

STANDARD SOCIALIST SERIES

**SOCIAL AND  
PHILOSOPHICAL  
STUDIES**

**PAUL LAFARGUE**

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LAFARGUE # SOCIAL AND  
PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES



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# **Social and Philosophical Studies**

By

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Translated by Charles H. Kerr

CHICAGO

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# CONTENTS

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## CAUSES OF BELIEF IN GOD

	PAGE
I. The Religious Bourgeoisie and the Irreligious Proletariat.....	7
II. Natural Origins of the Idea of God in the Savage .....	12
III. Economic Origins of the Belief in God of the Bourgeois.....	15
IV. Evolution of the Idea of God.....	35

## THE ORIGIN OF ABSTRACT IDEAS

I. Contradictory Opinions Regarding the Origin of Abstract Ideas.....	55
II. Formation of the Instinct and of Abstract Ideas .....	69

## THE ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF JUSTICE

I. The Law of Retaliation—Retributive Justice	92
II. Distributive Justice.....	117

## THE ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF GOOD

I. Formation of the Heroic Ideal.....	135
II. Decomposition of the Heroic Ideal.....	146
III. The Bourgeois Moral Ideal.....	158



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**Causes of Belief  
in God**

The mode of production of the physical means of life dominates as a rule the development of the social, political and intellectual life.

KARL MARX.



# CAUSES OF BELIEF IN GOD

## I

### THE RELIGIOUS BOURGEOISIE AND THE IRRELIGIOUS PROLETARIAT

Bourgeois free-thought under the auspices of two illustrious scientists, Berthelot and Haeckel, has set up its platform at Rome, opposite the Vatican to hurl its oratorical thunder-bolts against Catholicism, which with its hierarchical clergy and its alleged immutable dogmas stands in the bourgeois mind for Religion.

Do the free thinkers, because they are putting Catholicism on trial, think they are emancipated from belief in God, the foundation of all religion? Do they think that the Bourgeoisie, the class to which they belong, can dispense with Christianity, of which Catholicism is a manifestation?

Christianity, though it has succeeded in adapting itself to other social forms, is first and foremost the religion of societies founded on individual property and the exploitation of wage labor, and that is why it has been, is, and shall be, whatever is said, and whatever is done, the religion of the Bourgeoisie. For more than ten centuries all its movements, whether for organizing itself, emancipating itself, or spreading into new territory, have been accom-

panied and complicated by religious crises; it has always put the material interests whose triumph it sought under the cover of Christianity, which it claimed that it wished to reform and bring back to the pure doctrine of the Divine Master.

The bourgeois revolutionists of 1789, imagining that France could be de-christianized, persecuted the clergy with unequaled vigor; the more logical of them, thinking that nothing would be accomplished as long as the belief in God existed, abolished God by decree, like a functionary of the old regime, and replaced him by the Goddess of Reason. But when the revolutionary fever had run its course, Robespierre re-established by a decree the supreme being, the name of God being still out of fashion, and a few months later the curates emerged from their cells and opened their churches, where the faithful held love feasts, and Bonaparte to satisfy the bourgeois mob signed the Concordat: then appeared a Christianity of a romantic, sentimental, picturesque and macaronic character, adapted by Chateaubriand to the tastes of the triumphant Bourgeoisie.

The powerful intellects of free thought have affirmed and still affirm, in spite of evidence, that science would disencumber the human brain of the idea of God by making it useless for a comprehension of the mechanism of the universe. Nevertheless the men of science with but few exceptions are still under the charm of that belief; if in his own field a scientist, to use Laplace's phrase, has no need of the hypothesis of God to explain the phenom-

mena that he studies, he does not venture to declare that it is useless in accounting for those which are not summed up in the list of his researches; and all scientists recognize that God is more or less necessary for the proper working of the social gearings and for the morals of the masses.\* Not only is the idea of God not completely banished from the brains of the scientists, but the grossest superstition flourishes, not in the backwoods and among the ignorant, but in the capitals of civilization and among the educated bourgeois; some enter into sessions with spirits to get news from beyond the tomb, others prostrate themselves before St. Anthony of Padua to find something lost, to guess the lucky number at the lottery, to pass an examination at the Polytechnic; they consult palmists, clairvoyants, card-readers, in order

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\**La Revue Scientifique* for November 19, 1904, corroborates these assertions. M. H. Pieron, in his discussion of a work on "Scientific Materialism," recognizes that "God is the convenient residual cause of all that can not be explained, . . . that faith has always been framed to supplement science, . . . and that science has nothing to do with beliefs or faith, . . . but that religion is not absolutely incompatible with science, on condition, however, that it be shut up in a thoroughly tight compartment." He protests also against "the succession of present-day scientists who are searching in science for nothing but proofs of the existence of God or the truth of religion, as well as against the sophism of one who should search in science for proofs of the non-existence of God."

Up to the modern epoch, it was considered a denial of the existence of God, if one did not recognize his incessant action for the maintenance of order in the universe. Socrates reproached Anaxagoras for having wished to explain the motions of the heavenly bodies without the intervention of the gods, and Plato relates that the Athenians held as atheists the philosophers who admitted that the revolutions of the stars and the phenomena of nature were regulated by law (*Laws*, VII:21). In another passage, he demonstrates the existence of God by the creation, the order that reigns in it, and the consent of all nations, Greeks and barbarians (the same, X., 1). God is "he who balances the world," said the Egyptian priests.

to learn the future, interpret dreams, etc. The scientific knowledge that they possess does not protect them against the most stupid credulity.

But while in all the groups of the Bourgeoisie the religious sentiment retains its vitality and shows itself in a thousand fashions, the industrial proletariat is characterized by a religious indifference that is unreasoning, but unshakable.

Mr. Charles Booth, the well-known sociologist, at the close of his vast inquiry into the religious state of London, which his army of assistants "have visited district by district, street by street, and often house by house," states that "the mass of the people make no profession of faith and take no interest in religious observances. . . . The great section of the population which passes by the name of the working classes, lying socially between the lower middle class and the 'poor,' remains, as a whole, outside of all the religious bodies. . . . The churches have come to be regarded as the resorts of the well-to-do, and of those who are willing to accept the charity and patronage of the people better off than themselves. . . . The average working man of to-day thinks more of his rights or of his wrongs than of his duties and his failure to perform them. Humility and the consciousness of sin, and the attitude of worship, are perhaps not natural to him."\* These undeniable proofs of the instinctive ir-

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\* Religious Influences: Series III. of the investigation undertaken by Charles Booth into the "Life and Labor of the People of London."

religion of the London workingmen, usually thought so religious, can be matched by the most superficial observation of the industrialized cities of France: If laborers are found there who assume religious sentiments, or who really have them (these latter are rare) it is because religion strikes them as a form of charitable relief; if others are fanatical free-thinkers, it is because they have suffered from the meddling of the priest in their families or in their relations with their employer.

Indifference in religious matters, the most serious symptom of irreligion, to quote Lamennais, is inborn in the modern working class. While the political movements of the Bourgeoisie may have taken on a religious or anti-religious form, no inclination can be seen in the Proletariat of the great industries in Europe and America toward elaborating a new religion to replace Christianity, nor any desire to reform it. The economic and political organizations of the working class in both hemispheres are uninterested in any doctrinal discussion on religious dogmas and spiritual ideas; this however does not prevent their making war on priests of all cults, regarding them as the domestics of the capitalist class.

How comes it that the bourgeois, who receive a scientific education of greater or less extent, are still trammled by religious ideas, from which the workers, without the education, have freed themselves?

## II

## NATURAL ORIGINS OF THE IDEA OF GOD IN THE SAVAGE

To declaim against Catholicism as the free-thinkers do, or to ignore God as the positivists do does not take account of the persistence of the belief in God in spite of the progress and the popularization of scientific knowledge, nor does it take account of the persistence of Christianity in spite of the railleries of Voltaire, the persecutions of the revolutionists, and the results of exegetic criticism. It is easy to declaim and ignore and it is hard to explain, for to do that one must begin by inquiring how and why belief in God and spiritualistic ideas slipped into the human brain, took root there, and developed; and answers to these questions are found only by going back to the ideology of the savages, where are clearly outlined the spiritualistic ideas which encumber the brains of civilized people.

The idea of the soul and of its survival is an invention of the savages, who allowed themselves an immaterial and immortal spirit to explain the phenomena of dreams.

The savage who has no doubt of the reality of his dreams imagines that if during his sleep he hunts, fights, or takes vengeance, and if on awakening he finds himself in the place where he lay down it is because another self, a double,

as he says, impalpable, invisible and light as air has left his sleeping body to go far away to hunt or fight, and if it comes about that he sees in his dreams his ancestors and his dead companions he concludes that he has been visited by their spirits, which survive the destruction of their corpses.

The savage, "that child of the human species," as Vico calls him has, like the child, puerile notions about nature. He thinks that he can give orders to the elements as to his limbs, that he can with words and magic rites command the rain to fall, the wind to blow, etc.; if for example he fears that the night may overtake him on his march he knots up in a certain fashion certain herbs to stop the sun, as the Joshua of the Bible did with a prayer. The spirits of the dead having this power over the elements to a higher degree than the living, he calls on them to produce the phenomenon when he fails in bringing it about. Since a brave warrior and a skillful sorcerer have more effect upon nature than simple mortals, their spirits when they are dead must consequently have a greater power over it than the doubles of ordinary men; the savage chooses them out of the crowd of spirits to honor them with offerings and sacrifices and to beg them to make it rain, when drought compromises his harvests, to give him victory when he takes the field, to cure him when he is sick. Primitive man starting out with a mistaken explanation of dreams elaborated the elements which later served for the creation of one sole God, who is when de-

finer nothing more than a spirit, more powerful than the other spirits.

The idea of God is neither an innate idea, nor an *a priori* idea, but an *a posteriori* idea, just as all ideas are, since man can not think until he has come in contact with the phenomena of the real world which he explains as he can. It is impossible to set forth in an article the logically deductive manner in which the idea of God proceeded from the idea of the soul, invented by the savages.

Grant Allen, bringing together and summing up the observations and researches of explorers, folk-lorists, and anthropologists and interpreting them and illuminating them by his ingenious and fertile criticism has followed out in its principal steps the process of formation of the idea of God in his remarkable work entitled, "The Evolution of the Idea of God; an Enquiry into the Origin of Religions," London, 1903. He also demonstrated with ample proofs that primitive Christianity with its Man-God, dead and raised again, its Virgin-Mother, its Holy-Spirit, its legends, its mysteries, its dogmas, its ethics, its miracles, and its ceremonies, merely assembled and organized into a religion, certain ideas and myths, which for centuries were current in the ancient world.



## III

ECONOMIC ORIGINS OF THE BELIEF OF GOD IN THE  
BOURGEOIS

It might reasonably have been hoped that the extraordinary development and popularization of scientific knowledge and the demonstration of the necessary linking of natural phenomena might have established the idea that the universe ruled by the law of necessity was removed from the caprices of any human or superhuman will and that consequently God became useless since he was stripped of the multiple functions which the ignorance of the savages had laid upon him; nevertheless it can not but be recognized that the belief in a God, who can at his will overthrow the necessary order of things, still persists in men of science, and that such a God is still in demand by the educated bourgeois, who asks him as the savages do for rain, victory, cures, etc.

Even if the scientists had succeeded in creating in bourgeois circles the conviction that the phenomena of the natural world obey the law of necessity in such sort that, determined by those which precede them, they determine those which follow them, it would still have to be proved that the phenomena of the social world are also subject to the law of necessity. But the economists, the philosophers, the moralists, the historians, the sociologists, and the politicians who study human societies, and who even assume to direct them, have not suc-

ceeded, and could not succeed in creating the conviction that social phenomena depend upon the law of necessity like natural phenomena; and it is because they have not been able to establish this conviction that the belief in God is a necessity for bourgeois brains, even the most cultivated ones. If philosophical determinism reigns in the natural sciences it is only because the Bourgeoisie has permitted its scientists to study freely the play of natural forces, which it has every motive to understand, since it utilizes them in the production of its wealth; but by reason of the situation that it occupies in society it could not grant the same liberty to its economists, philosophers, moralists, historians, sociologists and politicians, and that is why they have not been able to introduce philosophical determinism into the sciences of the social world. The Catholic Church for a like reason formerly forbade the free study of nature, and its social dominance had to be overthrown in order to create the natural sciences.

The problem of the belief in God on the part of the Bourgeoisie can not be approached without an exact notion of the role played by this class in society. The social role of the modern bourgeoisie is not to produce wealth, but it is to have it produced by wage workers, to seize upon it and distribute it among its members after having left to its manual and intellectual producers just enough for their nourishment and reproduction.

The wealth taken away from the laborers forms the booty of the bourgeois class. The barbarian warriors after the taking and sacking of

a city put the products of the pillage into a common fund, divided them into parts as equal as possible and distributed them by lot among those who had risked their lives to conquer them.

The organization of society permits the bourgeoisie to seize upon wealth without any one of its members being forced to risk his life. The taking possession of this colossal booty without incurring dangers is one of the greatest marks of progress in our civilization. The wealth despoiled from the producers is not divided into equal parts to be distributed by lot; it is distributed under form of rents, incomes, dividends, interests, and industrial and commercial profits, proportionately to the value of the real or personal property; that is to say, to the extent of the capital possessed by each bourgeois.

The possession of a property, a capital, and not that of physical, intellectual or moral qualities is the indispensable condition for receiving a part in the distribution of the wealth. A child in swaddling clothes, as well as an adult, may have a right to its share of the wealth. A dead man possesses it so long as a living man has not yet perfected his title to his property. The distribution is not made among men, but among properties. Man is a zero; property alone counts.

A false analogy has been drawn between the Darwinian struggle which the animals wage among themselves for the means of subsistence and reproduction and that which is let loose among the bourgeois for the distribution of wealth. The qualities of strength, courage, agility, patience, ingenuity, etc., which assure victory to the animal, constitute integral parts of

his organism, while the property which gives the bourgeois part of the wealth which he has not produced is not incorporated in his individuality. This property may increase or decrease and thus procure for him a larger or smaller share without its increase or diminution being occasioned by the exercise of his physical or intellectual qualities. At the very most it might be said that trickery, intrigue, charlatanism, in a word, the lowest mental qualities permit the bourgeois to take a part larger than that which the value of his capital authorizes him to take; in that case he pilfers from his bourgeois brothers. If then the struggle for life can in a number of cases be a cause for progress among animals, the struggle for wealth is a cause of degeneracy for the bourgeois.

The social mission of grasping the wealth produced by the wage-workers makes of the bourgeoisie a parasitic class; its members do not contribute to the creation of wealth, with the exception of a few whose number is constantly diminishing, and the labor which they furnish does not correspond to the portion of wealth which falls to them.

If Christianity, after having been in the first centuries the religion of the mendicant crowds whom the state and the wealthy supported by daily distributions of food, has become that of the bourgeoisie the parasitic class par-excellence, it is because parasitism is the essence of Christianity.

Jesus in his sermon on the mount explained its character in a masterly fashion; it is there that he formulates the "Our Father," the prayer

which every believer must address to God to ask him for his "daily bread" instead of asking him for work; and in order that no Christian worthy of the name may be tempted to resort to work for obtaining the necessaries of life, the Christ adds, "Consider the birds of the air, they sow not neither do they reap, and your Heavenly Father feedeth them \* \* \* take no thought therefore and do not say, to-morrow what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed. \* \* \* Your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." The Heavenly Father of the bourgeoisie is the class of manual and intellectual wage workers; this is the God who provides for all its needs.

But the bourgeoisie can not recognize its parasitic character without at the same time signing its death warrant; so while it leaves the bridle on the neck of its men of science, that without being troubled with any dogma nor stopped by any consideration they may give themselves up to the freest and most profound study of the forces of nature, which it applies to the production of its wealth, it forbids to its economists, philosophers, moralists, historians, sociologists, and politicians the impartial study of the social world, and condemns them to the search of reasons that may serve as excuses for its phenomenal fortune.\* Concerned only with the returns received or to be received, they are trying to find out, if by

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\*The history of political economy is instructive. At a time when capitalist production, in the first stage of its evolution, had not yet transformed the mass of the bourgeois into parasites, the Physiocrats, Adam Smith, Ricardo, etc., could make an impartial study of economic phenomena, and search out the general laws of production. But since the machine-tool and steam require the co-operative efforts

some lucky chance social wealth might not have other sources than the labor of the wage-worker, and they have discovered that the labor, the economy, the method, the honesty, the knowledge, the intelligence, and many other virtues of the bourgeois manufacturers, merchants, landed proprietors, financiers, shareholders, and income-drawers, contributed to its production in a manner far more efficacious than the labor of the manual and intellectual wage-workers, and therefore they have the right to take the lion's share and to leave the others only the share of the beast of burden.

The bourgeois hears them with a smile, because they sing his praises, he even repeats these impudent assertions, and calls them eternal truths; but, however slender his intelligence, he can not admit these things in his inmost soul, for he has only to look around him to perceive that those who work their life through, if they do not possess capital, are poorer than Job, and that those who possess nothing but knowledge, intelligence, economy, honesty, and who exercise these qualities, must limit their ambition to their daily pittance, and rarely hope for anything beyond. Then he says to himself: "If the economists, the philosophers, and the politicians with all their wit and literary training have not been able, in

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of wage-workers alone in the creation of wealth, the economists confine themselves to the collection of facts and statistical figures, valuable for the speculations of commerce and the Stock Exchange, without endeavoring to group and classify them, so as to draw theoretical conclusions, since these could only be dangerous to the dominance of the possessing class. Instead of building up science they are fighting socialism; they have even wished to refute the Ricardian theory of value because socialist criticism had taken possession of it.

spite of their conscientious search, to find more valid reasons for explaining the wealth of the bourgeoisie, it is because there is something crooked in the business, some unknown cause whose mysteries are beyond us." An *Unknowable* of the social order plants itself before the capitalist's eyes.

The capitalist, for the sake of social peace, is interested that the wage-workers should believe his riches to be the fruit of his innumerable virtues, but in reality he cares as little to know that they are the rewards of his good qualities as to know that truffles, which he eats as voraciously as the pig, are vegetables capable of cultivation; only one thing matters to him, namely, to possess them, and what troubles him is to think that he may lose them without any fault of his own. He can not help having this unpleasant perspective, since even in the narrow circle of his acquaintance, he has seen certain persons lose their possessions, while others became rich after having been in distress. The causes of these reverses and strokes of fortune are beyond him as well as beyond the people who experienced them. In a word, he observes a continual going and coming of wealth, the causes of which are for him within the realm of the *Unknowable*, and he is reduced to setting down these changes of fortune to chance, to luck. \*

It is too much to hope that the bourgeois should ever arrive at a positive notion of the phe-

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\*The capitalist mind has in all ages been tormented by the constant uncertainty of fortune, represented in Greek Mythology by a winged woman standing upon a wheel with her eyes bandaged. Theognis, the Megarian poet of the fifth

nomena of the distribution of wealth, since in proportion as mechanical production develops, property is depersonalized and takes on the collective and impersonal form of corporations with their stocks and bonds, the titles to which are finally dragged into the whirlpool of the stock exchange. There they pass from hand to hand without the buyers and sellers having seen the property which they represent, or even knowing exactly the geographical place where it is situated. They are exchanged, lost by some and won by others, in a manner which comes so near

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century before the Christian era, whose poetry, according to Isocrates, was a text book in the Greek schools, said: "No man is the cause of his gains and of his losses, the Gods are the distributors of wealth. \* \* \* We human beings cherish vain thoughts, but we know nothing. The Gods make all things come about according to their own will. \* \* Jupiter inclines the balance sometimes to one side and sometimes to the other, according to his will, that one may be rich, and then at another time may possess nothing. \* \* No man is rich or poor, noble or commoner, without the intervention of the Gods." The authors of Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Proverbs and Job make Jehovah play the same part. The Greek poet and the Jewish writers express the capitalists thought.

Megara, like Corinth, its rival, was one of the first maritime cities of ancient Greece in which commerce and industry developed. A numerous class of artisans and capitalists took shape there and stirred up civil wars in its struggle for political power. About sixty years before the birth of Theognis, the democrats, after a victorious revolt, abolished the debts due to the aristocrats and required the restitution of the interest which had been extorted. Theognis, although a member of the aristocratic class and although he cherished a ferocious hatred against the democrats, whose black blood as he said he would gladly have drunk, because they had robbed and banished him, could not escape the influence of the bourgeois social environment. He is impregnated with its ideas and sentiments, and even with its language; thus on several occasions he draws metaphors from the assaying of gold, to which the merchants were constantly obliged to resort that they might know the value of the coins and ingots given them in exchange. It is precisely because the gnomic poetry of Theognis, like the books of the Old Testament, carried the maxims of bourgeois wisdom, that it was a school book in democratic Athens. It was, said Xenophon, a treatise on man such as a skillful horseman might write on the art of riding.



gambling that the distinction is difficult to draw. All modern economic development tends more and more to transform capitalist society into one vast international gambling house where the bourgeois win and lose capital, thanks to unknown events which escape all foresight, all calculation, and which seem to them to depend on nothing but chance. The Unknowable is enthroned in bourgeois society as in a gambling house.

