OF

HUMANITY.

VOLUME ONE.

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Several writings by the author having appeared in various periodical or other collections, such as the old *Globe*, the *Revue Encyclopédique*, and the *Encyclopédie Nouvelle*, the publisher considers it appropriate to announce that the present work forms a special publication, and will not be part of any collection.

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HUMANITY

ITS PRINCIPLE, AND ITS FUTURE

WHERE ONE WILL FIND EXPOUNDED
THE TRUE DEFINITION OF RELIGION
AND WHEREIN WE EXPLAIN
THE MEANING, THE SEQUENCE, AND THE CONNECTION
OF MOSAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

BY
PIERRE LEROUX

> Although we are many, we are not all nevertheless only one body..., and we are all mutually members of one another.
>
> — St. Paul.

A WORKING TRANSLATION BY SHAWN P. WILBUR, LAST REVISED JULY 11, 2025

VOLUME ONE
1840

TO BERANGER.

This Book, dear Béranger, is not for you a stranger who suddenly comes to disturb your solitude. The problems that I discuss in it have often been, in one form or another, the subject of our conversations. Allow me therefore to make it appear under your auspices. I have sought the truth with all my strength; now, after thought has tired itself out in seeking the truth, it is sweet to offer the result of one's labor to a friend. This satisfaction of the soul increases, if it is a question of a very old and long-tested friendship; but it is even greater when we have the assurance that the same questions that interest us have often presented themselves to this friend, and that there thus exists an additional link between them and us.

What have we been able to find for ourselves, that we do not have the pleasure of sharing with those who have a right to all our tenderness, to all our attachment? And, as for them, by the influence they have had on us, are they not always for something in our ideas, in our discoveries, as also in our errors? Are not our souls sisters who seek the truth with each other and for each other? I have always loved the model that Horace gives us of an honest writer and friend of truth, who presents his book to his friends by saying to them: "I have used what you have taught me, and here is what I have found in my turn. If you know something better, tell me; if not, profit with me from what I bring you:

Vive, vale; si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum."

The doubt that reigns today on the fundamental questions of philosophy and religion is such a great and general torture that I would pity a man who could not rise above the feeling of the imperfection of his work, and who was prevented by this bad shame from doing what his heart dictated.

You do not share the error of those who tear human knowledge to shreds and mutilate it at will, and who have made art an idol apart from humanity. It is not you, my friend, who will tell me disdainfully that your poetry has nothing to do with research in metaphysics and history. But if one of your admirers found this dedication strange, I would tell them in turn that they have not understood your poetry, and that they have been madly intoxicated by it without knowing how to nourish their soul with it. No, this admirer of your genius does not know who you are; he does not know that you have many family ties with philosophy.

You are, in poetry as in reality, the son of that great generation of the late eighteenth century, which made the Revolution. I often think of that sublime scene where Franklin presented his grandson to Voltaire, and where the great incredulous philosopher stood up, moved, full of enthusiasm, and, his hand

stretched out to heaven, blessed Franklin's grandson in the name of God and liberty: *God and liberty!* I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that this alliance between Voltaire and Franklin was also a sort of reconciliation between Voltaire and Jean-Jacques: I mean between their diverse geniuses, between the thoughts and tendencies of which they had been the representatives; for I discover in part Rousseau under the image of Franklin. This interview thus seems to me a sort of final scene of the eighteenth century. Voltaire, so close to his grave; Franklin, the printer Franklin, who had just brought to France the act of declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen, promulgated in America after having been thought of in Europe; and a child between these two old men: what a spectacle! Now suppose that this grandson of Franklin, thus blessed by Voltaire, had become a great poet: what would have happened?

This poet would always have remembered with piety Voltaire, his godfather, and would have remained faithful to the tradition of the emancipatory century. He would have been, like that century, pitiless toward all hypocrisies, all lies, all superstitions. The spirit of satire and comedy would have been given to him, to finish bringing down all the masks, and to destroy the last impostures of a false social order condemned by Providence. While in countries other than France other poets would have felt only the sadness of this death of all ancient beliefs and the inevitable dread attached to this end of a condemned old world, he would have continued the work of initiation of France, the work of the eighteenth century. He would have still mocked, while these other poets knew only how to moan and weep. He would have appeared, in the face of these Heraclituses, to have the role of Democritus. He would have laughed, but not with that desolate laughter that Voltaire is accused of. Son of Franklin, blessed by Voltaire in the name of God and liberty, enthusiasm would have mingled with irony in the soul of this poet. In the midst of a corrupt and despairing world, he would have been full of hope, having God and liberty on his side; and his satire, animated by lyrical sentiment, would have become your song.

The cult of humanity was the cult of Voltaire. On the ruins piled up around him and by him, on the heaped debris of all positive religion, Voltaire sometimes found religion in his heart, the indestructible religion: he called it HUMANITY. The poet I suppose would have had, like Voltaire, the cult of humanity; but he would not have had that blindness against Christianity, doubtless necessary for the great destroyer of the idolatrous forms of Christianity; and the moral sublimity of the Gospel would have spoken to his heart as it spoke to that of Rousseau.

Son of Franklin, blessed by Voltaire, he would have married the Gospel to philosophy.

Son of Franklin, blessed by Voltaire, he would have sung the alliance of all peoples.

Son of Franklin, blessed by Voltaire, he would have been the inspired champion of the political revolution brought about by Voltaire and Franklin.

Son of Franklin, he would have been a people like him; he would have understood that Voltaire's third estate was not the whole new people.

Time does not stand still, and humanity does not stand still. This poet would always have looked to the future. Son of philosophy, he would have called with all his soul for new progress in philosophy. The vulgar outcries against the innovators would not have prevented him from bearing witness in their favor; he would not have repudiated any of his sympathies, and he would have sung my master Saint-Simon.

And he too would have been an innovator: true poets are always prophets. He would have picked in advance mysterious fruits at the top of the tree of science, inviting philosophy to seize them in turn:

> HUMANITY, reign! Here is your AGE,
> Denied in vain by the voice of old echoes.
> Already the winds on the wildest edge
> Of your thought have sown a few words.
> Peace to labor! Peace to the soil that it fertilizes!
> May men be united through love;
> May they replace the world closer to the heavens;
> May God say to us: Children, I bless you!
>
> Let us salute the family of mankind!
> But what did I say? Why this song of love?
> In the campfire the sword still glitters;
> In the shadows we barely see the dawn.
> Of nations today the first,
> France, open up a wider destiny for them;
> To awaken the world to your light,
> God has said to you: Shine, morning star!

I treat of humanity in this book: we have the same cult. I prove in it how well-founded and prophetic your verses are. For I destroy, by reasoning, the fantastic ideas that have been made of heaven, and I seek to show where heaven really is. It will be necessary in the end that the blindest know where the true religion is, when we have proven (which for my part I try to do in this book) that Christianity, Mosaism, all positive religions, can be summed up in this great word HUMANITY! It will be necessary then that this humanity *reigns*, as you say, and that its *age* comes. Place, place on earth for the *family of the human race*. The

earth has until now served only as a pedestal for the statue of Prometheus, for this statue formed of clay and remaining clay for too long: but the earth itself will be transformed when this statue becomes what Prometheus wanted to make it, a powerful, divine being, like the gods. The earth will become Eden again when man, driven from Eden by his own fault, understands his fault, and walks in eternal life under the *benediction* of God.

It is true that, as you say, we are still in darkness: *In the shadows, we can barely see the dawn*. I even dedicate this book to you at a time sadder than the others. From all sides, the horizon announces the storm. To the internal war, open or disguised, that men wage within each nation, will perhaps be added the discord of Europe, the war of nations among themselves. Whatever happens, let France think of the mission that God has given her!

Yes, all the scourges that discord among mankind engenders still reign on earth. But what can we oppose to passions, evil, and error, if not our unalterable conviction?

Because brothers (which we see too often) go to war, are they any less brothers?

Evil exists: what does it matter! The truth is the truth, and error will not prevail against it. Error and selfishness will be vanquished; and Satan, who is nothing other than error and selfishness, will be relegated more and more to non-being, to death, to nothingness.

God *will reign on earth* when the final goal he proposed in his theodicy, by making man *in his image*, and by creating, not men, but man, that is to say, humanity, when, I say, this final goal will be attained, by the development of human charity, of human activity, of human knowledge, that is to say, by the development of man, or men, or of human consciousness. That this goal is set back into an indefinite and completely mysterious distance for us, that is certain: but should it therefore reign less in our souls, and is it not evident, moreover, that as we advance towards this goal, that *celestial reign on earth* evangelized by Jesus will also be more and more realized, and which, in the form in which Christianity presented it, was only a prophecy?

I therefore seek to prove in this book that it is to this final goal that the Providence of God leads humanity. It is the God immanent in the universe, in humanity, and in every man, that I worship. It is the God of whom you said:

> He is a God, before him I bow.

It is neither the God of idolaters nor the God of Epicurus. A remarkable thing! While in the eighteenth century, Bolingbroke and Voltaire had attempted, in opposition to the god of idolaters, to restore to honor fatalism, under the name

of nature, and the phantom of impassive Divinity of Epicurus, under the name of God, this sad system, which necessarily led to two others, to a crude materialism and to a deism without consequences, could not take hold of the serious minds or the ardent hearts of the new generations. The positive religions returned; and, although they were no more than phantoms, they had no difficulty in striking down these other phantoms. But at the same time the divine feeling of things regained the upper hand in our hearts and in our intelligences; idealism revealed itself.

The God of idolaters resembles, in a certain way, that of Epicurus: for he is outside of us like that of Epicurus; only he is wicked, while that of Epicurus is indifferent. You have often put them at odds with each other, and you have sometimes used as a comic character the God who occupies I know not what place in space, and who only puts, as in one of your songs, *his nose to the window*, to laugh at the folly of men.

What poetry should not attempt in an age such as ours, and what philosophy should attempt, to probe anew the ancient problems of theology, to speak doctrinally of the true God, to restore honor to the true God, and consequently to religion, I have dared, consulting more my zeal and duty than my strength, to undertake.

God, the true God, the incomprehensible and hidden, though eternally manifest God, communicates himself to us in an eternal and successive Revelation. It is this Revelation that I study in the earlier religions and in the positive philosophies; and, if I have proved that a certain supreme law, forming the design of God for humanity, is the foundation of all these philosophies and all these religions, I will at least have revealed what was most important and truly divine in these ancient religions and philosophies.

I seek to rediscover, in ephemeral, transitory, obsolete, and irrevocably fallen forms today, the spirit of the ancient religions. I show the modern idea in its ancient germ, the Revolution in the Gospel, and the Gospel in Genesis. To rediscover the titles of the modern doctrine of liberty, equality, and fraternity, in the depth of traditions, is to give more authority to this doctrine.

Please accept, then, this attempt at reconciliation between modern philosophy and ancient religions. Always keep me under the support of your advice; and if I err in my thoughts, set me straight. I do not ask you to keep your friendship with me:

O ET PRAESIDIUM ET DULCE DECUS MEUM!

Paris, October 1, 1840.

PREFACE.

I.

This book follows on from the *Essay on Equality*, and is its continuation.

In the *Essay on Equality*, I demonstrated that there is today in human consciousness a new *dogma*, the *dogma of equality*. This dogma makes contemporary man a being in many respects different from ancient man and from the man of the Middle Ages. High antiquity, middle antiquity and the feudal era, in which, it is true, we are still deeply immersed in many respects, were the preparation for the *new man* whom each of us feels within himself today, and whom all the facts of which we are witnesses already reveal in such a striking manner. Humankind, according to Lessing's idea, passes through all the phases of a successive education: it has therefore arrived at the phase of equality only after having passed through the three possible kinds of inequality, the system of *family castes*, the system of *homeland castes* and the system of *property castes*. But finally, today it is reaching the limit of this last phase of inequality, and is consequently on the verge of equality. It was undoubtedly necessary, it was good and necessary that man should thus be successively enslaved to the family, to the nation, to property. But finally, his education being completed in this respect, he begins to free himself from this triple servitude, he begins to be a man. *Inequality* was formerly synonymous with the idea of man: today it is *equality* that is this synonym. Formerly, it was necessary to be in the caste to be *equal*, to have *equals:* today, man conceives of no other caste than himself and all men. He considers himself as the whole, as the universal caste, as humanity. He is man-humanity. And before the high idea that he has of his being and his nature, all the small spheres in which one would like to restrict and imprison his right have no right in his eyes. But, not being able to prevent himself from recognizing his fellow man in every man whoever he may be, he necessarily transfers to his fellow man, whoever he may be, the idea that he forms of his own greatness; and, thus identifying his right with that of others, he is forced by his conscience to recognize in man, as man, the same right that he wants for himself. *Man* today therefore means *equal*. What was the citizen of the ancient caste called in the mystical language of the city? He called himself *equal*. Thus, among the Dorians, Sparta was the city of *equals;* the Spartans, the true Spartans, those who had the right to the *common banquet*, to the *Eucharist*, called themselves, in the mystical language of the city, *the equals:* that was their name; they were the only ones who were *men*. Today, on the ruins of castes, castes of all kinds, humanity rises. The religious law of caste, that is to say, equality and fraternity within caste, has become the religious law of all humanity. At least,

this is already the case in human consciousness. The principle has entered into consciousness, before being realized in fact. In the absence of a true realization of the dogma of equality, this dogma exists in us, and lives in our consciences. There is more; current society, although this principle is in no way realized there, nevertheless has, in whatever respect one considers it, no other basis than this principle.

This, from the most general point of view, is the succinct summary of the previous writing that I am recalling at this moment. In this writing, I spoke of the past and the present; I did not speak of the future. After having analyzed the present, and explained the past which brought about this present, I suddenly stopped before the future; I dared neither prophesy nor dogmatize.

And yet it is evident that I had written about the present and the past only to conclude, that is to say, with a view to teaching about the future. It is certain, I say, that in my mind this treatise was to comprise three parts, the *present*, the *past*, the *future*. But, having arrived before the future, I closed the book, and did not dare to go further.

Why didn't I dare?

It is becauseI saw myself forced to do as the surveyors do.

Geometers sometimes stop in the sequence of their reasoning; they interrupt the chain of their deductions and their *theorems*, to summarize themselves in what they call a *scholium*, or to demonstrate an intermediate proposition which is indispensable to them, and which they call a *lemma*.

I also needed, to push further, to summarize myself in a scholium and to demonstrate a lemma.

II.

It is this scholium and this lemma which together form the subject of the present writing.

After walking through the labyrinth of the past and thoroughly considering the meaning of the present, we feel drawn toward the *future city;* we would like to enter the future. But to cross the passage, our mind needs two things.

1. It needs to embrace, by a rapid return and under a single and indubitable formula, the previous life of humanity. This is first of all the necessary scholium.

2. But such a formula is not everything. The soul can be enlightened by the study of the past and the present, to the point of conceiving a certain law of progress, which makes it foresee the future; but it does not result from this that the soul loves to march towards this future. For the soul questions itself, and asks itself what relationship there is between it and this future of humanity that

it senses, if this future is linked to its own future. The soul, like Archimedes, demands a fixed point; and only religion can give it to it.

III.

The soul says to itself:

This is the past; I understand it: but this past is not me. The present is not me either. I understand perfectly why this present does not seduce me, does not please me. But will the future be me? Will I be on earth when justice and equality reign among men? And since I have neither the past, nor the present, nor the future at my disposal, where must I take refuge, and to what can I cling?

What am I? Where am I? Where am I going? And where did I come from?

Thus the soul questions itself, or questions those who explain to it so well the past and present of humanity, in order to give it a presentiment of the future. What relationship, it constantly repeats, is there between me and this future, between humanity and me?

IV.

We must therefore, of necessity, leave the pure domain of politics and history, to seek elsewhere, in philosophy, this solid point which is necessary for us.

God is always our base, the base where all beings come to take their point of support; he is the flying buttress where all forces come to support themselves to lift the obstacles they have to overcome.

God himself, that is to say, God insofar as he communicates himself to us, that is to say, in other words, a certain intuition of the very essence of life, can therefore alone give us this point of support that the soul seeks to know whether it must attach itself to the future destinies of humanity, or be distracted from them and separate itself from them.

Outside of religion, in a word, we cannot find that solid point which is necessary to us, and without which the force which we feel within us is not a usable force.

V.

This solid point, I repeat, must be sought only in religion.

Archimedes, too, asked for a fixed point; and, with a force, however weak, and a lever, if he had this fixed point, he boasted that he would move the world. Depending on how we understand this statement, we make Archimedes say a great truth or a great absurdity. Do we not see, in fact, that to ask for this fixed

point was to ask for the world itself? For what will give this fixed point, if not the entire universe, with the grace of the Being within which and by which the universe lives?

The same is true of the fixed point we are asking for. It is neither history nor politics that can give it to us. It is not the observation of the past, nor the observation of the present that can. It is nothing *finite* that can give it to us, any more than anything *finite* could give Archimedes his fixed point where he wanted to place his lever to make his force act. What can give it to us is the Infinite Being manifested in our consciousness and in his eternal Revelation.

It is a question of seeing if there is not some fixed point, *in God and in us*, on which we can rely for the perfection of ourselves, of humanity, and of the world.

VI.

A force, a lever, a fixed point: aren't all these necessary in ordinary mechanics? Will it be strange that three analogous terms are also necessary in moral mechanics?

The force is us; the lever is the idea of progress. Give me a certain ontological axiom: it will be the fixed point, the resistant point, where feeling and idea will rest. The effect, the useful effect, will necessarily follow.

That we are a *force*, that there is a force within us, a force that demands to be used, and which, in order to be used, that is to say, to live and produce an effect, demands to be based on some incontestable moral truth, this is obvious, this is felt, this is agreed upon by all.

That the study of the *finite*, the observation of the past, attention to what is currently happening in the world, provide this force with a *lever* in the notion of progress, of the possible improvement of our faculties, of the possible increase of our power over nature, of the possibility of a better organization of human societies, of the possibility of an ever greater science of man relative to all the mysteries that surround him, and still hide from his eyes both natural things, and his own history, and himself; this is still today recognized, generally admitted, consented to by every man who reflects and thinks.

It is, I repeat, neither strength nor leverage that we lack. Strength is the incessant need we have to live. Leverage is industry, art, science, which everyone today believes are constantly perfectible. What is missing is the ontological axiom of which I speak.

It is an axiom about life, about being, that we lack. It is a religious axiom. What are we, what is each of us in God? What is the Creator's will in giving us being at every moment of our existence? Where is our life, what is the purpose of our life?

We see that by this word *ontological axiom* I mean something quite different from that abstract and truncated science that is sometimes called *ontology* in current schools. There is no need to do philosophy if we do not break down at every moment the absurd barriers that modern psychologists have established between their abstract lucubrations and life, that is to say, religious, moral and social life at the same time.

Now then, this fixed point, which I believe to be demonstrable as much as *life* can be demonstrated, as much as *infinity* can be proven, and of which I will try to provide a demonstration, is the *communion* of the human race, or, in other words, the *mutual solidarity of men*.

VII.

The ancient myth of the Jewish Bible made us all united in Adam.

Christianity has been built on this solidarity. Jesus Christ, savior of humanity through reversibility and solidarity, is a myth corresponding to the myth of Adam, damner of his race through solidarity also and reversibility.

The truth is that we are all in solidarity and live a common life, or rather, as Jesus said, a life as *one*.

I therefore accept the idea which is at the bottom of these myths, and I strive to demonstrate their truth by philosophical reasons and those of the natural order.

This is the *lemma* I needed; and it was only after I found this truth through my own inductions, that I realized the relationship it has with ancient theology. I hope that this relationship will not cause this truth to lose authority and credit with certain readers.

OF

HUMANITY.

INTRODUCTION.

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK.

The title of this work indicates sufficiently the nature of the questions we propose to examine. What is man, what is his destination and, consequently, what is his right, what is his duty, what is his law? Is man linked to other men, his fellow men, fortuitously or in a necessary way? In other words, is the bond that unites men together fragile and ephemeral like the current manifestation of their being that we call their life, or is it persistent and eternal like this being is in itself? What is human nature considered as comprising all men? Is it something, or is it nothing but an abstraction of our minds? Is there a collective being, Humanity, or are there only individual men? This collective being, if it exists, does it exist otherwise than as the series, in truth progressive, and consequently influential, of the generations which have succeeded one another until now on earth, or which may succeed one another again?

These are serious problems: is it necessary to solve them, or is it even good to address them?

It is so necessary, in our opinion, to resolve them, that it is because these questions are not resolved, that we have today no solid principles of religion, politics and morality.

These questions, moreover, however difficult they may seem, naturally present themselves to all the even moderately serious minds of our time. The philosophy of history leads to them, as does politics. As for religion, one can say that these problems, in one form or another, have been and will be its eternal basis. How then can we escape them, if we only reflect?

I say more; there is not a man, however philosophical he may be, who does not see himself forced to ask these questions, at least in an indirect and veiled way, about his private life, his business, his pleasures.

No matter what we do, these problems are always in our way, and stand before us. Only, most of the time, we are content to glimpse them furtively without dwelling on them.

