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PART ONE

DOCTRINE.

The journal we publish aims to develop the principles of social science.

The doctrine we profess, and which we believe we can convince all people of good faith to adopt, is not new; it has had the most eminent men as its apostles throughout history. However, we believe that none of them has given a sufficiently clear or complete understanding of it. Furthermore, scientific discoveries make new developments indispensable, the evidence of which must be demonstrated by arguments commensurate with these discoveries. We are undertaking this task.

Before presenting the foundations of our doctrine, it seems essential to resolve a question that naturally arises for anyone who undertakes to discover the cause of the ills, crises, revolutions — in short, of all the scourges with which humanity has been afflicted for so many centuries. Could this cause be the product of **SOCIABILITY**? Is evil inherent in **HUMAN NATURE**? Neither of these is the case, as we shall prove.

If the first question were to be answered in the affirmative, then sociability would not be the mode of existence most in accordance with human nature, with our **ORGANISM**; the state of savagery, or isolation, would then be the one that would suit us. The question, stated in this way, becomes much less difficult to resolve; or rather, it is almost impossible not to immediately declare ourselves in the negative. Indeed, a simple notion of human nature and needs suffices to make it clear that the state of sociability, in the sense that only society can provide and guarantee complete satisfaction to all our needs, is essential; intellectual and moral needs, the satisfaction of which is as imperative as that of physical needs for constituting happiness, cannot receive any satisfaction in the state of savagery and isolation. Thus, man is an **INESCAPABLY SOCIAL** being, and sociability, moreover, produces the only situation that makes possible all the improvements of which his organism is capable. What, then, is the cause of these

incessant revolutions, of these eternal sufferings of humanity, which history presents to us? The cause of the evil lies in the organization of society, which, instead of basing its laws on those of nature and conforming them to the human organism, has constantly deviated more or less from the laws of the former and placed obstacles or hindrances to the development of the latter: this is the true source of evil. The different phases, the violent crises that humanity has undergone, confirm our assertion. These teach us that man, emerging from the hands of nature, has neither ideas, nor inclinations, nor aptitudes, since each time the social situation has changed, his way of thinking, acting, and reasoning has differed. Hence the conclusion that the system of innate ideas, innate inclinations, and innate aptitudes is utterly absurd and utterly contradictory to our understanding of the human organism. How could one possibly admit that since man is born with ideas, the social environment would have the power to change, distort or overturn them? The laws of nature are more constant and fixed; man can never change them entirely, and it is always to his own detriment that he deviates from them. We will not pursue our argument further in this article; its limitations prevent us: moreover, our only aim here is to indicate the foundations of our doctrine; we will demonstrate the self-evident truth of our principles in subsequent issues. We therefore say: man is born with needs and faculties; his preservation imperatively requires the absolute satisfaction of the former and the complete development of the latter. The violent crises and various revolutions that have so frequently and successively shaken humanity are the protest of human nature against a social order that did not guarantee the complete satisfaction of all its needs and the full development of all its faculties; such is the lesson that emerges from the study of the history of human vicissitudes. It has immense significance. Thus, history will be the living proof of the soundness of our reasoning and will be, so to speak, the impregnable redoubt behind which our social doctrine will take refuge, based on the study of the immutable laws of nature and the precise knowledge of the human organism.

Having demonstrated the necessity and usefulness of the science, it is now a matter of seeking its purpose and foundation. This is what we will do, while restricting ourselves, however, within the bounds of our framework.

The purpose of social science *is the guarantee of a situation entirely in accordance with the human organism*. Its basis is *the exact knowledge of this organism*.

A situation in accordance with the human organism necessarily implies the absolute satisfaction of all its needs, the complete development of all its faculties; for to live in accordance with one's nature is to satisfy all the conditions it demands. This is the true *criterion* of human **WISDOM**; this is **TRUE**

HAPPINESS.¹ The best guarantee of the absolute satisfaction of all of man's physical needs lies in the most judicious use of nature's resources, in the knowledge of the conditions most conducive to multiplying these resources. Thus, finding the situation that produces the greatest economy, that prevents abuses and waste, that increases the mass of natural resources, is therefore also within the domain of social science. This second problem, moreover, does not break the unity of science: for it is only the consequence of the first, which, as we have just formulated it, implicitly states all other social problems, and the solution of each of them will only be the consequence of the solution of the first: everything is interconnected in nature.

The complete development of all of man's faculties will guarantee the *utility*² of all his actions. Thus, evil — that is, the act by which man harms himself or another being of his species — must become impossible in a social organization based on human nature. Could there be anything more absurd than to admit that man, a being endowed with **INTELLIGENCE** and **REASON**, can harm himself or commit senseless, unreasonable acts when all his intellectual and moral faculties have received complete development? No; nothing could be more absurd. For from the complete development of the faculties must result **REASON**, where the exact, precise knowledge of the useful and the harmful arises: and these two things, scrupulously indicated and defined, no longer being able to be confused, will then become the sole motive of all human actions, as they are today the motive of every **WISE** person. It is therefore not true, one will say, that *man is wicked*, since you claim to remove from him even the possibility of doing evil? No, certainly not, men are not wicked; they are foolish and ignorant. A social order in manifest opposition to the eternal laws of matter and the needs of human nature has distorted all our knowledge, hindered the development of science and driven man, ignorant and like a beast, to commit acts harmful to his preservation: to remedy this evil, it is necessary to develop in man this precious faculty that he has received from nature, **REASON**; to make it the measure of the satisfaction of his material needs, as it is the only rule he has to consult in each of his actions. By this development of reason, we remove from man any possibility of doing evil, for it would be odiously absurd to claim that a sensible man, who never acts except according to reason, can harm himself.