Gambling, which on the stock exchange is seen without disguise, has always been one of the conditions of commerce and industry; their risks are so numerous and so unforeseen, that often the enterprises which are conceived, calculated and carried out most skillfully fail, while others undertaken lightly, in a happy-go-lucky fashion, succeed. These successes and failures, due to unexpected causes generally unknown and apparently arising only from chance, predispose the bourgeois to the mental attitude of the gamester; the game of the stock exchange fortifies and vivifies this mental cast. The capitalist whose fortune is invested in stocks sold on the exchange, who is ignorant of the reason for the variations of their prices and dividends, is a professional gamester. Now the gamester, who can account for his gains or losses only as a good run or a bad run, is an eminently superstitious individual; the frequenters of gambling houses all have magical charms to compel good fortune; one mumbles a prayer to St. Anthony of Padua, or no matter what spirit from Heaven, another plays only when a certain color has won, another holds a rabbit's foot in his left hand, etc.

The Unknowable of the social order envelops the bourgeois as the Unknowable of the natural order surrounded the savage; all or nearly all the acts of civilized life tend to develop in him the superstitious and mystical habit of assigning everything to chance, like the professional gamester. Credit, for example, without which commerce and industry are impossible, is an act of faith in chance, in the unknown, performed by him who gives the credit, since he has no positive guarantee that the one who receives the credit will be able to meet his obligations at maturity, his solvency depending upon a thousand and one accidents that can not be foreseen nor understood.

Other economic phenomena instill every day into the bourgeois mind the belief in a mystical force without material support; detached from everything material. The bank note, to cite a single example, holds within itself a social force so far beyond its small material consequence that it prepares the bourgeois mind for the idea of a force, which should exist independently of matter. This miserable rag of paper, which no one would stoop to pick up, were it not for its magical power, gives its possessor all material things most to be desired in the civilized world; bread, meats, wine, house, lands, horses, women, health, consideration, honors, etc., the pleasures of the senses and the delights of the soul; God could do no more. Bourgeois life is woven out of mysticism.\*

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\*Renan, whose cultivated mind was clouded with mysticism, had decided sympathy for the impersonal form of property. He relates in his "Memories of Childhood" (VI.), that instead of devoting his gains to the acquirement of real estate he preferred buying "stocks and bonds, which are lighter, more fragile, more ethereal." The bank note is a value quite as ethereal as stocks and bonds.

Commercial and industrial crises confront the terrified bourgeois,—uncontrollable, unchecked forces of a power so irresistible that they scatter disasters as terrible as the wrath of the Christian God. When they are unchained in the civilized world they ruin capitalists by thousands and destroy products and means of production by hundreds of millions. For a century the economists have recorded their periodical returns without being able to advance any plausible hypothesis of their origin. The impossibility of finding their causes on earth has suggested to certain English economists the idea of looking for them in the sun; its spots, they say, destroying by droughts the harvests of India, might diminish its capacity for purchasing European merchandise and might determine the crises. These grave sages carry us back scientifically to the judicial astrology of the middle ages, which subjected the events of human societies to the conjunction of the stars, and to the belief of savages in the action of shooting stars, comets, and eclipses of the moon upon their destinies.

The economic world swarms with fathomless mysteries for the bourgeois, mysteries which the economists resign themselves to leaving unexplored. The capitalist, who, thanks to his scientists, has succeeded in domesticating natural forces, is so amazed by the incomprehensible effects of economic forces that he declares them uncontrollable, like God, and he thinks that the wisest course is to endure patiently the ills which they inflict and accept gratefully the favors which they grant. He says with Job: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the

name of the Lord." Economic forces appear to him in a fantasm as friendly and hostile spirits.\*

The terrible and inexplicable phenomena of the social order which surround the capitalist and strike him without his knowing why or how, in his industry, his commerce, his fortune, his well-being, his life, are as disquieting for him as were for the savage the terrible and inexplicable phenomena of nature which excited and overheated his exuberant imagination. Anthropologists account for the primitive man's belief in witchcraft, in the soul, in spirits and in God, on the ground of his ignorance of the natural world: the same explanation holds for the civilized man; his spiritualist ideas and his belief in God should be attributed to his ignorance of the social world. The uncertain duration of his prosperity, and the unknowable causes of his fortunes and misfortunes, predispose the bourgeois to admit, like the savage, the existence of superior beings, which act on social phenomena as their fancies lead them, whether favorably or unfavorably, as described by Theognis and the writers of the Old Testament. To propitiate them he practices the grossest superstition, communicates with spirits from the other world, burns candles before sacred images and prays to the trinitarian God of the Christians or the one God of the philosophers.

The savage, in daily contact with nature, is

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\*Crises impress the bourgeois so vividly that they talk of them as if they were corporeal beings. The celebrated American humorist Artemus Ward relates that hearing certain financiers and manufacturers in New York affirm so positively, "The crisis has come, it is here," he thought it must be in the room, and to see what kind of a head it had, he began looking for it under the tables and chairs.

especially impressed by the unknown things of the natural order, which on the contrary worry the bourgeois but slightly; the only nature he knows about has been agreeably decorated, trimmed, graveled, raked off and generally domesticated. The numerous services that science has already rendered for his enrichment, and those he still expects from her, have engendered in his mind a blind faith in her power. He does not doubt but that some day she will solve the unknown problems of nature and even prolong indefinitely his own life, as promised by Metchnikoff, the microbe-maniac. But it is not so with the unknown things of the social world, the only ones that trouble him; these seem to him impossible of comprehension. It is the unknowable of the social world, not of the natural world, which insinuates into his unimaginative head the idea of God, an idea which he did not have the trouble of inventing, but found ready to be appropriated. The incomprehensible and insoluble social problems make God so necessary that he would have invented Him, had need been.

The bourgeois, vexed by the bewildering go and come of fortunes and misfortunes, and by the puzzling play of economic forces, is furthermore confused by the brutal contradiction of his own conduct and that of his fellows with the current notions of justice, morality, honesty; he repeats these sententiously, but refrains from regulating his acts by them, although he insists that they be observed strictly by the people who come into contact with him. For example, if the merchant hands his customer goods that are damaged or adulterated, he still wishes to be paid in sterling

money; if a manufacturer cheats the laborer on the measurement of his work, he will not submit to losing a minute of the day for which he pays him; if the bourgeois patriot (all bourgeois are patriots) seizes the fatherland of a weaker nation, his commercial dogma is still the integrity of his country, which according to Cecil Rhodes is a vast commercial establishment. Justice, morality, and other principles more or less eternal, are valuable for the bourgeois, but only if they serve his interests; they have a double face, an indulgent and smiling one turned toward himself, and a frowning and commanding face turned toward others.

The constant and general contradiction between people's acts and their notions of justice and morality, which might be thought of a nature to disturb the idea of a just God in the bourgeois mind, rather confirms it, and prepares the ground for that of the immortality of the soul, which had disappeared among nations that had reached the patriarchal period. This idea is preserved, strengthened and constantly revived in the bourgeois by his habit of expecting a reward for everything he does or does not do.\* He employs

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\*Theognis, like Job and other Old Testament authors, is embarrassed by the difficulty of reconciling the injustice of men with the justice of God. "O son of Saturn," says the Greek poet, "how canst thou grant the same lot to the just and to the unjust? \* \* \* O king of the immortals, is it just that he who has committed no shameful act, who has not transgressed the law, who has sworn no false oaths, but who has always remained honorable, should suffer? \* \* \* The unjust man, full of himself, who fears the wrath neither of men nor of gods, who commits deeds of injustice, is gorged with riches, while the just man shall be despoiled and shall be consumed by hard poverty. \* \* What mortal is he that, seeing these things, shall fear the gods?"

The Psalmist says: "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches \* \* \*

laborers, manufactures goods, buys, sells, lends money, renders any service, whatever it be, only in the hope of being rewarded, of reaping a benefit. The constant expectation of profit results in his performing no act for the pleasure in it, but to pocket a recompense; if he is generous, charitable, honorable, or even if he limits himself to not being dishonest, the satisfaction of his conscience is not enough for him; a reward is essential if he is to be satisfied and not feel that he has been duped by his good and candid feelings; if he does not receive his reward on earth, which is generally the case, he counts on getting it in heaven. Not only does he expect a reward for his good acts, and his abstention from bad acts, but he hopes to receive compensation for his misfortunes, his failures, his vexations and even his annoyances. His ego is so aggressive that to satisfy it he annexes heaven to earth. The wrongs in civilization are so numerous and so crying, and those of which he is the victim assume in his eyes such boundless proportions, that his sense of eternal justice can not conceive but that some day they shall be redressed; and it is only in another world that this day can shine; only in heaven is he assured of receiving the reward for his misfortunes. Life after death becomes for him a

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When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. \*  
\* \* I was envious of the foolish (those who fear not the Eternal) when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." (Psalm LXXIII.)

Theognis and the Jews of the Old Testament, not believing in the existence of the soul after death, think that it is on earth that the wicked is punished, "for higher is the wisdom of the gods," says the Greek moralist. "But that vexes the spirit of men, since it is not when the act is committed that the immortals wreak vengeance for the fault. One pays his debt in his own person, another condemns his children to misfortune." Men are punished for Adam's sin, according to Christianity.

certainty, for his good God, just and adorned with all bourgeois virtues, can not but grant him rewards for what he has done and has not done, and amends for what he has suffered; in the business tribunal of heaven, the accounts not adjusted on earth will be audited.

The bourgeois does not give the name of injustice to his monopolizing of the wealth created by wage-workers; for him this robbery is justice itself, and he can not conceive how any imaginable God could have a different opinion on the subject. Nevertheless, he regards it as no violation of eternal justice to allow the laborers to cherish the desire to improve their conditions of life and of labor; but as he is keenly aware that these improvements would have to be made at his expense, he thinks it good policy to promise them a future life, where they shall feast like bourgeois. The promise of posthumous happiness is for him the most economical way to satisfy the laborers' demands. Life beyond the grave, at first a pleasure of hope for the satisfaction of his ego, becomes an instrument of exploitation.

Once it is settled that in heaven the accounts of earth are to be definitely settled, God necessarily becomes a judge having at his disposal an Eldorado for some and a prison for others, as is laid down by Christianity, following Plato.\* The

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\*Socrates, in the tenth and last book of the Republic, cites as worthy of belief the story of an Armenian who, left for dead ten days on the battle-field, came to life again, like Jesus, and related that he had seen in the other world "souls punished ten times for each unjust act committed on earth." They were tortured by "hideous men, who appeared all on fire. \* \* They flayed the criminals, dragged them over thorns, etc." The Christians, who drew part of their moral ideas from the Platonic sophistry, had but to complete and improve Socrates' story to establish their hell, adorned with such frightful horrors.



celestial judge renders his decrees according to the judicial code of civilization, enriched by a few moral laws which can not figure in it, owing to the impossibility of establishing the offense and finding the proof.

The modern bourgeois occupies himself mainly with the rewards and compensations beyond the tomb; he takes but a moderate interest in the punishment of the wicked, that is to say, the people who have injured him personally. The Christian hell disturbs him little; first, because he is convinced that he has done nothing and can do nothing to deserve it, and second, because his resentment against his fellows who have sinned against him is but short-lived. He is always disposed to renew his relations of business or pleasure with them if he sees any advantage in it; he even has a certain esteem for those who have duped him, since after all they have done to him only what he has done or would have liked to do to them. Every day in bourgeois society we see persons whose pilferings had made a scandal, and who might have been thought forever lost, return to the surface and achieve an honorable position; nothing but money was demanded of them as a condition for resuming business and making honorable profits.\*

Hell could only have been invented by men and for men tortured by the hate and the passion of

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\*Emile Pereire, the day after the scandalous crash of the Credit Mobilier, of which he was the founder and manager, meeting on the boulevards a friend who made as though he would not recognize him, went straight to him and said loudly: "You can salute me, I have several millions yet." The challenge, interpreting so well the bourgeois feeling, received due comment and appreciation. Pereire died a hundred times a millionaire, honored and regretted.

vengeance. The God of the first Christians is a pitiless executioner, who takes a savory pleasure in feasting his eyes on the tortures inflicted for all eternity on the infidels, his enemies. "The Lord Jesus," says St. Paul, "shall ascend into heaven with the angels of his power, with burning flames of fire, working vengeance against those who know not God and who obey not the Gospel; they shall be punished with an everlasting punishment before the face of God and before the glory of his power."— II. Thess. i, 6-9. The Christian of those days expected with an equally fervent faith for the reward of his piety and the punishment of his enemies, who became the enemies of God. The bourgeois, no longer cherishing these fierce hates (hate brings no profits), no longer needs a hell to assuage his vengeance, nor an executioner-God to chastise his associates who have clashed with him.

The belief of the bourgeoisie in God and in the immortality of the soul is one of the ideological phenomena of its social environment; it will never lose it till it is dispossessed of its wealth stolen from wage-workers, and transformed from a parasitic class into a productive class.

The bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century, which struggled in France to grasp the social dictatorship, attacked furiously the Catholic clergy and Christianity, because they were props of the aristocracy; if in the ardor of battle some of its chiefs, Diderot, La Mettrie, Helvetius, d'Holbach, pushed their irreligion to the point of atheism, others, quite as representative of its spirit, if not more so, Voltaire, Rousseau, Turgot, never arrived at the negation of God. The mate-

rialist and sensualist philosophers, Cabanis, Maine de Biran, de Gerando, who survived the Revolution, publicly retracted their infidel doctrines. We must not waste our time in accusing these remarkable men of having betrayed the philosophical opinions which, at the opening of their career, had assured them fame and livelihood; the bourgeoisie alone is guilty. Victorious, it lost its irreligious combativeness, and like the dog in the Bible, it returned to its vomit. These philosophers underwent the influence of the social environment; being bourgeois, they evolved with their class.

This social environment, from the workings of which not even the most learned nor the most emancipated of the bourgeois can free themselves, is responsible for the deism of men of genius, like Cuvier, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Faraday, Darwin, and for the agnosticism and positivism of contemporary scientists, who, not daring to deny God, abstain from concerning themselves with him. But this very act is an implicit recognition of the existence of God, whom they need in order to understand the social world, which seems to them the plaything of chance, rather than ruled by the law of necessity, like the natural world.

M. Brunetiere, thinking to dart an epigram at the free-thought of his class, quotes the phrase of the German Jesuit Gruber, that "the Unknowable is an idea of God appropriate to Free Masonry." The Unknowable can not be any one's idea of God; but it is its generating cause, in savages and barbarians as well as in Christian bourgeois or Free Masons. If the unknown elements of the natural environment made necessary for the sav-

age and barbarian the idea of a God, creator and ruler of the world, the unknown elements of the social environment make necessary for the bourgeois the idea of a God who shall distribute the wealth stolen from the manual and intellectual wage-workers, dispense blessings and curses, reward good deeds, avenge injuries and repair wrongs. The savage and the bourgeois are drawn unsuspectingly into the belief in God, just as they are carried along by the rotation of the earth.

## IV

## EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF GOD

The idea of God, planted and germinated in the human brain by the unknown elements of the natural environment and the social environment, is not something invariable; it varies on the contrary according to time and place; it evolves in proportion as the mode of production develops, transforming the social environment.

God, for the Greeks, the Romans and other ancient peoples, had his dwelling in a given spot, and existed only to be useful to his adorers and hurtful to their enemies; each family had its private gods, the spirits of deified ancestors, and each city had its municipal or state god. The municipal god or goddess dwelt in the temple consecrated to him or her and was incorporated into the image which often was a block of wood or a stone; he or she was interested in the fate of the inhabitants of the city of these alone. The ancestral gods concerned themselves only with family affairs. The Jehovah of the Bible was a god of this kind; he lodged in a wooden box, called Ark of the Covenant, which was carried along when the tribes changed their location; they put it at the head of the army, that Jehovah might fight for his people; if he chastised them cruelly for their infractions of his law, he also rendered them many services, as the Old Testament reports. When the municipal god was not in the

best of circumstances, they associated another divinity with him; the Romans, during the second Punic war, brought over from Pessinonte the statue of Cybele, that the goddess from Asia Minor might aid them in their defense against Hannibal. The Christians had no other idea of divinity when they demolished the temples and broke the statues of the gods in order to oust them and keep them from protecting the pagans.

The savages thought that the soul was the replica of the body, so their deified spirits, though incorporated into stones, blocks of wood or beasts, preserved the human form. Similarly for St. Paul and the apostles, God was anthropomorphic, they made of him a Man-God, like to themselves both in body and mind; while the modern capitalist conceives him as without head or arms, and present in all the nooks and corners of the earth, instead of being quartered in one certain locality.

The Greeks and Romans, like the Jews and the first Christians had no thought of their god being the only god of creation; the Jews believed in Moloch, Baal and other gods of the nations with which they warred as firmly as in Jehovah, and the Christians of the first centuries and of the middle ages, while they called Jupiter and Allah false gods, still took them for gods, who could work wonders quite as well as Jesus and his Eternal Father.\* This belief in a multiplicity of

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\*Tertullian in his Apologetics and St. Augustin in his "City of God" relate as undeniable facts that Esculapius had raised several persons, mentioned by name, from the dead, that a Vestal had carried water from the Tiber in a sieve, that another Vestal had towed a ship with her girdle, etc.

gods made it possible for each city to have a god attached to its service, shut up in a temple and incorporated into a statue or some such object; Jehovah was in a stone. The modern capitalist who thinks that his God is present in all places of the earth can not but arrive at the notion of one sole God; and the ubiquity which he attributes to his God prevents his representing him with face and buttocks, arms and legs, like Homer's Zeus and St. Paul's Jesus.

The municipal divinities, which belonged to the warlike cities of antiquity, always at strife with neighboring peoples, could not answer to the religious needs which mercantile production created in the bourgeois democracies of the commercial and industrial cities, obliged on the contrary to maintain pacific relations with surrounding nations. The necessities of commerce and industry forced the new-born Bourgeoisie to demunicipalize the city divinities and create cosmopolitan gods. Six or seven centuries before the Christian era we observe in the maritime cities of Ionia, Magna Grecia and Greece attempts to organize religions whose gods should not be exclusively monopolized by one city, but should be recognized and worshipped by different nations, even hostile ones. These new divinities, Isis, Demeter, Dionysos, Mithra, Jesus, etc., several of whom belonged to the matriarchal epoch, still took on the human form, though the need was beginning to be felt of a Supreme Being which should not be anthropomorphic; but it is not until the capitalist epoch that the idea of an amorphous god has imposed itself, as a consequence of the impersonal form taken on by the property of corporations.

Impersonal property, which introduced a mode of possession absolutely new and diametrically opposed to that which had previously existed, was necessarily destined to modify the habits and customs of the bourgeois and consequently transform his mentality. Until its appearance, the possibilities of ownership were limited to a vineyard in the Bordelais, a weaving establishment at Rouen, a forge at Marseilles or a grocery in Paris. Each of these properties, distinct in the character of the industry and in its geographical situation, was possessed by one single individual, or by two or three at the most; it was a rare thing for one individual to possess several of them. It is otherwise with impersonal property: a railroad, a mine, a bank, etc., are possessed by hundreds and thousands of capitalists, while one and the same capitalist may have side by side in his portfolio bonds of France, Prussia, Turkey and Japan, with stocks of gold mines in the Transvaal, electric railways in China, a line of trans-Atlantic steamers, a coffee plantation in Brazil, a coal mine in France, etc. No such ties of affection can link the capitalist to the impersonal property he possesses as bind the bourgeois to the property that he administers, or that is operated under his control; his interest in it is proportioned only to the price paid for the stock and the rate of dividend it bears. It is a matter of absolute indifference to him whether the dividend be declared by a scavenger enterprise, a sugar refinery or a cotton-spinning mill, and whether the production be carried on at Paris or at Peking. Once the dividend becomes all-important, the distinguishing characteristics of the properties produc-



ing it disappear, and these properties in different industries, differently situated, are for the capitalist one sole dividend-bearing property, whose certificates, circulating on the stock exchange, continue to keep various names of trades and of countries.

Impersonal property, embracing all trades and extending all over the globe, unrolls its tentacles armed with suckers greedy for dividends, in a Christian nation just as it does in realms of Mohammedanism, Buddhism or fetichism. The accumulation of wealth is the absorbing and mastering passion of the capitalist, and so this identification of properties of different sorts and countries in one sole and cosmopolitan property was bound to reflect itself in his intelligence and to influence his conception of God.\* Impersonal property without any doubt leads him to amalgamate the gods of the earth into one sole and cosmopolitan God, who according to the various countries bears the name of Jesus, Allah or Buddha, and is worshipped according to different rites.

It is a matter of historical fact that the idea of one sole and universal God, which Anaxagoras was one of the first to conceive, and which through the centuries lived only in the brains of a few thinkers, did not become a current idea until capitalist civilization appeared. But as by the side of this impersonal, sole and cosmopolitan property there still exist countless personal and local properties, so certain local and anthropomorphic gods touch elbows in the capitalist's brain with the one and cosmopolitan God. The

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\*"Wealth engenders not satiety," says Theognis, "the man who has the most strives ever to double it."

division into nations, which are commercial and industrial rivals, compels the Bourgeoisie to parcel out its one God into as many gods as there are nations; thus every nation of Christendom thinks that the Christian God, who is all the while the God of all the Christians, is its national god, like Jehovah of the Jews and Pallas-Athene of the Athenians. When two Christian nations declare war, each prays its national and Christian God to fight on its side, and if it is victorious, it sings *Te Deums* to thank him for having beaten the rival nation and *its* national and Christian God. The pagans made different gods fight among themselves, the Christians make their one God fight with himself. The one and cosmopolitan God could not completely dethrone the national gods in the bourgeois brain unless all the bourgeois nations were centralized into one single nation.

