress all our old Aristotelian logic, all that academic dialectic is valueless, and that we must rid ourselves of it swiftly, or else talk nonsense all our lives. What we take for reasoning today, a melange of absolutist and progressive ideas, is only a fortuitous or arbitrary association of ideas, a glittering rigamarole, a bit of precious or sentimental bombast. I will not cite examples to you: our contemporary literature, from the point of view of ideas, and setting aside the question of form, is, in my judgment, only an immense waste. No one understands his neighbor or himself any more, and if sometimes, in party affairs particularly, some seem to enter into agreement, it is because some residue of prejudice makes us repeat the same words and phrases, without attaching the same meaning to them. Since the notion of Progress has entered our minds, the

Absolute having preserved most of its positions, chaos is in all of our heads; and as Progress, to some degree, imposes itself on all with an invincible force, the most insane is still the one who, believing himself rid of it, pretends not to be mad.

I have done what I could, insofar as my strength allowed, no doubt with more goodwill than aptitude, to shed a bit of light on this darkness: it is not up to me to say to what extent I have succeeded, but here is, more or less, how I have proceeded.

Movement exists: this is my fundamental axiom. To say how I acquired the notion of movement would be to say how I think, how I am. It is a question to which I have the right not to respond. Movement is the primitive fact that is revealed at once by experience and reason. I see movement and I sense it; I see it outside of me, and I sense it in me. If I see it outside of me, it is because I sense it in me, and *vice versa*. The idea of movement is thus given at once by the senses and the understanding; by the senses, since in order to have the idea of movement it is necessary to have seen it; by the understanding, since movement itself, though sensible, is nothing real, and since all that the senses reveal in movement is that the same body that just a moment ago was in a certain place is at the next instant in another.

In order that I may have an idea of movement, it is necessary that a special faculty, what I call the *senses*, and another faculty, which I call the *understanding*, agree in my consciousness to furnish it to me: this is all that I can say about the mode of that acquisition. In other words, I discover movement outside because I sense it inside; and I sense it because I see it: at base the two faculties are only one; the inside and the outside are two faces of a single activity; it is impossible for me to go further.

The idea of movement once arrived at, all the others are deduced from it, intuitions as well as conceptions. It is a wrong, in my opinion, that among the philosophers, some, such as Locke and Condillac, have claimed to account for all ideas with the aid of the senses; others, such as Plato and Descartes, deny the intervention of the senses, and explain everything by innateness; the most reasonable finally, with Kant at their head, make a distinction between ideas, and explain some by the relation of the senses, and the others by the activity of the understanding. For me, all our ideas, whether intuitions or conceptions, come from the same source: the simultaneous, conjoint, adequate, and at base identical action of the senses and the understanding.

Thus, every intuition or sensible idea is the apperception of a composition, and is itself a composition: now, every composition, whether it exists in nature or it results from an operation of the mind, is the product of a movement. If we were not ourselves a motive power and, at the same time, a receptivity, we would not see objects, because we would be incapable of *examining* them, of *restoring* diversity to their unity, as Kant said.

Every conception, on the contrary, indicates an analysis of movement, which

is itself still a movement, which I demonstrate in the following manner:

Every movement supposes a direction, $A \Rightarrow B$. That proposition is furnished, *a priori*, by the very notion of movement. The idea of direction, inherent in the idea of movement, being acquired, the imagination takes hold of it and divides it into two terms: A, the side from which movement comes, and B, the side where it goes. These two terms given, the imagination summarizes them in these two others, *point of departure* and *point of arrival*, otherwise, *principle* and aim. Now, the idea of a principle or aim is only a fiction or conception of the imagination, an illusion of the senses. A thorough study shows that there is not, nor could there be, a principle or aim, nor beginning or end, to the perpetual movement which constitutes the universe. These two ideas, purely speculative on our part, indicate in things nothing more than relations. To accord any reality to these notions is to make for oneself a willful illusion.

From that double concept, of commencement or principle, and of aim or end, all the others are deduced. Space and time are two ways of conceiving the interval that separates the two terms assumed from movement, point of departure and point of arrival, principle and aim, beginning and end. Considered in themselves, time and space, notions equally objective or subjective, but essentially analytic, are, because of the analysis that gave rise to them, nothing, less than nothing; they have value only according to the sum of movement or of existence that they are supposed to contain, so that, according to the proportion of movement or existence that it contains, a point can be worth an infinity and an instant eternity.

I treat the idea of *cause* in the same way: it is still a product of analysis, which, after having made us suppose in movement a principle and a goal, leads us to conclude by supposing further, by a new illusion of empiricism, that the first is the *generator* of the second, much as in the father we see the author or the cause of his *children*. But it is always only a relation illegitimately transformed into reality: there is not, in the universe, a first, second, or last cause; there is only one single current of existences. Movement is: that is all. What we call cause or force is only, like that which we call principle, author or motor, a face of movement, the face A; while the effect, the product, the motive, the aim or the end, is face B. In the ensemble of existences, that distinction has no more place: the sum of causes is identical and adequate to the sum of effects, which is the very negation of both. Movement or, as the theologians say, creation, is the natural state of the universe.

From the idea of movement, I further deduce, and always by the same analytic method, the concepts of *unity*, of *plurality*, of *same* and of *other*, which in turn lead me to those of *subject* and *object*, of *mind* and *matter*, etc., to which I will return soon.

It is thus that with the help of a single notion, of which I admit, furthermore, the impenetrability, because it is existence itself and life, with the notion, I say, of movement and of Progress, I can account for the formation of ideas, and

explain all intuitions and conceptions, the former by way of composition, the latter by way of analysis. This is not, I imagine, the route that has been followed up to now by the philosophers who have speculated about movement: but for that, they would have long ago made an application of their method to social practice; a long time ago they would have revolutionized the world. For such is the theory of ideas, and such is the economy of the human race.

III.

The theory of ideas leads me to that of reasoning.

From the moment that I conceive of movement as the essence of nature and of mind, it follows first that reasoning, or the art of classifying ideas, is a certain evolution, a history, or, as I have sometimes called it, a *series*. From this it follows that the syllogism, for example, the king of arguments of the ancient school, has only a hypothetical, conventional and relative value: it is a truncated series, proper only to produce the most innocent babble about the world, by those who do not do not know how to return it to its fullness, by bringing about its full reconstruction.

What I say about the syllogism must be said about the Baconian induction, the dilemma, and all the ancient dialectic.

The induction, remaining sterile in the hands of the philosophers, despite the declaration of Bacon, would return as the instrument of invention and the happiest formula for truth, if it was conceived, no longer as a sort of syllogism taken in reverse, but as the complete description of a movement of the mind, inverse to that indicated by the syllogism, and traced, just as in the syllogism, by a small number of marks.

The dilemma, considered the strongest of arguments, would no longer be considered anything but a weapon of bad faith, the dagger of the brigand who attacks you in the shadows, from the back and from the front, to the extent that it has not been rectified by the theory of the antinomy, the most elementary form and simplest composition of movement.

But that is not all that the reform of the dialectical instruments bears upon. It is still necessary to know, and never to lose from view, that even the most authentic and most certain method of reasoning cannot always, by itself, lead to a complete distinction of truth. It is, I have said elsewhere, in the classification of ideas as it is in those of the animals and the plants, as in the operations of mathematics themselves. In the two kingdoms, animal and vegetable, the genera and species are not everywhere and always susceptible to a precise determination; they are well defined only in the individuals placed at the extremities of the series; the intermediaries, compared to those, are often unclassifiable. The more one prolongs the analysis, the more one sees spring up, from the observation of characteristics, reasons for and against any given classification. It is the same in arithmetic, in those divisions where the dividend,

extended to as many decimal places as you like, can never be resolved in an exact quotient. It is thus with ideas, and all those who have scanned the treatises of jurisprudence, who have occupied themselves with trials and with proceedings, have felt it. Ideas, I say, are not always, whatever subtlety of dialectic we employ, completely determinable; there is a mass of cases where the elucidation will always leave something to be desired. And as if all kinds of difficulties come together to torment the dialectician and drive the philosopher to despair, it is never on the doubtful cases that the mass of humans hesitate and divide: by a strange caprice, they only battle and dispute the best demonstrated solutions...

In short, and to conclude this section, I affirm that the ancient method of ratiocination on which philosophy has subsisted up to the present, and on which our generation has been raised, is from now on proven false, that it is all the more false and pernicious as it admits today, into its old arsenal, a new instrument of war, Progress: from which I conclude that our logic must as soon as possible be reformed by the construction of that new idea, under penalty of infamy and suicide.

IV.

If from logic and the dialectic we pass to ontology, we meet, after the introduction of the idea of Progress, impossibilities no less numerous and no less grave, which arise from analogous observations, and call for the same reform.

All that our treatises of physics, chemistry, and natural history contain of general ideas about the body, and about the intelligence, is pulled from the speculations of Aristotle, Abelard, Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, etc., what one called in the Middle Ages universals and categories: *Substance, cause, mind, matter, body, soul*, etc. One single notion, the most important, has not furnished its contingent, Progress.

Doubtless, one no longer speaks to us of occult qualities, of entities, quiddities, of the horror of the void, etc. All of that has disappeared from ontology, but are we more advanced? Is it not true that all our scientists, without exception, like our psychologists, are still, willy-nilly, dualists, pantheists, atomists, vitalists, materialists, mystics even, partisans finally of all the systems, of all the dreams to which the old ontology gave birth?...

I cannot prevent myself from noting in passing the illusion that, for so many centuries, has made the philosophers produce so many ontological absurdities.

The condition of all existence, after movement, is unquestionably *unity*; but what is the nature of that unity? If we should consult the theory of Progress, it responds that the unity of all being is essentially *synthetic*, that it is a unity of *composition*.⁴ Thus the idea of movement, primordial idea of all intelligence, is synthetic, since, as we have just seen, it resolves itself analytically into two

⁴ Protagoras said: *There is nothing except in relation to something*. The *one* is thus only a hypothesis; the *self* is not a being: it is a FACT, a phenomenon, and that is all.

terms, which we have represented by this figure, $A \rightleftharpoons B$. Similarly, and for all the more reason, all the ideas, intuitions or images that we receive from objects are synthetic in their unity: they are combinations of movements, varied and complicated to infinity, but convergent and single in their collectivity.

That notion of the one, at once empirical and intellectual, condition of all reality and existence, has been confused with that of the *simple*, which results from the series or algebraic expression of movement, and, like cause and effect, principle and aim, beginning and end, is only a conception of the mind, and represents nothing real and true.

It is from this *simplism* that all of the alleged science of being, ontology, has been deduced.

It has been said that the *cause* is simple; — consequently the *subject* is simple, and *mind*, the highest expression of the cause of the self, is equally simple.

But as Leibniz observed, if the cause is simple, the *product* of that cause must still be simple: this is the *monad*. If the subject is simple, the *object* that it creates to oppose to itself cannot not be simple, thus *matter* is simple as well: this is the *atom*.

Let us draw the consequence: the cause and the effect, the self and the non-self, mind and matter, all these speculative *simplicities* that analysis derives from the single and synthetic notion of movement, are pure conceptions of the understanding; neither bodies nor souls exist, neither creator nor created, and the universe is a chimera. If the author of the monadology had been in good faith, he would have concluded thus, with Pyrrho, Barclay, Hume and the others.

Thus the system of the monads, despite all the genius of its author, has remained without partisans: it was too clear. Witness the poverty, or cowardice, of human reason! We have preserved, as articles of faith, the simplicity of the cause, the simplicity of the self, the simplicity of the mind, but we have affirmed the composition of creatures and the divisibility of matter: on this strange compromise rests the ontology of the moderns, their psychology, and their theodicy!...

With the idea of movement or progress, all these systems, founded on the categories of substance, causality, subject, object, spirit, matter, etc., fall, or rather explain themselves away, never to reappear again. The notion of being can no longer be sought in an invisible something, whether spirit, body, atom, monad, or what-have-you. It ceases to be simplistic and become synthetic: it is no longer the conception, the fiction of an indivisible, unmodifiable, intransmutable (etc.) *je ne sais quoi*: intelligence, which first posits a synthesis, before attacking it by analysis, admits nothing of that sort *a priori*. It knows what substance and force are, in themselves; it does not take its elements for realities, since, by the law of the constitution of the mind, the reality disappears, while it seeks to resolve it into its elements. All that reason knows and affirms is that the *being*, as well as the idea, is a GROUP.

Just as in logic the idea of movement or progress translates into that other,

the series, so, in ontology, it has as a synonym the group. Everything that exists is grouped; everything that forms a group is one. Consequently, it is perceptible and, consequently, it is. The more numerous and varied the elements and relations that combine in the formation of the group, the more centralizing power will be found there, and the more reality the being will obtain. Apart from the group there are only abstractions and phantoms. The living man is a group, like the plant or the crystal, but of a higher degree than those others; he is more living, more feeling, and more thinking to the degree that his organs, secondary groups, are in a more perfect agreement with one another, and form a more extensive combination. I no longer consider that self, what I call my *soul*,⁵ as a monad, governing, from the sublimity of its so-called spiritual nature, other monads, injuriously considered material: these academic distinctions seem senseless to me. I do not occupy myself with that *caput mortuum* of beings, solid, liquid, gas or fluid, that the doctors pompously call SUBSTANCE; I do not even know, as much as I am inclined to suppose it, if there is some thing that responds to the word substance. Pure substance, reduced to its simplest expression, absolutely amorphous, which we could quite happily call the *pantogene*, since all things come from it: — if I cannot exactly say that it is *nothing*, appears to my reason as if it does not exist; it is equal to nothing. It is the mathematical point, which has no length, no breadth, no depth, and which nonetheless gives birth to

⁵ We know that the original meaning of the words *soul* and *spirit* is breath, respiration. It is according to this material image that the ancients conceived their pneumatology, which placed the soul in the lungs, and quite logically denied it to stones and plants, since they could not be seen to breathe. Later, in its turn, flame became the term of comparison, and the soul was lodged in the blood. *The blood of an animal is its soul*, says the Bible. Descartes put it in the pineal gland.

It is astonishing that the discoveries of modern physics have not led to a more radical revolution in pneumatology. All bodies radiating caloric, light and electricity, all are in a state of perpetual absorption and exudation, all are penetrated and enveloped by a fluid which is normally invisible, but which sometimes becomes apparent, as in combustion, electrical discharge, the aurora borealis, etc. It is by this fluid, which we like to consider the soul of the world, that bodies act on one another, attract, repulse and combine with one another, pass into the solid, liquid or gaseous state.

What prevents us from saying that the human soul is also a fluid, formed from the combination of several others, as the flesh and bone are composed of various elements, which envelops and penetrates the body, courses through the nerves, makes the blood circulate, which puts us, at a distance, in more or less intimate relations with our fellows, and by that communication creates superior groups, or new natures?...

If we push that study as far as we would like, we will never see, ourselves, in all these *fluid manifestations*,—even supposing them as free of error, of charlatanism and of superstition as the most rigorous science can demand,—anything but analytic or symmetric speculations on being, its attributes and its faculties. The transcendent existence, to our eyes, is not that of supposed *spirits* or *aromas* which, separated from their *bodies*, are as chimerical as time or space would be, separated from the idea of movement; it is the sensible, intelligent and moral man; it is above all the human group, Society.

all geometric figures. I consider in each being only its composition, its unity, its properties, its faculties, so that I restore all to a single reason, — variable, susceptible to infinite elevation, — the group.⁶

V.

It is following that conception of *being* in general, and in particular of the human *self*, that I believe it possible to prove the positive reality, and up to a certain point to demonstrate the ideas (the laws) of the social self or humanitarian group, and to ascertain and show, above and beyond our individual existence, the existence of a superior individuality of the collective man, an existence that philosophy could not even suspect before, because, following its ontological concepts, it was absolutely incapable of conceiving it.

According to some, society is the juxtaposition of similar individuals, each sacrificing a part of their liberty, so as to be able, without harming one another, to remain juxtaposed and live side by side in peace. Such is the theory of Rousseau: it is the system of governmental arbitrariness, not, it is true, as if that arbitrariness is the deed of a prince or tyrant, but, what is much more serious, in that it is the deed of the multitude, the product of universal suffrage. Depending on whether it suits the multitude, or those who prompt it, to tighten the social ties more or less, to give more or less development to local and individual liberties, the alleged *Social Contract* can go from the direct and fragmented government of the people all the way to caesarism, from relations of simple proximity to the community of goods and gains, women and children. Everything that history and the imagination can suggest in the way of extreme license and extreme servitude can be deduced with equal ease and logical rigor from the social theory of Rousseau.

According to others, and these despite their scientific appearance seem to me hardly more advanced, society, the moral person, reasoning being, pure fiction, is only the development among the masses of the phenomena of individual organization, so that knowledge of the individual immediately gives knowledge of society, and politics resolves itself into physiology and hygiene. But what is social hygiene? It is apparently a liberal education, a varied instruction, a lucrative function, a moderate labor and a comfortable regime for each member of society: now, the question is precisely how to procure all of that for ourselves!

For me, following the notions of movement, progress, series and group, of which ontology is, from now on, compelled to take account, and the various findings that economics and history furnish on the question, I regard society, the human group, as a being *sui generis*, constituted by the fluid relations and economic solidarity of all the individuals, of the nation, of the locality or

⁶ Modern science confirms this definition of being. The more that physics and chemistry advance, the more they *dematerialize*, and tend to constitute themselves on purely mathematical notions.

corporation, or of the entire species; which individuals circulate freely among one another, approaching one another, joining together, dispersing in turn in all directions; — a being that has its own functions, alien to our individuality, its own ideas which it communicates to us, its judgments which do not at all resemble ours, its will in diametrical opposition with our instincts, its life, which is not that of the animal or the plant, although it finds analogies there; — a being, finally, who, coming from nature, seems the God of nature, the powers and laws of which it expresses to a superior (supernatural) degree.⁷

Similar doctrines, I know, when they do not claim a revelation from on high, can establish themselves on the facts alone. Also, it is with the aid of the facts, nothing but the facts, not arguments, that I think I can demonstrate the superior existence, the true incarnation of the universal soul... But, while waiting for the facts to be produced, it may be useful to recall certain issues that have already been brought forth, concerning the questions, insoluble in the previous state of philosophy, that agitate the consciousness of the peoples at this moment.

Let us speak then of religion, of that respectable faith, towards which the unbelieving still know only how to express contempt, and the believers to form wishes, and, in order to summarize in a word that whole matter, tackle the problem of Divinity. Here again I find myself placed on new terrain, where the idea of Progress comes to reform all that which has been written and taught by

⁷ Man is only a fragment of being: the true being is the collective being, Humanity, which does not die, which, in its unity, develops unceasingly, receiving from each of its members the product of its own activity, and communicating to it, according to the measure in which it can participate, the product of the activity of all: a body of which the growth has no assignable end, which, following the immutable laws of its conservation and evolution, distributes life to the various organs which perpetually renew it, by perpetually renewing themselves." (*De la Société première et de ses lois*, by LAMENNAIS, 1848.)

Who would not believe, after having read this passage where the objective, organic, personal reality of the collective being is affirmed with all the energy and propriety of expression of which the language is capable, that the author was going to give the anatomy, physiology, psychology, etc., of society? But Lamennais is a great poet and not much of a naturalist. The metaphor returns to the divine; and while he believes he only makes an allegory, he posits, unknowingly, a real being of which he is unaware. After having spoken as a humanitarian philosopher of the collective being, M. de Lamennais returns to seeking the laws of society in theology; he analyzes the dogmas of the Trinity and of Grace, and falls again into the intellectual void, proper to the mystics and the phraseologists.

I could cite still other writers who, like Lamennais, seem to have touched the reality of the social being, and speak in the finest terms of its *soul*, of its *genius*, of its *passions*, of its *ideas*, of its *acts*, etc. But one quickly perceives that all of that is only figure and verbiage on their part; there is not a fact, not an observation, which testifies that they have understood their own words. It is like the style of those economists, whom one would judge, to read them, disciples of Babœuf or of Cabet, but that one soon recognizes, by their anti-socialist protestations, for the most hypocritical and most insipid of chatterboxes.

the learned, in the name of the Absolute.

VI.

I observe first, something that everyone knows today, that is it with the theological question as with the question of politics; that it is essentially mobile and oscillating by nature, sometimes larger, sometimes smaller in its variations, without, in any of its positions, ever being able to settle or satisfy the mind. The philosopher launched in the pursuit of the divine being is continually led from one hypothesis to another, from fetishism to polytheism, from that to monotheism, from monotheism to deism, then to pantheism, then to idealism, to nihilism, in order to begin again with materialism, fetishism, etc. It is thus that for the man who seeks social order by way of authority, reason is drawn invincibly from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy, from that to an oligarchic or qualified republic, from oligarchy to democracy, from democracy to anarchy, from anarchy to dictatorship, to begin again with absolute monarchy, and thus in succession, perpetually. That necessity of transitions without end, which had been so clearly perceived, with regard to the political question, by Aristotle, and which has been established in our own day, with regard to the religious question, by the German philosophy, is perhaps the only positive conquest of philosophy, forced to recognize, by the testimony of its greatest writers, that even in the circle of its absolutist categories, the mind is always in movement.

Having established beyond doubt the circular course of the mind on the two questions that interest society to the highest degree, religion and government, I ask myself if this does not come from some metaphysical illusion, and in that case, what correction is it necessary to make?

Now, in looking more closely, I find that all that has been written about the *Supreme Being*, from Orpheus through to Dr. Clarke, is only a labor of the imagination on the categories, that is to say on the analytic (simplistic and negative) conceptions, that the understanding is able to draw from the primordial (synthetic and positive) idea of movement; a work that consists, as I observed earlier, in giving a reality to algebraic signs, in affirming as a living being, — active, intelligent and free, — that which is nonetheless neither man, nor animal, nor plant, nor star, nor anything known or sensible, defined or definable, let alone anything grouped or seriated. This being would be pure substance, pure cause, pure will, pure mind, the pure essence, in short, of the entire series of abstractions that are deduced from face A of the idea of movement, by the exclusion of face B. And all that, according to the learned, would become being, conceived in a superior degree, an infinite power, an eternal duration, in the absolute of absolutes.