But, it will be objected, we are, like you, convinced that a man in whom reason or intelligence has been developed will never harm himself by any of his actions; but where is the guarantee that he will never harm any of his species?

¹ The corruption of language will sometimes force us to use absurd or redundant epithets. Here, for example, the modifier *true* is entirely unsuitable for the word *happiness*. There are not several kinds of happiness; it exists or it does not exist.

² By this word *utility*, we mean everything that contributes to the health, preservation, and, consequently, the happiness of man; we will call *harmful* everything that is the opposite.

This guarantee lies in the very principle that we have just established; we recognize and proclaim that a sensible man is one who lives in accordance with his nature. Now, since living in accordance with one's nature means satisfying all of one's needs, it follows that a person who harms their fellow human being would not be fully satisfying all their needs, since moral needs are nothing other than sympathy and love for one's fellow human beings; but loving one's fellow human being is not harming them, and to say that the opposite can occur would be to deny that humans have moral needs at all. Who would accept this consequence? Moreover, if everyone were not convinced of the soundness of our last argument, we would say that, in our system, the following problem is clearly solved: *finding a situation in which it is impossible for a person to harm their fellow human being without harming themselves*. We will return to all these questions.

These are the fundamental points of all social science, on which it must provide a clear and obvious solution; and these points encompass everything; for, nature being one and indivisible, everything within it, as we have already said, is interconnected and bound together.

After having long studied and sought the solution to all these problems, we have acquired the **CERTAINTY** that **ONLY** an **EGALITARIAN SITUATION** can resolve them all; our journal will prove this in a clear and irrefutable manner.

The primary consequence of this principle being **UNITY, INDIVISIBILITY** cannot admit any division, any fragmentation of the land; we therefore desire the **COMMUNITY OF GOODS**.

But what a storm of recriminations and objections are raised by these two words: *equality* and *community*! Equality, an absolute law, does not exist anywhere; its realization would be the negation of intellectual and moral being! The destruction of science and the arts, a return to brutishness and the state of savagery! And this noble and precious faculty of man — **ACTIVITY** — is annihilated by equality! And what languor, what monotony, what constraint there is in the community of goods! Furthermore, how much dissension there is among the communists! Each understands community in his own way! Where, then, does this lack of unity come from? Why, then, this new communist newspaper, when there are already two in Paris? We will answer this in a few words.

Physiologists recognize in man three quite distinct natures, in other words, three orders of facts; hence, three kinds of needs: physical needs, intellectual needs and moral needs. Far from wishing to contest this trinity of the human organism, regarding the existence of which we are perfectly convinced, we say that society must give full satisfaction to all of man's needs. Now, since we recognize in humankind intellectual and moral needs, the satisfaction of which are as imperative for us as that of physical needs, we are far from wanting to annihilate intellectual and moral being; on the contrary, we will demonstrate that only egalitarian organization allows for the complete development of all

human faculties. This, moreover, is the consequence implied in the formula that we used to state the social problem. Indeed, by positing as a principle that the goal of social science is to guarantee the preservation of the human species, we imply that it must also guarantee to humankind the development of all its intellectual faculties, since the latter alone indicates the means to achieve this goal. Thus is refuted the foolish objection that equality is the negation of intellectual being.

Thus also falls the other objection that egalitarian law would destroy science and the arts.

But equality stifles, stifles, and annihilates human activity. Ah! If it were so, we would be truly criminals; equality would be a horribly atrocious law! For we know that to live is to be active. Far from denying in humankind this need to know, to reason and to act, and consistent with the principle that we have established, we want this need to be fully satisfied. We will prove that only an egalitarian situation can guarantee this satisfaction. But it is not enough for human activity to receive complete satisfaction for everything to be for the best in this respect; social science, which seeks all means of being useful to humanity, must also find a way to constantly direct this faculty toward useful objects instead of letting it be lost in aberration or trivialities; we believe that achieving this result is to reach the ultimate stage of perfectibility.

As for the reproach of monotony and languor leveled at *community*, it can only come from someone who has no idea of communist organization. Look, indeed, at how monotonous this organization is! Under this system, a person will only travel around the globe four or five times. The organization of labor, ordered according to the principle of community, is no less accommodating; never, in this social order, will a person be tied to the same job for more than a day at a time. What languor, then, in a state of affairs where people travel continually; and this, with the aim of bringing about the most intimate mixing of the race; of constantly stimulating their activity by always offering them new facts to study; of giving free rein to the development of **FRATERNITY** by preserving people from perpetual contact with the same individuals, which engenders individual attachment, which is positively the negation of the one and universal law of attraction. Oh yes! In such a combined social organization, there must exist an unbearable monotony and languor. Readers, do not think that all this is a dream; we will prove to you that it is a reality.