Impersonal property possesses other qualities, which it has transmitted to its one and cosmopolitan God. The proprietor of a wheat field, a carpenter's shop or a haberdashery can see, touch, measure, and appraise his property, the clear and precise form of which strikes his senses. But the owner of government bonds and of shares in a railroad, a coal mine, an insurance company or a bank can not see, touch, measure, appraise the parcel of property represented by his bonds and stocks, in whatever forest or government building, in whatever wagon, ton of coal, insurance policy or bank safe he might suppose it to be found. His fragment of property is lost, buried in a vast whole that he can not even picture to himself; for if he has seen locomotives and sta-

tions, as well as subterranean galleries, he has never seen a railroad nor a mine in its entirety; and a national debt, a bank and an insurance company are not capable of being represented by any image whatever. The impersonal property of which he is one of the co-proprietors can not assume in his imagination other than a vague, uncertain, indeterminate form; it is for him rather a rational being, which reveals its existence by dividends, than a tangible reality. Nevertheless this impersonal property, though indefinite as a metaphysical conception, provides for all his needs, like the Heavenly Father of the Christians, without requiring from him any more labor of body and brain than to take in his dividends: he receives them in blessed laziness of body and soul as a Grace of Capital, of which the Grace of God, "the truest of Christian doctrines," as Renan says, is the religious reflection. He troubles his brain as little to study the nature of the impersonal property which gives him interest and dividends as he does to know whether his one and cosmopolitan God is man, woman or beast, intelligent or idiotic, and whether he possesses the qualities of strength, ferocity, justice, kindness, etc., with which the anthropomorphic gods had been endowed. He wastes no time on prayers, because he is sure that no supplication will modify the rate of interest or dividend on the impersonal property of which his one and cosmopolitan God is the intellectual reflection.

At the very time when impersonal property was transforming the anthropomorphic God of the Christians into an amorphous God and a rational being,—into a metaphysical conception, it was tak-

ing away from the religious feeling of the Bourgeoisie the virulence which had produced the fanatical fever of martyrs, crusaders and inquisitors; it was transforming religion into a matter of personal taste, like cookery, which each suits to his fancy, with butter or with oil, with garlic or without. But if the capitalist Bourgeoisie needs a religion, and finds liberal Christianity to its taste, it can not accept without serious amendments the Catholic Church, whose inquisitorial despotism descends to the details of private life, and whose organization of bishops, curates, monks and Jesuits, disciplined and obedient to wink and nod, is a menace to its public order. The Catholic Church was endurable for the feudal society, all of whose members, from serf to king, were graded in a hierarchy and bound to each other by reciprocal rights and duties; but it can not be tolerated by the bourgeois democracy, whose members, equal before the law, but divided by their interests, wage perpetual industrial and commercial war among themselves, and always claim the right to criticize the constituted authorities, and hold them responsible for their economic mischances.

The capitalist, who does not want any obstacle to his getting rich, found it equally impossible to tolerate the guild organization of master-workmen, which supervise the manner of producing and the quality of the product. He crushed it. Freed from all control, he now has but his own interest to consult in making his fortune, each according to the means at his disposal: on his elastic conscience alone depends the quality of the goods that he makes and sells; it is for the cus-

tomers to see that he is not deceived with regard to the quality, weight and price of what he buys. Every one for himself, and God, in other words money, for all. The freedom of industry and commerce could not but reflect itself in his way of conceiving religion, which each one understands as he likes. Each makes his own arrangements with God, as with his conscience in a business matter; each according to his interests and his light interprets the teachings of the church and the words of the Bible, which is put into the hands of the Protestants, as the Code is put into the hands of all the capitalists.

The capitalist can be neither martyr nor inquisitor, because he has lost the furor of proselytism which inflamed the first Christians. They had a vital interest in increasing the number of believers, in order to swell the army of malcontents, giving battle to pagan society. Yet he has a sort of religious proselytism, without breath and without conviction, which is conditioned by his exploitation of woman and of the wage-worker.

Woman must be pliable to his wishes. He wishes her faithful and unfaithful according to his desires. If she is the wife of a brother capitalist, and if he is courting her, he demands her infidelity as a duty toward his Ego, and he unfurls his rhetoric to relieve her of her religious scruples; if she is his lawful wife, she becomes his property, and must be inviolate; he requires from her a fidelity equal to every test, and employs religion to force conjugal duty toward him into her head.

The wage-worker ought to be resigned to his

lot. The social function of exploiter of labor requires the capitalist to propagate the Christian religion, preaching humility and submission to God, who chooses the masters and sets off the servants, and to complete the teachings of Christianity by the eternal principles of democracy. It is quite to his interest that the wage-workers exhaust their brain power in controversies on the truths of religion and in discussions on Justice, Liberty, Ethics, Patriotism and other such booby-traps, in order that they may not have a minute left to reflect on their wretched condition and the means for improving it. The famous radical and free-trader, John Bright, appreciated this stultifying method so thoroughly, that he devoted his Sundays to reading and commenting on the Bible for his laborers. But the profession of Biblical brain-destroyer, which English\* capitalists of both sexes may undertake to kill time or as a whim, is of necessity irregular, like any amateur work. The capitalist class needs to have at its disposal professionals in brain destroying to fulfill this task. He finds them in the clergy of all cults. But every medal has its reverse side. The reading of the Bible by wage-workers presents dangers that one day some pious Rockefeller will recognize; and to meet this situation he will organize a company for the publication of popular Bibles expurgated of the complaints against the iniquities of the rich and of the cries of envious wrath against their scandalous good fortune. The Catholic Church, foreseeing these dangers, had

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\*The author might have included American capitalists; witness the famous Bible class of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.  
—TRANSLATOR.

provided against them, by forbidding the faithful to read the Bible, and by burning Wycliffe, the first to translate it into a vulgar tongue. The Catholic clergy, with its neuvaines, its pilgrimages, and its other mummeries, is of all clergies that which practices most wisely the art of brain-destruction; it is also the best equipped for furnishing ignorant brothers and sisters to teach in primary schools, and nuns to stand guard over women in factories. The great industrial capitalists, on account of its manifold services, sustain it politically and financially, in spite of their antipathy for its hierarchy, its rapacity, and its intrusion into family affairs.

## V.

## CAUSES OF THE IRRELIGION OF THE PROLETARIAT

The numerous attempts made in Europe and America to christianize the industrial proletariat have completely miscarried; they have not succeeded in moving it from its religious indifference, which becomes general in proportion as machine production enlists new recruits from the peasants, artisans and petty tradesmen into the army of wage-workers.

Machine production, which makes the capitalist religious, tends on the contrary to make the proletariat irreligious.

If it is logical for the capitalist to believe in a Providence attentive to his needs, and in a God who elects him among thousand of thousands, to load with riches his laziness and social inutility, it is still more logical for the proletarian to ignore the existence of a divine Providence, since he knows that no Heavenly Father would give him daily bread if he prayed from morning to evening, and that the wage which produces for him the bare necessities of life is earned by his own labor; and he knows only too well that if he did not work he would starve, in spite of all the Good Gods of heaven and all the philanthropists of earth. The wage-worker is his own providence. His conditions of life make any other providence inconceivable for him; he has not in his life, as the capital-



**ist in his**, those strokes of fortune which might by magic lift him out of his sad situation. Wage-worker he is born, wage-worker he lives, wage-worker he dies. His ambition can not go beyond a raise in wages and a job that shall last all the days of the year and all the years of his life. The unforeseen hazards and chances of fortune which predispose the capitalist to superstitious ideas do not exist for the proletarian, and the idea of God can not appear in the human brain unless its coming is prepared for by certain superstitious ideas, no matter what their source.

If the wage-worker were to let himself be drawn into a belief in that God, whom he hears talked of without paying attention, he would begin by questioning his justice, which allotted to him nothing but work and poverty; he would make the God an object of horror and of hate, and would picture him under the form and aspect of a capitalist exploiter, like the black slaves of the colonies, who said that God was white, like their masters.

Of course the wage-worker has no more idea of the course of economic phenomena than the capitalist and his economists, nor does he understand why, as regularly as night succeeds day, the periods of industrial prosperity and work at high pressure are followed by crises and lockouts. This failure to understand, which predisposes the mind of the capitalist to belief in God, has not the same effect on that of the wage-worker, because they occupy different positions in modern production. The possession of the means of production gives the capitalist the direction absolute and arbitrary of the production and distribution of products,

and obliges him, consequently, to concern himself with the causes which govern them: the wage-worker, on the contrary, has no right to trouble himself with them. He has no part in the direction of the productive process, nor in the choice and the procuring of the raw materials, nor in the manner of producing, nor in the sale of the product; he has but to furnish labor like a beast of burden. The passive obedience of the Jesuits, which arouses the wordy indignation of the free-thinkers, is the law in the army and the workshop. The capitalist plants the wage-worker in front of the moving machine, loaded with raw materials, and orders him to work; he becomes a cog of the machine. He has in production but one aim, the wage, the sole interest which capitalism has been forced to leave him; when he has drawn this, he has nothing more to claim. The wage being the sole interest that it has permitted him to keep in production, he therefore has to concern himself simply with having work so as to receive wages; and as the employer or his representatives are the givers of work, it is they, men of flesh and blood like himself, that he blames, if he has or has not work, and not economic phenomena, which he may be entirely ignorant of; it is against these men that he is irritated on account of the reductions of wage and slackness of work, and not against the general perturbations of production. He holds them responsible for all that comes to him, good or evil. The wage-worker personalizes the accidents of production which affect him, while the possession of the means of production is depersonalized in proportion as they take the form of machinery.

The life led by the laborer in the great industries has removed him even more than the capitalist from the influences of the environment of nature which in the peasant keep up the belief in ghosts, in sorceries, in witchcraft and other superstitious ideas. He sees the sun only through the factory windows; he knows nature only from the country surrounding the city where he works, and that he sees only on rare occasions; he could not distinguish a field of wheat from a field of oats nor a potato plant from hemp; he knows the products of the earth only in the form under which he consumes them. He is completely ignorant of the work of the fields and the causes affecting the yield of the harvests; drought, excessive rains, hail, cyclones, etc., never make him think of their action on nature and her harvests. His urban life shelters him from the anxieties and the troublesome cares which assail the mind of the farmer. Nature has no hold upon his imagination.

The labor of the mechanical factory puts the wage-worker in touch with terrible natural forces unknown to the peasant, but instead of being mastered by them, he controls them. The gigantic mechanism of iron and steel which fills the factory, which makes him move like an automaton, which sometimes clutches him, mutilates him, bruises him, does not engender in him a superstitious terror as the thunder does in the peasant, but leaves him unmoved, for he knows that the limbs of the mechanical monster were fashioned and mounted by his comrades, and that he has but to push a lever to set it in motion or stop it. The machine, in spite of its miraculous power and

productiveness, has no mystery for him. The laborer in the electric works, who has but to turn a crank on a dial to send miles of motive power to tramways or light to the lamps of a city, has but to say, like the God of Genesis, "Let there be light," and there is light. Never sorcery more fantastic was imagined, yet for him this sorcery is a simple and natural thing. He would be greatly surprised if one were to come and tell him that a certain God might if he chose stop the machines and extinguish the lights when the electricity had been turned on; he would reply that this anarchistic God would be simply a misplaced gearing or a broken wire, and that it would be easy for him to seek and to find this disturbing God. The practice of the modern workshop teaches the wage-worker scientific determinism, without his needing to pass through the theoretical study of the sciences.

Since the capitalist and the proletarian no longer live in the fields, natural phenomena can no longer produce in them the superstitious ideas, which were utilized by the savage in elaborating his idea of God; but if the former, since he belongs to the ruling and parasitic class, undergoes the action of the social phenomena which generate superstitious ideas, the other, since he belongs to the exploited and productive class, is removed from their superstition-breeding action. The capitalist class can never be de-christianized and delivered from belief in God until it shall be expropriated from its class dictatorship and from the wealth that it plunders daily from the wage-working laborers.

The free and impartial study of nature has en-

gendered and firmly established in certain scientific circles the conviction that all phenomena are subject to the law of necessity, and that their determining causes must be sought within nature and not without. This study has, moreover, made possible the subjection of natural forces to the use of man.

But the industrial use of natural forces has transformed the means of production into economic organisms so gigantic that they escape the control of the capitalists who monopolize them, as is proved by the periodic crises of industry and commerce. These organisms of production, though of human creation, disturb the social environment, when crises break out, as blindly as the natural forces trouble nature when once unchained. The modern means of production can no longer be controlled except by society, and for that control to be established, they must first become social property; then only will they cease to engender social inequalities, to give wealth to the parasites and inflict miseries on the wage-working producers, and create world-wide perturbations which the capitalist and his economists can attribute only to chance and to unknown causes. When they shall be possessed and controlled by society, there will no longer be an Unknowable in the social order; then and only then, will belief in God be definitely eliminated from the human mind.

The indifference in religious matters of our modern laborers, the determining causes of which I have been tracing, is a new phenomenon, now produced for the first time in history: the popular masses have, till now, always elaborated the

spiritual ideas, which the philosophers have merely had to refine and to obscure, as well as the legends and the religious ideas, which the priests and the ruling classes have merely organized into official religions and instruments of intellectual oppression.

# **The Origin of Abstract Ideas**

**Inquiries Into the Origin of the Idea of  
Justice and the Idea of Goodness**





# I

## CONTRADICTIONARY OPINIONS REGARDING THE ORIGIN OF ABSTRACT IDEAS

It often happens in the history of thought that hypotheses and theories, after having been the object of study and discussion, disappear from the field of intellectual activity to reappear only after a season of oblivion more or less prolonged. Then they are examined anew in the light of the knowledge accumulated during the interval, and sometimes they end by being included in the baggage of acquired truths.

The theory of the continuity of species—unconsciously admitted by the savage, who takes for his ancestors plants and animals endowed with human qualities, scientifically foreseen by the thinkers of antiquity and the Renaissance, brilliantly defined by the naturalists at the close of the eighteenth century—had sunk into so deep an oblivion after the memorable debate between Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier that its conception was attributed to Darwin when he revived it in 1859 in his "Origin of Species." The proofs, which in 1831 had been lacking for Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire to bring victory for his thesis, "Unity of Plan," had been accumulated in such abundance that Darwin and his disciples had been able to complete the theory and impose it on the scientific world.

The materialistic theory of the origin of ab-

stract ideas had a similar experience: put forth and discussed by the thinkers of Greece, taken up in England by the philosophers of the seventeenth century, and in France by those of the eighteenth century—it has since the triumph of the Bourgeoisie been eliminated from philosophical preoccupations.

Alongside of the ideas which correspond to things and persons, there exist others which have no tangible counterpart in the objective world, such as the ideas of the Just, the True, the Good, the Evil; of Number, Cause and Infinity. If we are ignorant of the cerebral phenomenon which transforms the sensation into an idea—just as we do not know how a dynamo transforms motion into electricity—we have no trouble in taking account of the origin of the ideas which are the conceptions of objects apprehended by the senses; while the origin of the abstract ideas which do not correspond to any objective reality, has been the object of studies which have not yet given definite results.

The Greek philosophers, whom we meet at the entrance of all the avenues of thought, have stated and tried to solve the problem of abstract ideas. Zeno (the founder of the Stoic School) looked upon the senses as the source of knowledge, but the sensation became a conception only after having undergone a series of intellectual transformations.

The savages and barbarians, who were the creators of the Latin and Greek languages, anticipating the philosophers, seemed to have believed that thoughts proceeded from sensations, since in Greek *eidos*, the physical appearance of

the object, that which strikes the view, signifies "idea"; and in Latin *sapientia*, the taste of an object, that which strikes the palate, becomes "reason."

Plato, on the contrary, thought that the ideas of the Good, the True, the Beautiful, were innate, unchangeable, universal. "The soul in its journey in the track of God, disdaining what we improperly call beings, and raising its glances toward the one true Being had contemplated It and remembered what it had seen." (Phaedrus). Socrates had also placed apart from humanity a Natural Right whose laws, nowhere written, are

\*The Greeks seemed to have attached more importance to the sense of sight and the Latins to the sense of taste, as is proved by the following examples:

Greek *eidos* aspect, physical form.

*eidolon* image, shade, phantom, idea.

*phantasia* aspect, exterior form, image, idea.

*gnoma* sign, thought.

*gnomon* square, sun-dial, one who knows, scientist.

*noeo* to see, to think.

*saphes* plain, manifest, striking the vision.

*sophia* science, wisdom.

Latin *sapor* savor, taste in judging food, reason.

*sapidus* savory, pleasant to the taste, wise, virtuous.

*sapiens* one with a delicate palate, wise.

*sapio* to have taste, to have reason, to know.

This difference, regarding the sense-sources of ideas, characterizes these two nations which played so great a historic role; the one in the evolution of thought and in its poetic and plastic manifestation, and the other in the elaboration of law, in the brutal manipulation of men and nations, and in the unified organization of the ancient world.

The very young child and the savage carry to the mouth the object they wish to know; the chemists do the same. The French word *savoir*, to know, and its derivative *savant*, scientist, combine the two meanings. *Voir* indicates the function of the eye; and *sa* the last trace of the verb *sapio*, indicates the function of the palate.

(In this translation, as in the original French, the Greek words have been set in Roman type, since the book is intended for laborers rather than classical scholars, and the use of familiar letters makes the form of the words and the argument drawn from them plain to the ordinary reader.

—TRANSLATOR.)

nevertheless respected by all the world, although men may have never assembled together to enact them by a common agreement.\*

\*One of the unwritten laws of Socrates was the universal agreement to forbid sexual relations between the father or mother and their children. Xenophon, who had traveled in Persia and who was not ignorant that the magi practiced this incest to honor the divinity and beget the high priests, claimed it was contrary to natural and divine law because the children who were the issue of such matings are puny. He reduced the law from the natural right of his master, Socrates, into nothing more than a physiological law acquired by experience.

Socrates would seem to have forgotten that Hesiod, following the religious legends of his epoch, gives to Uranus for wife his own mother, Gaia, the most ancient goddess, "the mother of all things," according to Homer; in the religions of India, Scandinavia and Egypt we meet with cases of divine incest. Brahma marries his daughter Saravasty; Odin his daughter Frigga, and Amon in the "Anastasy Papyrus" in Berlin boasts of being the husband of his mother. These myths, which may be found in all primitive religions, have a historical value: the legends and religious ceremonies preserve the memory of epochs long buried in oblivion. The bible story of the sacrifice of Abraham and the Christian communion,—that symbolic repast in which the devout Catholic eats his incarnate God,—are the distant echoes of the human sacrifices and the cannibal feasts of the prehistoric Semites.

Man to create his religious legends employs the same process as to elaborate his ideas, he uses as materials events of his daily life; in the course of the centuries, the phenomena which gave birth to them are transformed and vanish, but the legendary or ceremonial form, which was their intellectual manifestation, survives; we need only interpret this intelligently to call up the customs of a past which was thought to be lost forever.

The incests practiced by the Persian priests, and the religious legends of peoples of such different races would therefore lead us to suppose that at a remote epoch sexual relations between parents and children were a customary thing. On this point Engels remarks that the savage tribes which first arrived at the point of forbidding them, must by this sole fact have acquired an advantage over their rivals, and must consequently either have destroyed them or imposed their customs upon them. It is thus more than probable, that the prohibition of these incestuous marriages, the most universal custom that is known,—so universal that Socrates thought it one of the laws of his Natural Right,—has not always prevailed, and that on the contrary those sexual relations were naturally practiced in the human species emerging from the animal. But experience having demonstrated their bad effects brought about their prohibition,—as Xenophon thought. Breeders have also been obliged to prevent them among the domestic animals in order to get good results.

Aristotle does not seem to have so robust a faith in Natural Right, which he jests at pleasantly when he assures us that it was inviolable only for the gods, however, the immortals of Olympus were quite at their ease with this Natural Right, and their doings and practices were so grossly shocking to the morals current among mortals, that Pythagoras condemned to the torments of hell the souls of Homer and Hesiod for having ventured to relate them.

Right, Aristotle said, was not universal. According to him it could only exist between equal persons. The father of a family, for example, could not commit an injustice toward his wife, his children or his slaves, nor toward any person in dependence on him. He could strike them, sell them and kill them without thereby departing from the right. Aristotle, as is usually done, adapted his Right to the manners of his epoch; as he did not conceive of the transformation of the patriarchal family, he found himself obliged to erect its customs into principles of right. But instead of according to Right a universal and immutable character, he conceded to it only a relative value and limited its action to persons placed on an equal footing.

But, how is it that his teacher Plato, whose mind was so subtle, who had under his eyes the same customs and who had no idea of their abolition, since in his ideal republic he introduced slavery—had not the same opinions regarding the relativity of Justice? A word dropped by Aristotle gives room for the theory that Plato, like the priests of the Sacred Mysteries and a majority of the sophists, had not explained in his writings the whole of his philosophy, but had revealed it

only to a small number of trusted disciples. He might have been intimidated by the condemnation of Socrates and the dangers incurred at Athens by Anaxogoras, who had imported thither from Ionia the Philosophy of Nature, and who escaped death only in flight.