I reject that line of deduction, first as marred by ignorance, since God, the being of beings, *ens realissimum*, according to the idea that we have made of

him, must embrace all the attributes, all the conditions of existence, and since he lacks Progress, the most essential element of the definition. Then I deny that same deduction as destructive of the being that its object is to prove, and consequently as contradictory, precisely because it rests on a series of analyses that, prolonged as long as you like, can only lead to a split, to a negation of that being. And I conclude in my turn, by taking the affirmative, *assumens parabolam*, as Job said, that if the idea of movement and of progress, so long kept in the shadows by the metaphysicians, is reintegrated in its right, the God that we seek can no longer be such as the old theology taught; it must be entirely different than the theologians have made it. In fact, if we apply to the Supreme Being the condition of movement, of progress, and we cannot not apply it, since without that attribute it would not be supreme, it will come to pass that that being will no longer be, as before, simple, absolute, immutable, eternal, infinite, in every sense and every faculty, but organized, progressive, evolving, consequently perfectible, susceptible to learning in science, virtue, etc., to infinity. The infinity or absolute of that being is no longer in the actual, it is in the potential... The god of Kant, of Aristotle, of Moses and of Jesus, is thus not true, at least according to the documents produced, since it excludes the most essential condition of existence in nature and humanity, and that exclusion implies a contradiction with the life that one nevertheless accords to it. *I swear by the living God*, says the Church in its exorcisms. God, in a word, *is* not, and cannot *be* in the sense that the metaphysicians give to that word, since the deprivation of all conditionality, or simplicity, far from indicating the highest power of being, marks, on the contrary, the lowest degree; God can only *become*, and it is on this condition alone that it is.⁸

⁸ “Is God, the substance-cause, simple or multiple? If he is simple as Spinoza thought, by what means, by what action, by what law, can he pass from his mode of metaphysical action to the mode of finite existence, and manifest himself physically by form, variety and succession, in space and time, without dividing himself? There is the crux of the difficulty. Spinoza did not, and could not, resolve it.

“With the simple and individual constitution given to the substance-cause, God, endowed moreover with all the other theological attributes, is, in Spinozism, nothing other than a solitary atom of which the extent is infinite. That atom, infinitely extended, occupies by itself all space, or rather there is no space, and the indivisible expanse of God, in its infinity, is nothing other than what we mean by space.

“Now, in that simple and indivisible being, in that God-atom, infinite in extension, the property of extent being indivisible, since the subject which possesses it is simple, it is not possible, number not existing in it, to find the reason nor the means of any action whatsoever by which God produces the multitude of extended and finished beings which constitute the phenomena of the universe: his constitution is opposed to it. As he is infinite in his simple and indivisible extent, and there is nothing outside of him, he cannot have in himself anything but himself, that is to say a simple atom, infinite in extent.” (Ch. Lemaire, *Initiation à la philosophie de la Liberté*, t. II.)

M. de Lamennais, in his *Esquisse d'une philosophie*, has sensed the difficulty, and he has attempted to resolve it, after the example of the gnostics and kabbalists, by making use of

What if now, after having dispelled the clever chimeras of theology, I should consult the spontaneous testimonies of the human races on the essence and function of the divine being? I find first that the idea of Progress, inadvertently left off the list of academic categories, has not been forgotten by the masses; that by virtue of that idea, the people, reasoning in the liberty of their instincts, speaking in their own name, without the medium of the Academy, the Portico, or the Church, have constantly taken God for a being that is active, mobile, progressive, and sensible; that, to the degree that their intelligence has developed, could think to give to it, has been to make it a man. I see that at all times Humanity has tended, across its religious evolutions, to anthropomorphize or rather to socialize the ineffable being; that everywhere and always, in popular consciousness, the problem of religion has resolved itself in the identity of social nature and divine nature; that if, on the one hand, the people have loaned to God the faculties, passions, virtues and miseries of humanity, — since it is necessary for him to be born, to speak, act, suffer and die like a man, — on the other, it has conferred of him the attributes of society, rulership, legislation and justice; it has proclaimed him holy like society, and free from death like society, which is immortal.

Thus, what we affirm, seek and worship as God, is nothing but the pure essence of Humanity, social nature and individual nature indivisibly united, but distinct, like the two natures in Jesus Christ. This is what is attested to by popular consciousness and the series of religions, in accord with a rectified and complete metaphysics.

That is not all: while that movement of the humanization of the divine being was pursued by the masses, another movement worked, always unbeknownst to the theologians and the philosophers, in the intellectual discipline: it was the progressive renunciation of the ontological mysticisms, the relinquishment of the categories, recognized as useless for the explication of nature and society as divine hypostases, Love, Will, Intelligence, in order to make them produce in God, according to their categories, all beings. M. Ch. Lemaire refutes that system in this way: “With the constitutional simplicity of God, the condition which necessarily dominates that one of his attributes that we call the understanding, whatever, moreover, the number and variety of other attributes that we have given to God in order to make it come out from its inaction and its powerless to form from its own substance united beings, all these attributes, such as Power, Science, Love even, can only serve to form mythological or abstract personifications; but they are without efficacy to generate the smallest finished being, the smallest form, the smallest distinct personality in God or apart from God, and they logically fail before the simplicity and indivisibility of that God, being infinite and incommensurable with respect to extent.

“With regard to effects, God, simple and indivisible substance, cannot then be the cause of finished beings. If one supposes, in order to get out of that difficulty, that the other attributes of God, such as power and science, could change his original constitution, and divide that which is declared to be simple and indivisible, one falls into contradiction, and says that the God which one has declared to be simple would himself destroy the condition of his own existence.”

revelations and miracles. In one sense, the human race, by its anthropomorphic tendencies, came into contact and identified itself with Divinity; in another sense, by its growing positivism, it moved away from God, and, so to speak, made God retreat. Thus, where Newton, halted by a difficulty that seemed impossible to him, made Divinity intervene for the equilibrium of the world, Laplace, with a higher science, rendered that intervention useless, and dismissed the god and his machine to the attic.

For me then, summarizing all these facts and concepts, this remains regarding to the religious question: What Humanity seeks in religion, under the name of God, is its own constitution. It seeks itself. Nonetheless, God being, according to the theological dogma, infinite in its attributes, perfect, immutable and absolute, and Humanity, on the contrary, being perfectible, progressive, mobile and changing, the second term could never be understood as adequate to the first; there remains then an antithesis, one term always being the reversed expression of the other, and the consequence of that antithesis or *antitheism*, as I have called it, is to abolish all religion or worship, idolatry, pneumatolatry, christolatry or anthropolatry, since on one side the idea of God, opposed to that of movement, group, series or progress, does not represent any possible reality, and on the other, Humanity, essentially perfectible, but never perfect, remains constantly below its own proper ideal, and consequently always beneath worship. This I summarize in a formula at once positive and negative, and perfectly clear in our language: *Replacement of the cult of the alleged Supreme Being by the culture of Humanity.*⁹

VII.

Is it worthwhile now, monsieur, for me to recall those of my propositions, which, in politics, political economy, morals, etc., have made the most noise, and caused the most scandal? Must I show how they all resulted from the notion of Progress, which is identical in my mind to that of *order*?

I wrote in 1840 that profession of political faith, as remarkable for its brevity as its energy: *I am an anarchist*. I posited with that word the negation, or rather the insufficiency of the principle of authority... By that I meant, as I later showed, that the notion of authority is only, like the notion of an absolute being, an analytic idea, powerless, from whatever direction one might come at authority, and in whatever manner it is exercised, to give a social constitution.

For authority, for politics, I then substituted ECONOMY, a synthetic and positive idea, alone capable, in my opinion, of leading to a rational and practical

⁹ Every social theory necessarily begins with a theory of reason and a solution of the cosmo-theological problem. No philosophy has lacked that requirement. This is what explains why the partisans of political and social hierarchy all begin from a theosophic idea, while the democrats generally incline towards an absolute emancipation of reason and conscience. *In order to democratize the human race*, insists Charles Lemaire, *it is necessary to demonarchize the Universe.*

conception of the social order. However, I did nothing in this but to repeat the thesis of Saint-Simon, so strangely disfigured by his disciples, and combated today, for tactical reasons that I cannot work out, by M. Enfantin. It consists in saying, based on history and the incompatibility of the ideas of authority and progress, that society is on the way to completing the governmental cycle for the last time; that public reason has gained certainty of the powerlessness of politics, with regard to the improvement of the condition of the masses; that the predominance of the ideas of power and authority has begun to be succeeded, in opinion as in history, by that of the ideas of labor and exchange; that the consequence of that substitution is to replace the mechanism of the political powers by the organization of economic forces, etc., etc.

I trust you, sir, to tell me if I have been logical in my deductions, if, as I think, the idea of progress, the synonym of which is liberty, truly leads there.

It is with regard to economic questions that I have pushed the development and application of my principle the farthest. I have demonstrated, and with some success, it seems to me, that most of the notions on which industrial practice rests at this moment, and thus all the economies of modern societies, are still, like the notions of power, authority, God, devil, etc., analytic conceptions, parts mutually deduced from one another by means of opposition, from the societary group, from its idea, from its law, and each developed separately without restraint and without limits. As a result, society, instead of resting on harmony, is seated on a throne of contradictions, and instead of progressing towards wealth and virtue, as is its destiny, it presents a parallel and systematic development in misery and crime.

Thus I have shown, or I believe I have shown, that the Malthusian theory of the productivity of capital, justifiable as a means of mercantile order, and to a certain degree favorable to economic movement, becomes, if one applies it on a grand scale, if one claims to generalize it and make of it a law of society, incompatible with exchange, with circulation, and consequently with social life itself; that in order to end that incompatibility, it is necessary to reconstruct the integral idea, to make it so that each borrower is a lender, each lender a borrower, and so that all accounts, to the debit and to the credit, balance; that if the circulation is not today regular, if the return of values by sale is not made by each producer with the same ease as their outflow by purchase; if the stagnations, crises and unemployments make for the bankrupt a permanent means of equilibrium, it is first because the *valorization* of products ceases with gold and silver, because all merchandise is not, like gold or silver, taken for currency, which constitutes within the general wealth a destructive inequality; — in the second place, because of the capitalist prelibation,¹⁰ a consequence of money's prerogatives; — thirdly, because of land rent, which is the keystone, sanction and glorification of the whole system.

I have said that the right of the capitalist, proprietor or master, — who halts

¹⁰ *Prelibation*: offering of the first fruits. — TRANSLATOR.

the economic movement and hinders the circulation of products, who makes competition a civil war, the machine an instrument of death, the division of labor a system of exhaustion for the worker, taxation a means of popular extenuation and possession of the soil a ferocious and unsociable domain, — was nothing other than the right of force, royal or divine right, as the barbarians conceived and as it results from the definitions of politics and of the casuists, the highest expression of the absolute, the most complete negation of the ideas of equality, order and progress.

If anything has surprised me, in the course of this socialist polemic, it is much less the irritation produced by my ideas than the contradictions that have been raised against them. I could understand selfishness; I do not understand disagreement in the presence of truth and the facts. In order to pull society from the vicious circle where it has suffered death and passion for so many centuries, it is necessary, I insist, to enter resolutely on the path of progression and association; to pursue the reduction of rent and interest to zero; to reform credit, by raising it from the entirely individualist notion of *loan* to the thoroughly social one of reciprocity or *exchange*; to liquidate, according to that principle, all public and private debts; to purge all mortgages, to unify taxation, to abolish octrois and duties, to create the patrimony of the people, to insure inexpensive products and rents, to determine the rights of the laborer, to remake corporate and communal administration, to reduce and simplify the allocations of the State. Then, economic phenomena would occur in an opposite mode; while today the market lacks production, it will be production that will lack for a market; while wealth grows in arithmetic fashion and the population geometrically, we will see that relation inverted, and production become more rapid than population, because it is a law of our moral and aesthetic nature that the more intensity acquired by labor and the more perfection acquired by men, the less fecundity is possessed by the genetic faculty, etc.

I have remarked, since first addressing these issues, that society is already engaged, at all points, with the concept of industrial progress; that accordingly the definition of property, following the constitution of 1848, is in complete contradiction with the Code, and at base justifies my own definition; that under the influence of the same causes all jurisprudence tends to approach more and more the idea of commutative justice and to desert the civil tribunal for the tribunal of commerce, etc., etc.

There is not a critique on my part, not an affirmation or a negation that, in that order of ideas as in all the others, is not explained, justified or excused, however you want to put it, by the same law. All that I have said of centralization, of the police, of justice, of association, of worship, etc., follows from that.

I have done more: after dispelling any pretext of irritation and hatred, I have taken care to distinguish, in PROGRESS, *acceleration* from *movement*. I have repeated *ad nauseam* that the question of speed could be left to the consideration

of the majorities, and that I did not regard as adversaries, or as enemies of Progress, those who, accepting with me the idea of movement and the sense of its general direction, differed perhaps on the details and the time involved. Must we race or crawl? This is a practical affair, not for the consideration of the philosopher, but of the statesman. What I maintain is that we cannot preserve the *status quo*.

Many times it has been said to me: Tell it like it is. You are a man of order: do you, or do you not want government? You seek justice and liberty, and you reject the communitarian theories: are you for or against property? You have defended, in every circumstance, morals and the family: do you have no religion?

Well, I uphold completely all my negations of religion, government and property; I say that not only are these negations in themselves irrefutable, but that already the facts justify them; what we have seen burgeon and develop, for several years, under the ancient name of religion, is no longer the same thing that we have been accustomed to understand under that name; that which agitates in the form of empire or cæsarism, will sooner or later no longer be empire or cæsarism, or government; and finally, that which modifies and reorganizes itself under the rubric of property is the opposite of property.

I add, nonetheless, that I will retain, with the common folk, these three words: *religion, government, property*, for reasons of which I am not the master, which partake of the general theory of Progress, and for that reason seem to me decisive: first, it is not my place to create new words for new things and I am forced to speak the common language; second, there is no progress without tradition, and the new order having for its immediate antecedents religion, government and property, it is convenient, in order to guarantee that very evolution, to preserve for the new institutions their patronymic names, in the phases of civilization, because there are never well-defined lines, and to attempt to accomplish the revolution at a leap would be beyond our means.

I believe it useless, with a judge as well-informed as you, monsieur, to prolong this exposition. I affirm PROGRESS, and, as the incarnation of Progress, the reality of the Collective Man, and, finally, as a consequence of that reality, an economic science: that is my socialism. Nothing more, and nothing less.

VIII.

Allow me, sir, before passing on, to summarize the different meanings of that generic term Progress. In logic, it is translated by *series*, the general form of reasoning, which is nothing other, it seems to me, than the art of classifying ideas and beings. — If the series is reduced to two terms in essential opposition, in necessary and reciprocal contradiction, as takes place, for example, in the formation of concepts, it indicates an analysis and takes the name of *antinomy*. The antinomic dualism, reduced by the equation or fusion of the two terms into one, produces the synthetic and true idea, the *synthesis*, celebrated among the

mystics under the name of *trinity* or *triad*.

In ontology, Progress is *group*, that is *being*, as opposed to all the chimeras, whether substantial, causative, animistic, atomistic, etc.

From the idea of being, conceived as group, I deduce, by one sole and single argument, this double proposition: that the simplistic, immutable, infinite, eternal and absolute god of the metaphysicians, not becoming, is not and cannot be; while the social being, which is grouped, organized, perfectible, progressive, and which by its essence always becomes, is. Comparing then the facts of religious consciousness with those of metaphysics and economics, I arrive at this decisive conclusion, that the idea of God, with regard to its content, is identical and adequate to that of Humanity, while, with regard to its form, it is antagonistic.

In the political order, the synonym of Progress is *liberty*: collective and individual spontaneity, evolving without obstacles, by the gradual participation of citizens in sovereignty and government. But that participation remains forever illusory, and the political movement would realize itself in an invariable cycle of revolutions without end and of uniform tyrannies, if political reason, recognizing finally that the true object of government is to guarantee the liberty of the producer and trader, by insuring the just distribution of wealth, did not end, after having separated the contents from the political idea, by changing its organization. Authority has then for its organic formula economy, and the correlative of liberty is equality, not a real and immediate equality, as communism intends, nor a personal equality, as the theory of Rousseau supposes, but a commutative and progressive equality, which gives a completely different direction to Justice.

Let us admit, indeed, for a moment, the principle of the *a priori* equality of goods and of persons. What a singular thing! The consequence of that alleged equality would be stasis, the absolute, consequently misery. Society would doubtless continue to stagnate or to agitate; it would no longer progress. The human species, constituted on an anticipation, taking its end for its means, instead of being itself, would no longer be anything but an analog of certain animals, such as ants, beavers, etc., societies of which have existed since creation, but which do not advance at all. For a society thus made, the principle of order or, to put it better, of station, would find itself, as in societies founded on inequality or caste, an imperative power, dominating all wills, subordinating all energies, absorbing in its collective virtuality all spontaneous individualities. It is according to this system of absolutism that the first States were organized; it is thus that by yielding always a little under the invisible pressure of liberty, across a thousand contradictions and a thousand inconsistencies, they have maintained themselves in the old spirit of their institution.

But let a revolution, like that of 89, suddenly proclaim industrial liberty and with that single word the notion of equality changes: civilization can no longer encounter obstacles in its advance; at the same time the old political form is left

inapplicable. With the principle of liberty in work and of equality in exchange, which implies the acceptance of taxation and monitoring, the equilibrium of society can no longer depend, in principle, on sovereign commandment, king or people; it results virtually from the synallagmatic, quotidian determination of the *rights* and the *holdings* of the members. Governmental centralization is thus succeeded by contractual solidarity; the constitution of political powers is replaced by the organization of the economic forces. It is because of this that socialism was right to say, in 1848, that all the declarations of rights and duties, all the charters and all the codes promulgated previously or to be promulgated in the future, reduce themselves to two articles, the *right to work* and the *right to exchange*. Labor and exchange are the alpha and the omega of the revolution.

Thus, on the one hand, the suppression of the political forms is nothing other than the suppression of the hindrances imposed on Progress by political tyranny; on the other, it is the emancipation of the laborer or the exact compensation of products, which is the decisive and solemn act by which Humanity, breaking the chain of privilege, enters into the endless career of Justice.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, said the author of the Gospel, Jesus Christ, following all the ancient sages. A good maxim, but vague, and its uncertain glow has not hindered for thirty centuries the servitude of the human race. For what is it that I should want others to do to me?... As long as a precise answer is not made to that question, justice collapses. Economic science puts an end to that indecision by declaring that for each able-bodied citizen, *the revenue must be equal to the product*. The formula, this time, is categorical and concrete; it aims neither at the sublime nor at the sentimental; it has no more pretension to astonish the learned than to make the frivolous *caillettes* swoon. But find me a formula that is more crushing of pride, more hopeless for bad faith, which better removes the excuses for cowardice and envy, and which also insures the rights of all by leaving more liberty to each?

IX.

By giving to Justice a more practical and precise formula, the theory of economic progress has posited the foundation of morals.

Moral science is the ensemble of the precepts that aim for the perseverance of justice. It is, in other words, the system of *justification*, the art of rendering oneself holy and pure by works, which is to say, still and always, Progress. *Happy are the pure of heart*, it was said at the Sermon on the Mount, *because they SHALL SEE GOD!* These words, so much better than the theory of charity, summarize the whole law. They signify that holiness, the apogee of justice, is the very basis of religion, and that the beatific vision, the sovereign good of the ancient philosophers, — happiness, as the modern socialists say, — is its fruit. To see God, in the language of the myths, is to have consciousness of one's own virtue; it is to enjoy it and thereby collect the prize. Thus, morals has no sanction but itself:

it would infringe on its dignity, it would be immoral, if it drew its cause and its end from some other source. That is why morals has tended at all times to separate itself from theological dogmatism, and the essence of religion has tended to separate itself from the religious envelope, the vain figures of which could only compromise it. In Rome, the formulas of religion were all, like the articles of the Decalogue, juridical formulas. In China and Japan, where all theology had been rejected early, it was precisely the practice of sanctification, or cult of purity, which was preserved. Purity or clarity of reason, purity or innocence of heart, purity or health of the body, purity or justice in action and sincerity in speech, purity even in justice, which is to say, modesty in virtue: these are the morals of Progress, and this is my religion. It supposes a continual effort on itself, and it allows all transitions, it suits all places and times. The moral law — remark it well, monsieur — is the one thing that I regard as absolute, not with regard to the form of the precept, which is always variable, but with regard to the obligation that it imposes. And yet, that Absolute is still only a transcendent idea, having for aim the ideal perfection of the human being, by fidelity to the law and to progress.

But, you will ask me, who is holy? And if no man can boast of being holy, how, with the theory of Progress, will you resolve the problem of man's destiny? Sin exists, and it is a great question among the wise, to know if it diminishes, or if on the contrary it does not, with civilization itself, extend its empire. All the centuries have resounded with laments of the growing malice of the generations. The orator denounces the decadence of the century to the tribunal: *O tempora, o mores!* he cries. And the poet, in his misanthropy, sings the progress of vice and crime:

*Ætas majorum, pejor avis, tulit
Nos nequiores, mox daturos
Progeniem vitiosiore.*

If then sanctity exists nowhere on the earth, if sanctification does not succeed among mortals, Progress remains without a conclusion. It is necessary to consider the longer term, and after having freed militant humanity from the Absolute, to make it return there for its coronation. What use, consequently, is the idea of Progress, if Progress, like the fall, calls for a transmundane solution, something like immortality? What can the theory be which, after having posited Progress as the condition *sine qua non* of nature and mind, is forced to admit that it finds for that Progress neither term nor object, and which would contradict itself if it admitted either?...

Here is my response to that objection.

First, in that which no longer concerns the moral law, henceforth unassailable, but human *mortality*, I define Progress as a knowledge of good and

evil, consequently an *always growing imputability*.¹¹ So that, whatever is in each generation the proportion of offense, the *merit* and *demerit*, subject to a perpetual oscillation, becomes also always greater.

This is demonstrated by history.

It is proven, 1) that the sciences, the arts, commerce, politics, etc., are in continual progress; 2) that by virtue of that progress the juridical relations are multiplied more and more among men. From this double progress, which is accomplished apart from the will, it nonetheless results for the will, on the one hand, that its passional attractions are more and more exalted, and, on the other, that the sentiment of the just is increased in it proportionally. From these two points of view, it is certain that an immense difference exists between modern civilization and primitive society: just as among us sensibility, by shedding its brutal forms, has become livelier, so the respect for right has become more profound. Honest people of the nineteenth century are better and more honest than those of the times of Scipio or Pericles; for the same reason, the vicious have become more villainous. The conformity of the will to moral law is thus today more meritorious, and its resistance more criminal. The progress of our morality, I say, consists in this.

To know now if the sum of culpable deeds diminishes, if that of virtuous acts increases, is a question about which we can dispute at leisure, but of which the solution appears to me in fact impossible, and in any case useless. What is true is that there is an off-setting in all eras between good and evil, as between merit and demerit, and that the most favorable condition for society is that in which the movement in justice is accomplished with the least oscillation, in an equilibrium that excludes equally great sacrifices and great crimes. *Et ne nos inducas in tentationem!* Jesus Christ has said: "Do not expose us, oh God, to proofs too difficult!" One could not more sadly characterize human morality and its timid advance.