And indeed, since we are all clothed with this human character, no one can absolutely escape these questions. You do not want to concern yourself with such problems, you say; you live, you seek your happiness, without otherwise thinking of philosophy. But where, I pray you, is happiness to be found? Do you not know that precisely the primitive object of philosophy is to determine where happiness lies?

You seek happiness. But, in your search for happiness, you meet other men occupied with the same search, each from his own point of view. How will you, in your appetite for happiness, treat one another? This, it seems to me, is a question that essentially concerns the happiness of all of you. What are you, then, in relation to one another? Are you brothers, or are you enemies? Aristotle defines you as animals, political and sociable by instinct, like beavers and bees: Socrates, and Jesus, and many others, call you sons of God in the same way, and advise you to treat one another as brothers: *Love your neighbor as yourself;* while Hobbes, considering you acting, claims to have discovered that you are naturally wolves to one another: *Homo homini lupus*, and that only the despotism of the law can establish peace and a semblance of morality among you.

So you cannot breathe or act without asking yourself the problem of morality; and the problem of morality leads you to the problem of politics and to the problem of religion.

In vain, then, would you want to see in life only what you call your individual happiness, your interest, your egoism, your passions. You are a man; therefore your happiness, your interest, your egoism, your passions are primarily concerned with this general question: What is man, and what is humanity?

Philosophy always has, in fact, this double characteristic of starting from the most common things and the most ordinary facts, to return to them after a huge detour. Does not a falling stone give rise to all celestial mechanics, and does not all celestial mechanics ultimately aim to throw some light on this phenomenon of a falling stone, by connecting it to all analogous phenomena in the universe? Similarly, there is not a question of practical life, however simple one may imagine it, which does not lead our minds to probe the deepest mysteries, and which does not thus lead us to the most difficult questions of philosophy; and reciprocally the dogmas of philosophy ultimately have as their aim the very practice of life.

It will be a question here of humanity; therefore it will be about the happiness of each of us. Truly, beneath these abstract questions, we will pursue a very positive and by no means abstract interest. For, fundamentally, we will seek whether it is given to us, and under what conditions it is given to us, to be happier or, if you will, less unhappy than we are in our present societies. It is a

question of domestic and private interest for each of us that must be settled or clarified here.

This is so true that, having had, some years ago, to write, in the *Encyclopédie Nouvelle*, the thoughts that would come to me on the word *Happiness*, I was led, by the irresistible slope of ideas and by a series of certain deductions, to pose precisely the general problem of *humanity*, which will occupy me in this book.

I beg the reader to allow me to quote here the writing of which I speak: it will be the most natural introduction that I can find to my subject.

In this writing, as we shall see, I claim that the question of happiness, which is the question of each of us, the special question that each of us asks and must ask, necessarily leads first to philosophy and religion. I further claim that the various doctrines arising from this fundamental question, which, in our West, are principally four in number, namely: Platonism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Christianity, after all four having contributed, either by their intrinsic virtue, or by their reciprocal opposition, to the perfection of humanity, are today exhausted; that they have modified each other mutually in the course of the centuries, either by mixing and amalgamating, or by combating and refuting each other; and that this ultimately resulted in two principles invincible to each other, but nevertheless equally condemned today by reason, equally powerless, equally weak, when they are not used to destroy each other, and when they are taken for themselves and in themselves, separately from the opposing principle; two tendencies, in a word, which, by this relative power and this absolute impotence, successively attract us and repel us, and consequently toss us between them, if I may use this comparison, as a cork is tossed between two contrary electricities. They repel us, in fact, each, by their weakness, their inanity, their folly, and thus throw us for a moment into the bosom of the opposing principle, which in turn repels us because of the same defects, and soon makes us return in fear to the other pole. These two tendencies, unconquered for each other, yet defeated in themselves and both condemned, are what we call today Spiritualism and Materialism. They are two equally false ideas, which, however adverse and irreconcilable they may be in their present form, nevertheless aspire to be united in a new synthesis; for, by stripping of its false form the feeling that is at the bottom of each of these two ideas, we have two legitimate and true feelings, capable of being reconciled and united in a new conception of life. I therefore maintain again in this writing that the synthesis that must unite these two current tendencies of the human spirit will emerge, like previous philosophies, from the revisiting of this question: What is life? What is the true notion of life? And, proving that our life is not only in us, but outside of us, in other men our fellow men and in humanity, I arrive at the edge

of this problem: What is humanity, and in what consists the link that unites the individual man to humanity?

Now, this last question is precisely the one I asked myself in this work.

Thus, from that moment on, I gathered, so to speak without knowing it, the necessary premises of the subject that I propose to treat today. I therefore consider it necessary also that the reader follow me first on this ground of happiness and of the doctrines to which the search for happiness has given rise. The true history of previous philosophies, summarized in a few pages, as to what is most important in them, will introduce them fully to the problem that we wish to raise before them.

So we will begin with this question: What is happiness? This will lead us to this: What is humanity? I will answer the first in this introduction. I will then try to answer the other in the book.

OF HAPPINESS.

Posteri, posteri, vestra res agitur![1] I have always been struck by this inscription that a traveler said he encountered while climbing Vesuvius. It was on the edge of the lava, at the limit of an ancient flood of the volcano; a column had been raised to write these solemn words. Then the lava flowed again, engulfing the flowers and the countryside further away. What was the purpose of the inscription? I remember it as I write this word *happiness*. Happiness is the concern of everything that breathes. Philosophers have often discoursed on this subject; they have often warned posterity: but the lava has always flowed, and always engulfed human generations.

§ 1. *Absolute happiness does not exist*.

From Job to the poets of our time, how many solemn opinions on the sadness of the human condition! Solomon, after experiencing all the joys, concluded that all is vanity and lies: *Risum reputavi errorem, et gaudio dixi: Quid frustra deciperis?*[2] Pindar calls the life of man the dream of a shadow; and Shakespeare said: Happiness is not to have been born.

If we were pleased to make a long inventory of the testimonies of the past, we would see philosophers and poets all agree on this truth: that happiness is a chimera; we would make them all appear, and all, with sad brows, would confess that happiness is, properly understood, only a deceptive appearance, and, if we may speak thus, a moral mirage that will always mislead those who think they encounter reality in it. Among the philosophers, Epicurus, who has been given, quite wrongly, the reputation of a contented man, maintained that our greatest satisfactions are rooted in memory and depend solely on the remembrance of things past. As for poets, those seemingly the happiest, the most charmed by their earthly sojourn, have, in the midst of their joys, accents of profound melancholy, which betray the secret of their souls. Anacreon finds the grasshopper happier than man; and Horace repeats in every tone that life is short and fleeting:

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[1] “Posterity, posterity, your business is at stake!” — TRANSLATOR

[2] *Ecclesiastes* 2: 2. — I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?” (ESV)

Linquenda tellus, et domus, et placens Uxor.[3]

This same Horace begins his *Satires* by reproaching men because none of them is content with their own lot:

> Qui fit, Maecenas, ut nemo quam sibi sortem
> Seu ratio dederit, sou fors objecerit, illa
> Contentus vivat, laudet diversa sequentes?[4]

Thus, according to him, no one is happy; for if, on the one hand, the common people inevitably make themselves unhappy through their own fault, on the other hand, the wise man is condemned to continually keep his eyes on the fragility of all things and to savor death, so to speak, in order to learn to appreciate and tolerate life.

We find among the moderns, as among the ancients, the same willingness to attest that happiness is only an idea without reality. How many times did Voltaire write, in all its forms: "Happiness, a chimera. If we give the name happiness to a few pleasures common in this life, there is indeed happiness; but if by that we mean something else, happiness is not made for this terrestrial globe: look elsewhere."[5] This question and all the problems related to it came to trouble him in the midst of his attacks on Christianity. No matter what he did, the unhappiness of the human condition always confronted him. "It would be far more important," he exclaimed, "to discover a remedy for our ills; but there is none, and we are reduced to sadly searching for their origin." Bolingbroke and Pope had claimed to escape theology by establishing that the order of Nature is perfect in itself, that the condition of man is what it should be, that he enjoys the only measure of happiness of which his being is capable. Voltaire could not adhere to this system; he wrote *Candide*, he wrote his "Poem on the Lisbon Disaster," he wrote twenty other works against the axiom that *all is well:*

> O unfortunate mortals, O deplorable earth!
> O frightful assemblage of all scourges!
> Eternal maintenance of useless pain! etc.[6]

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[3] "We must leave the world, home and charming wife."

[4] How is it, Maecenas, thato one is content with that lot in life which he has chosen, or which chance has thrown his way, but praises those who follow a different course?

[5] *Philosophical Dictionary*.

[6] "Poem on the Lisbon Disaster."

The evils of humanity (and this is perhaps his greatest glory) struck and distressed him to such an extent that he sometimes preferred to be inconsistent and appear to return to revelation, rather than to deny them. "He admits," he says, "with the whole world, that there is evil on earth; he admits that no philosopher has ever been able to explain the origin of evil; he admits that Bayle, the greatest dialectician who ever wrote, has only learned to doubt, and that he is fighting himself; he admits that there are as many weaknesses in the enlightenment of man as there are miseries in his life. He says that revelation alone can untie this great knot, which all philosophers have tangled; he says that the hope of a development of our being in a new order of things can alone console us for the present misfortunes, and that the goodness of Providence is the only refuge to which man can resort in the darkness of his reason and in the calamities of his weak and mortal nature."[7]

Before Voltaire, Fontenelle, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, had discoursed on happiness.[8] He too, like Bolingbroke and all pure deists, knows nothing other than Nature and its immutable order. The present, that is his entire horizon; his philosophy is devoid of ideals. His art of being happy consists in managing as best as possible amid the innumerable calamities that surround us. "Let us learn," he says, "how dangerous it is to be human, and let us count all the misfortunes from which we are exempt as many perils from which we have escaped." He declares in advance that his lessons will be suitable for a small number of elite minds. His lessons, it must be said, are lessons in selfishness; but that is not what matters to us here. What we want to note is that by limiting himself to even the most paltry happiness, Fontenelle still finds happiness almost impossible and refused to almost the entire human race. "It is the state," he says, "that makes happiness; but this is very unfortunate for the human race. An infinite number of men are in states that they have reason not to like; a number almost as large are incapable of being content with any state: here they are, therefore, almost all excluded from happiness, and their only resources are pleasures, that is to say, moments scattered here and there against a sad background that will be somewhat brightened by them. Men, in these moments, regain the strength necessary for their unhappy situation, and cheer themselves up to suffer. He who would like to fix his condition, not for fear of being worse off, but because he would be content, would deserve the name happy; he would be recognized among all other men by a kind of immobility in his situation; he

[7] Preface of the "Poem on the Lisbon Disaster."

[8] *Œuvres*, tome III.

would act only to preserve himself in it, and not to escape it. But has such a man appeared anywhere on earth?"

If a philosopher as dry as Fontenelle finds happiness so difficult and his existence so problematic, should we be surprised by the cries of despair that men more passionate than he, and less fortunately gifted for this negative happiness with which he was content, have uttered for three centuries, since Christianity was no longer there to show them Heaven? Is it surprising that Shakespeare, in the guise of Hamlet, so harshly rejects the love of his mistress? Is it strange that, belief in paradise having fallen, and finding ourselves without Heaven in the presence of this earth where happiness germinates with such difficulty, we have heard all these lamentations, which for twenty years have resounded in our ears like a song from hell? The pain that Byron and so many others with him revealed to us was implicitly contained in the confessions of Fontenelle and Voltaire. It was obvious that reality being so sad, and Nature having left us at the mercy of so many evils, once we believed only in present reality and Nature, we would be in despair.

Let us therefore frankly confess that happiness is denied us, at least in our present life. And how indeed could we find it in this life and, as they say, on this earth, where pain and death dwell with us? Everything we love being perishable, we thus find ourselves, through our love, continually exposed to suffering. We would therefore have to love nothing in order not to suffer. But to love nothing is the death of our soul, the most dreadful death, the true death. Thus, whether we go out of ourselves to attach ourselves to some external object, or whether we detach ourselves from all the objects that the world offers us to love, we are assured of suffering. But it is not only because all the objects of the world are changeable and perishable that we suffer; it is also because they are so miserably imperfect that they cannot satisfy our thirst for happiness. And it is not yet their fragility and imperfection alone that cause our suffering: the same worm that devours them devours us; we suffer because we ourselves are horribly imperfect, because everything in us is changeable and perishable. Like steeds that suddenly fail under their riders, the waves of our passions that carry us continually collapse, and, after having lifted us up, withdraw, and, breaking us, abandon us on dry ground. The most ardently desired happiness, when it is obtained, frightens the soul with its insufficiency. Our heart is like the Danaides' barrel, which nothing could fill.

Within us, therefore, around us, everything is combat, everything is struggle. If we consider the world, we see everything at war: species devour each other, elements struggle against one another; human society is in many respects a

continual struggle and a war. How many philosophers have found that man's cruelest enemy is man: *Homo homini lupus!*

The world we inhabit is made up of nothing but ruins, and we cannot take a step without destroying. Whether we take this world in time or in space, in its two dimensions it is a network of evil, destruction, and carnage, so well woven and so full, that it resembles that painting by Salvator, where everything kills and is killed at the same time, where men, horses, and even a bird that flies over the battlefield, everything is struck, everything dies, under a pale sky, in a dreadful ravine, while the sun sadly sets on the horizon. An admirable tableau, the sublime expression of the melancholy that the moral evil and the physical evil spread throughout the world can cast into our soul!

Saint Paul, the great poet, the great theologian, summed up in one word this universal pain of nature when he said: *Omnis creatura ingemiscit*.[9]

And Christian theology is not the only one to have noted this groaning of every creature. All ancient religions have had myths to express this idea; and we have just seen that the so-called centuries of enlightenment and philosophy, the centuries of incredulity, also bear witness to the vanity of this word *happiness*. Yet the contempt that was shown for Heaven in those times should have turned to the benefit of earthly happiness. They wanted to dethrone outdated religions, so they had to exalt reality at the expense of their ideal; they had only the earth, so they had to enjoy it; they believed only in the present, so they had to take advantage of it. Like the *wise* Fontenelle, they took life for a find, and they were not fussy about it; they were not demanding of Nature, that blind mother who replaced Providence; they gave the least possible pledge to fortune; one has concentrated all one's attention and gathered all one's prudence upon oneself, one has put all one's genius into being selfish with art; one has called this wisdom, reason, philosophy: and, in the end, one has been forced to admit that happiness was not made for man.

§ II . — *Evil is necessary*.

So here is a first point well established: it is that happiness is, as we said at the beginning, only a sort of moral mirage, which would undoubtedly mislead us, and would make us march from disappointment to disappointment, if we did not make up our minds not to believe in it. If happiness does not exist, the beginning of all wisdom is not to believe in happiness.

A second step in wisdom would be, it seems to us, to make this sacrifice with courage and resolution. And this is what reflection leads us to; for it is easy to

[9] "Every creature groans."

convince ourselves that evil is necessary and that, in the current state of our manifestations, evil is the very condition of our personality and our existence.

In fact, we can only exist on the condition of being in relation either with the external world or with the internal ideas that we have formed for ourselves, and which moreover have their source in our previous relations with this world.

Let us first take the first mode of existence. When the relationship with the external world is pleasant to us, we call it pleasure: but this passing state is not happiness. By happiness we mean a state that would be such that we would desire its duration without change. Now let us see what would happen if such a state were possible. For it to be absolutely possible, the external world would have to stop and become immobile. But then we would no longer have any desire, since we would no longer have any reason to modify the world, whose rest would satisfy and fill us. We would consequently no longer have either activity or personality. It would therefore be rest, inertia, death, for us, as for the world.

It would remain, then, that the external world, which is constantly changing, should change in such a way that it never caused us any pain, or rather that all its changes were a source of pleasure for us. But in this hypothesis again, there would be no desire; consequently, no reason to intervene in the world, no activity, no personality. What would then modify the world? What would make it move?

Let us now take our second mode of existence, and we shall arrive at the same result. Is it not evident indeed that if we were always in relation with the same internal ideas accumulated in us, with the same passions, with the same desires, we would be pure machines, we would act by instinct as animals do, we would be fatally directed and determined?

Therefore, relative to the external world, its mutability is necessary in order to make us feel our existence; and relative to our inner world, that is to say, to our ideas and our passions, their mutability is equally necessary to create our liberty and our personality. Therefore the very fact of life, as it is given to us humans to feel it, entails the existence of evil. To refuse evil is to refuse existence. To want to live is to accept evil. You imagine absolute happiness possible, it is nothingness that you desire.

O man! If it is true that you began with happiness, as a famous myth says, you were still only an appendage of your creator; you still lived in his womb. You could indeed be in innocence, as this myth says; but this innocence was not even felt by you. No, you did not exist.

If this myth were true, we would not even be fallen, as is claimed: for we would have exchanged happiness for activity, for personality, for merit, for virtue, that is, for true life.

§ III . — *Absolute unhappiness is as chimerical as absolute happiness.*

Christian theology, abusing the necessity of evil, has declared anathema to the earth, that is to say, not only to all of nature, but also to life as it is possible for us to understand it. Just as in an opera where three successive decorations would change the scene, it has imagined three worlds, so different that from one to the other one passes only through an abyss and a miracle: the primitive Eden, the earth, Paradise; happiness and innocence, guilt and misfortune, reparation and beatitude.

It was providential that humanity clung to this belief for several centuries; but this belief is only a myth, which, like all myths, hides a truth. Evil, as we have just said, is necessary; it is evil, so to speak, that created us; it is evil that made our personality; without it our conscience would not exist. But the conclusion is also that evil becomes less and less necessary, if we know how to create within ourselves a living force that allows us to act and perfect human life and the world without needing the sting of evil. The error, therefore, is not in this sequence which shows us, after an unconscious life, an active and painful life, then an active life without pain; it is in the characterization of each of these three terms. It is the middle term, which, characterized in a certain way, has forced us to characterize the other two as we have done. Therein lies the error. The earth, that is to say, life as we know it, has been incompletely appreciated, and from there came both the chimerical Eden and the chimerical Paradise. The great theologians Saint Paul and Saint Augustine may slander Nature, but Nature is not as corrupt as they say. The present life is not solely devoted to misfortune. So what has happened? It is that Nature has always retained its partisans; it is that the present life has mocked the anathema cast upon it, and that we have ended up, for three centuries, by no longer believing in either Eden or Paradise.

Certainly the present life is only a prodrome to the future life. But between the present life and the future life, in terms of good and evil, is there the abyss that the Christians had imagined? Like the daughters of Pelias, who slaughtered their father in order to rejuvenate him, the Christians have thrown life, as we are given to understand it, into the flames of the Last Judgment. Then an unalterable, incorruptible, and definitive world was to come. This world did not come. Their eagerness for immortality subsequently harmed the very idea of the

immortality of our being, so that one could apply to this eagerness for unmixed happiness the beautiful verse of Juvenal:[10]

Et, propter vitam, vivendi perdere causas.

Let us therefore enjoy the present life in a healthy manner, without fearing to harm thereby our thirst for immortality.

In what we are going to say, it is not a question of the work of God in general, of this work that Christians have supposed to be cursed with us and because of us, while so many philosophers have judged it to be perfect in every respect. It is quite clear that by taking the question in relation to the whole, we would rather be right to maintain that there is no evil in the world. For whichever way we turn, we encounter not only necessity, but order; not only is everything arranged, everything is ordered according to the laws of an irrefutable geometry, but continually, after an effect that we would be tempted to call evil, we see another effect produced that we call good. Therefore, to a spectator placed in another point of view, this first effect, which we call an evil, might appear to be a good. Leibniz's argument, that if the first effect was necessary to produce the second, it is thereby justified, is therefore not even strong enough: for it presupposes too much evil in the whole, an evil of which we cannot have any certainty. But once again I am not dealing with this question here. It is man, it is humanity that is in question here. It is not the whole, the general work of God; it is the particular life of creatures.

Now if St. Paul has said that every creature groans, one could say with just as much reason that every creature smiles, and that pleasure shines in the world like pain.

No, even for us, God has not cursed or forsaken this world; for if we encounter pain and death everywhere in it, we also encounter pleasure and life everywhere.

Poets and painters have shown us the Hours dancing in circles: thus good and evil follow one another in turn in the life of each being.

All the arguments we were just putting together against the vanity of absolute happiness turn against the claim of absolute unhappiness on earth.

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[10] Juvenal (*Satires*, on *nobility*) said that it was necessary to prefer the ideal to life:

Summum crede nefas prefere pudori.
Et, propter vitam, vivendi perdere causas.

But, on the contrary is it to lack life, and consequently the ideal life itself, to disinherit from all infinity the present life, as the ascetic Christians have done.

TRANSLATOR — "Believe me, you prefer evil to shame. And, for the sake of life, you lose the reasons for living."

This same imperfection that we have for pleasure, we also have for pain. Whether it is physical pain or moral pain, we no longer feel beyond a certain degree. At a certain point the faculty of suffering fails us; then comes collapse, rest, sleep; then life reappears.

Who is unaware of the influence of time on the deepest pains?

Have not poets always sung the charm of melancholy?