This opinion is confirmed by an attentive and comparative reading of the dialogues of Plato, who, as Goethe remarks, often makes game of his readers. In any event, the teacher of Socrates and several of the disciples of the latter had but a slender idea of the immutability of Justice. Archelaus, who merited the surname of "Naturalist" (Phusikos), and who was the teacher of Socrates, denied Natural Right and maintained that civil laws were the only foundation for the notions of the Just and the Unjust. Aristippus, who, like Plato, was the disciple of Socrates, declared his profound contempt for Natural and Social Right, and professed that the wise man ought to put himself above civil laws and permit himself to do all they forbid when he could do so in safety: the action which they forbid being bad only in the vulgar opinion, invented to keep fools in check.\* Plato, without having the boldness to put forth such doctrines, showed by his acknowledged respect for pederasty, the little im-

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\*The anarchical opinions of Aristippus and the Cyrenaic School have been reproduced at various times in the course of history. Christian sects during the first centuries and during the middle ages; and political sects during the English Revolution of the seventeenth century and the French Revolution of the eighteenth century have revived them, and in our days certain anarchistic sects propagate them. The lack of social equilibrium translates itself in the brain by this cynical rejection of the notions of current and conventional ethics. I shall return to this interesting subject in the study devoted to the crisis of Greek philosophy.

portance he attached to the laws of Natural Right. This love against nature, forbidden to slaves, was the privilege of free citizens and virtuous men; in the "Republic" (Book 5) Socrates makes of this one of the rewards for warlike courage.

The quarrel over the origin of ideas was rekindled in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England and France when the Bourgeoisie was setting itself in motion and preparing to grasp the dictatorship of society. There are no innate ideas, declared Diderot and the Encyclopedists. Man comes into the world as a blank tablet on which the objects of nature engrave their impressions as time passes. The Sensationalist school of Condillac formulated its famous axiom, "Nothing exists in the understanding which has not originally been in the senses." Buffon advised the gathering of facts in order to procure ideas, which are nothing but compared sensations, or more accurately, associations of sensations.

Descartes, reviving the method of introspection, and the "Know Thyself" of Socrates, and bringing again into use the Chinese puzzle of the Alexandrian School, "Given the Self, to find God," isolated himself in his ego in order to know the universe, and dated from his ego the beginning of philosophy, for which he is reproached by Vico. As in his ego purified from beliefs that have been taught, or, so to speak, from the prejudices conceived from infancy by the senses, as well as from all truths taught by the sciences, Descartes found the ideas of Substance, of Cause, etc.; he supposed them to be inherent in the intelligence and not acquired by experience. They

were, according to Kant's expression, universal and necessary ideas, rational concepts whose objects can not be furnished by experience, but existing incontestably in our mind; whether we know it or not, we hold at every moment certain necessary and universal judgments; in the simplest propositions are contained the principles of Substance, Cause and Being.

Leibnitz replied to those who with Locke, affirmed that ideas were introduced by way of the senses, that in fact nothing existed in the understanding which had not originally been in the senses, except the understanding itself. Man, according to him, brought with him at birth certain ideas and conceptions concealed in his understanding which the encountering of exterior objects brought to light. The intelligence is preformed before individual experience begins. He compared the ideas and conceptions anterior to experience to the different colored veins which streak a block of marble, and which the skillful sculptor uses to adorn the statues he chisels from it.

Hobbes, who, before Locke, had said in his treatise on "Human Nature," that there were no ideas which had not previously existed in sensation, and that the sensations are the origins of ideas—reproducing the thesis of Archelaus, maintained in his "De Cive," that we must turn to the civil laws to know what was just and what was unjust. They indicate to us what must be called theft, murder, adultery or injury to a citizen; for it is not a theft simply to take away from some one that which he possesses, but that which belongs to him; now it is for the law to



determine what is ours and what is another's. Likewise, not every homicide is murder but rather when one kills one whom the civil law forbids putting to death; nor is it adultery to lie with a woman, but only to have to do with a woman whom the law forbids approaching."\*

The patricians of Rome and Athens committed no adultery in having connection with the wives of artisans, *in quas stuprum non committitur* "against whom a crime is not committed," said the brutal legal formula. They were consecrated to the aristocratic debauch. In our days the husband who in England should kill his wife, taken in the act of adultery, would be summarily hanged as a vulgar assassin; while in France, far from being punished he becomes a hero, who has avenged his honor. The course of a river suffices to transform a crime into a virtuous act, so said, before Pascal, the skeptic Montaigne. (Book 2, Chapter 13.)

Locke maintained that ideas came from two sources, sensation and reflection. Condillac apparently deprived the English philosopher's doctrine of one of its sources, reflection, leaving only sensation—which was transformed into attention, comparison, judgment, reason, and finally into desire and will.

His ex-disciple, Maine de Biran, casting sensation to the winds and restoring to honor the method of Descartes, who drew everything from

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\* "De Cive," Sorbière's translation, Amsterdam, 1649.

Hobbes in the "Leviathan" takes up the same thesis, which he thought it best to entrust only to the Latin in "De Cive:" "The desires and passions of man," he said, "are not sins in themselves any more than the actions which result from these passions are faults, until a law forbids them."

his ego as from a well, found in the understanding the point of departure of his ideas.\* The

\*The intellectual evolution of M. de. Biran is most interesting. It permits us to observe in the most remarkable French philosopher of the beginning of the nineteenth century the sudden and extraordinary veering of bourgeois thought, from the time when from being a revolutionary class, the Bourgeoisie became a ruling and conservative class. Biran in the manuscript of 1794, published after his death in 1824, declares that Bacon and Locke founded philosophical science and that Condillac "assigned its limits, and dissipated forever those dreams which are termed 'Metaphysics.'"

The National Institute, in which the sensationalism of Condillac was dominant, crowned in the month of Nivose of the year IX. (1801), a study of Biran on the "Influence of Custom Over the Faculty of Thought," which he had put up for competition. Biran there laid down as an axiom that the faculty of perception is the origin of all the faculties, and proposed to apply Bacon's method of the study of man and to throw light on metaphysics by transporting physics into it. De Gerando, who also found it necessary to abjure Condillac and his philosophy, in his monograph on the "Influence of Signs on the Faculty of Thought," crowned by the Institute in 1800, affirmed that the doctrine of Condillac was, as it were, the last word of human reason on the doctrines which interested it the most.

The Institute crowned in 1805 a new monograph by Biran on the "Decomposition of Thought." The political stage was transformed: the victorious Bourgeoisie was occupied in re-introducing and mustering into its service the Catholic religion, which it had ridiculed, despoiled and trampled under its feet when it was the maid-of-all-work of the aristocracy, its rival. While the men of politics were reorganizing the power, taking up and reinforcing the repressive forces of the ancient regime, the philosophers were taking up the task of clearing away the intellectual foundation of the "analytic and iconoclastic" philosophy of the Encyclopedists. The Institute in crowning this monograph of Biran, and he himself in writing it, were conscientiously fulfilling the task imposed by the new social conditions. Biran's monograph points out that there is somewhat of an illusion in the pretended analysis of Condillac, and in that sensation which transforms itself into judgment and will without one's having taken the trouble to assign to it a principle of transformation, he makes the method of Bacon—unseasonably applied to the study of the mind—responsible for the aberrations of the eighteenth century philosophy, and takes his stand against any assimilation between the physical phenomena perceived by the senses and internal facts. The Sophists had succeeded to the Philosophers.

Cabanis himself, who was to die in 1808, still had time to make his change of front. In his celebrated work on the "Relations of the Physical and the Ethical in Man," which appeared in 1802, he had written: "Medicine and ethics rest upon one common basis; upon a physical knowledge of

concepts of "Cause and Substance," he said, "are antecedent in our mind to the two principles which contain them. We first think these ideas within ourselves, in our knowledge of the Cause and the Substance that we are; once these ideas

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human nature. \* \* \* The source of ethics is in the human organization. \* \* \* If Condillac had understood animal economy he would have perceived that the soul is a faculty and not a being. We must consider the brain as a particular organ destined especially to produce thought, just as the stomach and intestines are destined to carry on digestion. **Impressions are the food of the brain.** \* \* \* They get into the brain and set it at work. \* \* \* They reach it isolated, without coherence, but the brain starts on its activity, acts upon them and soon sends them back metamorphosed into ideas. \* \* \* Cabanis, who had written these materialistic horrors, proclaimed—in his letter to Fauriel, on "First Causes," published sixteen years after his death—the existence of God; the intelligence governing the world, and the immortality of the soul by the persistence of the ego after death. Fauriel had converted Cabanis, as Fontanes had metamorphosed Chateaubriand from the atheistic **follower of Rousseau, who wrote the "Essays on Revolutions"** in 1797, into the reactionary and mystic Chateaubriand who wrote the "Genius of Christianity" in 1802. There existed then a little clique of proselyters influential in the press and departments of government, who had undertaken to **bring back the straying literary men and philosophers to sound doctrines.**

It is useless to waste any accusations of recanting and treason against the men who had gone through the revolution and come out on the other side. These remarkable men would perhaps have preferred to keep the political and philosophic opinions which at their start in life had brought them to the front, but they were obliged to sacrifice them to retain their means of existence and the positions they had won, and to conquer the favors of the Bourgeoisie grown wise. They replaced these opinions by the politics and philosophy suitable to its material interests and satisfying its intellectual needs. Besides, they were bourgeois, following the influences of their social environment; they evolved with their class and they could make this change of **skin without excessive pains.** So it is not a case for moral indignation, but for investigation and analysis of the social causes which imposed upon them certain political changes of front and certain intellectual transformations. There are few moments in history where we can grasp better than in the first years of the nineteenth century, the direct action of social events upon thought. This epoch is all the more characteristic that it is then that were formulated almost all the economic, political, philosophical, religious, literary and artistic theories which were thenceforth to **form the bulk of the intellectual baggage of the new ruling class.**

acquired, induction carries them outside of us and makes us conceive of causes and substances wherever there are phenomena and qualities." The principle of Cause and of Substance reduces itself to nothing but a phenomenon or rather a fiction of our understanding, to use Hume's phrase. The introspective method of Descartes and Socrates, which the Bourgeois spiritualists abused so liberally, leads on one side to skepticism and on the other to impotence, for, "to pretend to illuminate the depths of psychological activity by means of the individual consciousness is like wishing to light the universe with a match," says Maudsley.

The final victory of the Bourgeoisie in England and in France impressed a complete revolution upon philosophic thought. The theories of Hobbes, Locke and Condillac, after having occupied the center of the stage, were dethroned. People no longer deigned to discuss them and they were never mentioned unless truncated and falsified, to serve as examples of the wanderings into which the human spirit falls when it abandons the ways of God. The reaction went so far that under Charles X even the philosophy of the sophists of spiritualism fell under suspicion. An attempt was made to forbid their teaching in colleges.\*

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\*"In these last years," a professor of philosophy writes in 1828, "authority has almost brought back the study of philosophy to the age of Scholasticism. \* \* \* It has been ordered that lessons be given in Latin and under the form of ancient argumentation. This order is carried out in the most of our colleges. \* \* \* They are philosophizing in Latin from one end of France to the other, with the ceremonial and the etiquette of the ancient syllogism; and on what are they philosophizing? On the thesis of the school and on the *objecta* which correspond to them; that is to say, that the argument is on logic, metaphysics and ethics." (Essay on the "History of Philosophy in France in the Nineteenth Century" by Ph. Damiron, Professor of Philosophy in the College of Bourbon, Paris, 1828).

The triumphant Bourgeoisie re-established on the altar of its Reason the eternal truths and the most vulgar spiritualism. Justice, which the philosophers of Greece, England and France had reduced to reasonable proportions, which suited it to the conditions of the social environment in which it was manifested, became a necessary, immutable and universal principle. "Justice," cried one of the most academic sophists of the Bourgeois philosophy, "is invariable and always present, although it arrives only by degrees in human thought and in social facts. The limits of its field of action are ever extended and never narrowed; no human power can make it leave ground once acquired.

The Encyclopedists threw themselves with revolutionary enthusiasm into the quest of the origin of ideas, which they hoped to find by questioning the intelligence of children and savages.\* The new philosophy scornfully rejected these inquiries which were of a nature to lead to dangerous results. "Let us set aside in the first place

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\**La Societe des observateurs de l'homme* (Society of the Observers of Man), of which Cuvier, the alienist Pinel, the philosopher Gerando, the jurist Portalis, etc., were members, voted in the month of Prairial VIII. (1800) a prize of 600 francs for the following study: To determine by the daily observation of one or several children in the cradle the order in which the physical intellectual and moral faculties are developed, and to what point this development is helped or hindered by the influence of objects and persons surrounding the child.

In the same Session, reported in the "Décade Philosophique" of the 30th day of Prairial, Gerando offered certain ideas on the methods to be followed in the observations of savage nations. Another member contributed an essay on the childhood of Massieu, deaf and dumb from birth.

The Society was greatly interested in the observation of the young savage from Aveyron brought to Paris about the end of the year VIII. (1800). Three hunters found him in the forest where he lived naked, living on acorns and roots. He was apparently about ten years old.

the question of origin," exclaimed Victor Cousin, the master sophist, in his argument on the True, the Good and the Beautiful. "The philosophy of the last century was too complaisant to questions of this sort. To what purpose shall we call on the region of darkness for light, or on a mere hypothesis for the explanation of reality; why go back to a pretended primitive stage in order to account for a present stage which can be studied in itself; why inquire into the germ of that which can be perceived and which needs to be known in its finished and perfect form? We deny absolutely that human nature should be studied in the famous savage of Aveyron or in his peers of the Islands of Oceanica or the American Continent. The true man is man perfect in his type; the true human nature is human nature arrived at its full development, as the true society is also the perfected society. Let us turn away our eyes from the child and the savage to fix them upon the actual man, the real and finished man." (15th and 16th Lessons.) The ego of Socrates and Descartes could not but inevitably lead to the adoration of the bourgeois, the man perfect in his kind, real, finished,—the type of human nature arrived at its complete development and to the consecration of bourgeois society, the finished social order, founded upon the eternal and immutable principles of Goodness and Justice.

It is time to inquire into the value of this Justice and these eternal truths of Bourgeois spiritualism and to reopen the debate on the origin of ideas.

## II

## FORMATION OF THE INSTINCT AND OF ABSTRACT IDEAS

We may apply to the instinct of animals what the spiritualist philosophers call innate ideas. Beasts are born with an organic pre-disposition, an intellectual pre-formation, according to Leibnitz's phrase, which permits them to accomplish spontaneously, without going through the school of any experience, the most complicated acts necessary to their individual preservation and the propagation of their species. This pre-formation is nowhere more remarkable than in the insects which go through metamorphoses, as the butterfly and may-bug. According to their transformations, they adopt different kinds of life rigorously correlated with each of the new forms which they take on. Sebastien Mercier was altogether right when he declared that "instinct was an innate idea."\*

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\*On the seventh day of Nivose in the year VIII. (1800), S. Mercier delivered in Paris, just emerging from the Revolution, the first lecture on innate ideas, in order to "dethrone Condillac, Locke and their metaphysics." To Royer-Collard is attributed the first awakening of spiritualist philosophy, completely out of fashion for half a century. This honor, if honor there be, reverts to this unbalanced intellect, which opposed Kant to the Encyclopedists and noisily proposed to refute Newton, "that anatomist of light, who can imagine nothing more ridiculous than to make the earth turn like a turkey before the solar hearth." Bourgeois spiritualism could not have in France a more worthy godfather.

The lectures of Mercier made a sensation; they were largely attended. The *Décade Philosophique* of the Tenth Floreal gives an account of the lecture on innate ideas. "I

The spiritualists, not having the idea that instinct might be the result of the slow adaptation of a species of animals to the conditions of its natural environment, conclude stoutly that instinct is a gift of God. Man has never hesitated to put out of his reach the causes of the phenomena which escape him. But instinct is not like the Justice of the sophists of spiritualism, an immutable faculty, susceptible of no deviation, no modification. Domestic animals have more or less modified the instincts which God in his inexhaustible goodness bestowed on their savage ancestors. The chickens and ducks of our back yards have almost lost their instinct of flight, which became useless in the artificial environment in which man has placed them for centuries. The aquatic instincts has been obliterated in the ducks of Ceylon to such a degree that they have to be pushed to make them go into the water. Different varieties of chickens, Houdans, LaFleche, Campine,

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admit them," he exclaimed at the start, "and in this I obey my inmost reason. \* \* \* Man thinks independently of objects and senses. \* \* \* Innate ideas explain everything. The picture of the ideas of a man would be the picture of celestial truths. \* \* \* Instinct is an innate idea."

Mercier had a precedent, the celebrated decree of Robespierre, which re-established God like an ordinary police commissioner who had been thrown out.

Art. 1. The French Nation recognizes the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul.

Art. 4. Feasts shall be instituted to recall to man the thought of divinity and the dignity of his being.

A hymn recited at the feast of the restoration of the Supreme Being after the speech of Robespierre predicted the end of Atheism :

Where are they who dared threaten Thee  
 Who under the mantle of civism  
 Vile professors of Atheism  
 Hoped to efface Thee from the heart of man  
 \* \* \* \* \*

Did they think then \* \* \* \* \*  
 That in returning to nature  
 One would forget the Author of Nature?



etc., have been robbed of the imperative instinct of maternity; although excellent layers they never think of sitting on their eggs. The calves in certain parts of Germany for generations have been taken from their mothers at birth, and among the cows a notable weakening of the maternal instinct has been observed. Giard thinks that one of the prime causes of that instinct in the mammals might be the organic need of relief from the milk, which makes the breasts swollen and painful.\*

Another naturalist shows that the nest-building instinct of the stickleback must be attributed not to the Deity, but to a temporary inflammation of the kidneys during the mating season.

No very long time is necessary to reverse the best rooted instinct. Romanes cites the case of a hen which had been made to sit three times on duck's eggs and who conscientiously pushed into the water the true chickens which she had been permitted to hatch. Man has overturned the instincts of the canine race; according to his needs he has given it new instincts and afterwards has suppressed them. The dog in the savage state does not bark. The dogs of the savages are silent; civilized man has given the dog the instinct of barking and has afterwards suppressed it in

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\*The supplement of Figaro for January, 1880, reproduced from the letters of a missionary, the native lamentations of an Indian woman at the equator over the corpse of her new-born child, which illustrates the part played by the milk in the primitive maternal love: "Oh! my master, Oh! son of my vitals, my little father, my love, why have you left me? For you every day this breast with which you loved to play filled itself with warm milk. Ungrateful one! have I once forgotten you? Oh! woe is me; I have no longer any one to deliver my bosom from the milk which oppresses it."

dogs of certain breeds. When the hound encounters the game, he leaps upon it barking loudly, while the sight of game makes the setter mute and nails him to the spot. If the setter is of a good breed, he needs no individual education to manifest this instinct, which is relatively a new acquisition. The young dogs hunting for the first time stop mute and motionless in their path at the sight of stones, sheep, etc. The tendency is implanted in the brain, but it is blind and requires a special training. Since to modify or suppress the instincts of an animal and to develop new ones in him, it is only necessary to place him in new conditions of existence, the instinct of the wild animals is then only the result of their adaptation to the conditions of the natural environment in which they live. It is not created all at once; it is developed gradually in the animal species under the action and reaction of external and internal phenomena, which may be unknown but which necessarily have existed.

Man can study in himself the formation of instinct. He can learn nothing mentally or physically without a certain cerebral tension which relaxes in proportion as the object of study becomes more familiar. When, for example, one begins to play the piano, one must watch attentively the movement of the hands and fingers in order to strike exactly the note desired, but with habit one reaches the point of touching it mechanically without looking at the keyboard, and while thinking of other things. Just so when one studies a foreign language one must constantly keep his attention on the choice of words, articles, prepositions, terminations, ad-

jectives, verbs, etc., which come to mind instinctively when one becomes familiar with the new language. The brain and the body of man and the animal have the property of transforming into automatic actions what originally were voluntary and conscious, and the result of a sustained attention. Without this property of automatizing himself, man would be incapable of education, physically or intellectually; if he were obliged to watch over his movements in order to speak, walk, eat, etc., he would remain in everlasting childhood. Education teaches man to dispense with his intelligence. It tends to transform him into a machine more and more complicated. The conclusion is paradoxical.

The brain of an adult is more or less automatized according to the degree of his own education and that of his race. The abstract elementary notions of Cause, Substance, Being, Number, Justice, etc., are as familiar and instinctive to him as eating and drinking, and he has lost all remembrance of the manner in which he acquired them, for civilized man, like the setter, inherits at birth the traditional habit of acquiring them at the first occasion. But this tendency to acquire them is the result of a progressive ancestral experience prolonged through thousands of years. It would be as ridiculous to think that abstract ideas germinated spontaneously in the human head as to think that the bicycle or any other machine of the most improved type had been constructed at the first attempt. Abstract ideas, like the instinct of animals, were gradually formed in the individual and in the race. To seek their origin it is not enough to analyze the manner of

thinking of the civilized adult, as Descartes does, but also, as the Encyclopedists would have had it, to question the intelligence of the child and to retrace the course of the ages to study that of the barbarian and the savage, as we are obliged to do when we wish to find the origins of our political and social institutions, of our arts and our sciences.\*

The sensationalists of the eighteenth century in making of the brain a *tabula rasa*, which was a radical way of renewing the "purification" of Descartes, neglected this fact of capital importance; namely, that the brain of the civilized man is a field worked for centuries and sown with concepts and ideas by thousands of generations, and that, according to the exact expression of Leibnitz, it is pre-formed before individual experience begins. We must admit that it possesses the molecular arrangement destined to give birth to a considerable number of ideas and concepts. Some such admission is required to explain that extraordinary men, like Pascal, have been able to find out for themselves more than one series of abstract ideas, such as the theorems of the first book of Euclid, which have only been elaborated by a long procession of thinkers. In any case the brain possesses such an aptitude for acquiring certain concepts and elementary ideas

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\*The ancients were not afraid to go back to the animals in order to discover the beginnings of certain of our sciences: thus while attributing to the gods the origin of medicine, they admitted that several remedies and operations of minor surgery were due to the animals. The elder Pliny reports in his "Natural History" that the wild goats of Crete taught the use of certain healing herbs; the dog taught that of the couchgrass; and that the Egyptians asserted that the discovery of purging was due to the dog, that of bleeding to the hippopotamus and that of injection to the ibis.

that it does not perceive the fact of their acquisition. The brain is not merely limited to receiving impressions which come from outside, by way of the senses; it, of itself, does a molecular work, which the English physiologists call unconscious cerebration, which enables it to complete its acquisitions and even to make new ones without passing through experience. Students utilize this precious faculty when they learn their lesson imperfectly and go to bed leaving to their slumber the duty of fixing them in memory.

