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SOCIAL
DARWINISM

BY

EMILE GAUTIER

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WORKING TRANSLATION BY
SHAWN P. WILBUR

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The texts presented here include a translation of Émile Gautier's 1880 pamphlet *Darwinisme Social*, which is often cited as the first use of the term "social darwinism" in French, together with an unsigned article from 1877, which appeared while I was researching the better-known text, almost certainly also by Emile Gautier. The earliest appearance of the term in English is also generally considered to be in 1877.

Émile Gautier was an anarchist, tried alongside Kropotkin in the "Trial of the 66," where his impassioned defense was particularly noted. Sentenced, as a result, to a long prison sentence, he eventually gained his freedom with a promise to distance himself from the anarchist movement — although he maintained friendly relations with Louise Michel, with whom he collaborated on an ultimately unfinished novel, and Sebastien Faure, who asked him to provide a preface for *La Douleur Universelle*. In his later years, he became an important popular science writer.

Social Darwinism is of potential interest, not only for the early use of the term in the title, but because Gautier's argument was that a real social Darwinism would support, not oppose, anarchist and socialist goals. In this sense, it anticipates Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* in some ways. It is a fairly simple text, apparently the product of a science-related study group of which Gautier was a part, and some sections have aged more gracefully than others. But it is also short, and clear, and in some ways remarkably radical, so it should reward the bit of time required to become acquainted with it.

— Shawn P. Wilbur

April 13, 2024.



EMILE GAUTIER

1853-1937

NOTE.

Many people are probably unaware that there has been a social studies circle in the fifth arrondissement for several months.

The booklet that I am publishing today will reveal to them both its existence and its value.

Not that this is my exclusive goal, nor do I seek to take pride in the fact of belonging to a group of men capable of developing and producing serious ideas about the highest and most complex problems.

What I wanted was for the fruit of our work not to remain confined within the narrow confines of our personal relationships, but, on the contrary, to be communicated to as many people as possible. I was loathe to keep for ourselves and for those immediately around us what we had recognized as just, logical and true.

The very conclusions, moreover, that emerged from our philosophical discussions, as our readers will be able to convince themselves further on, made it our duty to call on all thinkers of good will to share.

This brochure is nothing other than the collection of the minutes of some of our sessions; it is the summary of the familiar course in social philosophy that I have the honor of giving each week within this small circle of convinced republicans, augmented, rectified, corrected and amended following the observations of the various listeners, their objections, their questions and the answers given to them.

We have also adopted a general program, which while being broad and elastic enough not to impose too onerous conditions on any disinterested socialist, is nevertheless precise enough to allow us to judge in advance what our criterion of certainty will be, and also what will be our rule of conduct.

Here is the content:

1. To begin from this principle that social, political and moral phenomena are, like all others, subject to natural *laws*, that it is not a question of creating arbitrarily or empirically, but of discovering and proclaiming.

2. To be emancipated from theological ideas; therefore :

A. To accept as true only what is scientifically demonstrable;

B. To act as we think, that is to say, to make — and to keep — the commitment not to submit any act of your life to any minister of religion.

3. To attribute to the republican principle its proper meaning and its true character, which consists of bringing together all forces whatsoever to the common work; therefore, to not separate socialism from the Republic, understood in the deepest sense of the word, and then meaning the abolition of arbitrariness, idleness and parasitism.

4. To recognize that wealth — material and intellectual — being social in its origin, must also be social in its uses, so that everyone is called to effectively enjoy the incontestable right that they have to participate in material well-being and integral education.

5. To take as the goal of our efforts and studies a social organization such that there is only room within it for useful beings.

It was perhaps not useless, before giving the public a sample of our deductions, to put this kind of manifesto before their eyes, so that they would know clearly in what dispositions of mind, with what method and in view of which work this modest social studies circle of the Pantheon, — which counts among its members employees, students, artists, writers, but mostly manual workers, — addresses, studies and resolves the questions.

November 1879.

Emile GAUTIER.

INTRODUCTION

Everyone knows, at least by reputation, the theory put forward by the English naturalist Darwin in his famous book, whose title alone is a revelation foreseen: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*.

Let us recall briefly, and without entering into superfluous details or supporting explanations not required for the establishment of our thesis, the essence of that theory.

All living beings, says Darwin, vary, change and are constantly altered under the influence of the environment and surrounding circumstances.

On the other hand, the resources of nature are not considerable enough to suffice for all the individuals that are born and demand to live. There is neither enough space nor enough sustenance for that numberless mass of newcomers.

So there is a *struggle for existence*, a fight for life, and the beings that triumph only survive at the expense of others.

It is because the modifications that the environment has impressed upon them were useful modifications that they were assured superiority over their rivals. The strongest, the best, the most gifted, the most fit, in a word, succeed in overcoming the difficulties and perils of life, while the weaker, the less fit, having received neither the same weapons nor the same guaranties of success, are pitilessly sacrificed, with and disappear.

This double phenomenon of the elimination of weak beings and the survival of the strong works according to a natural law that Darwin called the *law of selection*.

In other words, nature acts spontaneously on beings as breeders or horticulturalists act on domestic animals or plants, in order to develop particular useful qualities in them.¹

As, in the end, the qualities of beings tend to be transmitted to their descendants and reproduced in them, it happens that, the strong alone remaining, the qualities that have earned them victory in the competition for life are reproduced hereditarily and are stabilized in the race, until through the play of these same laws there emerges, under the influence of favorable circumstances, a still more superior race, which, better armed, stronger and more fit, *selects* in its turn the old privileges. And so on...

Such is, according to Darwin, the law of the universe.

Such is the principle of evolution that, step by step, has slowly extricated the

¹ The word *selection* comes from the Latin verb *seligere* — to chose, to sort out. And nature indeed makes a selection, a choice, among the beings, since it preserves only the strongest and condemns the others, the inferior samples of the species, to an inevitable death.

higher animals from the rudimentary organisms that stagnate in the lower regions of life.

It is thanks to the simultaneous cooperation of four influences — the struggle for life, — the uninterrupted alteration of primitive types, the hereditary transmission of these modifications to the descendants, and finally natural selection, the expulsion of inferior beings — that the unfailing progress of the permanent creation is accomplished and continues.

This hypothesis, — for it can only be a hypothesis, since its direct demonstration is impossible, — based on the observation and scrupulous analysis of the facts, on a mass of experiments, on intellectual and material evidence, drawn from the past and the present and confirmed, as well, by all the general phenomena of the most diverse sciences, notably of embryology paleontology, morphology and physiology,¹ — this hypothesis is generally accepted today and there is now hardly anyone to contradict it but the eternal promoters of obscurantism and blind faith.

However, we can easily understand the part that the champions of social inequality have been able to draw from it.

Abandoning from now on the worn-out arguments of their predecessors, for the *unquestionable* dogmas of original sin and the fall of man they substitute the *demonstrable* dogmas of the competition for life and natural selection.

Darwin's book will become the Bible of the new exploiters: it will be through, and in the name of science that the sacrifice of the weak will be accomplished!

What we propose to do is to precisely to prove that the alleged sovereignty of scientific law is no more legitimate than the sovereignty of divine right, and that it is through failing to deal with the problem in depth or study it with impartial intentions that we have arrived at these dreadful conclusions. Nature becomes, in the mouths and pens of the advocates of the *status quo*, a new entity that would be as loathsome as God, if it was not as fanciful and as false. As for the real, objective facts, it is only on the condition of torturing them and of deforming their meaning and scope that we can make them say precisely the opposite of their true sense.

Such is the theory that we wish to establish, with certainty, but also with success. We are too great friends of science and the experimental method to oppose ourselves to Darwin and his heirs, But, far from seeing in their teaching a condemnation of socialist aspirations towards a better state of things, we find there, on the contrary, a new argument, and one of the most powerful, in their favor.

¹ *Embryology*: science of the development of organized beings, science of the evolution of the egg, the embryo and the foetus.

Paleontology: science that deals with prehistoric and antediluvian beings, whose remains are buried within the layers of the earth.

Morphology: science of the form and structure of living beings.

Physiology: science of the phenomena of life among the animals.

1. The prodigious development of human intelligence and activity constituting a new factor, more powerful as civilization is more advanced, the terms of Darwin's law, inevitably modifiable like all natural laws, must necessarily be transformed in a proportional measure.

2. Instead of passively submitting to the inevitabilities of nature, man reacts against them and increasingly prevails over them.

3. Modifications have already been made to Darwin's law, as has been the case with other laws; the inevitabilities that crush us are conventional, artificial inevitabilities, social inevitabilities.

4. It is not nature that distributes the advantages and disadvantages. It is society, a human work and one that is revisable.

5. Society is badly made. It fails at its mission, which is to correct the natural inevitabilities and to sustain those who suffer from them.

6. Revolutionary socialism demands, not that we lay nature on a Procrustean bed, made in advance according to the caprices of some utopian, but that we reform society. Darwin's law, which is essentially modifiable, but which has not been modified as it should be, cannot be a sufficient refusal of its demands.

Such is, in a few lines, the outline of our argument.

SOCIAL DARWINISM

Does Darwin's theory extend to man?

Does it regulate the development of man as a social molecule as well as the development of man as a living being?

What is its influence on the progress of individuals and peoples?

These are the questions that urgently need to be answered. These are by far, among those evoked by the discussion of transformism, the most serious and those whose interest is the liveliest and most immediate.

Any theory, in fact, which, referring to the very principles, to the essential principles of science, constitutes a new philosophy, borrows its value above all from the action that it is called to exercise, in the domain of practice, on political institutions and social arrangements. Now, depending on whether the answer is in one direction or another, the conclusions could be significantly divergent: it would be possible to deduce not only two theories, two abstract conceptions of the world and of society, but also — and this concerns us more closely — two diametrically opposed general rules of conduct.

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Is it not, in fact, on the doctrine of transformism, extended to man inclusively, that those disciples of Malthus and the instigators of social inequality rely, who today — finally understanding that the Gods are leaving, that divine right has had its day, and that faith, now exhausted, is no longer a sufficient discipline, — ask science to justify their predominance and their prelibations?

Are the claims of the gentlemen plutocrats and economists anything else, at least in appearance, than the logical conclusion of Darwinism transported into the social domain?

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What did Malthus say?

Let us quote verbatim his own words, which formulate, with inimitable crudeness, the final judgment hitting the weak:

A man who is born into a world already busy occupied, if his family does not have the means to feed him, or if society does not need his labor, this man, I say, does not have the slightest right to ask for any portion of food: it is really too much on earth. At the great banquet of nature, there is no table set for him. Nature commands her to go away, and she does not take long to put this order into execution herself... When nature takes it upon itself to govern and punish, it would be a very contemptible ambition to claim to snatch the scepter from its hands. Let this man therefore be delivered up to the punishment that nature inflicts on him to punish him for his indigence! He must be taught that the laws

of nature condemn him and his family to suffering, and that if he and his family are saved from dying of hunger, they owe it only to some compassionate benefactor, *who, in helping them, disobeys the laws of nature... Justice and honor impose on us the duty to formally disavow the supposed right of the poor to be assisted.* (Essay on Population).