Who does not know that our pains turn, after a more or less time, into pleasant memories: *Et hæc meminisse juvabit!*[11]

Thus, even if we were not preserved by nature from a continuous and unrelenting misfortune, we would be preserved by the faculty that has been given to us to remember. The memory of a past pain is accompanied by satisfaction, just as the memory of a past pleasure ordinarily carries with it regret. We therefore have within us naturally a remedy for misfortune, in this power of life, which transforms evil into good, as it happens to us.

But this faculty is not limited to memory. The same phenomenon of the transformation of evil into good that takes place in the world is continually operating in us, by other means. The lightning, which crushes, makes the earth fertile; the most fatal poisons, combined in a certain way, become salutary: in the same way, in us, by a profound mystery, pain brings about developments of the passions, which struggle against it, resist it, balance it or even make it disappear.

Let us conclude, then, that absolute unhappiness is as impossible as absolute happiness. We are protected from it by the very instability of all things, which reigns in the world. We are protected from it by our memory, which, accumulating within us our sorrows, transforms them and draws joys from them. We are protected from it by our very passions, which, succeeding one another, make us escape the feeling of their falls, by rising up to carry us off to other battles and other setbacks.

Therefore, independent of the resources that we can draw from virtue, and without entering into the religious order, but remaining within the order of nature, it is certain that human life is a mixture of good and evil, and that it can never become absolutely happy or unhappy.

§ IV . — *On the system of compensations*.

Does this mean that we must adopt this optimism, as false as it is pernicious and contrary to all improvement, this system of natural compensations in human destinies, so widespread today and so trivial? Epicureanism abused the

[11] “And it will help to remember this!”

resources that nature left us against misfortune, just as Christianity abused the evil that necessarily enters into the composition of our life.

From the fact that absolute unhappiness is impossible, the philosophers who are enemies of Christianity concluded that we were wrong to complain about Nature, and they claimed to completely rehabilitate this Nature which Christianity had cursed.

This point of view arose and had to arise following Protestantism; for Protestantism was already to a certain extent a return to Nature. Also after Protestantism came the Bayle controversy, then the religious optimism of Leibniz, then the Epicurean optimism of which we speak.

It must be noted that it was great lords, such as the Count of La Rochefoucauld and Lord Bolingbroke, who first spread these maxims, that Nature is a good mother, who has done for us all that she could, and who has distributed her favors equally among us. "Whatever difference there may be between fortunes," says La Rochefoucauld, "there is a certain compensation of goods and evils that makes them equal." Fontenelle was of much the same opinion: "To measure," he says, "the happiness of men only by the number and liveliness of the pleasures they have in the course of their lives, perhaps there are a fairly large number of fairly equal conditions, although very different. He who has fewer pleasures feels them more keenly; he feels an infinity of them that others no longer feel, or have never felt; and in this respect Nature does her duty as a common mother well enough." But when Pope had sung the system of *all is good* that Bolingbroke had formulated for him, and when Voltaire had imported this system into France, Epicureanism found itself having a whole theology to oppose to Christian theology.

The first point of this philosophy is that happiness is not only the law, but the end and the sole rule of all beings:

> God said to me: Be happy; he has told me enough.[12]

The second point is that in the destiny of every man, good and evil compensate each other:

> Unhappiness is everywhere, but so is happiness.[13]

The third point is that all destinies are therefore equally divided into good and evil:

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[12] Voltaire, *Discours en vers*.

[13] *Ibid*.

The sky, in forming us, mixed our life
From desires, disgusts, reason, madness,
From moments of pleasure and days of torment.
These are the elements of our imperfect being.
They compose the whole of man, they form his essence;
And God weighed us all in the same balance.[14]

The conclusion of this system is immobility; for if all conditions are equal, if there is in all professions the same measure of good and evil, and if the only law and the only end of our being is happiness in the way that is understood in this system, it is evident that everything is justified and that it would be madness to want to change the situation of the world.

This, however, is the basis that eighteenth-century Epicureanism opposed to Christianity: the equality of happiness in all men and in all conditions! Honor to Jean-Jacques, who, without having a complete philosophy to compare with that, raised his powerful voice to protest against such a doctrine, and, supporting the existence of evil, asked for its cure. "At least," he cried, "we must note a great difference between the evils of the lowest classes of society and those that afflict the first; for the evils of the people are the effect of the bad constitution of society, the great, on the contrary, are unhappy only through their own fault."

But it is not only out of sentiment that this system must be rejected. All of its so-called axioms are fundamental errors.

To begin with the last, no, not all conditions are equal. It is true, as we have said, that Nature has set limits to misfortune; but Nature or Providence has two ways of compensating for evil: it can compensate for our pains by giving to us and by taking away from us. When physical pain becomes excessive, we faint; when our ills are repeated, we become insensible; when they become too great for our strength, we die. Sleep, insensitivity, death, are therefore compensations that Nature has provided for us. The Epicurean optimists of the eighteenth century should have counted these compensations *as less*, if I may speak thus, among those that made the condition of all the pariahs of the earth seem so bearable to them. Yes, it is true that in nature, according to the axiom of Hippocrates, everything contributes, everything conspires and everything consents. However, therefore, society is organized, whatever the ills that weigh on certain men, Nature will know how to find, not remedies, but, if I may put it this way, calluses for their pain. When a man loses his liberty, says Homer, Jupiter takes away half of his soul. This saying of Homer is of sublime truth. Such is indeed the goodness of Providence; it takes away from us in our pain the faculties that would make it intolerable.

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[14] *Ibid.*

You overwhelm a man with evils: what happens? Nature hardens him. If something has been given and left to this man, he will perhaps become a villain full of energy, just as he could become in certain cases great, heroic, sublime, Spartacus or Epictetus. But if his genius is naturally weak, or if the evil you do him is stronger than he is, he will become imbecile, stupid; he will lose, according to Homer's words, half of his soul. This is the *compensation* that Nature will find for his evils. However, as you have not fought in him the animal condition that is in us all, he will have the instincts, appetites and pleasures of the brutes, and, not being a man by intelligence, these instincts will occupy him entirely. You will then praise him as a happy man, and Voltaire will sing of his pleasures; and, seeing that such a man has joys on earth, he will conclude that

God has weighed us all in the same balance!

This is bitter mockery!

Let us now consider the compensations of Nature when it gives to us, instead of taking away from us. It is true that Nature gives the outcast certain resources to fight against his evils; it does not always limit itself to preserving him from the excess of evil by truncating and disfiguring him: but these gifts of Nature, to be positive gifts, are they a true indemnity, or only a kind of insurance premium against a new increase in pain? The Scythians, it is said, put out the eyes of their slaves: it is certain that the sense of hearing must have become more keen and more subtle. But did this compensation turn to the benefit of the slaves, except that it made them more suitable for the work with which their masters were pleased to overwhelm them, and that it thus guaranteed them from an excess of ill-treatment or pain, an excess against which Nature would have had a final compensation in death?

This, then, is the price at which one can support this system of equality of conditions: it is by maintaining that all alterations of the human type are not that; it is by maintaining that a roughly sketched being is the equal of a being whose faculties are all developed; it is by maintaining that the idiot or the insane person is the equal of a reasonable man.

Yet we undoubtedly arrive at this theory when we consider happiness solely in terms of the *quantity* of good and evil that is distributed to us.

If you add equal amounts of plus and minus to a given quantity, you will not change the result, say the geometers. Similarly, say the supporters of the system of compensations, if to a man of ordinary faculties and condition we add either genius, or power and fortune, the result will result for him at the same time in great pleasures and great pains: his essential condition will therefore not be changed. Then if we take away from this man instead of giving to him, the result will always be the same: he will be able to descend in the human scale, without

losing any of his happiness; he will have fewer pleasures, but he will have fewer setbacks; or he will not have the same pleasures, but he will have others. There will always be compensation, balance. Human life is an equation whose terms, charged with different coefficients, are basically identical.

The thing is probable, in fact, if we admit the method, that is to say, if we admit that happiness resides in the quantity of good and evil, of pleasures and pains, and that pleasures and pains can compensate each other as arithmetical quantities compensate each other. In one case, the faculties of man are developed; in another, they are atrophied: but if the aim, the end of man is the quantity of sweet or painful moments that he experiences, all compensation made, what does it matter which fate? Compensation made, this quantity is perhaps the same.

This is what has made this system so attractive, so common, so vulgar. It reigns everywhere today; it is so generally accepted that no one dares to fight it, and yet, looking it in the face, it seems so absurd that no one seriously believes it. We repeat it with our lips, and in the depths of our hearts we reject it.

This leads us to ask whether the very basis of this system is not an absurdity, whether the aim and purpose of man is happiness understood as it is in this system, and whether this supposed compensation of good and evil is not, by chance, a very crude method and a fundamental error.

§ V . — *Continued.*

You have before you, I suppose, a beautiful statue, Apollo or Venus: you give it a snub nose; will it be a compensation to lengthen its ear? From Apollo you could thus make a Midas, from man an ape, from the ape an even more stupid animal, and by continuing you would arrive at a block of matter. However, you would always have the same quantity of matter, divided into the same space.

So it is with man. Man is a harmonious assemblage of diverse faculties. It is impossible to remove some without harming others, and without disfiguring the whole. It is not a question of knowing whether the development of one of these faculties compensates for the absence or atrophy of the others. Would you find a man happy if, being hungry and thirsty, he only had enough to satisfy his hunger or his thirst? If it were his hunger, he could die of thirst; if it were his thirst, he could die of hunger.

We should not therefore say, for example: Here is a man who is devoid of intelligence, but who enjoys material life; he is happy. No, he is not happy, since he is devoid of intelligence. But, you will say, he does not feel the need; therefore, in this respect, he is not unhappy. And I answer you that being a man, he feels this need: what does it matter that he is not conscious of it? This need is

in him; this unsatisfied need distorts all his faculties, makes all his other enjoyments different from what they should be. He satisfies his hunger or his thirst like a brute: therefore, in this respect, he does not have the happiness of a man who satisfies his hunger or his thirst.

So the system that would consist of putting in parallel the material happiness which this man experiences with the analogous pleasures, which, suitable for the true man, for the man endowed with intelligence, would first have everything in this.

But this system would be even more wrong if it wanted to present these material enjoyments of a man devoid of intelligence as compensation for the pleasures of intelligence which he lacks. It would be as if one wanted to maintain that we can receive through one sense the ideas that are communicated to us by another. An animal could eat and drink with pleasure for an entire day, without the enjoyment that it would feel from it, however great one wanted to suppose it to be, being able to be compensated with the least intellectual pleasure.

And conversely, intellectual pleasures are not compensation for sufferings of another order.

There are in us, so to speak, several different lives, which unite without mixing or confusion.

Pascal, suffering from toothache, solved a difficult problem. Psychologically, did the attention he paid to his problem prevent him from suffering? No.

Voltaire imagines Archimedes, deceived by his mistress and forced to remain in the street, exposed to the cold, the rain, the hail, while his rival is admitted to the beauty's house; Archimedes, to pass the time, occupies himself with geometry, and discovers the proportion of the cylinder to the sphere: Voltaire asks if he does not experience a pleasure a hundred times greater than that experienced by his rival.

No. Between these two pleasures there is no term of comparison. Thus Archimedes could be both very unhappy about his mistress's betrayal and very delighted by the beauties of geometry.

How many philosophers, how many artists have been in this situation, so to speak, all their lives! Has genius ever healed the wounds of the heart? Ask Tasso, as well as Molière and so many others.

So this arithmetic, which consists of compensating our faculties with one another, of opposing our joys and our sorrows as if they were all of the same nature and perfectly commensurate with each other, is a false arithmetic. To

reason in this way is to resemble a geometer who would add together portions of a circle with portions of lines of a different order.

§ VI . — *Of the true notion of life.*

I repeat, it is difficult to understand how the eighteenth century, this innovative century, this century that produced the doctrine of perfectibility, this century ended by the French Revolution, could at the same time give birth to this system of equality of conditions. If, as this system says, the only law of creatures is happiness, and if happiness is always compensated, there is no reason to make any effort whatsoever in favor of the perfection of the world. It is as good to be mad as to be wise, to be wicked as to be good. Civilization has nothing superior to barbarism. Jesus Christ or Voltaire is the equal of a savage from New Holland; and we finally arrive at this conclusion, that the happiest of organized beings is perhaps the simplest, an oyster or a coral.

It is enough for a straight line to bend in a certain way for it to no longer be a straight line, and for there to no longer be a common measure between these two different things; we even regard as mad those who persist in seeking to square the circle: and it has been possible to suppose that there is a common measure of happiness between all beings, as if these beings were all of the same nature!

How much wiser it is to believe that each species and each being, while linked to all the species and all the beings, has its own special destiny!

However, if the first axiom of the philosophy we are combating were true, if happiness were not only the law, but the rule and the end of all beings, it would indeed be necessary that this sort of compensation by way of more and less, of addition and subtraction, be possible, and that its result be the same for all creatures; or else God would appear to us the most cruel and absurd of tyrants.

So, if this balance is not true, if it is absurd to claim that the fate of an oyster is identically equal to that of a man, it is because the very principle of the system is absurd; it is because happiness, understood as it is in this system, is not the end of creatures.

This leads us to seriously reflect on the true notion of life.

No, the end of every creature is not happiness, as it is understood in Voltaire's first axiom. Creatures were not made to be happy, but to live and develop by moving toward a certain type of perfection.

We have a very sensible image of this in the child. Tell me what is the aim of nature in a child? I am speaking both of his body and his mind. Everything in him has only one aim, one end: to arrive at the state of man. He nevertheless has his life as a child for that. One can even maintain, like Jean-Jacques in *Émile*, that

the best education that one can give him can be in accord with this life as a child, so that if he happens to die before becoming a man, he will have been as happy as his state of childhood allows. But finally this state is obviously not his aim, his end; he is not a child to remain a child, he is a child to become a man.

Just as the life of a child is an aspiration toward the life of a man, would not our present life be a simple aspiration toward a future state? In that case, the question would be quite changed; for it would not be a question of being happy, but of living this life in order to live another life afterwards.

Does this immense horizon disgust you, and do you want to fall back on the present life? No matter what you do, you will always find deep within yourself this need to march and to advance constantly from change to change.

The great lyricist Pindar said admirably: "Life is the track of a chariot;" but it is of life that has passed, of dead life, so to speak, that he wanted to speak. As for living life, if I may express myself thus, we can indeed form an idea of it, but it is indefinable. It is the wheel in motion: but what is the wheel in motion? If the wheel stops, it is no longer the wheel in motion; and, similarly, if life stops, it is no longer life; it is death. The wheel in motion is never fixed; it is no longer here, for it is already there; it is not there, for it is still here; it is not between the two points, for it would be stopped; and yet it successively passes through all the points. So it is with life: we are never in an idea, nor in a pleasure, nor in a suffering, but we always come out of an idea, a pleasure or a pain, to enter into another; we are no longer in that one, we are not yet in this one, and already this one has passed:

The moment I speak is already far away from me.

Our life is therefore not even a point between two abysses, as Pascal says, unless we understand by this point a mathematical point, a point without dimension.

What *is* truly in us, then, is not the being modified by pleasure or pain, but the being that emerges from this modification. Emergence from a previous state, and immersion in a future state, this is our life. The permanent state of our being is therefore aspiration.

Now the multitude of men, who have not reflected on this, carry out their phases of change and transformation without being aware of it. They seek happiness without ever finding it; but, in seeking happiness, they fulfill their end, which is not to be happy, but to advance. They always believe that they will settle, and the shore always flees before them. We dream of rest in the world, where there is only movement and never rest; and in the same way we dream of

happiness in life, where, by absolute necessity, there is only continual change and never duration without change.

Fontenelle, whose testimony the partisans of happiness on earth will not challenge, says of *almost all men:* "Incapable of discernment and choice, driven by a blind impetuosity, attracted by objects that they see only through a thousand clouds, carried along by one another without knowing where they are going, they compose a confused and tumultuous multitude, which seems to have no other purpose than to be constantly agitated. If, in all this disorder, favorable encounters can make some of them happy for a few moments, well and good: but it is quite certain that they will know neither how to prevent nor moderate the shock of anything that can make them unhappy. They are absolutely at the mercy of chance."

We will not say, like Fontenelle, that they are abandoned to chance; but we will say that they are marching, without knowing it, towards a future state.

This is how the question of happiness necessarily leads us to philosophy and religion.

§ VII . — *Opinions on happiness.*

Doctrine of Plato, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Christianity .

From an elevated point of view, poets are those who, from age to age, point out the ills of humanity, just as philosophers are those who deal with its healing and salvation.

Since the world is partially given over to evil, it is obvious that men have always had to be concerned with the means of escaping this evil, and that the question of happiness must have been the basis of philosophy.

This is what happened, in fact. The question of happiness has always been the basis of philosophy, just as it is also the basis of religion: for philosophy and religion are identical.

In this section, we will not go back to the philosophies and religions of the East. We will just briefly follow the lineage of ideas from Greece to the present day.

It is so true that this question of happiness is the very foundation of philosophy, that it was on this ground that all the sects of Greece disputed among themselves. "As soon as one does not agree on the supreme good," says Cicero, "one disagrees on the whole foundation of philosophy: *Qui de summo bono dissentit, de tota philosophiæ ratione disputat."*[15]

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[15] *De finibus boni et mali*, c. 5.

It is because Socrates set all minds searching for the solution to happiness that he was declared by the oracle of Delphi to be the wisest of men. His famous motto relates to happiness: *Know thyself*, in order to conduct thyself and be happy.[16] The glorious initiative that is attributed to him, and which has led to the saying that the philosophical schools came from Socrates, has no other origin.

Varro claims that from the question of happiness, two hundred and eighty sects were born in Greece. It is likely that this is, as Bayle says, a witticism on Varro's part. But, in any case, it is evident that all these sects, however numerous one may suppose them to be, must have essentially been related to three: the sect of Plato, the sect of Zeno, and the sect of Epicurus.

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[16] This maxim had been taught long before Socrates; but he was the first to make it count. He adopted it, explained it, and made it as useful as it was famous. "Socrates," says Diogenes of Laertes (Life of Socrates), "was the philosopher who treated morality as a science... Abandoning physics, he began to reason regarding morality; and he went everywhere, into houses, into shops and into public squares, exhorting everyone to *know themselves well*, and to think *about what was good and bad in them*," Cicero characterizes the mission and role of Socrates in the same way: "He was the first," he says, "who took philosophy away from the contemplation of the stars, to place it in our cities, and to introduce it even into our homes: *Primus philosophiam devocavit e cælo, et in urbibus collocavit, et in domos etiam introduœit*." (Tusc. Quæst., lib. V.) In another of his works, Cicero again reproduces this characterization of Socrates, relying on this subject on the testimony of all antiquity: "Socrates - mihi videtur, id quod constat inter omnes, primus a rebus occulis et ab ipsa nolura involutis, il quibus omnes ante eum philosopli occupati fuerunt, evocavisse philosophiam, et ad vitam communem adduxisse, ut de virtutibus et vitiis, omninoque de bonis rebus et malis quarerel ; caiestia aulem vel procul esse a nostra cugnitione censerel, vel, si maxime cognita essent, nihil tamen ad bene rivendum conferre." (Academie, lib. I.) Such was the initiative of Socrates: he learned to reason about good and evil, *de virtutibus et vitiis*, as Cicero says, in the name of the *Nosce te ipsum*, of the xxx. As for this sentence itself, it is attributed either to Thales or to an ancient Sibyl named Phemonoe: "It is from Thales," says Diogenes of Laertes, "that this maxim: *Know thyself* comes; a maxim that Antisthenes, in his *Successions*, attributes to Phemonoe, accusing Philo of having unjustly appropriated it." (*Vit. Thal.*) Juvenal was perhaps alluding to the inspired Sibyl when he said that this saying had descended from heaven. (*Satire* XI):

E cœlo descendit xxx.

Moreover, never has a maxim been more repeated. It was written in the vestibule of the temple at Delphi; and the value that all antiquity attached to it is attested to by this reflection of Porphyry, preserved for us by Stobec:

Nosce te ipsum, dictio quidem est brevis;
Sed lanta res, quam Jupiter solus seichat,

The main duel was and could only be between these three philosophies. Indeed, either you are satisfied with Nature, and you conform to it; or you disapprove of Nature, and you seek elsewhere another rule of conduct; or finally you accept it without being satisfied with it, and you claim to correct and perfect it according to a superior type that you have in yourself or that you unravel in it. The duel is therefore between: 1. those who are satisfied with Nature, or who, without being satisfied with it, accept it as a master, an arbiter, a sovereign judge, from whom it is not possible to appeal (*Epicurus*); 2. those who, dissatisfied with Nature, appeal to themselves (*Zeno*); and 3. those who regard this Nature as an imperfect, but transitory state, whose defects it is possible to correct by conforming to a certain ideal (*Plato*).

Plato, Epicurus, and Zeno, these are the three clear-cut solutions to the problem that Socrates had posed.

Plato preceded Epicurus and Zeno by a century; but the latter two were born at the same time, to oppose each other, and to make a sublime antithesis between them.