Indeed, the brain is full of mysteries. It is a *terra incognita* which the physiologists have scarcely begun to explore. It certainly possesses faculties which often find no outlet in the environment in which the individual and his race are evolving. These dormant faculties cannot therefore result from the direct action of the exterior environment upon the brain, but rather from its action upon other organs, which in their turn react upon the nervous centers. Goethe and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire called this phenomenon the balancing of organs. Here are two historical examples.

Savages and barbarians are capable of a far greater number of intellectual operations than they accomplish in their daily life. During hundreds of years the Europeans have transported from the coast of Africa into the colonies thousands of savage and barbarian negroes, removed from civilized men by centuries of culture. Nevertheless at the end of a very short time they assimilated the crafts of civilization. The Guaranys of Paraguay, when the Jesuits undertook their education, were wandering naked in the

forests, armed only with a wooden bow and club, with no knowledge, except how to cultivate maize. Their intelligence was so rudimentary that they could not count beyond twenty, using their fingers and toes. Nevertheless the Jesuits made these savages skillful operatives, capable of difficult works—such as complicated organs, geographical spheres, paintings and decorated sculptures. These trades and arts with the ideas corresponding to them did not exist in the inborn state in the hands and brain of the Guaranyes. They had been, so to speak, poured into them by the Jesuits as new airs are added to a street organ. The brain of the Guaranyes, if it was incapable of discovering them by its own initiative, was at least marvelously “predisposed” or “preformed,” according to Leibnitz’s phrase, for acquiring them.

It is equally certain that the savage is as foreign to the abstract concepts of civilized men as to their arts and crafts, which is proved by the absence in their language of terms for general ideas. How then did the abstract ideas and concepts which are so familiar to the civilized man slip into the human brain? To solve this problem, which has to so great an extent preoccupied philosophic thought, we must, like the Encyclopedists, start on the path opened up by Vico, and question language, the most important if not the first mode of manifestation of sentiments and ideas.\* It plays so considerable a role that the

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\*Vico, in the preface of his little work on the “Ancient Wisdom of Italy,” says, “I have resolved to find in the origins of the Latin language the ancient wisdom of Italy. We shall seek its philosophy in the origin of the words themselves.”

Christians of the first centuries, reproducing the idea of primitive men, said, "The Word is God;" and that the Greeks designated by the same term, *logos*, the word and thought; and that from the verb *phrazo* (to speak), they derived *phrazomai*, to speak to one's self, to think. Indeed the most abstract head cannot think without employing words—without speaking to himself mentally, if he does not do so really, like children and many adults who murmur what they think. Language holds too great a place in the development of the intellect for the etymological formation of words and their successive meanings to fail of reflecting the conditions of life and the mental state of the men who created and used them.

One fact strikes us at the outset; often one and the same word is used to designate an abstract idea and a concrete object. The words which in European languages signify material goods, and the straight line, have also the meaning of the moral Good and Right, Justice;

*Ta agatha* (Greek) goods, wealth; *to agathon*, the good.

*Bona* (Latin), goods; *bonum* (Latin) the good.

*Les biens* (French) goods; *le Bien*, the good.

*Orthos* (Greek), *rectum* (Latin), *derecho* (Spanish), *droit*, (French), etc. have the double meaning of being in a straight line and that of Right, Justice.

Here again are other examples chosen in the Greek language: *Kalon*, arrow, javelin, beauty, virtue; *phren*, heart, entrails, reason, will; *kakos*, man of plebeian origin, base, wicked, ugly; *kakon*, vice, crime. The word *kakos* contributes to the formation of a series of terms, employed

for what is vile and evil; *kakke*, excrement; *kakkia*, vice, baseness; *kakotheos*, impious; *kakophonía*, unpleasant sound, etc.

The fact is worth attention, although little noticed. This is the way with daily phenomena; because they fill the eyes they are not seen. Nevertheless, it is worth considering how the vulgar tongue and the philosophic and legal tongue have joined under the same term the material and the ideal, the concrete and the abstract. Two questions are raised at the very outset: first, have the abstract and the ideal been degraded into the concrete and into the material, or have the material and concrete transformed themselves into the ideal and abstract?—and how has this transsubstantiation been accomplished?

The history of successive meanings of words solves the first difficulty; it shows the concrete meaning always preceding the abstract meaning.

*Aissa* (Greek), used at first for the lot or portion which falls to any one in a division, ends by meaning a decree of destiny:

*Moirá*, at first the portion of a guest at a banquet, the lot of a warrior in the distribution of booty; then one's portion in life and finally the goddess Destiny, to whom "gods and mortals are equally subject."

*Nomos* begins by being used for pasturage and ends by meaning law.

The link which attaches the abstract meaning to the concrete meaning is not always apparent. Thus it is difficult at first glance to perceive how the human mind could have linked pasturage to the abstract idea of law, the straight line to the idea of Justice, the share of a guest at a banquet



to immutable destiny. I shall show the links which unite these different meanings in the article on the "Origins of the ideas, Justice and Goodness." It is only important at this moment to point out the fact.

The human mind ordinarily employs the same method of work in spite of the difference in the objects on which it operates: for example, the road which it has followed to transform sounds into vowels and consonants is the same as that which is traversed in rising from the concrete to the abstract. The origin of letters appeared so mysterious to the Bishop Mallinkrot, that in his "De Arte Typographica," to put his mind at rest, he attributed their invention to God, who was already the author of instinct and abstract ideas. But the researches of philologists have torn away one by one the veils enveloping the alphabetical mystery. They have shown that letters did not fall ready-made from heaven, but man arrived only gradually at representing the sounds by consonants and vowels. I shall mention the first steps traversed, which are useful for my demonstration.

Man begins by picture-writing. He represents an object by its image, a dog by drawing of a dog. He passes then to symbolical writing, and pictures a part for the whole, the head of an animal for the entire animal. Then he rises to metaphorical writing: he portrays an object having some resemblance, real or supposed, with the idea to be expressed—the forepart of a lion to signify the idea of priority, a cubit for Justice and Truth, a vulture for maternity. The first attempt at phonetics was made by rebuses; the

sound was represented by the image of an object having the same sound. The Egyptians, calling the pig's tail *deb*, represented the sound *deb* by the picture of the curled tail of a pig. Finally a certain number of pictures are preserved more or less modified, no longer for the phonetic value of several syllables, but for that of the initial syllable, etc., etc.\*

Writing had inevitably to pass through the metaphorical stage since primitive man thinks and speaks in metaphors. The Redskin of America to indicate a brave warrior said "he is like the bear;" the man with piercing glance is like the eagle; to affirm that he forgives an outrage he declares "he buries it in the earth," etc. These metaphors are for us sometimes undecipherable; thus, it is difficult to understand how the Egyptians came to represent in their hieroglyphics Justice and Truth by the cubit, and maternity by the vulture. I shall disentangle the metaphor of the vulture. In the next article I will explain that of the cubit.

The matriarchial family had in Egypt an extraordinary longevity, as is shown in its religious myths by numerous traces of the antagonism of the two sexes; struggling, the one to preserve its high position in the family, the other to dispossess it. The Egyptian like Apollo in the Eumenides of Aeschylus, declares that it is man who fulfills the important function in the act of generation, and that woman, "like the pistil of a fruit, only receives and nourishes his germ." The Egyptian woman returns the compliment and boasts that

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\*F. Lenormand's "Essay on the Propagation of the Phœnician Alphabet among the Nations of the Ancient World."

she conceives without the co-operation of man. The statue of Neith, the mother goddess, the "Sovereign Lady of the upper regions," bore at Sais this arrogant inscription: "I am all that has been, all that is and all that shall be. No one has lifted my robe. The fruit I have borne is the Sun." Her name, among other signs, has for its emblem the vulture and the first letter of the word mother (mou).\*

Now the hieroglyphics of Horapollon teach us that the Egyptians believed that in the species of vultures there were no males and that the females were fertilized by the wind. They attributed to that bird, everywhere else regarded as ferocious, a motherly tenderness so extreme that it tore its breast to nourish its little ones. So, after having made of it, by reason of its strange generative property, the bird of Neith, the mother goddess, who herself also propagates without the co-operation of the male, they made of it the symbol of the mother, then of maternity.

This characteristic example gives an idea of the twists and turns through which the human mind passes to picture its abstract ideas through the images of concrete objects.

If in the metaphorical and emblematic writing the image of a material object becomes the symbol of an abstract idea, it is seen that a word created to denote an object or one of its attributes ends by serving to denote an abstract idea.

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In the mind of the child and of the savage—"that child of the human race," as Vico

\* Champollion le Jeune: Pantheon Egyptian, 1825.

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calls him—there exist only images of definite objects. When the little child says doll, he does not mean to speak of any doll no matter which, but of one certain doll that he has held in his hands and that has already been shown him, and if another is offered him it results in his rejecting it with anger; so, every word is for him a proper name, the symbol of the object with which he has come in contact. His language, like that of the savage, possesses no generic terms embracing a class of objects of the same nature, but one series after another of proper names. Thus the savage languages have no terms for general ideas, such as “man,” “body,” etc., and for the abstract ideas, Time, Cause, etc. There are some which have not the verb “to be.” The Tasmanian had an abundance of words for every tree of the different species, but no term for saying tree in general. The Malay has no word for color, although he has words for every color. The Tibiponne has not words for man, body, time, etc. and he does not possess the verb to be. He does not say, “I am Abiponne,” but, “Me Abiponne.”\*

But by degrees the child and primitive man

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\* The idea of time was long in penetrating into the human brain. Vico remarks that the Florentine peasants of his epoch said so many harvests for so many years. The Latins for so many years said so many ears of corn, (aristas) something still more concrete than harvests. The expression merely indicated their poverty of language (and of thought, he might have added). The grammarians believe they see in it an attempt at art. Before having the concept of the year—that is to say, of the sun's revolution—man had the idea of the seasons and that of the revolutions of the moon. The elder Pliny said that the summer was counted for one year, the winter for another. The Arcadians, with whom the year was three months, measured it by the number of seasons, and the Egyptians by the moon. That is why several of them are cited as having lived a thousand years.

carry over the name and the idea of the first persons and things they have known to all the persons and things which present a real or fictitious resemblances with them. They elaborate after a fashion, by way of analogy and comparison, certain general and abstract ideas embracing groups of objects, more or less extended, and sometimes the proper name of one object becomes the symbolic term of the abstract idea representing the group of objects having analogies with the object for which the word had been coined. Plato maintains that the general ideas thus obtained, which classify objects without taking account of their individual differences, are "essences of divine origin." Socrates in the Tenth Book of the "Republic" says that the idea of bed is an essence of divine creation, because it is immutable, always identical with itself, while the beds created by cabinet makers all differ among themselves.

The human mind has often brought together the most dissimilar objects having only a vague point of resemblance among themselves. Thus by a process of anthropomorphism man has taken his own members for terms of comparison, as is proved by the metaphors which persist in civilized languages although they date from the beginning of humanity, such as the "bowels of the earth," the "veins of a mine," the "heart of an oak," "tooth of a saw," the "gorge of a mountain," the "arm of the sea," etc. When the abstract idea of measure takes shape in his brain, he takes for a unit of measure his foot, his hand, his thumb, his arms (*Orgyia* a Greek measure equal to two arms extended). So every measure

is a metaphor. When we speak of an object three feet, two inches in extent, we mean that it is as long as three feet two thumbs.\* But with the development of civilization, people were forced to resort to other units of measure. Thus the Greeks took the *stadion*, the distance traversed in the footrace at the Olympic Games; and the Latins *jugerum*, the surface which could be plowed in one day by a *jugum* (a yoke of oxen).

An abstract word, as Max Muller remarks, is often only an adjective transformed into a substantive;—that is to say, the attribute of an object metamorphosed into a personage, into a metaphysical entity, into an imaginary being, and it is by way of metaphor that this metempsychosis is accomplished. The metaphor is one of the principal ways by which the abstract penetrates into the human brain. In the preceding metaphors, they speak of the mouth of a cavern, a tongue of land, because the mouth presents an opening and the tongue an elongated form. The same process has served to procure new terms of comparison in proportion as the need of them has made itself felt, and it is always the most salient property of the object, that which consequently impresses the senses most vividly, which is made the term of comparison.

A great number of savage languages have no words for the abstract ideas of hardness, roundness, warmth, etc., and they are deprived of them because the savage has not yet succeeded in creating the imaginary beings or metaphys-

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\*The French word *pouce* has the double meaning of thumb and inch.—(Translator.)

ical entities which correspond to these terms. Thus, for hard he says "like stone," for round "like the moon," for hot, "like the sun;" because the qualities of hard, round and hot are in his brain inseparable from stone, moon and sun. It is only after a long process of brain work that these qualities are detached, abstracted from these concrete objects to be metamorphosed into imaginary beings. Then the qualifying term becomes a substantive and stands for the abstract idea formed in the brain.

No savage tribes have been found without the idea of number, the abstract idea *par excellence*, although the numeration of certain savages does not go beyond twenty. It is probable that even animals can count up to two. Here is an observation I have made, which is easy to repeat, and which would seem to prove it: the pigeon, although sitting on two eggs—with very rare exceptions—nevertheless has the property of laying eggs at will. If, after she has laid two eggs one is taken away, the female lays a third and even a fourth and fifth if the eggs are taken as fast as she lays them. She requires two eggs in the nest before she begins to sit. The domestic pigeon, overfed, may sometimes lay three eggs; when that happens she pushes one out of the nest, or else leaves it if she cannot push out the superfluous egg.

It would seem that the abstract idea of number, contrary to Vico's opinion, is one of the first, if not the first, to be formed in the brain of animals and man; for if all objects have not the property of being round, hard or

hot, etc., they have nevertheless one quality which is common to them, that of being distinct from one another, by their form and the relative position which they occupy, and this quality is the point of departure of numeration.\* The brain substance must have the idea of number; that is to say, be able to distinguish the objects from each other, in order to carry on its function. This was recognized by the Pythagorean Philolaus, the first who, according to Diogenes of Laercia, affirmed that the motion of the earth described a circle, when he declared that number resides in all that is, and without it nothing can be known and nothing can be thought.

But the extension of numeration beyond the number two was one of the most painful of Herculean labors ever imposed upon the human brain, as is proved by the mystical character attributed to the first ten numbers;† and the mythological and legendary memories attached to certain figures: 10 (Siege of Troy and of Veii, which lasted exactly ten years);

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\*Plato, who in the *Timæus* represents an astronomer as speaking and who for the moment forgets his essences of divine origin, gives a materialistic origin of Number and Time. "The observation of day and night, the revolutions of the months and the years have furnished us Number, revealed Time and inspired the desires of knowing Nature and the world."

†The decade had a sacred character for the Pythagorians and the Cabalists. The Scandinavians regarded the number three and its multiple nine as particularly dear to the gods. Every ninth month they made bloody sacrifices which lasted nine days, during which they sacrificed nine victims, man or animal. The Catholic *Neuvaines*, which are prayers lasting nine days, preserve the memory of this cult, and their holy trinity preserves the mystical character which all savage nations attach to the number three. It occurs in all primitive religions: three *Parcæ* among the Greeks and the Scandinavians, three goddesses of life among the Iroquois.



12 (the 12 gods of Olympus, 12 labors of Hercules, 12 apostles, etc.); 50 (the 50 sons of Priam, the 50 Danaides; Endymion, according to Pausanius made Selene the mother of 50 daughters; Acteon hunted with 50 braces of hounds when Diana metamorphosed him; the boat constructed by Danaus according to the instructions of Minerva, had 50 oars, as had that of Hercules at the time of his expedition against Troy.) These numbers are so many stages at which the human mind halted after the efforts made to reach the points, and it has marked them with legends to preserve their memory.

The savage, when he arrives at the end of his numeration, says "many" to indicate the objects which remain over and which he cannot count for lack of numbers. Vico remarks that for the Romans 60, then 100, then 1,000 were innumerable quantities. The Hovas of Madagascar say for 1,000 "evening," for 10,000 "night," and the word *tapitrisa*, which they use to indicate a million, is literally translated by the end of counting. It was the same for us, but since the war of 1870-1871 it is a billion which marks the limit of our popular numeration.

Language shows us that man has taken his hand, his foot and his arms for units of length. He still uses his fingers and toes for counting. F. Nansen says the Esquimaux, with whom he lived more than a year, have no name for any figure beyond five. They count on the fingers of the right hand and then stop when all the fingers have been named and touched.

For six they take the left hand and say the first finger of the other hand, for seven, the second finger, thus on to ten. Afterwards they count in the same fashion on the toes and stop at twenty, the limit of their numeration: but the great mathematicians go further and for twenty-one they say the first finger of the other hand and begin again, passing over the hands and feet. Twenty is one man, one hundred is five men. The Roman figures which were used until the introduction of the Arabic figures preserve the memory of this primitive mode of numeration; I is one finger, II is two fingers, V is a hand with the three middle fingers folded while the little finger and the thumb are straight; X is two Vs or two hands crossed. But when it was necessary to count beyond the hundred and the thousand, they were obliged to resort to other objects than the human members.

The Romans took pebbles, *calculi*, from which is derived the word calculus in modern languages. The Latin expressions *calculus ponere* (to place the pebble) and *subducere calculus* (to take away the pebble) indicate that it was by adding and taking away pebbles that they added and subtracted. At the Familistere of Guise I saw the first two arithmetical operations taught by a similar process to children of five and six years. Pebbles were the obvious things for this use; they had already served for drawing lots in the distribution of booty and land.

Savages cannot figure in their heads. They must have before their eyes the objects which

they are counting. Thus, when they make exchanges they place on the ground the objects which they are giving opposite those they receive. This primitive equation, which in the last analysis is simply a tangible metaphor, is the only thing which can satisfy their minds. Numbers, in their heads, as in those of children, are concrete ideas. When they say two, three or five, they see two, three or five fingers, pebbles or any other objects. In many savage tongues the first five figures bear the names of the fingers; it is only by a process of intellectual distillation that the numbers come to strip themselves in the head of the civilized adult of any form corresponding to a certain object, and to keep only the form of conventional signs.\* The most idealistic metaphysician cannot think without words nor calculate without signs,—that is to say without concrete objects. The Greek philosophers when they began their inquiries on the properties of numbers, gave them geometrical forms. They divided them into three groups:

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\*The Greeks employed for figures the letters of the alphabet, preserving the ancient Cadmean letters which carried the numbers up to twenty-seven. The first nine letters were the units, the next nine the tens and the last nine the hundreds.

It must have been extremely painful and difficult to calculate with the figures of the Greeks and Romans, who did not possess the zero. The metaphysical abstractors of abstractions of Nirvana were the only ones capable of inventing this marvelous figure—the symbol of nothing, which has no value and which gives value, and which according to the expression of Pascal, is a true indivisible of number as the indivisible is a true zero. The zero plays so considerable a part in modern numeration that its Arabic name *sifr*—which the Portugese transformed into *cifra*, the English into *cipher*, the French into *chiffre*—after having first been employed for zero alone, serves to designate all the signs of number.

the group of linear numbers (*mekos*), the group of the numbers of planes, squares (*epipedon*), the group of the numbers of three dimensions, cubes (*triké auxé*). The modern mathematicians have still preserved the expression "linear number" for a root number.

The savage, for long, hard, round or hot, says "like the foot, stone, moon, sun;" but feet are of unequal length, stones are more or less hard, the moon is not always round, the sun is hotter in summer than in winter; so when the human mind felt the need of a higher degree of exactness, it recognized the insufficiency of the terms of comparison which it had till then used. It then imagined types of length, hardness, roundness and heat to be employed as terms of comparison. It is thus that in abstract mechanics, the mathematicians imagined a lever absolutely rigid and without thickness and a wedge absolutely incompressible in order to continue their theoretical investigations, arrested by the imperfections of the levers and wedges of reality. But the wedge and the lever of the mathematicians, like the types of length, roundness, hardness, although derived from real objects whose attributes had been submitted to intellectual distillation, no longer correspond to any real object but to ideas formed in the human head. Because the objects of reality differ among themselves and from the imaginary type, always one and identical with itself, Plato calls the real objects vain and deceptive images and the ideal type an essence of divine

creation. In that case, as in a multitude of others, God, the creator, is man thinking.

Artists by an analogous process have given birth to chimeras, whose bodies, although composed of detached organs abstracted from different animals, correspond to nothing real but to a fantasm of the imagination. The chimera is an abstract idea—as abstract as any idea you please of the Beautiful, the Good, the Just, Time or Cause—but Plato, himself, did not dare to class it in the number of his divine essences.