Let our conscience, more and more enlightened, acquire thus more and more energy: there is our glory, and there also is our condemnation. Let the idea of good be realized in all our actions, if it is possible, and let the idea of evil remain deep in our hearts, like an enchained power: that is all that we can promise ourselves. To pretend that as the works of virtue become each day more abundant, the principle of sin, which is nothing other than the spontaneity of our animal nature, weakens, would be a contradiction.

Virtuous or culpable, man, in short, becomes always more human: that is the law of his genius and of his morals.

But, you insist, and here is the stumbling block for our poor reason, what is the term of that ascension in Justice? "I have run the race", cried the Apostle. "I

¹¹ It is not knowledge alone that is augmented, any more than morality; the work of the reason reacts on the reason, and is also reason. Our faculties, taken in the average of their ensemble, are no longer of the same degree nor of the same quality as they were among our fathers: there also there is movement.

have reached the end. Where is my recompense?" There then where religion makes us glimpse immortality, what says Progress?

To this final question, where every thought is troubled, where philosophy is confounded, I am forced to cut short my words, and to leave despite myself some obscurity. The social facts, which must serve the constitution of morals, being still unknown, I cannot argue from these facts as if they were known: I must limit myself to these sententious assertions.

The immortality of the soul is nothing other than the elevation of man by thought to the ideality of his nature, and the possession that he takes of his own divinity.

The radiant face of Moses, the assumption of Elijah, the transfiguration of Christ and even the apotheosis of the Caesars are so many myths that once served to express that idealization.

Art and religion aim to make us labor without ceasing, by the excitations that belong to them, toward the apotheosis of our souls.

Thus the theory of Progress does not promise us immortality, like religion; it gives it to us. It makes us enjoy it in this life. It teaches us to conquer it and to know it.

To be immortal is to possess God in oneself, says the prophet Isaiah, and he expressed this in a single word, of which he made a proper name: *Immanuel*. Now, we possess God by justice.

That possession is for all times, for all places, for all conditions: to obtain it, it is enough to know, want and exercise justice.

Justice is thus at the same time beatitude, as the Portico taught it: its presence makes our happiness, its privation our torment. The idea of a subsequent happiness merited by justice is an illusion of our understanding which, instead of making us think of movement as a series, having its reason in itself and its essential object, persists in seeing there a point of *departure* and another of *arrival*, as if justice, and life as well, was for us only a transformation of our being from one state to another. But that is a palpable error, refuted in advance by the theory of movement and of the formation of concepts, and moreover it constitutes, as we have just proven, an offense to morals: just as movement is the state of matter, justice is the state of humanity.

The possession of justice is thus equivalent to the possession of God, apart from which there is — and it is religion that declares it — no longer anything for man. It remains to know the character of that possession, relative to the conditions of space and time.

Space and time are nothing by themselves: they are valued only for their content. If an existence, of whatever duration, is raised up to the sublime, if, by the conception of its own ideal and the will to express it, it comes so to speak to touch the absolute, then that existence can be called consummated. It falls into infinity: reaching its apogee, it no longer has anything to do among the living. There is nothing for a being apart from its plenitude, which is its glorification,

any more than there is a complement to the universe. Just as the insect, at the highest point in its ephemeral life, is worth as much and more than the sun in the splendor of its rays, so for man just an instant of ecstasy is worth an eternity of paradise. An eternity and an instant, it is the same thing, said St. Augustine. Now, eternity does not repeat itself, and when one has seen God once, it is forever. Duration in the absolute is a contradiction.¹²

Thus, the one who has been illuminated by the ideas of the beautiful, the just and the holy; who has admired, who has loved, who, at one moment in his life, concentrating the effort of all his powers, has sensed in it ineffable exaltation: that one is reassured, and immortality will not escape him. HE HAS LIVED: that is more comforting for him than to hear it said *that he will live*.

The one, on the contrary, whose heart is eaten up by vice, rots in ignorance and idleness. He who has made a law for himself from iniquity, who has put his human intelligence in the service of his brute passions: that one has betrayed his destiny. He will come to the end without having understood existence. If he calls for the priest on his death bed, he has need of him. The priest, by his allegories, will perhaps succeed in touching that savage soul. At the last moment, he will inspire in him a sublime idea, and it will communicate to him, to his agony, a spark of moral sense. Then alone the sinner will have glimpsed life, and for the little that he had in him of repentance, he will die in peace...¹⁵

X.

I said before that the object of art, like that of worship, is to elevate us to immortal beatitude by the stimulation of its pleasures. Permit me to enter into that subject with some explanations. It is above all from the point of view of art that socialism is accused of barbarity, and progress of falsity: it is necessary to know to what extent that double reproach is merited.

Someone says to us: What superiority have the moderns achieved over the ancients, in that which concerns works of art? None. From the first leap, human genius, applying itself to the representation of the sublime and the beautiful, was raised to such a height, that it has been impossible to surpass it since. Let us admit that the idea of progress, becoming fundamental to philosophy and the political sciences, regenerates them, but what use can it be to painting and statuary? Will it be enough to say to the artists that by virtue of progress they

¹² *The death of the just*, celebrated in the Scriptures, and the *annihilation in God*, which forms the basis of buddhism, are nothing other than that. The mysticism of Gerson, St. Theresa, Francis de Sales and Fenelon, also leads there. The Church of Rome, in condemning the latter, has blamed the revelation of the secret rather than the corruption of the doctrine.

¹⁵ The academics, by their lack of frankness, have produced a generation of libertines; the Jesuits, with their bigotry, have created a generation of atheists. While making souls despair during life, they handle gently the benefit of testimonies *in extremis*. Ask, after that, why the people need religion!

must, like the mathematicians, be always more profound and more skillful, in order for them to indeed become so?... What if the expression, and consequently the conception of the sublime weakened or remained stationary in humanity? Who would dare to say that the idea of the good or the true grew and strengthened? The theory of progress, after having obtained a more or less genuine triumph in the previous questions, runs aground on the last, the most seductive and pitiless: more unfortunate than Ulysses, it is devoured by the Sirens; it can do nothing for Beauty!...

Such is the objection, which differs very little from my own judgment, that art, setting aside the period of apprenticeship, is by nature always equal to itself, on a level inferior to its greatest sublimities. In what then and how does it fit into the theory of progress? How does it serve it? How does it furnish its last proof? I am going to try to explain.

What morals have revealed to consciousness, in the form of precepts, aesthetics aims to show to the senses in the form of images. The lesson expressed by the Logos is imperative in its tenor, and refers to an absolute law; the figure presented to the senses, explicit in its meaning, positive and realistic in its type, refers equally to an absolute. These are two modes of our education, at once sensible and intellectual, which touch in consciousness, differing between them only in the organ or faculty that serves as their vehicle.

To perfect oneself through justice or to make oneself holy, by observing the temporal law and by developing it in its entire truth. Such is the end indicated to man by morals; — to perfect himself by art, or, if I dare to make use of that familiar expression, to make himself beautiful, by purifying unceasingly, following the example of our soul, the forms that surround us. Such is the object of the aesthetic. One teaches us temperance, courage, modesty, brotherhood, devotion, labor and justice; the other purifies us, protects us, surround us with splendor and elegance: is it not always the same function, proceeding from the same principle and tending to the same end? — It is to start low, you say, to make art begin in the bath, with the cutting of the nails and hair! There is nothing small and despicable in all that which relates to the improvement of humanity. Didn't morals commence with the prohibition of human flesh and bestial love?...

It is a question at present of knowing how that theory of art has been understood and practiced, and how it would be suitable for it to be practiced from now on.

In the beginning, man posited his ideal far from himself; he made it concrete, personified it, and called himself the image of a sublime and beautiful being that he named God. At that moment religion, morals, worship, art and the marvelous were all confounded; and we could predict, the gods having been so conceived, what the artists and poets would become. Among the Greeks, the first images carved were those of divine persons; the first poetry sung was inspired by religion. The gods were beautiful, of a finished beauty; their images had to be beautiful, and all the efforts of the sculptors would tend to give them a typical

perfection, which, in approaching Divinity, ended by having nothing of man in it. Worship and art identified themselves to the point that for a time statues were only made for the gods; it would have been almost a sacrilege to make ugly mortals partake of the honors reserved for eternal beauties. All the rest was dealt with as a consequence. Poetry was called the language of the gods; until their last days the oracles were rendered in verse: to speak in prose, in a profane language, in the temples, would have been a great impropriety.

Thus the theory of art among the Greeks resulted entirely from religion. It imposed itself on their successors; it has reigned until our day. The artist, according to that religious theory, sought in everything THE MOST BEAUTIFUL, at the risk of abandoning nature and lacking reality. Its aim, as Raphael expressed it, was to make things, not such as nature produces them, but as it should produce them, but does not know how and cannot. It was not enough for him to reveal, by his work, the thought of the Absolute; he tended to reproduce it, to realize it. It is thus that, the imagination always tending towards their ideal, the Greeks arrived, in the expression of the beautiful, at a point that has never been equaled and perhaps will never be equaled. It would be necessary, to equal and surpass the Greeks, that we should, like them, believe in the gods, that we should believe in them more than the Greeks, and it is that which is impossible.

The people shared the ideas and the sentiment of the artists: this explains how in that profoundly *idolatrous* society, in love with the form on religious principles, everyone was competent in matters of literature and art. Religion imprinted the same direction on minds, and the same physiognomy on characters; the aesthetic sentiment developed in unison, and while among us literature, music and all the arts are the perpetual objects of contention, among the Greeks it was the things of taste that were the least disputed. Never has democracy shown itself more sovereign and popular judgment more incorruptible. The Athenians had only to consult the philosophers of the Academy, the *aristarques* of the feuilleton, on the beauty of the statues and temples; they knew all about it, so to speak, from birth, as they knew battles and feasts. The masterworks of Phidias, those of Sophocles and Aristophanes were received without commission and without jury, in the full assembly of the people, who having learned to read through Homer, speaking the language better than Euripides, would not have allowed a directorate of fine arts, appointed by Aspasia, to choose for them their goddesses and courtesans.

Does it follow that the Greeks and their imitators had fulfilled the aim of art, to the point that, despairing of equaling them, it remains for us only to copy and translate them, at the risk of a continued and inevitable decadence?

I am so far from thinking so, that I accuse precisely the Greeks, in their course of seeking the ideal, of having weakened the use of it and misunderstood its role, and I trace back to them the cause of that anarchy, that anti-aesthetic that desolates our civilization, superior though it is in so many ways.

Even in the production of the beautiful, the tendency of the Absolute leads to

exclusion, uniformity and stasis, and from there to ennui, to disgust, and finally to dissolution. The slope is irresistible.

Once the god and heroes, goddesses and nymphs, the sacred pomp and scenes of battles, had been depicted, rendered with their celestial types and their Homeric physiognomies, everything was finished for the Greek artist: he could only repeat himself. He had idealized in his god the ages, the sexes, all the conditions of humanity: the young man, the virgin, the mother, the priest, the singer, the athlete, the king; everyone had their idol, or as they said in the Middle Ages, his saint. What more could one ask for! There was only one step left to overcome: by a last effort of idealization, the artist would return those divine effigies to a supreme form, a bit like the philosopher accomplished the reduction of the divine attributes, and made of all the immortal personalities an invisible, unfathomable, eternal, infinite and absolute subject. But such a masterwork was quite simply a chimera: it would have been a fall into allegory, into nothingness. An infinite and unique God, the Absolute, in short, is not represented. Nothing that is in the heavens, on the earth or in the sea knows how to represent it, as the Hebrew Moses said. From the point of view of art, the unity of God is the destruction of the beautiful and the ideal: it is atheism.

Thus, the theory of art, as the Greeks conceived it, led from ideality to ideality, that is from abstraction to abstraction, straight to the absurd: it could avoid it only by inconsistency. How this would have surprised that philosopher of the ideal, Plato, if it had been demonstrated to him, by Socratic reasoning, that all of his philosophy rested on one or the other of these two negations, the negation of God or the negation of Beauty!

Divine Plato, these gods that you dreamed do not exist. There is nothing in the world greater and more beautiful than man.

But man, rising from the hands of nature, is miserable and ugly; he can only become sublime and beautiful through *gymnastics, politics, philosophy, music* and especially, something which you hardly appear to doubt, the *ascetic*.

What is the beautiful? You have said it yourself: it is the pure form, the typical idea of the true. The idea, as idea, exists only in the understanding; it is represented or realized with more or less fidelity and perfection by nature and art.

Art is humanity.

Insofar as we live we are artists, and our craft is to raise in our persons, in our bodies and in our souls, a statue to BEAUTY. Our model is in ourselves; those gods of marble and bronze that the vulgar adore are only some of its yardsticks.

Gymnastics includes dance, fencing, wrestling, running, equitation and all the exercises of the body. It develops the muscles, increases flexibility, agility and strength, gives grace and prevents excess weight and illness.

Politics embraces civil right, public right and the right of peoples; administration, legislation, diplomacy and war. It is that which, pulling man from barbarity, gives him true liberty courage and dignity.

Philosophy teaches logic, morals and history: it is the path of science, the mirror of virtue and the antidote of superstition.

Music, or the cult of the muses, has for its object poetry, oratory, song, the playing of instruments, the plastic arts, painting and architecture.

Its end is not, as you suppose, oh wise Plato, to sing hymns to the gods, to raise temples to them, to erect their statues, to make sacrifices and processions. It is to work at the deification of men, sometimes by the celebration of their virtues and beauties, sometimes by the execration of their ugliness and their crimes.

It is necessary then that the sculptor and the painter, like the singer, cover a wide diapason, that they show beauty by turns radiant and shadowed, across the whole extent of the social scale, from the slave to the prince, and from the plebs to the senate. You have only known how to paint the gods: it is necessary to represent the demons as well. The image of vice, like that of virtue, is as much within the domain of painting as of poetry: according to the lesson that the artist wants to give, every figure, beautiful or ugly, can carry out the aim of art.

Let the people, recognizing itself in its misery, learn to blush for its cowardice and to detest its tyrants; let the aristocracy, exposed in its oily, obscene nakedness, be lashed all over its body, in punishment for its parasitism, its insolence and its corruptions.¹⁴ Let the magistrate, the military man, the merchant, the peasant, let men of all the conditions of society, seeing themselves by turns in the heights of their dignity and their baseness, learn, by the glory and shame, to rectify their ideas, to correct their mores, and to perfect their institutions. And let each generation, registering thus on canvas and in marble the secret of its genius, arrive at posterity with no other blame or apology than the works of its artists.

This is how art must participate in the movement of society, how it must provoke it and follow it.

And it is for having misunderstood that goal of art, for having reduced it to nothing but an expression of a chimerical ideal, that Greece, elevated by fiction, would lose the knowledge of things and the scepter of ideas.

A time would come, Plato, when the Greeks, having put all beauty in the gods, would find themselves totally without it, and forget even the sentiment of it. A sad, coarse superstition taking hold then of their minds, we would see the descendants of those who had once worshiped such beautiful deities prostrate themselves before a hoary and deformed god, covered in rags, the type of misery and ignominy;¹⁵ we would see them, for love of that idol, hate beauty and make

¹⁴ Our conservative public is not of that opinion. It is not enough for it to be called *honest* and *moderate*; it wants to be made beautiful and to be believed such. An artist, who in their studio practice followed the principles of aesthetics formulated here, would be treated as seditious, driven from the ranks, deprived of State commissions, and condemned to die of hunger.

¹⁵ The Greeks, converted to Christianity, represent the Man-God as old, thin, suffering and ugly, in conformance with the text of Isaiah, ch. 53.

themselves vile and ugly according to their religious principles. The pious and holy would be recognized by their filth and vermin. Instead of poetry and the arts, inventions of sin, they would practice poverty, making a glory of begging. Gymnasiums, schools, libraries, theaters, academies, works and pomps of Satan, would be devastated and delivered to the flames: the image of a tortured martyr hanging on a gibbet would become for women the most precious of jewels. To be covered in ashes, to mortify oneself with abstinences, to exhaust oneself in prayers, to flee from study as profane and love as impure, that is what they would call the exercise (*asceticism*) of piety and penitence.

And that religion, that liturgy, those mysteries, Plato, that would be the religion of the *Logos*; and in the name of the *Logos*, reason would be detested, beauty cursed, art anathematized, philosophy and philosophers thrown into the flames and dedicated to the infernal gods.

Humanity then, bent under an infamous superstition, and believing itself odious and fallen, would be afflicted with a systematic and fatal degradation. There would be no more ideal, neither within man nor outside him; therefore, no more poetry, no more oratory, no more art and especially no more science. As much as Greece had elevated itself with the worship of its first gods, so much, under the yoke of its new Lord, it would be abased. For man does not raise himself up in reason and virtue, except as attracted by beauty; and his faith would consist of denying that beauty, which should make his joy and his triumph. An absolute and inexpressible god, manifested in a sickly and dishonored incarnation; man declared impure, deformed and vile from birth: once again, what aesthetic, what civilization could arise from that horrible dogma?

However, the decadence would not be eternal. These degenerate men would have learned two things, which would one day make them greater and better than their fathers: the first is that before God all men are equal; consequently that by nature and Providence there are no slaves; the second is that their duty and honor is to labor.

What neither gymnastics, nor politics, nor music, nor philosophy, bringing together their efforts, knew how to do, *Labor* will accomplish. As in the ancient ages the initiation to beauty came by way of the gods, so, in a remote posterity, beauty will be revealed anew by the laborer, the true *ascetic*, and it is from the innumerable forms of industry that it will demand its changing expression, always new and always true. Then, finally, the *Logos* will be manifested, and the human laborers, more beautiful and more free than the Greeks ever were, without nobles and without slaves, without magistrates and without priests, will form all together, on the cultivated earth, one family of heroes, thinkers and artists.¹⁶

¹⁶ For art, there are, and really only can have been only two eras: the religious or idolatrous epoch, of which the Greeks furnished the highest expression, and the industrial or humanitarian epoch, which hardly seems to have begun.

XI.

Thus, monsieur, a single notion, the notion of Progress, restored to its rank on the intellectual *clavier*, is sufficient for me to demonstrate the reason of my doctrines and to reform from top to bottom all that our classical, domestic and religious education makes us consider as indubitable, definitive and sacred. Of all that we have learned, you and I, at the College, the Church, the Academy, the Palace, the Bourse and the National Assembly, nothing persists, as soon as we examine it in the light of that inevitable notion, prior to every other, and for that reason least sensed and least perceived, of movement or Progress.

The century of Augustus was only a continuation of that of Pericles: art, passing from the service of the gods to that of the conquerors, began to decline, not with regard to finish or execution, but with regard to the conception of beauty. Such models as the emperors, the patricians and their wives! Such types as the lazy and ferocious plebs, the gladiators and praetorians!

The Renaissance was in its turn, as the name indicates, only a pastiche. There is not, and there could never be a Christian art. Antiquity having been suddenly exhumed, one gave up the emaciated Christs, the angular and pale Madonnas for the Jupiters, Apollos and Venuses: the artists of Jules II and Léon X had no other inspirations. Also, that movement of an imitative art, a reversal for the tradition, without possible intelligence for the future, could not sustain itself: it was a scandal of luxury and curiosity. As one hardly believed anymore in Jesus and the Virgin, and today we no longer believe at all, one soon came to lose interest in their images; and that catholic carnival having passed, art found itself again completely empty, without principle, without object and without aim.

The century of Louis XIV has been for us like that of Leo X had been for Italy, a *classical* exercise. It has passed quickly; and the more we see it move away, the more it seems to us below its reputation.

At present, the world of arts and letters is, like the political world, given over to dissolution. We have had successively: under Louis XIV, the dispute of the ancients and the moderns; under Louis XV, that of the Piccinistes, and the Gluckistes; under the restoration, that of the classicals and the romantics; at the same time, the battles of faith and reason, of authority and liberty, the economic and constitutional controversies. In sixty-four years, there have been in the French government a dozen revolutions and sixteen *coups d'Etat*, executed sometimes by power and sometimes by the people. This certainly does not testify to a great political genius. What could literature and the arts be, alongside that anarchy?

In 93, we were still *sensible*; today we are only sensual. I had intended to make that definition of woman. A jaded youth, without appetite and without heart, says to you: Woman is an object of art. So painting and sculpture are no longer anything but specialties in the pornocracy of the day. The artist can do what he likes, but he cannot fight against the model, the *tableau vivant*! Woman an object of art! It is not socialism that discovered that... I would like, for our more rapid regeneration, that the museums, cathedrals, palaces, salons and boudoirs, with all their ancient and modern furnishings, be thrown in the flames, with a prohibition of twenty years against the artists occupying themselves with their art. The past forgotten, we could make something.

What if now, after having, with the aid of that notion of Progress, purged my brain, remade my judgment and renewed my soul, looking around me and considering the figures that surround me, I no longer find in other men, yesterday my counterparts, anything but contradictors — I would almost say enemies? Here, monsieur, you have to take account of that bellicose, aggressive style, for which many have reproached me, but of which I have not always been conscious and about which I insist only that my adversaries and myself, imbued as we have been with different ideas, have not been able to understand each other. Someone said long ago that I have written only one line: There are in society only two parties, the party of movement and the party of resistance, the progressives and the absolutists. And yet, how few of the former do you know! How many, on the contrary do you not know of the second!

Absolutists of the first rank, are the false skeptics who, misunderstanding the law of intellectual movement and the essentially historical nature of truth, can see in human opinions only a heap of uncertainties, who unceasingly accuse philosophy of contradiction and society of inconsequence, and from the alleged impossibility of discovering truth and making men accept it, conclude indifferently, some for *laissez-faire* and others for whim, recognizing as seditious and culpable only discussion and liberty! As if truth in philosophy and politics could be anything but the chain of glimpses of reason, and as if that chain, even if we manage to embrace it with the mind, can realize itself any way but in time and the series of institutions! As if the work of the philosopher and reformer, after having recognized the progression of ideas, did not consist solely of indicating by turns the various moments of the law, positing each day a new milepost on the great road of Humanity!... Pascal, who was so greatly scandalized if the formula of right was made to vary even a degree from the meridian, and who wanted to render juridical reason uniform on the two sides of the Pyrenees, — Pascal, much more than Pyrrho, who is too maligned, — was the type of these absolutists.

Even more absolutist are those who, impatient with that perpetual mobility, want to settle civilization in a system, logic in a formula and right in a plebiscite; who, taking conceptions for *principles*, claim to link all human activity exclusively to these principles and, outside of their passionnal, hierarchic, dualist, trinitarian and communitarian fantasies, no longer perceive society, or morals, or common sense at all. As if each affirmation of the philosopher did not raise an equivalent negation; as if each decree of the sovereign, repealing the prior decree, did not posit in advance the decree that would repeal it!...

Absolutists, those would-be politicians who impose on society, like a yoke, their inflexible axioms and order it to obey, whatever the cost, without taking any more account of the advance of ideas than of the backwardness of populations. Nothing is more ordinary, indeed, than a society that, at the very moment when it seeks certain reforms, lags behind the institutions that it is a question of abolishing. It is thus that the rigorists become as dreadful for it as the

retrogrades.