Moreover, these two opposing solutions of Stoicism and Epicureanism are so much the consequence of the double aspect of our life, of the mixture of good and evil found therein, that a hundred years before Plato, two centuries before Epicurus and Zeno, Democritus and Heraclitus had presented the same contrast. Epicurus and Zeno did, so to speak, only reproduce with more light and brilliance these two figures, hidden in the veil of an already profound antiquity, and become the two types of the man content with Nature and the man discontented with his fate. We know that Epicurus borrowed the principal

points of his system from Democritus, just as the Stoics drew many of their ideas from the old Ionian school.[17]

Acceptance of Nature as it is, this is the basis of Epicurus' system.

The reprobation of Nature and the complete substitution of a different life called Virtue, this is the basis of Zeno's system.

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[17] Certainly, by indicating Democritus as having represented before Epicurus the system of the acceptance of Nature, I do not mean to say that the fabulous and grotesque portrait that the Greeks left us of this philosopher has any kind of truth. It is not because it is commonly said that Democritus laughed at everything that I make him the ancestor of Epicureanism. I have explained elsewhere (see the article *Démocrite* in the *Encyclopédie Nouvelle*) the meaning of these two types of Democritus and Heraclitus, of a philosopher who laughs at everything in life and another philosopher who laments and is distressed by everything. I have also proven, in the writing to which I refer, that we form the most false idea of Democritus's philosophy by judging it purely and simply by that of Epicurus. Therefore, when I say here that Epicurus reproduced Democritus with greater light and brilliance, I mean above all Epicurus' influence on the Greeks. At the time Democritus appeared, the Greeks were unable to understand the entirely oriental philosophy that this great man brought back from his travels. Later, they fully understood Epicurus' system, which was a derivation, but also an alteration. Democritus, says Cicero, *vir magnus in primis, cujus fontibus Epicurus hortulos suos irrigavit*, Cicero, in this place and elsewhere, makes Epicurus small before Democritus. This is because Epicurus materialized the entire system of his predecessor. Democritus taught the doctrine of *emanation*. It was a system quite analogous to Leibniz's monads, though without the idea of progress in the successive development of beings emanating from the Infinite Being; a capital and entirely modern idea, which completely transforms, in our opinion, the ancient and profound system of emanation. Democritus therefore admitted atoms endowed with life, feeling, thought, in relative proportion, and reproducing in a finite manner the Infinite and Absolute Being. Epicurus made this system a system of materialist physics, recognizing only atoms endowed with solidity and movement. Nevertheless, his descent from Democritus is certain and well-established. The relationship between them is even more complete than is commonly believed. They touch each other at the heart of ethics, as at the heart of physics. Democritus considered the world and life in the manner of Eastern metaphysicians; he accepted it as a fatal and incomprehensible necessity, which had as its cause the permanent nature of the various beings emanating from the universal Being and immersed in illusion (*Maya*). Epicurus, in turn, accepted the world and life as a fatal and incomprehensible necessity, which had as its cause the permanent nature of atoms. This is how in every respect Epicurus represents, but in a completely new form, the fundamental tendencies of the doctrine from which he had drawn. Only he removed everything that was of the *infinite* in the system of Democritus.

Plato neither absolutely rejects nor absolutely accepts Nature. And yet, imbued with theological ideas of the East, he imports into Greece the confused seeds of the doctrine of the fall and redemption.

Epicurus' system is the simplest; and it had to be. Epicurus rejects the past prior to this life, as well as the future that may follow it; he starts from the present, and sticks to it. For him even more than for anyone else, philosophy is therefore reduced to the question of happiness; it is solely the art of leading man to happiness by means of his reason. It is a question of the present, of current reality; what need is there for metaphysics and theology? To open one's eyes and see what is, without worrying too much about the genesis of things; then to conduct oneself in conformity with what is; to free oneself from bodily ills and the troubles of the soul; thus to procure for oneself, if possible, a state free from pain, by the regulated satisfaction of the needs, appetites and desires that Nature has given us: this is happiness and philosophy. You want to penetrate further into the secrets of the world; you ask yourself what this Nature is of which you are a part and which encloses you: Epicurus satisfies this curiosity with atoms. But again, ethics is the only thing he considers important; the physics and metaphysics that relate to his system are only accessories.

All that in the eighteenth century and at the beginning of ours was erected in philosophical ideas by the partisans of Nature, the deism of Bolingbroke, Pope and Voltaire, the egoism of La Rochefoucauld, the sensualism of Condillac, the well-understood interest of Helvétius, the atomistic materialism of our scholars, the utilitarianism of Bentham, all this was in Epicurus. His books, lost, were, so to speak, rediscovered in the eighteenth century. Tranquil and impassive gods outside the world; no relationship between man and divinity, which amounts to the same thing as the negation of all divinity; the world conducted by chance, or by secondary causes; atoms clinging together according to all possible combinations; man thrown into the midst of these contrary forces, without being able to aspire to know why, and obliged to use his reason to accommodate himself to them; the interest of each person, the sole and legitimate motive of all our actions; utility, the basis of all legislation; then the noble part of the system, virtue united with pleasure, interest well understood leading to morality and happiness; Epicurus had, from the fourth century before our era, concentrated in his work all the diverse traits of this philosophy, of which we have seen so close to us a complete reproduction.

We do not enter here into the controversy that has arisen over the doctrine and life of this great man. We are disposed to regard him with veneration in the respectable light in which he has been represented to us, in antiquity as in modern times, by his numerous apologists. We confess that we know of no more

imposing genius than the one who brought together Horace and Lucretius, and whose influence reigned almost unchallenged over entire centuries. Escorted by so many disciples, Epicurus advances in humanity as great as the greatest of the wise. By a curious symbol of his destiny, he was in his childhood what the Greeks called a *hunter of ghosts*. He went, with the poor woman who gave birth to him, from house to house, making holy lustrations to put evil genies to flight. He has performed and will always perform the same function for humanity. He was and always will be the *ghost hunter*, the one who saves us from superstition. And this influence will always be useful. It will always be useful and often necessary to bring men back to the point of view of the earth. What Epicurus had more than most of his ancient and modern imitators was the holiness with which he did this work, striving to establish this contentment with the earth in a completely religious way. He is the pure, upright legislator of the intermediate epochs between a religion that was falling and a new religion. Compared to all the ancients, it was his sect that was formed comparatively the fastest, that remained the most numerous, and that lasted the longest; he saw it flourishing around him in his Garden, and it still existed in great harmony six hundred years later, in the second century of our era, when Christianity was soon to invade everything. This was to be: Epicureanism was to flourish at the fall of paganism, as it was to be reborn at the fall of Christianity. And by this I do not mean the absolute necessity in which humanity finds itself to destroy by doubt the outdated religions that arrest its progress; it is not this face of Epicureanism that I am considering: I mean the legitimacy of its reign in certain eras. When religions have fallen, what remains to be done? Man is forced to accept the present life as it is: the wise man seeks to pass it with the least possible torment; the fool wastes it and devours it. Then come those eras, so marked in history, of refined passions, of frenetic voluptuousness and of profound melancholy, of incredulity and superstition. Then also comes Epicurus, under this name or under other names, who calms the insatiable ardor for happiness with which men are feverish, who consoles them, who saves them from madness, and who distances them as much as he can, by pleasure itself, from false pleasure. This doctrine is a retreat for humanity; but finally it is a retreat that prevents a complete rout. However, humanity, having rallied and having gained confidence in itself, sheltered by this wisdom which it respects as a science and as a religion, soon realizes that its fate is not to flee or to stop, and marches forward to new battles. Such is the double role of Epicureanism: at all times, a useful influence in certain respects, and transiently, at certain times, a use whose legitimacy seems to us incontestable.

However, such a doctrine can never be truly understood and adopted except by a small number, chosen from among those who have at their disposal a

sufficient portion of the enjoyments of the earth. If Epicurus had been a slave like Epictetus, what would he have said of his system?

Therefore, necessarily, there also comes the sect that reproves and rejects Nature. Someone among those who have studied Stoicism will perhaps be surprised to hear us characterize it in this way. We know, in fact, that the Stoics affected, in the foundations of their philosophy, to obey the principle of empiricism, and that their fundamental maxim was: “Follow nature.” We know that the moral formula of Cleanthes and other Stoics was: “Live in accordance with nature.” But this contradiction is only apparent. For what did the Stoics mean by living in accordance with nature? They meant living in accordance with human nature. Now, in what precisely did the nature of man consist, according to them: solely in his liberty. To live in accordance with nature was therefore solely to keep oneself free. It was therefore not to attach oneself to anything that is not completely within our power. It was therefore essentially separating oneself from the world, and, through this analysis and this separation, resuming one's true nature. The Stoic's entire participation in life therefore consisted solely in voluntarily obeying destiny, that is to say, in voluntarily acting out the role that fate had given him, but without taking an interest in it; for by taking an interest in it, he ceased to be free, he became a slave. He was still superior if he even refused this role. “Remember,” says Epictetus, “that you must govern yourself everywhere as in a banquet. If the dishes come to you, stretch out your hand and take them modestly. If the one carrying the dish passes by, do not stop him; if he has not yet reached you, do not advance to reach him, but wait until he reaches you. This is what you must do for children, for a wife, for a magistracy, for riches; and you will be worthy of a heavenly banquet. But if you do not take the things that would be presented to you, and if you despise them, you will not only not be worthy of a heavenly banquet, but you will be of an even higher degree. For when Heraclitus, Diogenes and others like him did so, they were rightly called divine, and indeed they were.”

To despise life completely, to let it flow by, as they said, taking refuge in oneself; to regard oneself in relation to this life as a spectator, or at most as an actor in a comedy; to leave to fate the responsibility for one's work; not to think of tempering one's passions, but to uproot them; to create oneself without passions, to make of oneself a free intelligence, a freedom; such was, as everyone knows, the morality of the Stoics. They had such disdain for this life that they endeavored to demonstrate that the human soul was perishable, and that we had no reason to fear that life would extend beyond this world. They had such disgust for this world that they gave their wise man the right to take his own life, as a consequence of his liberty and a reward for his virtue.

Plato, we have said, had neither absolutely condemned nor absolutely accepted Nature. His work is a mixture of Socratic inspiration and oriental solutions. This double character of a Greek who had conversed for eight years with Socrates, and who then had become the disciple of the Pythagoreans and the priests of Egypt, is found everywhere in his works. The direction given by Socrates consisted, as we have seen, in turning all investigations towards the question of morality and happiness. Plato completely accepts this direction; but he resolves the problem with a theology drawn from Egypt and from the Pythagoreans of the Magna Graecia, which themselves were only a branch of Eastern philosophy. He says with Socrates (*Phaedo*) that all our research must have as its goal the discovery of what is good , and that we have no other means to achieve this than the study of man, the knowledge of ourselves: *Nihil aliud homini esse investigandum nisi quod potissimum sit et optimum* (τὸ ἄριστον καὶ τὸ βέλτιστον), *idque vero ex ipso homine, ex cognitione suî ipsius, ducendum*. Then, when it comes to knowing what is good and best, instead of deducing it directly from the study of man, Plato lets slip everywhere from his almost priestly hand the ancient religious solutions that he has collected in his travels. He is no longer a Greek, he is no longer the disciple of Socrates seeking, without the help of any tradition, the rule of life and happiness; it is a priest of Memphis who is speaking.

The soul is an active force in itself; but, fallen and united to matter, it now lives in a sort of exile and imprisonment. From this union result in us two different principles; our soul is composed of two parts: the reasonable part, and the unreasonable or animal part. But the first can return to the blissful life of spirits.

How can it make this return? By regaining consciousness of all the *Ideas*, the eternal types and models of things. These *Ideas* exist in God, and pierce through the world; for God formed objects on the model of the *Ideas*.

But how is the soul encouraged to become aware of *Ideas* again, and to get rid of matter in order to rise to God?

Through Love. Love is the wing that God gives to the soul to return to Him.

Is there anything more natural to men than Love? They naturally love everything that is beautiful, because their souls are descended from the very source of beauty. But everything that resembles in any way this primitive beauty moves them more or less, as their souls are more or less attached to the body. Those whose souls are more disengaged adore in the beauty of earthly objects this sovereign beauty of which they have preserved the memory and for which they were born; and this adoration produces Virtue in them. But those who are sunk and mired in matter, no longer retaining any idea of sovereign beauty, run

furiously after imperfect and passing beauties, and plunge themselves, without respect for themselves, into all kinds of impurities.

Happiness, therefore, according to Plato, does not exist at all in the direct relationship that we can have with the different objects that are offered to us in the world; but, through these objects, we put ourselves in touch with the ideas of beauty that are hidden behind them as behind a veil. This is the only road to happiness that we can follow.

Now since these *Ideas* have a real existence in God, it follows that God alone is the true good. Our happiness consists in making ourselves as much like God as we can.

Thus, ultimately, two guides are given to lead us to God, that is, to happiness: Reason and Love. Reason teaches the right path and prevents us from going astray. Love encourages us to walk, it ensures that we find nothing difficult, it softens the labors and pains inseparable from this fight.

Call Love Grace; explain more fully the real and objective existence of *Ideas*, the mysterious link between God and the world, where your thought meets divine thought; realize completely this Νοῦς, this Λόγος, this Word, this Wisdom, which Plato still distinguishes in God, the creative thought of God in power, just as the *Ideas* are his creative thought already carried out; finally find for this Word a man to incarnate it; make a history for it, a tradition; and all the terms of this mysterious chain, which unites man to God, will illuminate themselves before your eyes, and will give you Christianity.

How then did this theology not make Plato a Christian monk? It is because Plato, in trusting in it, had as his aim, not to reprove nature and life, but to improve and transform them. Here returns the Socratic inspiration; here is found the Greek genius. Why had Plato sought this doctrine in the East? To accomplish the work proposed by Socrates; to perfect human life. Having penetrated it, he had therefore to apply it to this goal. Thus, all this doctrine turns in him to active life, to practical life. It is an explanation of the world and of our destiny that he teaches; it is not the reversal of nature and life. There is therefore in Plato, preluding Christianity, a sort of acceptance of nature and life, which will not exist among his successors the Fathers of Christianity, when the three divine terms of the series which joins heaven to earth will have taken on such consistency for their faith, and will have in their eyes such an anthropomorphic reality, that this celestial light will no longer let them see the earth as anything other than a dark dungeon from which they will be in a hurry to escape, especially when, joining Stoicism to Platonism, they will have adopted from the Stoics the idea of the coming end of the world.

Plato, I repeat, on the contrary, turns all this theology to the perfection of nature and life. Is this a contradiction in his case? We do not believe so; for, despite the clouds that his writings leave us on this point, it is certain that he admitted at the same time the Pythagorean opinion of metempsychosis and successive existences. Consequently, his theology in no way led him to that reversal of the world into which the Stoics and the Christians rushed.

In any case, one only has to glance at his works to see that his doctrine is always for him a sort of introduction to practical life. In his eyes, the highest good is something inaccessible to human reason; we strive for it, we must strive for it, we strive only for it in the midst of our greatest errors: but we can strive for it and we must strive for it only through the world. It is in the world that the scattered rays of this Beauty are reflected, which we seek by virtue of the very constitution of our being, which is essentially and solely an aspiration. It is there, it is in earthly objects, that Love, the celestial emission of celestial Beauty, seizes us, inflames us, and incites us to live, that is to say, to advance, from aspiration to aspiration, towards the highest good, towards God. Who can tell us that this pilgrimage can suddenly be ended? Who can think that we can cross in a single leap the infinite distance that separates us from our goal? Unable to grasp the good in unity, we must therefore seek it in diversity and contingency. All the finite manifestations of the supreme good have analogy with it, without being the good itself. These manifestations are the ideas of the good that we gather from objects; these are the rays of beauty which, by a kind of chemistry, we release from these objects for our advancement. We must therefore attach ourselves to what we can discover of true good, and make our profit from it: but to want to immediately attain it would be madness and suicide.

It is in this way that Plato appears to us, in antiquity, as the greatest master of sociability. He starts from dogma and the fall, it is true; but he seems rather the supporter of a successive perfection than of an instant salvation. He does not reject the world, since he tirelessly seeks divine beauty in it. He wants to equip man, for his journey towards the goal that attracts him, with virtues to escort and support him: but what are these virtues, of which he composes Virtue? It is the spirit of science and intelligence (σοφία, φρόνησις), courage and constancy (ἀνδρεία), temperance (σωφροσύνη), and probity or justice (δικαιοσύνη). Our sciences are therefore infinitely respectable in his eyes, since they are emanations of divine beauty, and without them we cannot advance towards the supreme good. Social life is therefore one of the paths to our perfection, since in one respect we can only elevate ourselves to the supreme good through justice. It is thus that science, art and politics draw, according to Plato, their reason for being from the very idea of the supreme good, which is their goal. As for art, the identification that it always makes between the beautiful and the good is too

well known for us to insist on this point; and as for politics, the moral life of each man was so linked, for him, to civil life, that he says[18] that he who, with the help of philosophy, has kept himself pure from injustice and impiety, has nevertheless not arrived at the highest degree, if he has not been able to live in a well-constituted state.

When Platonism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism, these three great solutions to the question posed by Socrates, had been largely developed, the work of Greece was accomplished.[19]

Then Christianity came. It made a mixture of Platonism and Stoicism. It adopted Plato's metaphysics and Zeno's ethics. This is not the place to explain how this mixture came about, how this alliance was necessary, useful, providential: it is enough for us that the fact is incontestable.

Like the Stoics, the Christians rejected nature and life; like them, they believed themselves thrown into the world to *endure and abstain*. But while the Stoics found their refuge in themselves, the Christians, having realized that Word whose scattered rays Plato had sought in nature, bowed before this divinized Word. Then not only nature, but man disappeared; Grace was substituted everywhere. The Stoics had already substituted human virtue for nature; the Christians substituted divine action for the virtue of man. Thus Nature was completely abolished, abolished before man, abolished in man.

But in vain did the ancient civilization, in vain did the Barbarians consent to this complete sacrifice of nature. The anathema brought against it by Christianity was exaggerated and false: the sentence did not hold. Nature and life outlived the judgment of Christianity, and then we saw the doctrine of Epicurus reappear.

Today the battle is between Epicureanism, which sometimes calls itself deism, sometimes declares itself atheist and materialist, and a degenerate

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[18] *Republic*, book VI.

[19] We leave aside here, and for good reason, the works of Aristotle and his disciples. However great Aristotle may have been, his role is quite different from that of Plato, Epicurus, and Zeno. Aristotle did not have a particular and fundamental opinion on the fundamental question of philosophy. Aristotle is par excellence the maker of instruments of philosophy, if one can express it thus; he perfected dialectics, he organized logic, he opened widely all the roads of science; he was as greatly creative as it is given to a man to be. But on the question which concerns us, he took no decisive attitude. Whatever may have been said, Aristotle, not having separated himself from his master Plato on the essential point, could rightly be linked to Plato by the Platonists.

Christianity, which no longer dares to condemn nature and life, and shamefully seeks to make do with the earth.

§ VIII. — *Of the sovereign good.*

We have just seen that all Greek Philosophy and Christianity after it were a deduction from the question of happiness, or, as the ancients said, of the supreme good, of the *sovereign good*.

Voltaire, who came into the world to criticize the entire previous tradition of the human race, understood nothing of this denomination of the *sovereign good*, which is nevertheless equivalent to the very question of philosophy. He believed that the ancients meant by this a state of perfect happiness; he believed that the Stoics, for example, boasted of being insensitive and invulnerable; he did not understand that one could bring the resources of virtue into play in a question of pleasant or painful sensations. In a word, everything in this great attempt of the various Greek philosophies seemed to him completely *absurd*. "Well-being is rare," he said; "could not the sovereign good in this world be regarded as supremely chimerical?" The Greek philosophers discussed this question at length, as usual. Can you imagine, my dear reader, seeing beggars reasoning over the philosopher's stone? The sovereign good! What a word! It would have been as good as asking what the sovereign blue is, or the sovereign stew, the sovereign walking, the sovereign reading, etc. Everyone puts his good where he can, and has as much as he can, in his own way, and in very small measure."[20]

It must be admitted that Voltaire never showed himself more superficial. What is your condition in this life? With what eye should we regard the goods and evils that are encountered in it? From the answer we give ourselves to this question, a certain philosophical or religious conviction is born in us, which constitutes us in the presence of these goods and these evils, never abandons us afterwards, and serves us to bear the former and to enjoy the latter properly. Without this conviction, we are only unreasonable children; we are, as Fontenelle says, abandoned to chance or to the action of Providence. With this conviction, on the contrary, we are men; we have within us a principle of action, a point of support, other than our passions, to react on our passions and on the external world. This is the difference between a man who has a religion or a philosophy, which is the same thing, and a man who is deprived of them. Is it any wonder that the whole work of humanity has consisted in the construction of various doctrines on the sovereign good?

Let us therefore leave aside Voltaire's banter and summarize in a few lines the tradition of the human race.

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[20] *Philosophical Dictionary*.

On this question: What is our condition in this life? And how should we behave in it with respect to the goods and evils that are encountered there?

PLATO replies: We must live this life, be interested in this life, but in order to be reborn.