Man, probably when barbarous tribes began to differentiate into classes, separated himself from the animal kingdom and raised himself to the rank of a supernatural being, whose destinies are the constant preoccupation of the gods and the celestial bodies. Later on he isolated the brain from the other organs to make it the seat of the soul. Natural science reintegrates man in the animal series of which he is the sum and crown; the socialist philosophy will restore the brain to the series of organs. The brain has the property of thinking as the stomach has that of digesting. It cannot think but by the aid of ideas, which it fabricates with the materials furnished it by the natural environment and the social or artificial environment in which man evolves.

# THE ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF JUSTICE

## I

### THE LAW OF RETALIATION—RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

Justice as it exists in our civilized societies flows from two sources; one takes its origin in the very nature of the human being and the other in the social environment organized on the basis of private property. The passions and the concepts existing in man before the establishment of property, and the interests, passions and ideas which this engenders, acting and reacting one upon another, have ended by begetting, developing and crystalizing in the brain of civilized man the ideas of the Just and Unjust.

The human sources of the idea of justice are the passion for vengeance and the sentiment of equality.

The passion of vengeance is one of the most ancient in the human mind. It has its root in the instinct of self-preservation—in the necessity which impels animal and man to resist when they receive a blow, and to respond to it mechanically if fear does not put them to flight. It is that blind and unreasoning necessity which leads the child and the savage to strike the inanimate object which has wounded them. Reduced to its simplest and last expression, vengeance is a reflex movement analogous to the involuntary motion which makes the eye wink when it is threatened.

Vengeance with the savage and the barbarian is of an intensity unknown to civilized men. "The Redskins," says the American historian, Adairs, "feel their heart burn violently day and night until they have shed blood for blood. They transmit from father to son the memory of the murder of a relative, of a member of their clan, even though it be an old woman." There are stories of Redskins who have committed suicide because they could not avenge themselves. The Fijian, who has received an insult, places within the range of his vision an object which he does not take away until he has assuaged his vengeance. The Slavonic women of Dalmatia show their child the bloody shirt of the slain father to incite it to vengeance.

"Vengeance one hundred years old, still has its milk teeth," says the Afghan proverb. The Semitic god, "although slow to anger" visits the "iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children unto the third and fourth generation." (Exodus, XXXIV., 7.) Four generations do not assuage his thirst for vengeance. He forbids entrance into the assembly up to the tenth generation to the Moabites and the Ammonites, "because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt." (Deut. XXIII., 4.) The Hebrew might have said, like the Scandinavian, "The shell of the oyster may fall into dust by the process of years and a thousand other years may pass over this dust, but vengeance shall still be warm in my heart." The Erinnyes of Greek mythology are the ancient goddesses "of vengeance" "of the inextinguishable thirst for

blood." The chorus of the sublime trilogy of Aeschylus, palpitating with the passions that torture the souls of the gods and mortals, cries out to Orestes, hesitating to avenge his father: "Let outrage be punished by outrage, let murder avenge murder." "Evil for evil," says the maxim of ancient times; "blood shed upon the earth demands other blood; the nourishing earth has drunk the blood of murder; it is dried, but its trace remains ineffaceable and cries for vengeance." Achilles to avenge the death of Patroclus, his friend, forgets the insult of Agamemnon and stifles the wrath which made him watch unmoved the defeats of the Achaeans. The death of Hector does not assuage his passion; three times he drags his corpse around the walls of Troy.

The savage and the barbarian never forgive. They can wait year after year for the propitious moment of vengeance. Clytemnestra for ten long years watched patiently for the hour of her vengeance. When she had assassinated Agamemnon, the murderer of her daughter, drunk with joy and blood, she cried, "The dew of murder has fallen on me; as sweet to my heart as is to the fields the rain of Jupiter in the season when the grain of wheat comes forth from its sheath."

Man sanctifies and deifies his passions, especially when they are useful for his preservation, private and social. "The inextinguishable thirst for blood," vengeance, erected into a sacred duty, becomes the first of duties. The Erinnyes, in number like the curses which come from the mouth of an angered mother, hurl themselves



from the shades of Erebus when once the imprecations give them life and motion.\* They appear in the light of the sun only to breathe the passion of vengeance and untiringly to pursue the murderer over land and sea. No mortal could escape them. Their rage hunted down the culprit and his family and extended to him who gave him protection—to cities and whole countries. They stirred up civil wars and scattered pestilence and famine. The chorus of the Erinnyes of Aeschylus when Orestes is on the point of escaping them cries:

And I, dishonoured, wretched, full of wrath,  
 Upon this land (Attica), ha! ha!  
 Will venom, venom from my heart let fall,  
 In vengeance for my grief,  
 A dropping which shall smite  
 the earth with barrenness!  
 And thence shall come, (O Vengeance!) on the  
 plain  
 Down-swooping, blight of leaves and murrain  
 dire  
 That o'er the land flings taint of pestilence.  
 (Plumptre's Translation.)

The Semitic god likewise avenged the shedding of blood upon plants, beasts and children. The poetic imagination of the Greeks personified in

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\*Curses are not idle words for the barbarian; the word, the verb, is for him endowed with irresistible power. The gods themselves obeyed the imprecations of mortals. The Jews, like the Chinese, condemned to death him who had cursed his father or mother. (Exodus, XXI., 17.) Catholicism in giving the confessor the power of binding and loosing sins on earth and in heaven by the aid of a formula, reproduces the primitive idea of savages on the power of the word.

these terrible goddesses, whose name they feared to pronounce, the terrors inspired in primitive peoples by the unchaining of the passion of vengeance.

Vico, in his *Scienza Nuova*, formulates this axiom of social science:

“Legislation takes man as he is to make of him a being adapted for human society. From ferocity, avarice and ambition—these three vices which lead men astray, it derives the army, commerce and the court; that is to say, the strength, wealth and knowledge of republics; and these great vices, capable of destroying the human race, create social felicity.

“This axiom proves the existence of a divine providence—the divine legislative thought, which, from the passions of men absorbed completely in their private interests, that would make them live like ferocious beasts in solitude, derives the civil order which permits them to live in human societies.”

Inviolable law, to use Aristotle's phrase, arose in fact from the passion of vengeance, furious and ever boiling. But it is not a divine legislative intelligence, which, as Vico thought, creates order out of the disorders of human passions; it is on the contrary these disorders which engender order. I shall try to prove this.

The implacable and furious passion for vengeance which is found in the souls of the savages and barbarians of the old and new world, as is proved by the previous quotations, is im-

posed upon them by the conditions of the natural and social environment in which they move.

The savage, at perpetual war with man and beast, and his spirit haunted by imaginary dangers, cannot live alone, and gathers himself into herds. He cannot understand existence outside of his clan; to drive him from it is to condemn him to death.\* The members of a tribe consider themselves descended from a single ancestor. The same blood flows in their veins. To shed the blood of one member is to shed the blood of the whole tribe. The savage has no individuality; it is the tribe, the clan, and later the family, which possesses an individuality. Solidarity of the narrowest and solidest kind welds together the members of a tribe or clan to the point of making them one single being, like the Briareus of Greek mythology; in the most primitive nations that it has been possible to observe, the women are in common and the children belong to the clan. Individual property has not yet made its appearance. The most personal objects such as arms and ornaments pass from hand to hand with the most startling rapidity, according to Fison and Howitt, those conscientious and intelligent observers of Australian manners. The members of savage tribes and barbarous clans move and act in common like a single man; they change their location, hunt, fight and cultivate the land in

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\*Cain, driven from his clan after the murder of Abel, laments: "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me from this land. I shall be a wanderer and fugitive over the earth and it shall come to pass that whosoever findeth me shall slay me." (Genesis IV., 13, 14.) Exile is one of the most terrible punishments of ancient societies.

common. When warlike tactics are improved, they range themselves in battle by tribes, clans and families.

They put offenses into the common fund, like everything else; an injury done to one savage is resented by the whole clan as if it were personal to every member; to shed the blood of one savage is to shed the blood of the clan. All its members consider it their duty to wreak vengeance. Vengeance is collective like marriage and property. The right of exercising vengeance was among the barbarous Germans the family bond, *par excellence*. When the Frankish tribes had established the *wehrgeld*; that is to say, a monetary compensation for the offense, all the members of the family shared the price of blood. But the Frank who had gone out of the family community had no right to the *wehrgeld*. If he was killed, it was the king who became his avenger and received the price of his blood.

But, because the clan resents the injury done to one of its members, the whole clan becomes responsible for the offense committed by one of its members. The offense is collective like the injury.\* The offended clan takes vengeance by killing any individual whatever of the offending clan. "Among the Australian people a general consternation reigns," writes Sir G. Grey, "when a murder is committed, especially when the guilty one has escaped, for his relatives consider themselves guilty, and it is only the persons who have

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\*Collective responsibility still seems so natural in the Middle Ages that the ordinances of Edward I. of England, make the whole Trade Guild responsible for the crime of one of its members.

no relation with the family who feel any safety." A murder is the declaration of war between two families, between two clans—a war of ambushes and extermination, which lasts for years, since a murder demands a death to avenge it, which in its turn demands vengeance. Sometimes two entire clans come to blows. It is only half a century ago that in Dalmatia "war extended from the families to the whole village, and sometimes civil war was let loose over all the district."\* Even women and children are objects of vengeance. The Scandinavians did not spare the new-born in the cradle, for, "A wolf lies in wait in the tender child" says the Eddas. . . . Even in the nineteenth century the Greeks took vengeance upon male children of more than eight years old, and the women and young girls alone were spared. †

It is not only real murders which imperiously demand vengeance, but also the imaginary murders created by the superstitious intelligence of the savage. No death is natural for the Australian; every decease is caused by the mischief of an enemy belonging to a rival clan, and the duty of the relatives is to avenge the deceased by killing; not exactly the presumed author of the mischief, but any member whatever of his clan—several indeed if possible.‡ Moreover, the dead man avenged himself, his spirit came to

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\*Sir Gardner Wilkinson, *Dalmatia and Montenegro* 1848.

†Lord Carnarvon. *Reminiscences of Athens and Morea*.

‡Jesus Christ, St. Paul and the Apostles, shared with the savages this opinion: diseases were according to them the work of the demon, the enemy of the human race. (Matthew IX., 33; Luke XI., 14; Acts XIX., 12.) This superstition for centuries kindled in Christian Europe the pyres of sorceresses.

torture the guilty. Fraser asserts that one of the causes of the suppression of the cannibal banquets is the fear of posthumous vengeance on the part of the unfortunate who has been eaten. It is not only to avenge himself that the savage kills the murderer, but also to appease the dead, whose spirit would be tormented until human blood be shed. To tranquilize the shade of Achilles, the Greeks sacrificed on his tomb Polyxena, the sister of Paris, his murderer.

The savage, who understands his existence only as an integral part of his clan, transforms the individual offense into a collective offense; and vengeance, which is an act of personal defense and self-preservation, becomes an act of collective defense and self-preservation. The clan protects itself by wreaking vengeance for the murder or wounds of one of its members. But this collective vengeance inevitably involves collective dangers which sometimes compromise the existence of the clan. The collective dangers of these vendettas obliged the savages to stifle their sentiment of solidarity and to sacrifice the member of the clan responsible for the injury and to deliver him up to the clan of his victim. Savages of Australia, arms in their hands, stop and calm themselves, reducing their vengeance to a personal damage exactly equal to that which had been committed, and which had become the cause of the quarrel. Life for life, wound for wound. The law of retaliation was born.

Retaliation, "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe,

(Exodus, XXI., 23, 25), this alone can give full satisfaction to the sentiment of equality of the primitive communist tribes, whose members are all equal.

The most complete equality follows necessarily from the conditions in which the savage of the communist tribes lives. Darwin in his "Voyage of a Naturalist" relates this characteristic story: He saw a Fuegian, to whom a wool coverlet had been given, tear it into rags equal in breadth, in order that each individual of the tribe might receive a piece, since the savage could not admit that one member of his clan should be better endowed than another in anything whatever. Caesar, when he came in contact with the German tribes, was struck by the equalitarian spirit which governed their division of goods. He attributed it to the desire to create equality among their members. Caesar reasons like a civilized man living in a social environment where unequal conditions of existence inevitably produce inequality among the citizens. The barbarians whom he had under his eyes were living on the contrary in a communist environment producing equality; they therefore did not have to seek for it in their divisions, but to satisfy their equalitarian spirit by distributing equal shares to all without in the least suspecting the social importance of their act. It is in this way that people digest without any knowledge of the chemistry of the stomach, and that the bees construct the cells in their hives according to the most exact geometric and mechanical rules of resistance and economy of space, without suspecting the existence of geometry and mechanics. Equality is

not only implanted in the heart and brain of primitive men, but furthermore exists in their physical appearance. Volney relates that a chief of the Redskins expressed to him his astonishment at the great physical differences which existed between the whites whom he saw, while the greatest resemblance was the rule between the members of any one savage tribe.

Old age surrounded with respect is the first privilege which appears in human societies. It is the only one which exists in the savage tribe. Whatever may be the superior qualities of courage, intelligence, endurance of hunger, thirst and pain which distinguish a warrior, they do not give him the right to assert himself. He may be chosen to direct his companions on the hunt, and to command in war, but the expedition ended, he becomes again their equal. "The greatest chief of the Redskins," says Volney, "cannot even in the field strike or punish a warrior, and in the village he is obeyed by no child except his own."\* The Greek chief of Homeric times possessed an authority scarcely more extended. Aristotle remarks that if the power of Agamemnon went as far as the right to kill the run-away when they were marching against the enemy, yet he patiently accepted insults at the time of council. The Greek generals in historic times, when their year of command expired returned to the ranks. Thus, according to Plutarch, Aristides and Philopoemen, who had been leaders of armies, and who had won victories, served as simple soldiers.

Retaliation is merely the application of equality

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\*Volney's General Observations on the Indians of America, 1820.



in the matter of satisfaction to be awarded for an injury. It is the equalized expiation for the offense. Only a damage exactly equal to the offense committed—a life for a life, a burn for a burn—can satisfy the equalitarian soul of primitive men. The equalitarian instinct, which in the distribution of food and of goods imposed the equal share, created the law of retaliation. The necessity of preventing the disastrous consequences of vendettas introduced it into primitive societies. Justice plays no role, either in its creation or introduction. Thus we find the law of retaliation established among nations, who have so little idea of Justice that they possess no words for crime, fault, justice. The Homeric Greeks, although of a relatively higher civilization, had no word for law, and it is impossible to conceive of Justice without laws.\*

Retaliation, invented and introduced to escape the dangers of vendettas and admitted by primitive men because it gave full satisfaction to their passion for vengeance, had to be regulated when once it became a matter of custom. The entire clan originally had a right to vengeance, which it exercised indifferently on any member of the clan which had committed the offense. A beginning was made by limiting the number of persons who could exercise vengeance, and that of the persons upon whom it was permitted to exercise it. The *thar*, the law of blood of the Bedouins and almost all the Arabs, authorizes every

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\*This absence of the word "law" had struck the ancients: the historian Josephus observes with astonishment that in the *Iliad* the word *nomos*, which later was to signify law, is never employed in that sense.

individual comprised in the first five degrees of relationship to kill any relative of the murderer comprised in the first five degrees. This custom must have been general, for among the Germans and the Scandinavians the *wehrgeld* was paid and received by the relatives of the first five circles or degrees.

This custom, although limiting the field of vengeance, nevertheless gave up to it too vast a choice of victims; thus among the Hebrews we recognize attempts to restrain it and to limit vengeance to the guilty one. Jehovah, who has no fear of contradicting himself, commands in Deuteronomy (XXIV., 16): "not to put to death the fathers for the children, nor the children for the fathers, but each to be put to death for his own sin." It was so difficult to impose this limitation upon fiery vengeance that long afterwards the Eternal protests against the proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. As I live, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold! all souls are Mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine, and the soul that sinneth shall die." (Ezekiel, XVIII., 2, 3, 4.)

But it was still more difficult to limit the number of persons considering themselves authorized to exercise vengeance—and finally to take it away from them. The passion of vengeance could not be assuaged unless the nearest relative of the victim punished the guilty one. Thus, it is Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles, who before the Achaean army had to sacrifice the sister of his father's murderer. Caillaud relates that in certain tribes of the African desert, the guilty one

is turned over to the full discretion of the near relatives of the victim—who torture him and kill him at their will. Fraser saw in Persia a woman, to whom they had given up the murderer of her son, pierce him with fifty slashes of a knife, and by a refinement of vengeance, pass the bloody blade over his lips. In the ninth century in Norway, the murderer, led to the edge of the sea by the members of the popular assembly, was put to death by the prosecutor, or on his authority, by the royal provost. As for Athens, the civil power was charged to strike the culprit, the nearest relative assisted at the execution as an avenger of blood. Even though he no longer played an active part, his presence was necessary, not only to assuage his vengeance but also to fulfill the primitive conditions of the law of retaliation.

This law, by regulating and limiting the vendetta, proves that the passion which tortures and blinds primitive man subsides by degrees and can finally be curbed under a yoke; man accustoms himself no longer to exercise vengeance blindly upon a whole clan or upon a whole family, but on the culprit alone, and this vengeance is limited to rendering strictly blow for blow, death for death.\* This regulation could not be introduced

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\*The barbarian does not stop half way. He carries logic to its final consequences: once he had the idea of detaching the culprit from the collectivity of the family to make him carry the responsibility of his action, he pushed this idea to the point of detaching from the collectivity of the body, the organ which had committed the act, to be punished. Diodorus of Sicily reports that the Egyptians punished the violation of a free woman by mutilation. They amputated the nose of an adulterous woman in order to deprive her of the attractions which she had employed for seduction. They cut off the hands of counterfeiters and forgers of public seals, "in order to chastise the portion of the body with which the crime had been committed." In almost all countries the hands of thieves have been cut off for petty larceny not involving capital punishment.

and maintained but for the collective intervention of the clans and families of the victim and the culprit. The family, always remaining responsible for the actions of its members, is called upon to declare whether it wishes to take the responsibility of the offense, or to give up the offender; in this last case, to determine on an expiation proportionate to the injury, it must also constrain the culprit to submit passively in the event of there being resistance on his part.\* Thus they came to establish arbitrating tribunals, whose duties it was to estimate the offense and to award satisfaction.

The members of the tribe assembled together, as was the case with the Scandinavians, constituted this first tribunal of arbitration; but on account of the difficulties presented by the gathering of such assemblies, only cases of murder or serious wounds were submitted to them; as for those of minor importance, like blows and wounds not involving death or the loss of a limb, they had to be settled by the council of elders.

Moses, on the advice of his father-in-law, Jethro, chose "men of truth and placed such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifty and rulers of tens, to judge

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\*"When among the Itelmen of Kamchatka," relates a traveler of the eighteenth century, G. W. Steller, "a murder is committed, the family of the victim applies to that of the murderer and demands that he be given up. If the latter consents and gives him up he is killed in the same fashion in which he killed his victim; if it refuses, that means that the family approves of the murder. Then war is declared between the two families. That which triumphs, massacres all the males of the vanquished family and carries into slavery the women and girls." In Polynesia, when the culprit did not submit passively to the vengeance of the offended party, his own family constrained him by force. (Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*.)

the people at all times," but every grave matter they were to bring to him. (Exodus xviii.) Moses probably reproduced in the desert what existed in Egypt. A council of Druids was in Gaul charged with looking into the offense and fixing the penalty. If one of the parties refused to submit to its decree, it barred him from sacrifices, which constituted the most terrible punishment, for the interdict was avoided by everyone. (Caesar's Gallic War, vi, 13.) At Athens the Areopagus regulated vengeance. Aeschylus puts in the mouth of the Erinyes who had just lost their case, these words depicting the evils which had necessitated the institution of such a tribunal:

“For this, too, I will pray,  
That Discord, never satiate with ill,  
May never ravine in this commonwealth.  
Nor dust that drinks dark blood  
From veins of citizens,  
Through eager thirst for vengeance, from the  
State  
Snatch woes as penalty  
For deeds of murderous guilt.”  
-(Plumptre's Translation.)

These ancient goddesses, daughters of Night, who personified primitive vengeance, were pronouncing their funeral oration. After the establishment of the Areopagus, they subsided and lost their savage character along with their function. They then changed their names and were called Eumenides; that is to say, the Good Goddesses.

The Areopagus must have dated back to a remote antiquity. Another legend says it was

established to pronounce on the murder committed by Ares. He had killed the son of Poseidon who had violated his daughter. He was acquitted by the twelve gods who formed the tribunal. By the way, the word Areopagus signifies Ares Hill. Another legend has it that the first murder brought before this tribunal was that of Procris, killed accidentally in the chase by her husband, Cephalus. This legend and that of the matricide of Orestes would make the institution of the Areopagus date back to the period of the matriarchate, which at the time of the Trojan war had just been replaced by the patriarchate; in fact, at the moment when woman ceases to be the head of the family, she enters as a slave into the house of her husband, who has the right of life and death over her. Even her son possesses that right. Consequently vengeance could no longer be demanded for her death if the murder was brought about by her husband or her son.\* The Areopagus rendered its decrees in the dark, like the Egyptian tribunal corresponding to it.