Nothing is clearer, nothing more categorical.

We can protest, we can deplore this tragic fatality; we can criticize the formulas, discuss the figures, reject the proposed palliatives or propose others, the conclusion will nonetheless remain almost identical, with its character of inescapable necessity.

The great law of selection, recognized by Darwin, orders the weak, the poor, the suffering, the disinherited, to go away: they are truly too many on earth. Only those who triumph in the struggle for existence have the right to live and sit at the social banquet.

Thus the progress of humanity will be accomplished, naturally reduced to the “best,” to the most beautiful samples of the species.

Thus, through the elimination of the poor, the Malthusian extinction of pauperism will take place....

Such are the imperative orders of nature; such are the essential and indispensable laws of human societies...

At all times there have been, at all times there will be poor and rich, weak and powerful, excluded and favored: without this inequality, the society cannot survive.

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After Malthus it is Haeckel, the illustrious professor at the University of Jena, who makes his authoritative voice heard.

“There is no scientific doctrine,” he said, “which proclaims more loudly than the theory of descent that the equality of individuals is an impossibility; that this chimerical equality, is in absolute contradiction with the inequality, necessary and existing everywhere, in fact, of individuals... The realization of the wishes of socialism, which demands for all citizens equal rights, equal duties, equal goods, equal enjoyments, is purely and simply impossible. Darwin's theory establishes, on the contrary, that, in human societies as in animal societies, the rights, nor the duties, nor the goods, nor the enjoyments of the associated members neither are nor can be equal... The conditions of existence are, from the moment they enter life, unequal for individuals: how could our task and the results that flow from it be equal everywhere?.. Any intelligent and enlightened politician should, it seems to me, advocate Darwinism as the best counter-poison against the absurd egalitarian theories of socialists. Darwinism is everything but socialist... If we want to attribute a political tendency to it, this tendency can only be aristocratic. Doesn't the theory of selection teach that, in the life of humanity, as in that of plants and animals, everywhere and always, a small, privileged minority alone manages to live and develop: The immense majority, on the contrary, suffer and succumb more or less prematurely... The cruel

struggle for existence rages everywhere... Only the small number elected from the strongest or fittest are able to victoriously withstand this competition: the vast majority of unfortunate competitors must necessarily perish... The selection of the elect is linked to the defeat or loss of the great number of beings who have survived...”

In other words, *defeat is always deserved*, because it is an indication of a defect, of an infirmity.

If there are exploited people, it is because they are exploitable, it is because they are worth less than their exploiters; it's that they have less capacity, energy, spring.

Too bad for the ones who are crushed! They were useless elements, harmful perhaps, to the advancement of the species, to collective progress. Marked by nature with the seal of irremediable impotence and sterility, they had to be placed in the category of useless mouths.

Everything is for the best in the best of societies!

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From these theories, with a cruel but scientific tone, to reduce through hunger and the brutalization of merciless labor the embarrassing demands of the proletariat, or even to practice, from time to time, in its ranks and for the greater well of the community, hygienic and beneficial bloodletting,¹ there is only one step, easily taken.

Is it not science that has spoken, in its serene impartiality?

There is nothing left for the countless unfortunates affected by his verdict but to bow, to be silent, and... to die!

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But is it necessary to accept these desperate conclusions in their entirety?

Is it therefore true that poverty is inevitable, and that the happiness of the small number of the elect must thus, by imperative laws, be made from the suffering and more or less slow agony of the disinherited majority?

Is it therefore true, as scholars of the first order, perhaps a little too interested in the solution of the problem to be above the suspicion of partiality, teach, that all our revolutionary protests, all our socialist grievances, are so many attacks on nature?

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¹ Didn't the German economist Weinhold, a disciple of Malthus, seriously propose *the castration of a certain number of children of the people*? "His colleagues," says B. Malon (*Critical History of Political Economy*), "laughed at it, but were not indignant..." Another disciple of Malthus, Doctor G., quoted by Proudhon in his *Economic Contradictions*, advised *abortion*: a third, Marcus, went as far as *infanticide*...

Why, then, would we recoil from the organization of mass assassination?

We leave it to history — to that of yesterday, as well as to that of the past — to answer.

A priori, this possibility is repugnant to us; it offends our most intimate feelings and convictions.

But, as sentimentalism has nothing to do with science, this premature repulsion should in no way decide the solution of the problem. Moreover, it would be vain for us to protest, recriminate, even rebel against this lamentable inevitability, if, in reality, the law exists, inherent in cosmic facts and human things; nothing could prevent it from producing its disastrous effects. Whether we accept it or not, it will no less bend, whether we like it or not, the proudest foreheads as well as the humblest spines under its iron yoke, and resistance as sterile as it is inopportune will only make it heavier and more overwhelming!

We must therefore, taking our hearts in both hands, stifling our scruples, our pain and our anger, approach this poignant question with calm, without bias, without passion, without terror, and only ask the facts for a definitive answer.

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Now, it must be said, for those who do not get to the bottom of things, cold reason and inexorable logic seem, quite the opposite of sentiment, to vindicate the apologists of privilege and inequality.

Is it not, in fact, already demonstrated that man must not be relegated to a higher category, to a separate "kingdom," absolutely distinct from the rest of living beings? That his place, on the contrary, is marked, as an integral part, in the zoological scale, of which he is simply one term like the others, the first term without doubt, the highest, the most perfect of all, the supreme fulfillment, in a word, but not unparalleled? That man, finally, being no exception in organic nature, must be considered as the highest specimen of the vertebrate type, neither more nor less?

Are we not, therefore, authorized to conclude — quite naturally — that a law which, like Darwin's law, governs the entire organic world, must also apply to man and to society?

Let us add that it is impossible to rationally explain the appearance of man on earth and the gradual development, which slowly brought him, through the ages, from prehistoric barbarism to contemporary civilization, unless we suppose that he too falls under the laws of transformism.

Is it not thanks to the cooperation of the four influences pointed out by Darwin: — the alteration of the type under the pressure of external circumstances, the struggle for existence, the natural selection of the weak, of the less fit, finally heredity, — that, on this ancestral species from which the monkey, our first cousin, must also have emerged, was grafted and created a particularly favored variety, which, through a processive evolution, — the most important stages of which have been the fully acquired habit of walking upright, the differentiation of the anterior extremities, which became real hands, the appearance of articulated language, the discovery of metals, etc. — ended up constituting humanity? Unless we admit the miracle as the crowning

achievement of a theory whose principle and aim is the elimination of supernaturalism — which would be equivalent to denying science and retreating to the darkness of the grossest superstition — we are forced to recognize that man, as a living being, like any term of the animal series, must not escape vital competition or natural selection.

If Darwin's theory is true for his lower fellows, it must be equally true for him, and, in fact, many of the examples necessary for the exposition and demonstration of this theory are borrowed from humanity.

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No wonder, then, that people who, like Mr. Haeckel, have intentionally confined themselves to the “ethereal heights of pure science,” and have only a disdainful politeness for everyday practice, knowing and only wanting to know the physiological side of man, have, by way of analogy, transported the entire system of Darwinism onto the political-social terrain.

The professor from the University of Jena had, moreover, to be forgiven for the unconscious audacity of his *History of Creation*, and had to win back the good graces of the man who is today the most significant and the most powerful personification of Force, of the modern Attila, who, instead of calling himself, like his model, “the Scourge of God,” could readily qualify himself as “the Scourge of Scientific Fatality,” — of Count Otto de Bismarck, Chancellor of the German Empire. It is for his situation, for his own interests and for those of his class — *pro domo sud* — that Mr. Haeckel, reducing, under the eye of the master, his immense knowledge to the narrow limits of an intolerant and jealous naturalism, broke his spears against Mr. Virchow, for the greater glory of social Darwinism, without seeking any more than his rival to delve into questions in which — he himself admits with rather arrogant naivety — he had not the slightest skill.¹

Likewise, the economists, stamped advocates of the *status quo*, who — for their part — cannot invoke as an excuse their lack of preparation for problems that they profess to study and resolve, are at least suspect of partiality, when, not content with affirming the inevitability of this evil of misery whose victims are no longer counted, they strive to give it, in the name of nature or science, we do not know what irreformable blessing.

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Whatever may be, at first glance, the specious reasons that seem to confirm their sinister verdict, the reasons for challenge are however too numerous and too serious for us not to push our investigations further.

Nothing must be admitted that is not scientifically demonstrable, such is the watchword of this fertile and tutelary skepticism that has replaced the blind faith of ancient ages. The simple words of distinguished scholars and practitioners — even had these scholars and practitioners not even recognized their

¹ *Les preuves du transformisme, Réponse à Virchow*, p. 114.

incompetence, had they not even been convicted of being both judges and parties in the cause, — is no longer enough to convince us. We have the right — and the duty — to discuss the arguments thrown in our face, to uncover new dogmas, and, if necessary, to repudiate their teachings and conclusions.

This is precisely what we propose to do with regard to this particular case: and, with all due respect to Mr. Haeckel, his followers and his disciples, we are of Virchow's opinion.

Far from being the most energetic condemnation of revolutionary socialism, Darwin's theory, soundly understood and rigorously observed, can, on the contrary, if pushed to its final consequences, lend it valuable and unexpected support.

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Far be it from us to come here, for the needs of an incidental cause, to burn what we worship elsewhere. Exclusively concerned with the search for and proclamation of the truth, we are hardly concerned about the use that the various parties will be able to make of the facts that we have observed.

So, we have no difficulty recognizing once again that man is quite simply an animal, differing from other animals only quantitatively and not qualitatively;¹ that as such, it is subject to the law formulated by Darwin, and so judiciously elucidated by Mr. Haeckel himself.

It is beyond dispute for us, as for our opponents, that it is to heredity and to an increasingly complete adaptation that man owes all this baggage of ideas, of knowledge, of conscious notions, of sensations and volitions that constitute modern civilization.

Only where we part ways with them is when it comes to drawing practical conclusions from these common premises.

We do not confine ourselves, in fact, as they pretend to do, to the exclusive study of human morphology and the purely physiological development of our species.