EPICURUS: Live, accept life, without thinking of being reborn.

ZENO: Not to be interested in this life, in a way not to live; but to be from this life a free force, a freedom, to make oneself God, absolute power, to completely conquer Destiny, to emancipate oneself, to free oneself, quite certain that after this life the chain to the world is forever broken.

SAINT PAUL, developed by SAINT AUGUSTINE: Not to be interested in this life, not to live; to think, like Plato, that it is a state contrary to the original nature of man and, like Zeno, that this chain will not last long and will not occur again; but while Zeno seeks his Savior in himself, to seek him only in God, that is to say in this Wisdom of which Plato speaks and which he recognizes as having its real existence in God, in this Word of which this same Plato spoke so often, and which was truly incarnate in Jesus.

The means indicated by these various philosophies are in accordance with the various goals which they assign to us.

PLATO tells us: Love, seeking God in your love.

EPICURUS: Love yourself.

ZENO: Abstain.

SAINT PAUL: Love only God.

"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."[21]

To *love*, then, is the means equally indicated by Platonism, Epicureanism and Christianity. Indeed, our life being, as we have seen, only an aspiration, we are forced to love and to attach ourselves to something. Stoicism, attaching itself to nothing, had to disappear. It was necessary, if one did not want to love the world and creatures, to love God; and this is what Christianity did, by turning exclusively to this divine Beauty that Plato had represented as the goal towards which we tend, even unknowingly, in all our pursuits of happiness, and as the eternal source of Love.

Montesquieu placed the destruction of Stoicism among the misfortunes of the human race.[22] He believed the Stoics were *born for society*. "There has never been," he said, "a doctrine whose principles were more worthy of man, and

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[21] *Epistle to the Corinthians*, ch. x, v. 31.

[22] *Spirit of the Laws*, book XXIV.

more suited to forming good people. It only exaggerated those things in which he has greatness, the contempt for pleasures and pain. It alone knew how to make citizens, it alone made great men, it alone made great emperors." Montesquieu judged Stoicism by some Stoics. True at the beginning, Stoicism soon becomes an error. Its principle, that we must aspire to be a free force, is true; but its claim, that we must be an entirely free force, destroys at that very moment all the goodness of its principle. The fundamental error of Stoicism is to have exaggerated the effort we must make, so that, believing we have done nothing until we have achieved complete emancipation, we thereby destroy all connection with life and the world. To be a Stoic and to take a real interest in the world was an inconsistency. Some great men, no doubt, committed this happy inconsistency, and, having endeavored to make themselves Gods, regarded, as Montesquieu says, this sacred Spirit that they believed to be within themselves as a kind of favorable Providence, which was to watch over the human race. But, once again, this was an inconsistency, which the theoreticians of the sect never committed. This doctrine taught nothing as the goal of our love; it therefore had no solution to life. Why be a force, a freedom, a God? Is it to act on the world? But you can only be this by completely detaching yourself from the world. So there is no solution. Why live? Why breathe? Why does this world continue to exist, this world, a bad joke of Destiny? So Stoicism taught disdain for society, contempt for life, suicide, and the end of the world.

The Epicurean solution could be taken in two ways. Epicurus tells us to love ourselves, and to accept the laws of Nature. But how shall we love ourselves? Is it by seeking pleasant sensations, or by avoiding painful sensations? The first way was that of the Cyrenaic school; the second was more particularly that of Epicurus. Aristippus, a hundred years before Epicurus, had taught and practiced this crude Epicureanism, which consists in seeking pleasure wherever one believes to find it. But it is evident that this is not a philosophy. To have as one's sole principle the pursuit of pleasure is to plunge oneself not only into the crowd of men who act in this way, not being aware of what life truly is, but even into the crowd of animals who obey entirely the prescriptions of Nature. You seek pleasure, you say; but if you are enough of a philosopher to have reflected that life is only a continual aspiration and that the present, so to speak, does not exist, you must be quite sure of never encountering it; you will always desire and regret it. You want to exploit creatures for the benefit of your egoism: but, if you are perfectly egotistical, you will have no pleasure in this exploitation; and if you are not egotistical, it will happen, in this relationship, that it will be the creatures who will possess you and who will make you suffer. The conceited Aristippus may well say: "I possess Lais, without her possessing me," one can

affirm that this is a lie, and that she possesses him or that he does not possess her.

Epicurus was far from this way of seeking happiness. He deeply despised Aristippus and his school. He defined good as *fleeing evil*. In a passage quoted by Plutarch, he says that "the nature of good is generated by fleeing from evil and by the memory we retain of it; that good lies in remembering that one has been such and such a case has occurred; that what gives an inestimable and incomparable joy is to know that one has escaped a great evil. It is in this that happiness truly consists; it is therefore this that we must aim at; it is on this that we must stop, without wandering in vain from side to side."[23] Far from regarding the world as a cup of pleasure where one could only intoxicate oneself without respite, Epicurus and his true disciples had rather as a principle that our life should consist only of ourselves to cure pain. Pleasure for them was not pleasure, but a remedy; and one of them, Metrodorus, said that unfortunate accidents so filled the whole fabric of nature and life, that nature would not know where to put good and joy if it did not first dislodge pain. Also the true sect of Epicurus made wisdom consist in knowing how to find deep rest sheltered from all the winds and waves of the world. This is what Lucretius so admirably expressed, when he speaks of this return to ourselves and this selfish pleasure that we experience when from the top of a rock we consider the raging sea and ships about to sink:

> Suave, mari magno, turbantibus æquora ventis,
> E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem:
> Non quia vexari quemquam est jucunda voluptas,
> Sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.
> Suave etiam belli certamina magna tui
> Per campos instructa, tua sine parte pericli.
> Sed nihil dulcius est bene quam munita tenere
> Edita doctrina sapientum templa serena,
> Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre
> Errare, atque viam palantes quærere vitæ,
> Certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,
> Noctes atque dies niti præstante labore,
> Ad summas emergere opes, rerumque potiri.
> O miseras hominum mentes! o pectora caeca!
> Qualibus in tenebris vitæ, quantisque periclis
> Degitur hoc ævi, quodcunque est! Nonne videre
> Nil aliud sibi Naturam latrare nisi ut cum

[23] Plutarch, *That One Cannot Live Happily Following Epicurus*.

Corpore sejunctus dolor absit, mente fruatur
Jucundo sensu, cura semota metuque.[24]

Epicureanism is usually thought of as the doctrine of pleasure: nothing could be further from the truth, as far as Epicurus is concerned. The true doctrine of Epicurus was, on the contrary, very sad. Contentment was sought there, it is true, but a completely negative contentment, if I may put it that way. It was a matter of not being unhappy, of fleeing agitation, worries, anxieties, all occasions of suffering. *Hide your* life was the proverb of the Epicureans. Their maxim was not to interfere in public affairs. The pleasure of the senses was considered by them as a necessity, and as the result of the needs that nature gives us. But far from maintaining his passions by the idea that this pleasure was in itself a good, the wise man should only tend to diminish this necessity, and to live more and more in peace, sheltered from passions as sheltered from the world. Calm with a certain contentment, based on the awareness of not suffering and of having escaped countless dangers, is therefore, ultimately, Epicurus's sovereign good. Thus Plutarch exclaims: “O the great happiness and the great pleasure which these people enjoy, rejoicing in the fact that they endure no harm, that they feel no worry, nor suffer any pain!” and he tries to show them that this kind of flat calm in which they settle is not a very desirable thing: “Plato,” he says, “did not want people to esteem deliverance from sadness and boredom as pleasure, but to regard it only as the first rough sketch of a painting, a sort of mixture of white and black in which nothing drawn would yet appear. But there are people who, rising from the bottom to the middle, for want of knowing well what the bottom is and what the middle is, consider that the middle is the summit and the end, as do Epicurus and Metrodorus, who define the nature and substance of well-being as flight and deliverance from evil, and rejoice in the joy of slaves or captive prisoners, who have been taken from

[24] “It is sweet to contemplate from the shore the waves stirred up by the storm and the peril of an unfortunate person they are about to engulf. Not that one takes pleasure in the misfortune of others; but because the sight of the evils one does not experience is consoling. It is sweet still, sheltered from danger, to wander one's gaze over two great armies drawn up on the plain. But of all spectacles the most agreeable is to consider, from the pinnacle of philosophy, from the height of this fortress raised by the reason of the wise, the scattered mortals straying in the pursuit of happiness, disputing the palm of genius or the chimera of birth, and submitting night and day to the most painful labors, to rise to fortune or greatness. Unhappy humans! blind hearts! in the midst of what darkness, and to what perils you expose these few moments of your life! Listen to the cry of Nature. What does she demand of you? A body free from pain; a soul free from terrors and worries.” (From the Lagrange translation.)

prison and unchained, who consider it a great good that they are washed and oiled after they have been well whipped and torn with scourges, and who moreover never tried or knew what pure, clean and liberal joy is, not scabbed over; for if scabies, itching of the flesh and chastisement of the eyes are bad and annoying things that nature rejects, it does not follow that scratching one's skin and rubbing one's eyes are good and happy things; nor, if superstitiously fearing the gods and always being in anguish and fear of what is said about the underworld is bad, one must not infer that, in order to be exempt and delivered from it, one is immediately blessed or very joyful." This criticism of true Epicureanism is admirably accurate. The tranquility in which Epicurean claimed to place man was in fact, I repeat, entirely negative. Therefore Epicureanism was never able to maintain it; and this is so true that what is commonly understood by this word is rather the doctrine of Aristippus and the Cyrenaic school, than that of Epicurus. Horace himself, who so deeply understood the philosophical doctrine of his master, only made it poetic by tinting it with Aristippianism and voluptuousness. The *carpe diem* returns constantly under his pen. For him, it is not only a question of satisfying the prescriptions of nature, but of calling them up and savoring them through ever-renewed desires. Epicurus wanted to stay in place: he did not want to go up the torrent like Zeno; he did not want to blindly give himself over to it like Aristippus; he did not believe, like Plato, that this torrent, aided by our efforts, could lead us to the end of a journey. No, he wanted to remain motionless, to receive each wave and let it pass; then came death, which ended the exercise of the wise man. But his wise man, who plays with the wave in this way, who claims to have only skill, who wants neither to resist nor to steer, is, however strong the torrent may be, carried along unwittingly by the wave. Devoid of an ideal with Epicurus, one insensibly becomes accustomed to regarding pleasure as a good, and not as a cure for evil; one no longer waits for it, but seeks it; one no longer obeys nature by reason, but avidly gives oneself over to one's inclinations; one desires them, and one abandons oneself to them. The slope is inevitable. The deep cause of this is that our life is a continual aspiration, and that we cannot consequently resist, without a point of support, the force that carries us along. Epicureanism must therefore turn either to a narrow egoism, or to sensualism; the maxim of Epicurus, *Love yourself*, was bound to turn, for every naturally cold man, into selfish prudence full of emptiness and boredom, and, for every naturally passionate man, into unruly love of creatures. This is what happened, and this is what will always happen.

Platonism also opened two different roads. *Love God*, says Plato, love Beauty, the celestial Goodness, from which you came and to which you return. If you do not love this goal, you will seek your happiness in vain in creatures: you will

never find sustenance for your soul; for your soul can only be nourished by the beautiful. This precept could be understood in two ways: either like the navigator, who follows his route with the stars and contemplates the sky to guide himself, or like the astronomer, who looks only at the sky and does not think of the earth. One could, as Plato indicates quite positively, seek the beautiful throughout the world, by means of the world, in the world, extract it from the world, and return it to the world. One could also consider only the object, God, infinite Beauty, believe that one could immediately put oneself in contact with it independently of the world, and call upon it so passionately that everything would disappear before this impulse. This is what Christianity did.

Plato's maxim was: "Strive to become as like God *as much as it is in your power:*" ὅμοιος θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν. The Christians removed this restrictive condition, which preserved nature and life. Like the Stoics, they wanted a prompt, rapid, instantaneous Salvation. They said to the world, like the wise Seneca: Non placet. *Liceat eo reverti unde venio*.[25]

In this, we believe, Christianity has moved profoundly away from Platonism.

It also departed from it profoundly on another point, and this deviation was the consequence of the first. Plato had said: We have two means of returning to God, Reason and Love. The Christians, separating themselves from the world, had to neglect free will, and recognize only Grace. This is the doctrine of Saint Paul and Saint Augustine; and, whatever effort has been made to preserve the principle of free Reason, it is the true doctrine of Christianity.

Socrates, Plato, Zeno, Epicurus, and the two great doctors of Christianity, Saint Paul and Saint Augustine, are therefore, in summary, the successive terms of the development of the question of happiness. It is a consistent line of reasoning. Socrates begins philosophical antiquity for our West, which Saint Augustine ends by opening the religion of the Middle Ages. This sublime dialogue lasted ten centuries, and yet one could thus formulate it in a few words:

SOCRATES (450 years before Jesus Christ).

Let the sophists be silent. Let the scholars stop being arrogant and piling up foolish hypotheses to explain the world. Let the artists know that art without a goal is only childish, if not poisonous. The only knowledge worthy of man, that which will give science and art a true destination, is the knowledge of what is *good* and *best*, and this knowledge can only be acquired by the study of ourselves. Γνῶθι σεαυτὸν .

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[25] *Epist.* LXX.

PLATO.

From the study of ourselves it results that man is a force originally free, but currently united with matter, which appears to be coeternal with God. We tend to return to our source by the natural effect of life, which is an aspiration, a continual and endless love; but we can only truly return there by attaching ourselves to the rays of divine Beauty perceptible to us. It is therefore towards God that science, and art, and all human life must tend.

O Greeks, you are children. I have traveled among those who gave you all that you possess of knowledge, and this is what your teachers have taught me.

ZENO.

If, as Plato says, man is originally a free force, why would he not free himself at that very moment, and resume his true nature, by rationally separating himself from the world?

EPICURUS.

You are dreamers. I will be the first of the wise.[26] Do you not see that you are under the yoke of Nature, which created you in one of its infinite combinations? Therefore, all wisdom consists in obeying Nature in its inevitable prescriptions, and in sheltering oneself from its blows, as one would do with a fiery animal, if one wanted to use it.

SAINT PAUL.

I feel free and enslaved at the same time. I am carnal, sold to sin. I do not do the good I love, but the evil I hate. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?

It will be the grace of God, through Jesus Christ Our Lord.[27]

PELAGIUS.

At least we remain free in something; and if we must tend only towards God, at least is it by virtue of a force that is in us, by virtue of our freedom and by our own merit.

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[26] "Epicurus, the only human who had dared to call himself wise." (Cicero, *De Finib. boni et mali*, book II.) Lucretius spoke of Epicurus absolutely as one speaks of revelators:

> Qui gonas hamanum ingenio saperavit, et omne
> Praestinxit stelas, exortas ati atherius sol.

[27] *Epistle to the Romans*, chapter VII.

SAINT AUGUSTINE.

No. Sin has invaded everything, and has left us nothing. The Love that saves us is not our own; we have no trace of it ourselves, no vestige; it is given to us by God, when he pleases and as he pleases. We are free in nothing.

O my God! You command me to love you: give me what you command me, and command me what you want.[28]

§ IX . — *On the progress of humanity in relation to happiness.*

I know of nothing more profound in the poetry of our time than a few pages of Edgar Quinet in his *Ahasverus*. It is in the Third Day, entitled *Death*. The scene takes place in the cathedral of Strasbourg; the dead come out of their tombs to complain of not seeing the arrival of this Paradise in which they had put so firmly their hope of happiness. Since I have just made speak, using their own formulas, the five or six men whose controversy, continued from echo to echo through ten centuries, gave birth to the religion of the Middle Ages, I cannot help but faithfully contrast this complaint that the poet attributes to humanity, accusing of disappointment the theory of Plato transformed by Christianity:

CHORUS OF DEAD KINGS.

"O Christ! O Christ! Why have you deceived us? O Christ! Why have you lied to us? For a thousand years, we have been rolling in our vaults, under our chiseled flagstones, to seek the door of your heaven. We find only the web that the spider stretches over our heads. Where are the sounds of your angels' viols? We hear only the sharp saw of the worm that gnaws at our tombs. Where is the bread that should have nourished us? We have nothing to drink but our tears. Where is your father's house? Where is his starry canopy? Is it the dried-up spring that we dig with our nails? Is it the polished flagstone that we strike with our heads, day and night? Where is the flower of your vine, which should have healed the wound in our hearts? We have found only vipers crawling on our flagstones; we have seen only snakes that vomit their venom on our lips. O Christ! why have you deceived us?

CHORUS OF WOMEN.

"O Virgin Mary! Why have you deceived us? When we awoke, we looked around for our children, our grandchildren, and our beloved ones, who were to smile at us in the morning from niches of azure. We found only brambles, faded mallows, and nettles that sank their roots into our heads.

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[28] *Confessions*.

CHORUS OF CHILDREN.

“Ah! How dark it is in my cradle of stone! Ah! How hard my cradle is! Where is my mother to lift me up? Where is my father to rock me? Where are the angels to give me my robe, my beautiful robe of light? My father, my mother, where are you? I am afraid, I am afraid in my cradle of stone...

EMPEROR CHARLEMAGNE.

“...Christ! Christ! Since you have deceived me, give me back my hundred monasteries hidden in the Ardennes; give me back my golden bells, baptized with my name, my reliquaries and my chapels, my banners spun by Bertha's spinning wheel, my silver-gilt ciboria, and my kneeling people from Roncevaux to the Black Forest...

CHORUS OF WOMEN.

“Give us back our sighs and our tears.

CHORUS OF CHILDREN.

“Give us back our crowns of flowers; give us back our baskets of roses that we threw on the priests’ path at Corpus Christi!...

POPE GREGORY.

"And I, what have I to do now with my double cross and my triple crown? The dead gather around me so that I may give to each one the portion of nothingness that is due to them. Woe! Paradise, hell, purgatory, were only in my soul; the hilt and the blade of the sword of the archangels blazed only in my breast; there were no infinite heavens except those that my genius itself folded and unfolded to shelter itself in its desert. But perhaps the hour will strike when the door of Christ will roll on its hinges. No, no! Gregory of Soana, you have waited long enough! Your feet have dried up striking the flagstones; your eyes have melted in their sockets gazing into the dust of your vault; your tongue has worn itself out in your mouth calling: Christ! Christ! and your hands have remained empty. Yes, they are still empty, still empty as before! Look, look, my good lords; it is the truth: see that all the dead hide their wounds from me, that all the martyrs put their wounds in the shadows. I cannot heal any of them. I bring in return a web spun by the spider to those who gave their crown to Christ; I bring, in the hollow of my hand, a pinch of ashes to those who awaited a kingdom of stars in the ocean of the firmament.”

John Paul, the German poet, had already had the same idea. In a kind of sublime dream, he saw Jesus descend to earth at night and awaken the dead in their tombs to say to them: “I was deceived, forgive me; I went to my Father, and did not find him. There is no Heaven as I believed, and the Paradise that I

preached to you does not exist." Quinet preferred to put the complaint and the revolt into the mouths of men themselves. This complaint, I repeat, is as magnificent as it is painful. But what we would like to hear even better would be a song of justification to respond to this complaint. How beautiful it would be to see the poet, appearing *alive* in the midst of these dead, explaining to them their myth, which they have not understood, and exclaiming, like Demosthenes to the Greeks of Chaeronea: No, you have not failed; your faith has not been deceived, your hope of happiness has not been and will not be in vain!... But, alas! when will the theological poet of our time come? We are still at the point of complaint.

Must we then, like Voltaire, say that, philosophers or Christians, disciples of Epicurus or Zeno, Plato or Saint Paul, all those who have sought the *sovereign good* have sought in vain the philosopher's stone?

In seeking the philosopher's stone, chemistry was discovered; in seeking the highest good, humanity was perfected.

Every man who has sought the highest good, whether with Plato, or with Epicurus (I mean the true Epicurus), or with Zeno, or with Christianity, has been, in varying degrees, on the path to the perfection of human nature. Every man who has not sought the highest good, by following one or other of these directions, has been on the path to the degradation of human nature.

Christians said: "Outside of the Church there is no salvation." It is certain that outside the path of philosophical and religious perfection, man abandons his human nature and his destiny, to give himself over to chance and regress to the condition of animals.

So see; the whole of society and all the virtues have sprung from this search for the sovereign good; all the rules of morality derive from it, and derive only from it, so much so that, this point neglected, I defy you to name either a virtue or a rule of morality that subsists.

Of the four solutions we have just indicated, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Platonism, and Christianity, the least fruitful in virtues and rules of morality is, in our eyes, Epicureanism: and yet how many virtues it already teaches!

Once again, I speak of the Epicureanism of Epicurus, of that system of prudence and foresight, partly reproduced in the eighteenth century and in our own day by the truly respectable portion of modern Epicureanism. I do not speak of the preachings of voluptuousness and thoughtless abandonment to all the chances of life, with no other guide than sensation; this, I repeat again, is a delirium, and not a philosophy.