Based on what has been said, we believe it unnecessary to address this further objection: that community imposes perpetual constraint on humankind. Certainly, none of those who would impose this constraint on us would carry the love of liberty as far as we do. They would all be quite perplexed if we asked them for a plan of social organization in which *all domination of man by man* would be entirely abolished: we will publish this plan in our journal.

Finally, we will address the third and final objection: that communists are divided; that each understands community in their own way. We will reply: this

is true. But what is the principal cause of these dissensions? It is not necessary to look for it for long; it will be found in the absence of a work that formulates the doctrine clearly and completely. All those published to date have failed to achieve their intended goal. Both old and new works, whether through the ignorance of their authors or the fear of offending certain prejudices, are filled with false ideas, inconsistencies, or contradictions, which, instead of uniting, only divide. Thus, a work or publication that clearly and distinctly sets forth the communist organization is indispensable for restoring unity in the doctrine and among those who profess it. We have come to fulfill this task. Let no one accuse us of sowing discord, of seeking and desiring disunity; on the contrary, all our efforts will be directed toward rallying people of good faith under the banner of truth. We are deeply convinced that truth is the most powerful bond for uniting people, just as we are equally convinced that error and falsehood are eternal sources of division. We will never shrink from the truth. We will grapple with the prejudices that would prevent us from reaching it. A war to the death against all errors, against all prejudices! Falsehood already trembles at the sight of the advancing truth: make way for the truth!

We now ask the reader's indulgence for our style; our thoughts may be poorly rendered, many expressions may be inappropriate; but we believe that our first attempt will be well received. Moreover, we declare that we have no intention whatsoever of submitting to the absurd rules of *rhetoric*; the only qualities to which we adhere, and which we will strive to combine, are those of *clarity* and *precision*, and the most laconic expression or phrase will always be the one to which we give preference. We believe that the style which combines these three qualities is always the one that most accurately conveys the author's thought, and, consequently, is best understood by everyone: this, in this respect, is our sole aim.

We ask you, communists of Paris and the provinces, to support us in our work if you believe it to be good and useful!

BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Sylvain Maréchal.

There are men who have dedicated the treasures of their intelligence and vast genius to the betterment and happiness of their fellow human beings; who have consumed their lives in immense labors to achieve this important goal, without seeking to draw attention to themselves, and without chasing after the vain chimera of leaving a name after their death. *Sylvain Maréchal* is among them; he has earned, through his virtues, his ardent love of truth and his courage in speaking it openly, despite his powerful enemies, the right to have his memory preserved. He has earned, more than Boileau, Racine and so many other brilliant minds, whose writings have been more harmful than useful, the right to have his memory preserved. If we must still concern ourselves with men (which we will no longer do in a well-organized society), it is time to make a selection, to remember only those whose lives and works can offer some profitable lesson, and to consign the others to the oblivion and obscurity from which they should never have emerged. By this means, we will undoubtedly succeed in giving intelligence a salutary direction, which will hasten the progress of truly useful human knowledge.

Maréchal (Pierre-Sylvain) was born in Paris on August 15, 1750. His father intended him for a career in commerce; but his aversion to a profession he considered useless, which, moreover, forced him to lie, made him resist. He became a lawyer, but soon abandoned this new career, which he recognized as no better than the other, and devoted himself to literature, for which he had a particular fondness. From the age of twenty, devoted to poetry, he was already composing very pretty, witty verses for the various collections then being printed. He initially focused on the pastoral genre, writing charming idylls that Theocritus and Gesner would not have disavowed. But more serious subjects were to occupy him. Eighteenth-century philosophy, which had rendered so much service to reason, was losing new defenders every day; Maréchal took up the mantle and distinguished himself among the likes of Diderot and d'Holbach. In 1784, he published, anonymously, a philosophical poem whose boldness stirred up against him those of bad faith interested in error, and the anger of the devout.³ It was a scathing indictment of the opinion that admits the existence of a *being* above nature and an eloquent plea for materialism, grounded in the principles of the most austere virtue and embellished with the charms of a virile and energetic poetry.

³ *Livre échappé du déluge*. — TRANSLATOR.

Attached for several years to the Collège Mazarin, where he was assistant librarian, he performed his duties with the most scrupulous precision. His love of study kept him at the library every day, long after it had closed to the public. There, he would leaf through that innumerable multitude of books, most of which seemed to him so many monuments erected at great expense to error, pride, vanity and human stupidity. He lamented finding so little useful information amidst so much clutter and became increasingly convinced, as his investigations progressed, that instead of filling their heads with so many extravagances, men would have done better to adhere to the simple principles of nature, to a proper use of the intelligence bestowed upon them by Mother Earth, in order to work towards their happiness and the improvement of their species. These reflections led him to envision a social reform, which we will discuss shortly.