The unity and perpetuity of power, says one, is the first of social laws. No salvation apart from a legitimate monarchy!

The kings are made for the people, responds another, not the people for the kings. No salvation apart from constitutional monarchy!

All reason in the same way: No salvation apart from the prorogation of the president, adds this one. No salvation apart from the constitution, adds that one. If a single accent is removed or added to that constitution, all is lost!

Others, full of their theories on sovereignty, exclaim: The interests alone reign and govern. No salvation apart from the law of May 31! If there are more than seven million electors, should they vote for serfdom and birthright, all is lost! — To which the reply is not long in coming: The right to suffrage is a natural and inalienable right. No salvation apart from the law of March 1849! If there are less than ten million registered voters, should they vote for community or empire, all is lost!...

These are the contradictions of absolutism! These are the debates with which the seven hundred and fifty representatives occupy their days, those whom the people have chosen to oversee the maintenance of peace, to rule and compromise amicably to the satisfaction of many, if not all, of the general interests, to organize a system of concessions and reforms, the practice of liberty! The ignorant people are driven to civil war by their own representatives! Woe to us if they are saved by someone! Woe if they come to save themselves!...

Absolutists, finally, those who, while proclaiming a general law of progress and the need for transitions, were entirely unable to discern its direction, abusing words and ideas in order to change minds and, alternately lulling public opinion to sleep with their self-interested compromises or whipping up popular ardor, sometimes complaining that the century was below their genius, sometimes pushing it according to their impatience, and by their inability to lead it, driving it over precipices.

Thus, romantic literature, revolutionary in form, ultimately resulted in a retrograde issue. It could be useful to rescue from oblivion the poetry of the Middle Ages, to render some measure of esteem to the architecture of dungeons and cathedrals, but by reviving feudalism as a literary element, the romantics nullified, as far as they were able, the philosophical movement of the eighteenth century and rendered the nineteenth century unintelligible. We owe them the better part of the reaction that greeted the Republic.

Thus eclecticism, with such honest intentions, with such an impartial critique, but with such timid views, so intent in its mediocrity, after having given a strong impetus to study, ended up in intolerance. With its psychology borrowed from the Scots, and its theism from a bit of renovated Plato, it established a *cordon sanitaire* around the *status quo*. Catholicism owes to it the extension of its lease on life and pays back the debt by eliminating it: is this not justice?

Thus, since 1830, while the publication of the theories of Saint-Simon,

Fourier, Owen, and the resurrection of the ideas of Babeuf have posed so powerfully the social question, the real question of the century, we have been distracted, led astray, deceived by a false democratic and doctrinaire liberalism. Under the pretext of loyalty to the traditions of 89 and 93, we have cast as much discredit as we could on the socialist theories; instead of aiding the investigation, we have suppressed it. Doubtless it was necessary to redeem and avenge the men of the grand epoch; the progress of our generation was accelerated by all the Justice which was rendered to them. But was it necessary to take them for models, to impose on ourselves their practices and prejudices? In this moment, it is socialism that the so-called revolutionary coteries, who are all most insurrectionary, blame all the evil since 1848 on the revolution. They say that if socialism, if the revolution had not existed, the revolution would not have brought about the counter-revolution!... Also, and do not mistake it, that old democracy aspires only to save society from socialism one last time, and regrets not having saved it better in 1848. Thanks to that absurd distinction between the socialist party and the revolutionary party a handful of dictators have sworn, as one says in his patriotic zeal, the extermination of socialism, the suppression of Progress! Do you know where the blindness of the neo-Jacobins would push us? To a reaction without limits, of which they would not be the heroes, but the victims, but of which, to top off their misery, they also would not have the right to complain, since they would have been its accomplices...¹⁷

Progress is to know, to foresee. Those who were charged with realizing progress in 1848 were all, for various reasons, men of the past: is it surprising that they have not known how to make the future? Convinced today by their own

¹⁷ I have allowed this passage to remain, not in order to insult the misfortunes that I shared when it was written, but in order to respond to tireless calumnies.

The thing that is especially pathetic about the *coup d'état* of December 2 is that the men it has most cruelly struck are exactly those who appear to understand it the least. We want to see only the instrument, the occasion, the pretext, if I dare put it this way, the *strings*: we obstinately refuse to recognize the cause. The cause is the terror caused by a revolution of which the character, the measure and the end was distorted; it is the retrograde direction of opinion, the obstinate resistance of the parties, the machiavellianism of the Legislature, the division of the republicans, of which some, in the majority, wanted the republic without the revolution, or the revolution without socialism, the word without the thing, while the others were forced to protest against that absurd politics, or else suicide; it is above all the appeal to popular instincts, under the most unfortunate circumstances, under the name of *universal suffrage*. For my part, I confess, if I am worried for the sake of freedom, if sometimes I have doubts about the future of democracy, is because I see its defenders, martyrs of a vain formula, turn furiously upon the social revolution, having become indifferent to ideas, not understanding that the proliferation of socialist theories is precisely what makes it strong, so that some join the Orléanists, for shame! ... or indulge in chimerical projects, denounced as quickly as they are conceived! May they finally wake up ... On the day they abandon their deadly path, freedom will not be far away; in France, there will only be a prejudice to bring down.

confessions of having seen in the revolution only a change of functionaries, they have brought on themselves a fatal decline. Any attempt to return, which would not justify an explicit conversion, would be a crime on their part.

Liberty is wealth; it is nobility. We have cast the electoral right to those *dying of hunger*, as Bridaine said; they have responded like slaves. What is astonishing about that? Let the proletariat vote in 52 as it did in 48, on an empty stomach, and soon we will all be in servitude, and French democracy, refuted by its own principle, without flag and without program, will have ceased for a time to be a reality.

Forced in 1848 to fight for my defense and for the revolutionary affirmation, I soon recognized, by the annoyance that new ideas raised in the democratic party, that the moment had not come; and I have made all my efforts to conceal an antagonism which from now on serves no purpose, and work a necessary reconciliation between the laboring class and the bourgeois. I believe by that to have made an act of good politics, and above all of progress. When the parties show themselves unanimously refractory, they can only be revolutionized by one means, fusion...



You have, sir, my profession of faith. I have never written it before; I confess that I have rarely even reflected on it. I have been carried by the current of my century. I have gone forward without ever turning around, affirming movement, seeking the totality of my ideas, denying the analytic conceptions, sustaining the identity of ontology and logic, showing liberty to be above even religion,¹⁸ pleading in the name of justice the cause of the wage-earners and the poor, defending equality, or rather the progressive equation of functions and destinies; in addition, believing little in disinterestedness, holding martyrdom in low esteem despite my imprisonment, thinking that amity is fragile, reason vacillating, conscience doubtful, and regarding charity, brotherhood, attractive labor, women's liberation, legitimate government, divine right, perfect love and happiness, as travesties of the Absolute.

If I have, unbeknownst to myself, in the heat of polemic, in bad faith from party spirit, or in any other way, been unfaithful to this doctrine, it is a *lapsus calami* on my part, an argument *ad hominem*, a failure of mind or of heart, which I disavow and retract.

Besides, that philosophical humility costs me little. The idea of progress is so universal, so flexible, so fecund, that he who has taken it for a compass almost no longer needs to know if his propositions form a body of doctrine or not: the

¹⁸ A Voltairean who had a great fear of the devil, the prince of Ligne, said fifty years ago: "Atheism lives in the shadow of religion." — Since then, things have advanced and the roles are reversed: religion lives in the shadow of the State. Now, ask Odilon Barrot what is the doctrine of the State in matters of faith? His response, better than any I could give, will demonstrate to you the urgency of a principle that could serve at once as the foundation of religion, that is of morals, and of the State.

agreement between them, the system, exists by the mere fact that they are in progress. Show me a philosophy where a similar security is to be found!... I never reread my works and those that I wrote first I have forgotten. What does it matter, if I have moved for twelve years, and if today I still advance? What could a few lapses, or some false steps, detract from the rectitude of my faith, the goodness of my cause?... You will please me, monsieur, to learn for yourself what road I have traveled, and how many times I have fallen along the way. Far from blushing at so many spills, I would be tempted to boast of them, and to measure my valor by the number of my contusions.

I am, sir, etc.

SECOND LETTER

ON CERTAINTY AND ITS CRITERION

Sainte-Pélagie, December 1, 1851.

MONSIEUR,

The question that you pose to me in your second letter could not be more judicious, and if I have not addressed it first, it is because it seemed to me to pertain to the circle of proofs and justifications that I would have to furnish later, not the general outline that I needed to make for you. Since you ask, I can no longer refuse your wish, and I am going to try, if I can, to explain myself clearly on this difficult matter.

The problem of certainty is most certainly within the domain of philosophy: the theory of Progress admits it as well, and that theory alone, in my opinion, can resolve it in a satisfactory manner. But certainty is one thing; what the Greeks called κριτήριον, the *criterion* of certainty, is another. Certainty is, as I just said, rational and philosophical by right; the so-called *criterion* is only an importation from theology, a prejudice of religious faith without sense within the limits of reason, and is even, from the point of view of the intellectual movement that constitutes reason, a contradictory hypothesis.

But, you ask, how do you conceive of certainty without a criterion? And if certainty cannot be conceived without a criterion, how, without that means of discernment and of guarantee, is science possible? How, with regard to certainty, can faith be more favored than reason? It is precisely contrary to what is always assumed; it is by virtue of that very assumption that philosophy exists, and opposes itself to faith. The negation of the criterion, in philosophy, is the strangest thing imaginable...

I hope, sir, that this negation will soon seem most natural to you, and that you will see in it, with me, not the condemnation, but the glory of science.

I.

Saint Paul said: Faith is the argument for things that do not appear, that is, things that are without evidence or intuitive certainty, *argumentum non apparentium*. Now, things the *do not appear* form the majority of the objects that occupy the mind and consciousness of men. This means, according to the Apostle, that we know nothing, or almost nothing, of the things of the universe and of humanity, except by faith. It is thus that faith has become a criterion for the human mind.

All societies begin here and, surprisingly perhaps in our epoch of discussion

and doubt, the mass, in which I include the University and the State, has no other rule. In doubtful questions, and all practical questions are of that sort, most men know only faith. If they follow reason, it is without knowing it; for, I repeat, they do not conceive of reason without a decree or philosophy without a criterion.

Let me explain this.

The Christian believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, sent to earth and born of a virgin to teach men the truths necessary for political order, domestic society and personal salvation.

He believes that this Christ has transmitted his powers to his Church, that he is with it permanently through the Spirit that he has communicated to it and that, by virtue of that continued revelation, the Church rules worship and morals with an infallible authority.

Provided with that faith, the Christian possesses, or believes he possesses, for all questions, — not only of theology, but of politics and morals, which do not come directly under common sense, — an instrument of control that excuses him from reflecting and even from thinking, the use of which could not be more simple. It is only a matter of comparing the controversial questions, either with the words of Christ reported in the Gospels or with the ecclesiastical interpretation, the value of which is equal for the Christian.

Every proposition that confirms the Gospel or that supports the Church is true;

Every proposition that refutes the Gospel or that condemns the Church is false;

Every proposition on which neither the Gospel nor the Church has pronounced is irrelevant.

The words of the messiah and the canonical definition are, for the Christian, the absolute truth, from which all other truth emanates. Here is, consequently, the criterion.

It is obvious that such a judiciary process is nothing other than tyranny for intelligence. Likewise, all governments, constituted on the divine type of the Church, are eager to imitate it. But reason protests: "That saying is hard!" Even in the presence of Jesus Christ the apostles said, *Durus est hic sermo!* For in the end, the Gospel has not said everything, or foreseen everything; as for the Church, it has so often and so scandalously failed! And what if I showed in a moment that the so-called criterion has never served to discern a single truth, to render a single judgment!...

Yet, instead of dismissing as doubtful the Christian criterion, we have first tried to render it more universal and exact. To correct the criterion of truth could pass for real folly: So what! There have been no means to do otherwise. And the thing was seen as no greater difficulty than a rectification of weights and measures.

Thus, following the Reformation, Christ is God, or nearly so; his teaching is sovereign, and as criterion, in the questions to which it can be applied

immediately, it is infallible. As for the episcopal exegesis and the authority of the councils and the pope, the Reformation rejects them all as narrow, partial, subject to haste and to contradiction. In place of the Church, each of the faithful is invested with the right to read by himself the sacred text and to seek its sense. In other words, the evangelical criterion, which formerly only the Roman Church had had the right to use, has been put back in the hands of the baptized: such has been the result of the Reformation.

Lamennais, in his *Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion*, puts it in a different way. According to that *Croyant*, God is revealed at all times to humanity, not only by the patriarchs, priests and prophets of the Old Testament, not only by Jesus and his Church, but by all the founders of religion: Zoroaster, Hermes, Orpheus, Buddha, Confucius, etc. All the moral and religious ideas that Humanity has possessed come from that single, permanent revelation. As the States of modern Europe are the product of Christianity, more or less adapted to particular circumstances and races, so the States of antiquity were the product of the primitive religion, professed by Adam, Noah, Melchizedek, etc. At base, the legislations, like the cults, are identical: all rest on an original communication from the Divinity. If one made an inventory of the political and religious institutions of all peoples, and separated the content from the form, one would obtain a code of perfectly homogeneous formulas, which one could regard as wisdom revealed from on high, the criterion of the human species.

Obviously this way of envisioning Christianity weakens it, in the sense that it folds it back into the general system of religious manifestations, and obliges it to fraternize with all the cults on which it has cast the anathema for so long. But, for all that it loses, one can say that it increases as well, creating a larger Catholicism than that which the first Christians conceived. The cults are generally regarded as in solidarity as well; their cause is now common, and Edgard Quinet, in writing the *Génie des religions*, has clearly posited the principle of modern religiosity. The university is agreed in principle with the Jesuits, and the Pope can offer his hand to the sultan and the Grand Lama. The great reconciliation is accomplished, faith is one like the Logos, and the universal republic has found its criterion.

I fear, however, that this Christianity of poets and archeologists has only led to a mystification, and that by generalizing the criterion, they have lost it.

The Reformation said: All the faithful receive, by baptism and communion, the Holy Spirit. All are, as a consequence, interpreters of the words of Christ: the canonical definition is useless.

Lamennais, Quinet, Mazzini and others add: All the peoples have received, by their individual initiations, the Holy Spirit; all cults are consequently versions of the Gospel, and the authority of these versions together takes precedent over that of the Church of Rome.

However you look at it, as soon as you reject special authority, in order to put in its place either individual sentiment, or, what amounts to the same thing,

universal testimony, doesn't this break the link with faith and make an appeal to reason? We thought we had secured our criterion: it has vanished.

Since we are then forced to return to reason, let us see what it offers. Does it also have a criterion?

II.

Nothing new under the sun! Early on, reason, under the name of science, knowledge, *επιστημη*, *γνωσις*, or under the more modest one of *philosophy*, aspiration to science, opposed itself to faith and claimed the possession of truth, no longer through the words of a spirit-medium, *fides ex auditu*, but by a contemplation that is direct and, so to speak, face-to-face, *sicuti est facie ad faciem*. To see truth in itself, on the sole guarantee of one's eyes and one's reason, is clearly to reject the hypothesis of a criterion: I am astonished that philosophy has not been able to understand that apologue. Such was, however, the thought of that multitude of religionists, contemporaries of Jesus and the apostles, who, under the general name of *gnostics*, knowers, stood up to the Church for more than six centuries, and disappeared completely only with the arrival of the Reformation.

Gnosticism, I have no doubt, would have soon suppressed Christianity, and become the universal religion, if it had shown itself more true to its name, if it had been more practical, more empirical and less *illuminated*. But that supposed *gnosis* was five times more complicated, more mysterious, more hyper-physical than the emerging *faith* that it despised: so much so that, in his letters, Paul, the doctor *par excellence* of faith, the man of the transcendental criterion, treated the sublimities of the *gnosis* as old wives' tales and heaped his sarcasm on them. Alas! The common sense is the last to arrive in the human mind, and he who is believed wise because he protests against a certain degree of superstition, is himself only superstitious in a more malignant and incurable manner. Gnosticism, which only made an attempt at religious fusion, analogous to that which is attempted in our own times, was defeated as much by its own contradictions as by the real superiority of its adversary. Those who claimed to have a direct knowledge were persuaded to experience only the chimeras of their own brains; and now more than ever one will call for a preservative against the illusions of the encephalon. Thanks to them, science has been postponed for fifteen centuries. It would never have developed, if it had depended on the modern theosophists.

It was with Bacon and the Renaissance that science was formed, apart from the supernatural and the absolute, experimental, positive, certain and, I dare say, without criterion. I will first explain this apparent paradox: you will see soon how, after the example of the Greeks, the moderns could put back into question the certainty of knowledge, and how their minds, incompletely purged of theological notions, fell again into the *criteriomania* of the ancients.

All that exists, I said in my first letter, is necessarily in evolution; everything flows, everything changes, modifies, and transforms itself unceasingly. Movement is the essential condition, almost the *material*, of being and thought. There is nothing fixed, stable, absolute or invincible, except the very law of movement, that is the *relations* of weight, number and measure, according to which all existence appears and conducts itself. Here, the philosophy of progress absorbs that of Pythagoras, and gives it its rank and character.

Thus, the entirety of the universe is identical and adequate to the entirety of the series or evolution. For example, the entirety of animal existence is contained in the period included between conception and death: the living being, in whatever moment of that period, is only a fraction of itself. It follows from this that all actuality is imperfect and unreal, always representing only a movement of the evolution, a term in the series, in short a fraction or approximation of existence, conveying only incompletely the law.

The law in itself is thus certain, and we can have an exact idea of it by successive observations of the partial manifestations that reveal it. But nothing sensible, nothing present, nothing real can ever represent it: such a realization, at a given hour, is contradictory. There is then no specimen of movement possible, no exact and authentic copy. The archetype, Plato said, is and always will be only an idea; no power knows how to obtain a standard.

If it is thus for existence considered in its plenitude, if reality exists only fractionally in relations and in things, it follows:

That we can know well the *law* of our thoughts, the *rule* of our actions, the *system* of our evolutions, the *course* of our institutions and of our mores; that we conform as best we can, in the exercise of our liberty, to that *law*, to that *rule*, to that *system*, to that *providential course*; that we can finally, in the practice of life, render *equitable* judgments, but that we can never render these judgments just. God himself could not do it. His reason, just like ours, only pronounces correctly on the ensemble, never on the details: on that condition only can one say, with the psalmist, that divine judgments are absolute, *justificata in semetipsa*.

Let us render this more sensible by some examples.

The idea of value is elementary in economics: everyone knows what is meant by it. Nothing is less arbitrary than this idea; it is the comparative relation of products that, at each moment of social life, make up wealth. Value, in a word, indicates a proportion.

Now, a proportion is something mathematical, exact, ideal, something that, by its high intelligibility, excludes caprice and fortune. There is then, above supply and demand, a *law* for the comparison of values, therefore a *rule* for the evaluation of products.

But that law or rule is a pure idea, which it is impossible, at any moment, and for any object, to apply precisely, to have the exact and true standard. Products vary constantly in quantity and in quality; the capital in the production and its cost vary equally. The proportion does not remain the same for two instants in a

row: a criterion or standard of values is thus impossible. The piece of money, five grams in weight, that we call the *franc*, is not a fixed unity of values: it is only a product like others, which with its weight of five grams at nine-tenths silver and one-tenth alloy, is worth sometimes more, sometimes less than the franc, without us ever being able to know exactly what is its difference from the standard franc.

On what then does commerce rest, since it is proven that, lacking a standard of value, exchange is never equal, although the law of proportionality is rigorous? It is here that liberty comes to the rescue of reason, and compensates for the failures of certainty. Commerce rests on a *convention*, the principle of which is that the parties, after having sought fruitlessly the exact relations of the objects exchanged, come to an agreement to give an expression reputed to be exact, provided that it does not exceed the limits of a certain tolerance. That conventional expression is what we call the *price*.

Thus, in the order of economic ideas, the truth is in the law, and not in the transactions. There is a certainty for the theory, but there is no criterion for practice. There would not even have been practice, and society would be impossible, if, in the absence of a criterion prior and superior to it, human liberty had not found a means to supply it by *contract*.

From economics, let us pass on to morals. Justice, according to Roman law, consists in rendering to each what is due to them, *suum cuique*. I will hold myself to that definition, in order to avoid all dispute.

The law of justice is absolute: the civil law, written or customary, rests on it. No one ever disputes the validity of that law: on the other hand, the world resounds with complaints against its applications. Where then is the criterion? I observed in my first letter that the maxim, *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*, is not an instrument for exact assessment, since it would be necessary to know what we should legitimately desire to be done to us. The economic formula that socialism substitutes for that ancient adage, *To each according to his capacity, to each capacity according to its product*, is more certain, since it poses at once the right and the duty, the benefit and its condition. But it is no more a criterion than the other, since, according to what has just been said about value, we never know exactly what a thing is worth, or what a man deserves.

I profoundly respect property, as I respect every institution, every religion. But those who accuse socialism of wanting to abolish property, and who have taken such useless care to defend it, would be deeply embarrassed to say how they recognize, with certainty, that such a thing is the property of such a one, and that there is not another right to that thing. What, in a word, is the criterion of property? If some element of revelation must have had to intervene in human judgments, it is definitely in those that concern property. How much land and how much personal property must return to each? It seems to me that at that question the big eyes of our conservatives are troubled, and that their egoistic side is disconcerted.

Is it conquest, first occupation, which creates property? — I observe that force does not make law, and that at the first occasion I would know, without further ado, to take my revenge.

Is it the institution of the State? — I respond that what the state has made, the State can unmake; and as I have the greatest interest in the thing, I am going to try to make myself master of the State.

Is it labor? — I ask: what should the wages of labor be? If each has labored? If those who have labored have received what is due to them, *cuique suum*, neither more nor less?...

Some philosophers who think themselves profound, and who are only impertinent, imagine that they have found a flat refusal of the principle of equality, which forms the basis of the anti-proprietary critique. They say that there are not two equal things in the whole universe. — So be it. Let us admit that there have not been two equal things in the world: at least one will not deny that all have been in EQUILIBRIUM, since, without equilibrium, as without movement, there is no existence. What then is the equilibrium of fortunes? What are its *minima* and its *maxima*? What is the relation between the *minima* and *maxima* of fortunes, and the *minima* and *maxima* of capacities? Allow me to ask: because without an answer everything again becomes usurpation, and the most ignorant, the most incompetent of humans has the right to be treated as well as the most learned and the most valiant, if only as a compensation for his weakness and his ignorance.