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\*Demosthenes in one of his civil pleas cites an article of Draco's laws which gave every Athenian the right of life and death over five women—his wife, his daughter, his mother, his sister and his concubine. The Gragas (gray geese) which are the ancient laws of Iceland, sanctioned this same right, adding to it adopted daughters. Later on in Solon's epoch, customs being transformed, the laws of Draco appeared too blood-thirsty, yet they were never abolished, "but by the tacit consent of the Athenians," says Aulus Gellius, "they were, so to speak, obliterated."

The first laws, precisely because they fix and sanction the customs of ancestors, were never abrogated; they persisted although they were contradicted by new laws. Thus the code of Manu preserves, side by side, the law establishing equal division of goods between brothers and that which established the right of primogeniture. The law of the twelve tables at Rome did not abolish the royal laws. The stone on which the latter were engraved was inviolable; at the very most the least scrupulous believed themselves authorized to turn it over.

That is why Themis, the goddess emblematic of Justice, has her eyes bandaged. The Athenians no doubt wished this symbolism to recall the fact that the Areopagus had been established as a substitute for the Erinnyes daughters of Night, who, according to Homer, lived in the shades of Erebus. The Areopagus and the Egyptian tribunal admitted no attorneys. The culprit, himself, was obliged to preserve silence. These two tribunals, replacing the families of the offended and the offender, did not judge; their role was limited to finding the culprit and delivering him to the family of the offended.

If in a commercial city like Athens, the necessity of maintaining order permitted the establishment of a permanent tribunal for regulating vendettas and punishing culprits, almost everywhere else it was necessary to leave to the families the function of satisfying their own vengeance. In England in the tenth century, under King Alfred, custom and law still authorized families to declare private war in case of murder. The civil power in France, not having been able to take vengeance away from the families, tried to attenuate its effects by imposing an interval between the offense and the vengeance. A royal ordinance of the thirteenth century. *La quarantaine-le-roy* (king's forty days), attributed to Phillip Augustus or St. Louis, forbade undertaking private war for vengeance until forty days had elapsed since the commission of the offense. If, in this interval a murder was committed upon one of the offenders, the murderer was punished with the death penalty, for having transgressed the royal ordi-

nance. It is only lately that the French Government has been able to suppress vendettas in Corsica.

The passion for vengeance, although subject to the law of retaliation and to arbitrating assemblies, still remained irrepressible. Its claws and its teeth could only be drawn by property. Nevertheless property, which is destined to banish the disorders of private vengeance, makes its appearance surrounded by a train of discords and crimes in the bosom of families. Before the right of primogeniture was recognized and accepted as an established custom, it engendered fratricidal struggles for the possession of the paternal goods, of which Greek mythology has preserved horrible memories in the story of the Atridae.\* Since then property has not ceased to be the most efficacious and the most active cause of private dissensions and crimes, and of civil and international wars, which have overwhelmed human societies.

Property enters like a fury into the human heart, overwhelming the most deeply rooted sentiments, instincts and ideas and exciting new passions; nothing less than property would have

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\*If we recall the mythological legends of Greece, it seems that when the father's authority replaced the mother's in the family the order of succession was thrown into serious confusion. All the sons, who in the matriarchal family did not inherit, claimed to have equal rights to take possession of the goods of the deceased father and the management of the household. It is only after many internal struggles that the right of primogeniture succeeded in establishing itself and it could only maintain itself by calling religious superstition to its assistance. The father was accounted to live in his tomb placed in his house or the surrounding garden. He continued to administer his property and gave orders to his successor. Obedience was rendered not to the living heir, but the deceased father. Then by the side of the tribal religion were established the family cults, which Fustel de Coulange supposes to have been primitive.



served to restrain and weaken vengeance, the ancient and dominant passion of the barbaric soul.

Private property once established, blood no longer demands blood; it demands property; the law of retaliation is transformed.

The transformation of retaliation was probably facilitated by slavery and the slave trade, the first international commerce which was regularly established. The exchange of living men for oxen, arms and other objects accustomed the barbarian to giving for blood some other equivalent than blood. A new household phenomenon contributed even more energetically than the slave trade toward modifying the law of retaliation. Woman, so long as the matriarchal family exists, remains in her clan, where she is visited by her husband or husbands; in the patriarchal family the young girl leaves her family to go and live in that of her husband. The father is indemnified for the loss of his daughter, who by marrying ceases to belong to him. The young girl then becomes an object of traffic, a finder of oxen, *alphesiboia* according to the Homeric epithet. It was for oxen that the Greeks exchanged her. The father began by trafficking in his daughters and ended by selling his sons, as is shown by the Greek and Roman laws. The father by selling his own blood breaks the ancient solidarity which united the members of the family and bound them in life and death. The parents, exchanging for beasts and other property their children, their living blood, became for a still stronger reason disposed to accept beasts or other property for blood that had been shed, for a son who was slain.

The children, following the example of their parents, came in their turn to satisfy themselves with an indemnity, whatever it might be, for the blood of their father or mother.

Then instead of life for life, tooth for tooth, beasts, iron or gold are demanded for life, tooth and other wounds. The Kaffirs require oxen, the Scandinavians, Germans and barbarians, who by contact with more civilized nations have learned the use of money, demand silver.\*

This revolution, one of the most far-reaching ever accomplished in the human soul, was not brought about suddenly nor without painful struggles. Not only religion, the preserver of ancient customs, but also the barbarian sentiments of solidarity and dignity opposed themselves to the substitution of money for blood. Superstition attached a curse to blood money. The treasure, which in the Eddas is the cause of the death of Sigurd and the extermination of the family of the Volsungs and the Giukings, is precisely the

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\*At a time when historians believed that every nation and every race had its own special manners and customs, it was claimed that the wehrgeld was of German origin and that the Greeks and Latins had never descended to this barbarous means of compounding for blood by money. Nothing is further from the truth.

The Eighth Table of the Roman Law of the Twelve Tables says:

II. Against him who breaks a limb and makes no amends, retaliation

III. For the breaking of a freeman's tooth a penalty of three hundred aces; of a slave's one hundred and fifty

IV. For an insult a penalty of twenty-five aces.

Ajax having been sent with Ulysses and Phoenix on an embassy to Achilles to influence him to accept Agamemnon's presents and appease his wrath, said to Ulysses: "Yet doth a man accept recompense of his brother's murderer or for his dead son; and so the man-slayer for a great price abideth in his own land, and the kinsman's heart is appeased, and his proud soul, when he hath taken the recompense." (*Iliad*, IX., 632-6).

price of blood which the Scandinavian gods Odin, Loki and Hœnir had to pay for the murder of Balder. Saxo Grammaticus has preserved the song of a Danish bard who is indignant against the customs of his day and against those who carry in their purse the blood of their fathers. The nobles of Turkestan, says Pallas, never consent to receive the price of blood. The Afghan murderer, even if he has committed an involuntary murder, according to Elphinstone, has to beg the family of his victim to accept his money for compensation and has to submit to a humiliating ceremony analogous to that which on a similar occasion was in use among the Slavs of Southern Europe. "The judges and spectators form a large circle. In the middle, the culprit with a gun and a dagger attached to his neck, crawls on his knees to the feet of the offended party, who, after taking away his arms, raises him and embraces him, saying, 'God forgive you.' The spectators with joyous plaudits congratulate the reconciled enemies. This ceremony, called the 'Circle of Blood,' ends by a feast given at the expense of the murderer, in which all the spectators take part."\* The Bedouin, although accepting blood-money, forces the murderer and his family to recognize their obligations to him.

Retribution for blood was at first left to the award of the offended party, who at his will determined the quantity and quality of the objects to be given to appease him. The Sagas show us the Icelander fixing by himself the price of blood and content with nothing less than all the prop-

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\*Krasinski, Montenegro and the Slavonians, of Turkey, 1853.

erty of the murderer and his family. To appease his passion for vengeance, complete spoliation was required, that the culprit and his family might be deprived of the joys of life. This excess of compensation made this sort of expiation practically impossible and gave room for endless debates. The barbarians, to obviate this difficulty, saw themselves forced to decide on the price which could be demanded. The barbarian codes fixed minutely the price to be paid in kind or money for the life of a freeman, according to his birth and his rank; for wounds on the hand, on the arm, on the leg, etc.; and for every insult to his honor, and every attempt upon his domestic peace. The king, as well as the peasant, was protected by a wehrgeld, payable to his relatives. The only difference between the wehrgeld of the king and that of other individuals in a nation was the scale on which the price of blood was figured.\*

The family of the culprit was responsible for the payment of the price of blood, which the family of the victim shared among its members, proportionately to the degree of relationship. The Gragas of Iceland indicate the manner of division: the males of the family were divided into five circles or degrees of relationship; the first circle, composed of the father, mother and the eldest son, received or paid three marks; the

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\* The establishment of the wehrgeld carries with it this curious consequence, which Mallet observes among the Scandinavians: since the death of a freeman and wounds on his hand, his foot, etc., are subject to a price schedule, the body of a debtor may be held responsible for the debt contracted. It is this reasoning which in all countries has given the creditor the right to mutilate and enslave his debtor.

second and third circles two marks; the fourth one mark and the fifth one ore or an eighth of a mark.

The wehrgeld involved the creation of an official body with the duty of superintending its application. Later, fines were added to it. The wehrgeld continued to be paid to the relatives of the victim, while the fines accrued to the royal or public funds. It is almost the same as in our own days in capitalist countries, where the werh-geld has taken the name of damages and interests.

The simple and equalitarian spirit of the savage had led him to the law of retaliation, life for life, wound for wound, which was the only way for regulating vengeance that he could imagine; but when under the operation of property, the law of retaliation was transformed and the brutal equation of life for life was replaced by the economic equation, beasts and other goods for life, wound, insult, etc.—the spirit of the barbarian was submitted to a severe test: he had to solve a problem which obliged him to penetrate into the domain of abstraction. He had on one side to weigh the material and moral damage caused a family by the death of one of its members; and to an individual by the loss of one of his limbs or by an insult; and on the other hand to measure the advantage which they derived from the cession of certain material goods;—that is to say, he was obliged to apportion and equilibrate things having no direct material connection between them. The barbarian began brutally in demanding in the case of a murder, the social

ruin of the culprit, his economic death, the cession of all his property; and ended after many intellectual efforts by tariffing life, the loss of an eye or a tooth and even insults. This tariffing obliged him to acquire new abstract concepts on the relations of men among themselves and with things, which in their turn engendered in his brain the idea of retributive justice, which has for its mission to proportion as exactly as possible compensation to damage.

## II

## DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

The instinct of self-preservation, the first and the most imperious of instincts, impels the savage man, like the animal, his ancestor, to take possession of the objects he needs. All that he can seize he grasps to satisfy either his hunger or his fancy. He acts toward material goods in the same way the scientist and the man of letters act toward intellectual goods: he takes his good wherever he finds it, according to Moliere's phrase. \*The European travelers who have been the victims of that instinct have given themselves up to fine moral indignation and have belabored the savage with the epithet of thief, as if it were possible that the idea of theft should enter into

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\*"Nature," said Hobbes, "has given each of us an equal right over all things. In the state of nature each has the right to do and possess all that pleases him; whence comes the common saying that nature has given all things to all men, and from which it is gathered that in the state of nature utility is the rule of Right." (De Cive, Book I, Chapter I). Hobbes and the philosophers who speak of natural right, natural religion, natural philosophy are lending to Dame Nature their notions of right, religion and philosophy, which are anything but natural. What should we say of the mathematician who should attribute to nature his concepts of the metric system and should philosophize on the natural meter and millimeter? Measures of length, laws, gods and philosophical ideas are of human manufacture; men have invented them, modified them and transformed them, according to their private and social needs.

the human head before the establishment of property.\*

To subdue this prehensile† instinct, which is the transformation of one of the essential properties of organized matter, to subject it to the yoke and to compress it to the stifling point, has been one of the tasks of civilization. To subjugate the prehensile instinct humanity has passed through stages more numerous than those required for subduing and extinguishing the passion for vengeance. The subjection of this primordial instinct has contributed to the defining of the idea of justice, rough-hewn by the taming of vengeance.

The savage, while he wanders in little clans over the uninhabited earth, along the seas and the streams, stopping where he finds food in abundance, exercises his prehensile instinct without restrictions of any sort; but from the remotest prehistoric times, the necessity of procuring the means of existence obliges him to restrain that instinct within certain limits. When the population of a country acquires a certain density, the savage tribes inhabiting it divide the land into hunting grounds, or into pastures when they live by the breeding of cattle. In order to preserve their means of subsistence, which are the natural fruits, game, fish and sometimes

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\*Proudhon, who had taken to himself the proprietorship of Brissot's phrase, committed the same error when he gave for a social axiom his "property is robbery," for robbery is the consequence of property and not its determining cause. The historic origin of property, whether personal or real, proves that it never took, at its beginning a character of spoliation;—this could not have been otherwise.

†The word prehensile exists in zoological language. Webster defines it, adapted to seizing or grasping.



herds of swine feeding freely in the forests, the savage and barbaric nations of the old and the new world fringe their territories with neutral zones.\* Every individual who goes beyond the limit of the territory of his tribe is pursued, trailed and sometimes put to death by the neighboring tribe. He can within the limit of his territory take freely of what he needs, but beyond that limit he takes only at his risk and peril. The violations of territory, often encouraged to exercise the bravery and the skill of the young warriors, are among the most frequent causes of war between neighboring tribes. The savages, in order to avoid these wars and to live at peace with their neighbors, were obliged to repress their prehensile instinct and to leave it a free career only within the limit of their own territory, the common property of all the members of their tribe.

But even in the limits of this territory the necessity of preserving the means of existence obliges the savages to put a bridle on their prehensile instinct. The Australians forbid the consumption of chickens and pigs when there is a scarcity, and that of bananas and yams when the crop of the bread-fruit trees promises ill. They prohibit fishing in certain bays when fish are scarce. The Redskins of Canada for other rea-

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\*The rude savages of Terre del Fuego define the limits of their territories by broad vacant spaces. Caesar reports that the Suevi took pride in surrounding themselves with vast solitudes. The Germans gave the name of bordering forest and the Slavs the name of protecting forest to the neutral space between two or more tribes. Morgan says that in North America this space was narrower between tribes of the same language, ordinarily allied by marriage, and otherwise, and wider between tribes of different tongues.

sons do not kill the female beavers. The savages, even when dying of hunger, do not touch the plants and animals which are the totems of their tribes, that is the ancestors from which they claim to be descended. These prohibitions, to be more effective, often take on a religious character. The forbidden object is tabooed, and the gods take it upon themselves to punish those who violate the prohibition.

These restrictions to the prehensile instinct are communistic; they are imposed only in the interest of all the members of the tribe and it is only for this reason that the savage and the barbarian submit to them voluntarily. But there exist even among savages other restrictions which have not this character of common interest.

The sexes in savage tribes are distinctly separated by their functions. The man fights and hunts, the woman feeds and watches over the child, which belongs to her and not to the father, who is generally unknown or uncertain. She takes charge of the preservation of the provisions, the preparation and the distribution of food, the making of clothes, household utensils, etc., and she attends to agriculture at its beginning. This separation—based upon organic differences, introduced to prevent promiscuous sexual relations and maintained by the functions devolving upon each sex—is reinforced by religious ceremonies and mysterious practices peculiar to each sex and forbidden on pain of death to the persons of the other sex and by the creation of a language which is understood only by the initiated of one sex. The separation of

the sexes inevitably brought on their antagonism, which translated itself by prohibitions imposed upon the prehensile instinct, which no longer have a general character, but which take on a special sex character—we might say a class character; for, as Marx observes, the class struggle first shows itself under the form of a struggle between the sexes. Here are a few of these sex prohibitions: the savage tribes ordinarily forbid women to participate in their cannibal feasts; certain choice meats such as the flesh of the beaver and emu are in Australia especially reserved for the warriors; it is from a sentiment of the same kind that the Greeks and Romans of historic times forbade women the use of wine.

The restrictions imposed upon the prehensile instinct continued to become more numerous with the establishment of the collective family property. As long as the territory of the clan remains the undivided property of all its members, who cultivate it in common just as they hunt and fish in common, the provisions entrusted to the keeping of the married women, according to Morgan, remain common property. Also within the limit of the territory of his clan a savage takes freely the food he needs. "In a village of Redskins," says Cattlin, "every individual, man, woman or child, has the right to enter into any cabin, no matter what, even into that of the military chief of the nation, and eat all he requires." The Spartans, according to Aristotle, had preserved these communistic manners, but the division of the arable lands of the clan introduces other manners. The division of lands could only take place on condition of its giving full satis-

faction to the sentiment of jealous equality which filled the soul of primitive man. This sentiment demands imperatively that *all have the same, things*, according to the formula which Theseus, the mythical law-giver of Athens, had given for the foundation of justice. Every distribution of food or of the booty of war among primitive men was made in the most equalitarian manner; they could not conceive that it should be otherwise. The equal partition is for them the inevitable, so in the Greek language, *moira*, which signifies at first the part coming to each guest at a banquet, ends by indicating the supreme goddess of Destiny, to whom men and gods are subject; and the word *diké* used at first for equal division, custom, ends by being the name of the goddess Justice.\*

If the most perfect equality must rule in the distribution of food, so much more the equalitarian spirit will be awakened when it comes to distributing the lands which provide the support for the whole family, for the division of lands was made by families proportionately to the number of their male members.

It has been rightly said that the inundations of

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\*A fragment of Heraclides of Pontus, a disciple of Plato, contains a description of the communistic banquets of the Dorians. Every person at the *andreas* (the common repast of the men) received an equal share, except the archon, the member of the council of the elders; he had a right to a quadruple portion—one in his quality of citizen, a second in his quality of president of the table and two others for the support of the hall; these probably must have been reserved for his servants. Each table was under the special supervision of a matriarch, who distributed food to the guests. This function of distributor, reserved to woman, impressed so forcibly the prehistoric Greeks that they personified destiny and the fates by the goddesses *Moira*, *Aisa* and *Ceres*, whose names signify the part which is received in the distribution of food or of booty.

the Nile forced the Egyptians to invent the first elements of geometry that they might redistribute the fields when the stream, bursting its banks, had effaced their land-marks. The custom of holding plowed lands in common after the harvest, and their annual redistribution, imposed upon other nations the same necessity as the overflowing of the Nile. The primitive men were obliged in all countries to discover for themselves the elements of surveying without going through the Egyptian school. Measuring follows naturally from counting. Probably the flock fortified the idea of number and developed numeration, while the division of land engendered the idea of measurement, and the vessel that of capacity.

Rectilinear geometry was naturally the first to be discovered. It required year after year to learn how to decompose a curve into an infinity of straight lines and the area of a circle into an infinity of isoseles triangles. The arable lands were then divided by straight lines into parallelograms, very long and very narrow. But before they knew how to measure the surface of parallelograms by multiplying the base by the altitude and consequently before they had the power of making them equal, the primitive men could not be satisfied until the pieces of ground falling to each family were enclosed in straight lines of equal length. They arrived at these lines by carrying over the ground the same stick the same number of times. The stick which was used for measuring the length of the lines was sacred. The Egyptian hieroglyphics take for the symbol of Justice and Truth, the cubit, that is to say, the

unit of measure. What the cubit had measured was just and true.\*

The portions comprised between the straight lines of equal length set at rest their equalitarian spirit and gave no room for contests. The straight line was thus the important part of the operation. The straight lines once traced, the fathers of families were content. They gave full satisfaction to their equalitarian sentiments. For this reason the Greek word *orthos*, which at first means what is in a straight line, has the further meaning of that which is true, equitable and just.†

The straight line, because it acquired the power of subduing their savage passions, must of necessity have taken on in their eyes an august

\*Haxthausen relates in his curious journey in Russia that he saw in the State House of Jaroslaw certain rods which were revered as the sacred units of land measurement. The length of the rods was in inverse ratio to the quality of the lands; the shortest served to measure the best lands and the longest for lands of inferior quality. "All the portions are in this way unequal in size and equal in value."

†The root *or* in the Greek language contributes to the formation of three series of words, which seem contradictory, but which are complimentary and connect themselves with the division of land:

1. The idea of going in a straight line.  
*or-thos*, straight, erect, vertical, true, equitable, just;  
*or-me*; movement upward, soaring, leaping, passion;  
*or-numi* and *or-ino*, to set in motion, to excite;  
*or-ugma*, ditch, subterranean gallery;  
*or-ux*, pick-axe;  
*or-thoo*, to make straight, to redress,  
*or-thosios*, Zeus—Jupiter, who redresses wrongs.
2. The idea of bounding, of limiting:  
*oros*, boundary, frontier;  
*or-izo*, to bound, to limit, to define, to enact;  
*or-ios*, that which serves as a limit;  
*Zeus or-ios*, Jupiter, protector of boundaries;  
*theos or-ios*, the god of boundaries.
3. The idea of vigilance:  
*our-os*, guard, guardian;  
*pul-or-os*, guardian of gates;  
*tima-or-os*, he who punishes, who avenges;  
*or-omai*, to watch over, to guard.

character. It is by a like phenomenon that the Pythagorians, dazzled by the properties of the numbers they were studying, attributed to the decade a fatalistic character, and that all nations have given mystical qualities to the first numbers. We may thus conceive that the straight line represented in the minds of the men of the first agrarian allotments all they could conceive of Justice.

The equalitarian spirit of primitive men was so fierce, that to prevent the division of lands divided into narrow strips of equal lengths from exciting quarrels, they were distributed by lot, with the aid of pebbles, before the invention of writing. Thus the Greek word *kleros*, which means pebble, takes on the added significance of portion assigned by lot; then that of patrimony, fortune, condition, country.