The philosophical principles he so openly professed and the poem he had published had, as we saw earlier, earned him a host of enemies. The most relentless were the priests who ran the library and, consequently, held him in their power. They were only waiting for a favorable opportunity to take their revenge, and it soon presented itself. Maréchal had just published a philosophical pamphlet entitled *Almanac of Honest People*, in which he had deliberately placed the name of Jesus Christ between those of Epicurus and Ninon de l'Enclos. Denounced to Parliament, he was, on the indictment of the Attorney General Séguier, ordered arrested, and his work condemned to be burned by the executioner. To save Maréchal from this persecution, his friends requested a *lettre de cachet*; but the clerk who dispatched it made the mistake of sending it to Saint-Lazare instead of the Bastille, a prison where the unfortunate souls whom any flawed social order turns into thieves and scoundrels were confined. In 1789, he was restored to his liberty and to the position he had lost due to this mishap.

The dawn of the revolution filled him with joy; he believed he already saw the realization of the reform project he had long dreamed of. His predilection for the pastoral life of early humans, for the patriarchal government which he considered the only one sanctioned by nature and the only one capable of bringing happiness to humanity, had been evident throughout his works. Indeed, this was a fixed idea of his. He wanted cities demolished, viewing them as filthy cesspools, perpetual breeding grounds of corruption; and for people to divide themselves into families and live in dwellings some distance apart. But what made him adopt this system above all was that he found in it neither laws nor government: things for which he had a great aversion. "Man," he said, "is born to live independently and govern himself; he has already taken a step towards corruption when he recognizes one of his fellow men as superior to him, even if that man is much better off than he is. The science of government is an appetizer. Humankind cannot form a mass. Let us amicably separate ourselves into small groups. Man should not obey man; his father alone has the right to

command him; a king or representatives; a civil code, a political constitution, all that is perhaps fine, but perfectly useless to man in his family, who prefers domestic peace to the ephemeral and perilous splendor of civilization.” Finally, he wanted no written laws; morals, instilled in children from a very young age, was, according to him, the only law that could determine a person to act rightly:

“Laws do not create mores.

“Mores make laws unnecessary;

“Laws cannot exist without mores;

“Mores can exist without laws;

“Laws without mores create hypocrites;

“Mores without laws constitute the perfect honest person.”

These were the main arguments he put forward in support of his system, in which, as in all theories formulated to date, there are things to take and things to leave. One of these arguments has particularly attracted our attention; it concerns government, politics and laws; but we will return to it shortly. Let us now turn to Maréchal, during the revolutionary crisis. The National Assembly, which he believed should be composed of 1,200 wise men, boldly wielding the axe against the old social order, did not live up to his expectations. Instead of radical reform, he was indignant to see them applying slight and insignificant palliatives to society's ills. “Children of men!” he said to them, “if you only knew how small everything that comes from your narrow minds is compared to the vast conceptions of nature! Children! Listen to your mother; abandon these reforms that bring you only new excesses, these revolutions that, in the final analysis, are merely changes and, all too often, only an increase of evils. Only that which is sanctioned by history can have lasting consequences. There was a great and beautiful revolution to be attempted, and it was to be hoped for from the wisdom of 8 to 1,200 chosen ones among 25 million people: it would have been to *truly remind humankind of the fundamental rights of individual liberty*, and to break the complicated mechanisms of civil society, instead of strengthening them anew; it would have been, in short, to preserve only what nature allows.”

But Maréchal spoke in a wilderness; the revolution, entirely absorbed by politics, was causing people to lose sight of their social perspective. The grand words and phrases — *love of country, constitution, popular sovereignty, national representation* — brought into vogue by events, were on everyone's lips; everyone thought they had reached the pinnacle of human perfectibility by calling themselves a *patriot*, a *republican*, a *democrat*, and so on. As the revolution progressed, all these labels were elevated to the status of virtues, and everyone vied to see who could best embody them. Despite this enthusiasm, despite the danger of rising up against these ideas, which constituted the very essence of the government at the time, Maréchal attacked them forcefully and deployed all the resources of reason in this struggle. Wherever error took refuge, it was never sacred to him: he had attacked it on the throne; he attacked it now

in the senate and even among the people themselves. He uttered these ideal phrases only with pity, for despite their emptiness, they produced a magical effect on the masses; the only ones that held true meaning for him were those contained in that immortal legend of the republic: *liberty, equality, fraternity*. "But these are only words," he said, "as long as there are servants and masters, poor and rich: No liberty! No equality! As long as men form a people: No fraternity! The revolution is not yet complete."