Epicureanism, by teaching us to love ourselves, leads us to respect ourselves. It teaches us to limit our desires. It strives to show us the consequences of our

actions, and thereby prevents us from giving in to fate. It is a very sad philosophy, no doubt, to restrict life to the present without past or future, like an accident between two infinite sleeps. But when we see that those who have most deeply explored the human condition from this point of view have succeeded in teaching a pure morality, we cannot help but recognize that this philosophy has been one of the great paths to the general improvement of humanity.

The goods that truly came from Epicureanism relate more particularly to the improvement of our material life. The basis of this system is choice, αἱρησις as Epicurus said, what we call today foresight. From this resulted directly a certain arrangement of the pleasures that we share with animals. By sanctifying, so to speak, the care of material life, Epicureanism was indirectly the cause of this multitude of improvements that human intelligence has found in the properties of matter. If the life that we share with animals had not met with a reasonable and, so to speak, religious justification, human intelligence would have rushed even more than it did along the purely contemplative path down which Christianity plunged with such ardor. It is evident that all of the experimental sciences, which consist in discovering the will of Nature, in order to divert its bad effects and reap the good ones, have at bottom a certain affinity with Epicureanism; thus they have always sought in it the justification of their efforts. And let no one say that without this philosophy, we would have known how to make all these discoveries, simply because they were useful to us. If there had not been a doctrine that presented utility under a moral aspect, humanity would have absolutely condemned these researches; for the law of humanity is to be moral.

A sublime effort towards liberty, Stoicism has given birth to goods of another kind for humanity. With Epicurus, it was a question of avoiding evils by obeying nature as an intelligent slave; with Zeno, it was necessary to be free. Now, chained by nature, chained by society, man could then only be free by taking refuge in a sublime indifference. Twenty centuries have passed; see if the revolutions of the world have not brought about progress in liberty in our natural and social condition, and if this aspiration to be free, the source of Stoicism, has not been realized. Man has freed himself from man and from nature. He will free himself more and more from man and from nature. Man will become more and more equal to man, and nature will obey man more and more. We are today almost as powerful over nature as the all-powerful Jupiter of Olympus of the Greeks; and the time is approaching when Epictetus will no longer be in any way the slave of other men.

But of these various solutions, the one that has had the most influence on the world is undoubtedly Plato's Idealism. It was truly the spark of life that animated

our West. Like the statue of Pygmalion, where everything is marble until the moment of contact with divine love, the West remained without moral light until the revelation of Plato. It was Plato, so long nicknamed *the Divine*, who, happy interpreter of the earlier philosophy, was the first to bring down upon us the fire that makes us live.

When he had taught that the proper thing for man was not the satisfaction of the senses in the manner of animals, but that the proper thing for man was the satisfaction of an innate need for beauty and goodness, human morality became aware of itself. It was then truly for the first time that man in our West had his face turned towards heaven: *Os homini sublime dedit*. For the revelation of this attraction towards the beautiful was the revelation of what has been called Heaven.

Plato did not exclude science, we have said. On the contrary, the sciences were for him the incomplete, but accessible to man, realization of the human ideal. The known sciences thus received a new impetus from Idealism. Sciences almost unknown until then were born. In the womb of Plato was formed Aristotle, as strongly turned towards Virtue as his master. Aristotle engendered Alexander, that missionary of philosophy, so imbued with the ideal that the earth could neither satisfy nor contain him. Alexander transported Greece to Egypt, to its cradle. Then from Alexandria the hearth came to Rome, and all these Romans began to wonder towards which star humanity was marching.

Idealism, anthropomorphically realized by the Jews, produced Christianity. Then the whole West turned with such eagerness towards the ideal, that not only was the life we share with animals despised, but people believed they could immediately, and without the intermediary of this life, reunite with divine Beauty. Hence monasticism and the Christianity of the Middle Ages.

When a new continent is discovered, it must be explored and cleared; we see, with a kind of sublime frenzy, a kind of conqueror rushing forth, clearing a path for themselves in the heart of the wild nature, pioneers leading an uncultivated life where through them civilization must one day reign. How much more so, when the spiritual world began to be glimpsed, should one not eagerly rush to its search, and clear one's way with axe in hand! This was the role of Antony, Basil and Benedict, those sublime practitioners of Platonism interpreted by Saint Paul, Saint Athanasius and Saint Augustine.

But launched on this path, man needed the end of the world; people believed in it, and they expected it: the Gospel itself had predicted it for one or two generations. The end of the world did not come. Besides, the ideal had not captivated all men to the same degree; abstinence had not seduced them all; virginity, celibacy, had not invaded everything. From there, two worlds and two

Christianities: on one side the laity, and on the other the priests and monks; on the one hand the absolute doctrine of Saint Paul and Saint Augustine leading to complete detachment from the world, and on the other this same doctrine modified to accommodate itself to life. Saint Paul, as we have seen, had said: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all for the glory of God." The Church adopted this supreme precept of Love, it admitted it in all its rigor, and yet it rejected its rigor; it had two solutions. Did not the great doctor of the Middle Ages, Saint Thomas, carefully explain that it was enough to have God *virtually* as the object in our love of creatures.[29]

When St. Thomas, in the thirteenth century, explained St. Paul's precept in this way, it was because the ascendant period of idealistic Stoicism was over.

It was already in fact a return to Nature, an amendment to return to another interpretation of Platonism than this explanation. Also, in the thirteenth century, at the same time as this word is pronounced, we see the return of the sciences with Aristotle, the arts with the Crusades; and, as if Plato were to preside over this new phase as well as the first, ancient Platonism comes again to pose itself in Italy, as a rival, facing Christianity. This is the era of the Renaissance. We are emerging from the phase of absolute Christianity, which has and wants to have only God as its object. We still accept this doctrine, and yet we follow another road. We are shaped by Idealism, and yet we do not reject the earth. We have religion, and we admit science. We have the Gospel and the Fathers, and we introduce peripateticism into scholasticism. We have the hope of Paradise, and, in the meantime, painting seeks to realize divine figures on earth. People still believed in the heavenly Jerusalem when Leo X raised his temples and palaces to the heavens. It was at this time that the doctrine of the ideal produced its fruits in abundance. Science and art had received the illumination of baptism.

Thus Plato embraces the entire modern world with two universal bonds: charity and art. Our body is a network of intertwined arteries and veins; some carry blood to all our members, others return it to the heart. Thus charity and art: charity is the heart and the arteries, where the principle of life resides; art is the veins, which return to the heart a dark and often altered blood, which the heart vivifies.

How many artists have come out of Idealism! If Lucretius and Horace are sons of Epicurus, how much more numerous is the posterity of Plato! In his *Divine Comedy*, Dante tells that he had Virgil as his introducer into heaven. This is because Virgil is in fact a reflection of Plato, and a reflection that announces

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[29] *Q. Disp. De Charitate*, art. XI.

Christianity. But from Virgil to us, what slightly sublime monument of art is not imbued with Idealism?

Today the doctrine that rejected nature and life is overturned. The truths that gave it existence emerge from the broken envelope of myth, like the chrysalis from the cocoon in which it had wrapped itself. No more priests: today we are the lay people left alone, but the lay people raised to the condition of men who must have understood that the proper thing for man is to love the beautiful and the good, and to nourish his soul with them. The lesson of Plato must have been profitable, this lesson that Jesus repeated when he said: *Man does not live on bread alone*.

So, through Epicureanism, through Stoicism, through Platonism, and through Christianity, we have moved far away from the condition of animals. But, without philosophy, how would our life, I ask, differ from the life of animals?

Platonism has been the greatest motive for the moral improvement of man, and the most active instrument of sociability.

Stoicism has above all been the inner and energetic spring of the world's revolutions.

Epicureanism presided over the industrial improvement of humanity.

The first mainly considered our relationships with our fellow men and with God.

The second wanted above all to improve ourselves.

The third dealt more directly with external nature.

The real and general improvement, however, has not taken place through any one of these systems exclusively, but through all of them. The general result has been the improvement of ourselves through ideality and through power over external nature; which includes the incomplete formulas of these three systems.

It took the alliance of Stoicism and Platonism in Christianity, that is to say a supreme contempt for the earth, united with charity, to emancipate women and slaves, and to civilize the Barbarians. It is by rising towards absolute chastity, absolute purity, absolute independence, absolute isolation of humanity; it is by renunciation of the world, celibacy and convents, that the human type was first perfected. But let this consideration not make us forget that Epicureanism was the counterweight to the excess of Platonic Stoicism. It was Epicureanism that said to proud Idealism, which threatened to destroy the earthly basis of our existence: You will go no further. It was Epicureanism that sanctified that kind of devotion to natural laws, the holy source of so many discoveries, and from which resulted industrial power, which must one day serve as a submissive

slave to Platonic ideality. It is already the alliance of this power over nature, with the feelings of sociability stemming from Platonism, that means that today we see nations of thirty million men living in a certain equality, while the ancient nations only ever knew the caste system.

Let us therefore bow before Philosophy; for we have received everything from it.

§ X . — *Conclusion.*

Let us conclude.

It is a question of man and the kind of happiness that suits him; it is not with the life of animals that we have to concern ourselves. Now what is man?

We have seen (§ VI) that the permanent state of our being is aspiration. Emergence from a previous state and immersion in a future state, this is our life, from our birth until our death. What is really in us is not the being modified by pleasure or pain; it is the being that emerges from this modification and calls for another. We are, so to speak, never in the fact of modification by pleasure or pain; we are always on this side and beyond it. This is why the present, as they say, does not exist, and why we seem to know only the past and the future.

So all our happiness consists essentially and solely in the *state* to which we aspire.

This is what I would like to call the tone of our life.

I do not deny that successively experienced sensations influence this tone of our soul; but what I do deny is that they constitute our *self*, our personality, our life.

Our *self*, our personality, our true life consists essentially and solely, I repeat, in our mode of existence in passing from one situation to another, from one point to another.

When a moving object travels a distance, it passes successively from point to point, and these points serve to measure its speed. But its speed is something other than what is used to measure it. The medium through which it passes can influence this speed by slowing it down. But as long as there is force remaining in the moving object, this force will determine its speed. Similarly, our being is what lasts after the sensation, and not what is in the sensation.

It is this *state* of aspiration that properly constitutes man: it is therefore this state that we should strive to perfect. Making ourselves happy is therefore not directly a matter of gathering around us what we believe to be good, and removing from it what we believe to be evil; but it is, above all, making our fundamental state, what I called earlier the tone of our being, increasingly happy.

This is what we should consider directly. Pleasures and goods of all kinds are at most only a means of indirectly perfecting this fundamental situation of our soul.

This state of aspiration is really what distinguishes men from each other, what separates them by insurmountable barriers, what makes them different, what constitutes the *self*, the personality of beings.

Nothing, then, in our opinion, is more childish than to compare the condition of men in terms of happiness by taking, in order to weigh their various destinies, the pleasures and pains, the goods and evils that befall them. Everything lies in the nature of their soul. Pleasures and pains, goods and evils have no absolute and constant value.

For the same reason, it is childish to ask whether the man of the nineteenth century is happier than the man of the eighteenth, or than the man of the Middle Ages, or than the man who lived in antiquity; or whether the inhabitants of Asia are happier than the inhabitants of Europe.

Finally, for the same reason, it is absurd to seek, in relation to happiness, terms of comparison between the existence of animals and that of men.

From one being to another, the *self*, the personality is different.

When, in geometry, you seek the relationship between lines of different orders, you arrive at the incommensurable; if you go further and imagine seeking, for example, the relationship between lines and surfaces, or between surfaces and solids, you arrive at imaginary roots.

A first point, therefore, is that we must reject the habit prevailing today of reasoning on the subject of happiness by deduction from the false system of compensations. Nothing is more capable of weakening our souls and of brutalizing us than to have always before our eyes that Providence owes us all the same sum of goods and evils, and that if our share seems inferior to us, we have the right to complain; nothing is more miserable than to thus make our being solely dependent on external things; nothing is more likely to make us envious and selfish; nothing is more likely consequently to cause our unhappiness. This so-called philosophy of the eighteenth century would make us nothing but cowards and children.

That the common people should thus consider happiness as depending solely on external things that happen to us is understandable; but that philosophers should have legitimized this prejudice of the common people with their authority is inconceivable: it is as if scholars came to align themselves, without any reason, with the opinion of the common people on astronomical facts.

This doctrine of compensation necessarily led to the abandonment of all virtue. For, happiness thus confused with sensation, what remained to be perfected in us? Nothing. Everything depended solely on Fate and Jupiter's two barrels.

On the contrary, by grasping the truth, we regain virtue. Indeed, since our being, instead of consisting in sensations, is what constantly passes through them and survives them, our happiness does not depend solely on external things. Philosophy returns, and with it Virtue, which is the continuation of its lessons.

But, if we must abandon the doctrine of sensation and compensations, certainly it will not be to fall back into the hollow chimeras of current psychology.

The small reaction that was made against the eighteenth century fifteen years ago, in the name of psychology, was unfortunately very insufficient. We have just, it seems to me, grasped what is so difficult to understand with psychologists, the notion of the *self*. We have deduced it from the very feeling of life. Psychologists have, from the beginning, based it on the will, which is an error. If they had studied life more deeply, they themselves would have understood the *self* better, this arcane of all their science, and they would have made themselves understood. They were listened to, they did not know what to say to them, and yet their *self* was much mocked. There is no will in animals; of what then does the *self* of animals consist? When we do not exercise our will, when we abandon ourselves to sensation, when we fall into sleep, what becomes of our self? Psychologists have given reason to think that this *self* of which they spoke so much was only a chimera, opposed to the sensation preached by the eighteenth century.

It is not with this chimerical *self* of psychologists that we arm ourselves, I repeat, against the doctrine of sensation. It is to life that we appeal; it is life that we study. Our argument is based only on the permanence of our being after sensation, and outside of sensation.

But what are we to do with this permanent force within us, this force that aspires and always aspires? The common people, who are unaware of what life is, are not troubled by it. Like animals, they obey this force, passing from sensation to sensation, from desires to regrets, from disappointments to disappointments. Only they also follow, unwittingly, as if by higher prescriptions, what some of the men who, in all ages, have asked themselves the question that they do not ask themselves have taught them; and from this results what there is of morality in their actions. But the wise man is constantly asking himself this question.

What shall we do, then, I repeat, with this force which is within us, and whose very nature is to aspire without ceasing? With Plato, shall we turn this force towards God? And in this way, shall we stop, with the Platonists, at imperfect manifestations of absolute beauty? Or, with the Christians, shall we rush more immediately into the bosom of God himself? With Epicurus, on the contrary, will we attach ourselves to Nature? Like Epicurus himself, will we strive to calm, to restrain, to lull to sleep this force that aspires within us, and will we try to artificially procure for ourselves a sleep accompanied by a certain tranquil feeling of existence? Or, like his false disciples, will we deliberately give ourselves over to a voluptuousness which, we know, will constantly flee from us?

Strange thing! Much has been said in recent centuries about attraction; it has been sought to be the sole law of the world of matter. People have gone further, and have claimed to introduce this law into the moral world, as if the moral world, once subjected to attraction, were to take on that fixed and immobile position which, through an absurd prejudice, is attributed to physical nature. It is true that those who have spoken of generalizing in human society what they call Newton's discovery have never understood anything but appearances of the moral world, and it is still a sort of material attraction that they have sought to introduce into the moral world. But in reality, this system of attraction in the spiritual world has existed for many centuries. Long before it was imagined that the parts of matter gravitated toward one another, that the spheres of the heavens were centers of attraction for one another, and that groups of suns themselves gravitated toward unknown centers; long before the material world revealed itself to us in this aspect, the spiritual world was thus revealed to us. What is this attraction of which Plato speaks, under the name of Love, and which, according to him, brings us back to God? Did not Saint Augustine call Love *the weight of spiritual natures?*[30] All the immense works of Christianity on perfection have been nothing other than an application of this principle of attraction towards God.

But in recent centuries the return to Nature has brought about the renaissance of physical science, culminating in the discovery of the attraction of bodies. This truth has so dazzled our eyes that the spiritual world, which alone had occupied previous generations for so many centuries, has faded away for us, and we have suddenly fallen into the darkness of materialism. Will man never bear two truths at once?

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[30] *Confessions*, book XIII, ch. ix.

So today we are between two kinds of revelations: on the one hand the system of spiritual attraction, which tells us that we are a soul which must only tend towards God; and on the other the system of material attraction, which tells us that we are a body which must only tend towards matter.

To escape from this immense embarrassment, from this infinite contradiction which tears us apart and divides us, there is, it seems to us, only one way. It is to resort once again to the axiom of Socrates, and to study ourselves.

Rousseau, because he carried within him all the contradictory elements of a synthesis that his time was not able to achieve, once said: *The man who thinks is a depraved animal*. To do justice to his paradox, it was enough to ask him if, for the same reason, the animal who feels would not be a depraved vegetable. It is certain that we find the mineral in the plant, the plant in the animal, the animal in man. In some respects, the animal seems to us a being superimposed on the vegetable and the mineral, which are both in him. Man also seems to us a being superimposed on the animal, which is at the root of his existence. But in reality, is there in us a kind of purely material being, a kind of vegetative being, a kind of sensitive being, and a fourth rational being? No, no, assuredly. There is only one being, man.

When I consider an animal, I can indeed, by an effort of my thought, separate in it the faculties of the animal from the purely vegetative faculties that I find common to it with other beings that I call *plants*. But this is an abstraction of my mind; and in reality these two orders of faculties are so united in the animal that I would be very embarrassed to try make the demarcation: or rather the separation is impossible, because all the faculties of the plant have been, so to speak, transformed in the animal. What is a vegetable property in the vegetable has become an animal property in the animal. The animal, if I may speak thus, is an animalized plant, a plant metamorphosed into an animal. You will find by thought in the animal all that constituted the life of the vegetable, but transformed. Only, above all the properties of the vegetable a new faculty appears, the faculty of feeling. And immediately, this faculty, linking and mixing itself with all the faculties of the plants, the result is a being essentially different from the vegetable, and in which all the functions of the vegetable are metamorphosed. Will you, with the scalpel of your analysis, separate this new faculty from all the others; and, because it does not preside, in the first line, over the whole organization and all the functions, although it is mixed with them, will you say: “There is the animal; all the rest is plant”? That would be absurd. The animal is a new being, in which the vegetative life has been transformed; but it consists as much in this transformed vegetative life, although it is not

conscious of it as sensitive, as in sensitivity itself. I say that it is not conscious of itself as sensitive, but I affirm that it is conscious of itself as living. And, in fact, modify by illness, by iron or poison, this vegetative life that is in it, and immediately you will see sensations appear in him: therefore, in the regular and normal order, its very faculty of feeling was not only linked to this vegetative life, but founded on it and conscious of it in a certain mysterious way.

It is the same with man. Man today is perhaps further from the animal than the animal is from the vegetable. But man is not an animal on which is added some mysterious being called soul. Man is certainly a soul; but he is in his totality a soul united to a body, as Bossuet[31] says, that is to say, in him all the animal faculties have been transformed into human faculties.

The plant lived immobile through its roots; this was one of its properties. The animal moves to seek its subsistence: this is what its being partly consists of; this is what its life is partly devoted to. The plant breathed through its leaves, and its respiration was subject to two great alternatives, day and night. The most perfected animal, the most complicated in our eyes in its organization, still reproduces this phenomenon: its life, from its birth until its death, is revealed by a continual systole and diastole of the heart, and by a continual insufflation and expiration of air in its lungs. Respiration and the circulation of the blood are mixed in it with sensitivity, to give it a certain sense of existence. Its life, in this respect, is therefore still the transformation of a property of the plant; but, in the process, this property, from being vegetable, has become animal. It is the same with the need for reproduction. The plant, immobile, adorns itself with flowers through a secret need for love: the bird builds a nest through the same need. In a word, I defy anyone to cite to me either an act, a property or any mode of existence of the animal, the analogue of which is not found in the plant. Sensitivity itself, this characteristic property of the animal, is very apparent in some plants, and it is probable that it exists to an increasingly weakened degree in all. But even if one wanted to consider it as proper and special to animals, it would not follow that it alone really constituted their life; for it is indissolubly united in them with all the properties that they have in common with plants. So that their life is, if you will, a combination of sensitivity and vegetable life, but a combination in which one of the elements is as indispensable as the other. If you were to claim, by analysis, to strip the *animal* idea of all that it has in common analogically with the *vegetable* idea, you would completely destroy this idea; just as if you were to claim to preserve in the *animal* idea a single one of the properties of the *vegetable* intact and without metamorphosis, you would really

[31] *De la Connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même*.

not have an animal, but an absurd and impossible being, because it would be contradictory.

Well! This metamorphosis, which makes the life of the animal both so analogous and so essentially foreign to the life of the plant, is reproduced in the passage from animal to man. Man has reason over the animal, just as the animal had sensitivity over the plants. The animal is, so to speak, a sensitive plant; man is, so to speak, a rational animal. But, by the effect of sensitivity organized in particular apparatuses called *senses,* the animal is entirely different from the plant; and likewise, by the effect of reason, man is a being essentially different from the animal. In the animal all the functions and all the faculties of the plant were found again, and yet no longer existed, that is to say, they were transformed. Similarly, in man all the functions of the animal are found again, but transformed. The ancient definition, repeated from century to century: *Man is a rational animal*, should therefore not be understood as if one were saying that man is an animal plus reason, but in the sense that man is an animal transformed by reason.