We consider that if man is an animal, he is a special animal, intelligent, sociable, *relatively* free, all of whose faculties, in a word, have reached a higher degree of intensity, and it turns out that the results suggested to us by this new

¹ We say that two things or two beings differ only *in quantity* or *quantitatively*, when these two things or these two beings have the same ways of being, and all their common properties, but do not however have them to the same degree, with the same intensity or the same power — more precisely, do not have them *in the same quantity*. — We say that two things or two beings differ *in quality* or *qualitatively*, when their distinctive characteristics are not the same, when one of the two things or one of the two beings possesses properties that the other thing or the other being lacks. Thus, from the point of view of the means of locomotion, the dog and the pigeon differ *qualitatively*, because the pigeon has wings and the dog does not; but the pigeon only differs *quantitatively* from the penguin or the ostrich, birds which, like it, are provided with wings, but with rudimentary wings: there is, in the latter case, a difference of more or less; in the first, a difference of yes or no.

point of view, more comprehensive and broader, are diametrically opposed to those we have presented so far.

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That it is to the normal play of Darwin's law, and in particular to natural selection, that man owes his prerogatives — his refined consciousness and sensitivity, for example, more expeditious and more perfect instruments of knowledge, his flexible intelligence, penetrating and indefinitely perfectible, the vigor finally of its activity, — we do not contradict this.

But, wherever this superiority comes from, the fact is that it exists, that it manifests itself, and must generate special consequences. These special consequences consist precisely, not in repealing or suspending the laws of transformationism, but *in modifying their effects*.

There are no exceptions to the laws; there is simply a substitution of new laws for exhausted laws.

The introduction of this new element — the conscious and industriousness will of man — reacts against the natural influences, which previously exercised themselves freely, without counterweight, without obstacles, in the fullness of their power, — gives them another character and gives them another direction...

Man, in other words, no longer passively suffers external fatalities as before; he no longer lets himself go obediently with the current.

Thanks, in fact, to these very fatalities that govern life, he has acquired a certain ennoblement; he rose above the lower regions of animality, where he was born; his individuality became more pronounced and emancipated. From now on, he possesses a personal force that tends to manifest itself spontaneously, and to counterbalance the blind forces that formerly dominated it and still dominate less favored species.

The problem has been complicated by an additional term, the presence of which, by changing its position, will inevitably also cause the solution to vary. Alteration of type, natural selection, vital competition, heredity, no longer act alone or without encountering resistance: these fatal laws have found someone *to speak to*. They themselves have provided man with defensive and offensive weapons: he uses them to fight back and to stem their eternal action. Therefore, *a priori*, their results can no longer be assumed to be identical to what they were when man, not yet freed from the swaddling clothes of his obscure origin, was not able to stand up to them.

Let us also insist on this point, which should give us the key to the debate.

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Little by little, through a slow and gradual evolution, human intelligence acquired an acuity of which the lower animals had never before given examples, and, soon, with the awakening of intelligence, comes into play a fruitful activity,

which works to free man from the yoke of nature.¹ From being a slave, he aspires to become a master; he strives to realize this wish, and, in fact, he often succeeds, since the limits of his conquests recede every day.

Every time there is an encounter between the free spirit and natural fatality, the dignity of the self is offended and diminished; there it encounters something which does not respect it, which does not give it justice for justice and leaves it only the choice between domination and servitude. The self and the non-self do not balance each other. This is the principle which makes man the steward of nature, if not its slave and its victim.²

The elevation, the relative perfection that nature has attributed to man, gives him not only the desire and the right, but even the means to conquer the sovereignty of the universe, to shape this domain, to direct everything there as much as possible according to his needs and his goal.

Obviously, he uses it; *he reacts against the environment, and imposes new conditions on the world.*

Nature, formerly almost absolutely despotic, since its children were incapable of attempting a revolt, or even of thinking about it or feeling the need for it, nature obeys in its turn. Instead of being carried away mechanically, so to speak, by the whirlwind of natural relationships, man gradually manages to free himself from them, to make his present and his future independent of them.

Instead of being disarmed against the fatalities that called him to life, he turns against them the weapons that they have progressively provided him; he masters them, he replaces their springs with his own free and conscious determinations.

It is true to say that man has so subdued the natural forces and reduced them so well to serving him, that the primitive relations with the organized world now seem exactly reversed and turned around to the advantage of man.

Even those natural influences which, in the state of nature, act so energetically on our species, such as the climate, the constitution of the soil, the distribution of water, light and earth, etc., all this has become to a large extent, dependent on the civilized man.

Let us say the same about his domination over his parents in the organized world, that is to say over animals and plants.³

It is not the case that lightning, for example, which must have been for primitive man, as it still is for animals, one of the most formidable enemies, was so completely domesticated by him that, not only can he direct and neutralize its blows, but also that it carries his messages and carries out his errands?

Likewise with all natural agents, *likewise*, therefore, *with vital competition and selection*. In place of their blind power, human activity, introducing a new order into the world, substitutes reasoned decisions.

¹ Schaaffhausen, *La Doctrine de Darwin et l'anthropologie*.

² Proudhon, *Of Justice in the Revolution and in the Church*, I, p. 296.

³ Büchner, *L'Homme selon la Science*.

It reacts against Darwin's law, as it reacts against the laws governing electrical phenomena,

From which it follows that it is no longer admissible to claim that man, in his current state, is still subject to it unconditionally.

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“The harsh necessity of eliminating the weak, the less fit, the less capable, sacrificed to the progress of the species,” say the doctors in the style of Malthus and M. Haëckel, “is a fatal, inescapable law, which imposes itself all the same, brutally, without pity, without respect, without scruple; it is inherent in the very conditions of life, in the mysterious designs of nature. It is perhaps permissible to complain about it, but not to escape it. It is what it is: too bad for those who suffer from it! Those who benefit from it are not responsible. It is inflexible nature, the mistress of us all, which has arranged it this way from all eternity. *Dura lex, sed lex!*”

It is a natural law, a fatal law: so be it!

In the struggle for life, the weak are condemned by selection to succumb: so be it!

But, what is a law?

It is a necessary relationship, arising from the nature of things; it is the way of being essential to their arrangements, outside of which their formal existence would no longer be conceivable.

Thus, the mechanism of a natural law (of Darwin's law in the species), depends absolutely on certain determining conditions, so that the phenomena that are its consequence can only occur in the presence of such or such particular combinations and only those. If the conditions are modified to any extent, if the least of the efficient factors comes to disappear, or to be transformed, or even just to vary, for one cause or another, in intensity, in amplitude, or even sometimes place, *if a new element arises and reacts, the results will no longer be the same.* Not that the new phenomenon does not also have its law, but it is a distinct law: the modification of the cause has brought about an fitting modification of the effect.

We know, for example, that the law of solidification of water sets the freezing point of this liquid at zero (0°). However, there are cases where water only freezes at several degrees below 0°... Thus sea water only freezes at -2.5, i.e. at 2 degrees and half below zero.

Is there an exception there? Not at all.

The nature of things has changed and its relationships have varied in the same proportion. As conditions have changed, a new law has arisen, regulating these new relationships.

Water that freezes at 0° *is pure water*: let the water be loaded with salts or other foreign matter like sea water, it is no longer water. pure, a new element has intervened, and, consequently, escaping the law of the freezing of pure water, it

behaves in another way.

This is also the case with Darwin's law.

The advent of man to a higher consciousness and activity has modified the conditions of his exercise: *his mechanism includes one more factor*, which, having been generated by the natural factors that acted alone at the origin, nevertheless plays a considerable role in it, and nonetheless influences the entire system.

Subsequently, the consequences of natural selection and vital competition must be and certainly are modified to a proportionate extent, and they would only recur if the disruptive influence, that is to say, intelligent and voluntary activity of man, comparable to salt whose presence in sea water modifies the ordinary law of freezing, came to disappear.

With the intelligent, active, reasoning, industrious, civilized man, it is no longer Darwin's law that applies, but other laws, with different consequences.

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This established and understood, the reasoning of the aristocratic fatalists falls on its own. It only stands, in fact, on the condition of ignoring this undeniable fact: *the modifiability of phenomena*.

Man is capable of acting in his turn on nature which, in distant ages, shaped him like soft dough; and his action is not powerless.

Malthus and the economists, who have no scruples about proposing mitigations or more or less moral remedies for social misery, and Mr. Haeckel himself, who apparently does not believe in the sterility of his studies and his discoveries, do not, it seems, push skepticism and inconsistency to the point of teaching that human intervention cannot exert any action on natural phenomena or on the laws to which they relate.

So why make an exception for Darwin's law?

Why distinguish this law from mechanical, physical, chemical laws, etc.; whose effects are incontestably modifiable more or less as we wish?

Why deny social phenomena a variability that we are forced to recognize in others?

The laws that govern the social phenomena that humanity undergoes in its existence do not hinder its freedom any more than the law of resistance or heat hinders the freedom of the mechanic, rightly says Mr. Pierre Laffite. (*Les Grands types de l'humanité*, I, page 9.)

Who does not know that mechanics only took on its truly gigantic development on the day when the discovered laws became precisely the most considerable agents of its development?

Who does not know that the curative power of medicine increases with the extension of our physiological knowledge?

Likewise with social laws, which it is not a question of denying or rejecting, but of admitting, on the contrary, and of putting them to use for our purposes, as we are unable to neglect them!

Must we therefore, when we are ill, exclude doctors from our bedside, under the fallacious pretext that illness is a natural fatality deriving from a necessary law?

Have we not observed, on the contrary, that, except perhaps astronomical phenomena, which are produced by forces in too great a disproportion with the meager means at our disposal, both natural phenomena become all the more easily and more profoundly modifiable as their natural laws have been better known?

Hence this conclusion, that the more we are convinced of the accuracy of Darwin's law, the better its conditions will have been brought to light by researchers like Virchow and Haeckel, the more we must tend to free ourselves from it, and the easier this enterprise will become. The better, consequently, revolutionary socialism, which sets itself no other goal, will accommodate itself to it.

Whether he likes it or not, Mr. Haeckel is, in fact, one of our most powerful allies: it is for this, no offense to him, that he can be forgiven a lot.

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This is not, moreover, a gratuitous hypothesis, a purely abstract theory. It is based on observed and verifiable facts, which cannot leave room for a single moment of doubt. We can stop reasoning by analogy and borrowing our examples from foreign questions: on the very ground where the debate is posed, the arguments will not fail us.

We see, in fact, that the more humanity advances, the more it frees itself from natural inevitabilities. The reaction against nature is proportional to progress, of which it is at the same time the most significant index.

Is it not the case that as human intelligence and will develop further and take on greater intensity, their role enlarges, their action extends and strengthens, at the same time as external influences, encountering more numerous, stronger and more lasting resistance, are gradually neutralized?

Is it not the case that the modifiability of phenomena and laws is directly related to the improvement of humanity?

Given the excessively rudimentary conditions of his existence, primitive man was unable to counterbalance natural forces through his judgment and initiative. Like the lower animals, he suffered them humbly, without conscience and without rebellion.

Then the vital competition was cruel and the selection was raging. Darwin's law, acting without counterweight, displayed all its rigors; those who were incapable were forced to give up their subsistence and their place in the sun to the fittest.