This bold and vehement critique of the revolution, which had been led astray, nevertheless brought no persecution upon him. A friend of *Chaumette*, who shared his principles and who, like him, desired more than mere political reform, he was not uninvolved in the establishment of the Cult of Reason, which was initiated by the prosecutor of the Paris Commune. In Maréchal's eyes, the proscription of religious fanaticism, even more feared than political fanaticism, was a great victory over Gothic prejudices. But this victory was short-lived: Robespierre, wanting to replace the cult of reason with that of the Supreme Being, sacrificed the Hébertists, among whom was Chaumette. This mistake signaled his downfall. Had he better understood these men, had he not been frightened by their principles and their fervor, he would have made common cause with them and laid low the schemers, into whose hands his death left the helm of affairs. But one must resign oneself and watch with a cold eye as the revolution retraces its steps. This retrograde march lasted two years, without anyone even noticing. However, those men of good faith who had been misled by the Thermidorian Reaction, even those who had lent their support to it, soon realized their error. A man who, driven by love for his fellow human beings and seeking to make them happy, had called, from the very beginning of the revolutionary storm, for a more equitable distribution of the earth's bounty; a man who, deluded about the true intentions of the Hébertists and Robespierre, had applauded their downfall; Babeuf, finally, recognized his blindness and protested vigorously against the Thermidorian Reaction. He did not simply want a return to the way things were before that fateful day, but wanted the revolution to be made to its fullest potential; that is to say, to be brought back to its true spirit: the common good. To achieve this goal, he searched for a long time for the most practical and reliable path. The idea of sharing property, which he had initially conceived, left many doubts in his mind; he was still groping in the dark when Morelly's *Code of Nature* fell into his hands. Instead of dividing property, Morelly pooled it, following the example of Pythagoras and Thomas More. Babeuf, struck by the superiority of this doctrine, did not hesitate to adopt it and abandon his own. From then on, he enthusiastically preached the doctrine of real equality and the community of property in a journal entitled *Le Tribun du Peuple*. He made a great many converts, among whom were particularly noteworthy true democrats who, like him, had been misled by the Thermidorian Reaction. Sylvain Maréchal could not help but be moved by the courage with which this new tribune upheld his principles, despite the harassment from the

authorities and the fury of the selfish. It was the same with him as with Babeuf, and as it should be with any man of good character; as soon as he had considered the doctrine of the egalitarian community, he abandoned his patriarchal system of government. He went to Babeuf to come to an understanding with him, to seek his support. Together, with one of their friends, they held several conferences, as a result of which they resolved to create a committee, or secret directorate, composed of twelve members chosen from among the most enlightened and principled men, in order to lay the foundations of the egalitarian doctrine and prepare the means for its implementation. The committee was indeed formed, and Maréchal was its most assiduous, active and industrious member. The committee conducted a massive propaganda campaign using newspapers, pamphlets, posters and other materials, which it distributed profusely in the working-class neighborhoods of Paris and even within the army, where it had cultivated contacts. It was Maréchal who composed the songs in which the people were urged to rise up against their oppressors (the Directory) and to reclaim equality, songs which can still be found in the collection of pieces seized from Babeuf. It was he who drafted, according to the committee's instructions, the famous *Manifesto of the Equals*, the boldness of which alarmed even his colleagues. Here are some excerpts from this work: "The French Revolution is but the harbinger of another, far greater, far more solemn revolution, which will be the last. — Always and everywhere, men were lulled with fine words: never and nowhere did they achieve the deed with the word. From time immemorial, we have been told hypocritically: *men are equal*; and from time immemorial, the most degrading and monstrous inequality has weighed insolently upon humankind. — We are all equal; this principle remains uncontested, because unless one is afflicted with madness, one cannot seriously say that it is night when it is day. — Well then! We now claim to live and die equal as we were born: we want real equality or death. — *We consent to everything* for it, to make a clean sweep to adhere to it alone. Let all the arts perish, if need be, provided that real equality remains for us." This last sentence, and another worded as follows: "Disappear at last, revolting distinction between rulers and ruled," which the committee did not approve, prevented, as *Buonarotti* informs us, the publication of the *Manifesto of the Equals*. This fact requires some clarification. The reason that determined the committee not to accept Maréchal's sentence concerning the arts was that, its members having declared themselves partly for and partly against, it did not want to express an opinion on this important subject before having decided on it. Moreover, those who would think they find in this sentence the proscription of the arts would be greatly mistaken. Alluding to the opinion of philosophers who, like Mably and Rousseau, considered equality and the arts incompatible, Maréchal exclaims with holy enthusiasm: If we are reduced to the sad necessity of choosing between equality and the arts, *if necessary, we consent*: keep your arts, leave us equality. Thus, Maréchal presents the matter only in the form of doubt, saying: *if necessary, we*

consent; which also means: *if not necessary, we do not consent*. The extreme antagonists of the arts, whose ideas he momentarily assumes to be true, have made the greatest error: 1. by making equality an express condition of their exclusion; 2. by confusing the useful arts with the fine arts; 3. by failing to distinguish, in the latter, the abuse of the thing from the thing itself. The useful arts must be practiced, for the sole reason that they are useful, and the fine arts, which are merely agreeable, must be tolerated as a form of recreation, without making it a special function.

Maréchal participated in the work of the secret committee until it was discovered and, following the denunciation of a traitor, almost all of its members were arrested and thrown into dungeons. Babeuf, condemned to death by the High Court of Vendôme, perished like the Gracchi, whose name and title he had adopted, for having loved his fellow men and having sought to improve their lives. Darhé, one of his companions, suffered the same fate; the others carried into exile the pain and regret of their failure. Maréchal miraculously escaped the persecutions of the Directory. His handwriting was found among the numerous papers seized from Babeuf, but it was not recognized, and his name appeared on the title page of no document.