Clearly, this is no criterion for property, neither for its measure, nor its acquisition, nor its transmission, nor its enjoyment. Note also that from this lack of criterion for the just appropriation of goods, the author of the Gospel has concluded, following Lycurgus, Pythagoras and Plato for communism, all of antiquity for slavery, and Malthusian economics for the *salariat*.

Now what does the new science, the theory of Progress, say about property?

It says that property, like the price of things, is originally the product of a *contract*, that this contract is determined by the necessity of labor, just as the convention that fixes the price of things is determined by the necessity of exchange; but that, just as with time and competition the price of each thing approaches more and more its true value, so with time and credit property tends more and more to approach equality. Only, while the price of merchandise, or the just remuneration of the laborer, generally reaches its normal rate in a rather short period, property only arrives at its equilibrium after a much longer time: somewhat as if one compared the annual movement of the earth to the revolution of the equinoxes.

Once again, there exists here a rule for legislator, but there is no criterion for the judge. While eternal justice slowly accomplishes its work, jurisprudence is forced to obey custom, to obey the religion of the contract.

The natural sciences offer examples of that distinction between the *law* of things and their *realization*: the first is absolute and unchanging; the second

essentially mobile, approximate and untrue. Thus it is a law that the stars weigh on one another in direct relation to their masses and inverse to the square of their distances; that they sweep areas proportional to time, etc. But these laws, which we can grasp only by embracing in thought immense and numerous revolutions, are practically all that is true in the existence of the worlds; as for phenomena, they are as irregular as one can imagine. It is a fact, for example, that the sidereal circles are not round, nor are they oval. More than that, their shaky curves do not return on themselves, etc. Where do they tend, finally? No one knows. The celestial army rolls in a space without bounds, without ever presenting twice in a row the same positions. Is it necessary to conclude that geometry and arithmetic, by which we calculate these movements, are false, and the science illustrated by Newton, Laplace, and Herschel, is a chimera? No. All these variations of the eternal mode prove one thing, namely, that certainty is not in the phenomenon, which considered separately is nothing more than an *accident*, but in the series of evolutions, which alone is *law*.

But let us remain with the things of humanity, for it is there above all that the question of certainty takes on its gravity and interests us.

I have said that the idea of a criterion of certainty was an importation from theology into the philosophical domain; I have proven, with regard to economics and morals, which the supposed criterion was without possible application. More curious still, it is powerless in religion, the very order of ideas that produced it and for which it had been invented. Religion, like justice and economics, is subject to the law of Progress; for that reason, it no longer has a criterion, so that faith, that *reason of things unseen*, resolves itself in mental alienation or returns to the dialectic.

Did Christianity exist in Jesus? I do not address this question to the Christian, but to the philosopher. Did it exist in St. Paul, in Augustine, in Photios, in Thomas, in Bossuet? Does it exist in Pious IX, in Nicholas or in Victoria?

Christianity would be diminished if one reduced it to any particular profession of faith. The ancients did not know all that the moderns accept; the moderns, for their part, do not retain all that the ancients accepted. At no time has the form been the same for all contemporaries. According to Christ and the apostles, the kingdom of the Gospel is not of this world; according to Hildebrand and the ultramontanes, the pope, elevated above all power, is the master of the world; according to the Greeks and the Anglicans, the natural head of the Church is the head of State. All these oppositions can be equally justified by tradition, by Scripture and by the general system of religions; and it would not be difficult to show that the difference of opinions on the independence or the subordination of the temporal power leads to a similar case in dogma. Who is one to believe, Christ speaking for himself or the Church affirming its supremacy? Gallicans who separate the two powers, or Russians and Anglicans who reunite them? All that is equally a part of Christianity, and it is in perfect contradiction. Which becomes

the criterion?

The theory of Progress alone can give a reasonable explanation of the variations of the Christian faith, but on the condition that Christianity loses its Absolute character. That theory considers Christianity as a current of opinions, which formed in the time of Alexander all across Greece and the Orient; which grew and became complicated by a multitude of tributaries, from Augustus to Theodosius; which divided next at Photius; which, under the name of Catholicism, seemed to reach its apogee, from Gregoire VII to Boniface VIII; which subdivided again with Luther; which finally, while frightened of its own movement, attempted to fix itself at Trent and, killed as Catholicism by the negation of its inevitable mobility, went on to be scattered and lost, as Protestantism, in the sands of American democracy.

To know Christianity is not to affirm such and such a system of dogma, more or less harmonically combined and aiming for stasis; it is to have traveled and visited the Christian river, first in its oriental, Jewish, Egyptian, Greek, Latin, Germanic, and Slavic sources, then in its tumultuous and so often divided course, and finally in the innumerable offshoots where it little by little lost its character and disappeared.

Religion, like the State, like all human institutions, manifests itself in a series of essentially opposed and contradictory terms: it is for this reason alone that it is intelligible. Its true criterion is its variations. When Bossuet pointed to the instability of the dogma in reformed churches, and demanded of his own a constancy of faith that does not exist, he made, without knowing it, an apology for his adversaries and pronounced the condemnation of Catholicism.

Religion is like speech. Nothing is more mobile, more varied, more elusive than human language, the *verbe*, and yet language is one in its essence and the laws of language, much more than formulas of the law and the definitions of theology, are the very expression of reason. Here, as everywhere, the absolute is a pure idea, while the accident is reality itself. Do you say that speech is only a vain sound, grammar a folly, poetry a dream, because the universal language is and can only be an abstraction?...

All truth is in history, as all existence is in movement and the series; consequently every formula, philosophical or legislative, has and can have only a transitional value. Neglect of that maxim is the fecund source of all our aberrations and misfortunes.

Cicero regarded *universal consent* as the highest degree of moral certainty, and all our treatises of philosophy still cite it as the most explicit proof of the existence of God. But is it clear, by all that has just been said, that universal consent only has value if one takes it in the succession of its testimonies. Outside of that, it is only contradiction and falsehood. Considered at any one moment of its manifestations, universal consent loses its name; it becomes *universal suffrage*, the fantasy of the moment set up as an absolute.

Do you then want universal suffrage, which forms at this moment the basis

of our public rights, to acquire all the authority of which it has need? There is no question of abolishing it: the people have tasted the forbidden fruit; it is necessary, for its absolution or condemnation, that it be relished to the end. Abandon your systems of electoral voting, each more absurd than the last, which only give birth to the tyranny of the majority or its abdication. Make universal suffrage in the image of universal consent. Consider that mass that you are going to poll as a representation of all the ages of Humanity. There are day laborers, domestics, wage-earners, the poor and ignorant multitude, called constantly by its poverty to crime, which represent for you the primitive generations; above that multitude, a middle class, composed of laborers, artisans, and merchants, the mores, opinions and fortunes of which express rather well the second degree of civilization; finally, an elite, formed of magistrates, civil servants, professors, writers and artists, who mark the most advanced degree of the species. Ask of these diverse interests, these semi-barbaric instincts, these stubborn habits, these so-high aspirations, their intimate thought; classify all these wishes according to the natural progression of groups; then you will find in it a coordinated formula that, embracing the contrary terms, expressing the general tendency and expressing the will of no one person, will be the *social contract*, will be the law. This is how civilization has generally advanced, behind the backs of the legislators and the men of state, under the cover of oppositions, revolutions and wars...

I believe, monsieur, that I have sufficiently demonstrated that the criterion of certainty is an anti-philosophical idea borrowed from theology, the assumption of which is destructive of certainty itself. Not only do metaphysics, politics, legislation, economics, history and all the sciences reject this idea: the very religion that gave birth to it is rendered inexplicable by it. That proposition seems to me novel enough to merit some elaboration: I come now to the heart of the difficulty.

III.

Following the example of the Greeks, modern philosophy first asks us how we recognize what the understanding calls *law*, but which is inaccessible to the senses; — in the second place, it asks if these alleged laws, which we suppose rule beings, are not simply the effects of our intellectual activity or, in other words, an involuntary application of the forms of our reason to phenomena; — finally, it asks if we are certain of the reality of objects and if the opinion that we have of their existence is anything but a subjective faith. That is the transcendent doubt, in proof of which are cited the contradictory propositions of metaphysics, which Jouffroy among others has declared invincible.

My response will be brief, since it is made in advance, and so it will have the hope of being as clear as it is decisive.

On the first point, namely by what sign we recognize the general idea or law,

I respond that it is recognized by the *unity of diversity* that constitutes the series, genus or species, in short, by the group. It is like the knowledge of things themselves, a simple intuition. Will you ask next how the mind perceives unity? That amounts to asking how there is something or someone who sees and who thinks. I will not respond to that question any more than to this other: How does something exist? Thought, the faculty of discovering and expressing that diversified unity, is the original, prior, immediately given, and thus inexplicable fact of science and of the universe. Without the faculty of perceiving unity, there is no more thought, no more consciousness, no more existence, nothing more at all. I am, I think, I possess unity. Or, leaving aside that grammatical *personality*, which is itself only an accident, something is, something thinks, something is one: all these propositions are identical for me. They signify that the essential condition of my thought is to see the law and to see only the law. I do not prove that perception; I affirm it with Descartes and with Malebranche: as I think only by virtue of my faculty to perceive unity, on the one hand I discover unity everywhere and on the other I see everything in unity.

On the second point, — that is, if the unity or law that my thought discovers, which consequently becomes immediately the law or form of my thought, is a product of my thought or if it is at the same time the law of things, and if consequently, third point, it implies the existence, external to my thought, of what I call *things* — I respond that this double question is not one for me and that it can only be addressed to those who, not acknowledging the synthetic idea of movement as the basis of ontology and logic, depart from the distinction of substances and from the diverse degrees of being make so many different beings.

Indeed, if it is true, as I believe I have proven, that ontological dualism is the result of the analysis of the idea of movement and of the subsequent realization of the concepts given by that analysis, all the objections drawn from the distinction of *self* and the *non-self* fall with that distinction itself.¹⁹ The being, at

¹⁹ If *to think* [*penser*] and *to weigh* [*peser*] are impersonal [*anonymes*], as etymology proves, the gulf that the ancient ontology had dug between mind and matter is filled in; the vibrations of the ether can transmit the impressions of the brain; consciousness is no longer anything but a source of movements, which the crudest of bodies can echo. By the sole fact that I think, I move; by the conception in my brain of the idea of movement, that idea is executed; and the muscles which receive the effect via the nerves, tend to execute it in their turn. They would undoubtedly execute it, if a thought contrary in sense did not suspend their action, and make the first impulse die at the extremity of the nerves. If two, three, or a greater number of thinking subjects put themselves in relation by any conductor, if a word is cast in their midst, it will produce, unbeknownst to them, a general commotion, translatable into ideas, the spontaneity of which would indicate to superstitious persons the presence of a demon familiar or a departed soul. Would a career open up, from that, for the soothsayers and the necromancers? Perish the thought. Nature, by its harmonies, by the constancy of its laws, by the fixity of its types, teaches us enough to scoff at prodigies and monsters; and it is the sign of a great abasement of intelligence, a prelude to great catastrophes, when the people, incapable of scientific toil, abandon reason and nature to chase after evocations and miracles.

its highest degree of existence, is at once self and non-self: it can say equally, speaking of itself as of others, *I, you, he, we, you all, they*. What establishes the identity and the adequacy of persons in it, in the singular, the dual and the plural, is precisely their *conjugation*.

Just as Descartes could not doubt that he thought, and as doubt raised on his thought would be illegitimate, just so and for much stronger reasons, I cannot doubt that I move, since thought is only a form of movement: in this case, as in the former, and much more than in that case, doubt is contradictory and illegitimate.²⁰

Now, whoever says movement says series, diversified unity, or group, consequently self and non-self, I and thou, us and them, etc., *ad infinitum*. The revelation that I have of myself necessarily implies the one that I have of others and *vice-versa*, or rather these two revelations amount to only one, from which it follows that the laws of that thought are at the same time and necessarily the laws of things. The contrary would be a contradiction.

Besides, that decisive identity of self and non-self, so difficult to establish in the realm of pure ideas, will be proven directly and empirically by the physiology of the collective man, by the demonstration of his faculties, of his ideas and his operations.

When one has seen how, in the human species, the individual and society, indivisibly united, form two distinct beings, both thinking, active and progressive; how the first receives a part of its ideas from the second, and exercises in its turn an influence on it; how then the economic relations, products of individual analysis and contradictory among themselves insofar as one considers them in the individual, resolve into synthetic ideas in society, so that each man reasons and acts by virtue of a double self, enjoys a double intelligence, speaks a double language, pursues a double interest; when, I say, one will take into account that organic dualism sensed by all religions, which composes at once collective existence and individual existences, one will conceive more easily the resolution of the contraries in ontology and metaphysics, and the scandal of the divergence and contradiction of the philosophies will reach its end.

These philosophies will all appear true, as special analytic deductions of the universal theory of movement; but each of them will also appear false, insofar as they aspire to make a schism and exclude their rivals.²¹ Thus, the philosophical

²⁰ Zeno of Elea denied movement, and pretended to justify his negation by a mathematical reasoning, based on the principle of the *infinite divisibility of space*. But it is clear: 1) that the demonstration of Zeno is itself only a movement of his mind, which involves him in a contradiction; 2) that it rests, like the idea of space traveled across, on an analysis of movement, which is another contradiction; 3) that in posing the infinite division, he requires an infinite *retrogradation*, which is a third contradiction.

²¹ The philosophy of Progress reconciles systems by showing that their apothegms all rest on analytic notions which are only true to the extent that they are coupled to other notions that are equally analytic, but diametrically opposed, in a common synthesis; so that each is true, but on the condition that the contrary is true as well:

problem being resolved, it will be true to say that the philosophical movement is accomplished: in the place of systems, starting from an arbitrary conception and leading to a fatal contradiction, we would have progressive science, the ever-greater comprehension of being, of law and of unity.

Thus religious dogmatism would also receive its rational interpretation, and the political order its free constitution: every theosophy dying away in the realm of morals, every cult in education, all government in economics, all authority in contracts.

Thus, finally, we would know why, the economic science having until recently been lacking, general equity must arrive so late; why the humanitarian evolution that ended a first time, for the cults at the fall of polytheism, for politics at the ruin of empire Roman Empire, had to begin again with Christianity, feudalism and modern philosophy; why, in a word, leaving aside the progress of industry and the sciences, civilization has been for fifteen centuries only a repetition.

Because the theory of interests had been neglected, it was necessary for us

Examples:

All ideas come from the senses. Locke.

All ideas are conceived in the understanding. Descartes.

The first proposition is true only if one admits at the same the second, and vice-versa. It is the same for the following:

Bodies do not exist. Berkeley.

Minds do not exist. Hume.

Philosophy is the study of first principles. All the dogmatists.

There are no first principles. The skeptics.

It is necessary to draw up a table of the categories. Aristotle and Kant.

There is no table of the categories. Cousin.

Every philosophy comes from empiricism. The Scottish.

Every philosophy tends to free itself from empiricism. The Germans.

The ideas of cause and substance, going beyond sensation, are chimeras. Hume.

The ideas of cause and substance, going beyond sensation, are necessarily conceived by the mind, and prove it. Kant.

Every positive science defines its object and its method. Jouffroy.

Every positive science tends, by its progress, to overcome its limits. Ch. Renouvier.

Genera and species are things. Realism.

Genera and species are conceptions. Conceptualism.

Genera and species are names. Nominalism.

In that example, the three terms clearly boil down to two, since, in order to create a name, one needs a thing or a conception, that is to say an idea.

There is one God. Monotheism.

There are many gods. Polytheism.

All is God. Pantheism.

There is no God. Atheism.

There are two persons or hypostases in God. Magism.

There are three persons in God. Christianity.

There are four, seven, ten, etc., persons in God. Gnosticism.

There is no company in God. Mohammedanism.

All these formulas, which seem to combat one another, draw in one another and resolve themselves in the idea of the being (group, series, evolution or movement), raised to its highest power and analyzed by these concepts.

to copy everything, to repeat everything from the Romans and the Greeks, from the ancient tyranny to eclecticism, from slavery to communism, from the most ferocious superstition to mysticism, the Cabala and gnosis. Now nothing remains for us to take. The tradition is exhausted and we are forced to become original in our turn, to continue the movement.

But nothing in nature is produced without pain: the last revolution of Humanity did not escape that law. The interests, surprised in their foolishness, are frightened; superstition roars, pedantry bellows and the *status quo* protests. These are triumphant symptoms, which indicate to us that the revolution penetrates, that it acts on and possesses society.

Sleep in peace, reformers: the world has no need of you.

Economic science, although its constitution is not achieved, is already too powerful for it to allow the old prejudices to undertake anything against its decrees, which are the decrees of the revolution itself.

No more barbarians, capable of imposing on civilization the torture of a new feudalism. Were they our masters, the Cossacks would be nothing: they would no sooner set foot on the sacred ground of Progress than they would become its apostles.

No more religious current that could, as in the first century of our era, absorb and recast in a superior cult the multiplicity of Churches; no more Christ or Mohamed, who dares to repeat, after Voltaire:

We need a new cult, we need new chains,
We need a new god for the blind universe!

All that is finished! We will find salvation only in innovation and movement. It is not to you, sir, that one must cry: *Those who have ears, let them hear!* You hear and, better than any other, you know how to express to the public these two very simple propositions:

Affirmation of PROGRESS:

Negation of the ABSOLUTE.

I am, etc.

APPENDIX

LETTERS TO PROUDHON FROM M. ROMAIN-CORNUT

Ms. 2948, Besanon

Paris, November 10, 1851

Monsieur,

I have begun, in *La Presse*, a series of studies on the principal systems of ideas that have been produced recently under the generic denomination of Socialism. Your works cannot fail to have their place.

My intention is even to pass to you, immediately after M. Auguste Comte, who occupies me at the moment. Could you grant me some minutes of instruction? You would aid me with your advice in analyzing your works with the most order, unity and clarity possible. I do not want to hide from you that there is already something even more vivid in it, of knowing personally the man whose thoughts have often radiated upon mine, to whom my intelligence owes the most, after the mother who taught me to speak.

I salute you fraternally,

Romain-Cornut



Paris, November 30, 1851

Monsieur,

I have read attentively the new letter that you have done me the honor of addressing to me, and which is far from being too long for me. But the first reading has left me with the feeling of the need of rereading it again in order to be able, in conformity with your desire, to express a judgment that [.] with any certainty.

It is not that I do not adopt entirely the universal notion of progress, and consequently the negation of all absolute or complete science, in whatever order it might be. It seems to me, however, to have glimpsed, in reading you, some essential observations to make so that progress, the essence of which the human mind itself affirms, does not become its ruin, and so that our knowledge does not perish from the very principle that connects and renders it fertile.

At the moment when your letter was delivered to me, I was writing about the very question that is its subject, with regard to the *positive philosophy* of M. Comte. That writer promises to constitute the social knowledge of man, or *Sociology*, in the state of a positive science, by the same title as mathematics, astronomy, physics; on the other hand, he posits as general and essential basis of social science the law of continuous progress, which has operated and operates incessantly in the very object of that science, in the collective man or humanity. I asked myself if there was not in the essence of the problem a radical

contradiction; if the *science* of a being in progress, made by itself, is not an affirmation refuting itself in its terms. My response returns, it seems to me, precisely to your views, which would reassure me, if however, I have had the [.] to understand you well.

I don't think that the *Presse* sets any obstacle to the complete insertion of your letter; on the contrary, it will welcome it, I have no doubt, as a good fortune: n'a pas de vous qui veut, particularly at the present time. I should see M. de Girardin very soon, and I will be able to tell you then roughly when the series of articles concerning you will begin.

If you have, Monsieur, the first letter that you had the generosity to write to me, I would be happy to have and preserve that first testimony of your kindness and esteem.

Do I need to respond to a certain fear in your letter and to tell you that anything that comes to me from you will be welcomed not only with pleasure, but with gratitude? I appreciate more than you seem to suppose the advantages of that correspondence and the honor of knowing you.

Accept my devotion,

Romain-Cornut

**PRINCIPLES OF THE
PHILOSOPHY OF PROGRESS**

PRINCIPLES OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF PROGRESS

I.—THE CONDITIONS OF EXISTENCE.

Man is made up of parts called members or organs. What makes his reality is the *animistic* gathering of these organs into a whole that, as long as it lives, is called a *person*.

In the same way, a society is made up of parts that are persons or aggregations of persons. What establishes the social reality is the *spiritual* consent of these persons and aggregations in an ultimate whole that we call, as long as it endures, company, association, municipality, city, people, etc.

It is thus with all the existences that we can observe: they are always conglomerations of organisms or societies, formed of simpler parts, according to some unifying law.

1.—I generalize from this observation and I say: Every perceptible existence, from a grain of sand or drop of water to man and society, invariably and necessarily possesses the double character of *unity* and *collectivity*. So I have a right to consider the two terms as correlative and inseparable, as much in their nature as in their logic, and I define the being as a *group*.

The idea of a simple being is contradictory. Atomism is a fiction. For the same reason, substance in itself, prior to all phenomenality, is only a metaphysical notion: it does not *exist*.

2.—Every being, which is to say every group — or to remain within the terms of the definition, every *unity-collectivity* — by the very fact that it is a plurality of elements assembled according to a law, manifests an internal, radiant energy, capable at least of maintaining the unities that make up the group.

I generalize further, and I say: Existence implies *force*. These two ideas, like those of unity and collectivity, are correlative and inseparable, in nature as in the understanding. An existence without force is a contradiction. A force without a group that sustains, represents and produces it, is, like substance in itself, a chimera: it does not exist.

3.—All beings, by virtue of the personal, radiant energy that constitutes them, attract and repel one another reciprocally, tend to unite to form other groups or to be absorbed and dissolved, through the centralization and dispersion of their forces. This is an empirical fact sufficiently demonstrated by molecular attraction, the phenomena of vegetation and life, and History...

I generalize once again and I say: Creation is the ascending movement of existences; the chain of beings has no end: the universe, always changing, is eternal.

4.—There is then, for every being, two manners of manifesting its existence, and it could only have two: its *composition*, and its *action*.—Action, in certain beings, becomes thought and speech.

Let us apply these principles to the study of economic phenomena.

II.—THE FORCE IN THE SOCIAL BEING.

1.—There exists between men a tendency or attraction that pushes them to group and act, for their own greater interest and the most complete development of their individuality, collectively and as a mass.

What is the principle of that tendency? The same as that of the attraction between all beings: It is a property and a condition of their existence (n. 2); it is impossible to know more of it, and consequently senseless to ask more. Let us limit ourselves to reasoning from the point of view of the aim.