It is in this sense that we are justified in saying that this implacable law has produced progress.

The salutary emulation, resulting from the very misfortune of his situation

and the inadequacy of his means of defense, has been the most powerful stimulant to man's activity.

For him it was a question of life and death. *To be or no to be!*...

It is under the energetic pressure of circumstances that man created for himself an industry that is endlessly perfectible and endlessly perfected, that he made an alliance with his fellows against common difficulties and dangers, that he organized himself into societies, that he finally founded this entire civilization, for which so many generations have perished at the task.

“Let us add,” says Dr. Büchner, “that what especially benefited man in the struggle for existence was that with him the knowledge or experience acquired did not perish with each individual, but was transmitted through education, tradition, and that, as a result, each new generation could, in its struggle to live, develop a greater force of resistance than the previous generation.”

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Thus, natural selection and vital competition, after having been productive of progress, later became, once this progress had reached a certain degree, so many obstacles to its further progress.

At the dawn of humanity, when man was still very close to animals, it was thanks to their action, thanks to the suppression of the weak and the survival of the “best,” the fittest, that the breed was improving. But, as soon as the race, thus freed from its initial passivity, had acquired enough resilience to act in its turn, to reason and to consciously and freely exercise its own action, progress should consist, on the contrary, in freeing itself more and more.

It is the same, moreover, for all the determining influences of nature, whatever they may be.

The extremes of climate, the difficulties of obtaining food, the rivalries — often formidable — with contemporary animals, all the demands, in a word, of the surrounding life — which, in the beginning, must have pushed man so energetically to constantly use and develop his bodily and intellectual faculties — which were then, consequently, the auxiliaries of progress, are today the enemies against which all the efforts of civilization converge. And the more advanced this civilization is, the more numerous and more in-depth our knowledge is, the more our tools are perfected — the more the domain of these fatalities shrinks, the more their action diminishes.

See for example, how the civilized European is able to fight against unfavorable conditions of existence with much greater success than the indigenous peoples themselves, who have nevertheless resided in the country for a long time, and who should be better adapted to the climate and to the localities!

This is because his intelligence, better developed, and his activity, better armed, react more strongly!

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It is not conceivable that Darwin's law applies exactly to man, when his brain, his mind and his social qualities have reached a certain degree of development, for the excellent reason that, a new factor being introduced into the problem, the final result must inevitably be modified. And this result — let us repeat it once more — will undergo a modification all the more considerable as the action of this new factor becomes more powerful.

Even today, if we do not want to get lost in the unfathomable darkness of prehistoric ages, do we not notice that it is among savages that vital competition is exercised in the most intense and harsh way? There, they are not content to abandon the weak to the mercy of nature, this cruel stepmother, whose capricious preferences we have not yet been able to control: we eliminate them or we eat them!

Will Mr. Haeckel dare to maintain that manhunting, cannibalism or slavery are instruments of progress? That the unfortunate people who are tied to the torture stake or put on a spit have deserved their fate? That their regular destiny, their providential mission is to serve as sustenance for the strong? That there is a natural inevitability there against which protests are useless?

Would his ideal be to bring us back to this state of nature, sung by Rousseau, in which “fatalities” manifest themselves without hindrance, in their murderous fullness?

We do not believe it.

But, were this supposition well-founded, our opponent would allow us to disagree with his opinion.

If the struggle for existence is unleashed among savages with such terrible brutality, it is precisely because they are savages, and the superiority of our civilization lies in the fact that we have been able to shake off little by little this yoke that crushes them. It is obvious that, among these lagging populations, the individuals who succumb, those who are reduced to servitude or transformed into edible goods, are the weakest, the least capable... This is what Darwin's law expects, what the law of natural selection dictates, when nothing counterbalances it.

But this is not a reason to conclude that this is good, nor that we must see it as an irremediable necessity.

It is possible, on the contrary, to remedy it; these are phenomena which, although they fall under natural laws, are no less susceptible to modification.

The best proof is that modifications were made, and remedies applied, which produced their effects. Civilized men no longer eat one another; ancient slavery was abolished. If the strongest, the fittest, or at least those who pass for such and behave accordingly, do not hesitate any more than before to shed the blood of the vanquished and to trade in their sweat, at least neither of them drinks it anymore. The barbarity of primitive mores loses ground every day, at the same time as natural selection and vital competition change direction and orientation.

Why wouldn't the hypocritical exploitation of Labor by Capital disappear like

cannibalism?

Why would wage labor, “this final transformation of servitude,”¹ be more respectable and more enduring than the similar institutions that gave it birth?

Why should the new fatalities be less modifiable than their predecessors?

Why wouldn't conditions that were produced by a certain progress of civilization be transformed, even erased, by a more considerable progress?

Don't the facts of all kinds that we observe around us every day teach us that the march of progress is more and more accelerated, and that its speed and intensity are all the greater the more advanced it is and as the elements that cooperate there are more numerous, more complex and more powerful?²

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Consequently, we do not see why, thanks to the incessant development of skills and faculties of man, thanks to the indefinite perfectibility of his brain and his heart, there would not come a day when, in the words of Sir Alfred Wallace, one of Darwin's collaborators, “there would no longer be anything but plants and animals cultivated, that is to say tolerated or raised by man, where human selection would have replaced the selection of nature,” — where, on the other hand, war, which fruitlessly wastes productive forces, would give way to universal solidarity, where, finally, natural inequalities, rectified and compensated by tutelary institutions, would be absorbed, for the benefit of humankind, in the irresistible torrent of a civilization common to all...

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From this fact, that Darwin's law, like all other natural laws, is not only modifiable, but that, in reality, it has been modified, a new consideration emerges, which will serve as a transition for us to consider the question from another point of view.

There is now no doubt that this law no longer governs humanity exclusively and that a people is less subject to it as it is more civilized.

Consequently, it is inappropriate to demand from it the consecration of abuses that have ceased to be attributable to it: these abuses are not due — for the most part, at least — to natural fatalities; on the contrary, they are due to the institutions that were created to react against these fatalities — human, artificial institutions, therefore revisable, and of which those who suffer from them have the right to demand the revision.

In other words, if Darwinism alone presided over our destinies, we would not be condemned to mute and passive resignation, because there is no law that cannot be modified and give way to another law.

But what is even more decisive is that modifications have already been made;

¹ Châteaubriand.

² “We summarize in ourselves, we who came last, all the thoughts and all the passions of our fathers! The century in which we live is always the greatest, because it has benefited from everything that the others have experienced, conquered, suffered!” (Jules Vallés).

we are already subject to a new law. It is no longer nature, it is a human work that must be transformed.

What humanity has done, can it no longer undo or improve it?

Who would be admissible, to defend the *status quo*, to hide behind impossibilities that our ancestors, less favored, were able to overcome?

This perhaps deserves explanation.

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Why did men form a society?

Association is not something essential to our species; it is not an arrangement prepared and imposed by nature.

Certainly, man today is born with social instincts; he is a sociable animal — *Zoon politikon* — as Aristotle already said. But these innate instincts, which many other animals also possess, to a lower degree, are the result, transmitted and fixed by heredity, of an adaptation to external circumstances that may have required, in order to be produced, the several centuries-old accumulation of uninterrupted efforts...¹ Society is no more a natural creation than civilization, no more than health flannel, the phonograph, Liebig canned goods or sewing machines. It is a human institution, due to this gradual development of intelligence, which has been generated and driven by the demands of the environment.²

Among other methods to improve their situation and to fight more effectively against the innumerable dangers that assailed them from all sides, men imagined lending each other mutual support.

A long and costly experience having finally taught them how disastrous isolation and insolidarity were, they came together in groups, they pooled their resources and their efforts; some of them committed to protecting and supporting each other.

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The company was therefore an attempted reaction against Darwin's law.

And, in reality, once this means of defense was instituted, man did not take long to free himself more and more quickly and more and more completely from the difficulties and evils of which he was previously the helpless victim.

Society therefore aims to correct natural fatalities, to attenuate them, and even, if possible, to absolutely eliminate their disastrous consequences — or, more precisely, to divert their course, and, as all phenomena are modifiable, to make them serve the general good.

¹ Likewise, the well-known instinct of the pointing dog is nothing other than the extension, obtained artificially and *become hereditary*, of the short pause that hunting animals are accustomed to making before darting on their prey. (See *Lettres sur les animaux*, by Georges Leroy.)

² The social contract is not of my fashioning,

I did not sign it from my mother's womb. — Alfred de Musset.

We enter into society, or, when we are there, we agree to stay there, in order to increase, under certain conditions and by means of certain sacrifices, our security, our liberty, our happiness.

In exchange for the burdens that it necessarily imposes on them, society has the duty to protect its members, to guarantee them against the dangers to which they are exposed, both against the slow death that awaits the victims of natural selection and against violent death, as much against the bites of hunger as against those of cannibals, as much against exploitation as against assassination!

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It even seems that society is made especially for the benefit of the small and the weak...

Is it not those, in fact, who suffer the most from natural fatalities, to the point of dying, who, consequently, are the first interested in their annihilation?

The strong need not fear these fatalities, since they would benefit from them if they acted freely.

The state of nature presents disadvantages harmful to the masses, profitable to a privileged minority: — the social state, which was invented to remedy these disadvantages, cannot therefore serve the privileged, for whom it must, on the contrary, level the prerogatives. It cannot consecrate what it is intended to amend and destroy: otherwise, why not stick to the state of nature?

Now, if the weak were not the first to benefit, the social state would only have served to sanction their inferiority.

It is in this sense that it is permissible to say that society is made especially for the weak, that its aim and duty is to protect and arm them with a view to competition against the strong.

There is such strong logic in these deductions that our civilization, however incomplete, however arbitrary it may be, has not been able to escape its influence.

In fact, alongside the countless abuses, anomalies and inequities with which it teems, we have seen the emergence of a number of charitable institutions, intended to protect the least capable, to safeguard the most helpless, to take in the vanquished, to raise and bandage the wounded of the great social battle, or to alleviate the evils of war, to even prevent them, if necessary, to replace them with works of peace.

All this is very incoherent, very capricious, very insufficient, often very humiliating and very dearly bought; almost always, still, the altruistic spirit of solidarity is in formal antagonism with the selfish instinct of self-preservation. Nevertheless, all these narrow and haphazard attempts attest to the power of the principle that presided over the founding of societies.¹

¹ So, Malthus, this merciless logician, keenly feeling the inconsistency of practice, led the most vigorous campaign against philanthropic institutions. “No sentimentality,” he cried. “Let’s put an end to legal charity and even private charity once and for all! What does it matter if poor children *fall prey to dogs*? At the banquet of life, there is no place for them.”

It is indeed to react against natural fatalities, to ward off the blows of selection and to soften vital competition, that man has drawn closer to his fellow men and made an alliance with them.