After Babeuf had paid for his generous efforts and his death had almost extinguished any hope of resuming his work, Maréchal fell once again under the influence of his earlier inspirations. His patriarchal system appeared to him even more perfect than that of the community, as taught by Babeuf. What repelled him in the latter was that it still contained a political constitution, a form of government, laws, which he, Maréchal, considered a negation of liberty. According to him, men had only invented politics, had only created laws and constitutions, as they began to become corrupt; they had been forced to place some of their own at their head to enforce these laws, to ensure the maintenance of “these constitutions;” hence the action of man upon man, hence the hardship, hence the tyranny exercised by one or by many. Corruption and oppression, evil, in short, ever increasing, yet nothing indicating that it would soon end. How, then, to stop it? It was necessary to attack it at its root; it was necessary to return to the common mother, and for this there was only one way: “It was,” continued Maréchal, “to break the social pact, to divide ourselves into families, and to live each in our own home, obeying only the paternal law.”

Leaving aside his patriarchal system, *the anti-political or anarchic ideas*⁴ that he put forward, and which no socialist has yet addressed, deserve, in our opinion, to be seriously examined. It is regrettable that he did not seek to apply these ideas to the doctrine of the egalitarian community, as this phrase from the Manifesto of the Equals: “Disappear at last, revolting distinction between rulers and ruled,” rejected by the secret committee, would suggest that he initially

⁴ Anarchy — a state without government, and not disorder as our politicians understand it.

intended to do so; he could have left us insights that would have shed considerable light on this matter. But in any case, he indicated, he posed a problem that would not be unworthy of occupying the Institut de France; its solution would be somewhat more interesting than that of squaring the circle, and so many other problems of this kind. One could thus pose the question: Is man perfectible? — Is this perfectibility limited only by perfection? — Is man, being perfect, able to live in society without any kind of laws, any form of government whatsoever?

We would still have much to say about Maréchal, if the limited scope of this article did not oblige us to confine ourselves to this simple account. The mere mention of the titles of all the works he published would take us further than we would wish: one can boldly count more than fifty. He was one of the most prolific writers, as well as *the boldest thinker of his century*.⁵ In Year VI of the French Revolutionary Calendar, he published *Le Lucrèce français*, a poem in verse, in which he rises far above the Latin poet, both in the force of his reasoning and the vigor of his style. The epigraph of this book reads:

“Man said: let us make God;

“Let him be in our image!

“God was; and the craftsman adored his work.”

In the prologue, we find the following five lines which perfectly illustrate his love for truth, and the courage he always had to speak it:

“August truth, be the soul of my verses;

“I will plead for you against all the universe.

“The priest, in taking his revenge, savors all pleasures...

“Yes! I know it... Well!... Error had its martyrs;

“I, in my turn, wish to be a philosopher.”

The following year, he published his *Voyage de Pythagore*, on which he had been working for ten years. The references it contains attest to Maréchal's vast erudition. The legislator of Croton is, for the first time, appreciated for his true worth; his political and moral laws, previously scattered throughout the works of antiquity, are collected with care, offering much food for thought to those concerned with social science and philosophy.

His *Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Atheists*, published in Year VIII, and headed by an apology for materialism supported by the most solid arguments, stirred up a violent storm against him. Convinced of what he had said, he did not back down from his furious antagonists; he simply expressed his sympathy without responding to their insults. Several other vigorous works still flowed from his pen, but death seized him suddenly on January 18, 1803, in his 53rd year; and thus took him from philosophy, to which he could still render important services, and from his many friends, of whom he was the idol. One of them,

⁵ This is what several of his contemporaries called him.

Delalande, said: "The loss of Sylvain Maréchal is a loss for philosophy, for he had a courage that is almost never found again." Indeed, no man of letters ever had more courage and boldness; however harsh the truth, however violent it might be for certain prejudices, he spoke it aloud and in its entirety. If he had found many imitators, we would undoubtedly be more advanced than we are.

We will conclude this notice with the epigraph that Maréchal himself had chosen:

"Here lies a peaceful atheist:

"He always walked upright without looking to the heavens.

"May his tomb be respected.

"The friend of virtue was an enemy of the gods."

ON SOCIAL SCIENCE.

This branch of philosophy, which in our crude and absurd language we call Social Science, aims to show humankind the means of preserving and improving itself. Now, who will reveal to us these means of preservation and improvement? Where will we begin to arrive at this discovery? What will be the basis upon which we will base our social law? We shall seek this.

The foundation of social science lies in the precise knowledge of the human organism; its goal is to guarantee humankind a complete satisfaction of its organism. This is what we already stated in our first issue: we will not cease repeating this truth until it is well understood by all, because it is the entire future of humanity. According to the extent to which this goal is achieved, humanity will be more or less unhappy. All its ills will finally end on the day when all the consequences of the principle we are establishing are realized. That is to say, when society is such as the human organism requires. All the evils that have successively afflicted humanity are the work of human ignorance, and not the inherent condition of matter's existence. Matter, studied as a whole and in all its details, everywhere exhibits admirable order and preservation; therefore, whenever disorder and destruction present themselves to us, in one or more of their forms, we can affirm *a priori* that humankind has come to disrupt the eternal laws of matter. Thus, if today and throughout history, so many diverse scourges have agitated and disrupted all of humanity, it was precisely because the situations in which it found itself were in direct opposition to the conditions indispensable to its existence.