The tendency to group, fatal in some species, free and reflective only in our own, in all our most precious faculties, is a fact. The philosophers and naturalists, considering it in its mystical and superficial expression, have called it *attraction* or *instinct of sociability, sympathy, devotion, patriotism, charity, fraternity, humanity*, etc. They have seen in it one of the hallmarks of our destiny, the basis of justice, morals and religion itself. They have not gone further. The useful side, the economic and productive power of the human group, independent of the work of the individuals, has completely escaped them. For all of them, as for the economists, the *social instinct* has remained a sort of platonic love, a budding idea that has never been expressed and realized. There, in fact, the evangelical work has stopped, and there moral philosophy has broken, both powerless to resolve the complicated problem of human relations, and, on the highest questions of public and private right, reduced to appeals to divine authority and the reason of State.

2.—It is up to our century, to the positive and precise genius of modern societies, to study the social instinct in its *practical* development, and follow it in its speculative, moral and industrial manifestations.

From the formation of individuals into a group there results a FORCE, numerically equal to the sum of the individual forces that make it up, but which is, by virtue of its unity, very superior in its application, and which must for this reason be considered as the soul of the group, its own essential energy, its life, its mind. So that the individual — sensitive, intelligent, active and free — being taken for an elementary unity, the various groups in which it can enter form so many unities of a more and more elevated order, endowed, like the individual, with sensitivity, will, intelligence and action.

Thus, alongside the *individual man* arises the *collective man*, which is certainly something other than the sum or addition of the individual energies that form it, but, which, converting all these energies into a higher energy, *sui generis*, has the right to be treated from now on not as a being of the mind, but as a real and veritable person. Such is the immense fact, principle of

supernaturalism, which must in the end set the economic science on its certain basis, and which I will attempt to summarize.

III.—SIMPLE COLLECTIVE ACTION.

3.—The *collective force* is generally recognized in every action that surpasses the scope of an individual force, working as long, and with the aid of all the tools and instruments that you might want.

One man, with a plow and some oxen, can turn over one acre in a day: ten men, with ten plows and ten pair, would work ten acres in the same amount of time. There would be time saved relative to the surface works: but as each plow can be considered as working for a simple individual, as each plow can, in ten days, accomplish the work of the ten, while there may be concert, community or exchange of services, there is no collectivity.

Just so, one businessman, disposing of material that he has purchased and workers that he has hired, can, in three months, build a fine looking country house. There again, there is time to be saved by the promptness of the construction: nevertheless, we can conceive that, in a pinch, the same individual could exercise in turn all the functions of stonecutter, mason, carpenter, etc.; and in time build his house by himself alone. We would see in the first operation rather an effect of exchange than of collective force. There again, we do not recognize the group.

Economy considers separately, as distinct principles and special forces, *exchange* and *community, association*, etc. It does not confuse them with COLLECTIVE FORCE. (See *The General Idea of the Revolution in the 19th Century*, Ch. III and VI.)

But here is where we will see it appear: let us begin with the simplest cases.

A man, of middling strength, can easily carry, for 60 feet, a burden of 125 kilograms. Let that man repeat that operation a thousand times in a row and he will have transported a whole boatload on his shoulders.

This is how the dockhands proceed in the ports. But let it be a question of a block of 2000 kilograms: individual strength becomes powerless and if it is reduced to its own means the block runs the risk of remaining in place forever. For such a great effort, a group is required.

One worker was able, in the past, over time, to cut and sculpt the obelisk of Luxor in the quarries of the Thebaid. In order to accomplish the loading, the transport to Paris, the unloading and the erection of the monolith, a squadron commanded by an engineer, obeying his words like a single man, was required.

A gravedigger can dig a hole in the sand, erect a beam there and then, after filling the hollow and stuffing the empty space by reversing the excavating, begin the same work again until he has moved around a surface as great as Notre Dame. The same individual, if it were a question of a piling in a river, sinking some oak stakes, six meters in length and 0.80 centimeters around, there by

hammer blows, would never come to the end of the task. Here, the action of the group is indispensable.

A boater could, by multiplying his voyages, transport a cargo of 1000 tons from Paris to the Havre. He could never, with his little boat, transport the same mass from Calais to Dover, although the distance is much less. To contend with the ocean requires nothing less than a large ship, and consequently the effect of a group.

We can multiply infinitely these examples that modern industry presents at every step.

4.—Collective force is thus *something other* than the sum of the individual forces of which it is made up: I add that in the application it is, by virtue of its unity, *greater* than that sum.

A man, whose muscular strength, in all parts of his body, is equal to six times that of an individual of average vigor, would not only render as much effective labor as six men, but in a struggle he would lay them low. The reason is that, being able to deploy on each side a superior power, or to oppose a superior resistance, he crushes his divided adversaries in a mass.

This is the image of the group: its strength or force, numerically equal to that of its components, is more than equal in its unity to all together specifically. The military men know it well, their whole science consists, through progressions of attacks and retreats combined, in breaking up the enemy mass so that they can oppose everywhere a greater force to lesser forces.

A warship with 100 cannons will chase off 500 fishing boats; a steamer with a force of 100 horsepower, giving the same service as a crew of 100 horses, will be much superior to them with regard to general costs and risks; a large agricultural operation will give, for the same amount of land cultivated, finer and more abundant products, and at lower cost, than would a dozen little farms. The mechanical arts abound with facts of this nature: the Creusot steam hammer, which represents in weight two or three hundred times the big hammer of a blacksmith, produces more effect in a single fall than two hundred blows struck by a worker; the work of a mechanical saw offers more precisions than if it is used by a half-dozen arms; the sound created by one hundred singers in unison is truer than each of the individual voices.

These facts, which each can multiply as they please, suffice to establish the reality of the collective force, of that force that the economists have forgotten even to mention in their books, and that still, by its innumerable applications, its transformation, its political, moral, religious and intellectual consequences, dominates science and governs civilization.

IV.—OF COMPLEX COLLECTIVE ACTION.

Everyone has read, in A. Smith, J.-B. Say, and others, the marvelous results of that force; but what few people have noticed, no doubt, is the technical

inexactitude with which these two masters of the science explain its nature. They have not seen that what they call *division of labor* or *separation of industries* is only an application, in reverse, of the *collective force*, so that the same scientific demonstration suits them both. And because they have not seen it, not only have they been led to omit from their treatises the initial force, which is the agglomerated force, but they have understood nothing in the theory of the one they wanted to set out, the force of division.

As that question is serious, essential in science, I must, by a rapid discussion, furnish the proof of what I have claimed.

7. I begin by citing A. Smith:

“Let us take, for example, a manufacture the object of which appears frivolous, but that has merited more than once that we have noted the details with a sort of admiration, I mean the fabrication of pins. Let the most industrious worker, but still a novice in their trade, wish to give himself up to it, *he could perhaps manage to make in a day only a single pin, and certainly not as many as twenty*, so diverse and multiplied are the are the labors demanded by a pin! He thus needs to divide the labor, first separate this trade from all the others; he must then follow, with all the details that they demand, so many individual trades; then finally he must create, to speed up the whole of the work, the play and movement of the machines: such is, in fact, that art today. One man draws out the brass wire, another straightens it, another cuts it, farther along one sharpens the point, and then one prepares the end that must receive the head. To shape that head requires two or three distinct manipulations; to place it is a new occupation; to whiten the pins is another; it is even a trade to line them up on the paper. In the end, eighteen operations make up the grand art of making a pin.

“In several manufactories, these eighteen operations are almost all executed by different hands. However, I have seen one manufactory of this sort, which employed only ten men, some of whom, consequently, performed two or three distinct manipulations. The establishment was poor, and as a result poorly provided with the necessary machines; but their zeal sometimes made up for it all, and the common labor gave them about twelve pounds of middle-sized pins each day. Now the point being made up of four thousand pins, it follows that more than forty-eight thousand pins came each day from the hands of ten persons, and that each of these workers, doing a tenth of the general labor, must be considered individually as the artisan of four thousand eight hundred pins per day.”

Now here is the example supposed by J.-B. Say:

“The division of labor seems to have been pushed even farther in the fabrication of playing cards. It is not even the same workers who prepare the paper of which the cards are made, nor the colors with which they are printed; and by only paying attention to the single use of these materials, we will find that a deck of cards is the result of several operations, each of which occupies a distinct series of workers, male or female, who always apply themselves to the same operation. It is different persons, and always the same, who skim off the

lumps and blockages that are found in the paper and harm the equality of thickness; the same who glue together the three sheets of paper of which the cardstock is made and put them in the press; the same who color the side destined to form the back of the cards; the same who print in black the outline of the figures; other workers print the colors of the same figures; others dry the cardstock at the stove once it has been printed; once they are printed, other are occupied smoothing them on both sides. It is one particular occupation that cuts them with equal dimensions; it is another to assemble them to form packs; another still to print the wrappers for the packs, and yet another to pack them; without counting the functions of those persons responsible for sales and purchases, for paying the workers and keeping records. In the end, if we are to believe the people in that trade, each card, one little bit of cardstock that will fit in the hand, before being in a saleable state, is subject to not less than 70 different operations, which could all be the object of the labor a different sort of workers. And if there are not 70 series of workers in each card factory, it is because the division of labor has not been pushed as far as it could be, and because the same worker is responsible for two, three, or four distinct operations.

“The influence of the division of occupations is immense. I have seen a factory for playing cards where thirty workers produce 30,500 cards each day, that is to say more than 500 cards per worker, and we can assume that if each of these workers found themselves obliged to do all the operations by themselves, and even supposing them practiced in their art, *they would perhaps not finish two cards in a day and consequently, instead of producing 15,500 cards, they would only make 60.*”

It is thus that two of the founders of political economy accounted for the division of labor and its effects: I will later rectify what is false and puerile in their account.

8. But, what is, according to A. Smith and J.-B. Say, the reason for that prodigious multiplication of one single product, by a wisely combined division of labor?

According to the two writers, that reason, or that cause is triple: first, there is 1) the *dexterity* acquired by each worker, in a simple and often repeated operation; 2) suppression of the *loss of time* that workers make, in passing from one occupation to another, changing place, position and tools; 3) finally, the use, for each divided function, of the most expeditious procedures, that is to say of *machines*, which are only truly advantageous in the large establishments where the abundance of work allows its division.

A. Smith, after having signaled these three *causes* of the fecundity of the division, adds that the *principle* of that division is the need for the exchanges; and immediately he throws himself into a dissertation on money, which is full of erudition, certainly and very curious, but which does not touch on the question and proves nothing at all.

9. Now, it is false that in the trade of the pin-maker, a single worker cannot

come to produce 20 pins in a day; it is false that in the industry of the manufacture of cards and tarots, the same worker could not, at the same time, produce more than two cards; and Smith and Say, admiring the effects of the division of labor, have ended up not really seeing a thing there. It is even more false that the dexterity acquired and the suppression of the losses of time, of which I do not deny the merits, are the causes of that great fecundity: as for machines, they form a separate category in science, they should not figure in a theory of the division of labor. The advantage that results from the machine is one thing; that which results from the division of labor is another: the duty of the two professors was not to confuse them.

10. To believe A. Smith and J.-B. Say, who have only sought to imitate it, the division of labor will only exist where there are found as many worker specialties as the labor to exist can be subject to fractions. It is then on the basis of that notion that they tell us, one that a worker laboring in isolation could not manage to fabricate 20 pins, the other that this same worker could not make two cards in a day. And the others who have followed them have all taken the thing seriously: it is accepted as certain in political economy that the same individual who can produce 4800 pins in a day, when he labors in a workshop where the chore is distributed, could not produce 20 of them if he was alone.

It is, however, notorious, and known to the least of the workers, that in all industries the division of labor can receive its application, whether by a single worker or by a group. A. Smith himself suggested it when he reports that in the workshop visited by him only ten persons executed the 18 operations of the pin-making industry, which supposes that some of those persons executed several of them. And J.-B. Say confirms it, when he adds that at the card-making factory, 30 workers are sufficient to make 70 distinct manipulations.

11. The division of labor, for the individual as for the group, consists of, for example, instead of executing, successively and without stopping, on ONE pin or ONE card, the 18 or 70 fragmented operations of which the fabrication is made up, executing them simultaneously on SEVERAL.—Assuredly, by following the first of these methods, a worker would not produce 20 pins per day; he would consume himself, at that ridiculous task, in powerless efforts. But if he distributed the manipulations intelligently, then, instead of a few units he would produce thousands; and if my intelligence counts for something alongside that of A. Smith, I would say that if there was seen one factory where 10 persons produced, by the division of labor, 48,000 pins per day, I knew myself a pin-maker who, thanks to the same division, working all alone, lived by his trade.

12. So what is the division of labor, so badly understood by the economists that this single rectification ruins their whole system?

It is the art for the laborer, individual or collective, of attacking a function, too difficult in its totality, or too complicated, or too meticulous, of attacking it, I say, in its elementary parts, in such a way that the mind and body of the laborer who, formerly, finding themselves overwhelmed by it, could now deliver

themselves from it with a superior force.

Thus, in the division of labor as in the collective force, the principle is the same: it is to always attack a lesser task with a greater force. While, in one case, the laborers, individually too weak, form into groups, in the other they break, as it were, the bundle of their operations, in order to take them up again, with more advantage, in detail. What the group, with its immense power, is in comparison to a mass inaccessible to the individual, that one becomes vis-à-vis some fragmented operations, the ensemble of which makes up its industry.

13. Let A. Smith and J.-B. Say pretend then that the sometimes fantastic *dexterity* that the worker acquires then in a fragmented operation exclusively repeated; the *economy of time* obtained by that specialization of laborers, and the more advantageous use of *machines* in a large enterprise, should be counted for something in the results of the industrial organization, it is not in my thought to deny it. I would simply observe that these facts, in which they think to find the cause of the results of the division of labor, are themselves effects of the collective force.

That is what I will demonstrate.

V.—OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION

14. Whoever says ORGANIZATION says *analysis* and *synthesis*, indissolubly united. Whoever says *organization of labor*, then, says 1) decomposition of the labor into its elementary or constituent operations; 2) recomposition of those same operations into a single action.

The organization of labor exists from the beginning of humanity; I mean since the day when the human species becomes industrious. It would be strange that anyone who have the pretension, in this matter, of having discovered anything. But if socialism has fallen too often into the folly of fabrications, Economy, from its side, has been no less wrong in refusing to open its eyes and see the facts, in presenting its ignorance as dogma.

15. Industrial organization consists of the combined use of two forces: the collective force and the division of labor. Let us again take up the example of A. Smith.

It is proven, although the conscientious and diligent investigator says the contrary, that the division of labor exists as much for the solitary laborer as for a large workshop: it is by that division that he manages to multiply his products in sufficient quantity to make a living. Without it, his efforts would come to naught; he would only produce trifles.

Now let us conceive, as A. Smith and J.-B. Say have laid it out so well, a workshop arranged in such a manner that each of the individual operations in which the function of the worker is divided are performed by a special worker, and we will see a new fact produced, and, as a result of this fact, some superior results: this fact is a new application of the collective force.

In the examples above, No. 3, the use of the collective force is *simple*, all of the individuals form the group identically executing the same task. In the workshop where the divided work is also divided, that use is *complex*: each of the laborers who make up the group executes a distinct operation.

The result of that combination is known: A. Smith and J.-B. Say analyzed it very well. The worker who, instead of successively passing through all the parts of his industry, always performed one, will become proportionally more skillful in that one; – there is for all less loss of time; finally, the machines, which one can consider as automatic workers, work in a more continuous manner, which increases the revenue from the capital that is in use there. From all these causes, production is noticeably increased, and while the worker, laboring outside that combination, could produce, with the same division of labor, the use of the same machines, and the same diligence, only 3000 pins a day, in the organized workshop he will produce 4800. The profit is thus more than an additional third: this third, being a true discovery of genius, must not, as I have said, be attributed to the division of labor, but to the collective force.

16. All human labor tends to be organized more and more on that principle of the collective force and divisional force combined. It is this tendency that constitutes the economic movement of our century, a movement so formidable that it absorbs and converts all the others. It is for this reason that modern society separates itself definitively from ancient, catholic, feudal and barbaric society, where the industrial production, being unproductive, generally followed the example of agricultural production, given over from time immemorial to simple, individual labor.

Today, everything is subject to the law of organization. Already, in England, agriculture is *industrialized*, managed, not only by the division of labor, as with all the peasants, which the succession of the seasons is sufficient to command, but by the use of machines and collective force. Sooner or later, the English system will extend everywhere: then large-scale cultivation could unite with fragmentary possession, and the revolution foreseen by socialism, the revolution of property that draws along with it all the others, will be accomplished.

17.—But the most serious consequence, in the eyes of the philosopher, of the combined use of the divisional and collective forces, is the *de facto* solidarity that this use gives rise to among the workers, and as a result the guarantee of rights that it calls for.

It is obvious, setting aside some interests of capital, which must not concern us here, and some privilege of the businessmen, whose initiative desires a remuneration, that the worker enmeshed in this organism, which reduces them to the role of a simple cog, barred from their liberty by their admission into the workshop, enchained, if we can put it that way, by their own cooperation, cannot be left without compensation. The freedom of movement that they lose on the one hand must be found again elsewhere; the intellectual inertia to which their specialty condemns them must be recovered in a higher combination. It is in

vain that *Economism* opposes to the degradation of the hardworking masses the wealth of a progressive society; it is in vain that it invokes against these damned souls of civilization the necessity of its alleged principles, and that it offers them the consolations suggested by a hypocritical religion. There is no right against rights, no necessity that stands against justice, no religion that demands the mass to die of starvation in order to fatten a handful of the elect.

VI.—DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECONOMIC FORCES, UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

18. In a recent publication (*The General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, Ch. VI) I have given the name of *economic forces* to certain principles of action that, like the working group and the industrial division, have the effect of increasing the productivity of labor, and, for the same expense in time and costs, multiply wealth more and more. Among these principles or forces I have especially distinguished *exchange*, the principal agent of which is *currency* and *credit*.

19. Although, in order to make an exchange, at least two people are necessary, a buyer and a seller, and although commerce, which is a series of exchanges, or the mass of all exchanges, implies an idea of plurality, still we could not confuse commerce or exchange with collective action, nor derive it from that action: they are essentially distinct things.

In the working group, there is a gathering of forces for one aim and in one single direction; in exchange there is an increase of forces, a permutation of products, supposed to be equal among themselves. It is neither a convergence, as in the organized workshop, nor an inversion, as in the division of labor; it is a reciprocity.

20. The same observation can be made regarding credit. Although, like exchange, it supposes the intervention of two persons, a borrower and a lender, it cannot be assimilated to the group, since the stake-holding parties are in opposition. Doubtless, by placing ourselves in a humanitarian point of view, we can say that they contribute, each in their own manner, to the GENERAL wealth, the first by the loan of their capital and the second by the use that they make of it. But these two persons do not cooperate in the creation of a *common* wealth, since the capital loaned must be completely returned, and the interest is deducted from a new production, in which the creditor does not really participate. It is still, as in exchange, not a collective action, but a reciprocity.

Credit and exchange are thus two principles apart, two special forces of production, which must be studied by themselves and whose theory truly has nothing in common with the collective force.

21. But the collective force or the principle of grouping can be applied to commerce and to credit, just as to industry: then it communicates to them an extraordinary power, at the same time as it profoundly modifies their character.

The Orientals have still changed nothing of the primitive and immemorial practice of commerce. According to the accounts of travelers, each merchant in the Orient has the habit of holding only one sort of merchandise: one sells perfumes and another pistols; this one sells jewels and that one spices, etc. Those diversely stocked shops, where we are in the habit of finding gathered, as in small bazaars, the most diverse objects, are unknown to them.

However, it is obvious that a diversified commerce offers much less risk, plus compensations, more guarantees of profit, than a commerce reduced to a single article: it is only in those rare cases of fashions and of monopoly that commercial simplicity can be undertaken with some security. It is in the commerce of buying and selling as it is in the commerce of transport. What would we say of a messenger who, providing the service from his village to the city, purported to limit his commission to the transport of pepper or tobacco alone? We would say that this man was mad, that he would bankrupt himself, and we would have to reason with him.

Thus, the multiplicity of operations in commerce is a law.

22. But what is that multiplicity, in itself? A group effect? The merchant who, in his boutique, offers a most varied collection of merchandise to the connoisseurs, is nothing, at base, but the representative of the thousand different industries whose products he keeps, which, instead of each maintaining their correspondent in the place, make use, for the delivery of their merchandise, of a common intermediary. In short, that alleged mercantile individuality that we call a trader is a company.

Now, if Commerce, in order to be done, in order to be accomplished with ease, speed, exactness, economy and profit, must be done by companies; if exchange inevitably demands for all the interested parties a collective action: a whole series of obligations, between the producer and the merchant, between the merchant and the consumer, obligations analogous to that that rule the Entrepreneur and the *parcellaire* worker, will emerge from the commercial relations and call for the attention of the legislator and jurist. The civil code and the code of commerce have said nothing, or nearly nothing, more than the *economists*: does it follow that the practical reason must rest eternally on the faith of the practitioners and the verbiage of the obscurantists?...

23. What is *currency*? It is the instrument or intermediary of the exchanges, responds J.-B. Say; as a result, the common denominator of the merchandise. — Very well: but who has created that instrument? Who is its author, its inventor? — Everyone, and no one, responds the economist, following Aristotle. The Greeks gave money the name of *numisma*, *nomos*, law, convention, usage, because it serves commerce, not by virtue of authority, but by virtue of the tacit and universal consent of the people.

Currency is thus the product of the force or, more exactly, of the thought of the collective will. It is the collective thought that has made of that strange merchandise that no one consumes and all seek, the type of venality and

circulability, the symbol of wealth, and the common term for all values. It is not only gold, silver or copper that we possess in it; it is public faith, the irrevocable oath of the people. It is for this reason that it seems to men to have something divine about it, which, at all times and in all places, has caused it to be worshiped. Neither Jupiter made visible for the statue of Phidias, nor Venus made manifest in the masterpiece of Praxitèle, nor Christ represented by Michelangelo seemed to men so present, so sublime, nor exerted as marvelous a power, as the Genius of Humanity, symbolized in a bit of coinage. And the civilized nations generally agree to make the fabrication of currency a prerogative of the State; the Hebrews had only one temple where it was permitted to sacrifice and we have only one mint.

24. It is above all in the operations of credit that collective force accomplishes its miracles. Let us first consider *Insurance*.

We understand that one proprietor insures another: the operation has nothing contradictory about it, nothing impossible. But if the operation stopped there, and for that single insurer you gave just one insured, what would follow? For a petty profit, 2 per 1000 for example, the insurer would incur an enormous risk. In a century he would only collect a poor revenue, and in the course of that century he could be ruined ten times. After 500 years, he would only cover the value of the property insured; now, it is more than probably that in 500 years he would have suffered at least one accident, which would make him lose all.

Let us make the group step in: that can take place is several ways.