The policy of this mutual insurance contract cannot be otherwise.

In reality, is this policy respected? — No.

Never, in fact, thanks, no doubt, to the advance of the general consciousness of good over contemporary institutions, has so much disagreement appeared between what is and what must be, between the idea and the facts.

It is from a man of science, of indisputable erudition and competence, from the author of *Force and Matter*, from Doctor Büchner, finally, that we will borrow a quotation to support our statements. Mr. Haeckel will undoubtedly not be able to challenge the authority of the former, under the pretext that, as he reproached Mr. Virchow, he knows nothing about zoology. So that our own incompetence does not expose us *a priori* to a categorical rejection, so that we do not refuse to discuss with people whom we would consider in advance as ignorant fanatics, we are forced to invoke such considerable references:

“The undeniable right of every man to all the goods of humanity, at least of his people or his nation,” says Büchner, “is, in the current state of things, only a cruel mockery. One, in fact, is born with the crown on his head, or, from the cradle, rolls over millions. It was enough for him to breathe to own a large part of this soil on which we were all born, and which should, in fairness, be the common heritage of all; he does not yet think, and already he must have rank, wealth, places, knowledge; he must dominate his fellow citizens. Another is born naked and poor: he does not have a stone on which to rest his head. The very earth that gave birth to him seems to regard him as an outcast or a latecomer, obliged first of all to establish his right to a miserable existence, by enslaving to others, throughout his life, the bodily or intellectual forces that nature gifted to him. Even under such conditions, even when he sacrifices his life and health to this serfdom, society usually forces him and his family to endure the saddest existence; it imposes on them, in the midst of incredible public wealth, the torture of this mythical Tantalus, eternal spectator of meals, where he cannot be a guest. Excess poverty and excess wealth, excess strength and excess powerlessness, excess happiness and excess misery, excess servitude and excess caprice, excess of superfluity and excess of deprivation, fabulous science and fabulous ignorance too, the most difficult labor and effortless enjoyment, all kinds of beauty and splendor and the deepest degradation of existence and being, this is the character of our current society, which, by the magnitude of its contrasts, surpasses the worst eras of political oppression and slavery. Every day, the most moving tragedies, the fruit of these contrasts, happen before our eyes, without our being able to prevent their recurrence, and we are obliged to tell ourselves that, every day, every hour, men, deprived of the things most necessary for life, perish quickly or slowly, while, very close to them, the better-off portion of society overflows with superfluity and well-being, while national prosperity has experienced a rise previously unknown. Let us travel through our large cities and our principal manufacturing districts, this

will be enough for us to see, right next to the abode of Wealth and Happiness, above and below it, the hidden dens of vice and Misery; to see, near the overcrowded tables and drunken stomachs, the hollow-eyed Hunger undergoing its silent torture; to see, alongside all kinds of luxury and arrogance, hopeless Privation huddling, fearful and anxious, in a dark corner, or else, prey to gloomy despair, hatching horrible designs. How many times, with the scraps that have fallen from the rich man's table and disdained even by his dogs, how many times could the poor worker snatch his hungry and shivering children from the most horrible death!... The distribution of intellectual nourishment is also unequal. How much intellectual and physical hunger would easily be satisfied by an equitable distribution of property and education! How everyone could eat and learn to their appetite, if activity were a last duty for all, and if "so many men did not work for one or for a few!"¹

In other words, vital competition has lost none of its ruthless fury.

It is always by the thousands, perhaps by the millions, that men succumb, for the greater glory and the greater profit of a minority of favorites, who apparently monopolize the progress of the species.² The same contrasts, the same || conflicts, the same disasters never stop recurring: there are always sacrifices.

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Is this persistence of the evil that society was called to cure due to its impotence, or to the vices of its organization?

This is the new question that arises.

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According to Malthus and Mr. Haëckel, this should be seen as an inevitable fatality.

Taking Bacon's famous maxim literally: "We only triumph over nature by obeying its laws," — they teach that humanity would exhaust itself in useless efforts in wanting to transform an order established for all eternity by nature;

¹ *L'Homme selon la science*, pp. 331-332.

² Let us also listen to J. B. Say — an economist nonetheless:

... "Everywhere we see the exhaustion of poverty alongside the satiety of opulence; the forced labor of some compensates for the idleness of others. Hovels and colonnades, the rags of poverty mixed with the brands of luxury; in a word, the most useless profusions in the midst of the most urgent needs."

It is true that he adds, undoubtedly forgetting that in his youth he had written "Olbie," a socialist novel: "*Most of these evils are in the nature of things and we can do nothing about it.*"

This is the conclusion of Malthus and Haëckel.

"Not all of them can rise," said somewhere "Mr. Thiers, it must be the strongest (the fittest) who rise. Society therefore owes credit, not to everyone, but to the most skillful..."

In other words, society lends a hand to the strong to crush the weak. She is doing the opposite of what she should. It is a logical consequence, an unfair but direct application of Malthus' law and selection to social practice. Civilization helps nature in its destructive work! She only lends to the rich!

that, consequently, social practice cannot do anything other than consecrate its judgments, however rigorous, however deplorable they may be. *It was written*, weak mortals, tremble and obey! To try to react would be more than a crime, it would be a mistake, sterile stupidity.

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This entirely oriental morality cannot suit us, for the excellent reason that it is based on an error.

Without doubt, nature, which only cares about the species, condemns to death and mercilessly executes the least fit individuals.

This is its law.

But this law has changed over time, under the pressure of different circumstances and new elements. It no longer manifests itself as before in its absolute intensity. It is no longer by virtue of natural fatalities that inequality increases and that the sacrifice of the damned is accomplished. For a long time now, nature has had almost nothing to do with social disorders.

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It is not true, in fact, that wealth, education, power, well-being, in a word all privileges and all superiorities whatever, correspond to native superiorities.

It is not true that the rich and powerful are, in reality, the best, the strongest, the most capable, the best balanced from the physical, intellectual and moral point of view.

It is not true that these various advantages are proportionate to the intrinsic forces, to the organic energy of each person, nor even that they result from this or that special quality, produced in certain individuals by the normal play of natural agents.

Activity, individual application, personal value, have little influence on the distribution of the fruits of the collective labor of past or contemporary generations: no one would seriously dare to maintain that capital, material or intellectual, with the consequences of power, consideration and success that its possession implies, either the necessary attribute of certain natural advantages, or that the poverty and deprivation of the underprivileged classes are symptomatic of a logical and deserved inferiority.

This would be the case, however, if nature acted without hindrance, rectification, or counterweight, and if the laws of transformation alone governed social evolution.

Vital competition is normally only unfavorable to the weak and incapable: only these are affected by natural selection. The strong, on the contrary, and the capable, should therefore, if society, powerless to react, only brought new consecration to Darwin's law, benefit, exclusively and without sharing, from all collective progress and all social resources.

What testifies even better to this, what irrefutably demonstrates that it is not

nature that has predestined the privileged classes to triumph in the struggle for life, is that, often, it gives birth to a great man under the thatch and that it throws a cretin into a princely cradle.¹

“How many talents, how many geniuses perhaps slumber in the crowd, prevented from taking their legitimate flight, obliged to drag the plow of daily labor, while, on the seat of the potentate, in the chair of science, display incapacity and small-mindedness.” (Büchner).

“The number of geniuses that a nation produces is proportional to the number of men who receive sufficient culture. Nothing proves to me that my shoemaker does not have what it takes to write like Corneille; he only lacks the education necessary to develop feelings and teach him to communicate them to the public.” (Stendhal).

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There is therefore no doubt that all these inequalities, all these monstrosities, cannot be attributed to nature, which acts differently, does not tolerate anomalies and does not strike its victims indiscriminately.

There is therefore no doubt that they are due not to the impotence of the social state, but to its vices.

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Cosmic laws have been changed, but they have not been changed in the direction of fairness.

Instead of amending them or completely neutralizing them, society — let us say better, the will of man — while modifying them and giving them a different direction, has, on the contrary, aggravated them with new fatalities, all of them conventional. It has shifted the center of gravity of force and progress, overwhelming those it did not favor with the additional weight of artificial institutions, in the presence of which there can no longer be any question of scientific selection or irremediable biological laws.

The strong are not the strong, the best are not the best, — *oi aristoi*, as the Greeks said, — because nature willed it that way, but because they are the privileged ones in education and wealth, because purely human combinations have drained for their benefit material well-being, the means of production and exchange, intellectual supremacy, political power and social consideration.

It is not a natural selection, but an artificial selection of which the weak are victims.

The share due to each person in life is far from being a direct result of their

¹ It is objected that men of value always end up succeeding and we cite, in support of this thesis, the example of people who, like Stephenson, Lincoln, James Wall, etc., started from very low to finally reach the highest positions, wealth, glory. But what we forget is that for a few poor people who, favored by exceptional circumstances, succeed in violating fortune, there are perhaps hundreds who die out obscurely in the corners, eaten away by the consumption and despair of their forced continence and their uselessness!

efforts or their merits. The distribution is not fortuitous, nor in conformity with the general laws of life: it depends, on the contrary, on arbitrary arrangements made by the free cooperation of man, on social fatalities, in short, on a chain of *artificial* circumstances and *deliberate* causes, in which the labor, virtue, diligence and abilities of the individual played only a secondary role.

Sismondi, an economist, has said:

“The greater part of the costs of the social establishment is intended to defend the rich against the poor, because, if they were left to their respective forces, the former would not take long to be robbed.”

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Let no one say, after this, that defeat is always deserved, nor that the exploited are exploitable and have no reason to complain about their fate!

At one time, no doubt, this may have been true.

Originally, when humanity, still so weak, so poorly armed, so ignorant and so crude, when it was not, so to speak, freed from the fatalities common to all living beings, it did not know how to modify either phenomena or laws. It was then truly the strongest, the most vigorously constituted, the most capable, the best adapted, who triumphed over his competitors.

But since then, things have changed.

Human intelligence has reacted more and more, and replaced natural conditions with an artificial and reasoned order.

From now on, the defeat and death reserved for the vanquished are no longer sufficient testimonies of inferiority, and it is no longer possible to hide behind alleged dispositions of nature to legitimize these lamentable injustices.

Society alone is responsible from now on, because it alone is guilty.

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But still they insist.

“From the natural state in which they were, it is said, fatalities have been transformed; they have become social; so be it!

“It is men who have artificially arranged events and capriciously combined institutions: so be it!

“But, it remains no less true that, to found an order of things so solid, so regular, so harmonious and so durable, superior people were needed, excellently gifted, and therefore more capable than others.

“It is therefore, in the end, to nature, to natural fatalities, that we must go back when we want to know the essential reason for the distribution of social goods and evils.