By placing the man in the required situation; by indicating to him, clearly and distinctly, the means of preserving himself within it; by removing from him everything that, directly or indirectly, could lead him astray, it is evident that one thus deprives evil of any possibility of reappearing, in whatever form.

Certain people will still cry out here at this extravagance; the objections raised in our first issue will be repeated. You want to make all evils disappear! What madness! What a chimera! You are undoubtedly also teaching man how to escape death, how to avoid illness. You make this claim, don't you? No; our faculties are not yet in such a state of dementia; we know how to distinguish *evil* from accident; and, probably, our adversaries have never been able to make this distinction. The former does not exist anywhere in nature; it will therefore disappear completely the day man is enlightened and wise enough to base his rules of conduct on the immutable laws of nature. The second (the accident) is the case where a portion of matter is deprived of universal law by a fortuitous cause, which, in some cases, could have been prevented by human intervention, but over which, in other circumstances, humans have no control. It follows, therefore, that some accidents are probably inevitable, while the recurrence of

others will be easily prevented. By studying the causes that produce accidents in the present situation, one is quickly convinced that the greatest number are due to human negligence; not all accidents of this nature would recur in our current system. Our system must be structured in such a way as to minimize the number of accidents; nothing more can be demanded.

So let us be reassured, the people of future societies will not be exempt from death; only we are convinced that the duration of life will be much longer than in present-day society. Death is neither an evil nor an accident. One cannot call by either of these names that which is the consequence of an absolute law of matter; however, death is sometimes the result of an accident, and then it is an evil. If an accident arises from a cause over which man can act, social science must seek the means to prevent this cause from recurring. Today, for example, death is very often due to debauchery, a poor diet, excessively arduous work and excesses of all kinds; over all these things man can exert absolute power, and they are therefore so many scourges from which humanity can protect itself; but as for normal death, it is inevitable. This is the consequence of the law of transformation, to which all of nature is relentlessly subject. When this event occurs, a new combination takes place, and instantly the thing that is its object ceases to be what it was before: no power can stop the results of a cause without which nothing would exist. Indeed, without the law of transformation, it would be utterly impossible to conceive of existence and reproduction.

Thus, let no one gratuitously attribute to us pretensions that we do not possess. Certain accidents may still disrupt the social organization whose mechanism we will explain; but their number will be very small. To cite an example, diseases are accidents. We cannot affirm, in the current state of our hygienic knowledge, that humankind will one day be absolutely free from them; and yet, we possess enough evidence to establish in principle that they will be much less numerous and much less frequent. The same will be true of a host of other inconveniences of this kind, which it is unnecessary to enumerate here. As for evils, all will disappear; because all owe their origin to human ignorance, or to a vicious situation which, by not guaranteeing all the conditions indispensable to existence, forces people to commit acts that they would not even conceive of if inflexible necessity had not compelled them to do so. For, let us repeat, matter is nowhere destroyed; it is transformed, but it is not annihilated. From what precedes, we have already defined the word *evil*; it is everything that, through human determination, produces destruction, either immediately or indirectly.

Murder, which produces immediate destruction; intemperance, debauchery, which lead indirectly to the same result; In both cases, the causes produced by human determination are evils whose very concept will be unknown to the people of future societies. Abject begging and ignoble domestic servitude, these two most hideous scourges of ancient and modern societies, are instantly eradicated by the application of community.

Our ideas being diametrically opposed to those generally accepted, it results in a great difficulty for us to always express our thoughts precisely; this is why the preceding details may seem out of place to some, and yet they were essential for us to make ourselves clear.

From what has just been said, the path we must follow in the search for social law emerges, the foundation upon which we must base it; it is in the study of the human organism that we find the solution to the social problem; this being recognized, this science becomes eminently positive and demonstrative. It finally emerges from the dark depths of metaphysical absurdity, the main cause of the aberration of human intelligence.

From now on, the triumph of truth is certain. The most difficult step has been taken; abstract and mystical ideas are coming to an end of their fatal reign; man will finally form an accurate idea of happiness and will know the conditions that constitute it. The human organism is not so complicated that it is impossible to acquire knowledge of it. For a certain time, there may well be disagreements on the classification and naming of human faculties, and this more because of the deficiencies of language than because of the difficulty of giving certainty on this subject; but once the struggle is engaged on this ground, the triumph of truth is assured, and will not be delayed much longer: man, convinced that happiness consists in living in a way that conforms to his organism; That knowledge of one's own nature is above all the most indispensable thing, that the determining motive of all one's actions lies in their effect on one's preservation, man, we say, convinced of these truths, will then enjoy the happiness that nature destines him for, by always conforming to its immutable laws. He will no longer seek the rule of his conduct in the absurdities of a so-called "revelation," as impossible to admit as the existence of the being who reveals it. Fanciful lucubrations of a mental alienation; disappear forever, cease to occupy a place that belongs only to truth! And you, humanity, rejoice! The most terrible of your scourges has disappeared!