We have already had occasion elsewhere to demonstrate that all metaphysicians had arrived, even under the influence of Christian prejudices, at recognizing this unity of our nature. We have quoted these admirable words of Bossuet: "The body is not a simple instrument applied from the outside, nor a vessel that the soul governs like a pilot. The soul and the body together form only a natural *whole*. Thus, in all our operations, we find something of the soul and something of the body; so that, in order to know ourselves, we must not only know how to distinguish, in each act, what belongs to one from what belongs to the other, but also note together how two parts of such different natures mutually assist each other. Without doubt, the understanding is not attached to a bodily organ whose movement it follows; but we must nevertheless recognize that we do not hear without imagining or without feeling; for it is true that, by a certain agreement between all the parts which compose man, the soul does not act without the body, nor the intellectual part without the sensitive part, etc."[32] We have also mentioned in this place the definition that the same Bossuet gives of the soul: *Intelligent substance born to live in a body and to be intimately united to it;* to which he adds: "The whole of man is included in this definition, which begins with what is best in him without forgetting what is least in him, and shows the union of the one and the other." We have also shown how much this definition of Bossuet is preferable to that of a blind and exaggerated spiritualism, to that of M. de Bonald, for example: *Man is an intelligence served by organs*. As much as the first is complete, the second is incomplete, and can

[32] *De la Connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même*.

consequently lend itself to error. One is from a wise man who thoroughly understands human nature, the relationship and the necessary interplay of the two substances that he believes he has the right to distinguish there, and who, while giving predominance to the greater, does not sacrifice the lesser; the other is from a braggart, who will be all the more embarrassed by the passivity of our nature, as he will have disdained the body more and exalted the sovereign power of the soul. Finally, we have proven, in the articles that we recall here,[33] the emptiness and absurdity of the new psychologists who, abstracting from the complex being *mind-body* what they call the *self*, and giving, by an inconceivable begging of the question, to this *self* thus abstracted all the properties that belong only to the complex being *mind-body*, then reason at their leisure, without ever realizing that they have taken for a solid basis the most chimerical and most false starting point.

Descartes, in a reply he made to Gassendi, had called it *flesh*. Gassendi ended his reply with these remarkable words: "By calling me *flesh*, you do not take away my *spirit*. You call yourself *spirit*, but you do not leave your *body*. You must therefore allow yourself to speak according to your genius. It is enough that, with God's help, I am not so much *flesh* that I am not still *spirit*, and that you are not so much *spirit* that you are not also *flesh*. So that neither you nor I are above nor below human nature. If you blush at humanity, I do not."

Mind-body, not a *mind* and a *body*, such is indeed human nature. "Man," says Pascal, "is neither angel nor beast."

Strange thing! This saying of Pascal has not yet been understood. We distinguish three kingdoms, the mineral kingdom, the vegetable kingdom and the animal kingdom; and we understand man in the animal kingdom. Then, suddenly changing our point of view, we recognize the spiritual nature of man, we give it a name, we call it *soul,* and there is another world. Man then appears to us sometimes as an animal, sometimes as a soul. The animal has its exclusive partisans; the soul also has its own. Some, considering man as an animal, reduce him by their precepts to the condition of animals; others, considering him as a kind of angel, teach him an impossible life and contrary to his nature. Hence two moralities equally absurd today and equally pernicious.

Is it not about time that we agree regarding this on some truth? For we have been divided for twenty-two centuries: on one side sixteen centuries, from Plato

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[33] These various articles on psychology are now reassembled and completed in the work entitled: REFUTATION OF ECLECTICISM, *Where the true definition of philosophy is exposed, and where the meaning, sequence, and sequence of the various philosophers since Descartes are explained;* 1 vol. 1839.

to the end of the Middle Ages, whose general tendency is spiritualist, and in opposition the six centuries of the modern era, whose general tendency is materialist.

This immense controversy has undoubtedly been necessary; but is it not time to conclude? Spiritualism and materialism have equally conquered and been conquered; both are right and both are wrong.

The materialists may say: *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*. We can always answer them with Leibniz: *Nisi ipse intellectus*.[34]

Spiritualists may advocate intelligence and reason; they will always be shown that this intelligence and reason are linked to the body, united with the body, formed and nourished by bodily sensations and needs, subject to the health of the body, to the life of the body, to nature, to the earth.

Man is neither a soul nor an animal. Man is an animal transformed by reason and united with humanity.

United with humanity: this second point of our definition would require developments which there is no space to make here. Let us be content to say that, just as the animal cannot exist without the environment in which its sensitivity is exercised, so man, a rational being, lives in a certain environment which is society, and whose more general name is humanity. Morality, politics, the sciences, the arts, are the various aspects that this environment presents to human reason and sensitivity; and it is man himself who, by the successive development of his nature, has created this environment.

This is what has hardly been understood until now, and what has always deceived reasoners, and led them either to the abyss of spiritualism, or to the abyss of materialism. Not understanding that man is a being necessarily united to humanity, they considered man in himself, without asking themselves if there was a medium to which this man was indissolubly united and from which he was inseparable; and then, following their tendency, they saw in him only an animal or an angel.

Man is neither beast nor angel, as Pascal says; and he is not only a complex being, *mind-body;* he is also united with humanity.

What was small, what barely existed in the animal, society, becomes immense in man. It is the new environment, the true environment, the only environment where the existence of this new being emerges from the animal condition develops, this being that is called man.

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[34] *Opp*. Book V.

So, to summarize, by considering that our being is a force that constantly aspires, and that this aspiration accompanies sensation and survives it, we fundamentally escape the doctrine of sensation. By considering the unity of our being, which is both soul and body, we fundamentally escape Christian asceticism. Finally, by understanding that the life of man is united with humanity, we discover the road we must walk, the road where the two tendencies that have divided philosophy come together; for, through humanity, we can satisfy our spiritual thirst for goodness and beauty, without departing from nature and life. Here we are beyond the two pitfalls, beyond materialism and beyond misunderstood spiritualism. The *Know thyself* of Socrates is enough for us to be in our human condition and to remain there, to attain through thought the dignity of our nature and not to disdain it.

Yes, Plato speaks the truth; we gravitate toward God, drawn to him, who is sovereign beauty, by the instinct of our loving and rational nature. But just as bodies placed on the surface of the earth gravitate toward the sun only all together, and the attraction of the earth is, so to speak, only the center of their mutual attraction, so we gravitate spiritually toward God through the intermediary of Humanity.

So here is our final conclusion.

If by *happiness* we mean an undefined state of pleasant sensations and feelings, independent of a philosophical conception of our nature and our destiny, Philosophy has nothing to do with it. Go, follow your fancy, run after sensations, and abandon yourselves to your passions; give yourselves over to fate; behave like animals and children! You will live in a certain way, and you will have a certain happiness; if, forgetting that you are reason, you make yourself a body, you will have the happiness of bodies; if you transform yourself into pigs under the wand of Circe, you will have the joy of pigs; if, forgetting that you are united with humanity, you make yourself selfish, you will have the solitary pleasures of a lonely man, that is to say, of a horribly incomplete man, who lacks the necessary environment for his true existence; you will be an imperfect being, a sort of monster. In a word, you will have pleasure and pain analogous to the passions that you will realize in yourself and to which you will surrender your nature. But at the same time, the law of the world, which is to change constantly, will always make you find emptiness and nothingness everywhere; and sooner or later the time will come for you when you will wake up from this confused intoxication, and when, however degraded you may be, you will have the feeling of the reasonable nature of your being.

If, on the contrary, we understand by *happiness* a conscious state of ourselves; then it is only Philosophy that is given the power to procure it for us. The

question changes: it is no longer really a question of being happy in the vulgar sense that we give to the word *happiness*, it is a question of living in conformity with our human nature.

It is Philosophy that teaches us to know our nature, and the practice of its lessons is called Virtue.

Philosophy has had its phases, like humanity. With Plato, it showed us our path by giving us God as our goal, and Reason and Love as our guides. With Aristotle, it perfected the instruments of our Reason. With the Christians, it perfected our Love. Epicurus served to prevent our impulse toward God from being suicidal. Stoicism has been our support during this difficult road through so many centuries. Today, Philosophy teaches us that the highest good consists in loving the world and life religiously. It must teach us how we can love the world and life religiously, how, while remaining in nature and in life, we can rise toward our spiritual center. Christians, for eighteen centuries, have marched toward the future life in the name of the *Father*, the *Son* and the *Holy Spirit*. Philosophy, explaining their formula, will teach us to walk towards the future in the name of *Reality*, the *Ideal* and *Love*.

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The reader now has the program for the treatise that follows. Our goal is clearly defined in this definition of man:

> Man is neither a soul nor an animal. Man is an animal transformed by reason and united with Humanity;

and in this thought, which summarizes for us the history of Philosophy:

> Yes, Plato speaks the truth; we gravitate toward God, drawn to Him, who is sovereign Beauty, by the instinct of our loving and rational nature. But just as bodies placed on the surface of the earth gravitate toward the sun only together, and the attraction of the earth is, so to speak, only the center of their mutual attraction, so we gravitate spiritually toward God through Humanity.

DOCTRINE.

BOOK ONE.

DEFINITIONS.

CHAPTER ONE.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFINITION.

I will start from the individual man, and I will show the necessary link of man with humanity,

I therefore take man as we are accustomed to considering him today in philosophy, not the man of ancient theologies, but the man of modern thinkers; that is to say, man understood as absolutely distinct from all his fellow men; conceived as possible and as really existing, as an entity, outside not only of total humanity, but of any fraction of humanity, isolated in time, without tradition and without prophecy; isolated in space, without family, without fatherland, without property; declared, in a word, free from all solidarity and all natural or divine reversibility; independent, existing by himself, as the Divinity really is, or as those who do not want to recognize God today suppose Nature to be; relating everything to himself. consequently, and drawing everything from himself alone, his right, his law, his God. It is this being that I want, so to speak, to convert to humanity.

But what is such a being? I need some definition of this being.

Certainly, I will not go and define him, as I did man, in the writing which has just served as my Introduction, as *an animal transformed by reason and united with humanity*. If I defined man at my beginning, everything would be easy for me; but it would be a vicious circle to begin like this. They would not let me do it: one would shout at me that man is only an animal; another would maintain, on the contrary, that there is no relationship between man and animal, that man is an intelligence; others finally would laugh to see *universals* such as humanity reestablished in philosophy.

How will I do it?

Fortunately, I think that this being, thus conceived, this man of modern philosophers, is still clothed in the character of human nature. However abstract

these philosophers may have imagined him to be, it is always of man that they have wanted to speak. Therefore, in this being of reason, the truth that I seek must be found. The true nature of man must be portrayed in this man, however solitary one may make him.

Let us therefore question the philosophers. Since they have come to imagine man in this way, and to study him in this way, their reflections must have had the aim of knowing him in this state of abstraction in which they had placed him, and of defining him.

This is indeed what all modern philosophy has tended towards and constantly applied itself to. All modern philosophy, since Descartes, or at least all metaphysics, has had as its aim the study of the very nature of the human mind, and consequently it aimed to form a certain idea and give a certain definition of this solitary and individual man, with whom I also wish to deal in my turn.

What did Descartes do, I ask, by putting himself into experience, by making himself abstract and solitary, by isolating himself from all tradition, by isolating himself from the entire universe? He studied man in himself, the abstract being man. And what did the thinkers he launched into the psychological problem, into the problem of the origin and certainty of our ideas, do after Descartes? They all took, like him, as the object of their research, man separated from humanity. Did not Locke abstract man from humanity, at least as completely as his rival, he who imagined that man, before receiving sensations from the external world, was in essence only a blank slate, without innateness, without any spontaneity? Spinoza, by destroying the solitary dreamer of his master Descartes in the divine substance, without intermediary; Malebranche, that other disciple of Descartes, arriving at roughly the same conclusions; Berkeley, deducing from his master Locke an analogous system; Hume finally, concluding from their various works a universal skepticism, have all worked on the solitary and abstract man whose definition I am seeking at this moment.

Leibniz, perhaps greater but certainly more universal than all of them, gifted as he was with the feeling of infinity, the feeling of the relationship and the coexistence of all things, was obliged to follow them on this terrain of abstraction.

And what did Kant do after them, and what did his successors in Germany do after Kant? Finally, what did the pale disciples, the inconsistent scholars, who, in recent times, have wanted to put France under the pure regime of psychology, come to do after all these masters?

It is always the "self," always the solitary man, that they have put to study, that is to say what remains of man and to man after one has tried to isolate him from the world and from humanity.

So what they did is precisely the study I want to use, and need.

They each gave, in their own way, a certain definition of this solitary being, of this individual whom they considered to be the human spirit in itself, and whom they indeed called by this name in their books.

Yes, for almost three centuries now, the metaphysicians, and after them many philosophers, moralists, politicians and others, have been discussing what one could call man without humanity: P*rolem sine matre creatam*. For three centuries, in fact, metaphysics has been known as psychology.[35]

But this great labor had to lead to something; this prolonged struggle of the schools had to have a result. It did have one; and this result, I believe I have demonstrated in an irrefutable manner in a previous work.[36]

What does it matter, then, about the errors that this abstraction of man, violently torn from humanity by the philosophers, may have given rise to? What does it matter that Descartes was the first to be mistaken in finding in this being, thus abstracted from humanity, only the *spirit*, that is to say, reason or *knowledge!* Was not Gassendi there providentially, at the same time as Descartes, to oppose the *flesh* to the *spirit*, and to make claims in favor of *sensation?* And if Locke, reproducing Gassendi with more study, but also with less breadth, came to be, in the opposite sense to Descartes, as exclusive as him, and to no longer see in man thus abstracted from humanity anything but sensation, was not Leibniz there providentially, at the same time as Locke, to oppose to the formula: *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*, his famous and invincible reserve: *Nisi ipse intellectus?* Thus here are already two characteristics that the isolation in which philosophers have placed man, in order to come to know him, has not been able to make man lose.

But did not the same Leibniz, great among the greatest, also perceive a third characteristic of man, or of the human spirit, inseparable from the other two; and is not his psychological formula of sensation, apperception and notion in every phenomenon of life the germ that we have had, in recent times, only to develop, in order to bring to light, as the last result of all modern psychology, the ancient formula of the *trinity* of the human soul?

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[35] It is understood that I am leaving aside here the principal role of France in philosophy: I will return to it shortly.

[36] *Refutation of Eclecticism*.

I can therefore legitimately take hold first of all of the result of all the work of psychologists over the last two centuries, and tell this solitary being that we call man today, and that we consider to be complete in himself, what he is psychologically, in order to then succeed in making him understand his being morally, politically and religiously.

I therefore arm myself with this result with which I have the right to arm myself; and I say: Man, however individual, however solitary, however abstract from humanity one imagines him to be, is, by his nature and by essence, sensation-feeling-knowledge indivisibly united.

CHAPTER II.

USEFULNESS OF THIS DEFINITION.

Here we are, at once, freed, the reader and I, from all the difficulties of psychology. Here we are beyond all those fumblings with which one is usually forced to begin in any research on morality and politics.

I dare say that, thanks to the well-understood works of all the thinkers who have studied the human mind for three centuries, we have a light that they did not have, which they were looking for. Enlightened by this light, we can approach the terrain of the true life of man, morality, politics, society. The man of the psychologists, in fact, is only an abstraction, which is good to make for study, but is impossible to realize. What really is, what lives, what exists, is man in society with man.

Nevertheless, a true knowledge of man considered abstractly is so necessary that, without this knowledge, one can only go astray in any science having as its object the living man, the social man.

This is why so many great geniuses have been mistaken in their considerations of morality and politics.

What greater genius in antiquity than Plato! I will add that he had a certain knowledge of the true psychological formula of man; all his writings attest to this. But although he knew this formula, as his masters the Pythagoreans had known it before him, he made erroneous use of it, even in philosophy, by always giving one of the terms of this formula an exaggerated predominance, which implicitly destroyed the formula itself. We know, in fact, that for Plato, man is above all *knowledge*. He thus breaks the true human type, by subordinating the two terms *sensation* and *sentiment* to the third term *knowledge*, instead of uniting all three indissolubly. What resulted from this? This is because this great man made, in morality and politics, a bad and I would dare say a detestable use of the psychological formula he had in hand. Thus, in his *Republic*, he concludes from

this formula the necessary and eternal inequality of men, their radical division into three castes, corresponding to these three terms, *sensation, sentiment, knowledge;* and, sacrificing everything to knowledge, he delivers the castes of sensation and sentiment, that is to say, the *industrial workers* and the *artists* or warriors, to the caste of knowledge, that is to say, the scholars and the *priests*. He is therefore only in progress from the oriental theocracies in one point: that is, that he suppresses the fact of birth as a determination of the caste, thus annihilating the natural family, in order to legitimize in the eyes of reason the very constitution of the castes. This suppression of the natural family is still an error; but this error itself does not remedy the evil. Because what ultimately comes out of his system is theocracy and despotism.[37]

Among the moderns, Hobbes and Machiavelli were certainly great thinkers; but of the psychological formula of man, they know little more than the first term, *sensation*. Hobbes, who dealt deeply with psychology before delving into politics, and who was the brilliant predecessor of Locke and all the sensualist philosophers, guided himself rationally according to this first term, *sensation*, which became for him the entire formula of the human mind. In the eyes of Machiavelli and Hobbes, then, what is human society? An aggregation of beings defined as *sensation*. Here is a herd of brutes, here is the human race composed of animals having needs and instincts that bring them together or divide them, but being nothing else in essence. The conclusion is necessary. Machiavelli, who is concerned above all with practice and action, will conclude from this psychological view government by force and cunning. Hobbes, who is mainly concerned with theory, will theoretically conclude despotism and, annihilating man before the law embodied in the *king*, will make the human race, for its greatest advantage, a herd of slaves. How many politicians, speculative or practical, have seen human affairs like Machiavelli and like Hobbes, because they saw psychological man through the same glass as them!

Here is Rousseau in his turn, the politician of *sentiment*. He feels in his heart that man is born free or must be free, and he sees him everywhere in chains. He wants to seek whether there is not some form of legitimate administration, that is to say, suitable for restoring this natural freedom of man. But what psychological idea does he have of man? Man for him, unfortunately, is only a sentiment, a force, a will, a self. From this it follows that all men appear to him as so many separate forces or individualities, not only equal, but identical, which can be united in nothing except by contract: “Since no man has a natural authority over his fellow man, and since force produces no rights, there remain

[37] See *Equality*, Part One.

therefore conventions as the basis of all legitimate authority among men."[38] How, in fact, can we unite all these men who are all: equal, identical forces, existing in the same way, homogeneous in a word, because they are all only one thing, one will, one *sentiment!* It is obvious that only the contract, on the basis of equality per head, can bring these homogeneous forces to a result. Rousseau therefore sets to work; he has before his eyes the debates of ancient societies where, while the slave, who was not counted as a man, fulfilled industrial functions, the citizens came to the public square as so many equal, identical, homogeneous forces, to deposit their vote in the ballot box. Rousseau generalizes this situation of homogeneous and identical forces or individualities: "Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and we receive into the body each member as an indivisible part of the whole."[39] But for each member to be part of the whole, each member must have abdicated his natural sovereignty, in order to retain only a part of his sovereignty, in proportion to the number. Rousseau recognizes this. "So that the social pact is not a vain formula, it tacitly contains this commitment, which alone can give strength to the others, that whoever refuses to obey the general will *will be forced to do so by the whole body;* which means nothing other than that *he will be forced to be free*. For such is the condition that, by giving each citizen to the fatherland, guarantees him from all personal dependence; a condition that constitutes the *artifice and play of the political machine*, and which alone makes legitimate civil commitments, which without this would be absurd, tyrannical, and subject to the most enormous abuses."[40] Thus, thanks to this political machine, here is man again a slave — and a slave in every way. Epictetus, the slave, at least retained the freedom of his intelligence. Rousseau's citizen engages his intelligence in the contract. The citizen of Rome remained free with regard to his family right; family and property existed for him independently of the city. Rousseau's citizen commits everything to the contract; he becomes part of the sovereign in everything, and it is only in this way that he is free. He is therefore truly free only in his voice, free only in his vote. Once the law is made, he is a slave. But there will always be, in the making of this law, a majority and a minority. Well, replies Rousseau, the minority will be slaves! This is the only way for man to be free; this is the artifice and the game of the political machine; it is in this way that men will be forced to be free. Thus all our ideas, all our feelings, all our actions, will be or can be governed

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[38] *The Social Contract*, chap. IV.

[39] *The Social Contract*, chap. VI.

[40] *The Social Contract*, chap. VII.

despotically by the sovereign, that is to say, by the majority! Yes, says Rousseau again, there is no other way for us to be free; for men are each a force, a will, a freedom, an independent *self;* and I challenge you to harmonize these homogeneous *selves,* except by a convention of this kind.

Just as Plato arrived at despotism through *knowledge*, just as Hobbes and Machiavelli arrived at despotism through *sensation*, so Rousseau arrives at despotism through *sentiment*.