1) Let the insured become in their turn the insurer of the property of the one who insures them; and let the two gather, two insurers = two insured parties, establishing for that purpose a society, a new moral being, responsible for the accidents and supported, for the cases of reimbursement, by the two members; the risk and consequently the loss, like the profit, will be divided in half. Instead of two associates, let there be 10,000, or 100,000, and the total of the premiums paid each year will be sufficient to cover all the accidents, but still give the society a profit. This mode of insurance has received the name of *mutual insurance*.

2) Alongside the mutualist societies there exist insurance companies where a small number of capitalists, speculating on the probable, and more or less considerable, profit that will be given by an insurance business founded on large enough bases, make themselves, at their own risk and peril, insurers. The advantage of these companies is that, in reality, they do not need actual payments from the portion of their shareholders, and that the capital on which they are established does double service, on the one hand as a loan in commerce or investment in the State, on the other as the backing of the insurance business. Now, from whatever point of view one assumes, that the insurance is composed of the totality of the insured or that it is taken from outside; that one considers the double product of a capital engaged at once, here as backing and there as loan, or else the decreasing and sometimes nonexistent quality of the annual cotisation

of the mutualists, the operation does not differ essentially and the principle remains the same. It is always the collective force that, directly and by itself, or else indirectly and by a substitute, comes, by a slight sacrifice, to annihilate the risks of property and extinguish the lightning with which a blind heaven threatens at each moment to set the world ablaze.

25. I have no intention of taking a side between the free insurance companies and the mutualist societies; still less do I have a fixed opinion of the plan for a general organization of insurance by the State. I believe, without prejudice, that here, as in so many other cases, individual initiative, though operating on a collective force, can be useful and I see no inconvenience in the commerce in insurance continuing, as before, to remain free. I would only ask whether the existing legislation, which sees in insurance only a contract between individuals, is perfect. If it is not true that in principle the insured being their own insurer, and the insurance entrepreneur doing nothing consequently than subrogate, in return for a deposit, the rights of their clientele, isn't there an occasion for the legislator to stipulate in favor of that one some guarantees against the haggling, unexpected deductions, disputes in bad faith and interminable trials that often accompany the repayments from accidents and make insurance an immoral industry?

26. The development of credit, although less rapid than that of insurance, has had the same cause.

For a long time, the loan for money has been, like the loan for use, a contract between individuals, in which the risk of non-repayment, whatever guarantee is furnished against it by mortgage, was nonetheless incurred by one single person, the lender. So, as remuneration of that risk, we have seen the interest stipulated by the loan contract vary from a minimal fraction of the capital loaned to the whole amount, and even more, of that same capital.

The application of the principle of collectivity changes all the conditions of credit.

27. A banker operating on his own capital draws from it an average revenue of 6% per year. The credit that he gives to his clients, in return for the delivery of their values, is *individual* and *simple*. If he has 10 million engaged in this commerce, his revenue is 600,000 francs. I have never contested the legitimacy of this revenue.

In the place of this banker, let us suppose that the traders who make up his clientele, coming together, each contribute a sum proportional to the total of their annual discounts, and form among themselves a bank company functioning for their own service, with a capital of 10 million francs. Things will go on as with insurance. Each of the clients of the former banker, becoming, through the partnership into which they have entered, at once creditor and credited, and consequently having a right to a portion of the products of the bank proportional to their contribution to the fund, a stake representing the average of their current account, two things occur: 1) The dividend to receive coming in deduction from

the sum of discounts to pay, the interest on the discounts is reduced progressively by the shareholders. 2) At the end of 18 or 20 years, they will be in fact reimbursed for their advance; what is more, supposing their circulation to be always the same, they will be assured the discount of all their values for a sum paid once, perpetually at $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{4}\%$, even at zero.

28. Instead of a limited partnership of ten million francs, formed by some thousands of Parisian traders, let us suppose a society formed by all the traders in France, with a capital of 500 million francs: the effect of the collectivity would be still greater. As it is in the nature of currency to circulate, not to amass, the sum of the subscription for each trader would diminish as the number of subscribers increased, so that for a minimal sum, which would not even equal the total of the discounts paid annually by each at a rate of 6%, the commercial interest that they paid would be paid for in perpetuity.

29. Now, just as by virtue of the mutualist or collective principle that regulates insurance there have formed special companies of insurers, operating at their own risk, and with their own capital, just so there has formed at Paris a banking company that, with the help of a first stake of funds, and with the privilege that the government has granted it to issues notes to the bearer, has succeeded in realizing in fact, but for their exclusive profit, this vast partnership of 500 millions, and to thus centralize all the commerce of the country. It is the Bank of France. The cash on hand of the Bank of France is from 500 to 600 million francs, of which at least three-quarters have been lent to it, FREE OF CHARGE, by the nation, against that sort of receipt that we call *bank notes*.

30. So I ask, as I just did regarding insurance: Why is the Service of free prestation rendered by the public to the Bank, not rendered free, in turn, to the public?... I have addressed this question to the economists and jurists so many times that it becomes tiresome for me to repeat it. One last observation only.

The events of the last 18 months have pronounced against my detractor, Mr. Bastiat, speaking in the name of all the economists and myself.

The remuneration of credit, which it is practiced between individuals, is legitimate: I have solemnly affirmed this in my controversy with Mr. Bastiat.

But the legitimacy of that remuneration does not preclude free credit as a possibility, and even one that has already been realized: the proof is the free prestation of 600 millions that the French nation made to the Bank and an additional proof is the decree of the President of the Republic, who, implicitly recognizing that service, imposed on the Bank a reduction of interest from 4 to 3%.

31. Let us cite, on the question of credit, one more example.

The sum of mortgage claims has recently been estimated at eight billion.

How, with a mass of cash in circulation that probably only amounts to 1500 million, was it possible to lend eight billion on mortgages? — It is an effect of the circulability of cash, which is itself the product of general consent or collective force (no. 23). From this fact already the law on mortgages had to deduce

important consequences, to the advantage and for the security of mortgages. The law has seen nothing, foreseen nothing: the juriconsults have been as blind regarding this question as the economists. But let us move on.

32. A problem, raised by the universal embarrassment, arises before the nation: it is a question both of noticeably reducing the rate of usury borne by landed property, of lengthening the maturity and of facilitating repayment. How has the current head of state, acting in the name and on behalf of the national community, resolved this problem, which the last monarchy dismissed as long as it lived and which the Republic, given over to dissension, did not have time to resolve? Did he use the fabulous treasures that the people of 48 and 52 claimed he had brought back from America?...

He did better. There are no treasures equal to those contained in the collective strength of a nation, skillfully led. A first mortgage credit company, Société de Crédit Foncière, with a capital of 20 million, was created, with the ability to issue *mortgage bonds*, under the condition of lending at 4% per year and requiring repayment only in annual installments.

The mortgage bond is the conversion of the mortgage title, which remains in the hands of the company until the day of repayment, into a circulating note bearing interest at 3.65%.

When the company, initially constituted with a capital of 20 million, has placed the entire capital on large and first mortgages, it will have in its hands, in place of money, title deeds representing a double value. The notes that it will then issue, it will exchange them, because of the interest they produce against twenty other millions of cash, which it will in turn place on mortgages, which will bring it new securities, also convertible into letters of pledge, etc. The same operation can be repeated ad infinitum.

But, with the system of annuities, the Société de Crédit Foncière will not need to issue more than 200 or 300 million letters of pledge, to soon be able to cover, by investments, the eight billion existing mortgages, and to thus substitute itself alone for the mass of former lenders. Its income will be enough for it.

33. What then, in the final analysis, is the Société de Crédit Foncier? An intermediary through which all of the mortgage debtors, whose properties form a mass of at least 16 billion, can, with a sum of 500 million in cash, bearing interest at 4%, over a period of 15 to 20 years, convert its debt, instead of five to ten million in interest which it pays each year, pays no more than 20. The ratio of collective strength to individual strength is therefore here as 500 is to 20, or more simply as 25 is 1.

34. It is true that the above-mentioned mortgage debtors, for whose benefit the Société de Crédit Foncier is supposed to operate, are not yet close to enjoying all the savings to which their solidarity entitles them. The Société de Crédit Foncier established in their interest and place to negotiate their titles against cash, and to organize the conversion of their debt, also perceives, in their interest and place, the clearest profit from speculation. And since it is unlikely that they

have enough energy and intelligence to form themselves in the company of mutual credit, they will have to content themselves with the scraps left to them by the new society, unless the Head of State, intervening again, does not put an end to this monopoly by ordering a reduction of the land interest to 20%.

But is it any less certain that the successes of the Société de Crédit Foncier and the rise in its shares are due solely to the power of the community? Is he less certain that the titles which form the basis of his speculations are the titles of properties which do not belong to him? Can I not say that the Company, by asserting these titles, by monetizing them, finds itself in the same situation as a notary who, having received a sum of money on deposit, allows himself, without taking account of the proceeds to the depositor, to lend it at interest?... And because our old magistracy has never known a word of credit combinations, because jurisprudence, the Court of Cassation, as well as that of the school has not provided for them, do not even suspect them, is this a reason for the benefit of it to remain eternally acquired by the intermediaries, and is there nothing for the legislator to do?...

35. The Societe de Crédit Mobilier is established on a similar basis.

The Mutual Benefit Society, and all sponsorships also come under the collective force. Just a word about these. The general partnership is originally confused with the prescription society. It was even in the Middle Ages, when ecclesiastical discipline, too well obeyed, prohibited the loan at interest, only a means of evading the canonical prescriptions. Thanks to this somewhat Jesuitical combination, the loan was no longer called a loan; it became a *command*. Interest was no longer called interest, it was called share, or dividend. Gradually this system, having grown, ended up becoming the [present] system, consecrated and defined by our commercial code.

”Art. 23. The limited partnership contracts between one or more responsible and solidary partners, and one or more simple financial partners, who are called limited partners or limited partners. — It is governed under a corporate name, which must necessarily be that of one or more of the responsible and joint and several partners.”

”Art. 27. The limited partner cannot do any act of management, nor be employed for the affairs of the partnership, even under power of attorney.”

Mr. Troplong, after having compared the advantages and disadvantages of the two kinds of commercial companies, the *Limited Partnership* and the *Anonymous*, ends in these terms, where it is permissible to believe that the former adviser of the Court of Cassation, the writing in 1842, contained more than one political illusion:

“Anonymous societies, species of democracies in miniature, are, as M. Regnaud so aptly put it, eminently proper to vast undertakings. It is through them that the construction of canals, bridges, railways, etc., is organized. They are an all the more powerful attraction for civil capital, in that, in addition to dispensing with solidarity and personal responsibility, they allow the partners to

supervise the operations by themselves, to manage them even as agents, and that the interference is not regarded there as well as in sponsorship as an act likely to lead to solidarity. And in this respect the public limited company has a great advantage over the limited partnership; for the anonymous partners can govern their interests, while the limited partners, except for certain acts of supervision, are *forced to confide in the good faith of their managers*.

“But on the other hand, the limited partnership is superior to the limited company, in the sense that it has an organized government for the whole duration of its operations, functioning with freedom and promptness, uniting with the advantages of the company those of the individual action. When it has the *good fortune to have skillful and honest managers*, it has, in all respects, a marked superiority over the public limited company, in the administration is elective and mobile, where the management is constrained, embarrassed with controversies and oppositions, dependent on more or less enlightened majorities, and subject to forms that harm the speed of resolutions and the timeliness of expedients. The public limited company is a veritable elective republic, it has all the inconveniences. Sponsorship is rather a temperate monarchy: but *woe to it if it falls into the hands of overambitious managers with absolute power*, who are lavish with its resources! *It is the worst of combinations*, and its ruin soon comes through the fault of its leaders.”

36. Mr. Troplong is, one guesses, neither for the sponsorship nor for the anonymous: he prefers the imperial. But, while waiting for this new form of society which will undoubtedly have to unite the advantages of the two others without any of their disadvantages, I will ask the modern Tribonian if he does not deem it useful to add to his learned commentary one or two paragraphs, concerning the conditions which, independently of the will of the contracting parties, and by the sole accession of a greater or lesser number of shareholders, tend to bring the partnership closer to the anonymous. I will ask him, for example, if, as the partnership develops, either by the mass of shares, or by the number of limited partners, there is not created, in front of the managing partner, a collective right, which at some point takes precedence over his prerogative? If it is not contrary to the nature of things that a considerable capital, formed by the assistance of 1000 or 2000 people, should be delivered up to the discretion of a management which thinks only of separating its interests from those ‘it represents ; who, under the pretext of responsibility, assumes autocracy; which regards its funders as its instruments and food; who makes of his mandate a venal and alienable title to property, who traffics in this title, and, as we saw in a recent example, finds the secret of selling it at a third for a million, while the whole of the sponsorship, betrayed by its leader, is only estimated at 500,000 francs?...

[37-40: numbers skipped in the manuscript]

VII.—THE COLLECTIVE REASON.

The *social body* is known; it remains to reveal the social *mind*: After *physiology, psychology*.

41. We have shown, directly and with facts, the difference between individual and collective action, and we have concluded from that difference in actions the difference in their courses or the forces that produce them: individual force and social force. And as there is no force without a group or being within which it resides and from which it emerges, we have concluded anew, from the manifestation of the two forces, that these two beings, the individual and society, are equally real.

We have demonstrated now, and always by facts, that in every existence action is synonymous with *expression, speech* or *word*, and that *verb is synonymous with thought*. So that, as we have already recognized, in Society, a collective action, a collective force and a collective being, we must also recognize there a collective speech and a collective thought, distinct from individual thought and speech.

In other words, human Society being, by virtue of its unity-collectivity, a positive being or reality, endowed by virtue of that reality with force and capable, by virtue of that force, of action, we will also find it, by virtue of its action, capable of thought and feeling.

42. What! It will be said; Society considered as moving, feeling, thinking and willing individuality! A reasoning being treated like a person! What madness! Where then is this being? Where are its organs, its hands and feet, its heart, its mouth, its brain? How is it that it moves, feels and reasons?

Coarse, superstitious men! Tell me yourselves, what is the portion of pulp in your brain that thinks? What is the gland that centralizes the sensations that come from outside, compares them, combines them, and extracts ideas and judgments from them? Which then controls the organism, sends its orders to the nervous extremities and says to the muscles: execute my law? What is, in that machine, the motor, and what is the body to be moved?

These are questions without solutions, or rather absurdities, that come down to this: What weighs in matter? What is it that grows in the grass, that gleams in the metal, that wets in the wave, that rings in the bell, that vibrates in the piano string or the organ's pipe?...

In the human body," Hippocrates said, "*everything conspires, contributes and consents,*" consequently everything acts and thinks. There is no beginning, nor end, nor domination, nor obedience, nor principle of force, nor principle of inertia. Everything is action and reaction, and from that action-reaction of organs on one another, is born the force of the group, which in living beings is always translated, more or less, into thought and speech. So what is astonishing about that? What! An organism of flesh can think and speak, and an organism

formed of beings could not think?

43. But I know what stops you. You want to know if the dualism that we are accustomed to conceiving and accepting in order to explain the phenomena of life and mind in men applies equally to society, if, in short, society has a soul. If so, is it prior to the social body and does it survive after it. Where was it before the society was formed. What becomes of it when the society is dissolved?...

44. So let us speak us speak of theology or psychology, for it is all one. That language is as good as any other and I do not want to trouble anyone.

Well! God who has given attraction to matter, even if that matter was formed of manure or mud; God who has endowed the plant with life, even if that plant was the euphorbia or the upas; the animal instinct and intelligence, even if that animal was a toad or a viper; God who has willed that the amorous coming together of man and woman should give birth to a child, even if that man and woman were united by adultery or incest, and that the child should have a soul, even if that soul be that of the Antichrist God, who, in short, has imposed on all beings some universal, irrevocable laws, regardless of qualities, without distinction of worthiness or unworthiness, without consideration of destiny or aim; God has also willed that everywhere that there is a relation of parts, combination of elements, centralization, harmony, a group, finally, there will be a force, and that force will contain a latent or free form of thought.

The truth of that proposition results from the very definition of thought: thought, [in French, *pensée*,] from *pensare*, *peser*, means force. The Latin cogitatio, which corresponds to the French *pensée*, from cogitare, to act as an ensemble, comes from the some view, and it also implies the idea of force. Thought is the *labor of force*.

45. Yes, everything in nature thinks; everything has its soul, as the psychologists say, more or less elevated in the hierarchy of souls, from the stone up to the man, and the Universe also has its great soul, and its non-mute thoughts: *Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei!* ["The heavens recount the glory of God," Psalm 19 (18), 1.] And everywhere that two or more men are grouped, their souls unite, lose themselves in one another and produce, through their fusion, a God: *Ibi sum in medio eorum!* [From Matthew, 18, 20, *Ubi enim sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi sum in medio eorum* ("Let two or three be gathered in my name, and I am in their midst.")]

It is impossible to speak with clarity and reason about the nature of beings, about their composition, their laws and development, without supposing in the heart of each group, a force of cohesion, a relation of similarity, a law of composition, an essence, a SELF, *moi*, makes it so that the group is one, is defined, is distinguished from what surrounds it and is established as an individual. It is the profound sense of the famous phrase of Descartes, which he was only wrong in not extending it to all beings, without exception: *I think, therefore I am!* This is not a new beginning of mythology and fable; it gives the higher reason of the mythology, unknown or poorly understood until now by the

so-called psychologists.

46. What gives us a false idea of the *animism*, and makes it so inconceivable in society, is that we always take as a condition of this animism a visibly imperfect organization, the animal organization. In man, for example, each animal or vital function has its exclusive and special organs: vision is by the eye, locomotion by the nerves, hearing by the ear, affections by the chest, memory, imagination, comparison, meditation by the brain, without there being any possible permutation of function between the organs.

This specialization, which is nothing other than the application of the fundamental organic law of human economy, leads us to very different conclusions. Some see it as proof of the essential and substantial difference between *soul* and *body*; the others find in it the demonstration of the assertion that each organ has its own life and its function, its instinct, its soul, and that since there is no more reason to grant a soul to each organ than to the whole; we must conclude that there is no more for one than for the other.

But let us conceive of an organism, whose members, thinking for themselves and mobile, are capable of exchanging their services, and of fulfilling in turn and indifferently all the functions of the Being: this being will obviously be superior. Its strength could always be due to its mass, or to the number of its units, but its life will no longer depend on the conservation of such or such unit; it would not have parts like us that it can lose with impunity, like hair, nails and beard, and others whose preservation is essential to it, such as the heart, lung, or brain.

We will see that this is precisely the existence of society and its animism. — Beforehand, we have to note its thought and recognize its ideas.

47. Let us conclude then, and let us accept this *general psychology*, which is nothing, after all, but the summary of our experience.

a) Thought, in every being, is proportional to the organism and of the same quality as it.

b) Thought follows the modifications of the organism, rises and falls, is born and disappears with it.

c) All beings forming together an infinite series of genera and species, of larger and larger groups, and of smaller and smaller unities, each organism can be considered, and considers itself, from four different points of view, which are the cardinal points of its thought and existence:

1) in relation to the Universal Cause, to the Movement that embraces everything

2) in relation to external groups

3) in relation to itself, and to its own special essence

4) in relation to the groups of which it makes a part, and in which it is included.

d) It follows from this that every thinking group or organism is susceptible to four sorts of thoughts:

1) those that come to it from movement, which we call *conceptions* or *notions*;

2) those that come to it from external organisms or from the objects that surround it, which we call *intuitions* or *images*;

3) those that come to it from its own constitution, which are the *affections, passions* or *instincts*.

4) those that come from the group of which it is a member, which are *mores* (its rights and its duties.)

e) The thinking organism is capable of forming *concepts*, of having ideas of *time, space, substance, cause, movement, tendency* and *finality*, like those of *atom, monad, instant, point, rest* and *inertia*, because it is a unity; it is by virtue of these concepts that it raises itself toward the ideal, which is only the perfection of the unity.

It is capable of receiving *impressions* or *images*, because, like the mirror that reflects objects, as long as it is not broken, it is a unity.

It feels the need to act because it is a force, and because that force acts, reacts, or suffers by virtue of its unity.

Finally, it is subject to the law of *mores*, because it feels itself to be part of a unity.

f) The Being, by the labor of the force that it created, thus *conceives* the infinite, but without understanding it;

It *sees* the objects, and *studies* them;

It *feels* its activity and passivity, and, while yielding to them, tends to make itself their master;

It *senses* its mores and, while yielding to them, tends to make itself their master;

Conception, intuition, activity or passionality, divination, are the four *forms* of the thought of the being; science, liberty, justice, ideal are its four *ends*.

g) So the being knows itself, *a priori*, since it knows what appeals to it, by virtue of its unity. By the mere fact that it is a unity it knows its attractions, it wants to satisfy them and it is carried along by them. It also has the *a priori* notion of the infinite, or of the one, and that notion, applied to the various objects revealed by the senses, is enough for it to prove all concepts.

That is why psychology, like pure mathematics, is possible *a priori*; and why there is no theory of art, since art, like love, is an innate thing and all that can be said about it is that it is proportional to the education of the individual and the environment in which they live.

h) But being does not know itself, *a priori*, either as a plurality or as a fraction. In other words, it does not know, *a priori*, the compositions of its organs, nor that of the higher group of which it is part; in order to know them, it is obliged to observe them as things external to itself, as objects. The reason is that the being knows nothing *a priori* except by virtue of its unitary essence, and that in order to know itself *a priori*, as an organism or a fraction of an organism,

it must know itself as a multiplicity, by analyzing and destroying itself, which would entail a contradiction.

This is why each part must have its own anatomy and why, reciprocally, the law of each part imposes obligations on the organism, on pain of mutual destruction.

i) The law of the organism is binding on each part, and reciprocally the law of each part is binding on the organism, on pain of mutual destruction.

k) Liberty and Justice, for the individual and for the social body, consist in the complete fulfillment of these two laws. On this condition, they merge: *Summa libertas, Summa justitia*.

48. Thus, with the exception of: 1) the *self*, that is to say the *unity*, the *same*, the unique category of all conceptions; 2) its *passionality*, which produces, depending on the objects to which it is applied, passions, affections, appetites, inclinations, sympathies or instincts... which it feels immediately; the being does not think, does not know anything that does not come to it from outside, either from lower objects or from the higher being of which it is a part, which is society.

On one hand, the sentiment of the *self*, the *same*, the *one*; the idea of indivisibility and that of the infinite;

On the other, the feelings of the passions are innate in the Being: they are the being itself, simply because it exists; it possesses them, and cannot not know them.

As for all the other ideas, they are not innate, but imprinted, suggested, or revealed: they are first of all the impressions of objects; the categories of understanding, resulting from the application of the notion of *infinity*, of the *self*, of the *one* and of the *same* to external phenomena; they are also the passional categories resulting from the application of our *activity* to external objects; finally, there are the moral categories resulting from our relations with our fellow human beings and from the society that we naturally and spontaneously form with them.