“Association modifies the conditions of vital competition, we cannot disagree with this, since we know that no law is unmodifiable. But we must not let ourselves be taken in by appearances, nor believe that, deep down, selection has therefore ceased to be exercised.

“If the disinherited have not been able to rectify the new order artificially substituted for the old order, if they have never succeeded, despite costly attempts, in founding their own, in their turn, it is because they do not have the required qualities, it is because they are really the weakest. Success is the criterion of merit: it is its own justification. Incapable of transforming a society that crushes them and of organizing one that recognizes their rights and meets their needs, the sacrificed have no reason to complain or recriminate. Their inferiority nonetheless remains a natural, fatal, unavoidable inferiority, which is expressed and demonstrated precisely by the sterility of their efforts.

“When we are beaten, it is because we had to be; it is because we did not have what it takes to be victors.

“Vital competition was able to be transformed under the action of the initiative and the growing industry of humanity; what was once a guarantee of triumph — muscular strength, for example — may have become indifferent or harmful; the struggle to live, limited at first to the external conditions of existence, was able to be transported from the material domain into the political, social and scientific domain... But, it is no less necessary, inevitable; it nevertheless governs the world; it is nonetheless the strongest who, thanks to their skills, their faculties and the precautions they know how to take, emerge victorious...”

This is the final objection, presented fairly, in terms as explicit and as complete as possible.

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Certainly, it is possible, it is even certain, when people have, for the first time, succeeded in founding a society advantageous to them, that they were the most capable, the strongest, among their contemporaries. The artificial order they established was symmetrical to the natural order.

But that was only the case for their generation.

The energy of their descendants, softened by the ease of life that they bequeathed to them, soon ceased to be up to the circumstances: hereditary privileges increasingly affected the character of usurpation that we pointed out earlier. This explains the fatal degeneration of all aristocracies.

However, the social machine was not dismantled for that and, although the workers no longer valued it, it was going, it was still going, animated by the speed acquired, weighing with all its weight on the new generations.

The strongest of an era having settled everything for the benefit of themselves and their offspring, the new “best,” overwhelmed under this burden, cannot break through. All the advantages being accumulated in one corner, at the disposal of those who, often, are the least worthy of them, competition is distorted from the start by what Mr. Agathon de Potter so aptly called *social predestination*.

Something like a race is being run in which a minority of runners compete

in carriages for the prize with a majority of *pedestrians*. Certainly the first ones who would have thought of using this perfected means of locomotion to their advantage would have demonstrated more capacity, more intelligence than those who would have remained reduced only to the strength of their hocks. They would have actually deserved their victory. But the same cannot be said of their descendants, who, while perhaps not worthy of it in any way, judging from their natural qualities, (it is even probable that they would have almost lost the habit of walking) would nonetheless have everything necessary to prevail over their less well-equipped competitors. The advantage resulting from the use of carriages would nonetheless remain, creating an artificial inferiority to the crowd of pedestrians, who would already have a hard time making their way and avoiding being crushed under the wheels. In the vast majority of cases, the outcome is thus decided in advance.

A complete system of artificial conditions, of human creation, cuts humanity in two, and ensures, outside of competition, to a special class, all the superiorities of education, wealth and power.

There is not even the possibility of competition, since the situation is arranged in such a way that this class, which monopolizes force, *even benefits from the efforts of others*.

Fatally, no doubt, these, the cursed, the outcasts, remain dependent on the fortunate, and have neither a clear awareness of their subordination, nor an exact notion of its determining causes, nor a very keen feeling of its horror.

But let no one say that this fatality is a *natural* fatality: it is a *social* fatality, a combination made by men, an artificial barrier!

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Therefore, this organization is revisable, as are all human things.

If we can, in fact, modify natural fatalities, *a fortiori* we must be able to modify conventional fatalities.

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Otherwise, the excluded, finding nowhere a compensation for the inferiority they encounter at birth, no longer having either support or recourse, will no longer have any interest in remaining in society.

Most of them owe their inferiority not to the partiality of nature, but to the arbitrariness of the legal arrangements of politics and economics. The social state imposes obligations on them, often very onerous; it makes them pay dearly, often with their entire independence, for the services it renders... to others, better served by the chance of birth or events...

What good, then, would it do them to accept, with the resignation that is preached to them, such a disadvantageous situation?....

It would be better for them to put themselves on the margins, and live in the wild, like wolves, free, combative, inexorable, according to their whims and their

native energies!

It would be better to return to the brutal competition of the first ages, to Darwin's law, and, appealing to the right of the greatest number, — an authority which, apparently, is as good as any other — to overthrow the traditional obstacles that oppose the normal expansion of each person's faculties, taking nature as supreme judge!

Are the plutocrats and their champions willing to do so?

Do they agree to return to the lists, after having willingly torn up all the arbitrary conventions that serve them as both a buoy and a shield?

Do they agree to raze the courts of justice and the citadels of domination, tribunals, barracks, special schools, seminaries of aristocracy, colleges, arsenals, registries and prisons, to throw in the fire the administrative paperwork and the notarial parchments, the constitutions that chain the future and the codes that petrify the past, to dismiss their gendarmes, their bureaucrats and their soldiers, to stick to the religion of Darwin, of Haeckel and of Malthus, to the right of the strongest, to the *right to crime*?

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We hardly believe it, for it could well be done then, as labor — or rather productivity — is the measure, the dynamometer of individual value, as, on the other hand, social advantages should thus be proportionate to labor, as the brutal force that does not know how to legislate and which speaks even less, would know how to impose this proportional sanction, that the useless mouths to be suppressed were precisely our masters today.

The damned of the social hell labor; they produce; they are useful to the community. If there are, as their exploiters claim, too many people in the world, if a clearing out is essential, why not start with the idle, with the parasites, with those who consume without producing?...

Let us reduce them, at least, to the minimum portion!

If there is not room for everyone at the banquet of life, at least let no one be tolerated there who does not pay their share!

Let no one, when getting up, take away the cutlery!

What would the ruling classes think of this?

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No doubt, these logical deductions frighten and upset them, especially since they are aware that victory often belongs to the big battalions.

But what are they to do?

Too interested in maintaining the status quo to convert to the best reasons and to recognize right, as long as it does not have force as an effective sanction, they will continue to throw Darwin's law in our face, and explain by it the alleged inevitability of poverty and the so-called necessary elimination of the disinherited, until the inevitable day when the masses, at the end of their

patience, will break this leonine contract like glass, and will demand of nature, that is to say of this brutal violence whose legitimacy Mr. Haeckel can no longer contest, a revenge too long awaited.

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It would undoubtedly be better to prevent this desperate resolution — *ultima ratio servorum* — supreme resource of the oppressed.

But we are too familiar with the blindness and vain obstinacy of the privileged people of all times to lull ourselves into a chimerical hope in this regard.

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However, it would have been enough, to rule out a solution brutal, and to stem the demands from below in a peaceful way, to look in the face this formidable social problem, which is growing in silence, and, — instead of looking for an interpretation as fanciful as it is illusory, — to study in good faith in all its aspects, to analyze all the factors, whose tendencies and action have been calculated, and to behave, finally, accordingly. Instead of denying the social malaise and defending it in the name of lying science and sophisticated laws; instead of hatefully persecuting those who bring it to light and propose to remedy it, we should have rather listened to their advice, and, through gradual reforms, prepared the advent of a better state of things...

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Moreover, it is not enough to criticize the theory and practice of our opponents.

We must, in turn, lay down the general principles that will govern ours.

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Darwin's law exists; it is one of the many influences that weigh on man, and, consequently, on human arrangements.

This is too important an element for us to allow ourselves to neglect it and not take into account its results, direct or indirect.

What is its role in the current state, or rather in the future state that needs to be established?

Given the fatalities that this law summarizes and governs, what can be the social destiny of man?

This is, in two different forms, the last question that remains for us to resolve.

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We know that Darwin's law, like all natural laws, is essentially modifiable.

We know that, in fact, it was modified by the reaction of man, and all the more profoundly modified since, as man developed and became more civilized,

this reaction was enriched by new, more perfect or more powerful means, and gained in intensity.

We know, finally, that the social state that encompasses all these modifications does not exactly meet its goal, since it is still only advantageous to an oligarchy of the privileged and it enshrines the enslavement of the greatest number.

Having established these premises, some logical and equitable conclusions emerge easily.

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All that is required is to complete the work begun, all that is necessary is to concentrate all the social forces with a view to the increasingly complete subordination of nature.

Since, as humanity progresses, it frees itself more from natural fatalities, we must hasten the time of its definitive emancipation, or at least continue the continuous approximation of this ideal, which gradually recedes...

Instead of unproductively using their activity to subjugate one another, to exterminate one another, or to maintain in scandalous luxury a handful of idle and parasitic exploiters, men must finally begin to devote their entire activity to useful works, in the general interest. Let warlike emulation with a view to destruction and evil give way to laborious emulation with a view to production and good!

In other words, instead of the struggle for existence, *aid for existence*; instead of man, humanity; instead of antagonism of interests, universal solidarity!

We must organize the struggle AGAINST the struggle for life.

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Against the natural inevitabilities, we have piled up formidable obstacles, created powerful instruments, founded tutelary guarantees. And, thanks to the progressive and constant evolution of humanity, every day new obstacles, new instruments, new guarantees, even more formidable, even more powerful, even more energetically tutelary, are added to the first.

Everyone must have their share, so that no one is excluded!

Isn't the inequality of conditions one of those inevitabilities against which we must react?

What does it matter that it exists in nature? This is one more reason to remedy it, since society was imagined precisely to rectify the deviations from the distributive justice of nature...

The division of labor, this great principle whose importance is ever increasing, and in which Mr. Haeckel wrongly believes he sees a justification of hierarchy, is it not intended, on the contrary, to provide the weakest with the means of make themselves useful, and cooperate, for a share equivalent to the

share of their collaborators, in the collective work of human labor?¹

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This is how the rather specious theory found itself refuted, according to which men began with almost absolute equality and over time became more and more unequal, so that inequality would be, so to speak, proportional to the development of civilization.

It is very true that, according to Darwin's law, selection, exercise and heredity develop marvelous dispositions in a privileged minority, while the others, less well served by circumstances, remain stationary, retrograde and perish, which may seem, apparently, the last word in inequality. But social organization only has a reason to exist on the condition of mitigating the unfortunate consequences of this necessity, in other words of *socializing* progress.

Let the differentiation of aptitudes and functions always go on in this manner, becoming more accentuated, the equality of conditions will not have to suffer: on the contrary! The more divided and specialized the work, the less men will be able to do without each other, the more the cooperation of all will be essential, the more their equivalence will appear, the more the differences in strength and abilities will be neutralized, the closer the social bonds will become.

..

History, moreover, is there to confirm this assertion.

There is, as civilization progresses, a constant tendency towards more and more complete equality. Civil equality and political legality are already — at least in form — enshrined in our constitutions and in our codes.