And indeed, by considering man psychologically only as a will (feeling), or by considering him only as a passivity (sensation), or by considering him only as an intelligence (knowledge), that is to say by sacrificing two aspects of his nature to the third, we have, not *fellow* beings, but *homogeneous* beings, which nothing connects, and between which there is no other common measure than the abstraction which we have preserved, whether knowledge, feeling, or sensation. Therefore, either you will subordinate these beings to each other in the relation admitted by you, and thus you will have *despotism* at once; or you will equalize them all, whatever natural inequality there may be between them, even in this relation; and, in this last case, you will have first of all the opposite of a society, you will have *individualism*. That if, finally, you want to harmonize them and unite them in this condition, you can only do so by virtue of a contract in the manner of the one Rousseau imagines, and you consequently create an omnipotent majority in everything, which is still despotism, and which would perhaps be the worst of all despotisms.

This is because the three greatest attempts at a political theory based on philosophy have been found to be false, due to the error of the psychological data which inspired them.

Man is not only *knowledge*, one can object to Plato: therefore your scholars have no right; therefore your theocracy is not legitimate.

Man is not merely a *sensation*, one might reply to Hobbes: therefore your right of the king or of the strongest is not authorized by human nature. Men need to be enlightened, because they are intelligence at the same time as sensation. They need to consent, because they are sentiment at the same time as sensation and intelligence. Morality and peace must come from them and be within them. Society is made for them, it is true, but it is they who make it. It does not exist outside of them, in the sense that they themselves are this realized and responsible society. They are responsible, and consequently they cannot legitimately be slaves.

Finally, we can respond to Rousseau: Man is not only a *will:* therefore twenty wills can do nothing against ten. Man is intelligence: therefore he cannot abdicate himself to the point of abdicating his intelligence. He is sentiment:

therefore, even if he had made the absurd agreement of abolishing sentiment or will in himself under the influence of the general will, that is to say, of the majority, this sentiment would be reborn in spite of himself in his heart, and would protest against this inhuman sacrifice; therefore the majority could not have this absolute despotism over the citizen which embraces the whole man and the whole life of man in your system.

Let us therefore trust in our formula, which says that man is not only sensation, or feeling, or knowledge, but that he is an indivisible trinity of these three things. We are sure at least that it will lead us neither to theocracy like Plato, nor to monarchy like Hobbes, nor to demagogy like Rousseau.

CHAPTER III.

PHILOSOPHICAL DEFINITION.

But is this the only certain philosophical data with which we can equip ourselves at the outset? Is psychology then the whole of philosophy? And, apart from psychology, does not general philosophy also have some certain and indubitable axiom to provide us?

The ancients defined man as a sociable and political animal. This is what I would willingly call a philosophical formula of man, as opposed to the purely psychological formula that I have just presented previously.

The ancients, as I said above, also knew, to a certain extent, the psychological nature of this being, which they nevertheless defined, in general philosophy, as a sociable and political animal. Why then did they give this second definition of man? It is because between abstract man, the object of psychology, and real and living man, the object of ethics and politics, they threw a bridge, by means of this axiom, which summarized all their philosophical knowledge of man, apart from psychology. By this, in fact, they clearly recognized the necessary link which unites individual man to society.

Have we moderns, after so many centuries have passed, nothing to add to this philosophical definition that the ancients gave of man? Have we nothing more to say?

Oh! Yes indeed. We can state today with certainty a great truth that the ancients did not know: *Man is perfectible, human society is perfectible and the human race is perfectible*.

This is yet another substantial summary of all the work of philosophers over the past two centuries. And this time it is France above all that we must glorify for this discovery.

France's characteristic, in fact, during these last two centuries, has been to first take the initiative in psychology through Descartes, then to abandon the path it had opened, and to leave it to other peoples, but not to remain idle itself. After Descartes, in fact, and his two commentators in France, Malebranche and Arnauld, France produced no more metaphysicians. The movement in this genre passed to England and Germany. Locke, Berkeley, Hume and, to a lesser extent, the Scottish psychologists, indicate the important part that England took in research on the abstract nature of the human mind. Spinoza and Leibniz, geniuses incomparably greater than those we have just named, served, so to speak, as intermediaries between France and Germany. Spinoza, like the ancient race from which he sprang, belongs to no people, and embraces all peoples. Leibnitz, while founding the German philosophical spirit, was still turned towards France; he wrote for her, and in our language, his most notable works. But France, occupied at that time with another function, was inattentive to such profound meditations as those of Leibnitz and Spinoza; and if, for the work she was pursuing, she felt the need for a psychology, she was content with the simplest and most material, so to speak: she had that of Locke translated by Condillac and Helvétius.

The legacy of Leibnitz and Spinoza thus finally passed to the Germans. Wolf, the methodical disciple of Leibnitz, definitively replaced in Germany the studies neglected and deserted in France. From there emerged Kant and Kant's successors.

What was France doing during this time, thus neglecting the legacy of its Descartes? It had ceased to concern itself with the *moi*, the *self* or individual man, with the abstract man, to fall in love with the *nous*, or with humanity. It was working to found the doctrine that would save the world, the *Doctrine of Perfectibility*.

This is not the place to demonstrate what we have proven elsewhere,[41] that the Doctrine of Perfectibility has its roots and its seat in France from the seventeenth century; that the eighteenth century, which ends with it, also begins with it; that on the borders of the two centuries, in a word, this Doctrine came to be established, and that it is this doctrine that, giving men a completely new revelation of their existence, a new feeling of their strengths, a new appreciation of their destiny, created this remarkable era that has been called the eighteenth century.

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[41] "On the law of continuity that unites the eighteenth century to the seventeenth," writing inserted in the Revue Encyclopédique, year 1833.

If, therefore, France, after having opened the road to solitary rationalism, or to psychology, through Descartes, withdrew from it, to take another path, this is a fortunate turn for humanity. It was necessary that research on the abstract nature of the human mind be continued, without doubt; so it has been continued by other peoples. But it was also necessary that a new career be attempted; it was necessary that the true nature of man, not in the psychological state, in the virtual and potential state, but in the state of nature, in the state of life and existence, be signaled. This is what our eighteenth century has providentially begun to do.

Rationalism is the claim to elevate the individual to certainty and life, which is contradictory in terms. If, therefore, by this route of rationalism, one were to arrive at a solution, it was also necessary that another solution, another idea be prepared and elaborated outside of psychology, so that this other idea would later come to join and unite with the psychological solution, and make it fruitful and useful. This is what the French eighteenth century attempted, by raising this banner of the perfectibility of the human race.

Certainly, I do not mean that France alone established this doctrine. The nations, its sisters, have contributed their share to the work. Bacon in the seventeenth century, Leibniz in the eighteenth, and in recent times Lessing, have nobly responded to the effort of France.[42] Honor above all, among these allies, to Leibniz, whose entire philosophy is imbued with the idea of perfectibility! But in France the transmission of this doctrine is certain, evident, uninterrupted; and if we are asked who are the fathers of Turgot, Condorcet, Saint-Simon, we can name without fear a series of French initiators, who, without having formulated the general truth like them, nevertheless formulated it, glimpsed it at different degrees, and transmitted it to them in germ, so that they would ultimately make it the explanation of the whole history, and the very idea of philosophy.

Man, then, is not only a sociable animal, as the ancients said; man is also a perfectible animal. Man lives in society, lives only in society; and, furthermore, this society is perfectible, and man perfects himself in this perfected society. This is the great modern discovery; this is the supreme truth of philosophy. Just as we really possess in this definition: *Man is sensation-sentiment-knowledge indivisibly united*, the whole substance of psychology, that is to say, of that part of philosophy that has the *abstract human mind* as its object, so in this definition:

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[42] I would also mention Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and especially Krause, who were led by their metaphysical conceptions to beautiful intuitions of the life of humanity. Hegel himself, although he turned philosophy to the justification of the present, could only establish his fatalistic optimism by explaining the development of humanity.

Man is perfectible, we really possess the whole substance of general philosophy, that is to say, of the philosophy that takes *the human mind in its concrete and living state* as its object.

We will therefore start again from this other definition of man: *Man is perfectible*. We will take as an agreed axiom this thought of Leibniz: *Videtur homo ad perfectionem venire posse*.

Certainly we will not assume that the reader has better will than is necessary. We will not assume that the Doctrine of Progress and Perfectibility has obtained his entire and full consent, that he possesses, in a word, the magnificent faith in the future and the truly prophetic inspiration which made Saint-Simon say: "*The golden age, which a blind tradition has placed until now in the past, is before us*. The future shows itself to the eyes of the people, no longer as a reef, but as a port. Until now men had always bequeathed to their descendants the love and admiration of the past. Tormented by a need for happiness whose position on this earth they did not foresee, they sought it behind them, or in Heaven. They consoled themselves with chimeras. But, in spite of its leaders, its moralists, its artists, its poets, the human race was strengthening itself day by day; it developed by a slow but continuous march. It suddenly showed to its false prophets, it revealed to itself, so to speak, that the centuries had not been lost for it, and that it had to hope for more beautiful days than the times of its childhood. Society, since its existence, has never taken a step backward. Its development has been slowed down, but it was not in the power of man to prevent it. Let us therefore finally let rest the past, to which we have given a rather beautiful and rather long funeral. Let us not disdain it. Let us know how to appreciate it, since it has led us to the present and opens for us an easy path towards the most beautiful future. But let the future always be before our eyes. Let us march as one man, following the beautiful expression of an ancient poet, and inscribe on our peaceful banners: *The earthly paradise is before us*."[43] We. will not assume, I say, that the reader bears, before reading us, this conviction in the Doctrine of Perfectibility and this enthusiasm of the master that we have just cited. We want to contribute, for our part, to demonstrating and explaining the prophecy of Saint-Simon. We will therefore not begin with a vicious circle, by assuming that our reader believes in this prophecy, and that he has adopted in advance the faith that we want to give him. But we have at least the right to assume that he is not a stranger to the works of the human mind in the last two centuries, and that he does not absolutely reject:

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[43] *Opinions littéraires, philosophiques et industrielles*, introduction.

Pascal's thesis, that, “by a particular prerogative of the human species, not only does each man advance from day to day in the sciences, but that all men together make continual progress, as the universe ages, because the same thing happens in the succession of men as in the different ages of an individual. So that the whole series of men, during the course of so many centuries, must be considered as *one and the same man who always subsists, and who continually learns*. From which one sees with what injustice we respect antiquity in the philosophers; for, as old age is the age most distant from childhood, who does not see that the old age of this *universal man* must not be sought in the times close to his birth, but in those that are most distant from it! Those whom we call ancient were truly new in all things and formed the childhood of men properly; and as we have joined to their knowledge the experience of the centuries that followed them, it is in us that one can find this antiquity which we revere in others.”[44]

Charles Perrault's thesis, identical in some respects to Pascal's, but more advanced in other respects, that “the human race must be considered as a single eternal man, so that the life of humanity, like the life of man, has had its childhood and its youth, that it currently has its virility, but that it will not have a decline;[45] and that this law of incessant progress is true and demonstrable not only for the exact or observational sciences, and for industry or politics, but even for morality and for art.”[46]

Fontenelle's thesis, identical to that of Perrault, of which Fontenelle was the important popularizer: “A good, cultivated mind of our century is, so to speak, composed of all the minds of previous centuries; it is only one mind that has been cultivated during that time. Thus this man, who has lived from the beginning of the world until now, had his childhood, where he only concerned himself with the most pressing needs of life; his youth, where he succeeded quite well in things of the imagination, such as poetry and eloquence, and where he even began to reason, but with less solidity than fire; and he is now in the age of virility, where he reasons with more force and enlightenment than ever. This man himself, strictly speaking, will not have old age; he will always be equally capable of the things for which his youth was proper, and he will always be more and more capable of those things which are appropriate to the age of virility. That is to say, to leave the allegory, that men never degenerate, and the healthy

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[44] *Pensées*, chap. I.

[45] Unless we understand by decline the passage to a new humanity.

[46] Parallel of the ancients and the moderns. See the writing cited above: On the law of continuity which unites the eighteenth century to the seventeenth.

views of all the good minds which will succeed one another will always add to each other."[47]

The thesis of Bacon, whose principal work carries even in its title, *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum*, the idea of progress, and who, "believing that the knowledge which the world is now in possession of does not rise to the majesty of Nature,"[48] conceived the project of "delivering man from his chains and his fetters, by increasing, by intellectual power, the power of the human race over this Nature,"[49] thus attaching, according to his expression, his own fortune to the fortune of the human race, and making himself the leader of this great expedition against ignorance and evil that today unites, in the cultivation of the various sciences, so many efforts, so many heads and so many arms, and for which there is already agreement, communication from one end of the world to the other; a coalition evidently formed by "the desire to push back the limits of human power in the accomplishment of all that is possible," as Bacon also said,[50] and by the profound feeling that humanity continually increases its strength, and will end up escaping, by means of intelligence and virtue, its original weakness and, if you like, its fall.[51]

The thesis of Descartes himself, who ends his *Discourse on Method* by saying that "the aim of his entire philosophy is to make man master and possessor of Nature in the future; that one day man, knowing the force and actions of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens, and all the other bodies that surround us, as distinctly as we know the various trades of our artisans, will employ them in the same way for all the uses to which they are suited, and not only will man be able to exempt himself from an infinity of illnesses, but perhaps even from the weakening of old age."

Leibniz's general thesis, where the perfectibility of man is found attached to a universal law of continuous progress throughout the universe. It is of Leibniz's

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[47] *Discourse on the Moderns.*

[48] *De aug. scient.*, init.

[49] *On the Interpretation of Nature.*

[50] *New Atlantis.*

[51] See, in the *Encyclopédie Nouvelle*, the article on *Francis Bacon*, where I believe I have exposed the true character of this genius, who is so little understood and so poorly appreciated, because people have wrongly wanted to make him the father of sensualism, while he is the idealist apostle of perfectibility in relation to the external world and the true theologian of the science of Nature.

famous *law of continuity* that I want to speak, of this law that he made geometers, physicists, naturalists, all scholars of detail adopt, and which has produced such great fruits, but which is basically only another formula of his theodicy. The indefinite perfectibility of all beings, this is, as I will perhaps have occasion to show later, the supreme word of this theodicy. The perfectibility of man in particular is at once its basis and its final corollary. Everything, in Leibniz, from the monad or simple substance to man, everything progresses towards God, that is to say towards the Infinite Being, the source of all beings; and, in this chain of perfectibility, man particularly reveals to us the perfectibility of all creatures; for, for his part, he is highly perfectible: *Videtur homo ad perfectionem venire posse*.

Lessing's thesis, that "humankind passes through all phases of successive education."

The thesis finally, not to multiply the names, that Turgot formulated, with admirable rigor and precision, at the end of the eighteenth century; this thesis of the indefinite perfectibility of man and of the human species that Condorcet, before dying, bequeathed, by a sublime effort, to posterity, as the last word and the testament of this eighteenth century, and that Saint-Simon received from their hands and transmitted, increased by his faith and by his science, to new generations.

CHAPTER IV.

UTILITY OF THIS DEFINITION.

Plato, as I said above, knew the psychological formula of man; but, apart from having falsified this formula, even in the metaphysical respect, he did not know, or barely suspected, the philosophical formula of this same man. Man was for him a *sociable animal*, and that is all. The *perfectibility* of human societies and of individual man within these societies was not revealed to him. If the doctrine of perfectibility had been known to him, he would not have fallen into the errors that disfigure his *Republic*. He would have understood, for example, that all, as Jesus later said with a prophetic spirit, were called, and consequently he would not have despaired of slaves. He would have raised himself to an ideal without slaves. He would not have regarded as certain and indubitable that slaves and stupefied industrialists were needed to feed generous warriors and learned priests,

Condorcet or Saint-Simon, writing today on the subject that occupied Plato in his *Republic*, would take as their guiding light, not the principle that man is purely a *reasonable and sociable* being, or, as the ancients said, a *political animal*, but the principle that *man is perfectible*, and that *human society is perfectible*. This

is the measure of the difference that twenty centuries have brought between us and the ancients.

What we have called the philosophical definition of man is therefore of immense use in all research on the foundations of morality and politics. It is not only a matter, in fact, of having a psychological notion of man; for the most exact notion of this kind would be in itself powerless to guide us. It is absolutely necessary that we be further illuminated by another light. It is necessary that the life of humanity and the progress of the centuries have revealed to us, vaguely if you like, but nevertheless with sufficient effectiveness, a certain truth about the life of relation of this same being, which psychology considers in itself and in an abstract way.

Such is, in fact, as has often been noted, the nature of our mind and, if you will, its impotence, that it is always obliged to start from definitions containing in a certain way the very truths that it wishes to demonstrate. We are obliged to admit indemonstrable definitions in geometry and in all the sciences; and all the philosophers who have reflected on these definitions have been forced to agree that they implicitly presuppose the very sciences that are deduced from them. Our mind cannot and does not do anything else, in these sciences, than to draw a multitude of consequences from certain *principles* to which it gives its consent in a way that is at once entirely spontaneous and entirely necessary. How could it not necessarily be the same in the moral sciences? I want to establish certain truths about the relationship of man with his fellow men. It is absolutely necessary that I have in mind and that the reader grant me some point, a *datum*, relative to this relationship.

The ancients, I repeat, had no other idea about this life of relationship between man and his fellow men than that presented by the word *society*. They saw man, by his nature, united with a certain number of his fellow men, living contemporaneously with him in a city. They hardly perceived the link between generations, through time. Nor did they suspect that these states, these cities, these republics, which they saw existing, or whose memory history had transmitted to them, had a providential destination, which would reveal itself later. In a word, they had no feeling, even vague, of the collective life of *humanity* with any final goal whatsoever. What was happening? It was that the imperfection of their philosophical definition of man reacted with the use they could make of their psychological definition. This is what led Plato astray, as I have just said. Thus it can be affirmed that if of the two definitions of man, one psychological or of abstract man, the other philosophical or of man in a living and concrete state, the first was known from antiquity, it was less known, however, to the ancients than to us today, precisely because the second was

never more than suspected by the ancients, or rather still only by a few, as if by a quick flash, which vanished at that very moment. These two truths, therefore, lending each other, — as we shall see, I hope, in the course of this book, — a mutual support, it necessarily resulted that, one being lacking, the other was not capable of acquiring, in the hands of the ancients, all the development that it involves; and from there capital errors from which we can free ourselves today.

We have, so to speak, another muse than the ancients, another muse of morality and politics; we have the muse of perfectibility. She appeared to us, thanks to the work of so many centuries that preceded us; we cannot pretend, and no one can claim today, that this apparition did not take place. Do not even the most stubborn and the most rebellious feel the presence of this divine muse? We cannot therefore refuse to be inspired by her. Those who would refuse us, we would send them back to study history, study philosophy. We would tell them to first refute Pascal, Charles Perrault, Fontenelle, Vico, Malebranche, Bacon, Descartes, Leibnitz, Lessing, Kant, Turgot, Condorcet, Saint-Simon, and even also Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, who all glimpsed, to varying degrees, and in different ways, the collective and progressive life of humanity.

But for this we will not commit the error that logicians call a begging of the question or a vicious circle. We have two formulas, one of which is psychological, the result of a separate science, a science different from morality and politics: this one will be our principle for reasoning. The other we will use to inspire us, to guide us. Of the two wings that Plato declares necessary to raise us to knowledge, to life and to God, is one not reason, the other sentiment or love? We have in the psychological formula of man a principle of reasoning and logic; we have in the philosophical formula of this same man, as we have just posed it, a principle of sentiment. One will be, if I dare express myself thus, our traveling staff; we will walk towards the other in the light of this other itself, and under its flash. For it is the truth sensed which guides us by feeling, while waiting for it to enter into us as knowledge, and reign over us as such.

You will therefore understand, I think, the kind of restricted utility that I claim to draw from the philosophical definition: *Man is perfectible; the human race is perfectible*.

Certainly, once again, I do not ask that the reader have the same assurance as I have in this Doctrine of Perfectibility. It is up to me to communicate this confidence to him. Only I have the right to suppose that he does not absolutely reject the idea that the human race is perfectible, and that he does not have, in this respect, the decided prejudice of Horace:

Damnosa quid non imminuit dies?
Aetas parents, per avis, tulit
Non nequiores, mox daturom
Progeniem vitosiorem.[52]

Let us only grant that there is a truth in the assertion of so many great men who for two centuries have repeated, in a thousand different forms, that the human race is perfectible; and we will try to determine more precisely the profound meaning of this principle or, if you will, of this revelation, which has come to shine in recent times within the human spirit.

At least, this concession made, to the extent that we ask, if, taking the individualized man of modern philosophers, we show that this man has a necessary link with humanity, we will be sure of not attaching him thus, by a kind of torture of Mezentius, to a corpse, that is to say to an immobile human race always turning in the same circle.

[52] "There is nothing that does not deteriorate with time. Our fathers were already worth less than our ancestors; we are worth less than our fathers; and our children will be worth even less than us." (*Od.*; book III, vi.)

TRANSLATION IN PROGRESS...