Reason, it is now up to you to govern the world! For long enough, in the name of progress and liberty, humanity has been plunged into the most horrible misery, the most odious slavery. It would be futile to claim that reason is not powerful enough to play the role we assign to it; this is a foolish objection, entirely refuted by what we have just said. We have proven that man, in the state of nature, would be entirely free from inclinations and desires that would lead him to commit acts of violence against members of his own species. In this situation, he would blindly obey his instincts, and these would only cause him to commit acts necessary for the satisfaction of his needs. But, in such a state of affairs, there is no guarantee of survival: man, physically lacking offensive and defensive weapons, would not long be able to fight with any advantage against all the animals that came to attack him. To compensate for his physical weakness, nature endowed him with intelligence or reason, a precious faculty, a formidable weapon with which he has conquered the world. Now, would anyone

dare say that no matter how much social circumstances develop a person's intellectual faculties to the highest degree, a person will never be wise enough to constantly obey the laws of reason; that certain desires harmful to themselves, sometimes tempting them, will ultimately lead them to commit acts that reason condemns? For example, a certain dish is very unhealthy; but it appeals to the sense of taste; reason will cry out in vain that I should abstain from it, I will eat it because it pleases me. This is the terrible argument used to declare our doctrine a chimera. It is pitiful to have to refute such nonsense; but since the objection has been raised by communists, it is our duty to answer it, in order to enlighten those whom fools and the ignorant are leading astray. First, from what has been said above, it is demonstrated that a person placed in a suitable situation cannot have evil desires; In this state, enlightened by the indications of science, all its decisions, all its actions, will conform to the laws of conservation. History, which is invoked against us, proves, on the contrary, the soundness of our reasoning. From the fact that humanity has always been senseless, it is absurd to conclude that it always will be. This is to create an entity, not to resolve the question. What is the cause of this madness, this dementia of humanity? Does it stem from a vicious situation, or is it the inevitable result of human nature? This is how the question can be resolved. We have already expressed ourselves sufficiently on this subject; it would be superfluous to repeat a new demonstration here. Spiritualism has powerfully contributed to the aberration of human reason. The social environment, always opposed to the organism, ignorance, or the underdevelopment of its faculties, have done the rest. Thus, history is not a condemnation of our doctrine: it is through a failure to understand its teachings that one reads it as an argument against us. History proves that reason ceases to be an infallible guide when, instead of directing it in the right direction during the first phase of its development, it is, on the contrary, given a false direction. Now, since it is recognized that human reason can go astray — and this occurs when the intellectual faculties that constitute it have not received sufficient development, or because initial impressions have pushed them in the wrong direction — it is essential, so that humanity may never again commit senseless acts, to remove these causes of straying and aberration from which there is any possibility of their recurrence. These causes being evidently such as we have just described, the following remedy is sure and infallible: *Place man in a situation conforming to his nature; develop his faculties to their full extent; remove from him everything that contributes immediately and indirectly to leading his reason astray*, and then the madness of humanity will end. Then, too, will disappear despotism, or the domination of man over man, which takes on a multitude of different forms, all of which we reject. Our doctrine combines all these advantages. It places man in such a situation that it is utterly impossible for him to commit a single senseless act, that is to say, an act harmful to his preservation. Will it be said that by thus depriving man of the possibility of doing evil, we annihilate the self, we kill human liberty, to

establish a tyranny of a new kind, but no less odious than those that have existed? We have already declared that no one is a more ardent friend of liberty than we are, that no one detests all tyrannies more; therefore, if the objection were true, our doctrine would contradict the declaration we have made. Let's discuss this. First, what is liberty? What is tyranny? *Liberty is a situation where man obeys no authority other than that of reason; tyranny is the opposite, or a situation in which he is forced to commit other acts than those dictated by reason.* What then is *reason*? It is *science*, or *the knowledge of what is useful and what is harmful*. Now, this knowledge is easy to acquire. Even if error were to take the place of truth, it could not last long; the facts would quickly expose it. There is therefore no tyranny in our organization, since man obeys no authority other than that of reason; it alone possesses all the conditions of true freedom.

We have just addressed the most important preliminary questions. We will now proceed to the solution of all social problems. It is then that our reasoning will have all the rectitude of a mathematical demonstration: we believe ourselves ready to undertake this task.

Our plan is dictated by the very nature of social science. We will first present the situation that is suitable for man, based on the knowledge of his organism; Then we will outline the precautions to take to ensure we never leave this happy state; next, we will explain by what means this great transformation can be effected.

In our next issue, we will demonstrate that the egalitarian situation alone is in accordance with the human organism, everywhere the only one that suits it.

Communists, whatever the reception we receive, whatever our future may be, we will invariably pursue the path we have set for ourselves. We are certain that our entire doctrine is true; even if we had no other encouragement, this alone would suffice. We will never fail in our principles!

Working translations by Shawn P. Wilbur; last revised January 14, 2026.