When will they actually be realized?

When will we see the advent of social equality, without which the other egalitarian formulas would only be a mystification?

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Once again, if these institutions are diverted from their goal, if natural fatalities are not destroyed, but replaced, even aggravated by artificial fatalities,

¹ Let us note in passing that the division of labor, established, as we have just said, to help the weak and provide them with the means to compensate for their inferiority, reacted in turn, transformed by its normal action the conditions of human life and contributed in another sense to leveling natural inequalities, by increasingly imposing reciprocal dependence on everyone, *even the strong*. There is no one today, thanks to it, who is capable of being self-sufficient, disdaining the help of his peers. For the satisfaction of the least of our needs, we must evoke and bring into play a host of radiating and entangled activities, all of which call for each other, necessitate each other, penetrate each other in a mutual permeability, so that it is true to say that each needs all and all need each. Isolation has become impossible and solidarity inevitable.

Thus, the division of labor, at the same time as it uses the efforts of the weak, makes them indispensable to the strong — a double means of correcting the defects and injustices of nature.

the mass, returning to the summary jurisdiction of Darwin's law, will withdraw, as formerly the proletarians of Rome withdrew to Mount Aventine, outside of society, outside of civilization, which it will leave to the aristocracies, who are the only ones to benefit from it.

We will then see what they will do, left to their own strength, and whether they will be able to victoriously sustain, against collective power, this vital competition whose complicity they invoke today.

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If, on the contrary, man wants to achieve his social destiny, he must stop walling himself off in an intolerant and jealous individualism; he must stop waging war on his own behalf, one against all.

It is only by uniting with beings of his species, and working, in concert with them, to bring all efforts together into a common alliance against the oppression of nature that he can achieve justice and achieve to happiness.

Whoever says society, says community of interests, says solidarity, and also says equality, because according to the beautiful words of the English poet Milton, — *amongst unequals no society*: — between unequal beings, there is no conceivable association.

Is it not a question of suspending the struggle for existence, in order to replace it with the fruitful struggle against the demands of external life?

All human strength will not be too much for this endless fight.

Hence the need to equalize as much as possible the means and conditions of all the combatants and to rally them all around the same flag, around the federal standard of the human race.

As long as there remain sacrificed, excluded, disinherited people, there will still be progress to be made, and the great and decisive battle against nature will not be won.

Everyone must live, everyone must have their place in the sun and at the banquet, everyone must be able to fully develop all their faculties and satisfy all their needs.

This is what Darwin's law opposes, this is what must be conquered with a fierce struggle.

This must be the supreme *desideratum* of humanity!

It is therefore also with a view to this general goal that all the wealth that it accumulates from generation to generation, all the sciences that it establishes, all the improvements that it achieves must be used.

Suffice it to say that each of its members has an equal right to this collective fund.

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Instead of disappearing, as in crude times when man, still disarmed and powerless to react, passively submitted to ambient laws, instead of obeying

natural selection, inferior individuals or less gifted peoples will *adapt* to the new conditions brought about by progress.

Instead of being crushed by circumstances, they will rise to their height.

The weak will become more and more involved, in their turn, in the general civilizing movement, which will no longer benefit just a few, but all.

No one will remain outside of human evolution; no one will stay late or behind. Gradually, progressively, there will take place a sort of universal concert, stifling the discordant clamors of ancient barbarism, in which everyone, called to play their own tune, will collaborate usefully in the final harmony.

New races will no longer emerge, storing up, to the detriment and exclusion of others, all the potentialities of subsequent improvement. Transforming, for the benefit of the human race, natural, artificial or traditional fatalities, the intelligence of the superior being who has so rightly been called the “king of the universe” will put all available forces at the service of the parallel development of all.

We can already foresee — and prepare for — the era when a certain uniformity of culture, of material and moral well-being, of power, of wealth and civilization, a true cosmopolitanism of civilized man, without differences, without exceptions, without appreciable anomalies will reign; on most of the habitable and inhabited surface of our planet.¹

There will no longer be superior castes or races, vested with rights and advantages denied to others. Society will be responsible for leveling out differences and compensating for inequalities.

However, as it will impose its mission, not to “shorten coats” but rather to “lengthen jackets,” it may well be that, for a long time, if not always, there will arise here and there truly superior individualities. Only these privileged by chance will not therefore have the right to monopolize progress nor to transform themselves into social scourges. They will, in fact, owe their superiority only to a particularly advantageous social state, only to particularly favorable circumstances, fortuitous or artificial.

The metaphysical lie inscribed in golden letters on the pediment of the Pantheon will have to be turned against them.

Instead of saying, as today: “*To the great men the grateful fatherland*”, we will say: “*To the fatherland the grateful great men.*”²

¹ Büchner and Wallace.

² Is it not obvious first of all that a man, however great we suppose him to be, and whatever scope we want to attribute to his genius, is, to the same degree as his generation and contemporary social phenomena, only a product of the society in which he is born, only the result of a multitude of influences and complex forces, which have acted together and reciprocally for centuries? The genesis of a great man cannot be conceived as an effect of chance: he cannot arise anywhere or in any circumstances. This is what the experience of history and the everyday observation.

No one will believe that a Newton could ever have been born from a Hottentot family. Biology, moreover, agrees with the doctrines of the most eminent psychologists and with

The association of men being made with a view to common advantages, and in direct hostility against the struggle for existence, having received more, they will owe more, under penalty of an inexorable ostracism.

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We therefore understand why Mr. Virchow, more insightful than Mr. Haeckel, was able to point out the extremely dangerous side — *for their world* — of Darwin's theory, once accepted by revolutionary socialism.

We understand how, far from doing everything, as another official professor from ambitious Germany, Mr. Oscar Schmidt, advises us, to stifle the transformist hypothesis in silence, we can, on the contrary, as we have already done said, encounter valuable and unexpected support there.

Socialism, in fact — or sociology, which is all one — having the sole aim of correcting natural fatalities, up to and including those that derive from the laws of descent and the transmutation of species, it is obvious that it is ill-founded to maintain that theories that only recognize and note these fatalities — which are eminently modifiable — testify to the inapplicability of socialist ideas.

There is a real vicious circle there.

We can rightly object that all social organizations, also intended for this mission, which socialism claims today, of replacing the cruel decrees of nature with just and rational combinations, were never made to replace the evils that they had to remedy with new evils, to replace Darwin's selection with a new selection, this one artificial and perhaps even harsher, more merciless and more undeserved.

All right!

But the abuse of something is not enough to bring about its definitive condemnation.

We are not authorized to conclude that no social form would be capable of accomplishing what others have not accomplished.

Why should our children or ourselves not achieve what our ancestors could not?

By what right can you assert that the series of unfortunate experiences is not yet coming to an end?

popular common sense, to affirm that the appearance of a great man presupposes certain conditions, a social state of a certain degree.

On the other hand, it is no less obvious that the action of man would be powerless, if he were not able to exploit the material and intellectual wealth, progressively accumulated by the ancestors, and to operate on a civilization already sufficiently advanced. He must necessarily have at his disposal the collective capital of humanity, so that he only has to give rise to the enormous latent power contained in these hereditary materials and instruments. So suppose Littré or Napoléon I born and raised in the middle of a tribe of Kanacks!

However great the influence of a man, this influence will always be very minimal compared to the work from which he benefits. (See Herbert Spencer, *Introduction to Social Science*.)

The golden age is not behind us, as the theological legends with which we grew up tell us. The history of the past teaches us, on the contrary, that it is before us and that all the progress of humanity consists of getting closer and closer to it.

“This future paradise is not imaginary, but real; it is not the gift of a God, but the result of labor, the gain of man and of society”. (Büchner).

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And it is precisely socialism, whose peaceful action depends on its adversaries, which, repudiating the self-serving theories of Malthus and Haeckel, will serve as our guide.

Is it not socialism that demands and proposes the organization of a general *modus vivendi*, absorbing and equalizing the classes, the advent of a social regime of such elasticity that it can lend itself, without shock nor tearing apart, with the incessant addition of new modifying elements, while ensuring to everyone, starting with the most interested, that is to say with the weakest, the means to live, to learn, to labor, to enjoy at least the equivalent of his product, and to cooperate through his faculties, his aptitudes, his services, his examples, to the prosperity of his contemporaries and his descendants?

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This is not the place to develop *ex-professo* a sociology course, nor to describe in all its details the order of things that should result from a practice conforming to this new conception of the world and society.

We did not intend to do anything other than philosophy, than pure theory, postponing the application of recognized principles to a future date. We have noted that the scientific doctrines on which current social organization is based are insufficient and backward, therefore false, and that the people who invoke them neglect, consciously or unconsciously, certain factors in the problem, the introduction or variations of which are, however, of considerable importance. We have finally filled in the gaps and rectified the errors, thus laying the foundations of the modern philosophy that will govern the institutions of the future.

Our task is completed.

What exactly will these future institutions be, combined in such a way as to satisfy the requirements of equity, logic and science; in what various forms will they be arranged and linked; by what processes can they be inaugurated, implemented and guaranteed against the offensive returns of the old regime?...

This subsidiary question remains pending: it will have to be the subject of one or more new studies, just as precise, detailed and conscientious as this one.

It is enough for us, for the moment, to know the general idea that should inspire them and serve as a touchstone.

The analysis of the innumerable and complex elements that will come into

play in this reform movement, the calculation of their power, the evaluation of their role, the intensity of their actions, reactions and reciprocal repercussions, as well as the probable or possible causes of disturbance and influences due to the changes made, — a whole new order, in short, of observations, experiments, comparisons and conclusions, — this is the new duty that imposes itself on us, now that the terrain of abstract science is cleared of prejudices of command and age-old lies. We already have the criterion: we must shed its light on everyday events. We know what piece to play: it's up to us to bring together the musicians and arrange the orchestration.

The work is serious enough and difficult enough to merit being set to one side.

Let us add that it would be imprudent to lock our demands in advance into a rigid and definitive program.

Absolute formulas, full of barbaric words which inevitably end in ism, have something sacramental and nebulous which makes them look too much like dogmas.

Now, nothing is more hateful, more hollow than dogmas.¹

Are the conditions of life not indefinitely modifiable?

Can't new elements constantly arise? Are the ancient elements not susceptible to continuous variations, so that it is impossible to foresee completely what the needs, strengths and demands of later generations will be?

We must not confuse theory with practice, nor the ideal with the means of approximately conforming reality to it.

Let us therefore stick to the very high and very general conception of good, which a careful examination of the laws that govern the evolution of the world and of humanity has provided us, reserving for a separate examination how this conception could be usefully inoculated and applied to men, not to all men, whoever they may be, not to the men of tomorrow, whom we cannot know, but to the men of today, with their mores, their prejudices, their traditions, their qualities and their vices.