49. Every idea, regardless of its origin and nature, is the expression of a reality, which it defines and represents; and we have here, through the theory of the formation of ideas, the proof so often sought of the reality of external beings.

In fact, just as inner feelings reveal to us and guarantee to us, in an unmistakable way whose negation would imply contradiction, the reality of our own existence, just so the reality of external objects is proven by the images that we receive. Here is the demonstration.

1. *The being is a group.*

2. *The group is a unity-multiplicity.*

3. To have the idea of a group is thus to have the idea on a *unity-multiplicity*.

4. Now, the thinking Being can only acquire the idea of a multiplicity *a posteriori*, and not by itself, since that would be to *analyze and destroy itself*.

5. Thus, the groups, the ideas of which are received or perceived in the understanding, are *external* to the mind.

6. Thus, if they are external to it, they are real, since the highest reality that we can conceive is the group.

Thus the metaphysical *concepts* — born of the application made by the self of the notion of unity or of the same, which is in it necessary for phenomena — reveal to us the animate or thinking reality and, by analogy, the cosmic infinity.

The *images* reveal to us the reality of the creation.

The *passions*, a form of our passional activity that we could call *categories of sensibility*, reveal to us the reality of the *human essence*, and our own personality.

Mores indicate the reality of the Social Being.

So that we have now, as guarantee of the reality of that being, three sorts of proofs:

the ontological proof, by which the being is affirmed everywhere that there is *unity*, composition of parts or a group;

the economic, psychological or mechanical proof, which shows us that being in the exercise of its strength, in its action;

the *ideological* proof, which reveals to use the ideas that it generates by itself, affirms its necessary reality.

51. What, then, is the *Collective* or *Social Reason*, as opposed to individual reason?

It is the set of ideas that the social group spontaneously generates, as an expression of its nature, through its formation, action, development, preservation, and tendency towards perfection and well-being.

These ideas are the juices of the individual, to whom they reveal themselves as the group progresses, but they do not come from it; it does not possess them *a priori*; it is by itself incapable of producing them.

At the same time as they imbue the human understanding, they penetrate the conscience, so that they immediately become a superior commandment, which, expressed or implied, with or without the declaration of the legislator, is soon translated into the uses, constitutes *morales* or mores, and is the basis of public respect, that is to say of RELIGION.

VIII — THE IDEAS OF THE COLLECTIVE MAN

52. Considered in the group that produces it, the idea is identical and adequate to this group: in this sense, Hegel's proposition is true, the *idea* is the same thing as the *being*, and *vice versa*.

Considered in the group that receives and reflects it, the idea is no longer, according to the etymology of the word, anything but an image, an affirmation of being.

Any idea, whether it comes from within or from without, is therefore the expression of a reality, either internal or external.

It is thus that the feeling we have of our activity, of our passions, of our liberty, reveals to us our existence as men; — while the perception that we have

of external objects reveals their existence to us.

The question is therefore to know whether the moral ideas that man acquires in society are *produced* within him, like the feeling that he has of his own nature: in which case society would not be a reality in itself, but a dependence on human beings; — or if these ideas are truly *received* and *communicated* from outside, in which case society would be more than a simple mode or condition of our existence: it would itself be a being!

53. To solve this difficulty, there is only one thing to do, which is to verify, by logic, whether moral ideas are a logical and natural deduction from man's own ideas or whether they form a new order, which no logical law allows us to attach either to the passional theory, or to the theory of concepts, or to that of empirical knowledge received from other beings and from the Universe.

Now, this is what will result with the last degree of evidence, 1) from the natural opposition that exists between moral ideas and passional ideas, in other words, between the law of society and the law of the individual; 2) from the measures that society has always taken to ensure the execution of its *ideas* and its laws.

54. I therefore say that *to lie, to deceive, to steal, to perjure oneself, to murder, to strangle one's father, to rape one's mother and to devour one's own children*, all those things that the Decalogue has forbidden, and the development of which constitutes moral and political science, are of collective and acquired right (as I will soon demonstrate), but not at all of natural and primitive right; the proof is the impossibility of finding for them a basis, a reason and a sanction in the proper nature of man.

You will love your neighbor as yourself, says the Gospel, and *you will do to him on all occasions, as you want him to do to you*. Here is the summary of morality, here is the whole of the law and the Prophets!

Undoubtedly, and everything is there, but by virtue of what is this precept — eminently *useful* to my neighbor, a weak, fearful and stupid man, who needs to be loved, protected, helped; to my neighbor, a rich man, exposed to theft, calumny, treason, assassination — by virtue of what does it become OBLIGATORY for me who finds an interest in hating, stealing, avenging myself, killing, etc.?

This is the eternal problem on which rests the existence of States, the security of citizens and the development of societies.

Because, make no mistake about it, the individual man is only an animal endowed with superior emotional and intellectual faculties. As in any living being, his passions constitute his right; his intelligence composes his means, and all nature becomes his *debtor*. In the exercise of his faculties, he meets his fellow man, who says to him: by two! — Why this sharing? What is such a claim based on? What action can man bring against man? Aren't they equal?... Hobbes said: man to man is a god or a wild beast. This adage, which seems overwhelmingly misanthropic, is only a common-sense truth. Man is capable of friendship as well as hatred, neither more nor less than the tiger... Who denies it? In friendship, he

is generous, devoted, he loses his selfishness; he lives his friend's life; this is nothing more than a purely friendly affection. But see the other side of the coin: the more man is capable of devotion and tenderness, the more he is of vengeance and ferocity: since basically the two continents are only the double face of the same passionate attraction. The question is not there: it is a question of knowing how you claim to oblige him, to make him a law, a principle, a duty, better than that, a good, an advantage, a power, a glory, to treat other men as *co-partners!* — as friends, as brothers?...

55. Religion says: It is God who commands it! but what does God matter to me, who doesn't believe in him? To me who makes fun of him? To me, who regards him as a mystification? To me who sees in those who speak in the name of God only deceivers, who seek to impose on men, in the name of God, duties from which they derive immense benefit, by freeing themselves from them. Religion ! It can be a very beautiful and good thing, no doubt, but everything that can be said to me in its name crumbles before this invincible reflection, which asks me if religion is not, on the part of greedy and cunning men, even more wicked than I, poor innocent, one more cunning?...

Philosophy takes the floor, and says: Be human, beneficent, etc., so that your neighbor may in turn be so towards you!... Do not hurt your neighbor, so that he does not hurt you... I'm not saying no; I understand this reciprocity; I believe it is, in many cases, advantageous; perhaps we would all gain if it were taken as a rule and inviolably observed.

But isn't this, in the final analysis, only a *contract*? Now, this contract, who can oblige me to sign it, if I don't want it? If I find more advantage in keeping my freedom of action? And if, after having signed it, I break it, who can make it a crime for me? What did I say? Who will prove to me that I am the first who broke it? When I prove that the conditions are leonine for me, that it constitutes a loss for me?... And then, who will be the judge between me and my co-contractors? Who will decide between us?...

Rousseau, his *Social Contract* in hand, only proves that Society is a pact of mutual insurance of the weak against the strong, which pact has war as its *ultima ratio*, and the executioner as its sanction. All in good time! That is speaking reason. The small coalesce against the great: it is war. Consequently the big ones eat the small ones, in spite of their coalition: it is war. The vanquished pays with his liberty and his life: this is war. Enough rhetoric and hypocrisy! The natural and imprescriptible rights of the human being, robbery, parricide, adultery and rape, were lost; Rousseau found them. Glory to Rousseau.

Love your neighbor as yourself? repeats the Gospel. But do you believe that I don't love him? — I love him, no doubt, as much as I hate him who is not my neighbor. Because as the same Gospel says very well, we are not all companions; and my neighbor is neither a Pharisee nor a priest, he is not one who speaks of law and religion; my neighbor is he who, like me, will know no law but frank and free nature; my neighbor is the Samaritan! I call it the parable.

Here is Jeremy Bentham, the utilitarian, who says to me: Be fair, in your *interest, of course!* If it is not the sublime of charlatanism, it is the sublime of the ignoble. My interest, of course! It's an obligation, a sacred, irresistible duty, which commands me to submit?... it took an English head to conceive of that! Civilized coward, vile and flat industrial? Do I love *out of self-interest*, me, a man of nature, devoted unto death to my companion in fortune? Between creatures who love each other out of friendship and love of heart, is there any interest? You want to civilize me and you are a hundred thousand leagues below me, barbarian! To love from interest!...

But let us finally see what this *interest* will be. What do you want me to serve?

In each country, *nine-tenths*, at least, of the nation, are poor, doomed to work, to exploitation and to poverty, or taking the chance, imminent and almost inevitably multiplied, of poverty. What *interest* do they have in respecting the laws of this lying, hypocritical stepmother of a society?

Of the tenth, reputed to be rich, more than half have only become rich or continue to be so by dint of correcting, by fraud, violence, and all the means condemned by morality, the errors of fortune. Those don't have so much. So that, in the whole of a nation, there is not one person out of twenty, five percent, who, enjoying well-being, and at the same time professing justice, has a real, proper interest in respect for the social laws. The undesirable mass that, somehow, respects this law, obviously respects it *against its interest*.

The philosophy of the ideal comes in its turn; in the name of moral beauty, it affirms the necessity of devotion to the law and to what is called order. It is such a physiological, psychic and intellectual necessity for man, it says, to strive for *health, strength and beauty*; it is such a need for him, a self of his nature and of his well-being, to seek moral health, which is innocence, strength, which is virtue, and beauty, which is devotion. He cannot help desiring and wanting these things, which are his true goods, without which he hates himself, he despises himself, he is unhappy.

Either this speech means nothing, and is only a misuse of words, or it implies the prior satisfaction of the needs, attractions and passions of man. What is virtue? Doing good to others? We cannot, rationally and in good faith, for all the wretches born of the civilized regime, make of the so-called moral beauty, which is obviously here only abstinence, a compensation for health, strength and physical beauty, which is the fruit of this abstinence and civilization. The *fullness of being*: that is what man seeks, what he calls for. The development and free exercise of all his faculties: that is what he wants. This is what some rich people have, what all men aspire to, and what it is most certainly their right to claim, on pain of breach of contract and revolt. If virtue is not an empty word, it must have for its object to increase unceasingly, and to share equitably, well-being and wealth. This is its first duty. However, on the contrary, virtue is to sacrifice oneself!... Now, what do the moralists, economists and politicians teach in this

respect?... That moral and physical wealth cannot be shared by all, that there is an essential impossibility in this, that the conditions of order are contrary to it, etc.

So that, according to these moralists, &c., by the strangest reversal of ideas, the virtue that ought to be obligatory, principally for the rich, in order to share wealth with the poor, is especially obligatory for the poor, in order to preserve the privilege of the rich!...

We are talking about the ideal!... But the ideal of human virtue is as much, if not even more so, not to suffer any injustice, as it is to point out to the iniquity of others. There is heroism in the so-called brigand who rises up against a stepmother society, and protests, by the war he makes against it, against its odious jurisdiction.

Thereupon the theologian returns to the charge, and says: It is obvious that social morality cannot receive any sanction deduced from purely human considerations. Now, this morality exists, it is engraved in the heart of man; even as he breaks it and denies it, he honors it. A higher idea must therefore explain and consecrate it; it is God's idea. Religion, which commands all men, in the name of heaven, without considerations of *interest, pride, sensitivity*, etc., Religion is the true foundation of morality.

This, again, could be true, if Religion could by itself establish its authority. But who does not see that Religion is introduced here for the need of the cause; that it just happens, as a postulate, to fill the gap in morality; so that, far from serving as proof and guarantee of the truth of morality, it is the necessity of a moral sanction that serves as proof and argument for the necessity of religion.

If morality did not need a sanction, there would be no religion; — the very idea of religion would not exist. Kant teaches it formally, and this is what makes not the originality, but the sincerity of the doctrine: the moral law, he says, being posited imperatively in the conscience (which is in question), requires and consequently reveals God and the Immortality of the soul.

So that religion, which should guarantee morality, is itself guaranteed by it. What do you say of the vicious circle?

56. Society and the individual are in essential opposition, and almost everywhere today this opposition translates into violent antagonism: this is a matter of experience and history. How, then, can the moral law, invoked by society, be binding on man? That is the question! In resolving it, religion, politics, political economy, aesthetics have failed up to now: that is no less certain. And yet conscience affirms the moral law against which passion, interest, murmur; it is therefore necessary, at all costs, to obtain this agreement between Reason, which demands a *proof*, and Conscience, which must *only affirm*. For until this proof is obtained, logic being or appearing to agree with Egoism, the moral law will be without sufficient basis, and all the states that claim to support it, will be hypocritical and ridiculous.

57. This proof, we believe, can only be found by demonstrating against moral

philosophy, that the laws of conscience are not innate in man, as has been believed, that they are not are not instincts, a kind of Word incarnated in us; but that these are the *ideas proper to the social group*, ideas that it produces as an expression of its essence and its unity; that man then discovers by virtue of his reason, as he discovers all the laws of things; and which he also recognizes as obligatory for himself, because he feels himself to be an integral and constituting part of the social Being.

a) Moral laws are the ideas of the social being, just as the affections, or forms of activity, are the ideas of the individual.

These ideas are only known to man *a posteriori*, like all the ideas he has of things.

b) As soon as they are known, these ideas impose themselves on his conscience and win his assent.

Their *sanction* is in his heart; it is stronger than any other; any external sanction of morality is, as Kant says, immorality.

These are the two propositions which must be proved.

58. – Let us first establish our first proposition; for on this capital proposition depends all the theory of moral laws, and consequently all the science of rights and duties, and all religion. Let us prove, directly, by facts, that moral laws are not innate categories of individual consciousness, as Rousseau, Kant, etc. believed, not categories that the individual applies to the society of which he is a part, which would make morality something arbitrary and always revocable; — but that they are the ideas of the collective Being, which are revealed later, and are imprinted, over time, in the soul of the Individual.

Take, for example, *marriage*.

The union of man and woman is an integral and social idea, which man divides, and divides almost fatally.

On the one hand, *pleasure*, an individual idea,

On the other, *maternity*, another individual idea,

Solution sought, in *Community of Women, Community of Children*, workshops of maids, nannies, etc.

Negations of pleasure, in virginity, dogmatic aberration.

Conjugal love is a thing, a feeling *sui generis*, a fact, which by its nature is exclusive, the doubling of which implies contradiction.

This idea emerges little by little; reaches its fullness but is always threatened by novelists and prostitutes.

The man and the woman who, after living in concubinage, marry, change their feelings, become different, etc.

Justice. — This notion emerges just as painfully as the previous one. Justice for the savage is the *right of force*.

It takes time to arrive at the conception that consists in rendering *what is due to each*, a formula that means nothing.

Economics alone can provide the full picture, saying that it is the equation

between *product* and *wages*.

However, WAGES is an eminently social thing: since it is the ability to buy *everything* with a SINGLE PRODUCT. – IMAGE of the dignity of the human person.

Outside of *society*, of the *collectivity*, of *economic relations*, it is *mathematically* impossible to acquire a clear and exact idea of JUSTICE. We only have a vague feeling of it, which denies itself — and cannot sustain examination.

Property: false idea, and inadequate in all legislations; consequently, excusability of the theft. Criminal justice is a kind of war waged by the owner against the non-owner.

Community: *idem*, an incomplete idea.

Penal sanction. It is a *vengeance*, in all legislations, or else a *correction*; — two violations of right. Expiation is the same thing as correction.

The *penal sanction* is the *application to the individual who rejects the social law, of the law that he has made for himself*, except for the attenuation that circumstances may bring.

Thus, the Church professes authority; let it be treated with authority.

Thus, a party uses and abuses power; let it be treated dictatorially.

Thus, an individual steals or kills; let his property be taken from him to the extent taken, and let him be killed.

If society refuses to kill the man who killed my father, I will strike him myself, and I will be excused, I have the right.

If the thief has nothing to give back, let him be made to labor, and COMPELLED.

The constraint to labor must replace the constraint of body, and the prison, for any individual who agrees to labor.

If he refuses to labor, the dungeon, and if he persists, death.

The slanderer must be punished with the same penalty as the slandered person deserves.

For any act of justice, two witnesses and the plaintiff, before three citizens judging publicly, are enough.

Perjury, truth, good faith, deceit, etc.

Man does not immediately arrive at this MORAL NOTION, *the duty of sincerity and truth and fidelity*.

The RUSE, on the contrary, is an essential part of bestial and warlike law, part of intellectual exercise; it is indistinguishable at the beginning from true *ability*.

Cunning, trickery, hypocrisy, comedy, charlatanism, swindling, deceit, etc., etc. all this is *in good order*, for the primitive, unassociated man.

Jura, perjura, secretum prodere noli. [“Swear, perjure yourself, but never reveal the secret.”]

To swear by Jehovah, the only obligatory oath, in the time of Moses, which means 1) that the Spirit perfectly distinguishes truth in itself from affirmation; — 2) that for a long time, it is fair game to USE CUNNING, and to tell the *truth that*

is good to tell.

Fides punica, graeca, etc.

Yes, yes, no, no! – St. Matthew Gospel.

Where does the sense of obligation come from? From an aesthetic feeling? One might as well say that there are *foolish trades*, and that good faith has no superiority over cunning, except as a finer thing.

This feeling of obligation comes from the fact that man feels himself to be a *constituent part* of a whole, which cannot subsist if the parts LIE RECIPROCALLY.

Now, that doesn't happen first. There is a time when man, already *speaking, reasonable*, but at war with his fellow man, has no notion of this whole. He is convinced, on the contrary, of the necessity of lying; otherwise he would not be careful.

Lying is thus a *custom!*

The first progress is when one agrees to make an exception to it, that of the *oath by Jehovah*, ON PENALTY OF DEATH!

Hence the Hebrew word *Schaba*, to swear, which is the act of being cut in seven.

Notice then to him who swears not to be prodigal of *oaths*.

Then, the need felt to banish this ridiculous distinction, and to make everyone affirm sacramentally.

Transition point; the Pharisees.

Last term of transition: the Latin Church and the *faith of the oath*.

Solution: Quakers.

Retreat, or relapse; the mental restriction of the Jesuits. Shame.

Contradiction: public faith everywhere substituted for individual faith, that is to say, *constitution* by the state, *industry* by the state, *instruction* by the state, etc.

Always an antithesis to a thesis; always antinomy in place of truth.

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**NEW PROPOSITIONS DEMONSTRATED
IN THE PRACTICE OF REVOLUTIONS**

New Propositions Demonstrated In The Practice Of Revolutions

- 1 — The interests established by society are mobile, subject to a constant and fundamentally unstable shifting.
- 2 — Fixity, permanence or perpetuity in the relations of interests is a chimera.
- 3 — That mobility of interests is the primary source of revolutions.
- 4 — An interest, however unjust it may be, can only be abolished on the condition of being replaced by another, which itself could appear every bit as unjust later.
- 5 — The human mind has a horror of the void; it does not accept pure negation, even if it is the negation of the greatest of crimes.
- 6 — Nations do nothing from pure love or pure justice; there is always a self-serving motive for every reform.
- 7 — The worship of truth for its own sake is pure nonsense in revolution.
- 8 — All religion, every political institution, all the economy of society are successive modifications of cannibalism.
- 9 — The ideas that govern society, with the interests, are mobile like those interests themselves, liable to increase and decrease, subject by nature to conflict and contradiction, perpetually changed.
- 10 — Consistency in ideas is the opposite of the social Mind; the immutability of symbols and professions of faith, in Society, is a chimera.
- 11 — That fundamental oscillation of ideas is the second cause of revolutions.
- 12 — An idea, however absurd it may be, can never be entirely abolished, except when it is replaced by another, which could appear as absurd later.
- 13 — The mobility of ideas and interests is not sufficient to explain Revolutions.
- 14 — Human Nature remains the same, with regard to worthiness and unworthiness;—well-being increases, the sum of knowledge is multiplied: the quantity of virtue remains the same.
- 15 — *Evil, vice, selfishness* and *sadness* are essential elements of humanity.
- 16 — The antagonism of powers creates all of our life: the *status quo*, bread, the absolute, happiness, sanctity, perfection is nothingness, death.
- 17 — The intimate knowledge of that truth is the principle of resistance to revolutions.
- 18 — The feeling of the beautiful and the sublime, the fascination with the absolute, is the cause that tips the balance and incites revolutions.
- 19 — The beautiful, the sublime, the absolute, the perfect, the true and the ideal are the infinite in thought.
- 20 — This feeling produces the marvelous in Humanity; it is the supreme cause, the *ultima ratio* of revolutions.
- 21 — The idea of God is not the conception of a *Supreme Being*, but of a *Supreme*

Ideal.

- 22 — The supreme ideal is without reality: *there is no God*.
- 23 — A society cannot exist without a transcendent ideal: without religion, modern society is in danger of dying.
- 24 — Every ideal has a real and intelligible basis: every reality and every idea is susceptible to idealization.
- 25 — The mind inevitably tend to realize its *ideal*, in nature, in labor, in person, in government, in religion: that is why it decides to make a revolution.
- 26 — Society needing an ideal, and that ideal needing to belong to a real being, we must seek a supplement to the idea of God.
- 27 — Truth, as well as Justice, is essentially mobile and historical; there is nothing absolute or eternal about it.
- 28 — Only the laws of movement are absolutely and eternally true.
- 29 — The state of revolution is the normal state of societies.
- 30 — Every manifestation supposes a subject: thus, the series of revolutions leads us to suppose a revolutionary subject.
- 31 — *Revolutions* are the *Transitions* [Passages] of Humanity
- 32 — There have been some presentiments of that idea; the Peoples, the Poets, the Writers have had an intuition of it.
- 33 — The phenomena of revolution can only be explained and understood with the aid of this hypothesis
- 34 — The hypothesis of a revolutionary subject is as rational and more legitimate than that of God and that of Providence.
- 35 — A being is not a simple thing, but a group.
- 36 — All beings, living and unorganized, are groups.
- 37 — Everything that forms a group is a reality or has the power of realization.
- 38 — The old ontology went astray which it defined the *Being* as a simple substance.
- 39 — Simple substance, *mind* or *matter*, is a chimera.
- 40 — A man is an organized group, in which the mind arises from the organization.
- 41 — The People are an organized group: thus, the People are a real being, endowed with Life, Personality, Will, Intelligence and prescience.
- 42 — The definition of man by Bonald is the same, at base, as that of Cabanis:—a simple transposition of terms has made all the difference.
- 43 — The family, the familial group, is a *Complex Being*, which has its Self, like the People and the Individual.
- 44 — The old ontology, in its materialist form, leads to this proposition: Matter does not exist.
- 45 — In its spiritualist form it leads to this other proposition: Mind does not exist.
- 46 — To set aside the notion of *substance* and *Cause*, and move onto the terrain of *Phenomena* and *Law*, or of the Group.