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Already, however, we can, at least, indicate the broad outlines of the future regime, the main milestones around which the *ordinary* institutions of the regenerated society will be grouped and radiated.

We have enough information for this.

A first point, outside and beyond all dispute, is obviously that all the means of production, that is to say, ultimately, all the guarantees forged by successive

¹ "Mystagogues, mythologists, yes, all, almost all! Those who call themselves free-thinkers, instead of simply affirming human liberty, discuss, lecture and plant altar after altar. If they deny one dogma, it is to preach another. In any case, they speak a language that ordinary mortals understand nothing about, and that they themselves do not always understand... They say that they see clearly, but Florian's turkey said so too..." (Jules Vallés.)

generations against natural fatalities, in order to rectify the primitive passivity of man, must be made available to all and cease to be the monopoly of a few.

There must no longer be any obstacles to the full development of the faculties and the complete satisfaction of each person's needs other than natural impossibilities, that is to say, fatalities that humanity has not yet been able to overcome.

It is enough for there to be a single man somewhere who finds a way to escape it for everyone, without exception, to acquire the right to claim the benefit. It is a conquest made over nature, and it must benefit the human race.

Let us make a gratuitous, excessive hypothesis, the very exaggeration of which will serve to give our thought more relief and scope: suppose that a man discovers, the dream of researchers in the Middle Ages, the elixir of immortality

Well! Society will fail in its duty and will deserve to be shaken from top to bottom by a merciless insurrection, if it does not deliver this blessed secret to all mortals without exception, if it reserves it for a coterie of the favored...

More precisely, what happens to capitalist privilege in the face of this necessity?

This is a second point that we can again consider without scruple.

According to the theory of Mr. Haeckel and all the well-fed, this privilege must undoubtedly also be considered as a consecration far removed from Darwin's law, which is supposed to be invested with the mission of attributing to the strongest, to the most intelligent, to the most capable, special advantages.

But we know what to expect about the accuracy of this assertion.

It has been a long time since the *social* fact of the organization of property and the distribution of capital has corresponded to a natural fact. Were there still agreement, moreover, that society, which aims precisely to react against the consequences of transformism and to raise up the weak, should cease to protect and maintain it.

Let us not forget, moreover, that wealth, made from the munitions piled up by past generations with a view to the fight against nature and constantly increased by the immense collaboration of contemporary generations, is *social in its origin*.

Is this not one more reason to conclude that it must also be *social in its destination*, that no one must be excluded from it, as it happens today that it is delivered without control or counterweight to the arbitrary fantasies of private interest?

Is it not in the general interest that we increase the resources of the community by the indefinite extension and constant improvement of the means at our disposal, but in such a way that the progress of agriculture and industry, instead of inflaming, as inevitably happens with the current organization, the plague of pauperism, reduce the difficulties of life for everyone?

Hence this consequence, that all the means of production — education,

sciences and arts, industrial processes, instruments of labor, credit institutions and guarantees of equal exchange — must be made freely available to all, so that each having taken them according to his tastes, his aptitudes, his needs and his power of assimilation, is able to live as intensively as possible, without owing homage or royalty to anyone in particular, but only to the entire community, of which he is an integral and active part.

In fairness, the individual can only definitively dispose of what he has personally produced, or the equivalents that other producers have taken from their works to pay for his services. This portion of collective goods, appropriable and alienable, constitutes his own piece of existence: it is only by using it that he exercises his right and exhausts his share of consumption and life.¹

As for the means of production, the weapons intended to overcome natural fatalities and to compete with them for the things necessary for men, this is the common heritage of humanity!

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In the meantime, as it is proven that it is less natural fatalities than social fatalities that oppose the development of humanity and the increasing legalization of the advantages that constitute the succession of past generations, it is against these conventional fatalities that we must declare war and wage it harshly.

We must change the course of progress, channeled until now for the benefit only of a few seigniorial domains; we must work to break all these artificial locks that cut out its beneficial flows with parsimonious injustice, in order to be able, through a scientific and indefinitely perfectible system of social irrigation, to distribute them to all the members of the great human family.

Let us therefore teach the crowd to feel the evils they face, to know their seat and their depth, to also know their own strength, their value, and the irresistible powers that lie dormant within them.

By one means or another, the question will not take long to be resolved. Let us first shake off the torpor of the disinherited, let us enlighten their conscience: common sense or the cowardice of the privileged will do the rest!

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This is how social Darwinism should be understood and practiced!

END

¹ As, in fact, progress has no other goal, in short, than the expansion of the individual, that is to say his integral development, if it is useful *to collectivize the means of production*, it is no less essential *to individualize the means of enjoyment*.

Society is indebted to everyone for the guarantee of means of existence; but, this debt paid, let her creditor, now disinterested, arrange her lot as she pleases.

APPENDIX

SOCIAL DARWINISM

A medical student, who is interested and preoccupied by social questions, he says, is surprised that we have placed Darwinism among the systems or theories falsely applied to the solution of social problems. He even wonders if we would be the adversaries of this absolutely positive theory of incontestable scientific value, based on experience and the study of facts, which is only rejected by the eternal enemies of science and the reason.

As this student is perhaps not the only one who could have asked these questions and it is not useless for the education of the democracy to explain them, we will answer him.

The scientific value of Darwinism affecting the theory of the origin and transformation of spaces, zoology, anthropology and physiology, is not in question here; there is not even a need to discuss it. Let it be enough for the satisfaction of our medical student, his friends and all those who devote themselves to these special studies, to know that this theory is in our eyes the most true. But from the fact that a theory or a system is scientific, rational, when it concerns a particular order of things, it does not follow that it is applicable to the solution of social problems, by analogy, comparison or extension. It would then no longer be science, it would be fantasy.

What ultimately is Darwinism? A theory that explains the origins of species, their evolution, their transformations, the modification of their organs and their character, the influence of environments, the reasons for their improvement or their disappearance. In other words, Darwinism explains the natural fatalities to which beings, men, animals and plants, are subject. It is certainly useful to know these fatalities; it is essential that anyone who works as an economist, historian or sociologist understands at least the general notions; but from all this theory, there is nothing to conclude for social organization.

There is nothing to conclude, because society, far from having the aim of perpetuating natural fatalities and encouraging their fulfillment, has precisely the aim of reducing these fatalities, of mitigating their consequences, even of making them disappear or making them serve results quite contrary to what appears to be their end.

Social laws and natural laws are all different, one could even say contradictory. Nature, if we are to believe our origins and the way in which the alma mater gave birth to us, brought man into this world, in order to perpetuate his race and destroy his species: but it did not make him to live, as a civilized person, as a citizen of a nation, to labor and save, to make locomotives, fabrics, furniture and spend his life shaping watch wheels or pin heads. If it had wanted

him to have steam engines, she would have installed them on the great roads it had made; if it had wanted him to have shoes, clocks and cupboards, it would have made them grow like pumpkins. But this is not the case: man does not obey the law that nature seems to assign to him, he does not submit to the fatalities that result from his arrangement.

He withdraws from them and tries to make them serve his views, his satisfaction, the realization of his desires and his wishes. Society is no more a natural creation than boots, suspension bridges, crushed velvets and mirrored wardrobes; it is a human creation. However, if society has the aim and sometimes the effect of restricting, reducing natural fatalities, being unable to completely eliminate them, it too often replaces them with social fatalities. And the very particular study of these, as well as the search for the means to make them disappear, are precisely what constitutes socialism.

A short time ago, a now defunct newspaper, having to discuss English opinions, thought it necessary to point out that, among our neighbors across the Channel, Darwinism was at the same time Malthusian. This newspaper was wrongly surprised by this, because the logical conclusion of the Darwinian theory transported into the social domain is precisely the Malthusian solution.

After having observed, experimented, collected the evidence provided by the debris and the remains of previous generations, after having received the attestation of the facts, Darwinists rightly affirm that beings living by absorption, life is a universal distraction or rather that the creation is in continual transformation; that, in this eternal struggle for existence, there are individuals, races, species that adapt better to the demands of the environment, modifying themselves in their habits and even in their organism to resist, endowed with vital energies more powerful, resist and perpetuate themselves, while others wither away, disappear, die or are destroyed by stronger and better ones. Thus nature pursues its obscure goal which we cannot grasp or know and to which our pain, our miseries, our disasters and our mourning probably contribute.

Such is the world, say the disciples of Malthus; by virtue of these natural or providential laws, — it is all one, — he lets selection do its work. Those who have the right to live are those who triumph in the struggle for existence; if there are exploited people, it is because they are exploitable, it is because they are less strong, it is because they have less energy and capacity than their exploiters; they only have to resign themselves or disappear; those that remain will be the most beautiful samples of the species. There is not room for everyone at the banquet of life; let those whose place is not set go away; let those who cannot raise their children not have them, and let war and plagues harvest those who are too many on this earth. Such is the extinction of pauperism.

And the one who spoke thus was an honest man, of gentle morals, but one who was a sincere and rigorous interpreter of nature and its fatalities.

It is understandable that the leader or the bard of barbarian tribes, obeying

their instincts and the force of things, should go, like an overflowing river, to invade the land where more abundant harvests ripen in a milder climate. This is the whole philosophy of Attila, which, after all, is as good as any other. But do we remember that the inferiors, the disinherited, the condemned by selection, those who are too many, as Malthus says, can respond:

“We don’t want to disappear; we too want to have a place at the banquet. If you are the best organized, the strongest, the best, we are the most numerous; and numbers are a force worth as much as yours. If we do not have your abilities and your energies, we have others sufficient to replace you at the table of guests, the most beautiful samples of the species with the disinherited, poor and suffering who want to live.”

And the necessary, practical conclusion of this double argument is the brutal struggle, the extermination of men; it is perhaps the fulfillment of the views of nature, but it is not the extinction of pauperism, it is not the most perfect way of living in peace, in society.

It is precisely to avoid having to come to this argument, to these consequences, in order not to have to invoke the supreme reason of numbers, the right of force and blind fatality that men, if they want to live more or less peacefully among themselves and enjoy social advantages, instead of exterminating one another in the struggle for existence, must find a *modus vivendi*, an organization of society, political and economic, imagine combinations and formulate a contract that assures to everyone everything necessary for life, the means of laboring, of producing, of consuming at least the equivalent of what they produce and of helping with their faculties, their skills, their example and their services to the prosperity of their fellow men.

Now, the study of the conditions in which this organization can be accomplished, of which human will is the first element, is not a natural science, like Darwinism; it is social science. And this is what we must learn, if we want to have eternally others means of extinguishing pauperism than by exterminating the poor, while having to fear that the exterminated will in turn take a revenge similar to that which the vanquished of Jena took at Sedan.

SOURCE: “Darwinisme sociale,” *Le Mot d’Ordre* no. 48 (25 août 1877): 1.