The idea of justice was originally so closely linked to the division of lands, that in Greek, the word *nomos*, which means usage, custom, law, has for its root *nem*, which gives birth to a numerous family of words containing the idea of pasturage and of sharing.\*

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\**Nemo*, to share, to distribute, then to treat some one according to law;

*nome*, pasturage, portion, lot;

*nomas*, nomad, vagabond, who wanders feeding a herd;

*nomos*, originally pasturage—then sojourn, dwelling, portion—and finally usage, custom, law;

*nomizo*, to observe the custom, the law; to think, to believe, to judge;

*nomisma*, a thing established by custom, by law, religious practice, money;

*nomisis*, worship, religion, belief;

*nemesis*, wrath of the gods against those who infringe on the rights of another, the goddess of distributive justice;

*epi-nomia*, right to pasturage;

*pro-nomia*, privilege.

*Nomos*, at first exclusively used for pasturage, took on in the course of time numerous different meanings (sojourn, habitation, usage, custom, laws), which are so many historical sediments deposited by human evolution. If we unroll the chronological series of these meanings, we pass in review the principal stages traversed by prehistoric peoples. *Nomos*, pasturage, recalls the pastoral and vagabond epoch; from the time the nomad (*nomas*) pauses, *nomos* is used for sojourn, habitation; but when once the pastoral peoples pause and choose their homes in a country, they must inevitably divide up the lands; then *nomos* takes on the meaning of division. When once the agrarian divisions have passed into popular customs, *nomos* takes on its last meaning, custom, law,—law being originally the codification of custom. In the Greek of the Byzantine period and of the modern epoch, *nomos* no longer preserves any other meaning than law. From *nomos* are derived *nomisma*, that which is established by custom, religious practice; *nomizo*, to observe the custom, to think, to judge; *nomisis*, worship, religion; *Nemesis*, the goddess of distributive justice, etc.—which are so many witnesses of the effect of agrarian divisions upon human thought.

The division of the common lands of a clan reveals a new world to the imagination of prehistoric man. It revolutionizes the instincts, the passions, the ideas and the customs in a more energetic and more profound fashion than would be done in our days by the return of capitalist property to the community. The



primitive men, to familiarize their brains with the strange idea that they must no longer touch the fruits and the harvests of the neighboring fields within reach of their hands, were obliged to resort to all the witchcraft that they were capable of imagining.

Every field assigned by lot to a family was surrounded by a neutral zone like the territory of the tribe. The Roman law of the Twelve Tables fixed it at five feet. Boundaries marked its limits. At first they were only heaps of stone or trunks of trees. It was not until later that they were given the form of pillars with human heads to which arms were sometimes added. These heaps of stone and pieces of wood were gods for the Greeks and Latins. Oaths were made not to displace them;\* the plowman was not allowed to approach it, "for fear that the god, feeling himself struck by the ploughshare, should cry to him, 'Stop, this is my field, there is thine.'" (Ovid, *Fasti*.) "Cursed be he who removeth his neighbor's landmark," thunders Jehovah, "and all the people shall say Amen!" (Deuteronomy, xxvii, 17). The Etruscans called down all manner of curses on the head of the culprit. "He who shall have removed the boundary," says one of their sacred anathemas, "shall be condemned by the gods, his house shall disappear, his race shall be extinguished, his land shall produce no more fruits; hail, blight and the fires of the dog-star shall destroy his harvests, his limbs shall be cov-

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\*Plato in his "Laws" says: "Our first law should be this,—that no one touch the boundary which separates a field from that of his neighbor, for it should remain unmoved, that no one should think of shaking the stone, which he has bound himself by an oath to leave in its place."

ered with ulcers, and shall fall into corruption." If property brought justice to humanity, it drove away brotherhood.

Every year at the Terminalia, the neighboring proprietors of Latium decorated the landmarks with garlands, made offerings of honey, wheat and wine, and sacrificed a lamb on an altar built for the occasion, for it was a crime to stain with blood the sacred landmark.

If it is true, according to the word of the Latin poet, that fear gave birth to the gods, it is still more true that the gods were invented to inspire terror. The Greeks created terrible goddesses to subdue the prehensile instinct and to horrify the violators of the property of others. Dike and Nemesis belonged to this class of divinities. Their birth was subsequent to the introduction of agrarian divisions, as their names indicate. They were charged with maintaining the new customs and punishing those who infringed them. Dike, terrible as the Erinnyes, with whom she is allied to terrify and punish, is appeased in proportion as men acquire the habit of respecting the new agrarian customs; she loses little by little her forbidding aspect. Nemesis presided over the divisions and took care that the distribution of the land was accomplished in an equitable manner. Nemesis on the bas-relief which represents the death of Meleager, is represented with a roll in her hand; doubtless the role on which were inscribed the lots that fell to each family. Her foot rests on the wheel of fortune. To understand this symbolism it must be remembered that the portions of land were drawn by lot.\*

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\*Agriculture had a decisive influence over the development of the mentality of primitive men. Thus, for example,

The Greeks were so thoroughly convinced that the culture and sharing of lands had given birth to law and justice, that out of Demeter, the goddess of the shepherds of Arcadia, where she bore the name of Erinnys,\* and who plays no part in the two Homeric poems, they made the goddess of the fruitful earth, who initiated men into the mysteries of agriculture and established peace among them, giving them customs and laws. Demeter, on the monuments of the more ancient

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it was this which modified their opinions on the division of time. The hours, which in Greek mythology designated not the divisions of the day, but those of the year, were originally two in number; the hour of spring-time, Thallo, whose name signifies to be verdant, to bloom; and the hour of autumn, Karpus, which means fruit. Spring and autumn are the important seasons for the savage, who does not cultivate the land, but who lives on the fruits which it bears spontaneously. After the division of the lands, the number of hours is increased to three,—Dike, Eunomia, whose name signifies good pasturage, equity, observation of custom, and Eirene, which means peace. Hesiod describes them in his Theogony as giving customs to men and establishing among them peace and justice, like Demeter Thesmophora.

As long as men live by hunting, fishing and gathering wild fruits, it is a matter of indifference to them to be at war during one season rather than another, but when they have fields to sow and to reap, they are obliged to suspend during certain seasons of the year the wars of tribe against tribe, and to establish truces for the sowing times, the harvests and other agricultural labors. They then created the hour of peace, Eirene, and put these truces under her protection. The Catholics of the Middle Ages placed them under that of God and called them "Truces of God." Eirene is derived from the word *eiro*, to speak. At Lacedæmon they gave the name *eiren* to the young man more than twenty years of age who had a right to speak in public assemblies. During the periods consecrated to the labors of the fields, the disputes between tribes and villages were settled no longer by arms, but by speech,—whence is derived Eirene, the goddess who speaks.

The cultivation of the land might have had an influence over writing, as would seem to be proved by the ancient manner of writing employed by the Greeks, Chinese, Scandinavians, etc., which consists in writing alternately from left to right and right to left,—returning on one's steps like the oxen which plow.

\* Erinnys might have come from *erion*, wool, from which is derived *eriole*, wool stealer.

type, is represented with her head crowned with ears of wheat, holding in her hand implements of husbandry and poppies, which by reason of their innumerable grains are the symbol of fruitfulness; but in the more recent representations, which show her as law-giver, *Thesmophora*, Demeter replaces her ancient attributes by the stylet, which serves to engrave the customs and laws regulating the divisions of land; and by the roll on which are inscribed the titles of property.\*

But the most formidable goddesses and the most horrible curses and anathemas, however deeply they disturbed the fantastical and artless imagination of the child-nations, failed utterly in curbing the prehensile instinct and the people's inveterate habit of taking the things they needed. So there was nothing for it, but to resort to corporal punishment of a ferocity never before heard of and totally opposed to the sentiments and customs of savages and barbarians, who, if they do inflict blows to prepare themselves for their life of incessant struggles, never give to them the character of punishment. The savage does not strike his child. It is the proprietor fathers who invented the horrible precept, "He who loves well punishes well." Attempts against property were punished more fiercely than crimes against persons. The abominable codes of iniquitous justice made their entrance into history in the train, and as the consequence, of private appropriation of land.

Property marks its appearance by teaching the

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\*The mythological gallery of Millin (Paris, 1811) reproduces numerous medallions, vases, cameos, bas-reliefs, etc., on which Demeter is pictured with her various attributes.

barbarians to trample under foot their noble sentiments of equality and brotherhood. Laws inflicting the death penalty are enacted against those who menace property. "He, who at night shall secretly have cut or pastured his flocks on harvests produced by the plow," commands the law of the Twelve Tables, "if he is of age, shall be sacrificed to Ceres and put to death; if he is under age, he shall be beaten by rods at the will of the magistrate and condemned to make amends for double the damage. The open robber, (that is to say, taken *in flagrante delicto*), if he is a freeman shall be beaten with rods and delivered up into slavery. The incendiary of a hay stack shall be flogged and put to death by burning." (Table VIII., 9, 10, 14.) The law of Burgundy goes beyond the ferocious Roman law. It condemned to slavery the wife and the children of more than fourteen years who did not immediately denounce the husband and father guilty of theft or horses or oxen. (XLVII., 1, 2-. Property introduced espionage into the bosom of the family.

Private property in real and personal goods, from its appearance, gives birth to instincts, sentiments, passions and ideas which under its action have been developing in proportion to its transformations, and which will persist as long as private property shall survive.

The law of retaliation introduced into the human brain the germ of the idea of justice, which the division of lands, laying the foundations of private property and real estate, was to fertilize and make fruitful. The law of retaliation taught

man to subdue his passion for vengeance and subject it to regulation; property curbed, under the yoke of religion and law, his prehensile instinct. The role of property in the elaboration of justice was so preponderant that it obscured the earlier working of the law of retaliation to the point that a nation as subtle as the Greeks, and minds as keen as those of Hobbes and Locke, did not perceive it. In fact Greek poetry attributed the invention of laws only to the goddesses who preside over the partition and culture of lands. Hobbes thinks that before the establishment of property in a state of nature there is no injustice in whatever a man might do against another. Locke affirms that "where there is no property, there is no injustice, is a proposition as certain as any demonstration of Euclid: the idea of property being a right to a thing, and the idea to which the word injustice corresponds being the invasion or the violation of the right."\* The Greeks and these profound thinkers, hypnotized by property and forgetting the human being and his instincts and passions, suppressed the first and principal factor of history. The evolution of man and his societies cannot be understood and explained if we do not take account of the actions and reactions, one upon another, of human energies and economic and social forces.

The equitarian spirit of primitive men, to overcome the passion of vengeance, had not and could not have found anything but the law of retaliation. On the occasions of the divisions of

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\* Hobbes: *De Cive*, remark added to the French translation of Sorbieres. Locke: *Essay on the Human Understanding*.

food, booty and lands, this same equalitarian spirit required imperatively equal parts for all, "that all might have the same things," according to the formula of Theseus. Blow for blow, equal compensation for the wrong caused, and equal parts in the distribution of food and of lands were the only ideas of justice that primitive men could conceive. An idea of justice, which the Pythagorians expressed by the axiom "Not to over-pass the equilibrium of the balance," which as soon as it was invented became the attribute of justice.

But the idea of justice, which at its origin is but a manifestation of the equalitarian spirit, goes on, under the action of the property which it helps establish, to sanction the inequalities which property engenders among men.

Property, in fact, can only be consolidated by acquiring the right to set aside the prehensile instinct, and this right once acquired becomes an independent and automatic social force, which dominates man and turns against him.

The right of property conquers such a legitimacy, that: Aristotle identifies justice with respect for the laws which protect it, and injustice with the violation of these same laws; that the *declaration of the rights of man and the citizen*, of the bourgeois revolutionists of 1789 erects it into a "natural and inalienable right of man" (Article II); and that Pope Leo XIII. in his famous encyclical on the condition of the laborers transforms it into a dogma of the Catholic Church. Matter leads the spirit.

The barbarian had substituted property for the shedding of blood. Property substituted itself

for man, who in civilized societies possesses no rights but those conferred upon him by his property. Justice, like those insects which as soon as born devour their mother, destroys the equalitarian spirit which engendered it, and sanctions the enslavement of man.

The Communist Revolution, by suppressing private property and giving "to all the same things," will emancipate man and will bring to life the equalitarian spirit. Then the ideas of justice, which have haunted human heads since the establishment of private property will vanish—the most frightful night-mare which ever tortured sad civilized humanity.



# THE ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF GOOD

## I

### FORMATION OF THE HEROIC IDEAL

One and the same word is used in the principal European languages to indicate material goods and moral Good. We may without suspicion of rashness conclude that the fact must be the same in the idioms of all nations which have arrived at a certain degree of civilization, since we know today that all traverse the same phases of material and intellectual evolution. Vico, who had set forth this historic law, affirms in his "Scienza Nuova" that "there must necessarily exist in the nature of human affairs a mental language common to all nations, which language designates uniformly the substance of things which are the moving causes of social life. This language bends into different forms, as numerous as the different aspects which the things may assume. We have proof of this in the fact that proverbs, these maxims of popular wisdom, are alike in substance among all nations, ancient and modern, though they may be expressed in the most different forms."

I pointed out in the preceding articles on the origin of abstract ideas and the idea of justice, the twists and turns through which the human spirit passed to represent in Egyptian hieroglyphics the abstract idea of motherhood by the

image of the vulture and that of justice by the cubic. In this study I shall try to follow it in the tortuous road which it has traversed to arrive at confusing under the same word material goods and moral Good.

The words which in the Latin and Greek languages serve for material goods and moral Good were originally adjectives applied to the human being.

*Agathos* (Greek), strong, courageous, generous, virtuous, etc.

*Ta agatha*, goods, riches.

*To agathon*, good, *to akron agathon*, the Supreme Good.

*Bonus*\* (Latin), strong, courageous, etc.

\*The same phenomenon may be observed in our own language: *bon* (good) in the old French signifies courageous. The song of Roland implies it always in this sense:

Franceis sunt bon, si ferrunt vassalement.

(The French are brave, they will strike bravely, XCI.)  
Speaking of the archbishop Turpin, Roland says:

Li arcevesque est mult bons chevaliers:

Nen ad meillur en terre desuz ciel,

Bien set ferir e de lance e d'espiet.

(The archbishop is a brave knight, none better on earth under heaven, he knows how to strike well with the lance and the spear, CXLV).

King John had been surnamed "Good" on account of his courage. Commynes, who wrote in the fifteenth century, said good men for brave men. Goodman, after having been in English the epithet for the soldier and after having indicated the head of the family, the master of the house, ends like the French *bonhomme* in being applied to the peasant,—*goodman* Hodge. Hodge is a contemptuous term for peasant. It is no doubt when *bonhomme* came to be generally applied to peasants, whom the nobles and soldiers pillaged (to live on the goodman, was a current expression), that the word took on the ridiculous meaning which it has kept. According to Ducange, it has had at times the significance of cuckold. The addition of a suffix makes good and *bon* grotesque, goodie, *bonasse*. *Agathos* and *bonus* could not in ancient times acquire such a meaning. It is only in the Latin of the Middle Ages that we meet with, *bonatus*, goodie. The writers of the Byzantine period used *agathos* especially in the sense of gentle, mild, and it seems that the gamins of modern Athens use it for imbecile.

*Bona*, goods, *bona patria*, patrimony.

*Bonum*, Good.

*Agathos* and *bonus* are generic adjectives. The Greeks and the Romans of barbarous times to whom they were applied possessed all the physical and moral qualities required by the heroic ideal; so their irregular superlatives, *aristos*, *esthlos*, *beltistos*, etc., and *optimus*, are in the plural used substantively to indicate the best and the foremost citizens. The historian, Velleius Paterculus gives the name of *optimates* to the patricians and the rich plebians who leagued themselves against the Gracchi.

Strength and courage are the first and most necessary virtues of primitive men in perpetual war among themselves and against nature.\* The savage and the barbarian, strong and courageous, possess in addition the other moral virtues of their ideal. Thus they comprise all physical and moral qualities under the same adjective. Strength and courage were then so near to the sum total of virtue that: the Latins, after using the word *virtus* for physical strength and courage, came to employ it for virtue, while the Greeks gave the same successive meanings to the word *areté*; and that the word *pavelin*, the primitive weapon, which in Greek is called *kalon* serves later for the beautiful, while the Latin word for it, *quiris* indicates the Roman citizen.

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\*Physical force was so prized that in the Third Book of the Iliad, when Helen points out to the old men of Troy the Greek chieftains, it is not by their age, their physiognomy or their character, but by their strength that she distinguishes Ulysses from Menelaus and Ajax, both of whom he surpasses in the breadth of his shoulders. Diodorus Siculus, in summing up the qualities of Epaminondas, mentions first the vigor of his body, then the strength of his eloquence, his bravery, his generosity and his skill as general.

Varro tells us that originally the Romans represented the god Mars by a javelin.

It was inevitable that strength and courage should make up the whole of virtue at that time, since to prepare for war, to acquire bravery in order to meet its perils, to develop physical strength so as to endure its fatigues and privations; and moral strength in order not to fall under the tortures inflicted upon prisoners, was the whole physical and moral education of the savages and barbarians. From childhood their bodies were suppled and tempered by gymnastic exercises and hardened by fasts and blows, under which they sometimes succumbed. Pericles, in his Funeral Oration over the first victims of the Peloponnesian War, contrasts this heroic education still in force at Sparta, which preserved its primitive customs, with that of the young men of Athens, which had entered into the democratic bourgeois phase. "Our enemies," said he, "from the earliest childhood train themselves to courage with the severest discipline, and we, brought up with mildness, have no less ardor for running the same risks." Livingston, who found among the African tribes these heroic customs, drew a similar contrast for certain black chieftains between the English soldiers and the negro warriors.

Since courage in ancient times was the whole of virtue, cowardice must necessarily have been vice; thus the words which in Greek and Latin mean cowardly, *kakos* and *malus*, have the meaning of evil, vice.\*

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\**Imbellis*, *imbecillis*, which signify unsuited for war, are especially used by the Latin writers for cowardly, weak in body and mind: *malus* has a more general sense, it is the epithet applied to one who physically and morally does not possess the requisite virtues.

When the barbarian society became differentiated into classes, the patricians monopolized courage and the defense of the country. This monopoly was "natural" (if I may apply the expression of bourgeois economics), although nothing appears more natural to the capitalists than to send in their place on colonial expeditions working men and peasants, and even, when they can, to entrust the defense of their country to proletarians, who possess neither an inch of land, nor a cog of a machine. The patricians reserved to themselves, as a privilege, the defense of their country, because they alone had a country, for, then, one had a country only on condition of possessing a corner of its soil. The foreigners who for reasons of commerce and industry resided in an ancient city, could not even possess the house in which they trafficked from father to son, and they remained foreigners although living in the city for generations. It required three centuries of struggles for the Roman plebians who lived on the Aventine Hill to obtain property in the lands on which they had built their dwellings. The foreigners, the proletarians, the artisans, the merchants, the serfs and the slaves were relieved of military service and had no right to bear arms, nor even to have courage, which was the privilege of the patrician class.\* Thucy-

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\*Even in democratic Athens in the time of Aristophanes, the merchants were not drafted for military service. The sycophant of his "Plutos" declares that he has become a merchant so as not to go to war.

Plutarch says that Marius, "to fight against the Cimbri and the Teutons, enrolled, in spite of the customs and laws, slaves and vagrants. All the generals before him excluded such from their armies. Arms, like other honors of the Republic, were only for men who were worthy and whose well known fortune answered for their fidelity."

dides relates that the magistrates of Sparta massacred treacherously two thousand Helots, who by their bravery had just saved the republic. From the moment that it was forbidden to the plebians to take part in the defense of their native country, and consequently to possess courage, cowardice must necessarily have been the sovereign virtue of the plebians, as courage was that of the aristocracy. Thus the Greek adjective, *kakos*, (cowardly, ugly, bad), indicates a man of the plebians; while *aristos*, superlative of *agathos*, indicates a member of the patrician class—and the Latin *malus* indicates ugly, deformed, as were in the patrician eyes the slave and the artisan—deformed according to Xenophon, by their trades, while the gymnastic exercises developed harmoniously the body of the aristocrat.\*

The patrician of ancient Rome was *bonus*, and the eupatride of Homeric Greece was *agathos*, because both possessed the physical and moral virtues of the heroic ideal—the only ideal that could have been engendered by the social environment in which they moved. They were brave, generous, strong of body, and stoical of soul, and moreover landed proprietors—that is to say, members of a tribe and of a clan possessing the territory on which they resided.†

The barbarians, who practice only the raising

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\* "Work at a trade deforms the body and degrades the mind. It is for this reason that those who engage in these labors are never called upon for public services." (Xenophon's "Economics.")

†The epithet stoical applied to the barbaric heroes is an anachronism, but merely a verbal one: the word was manufactured to indicate the disciples of Zeno, who taught under the portico, *stoa*; the barbarians possessed the moral force, which the stoics forced themselves to acquire.

of cattle and agriculture of the rudest kind, give themselves up passionately to brigandage and piracy, as an outlet for their surplus physical and moral energy and to procure goods which they know no other way of procuring. In the Greek poem, of which only one strophe remains (the skolion of Hybrias), a barbaric hero sings, "I have for wealth my great lance, my sword and my buckler; ramparts of my flesh, with them I plow, with them I harvest; with them I gather the sweet juice of the vine, with them I am called "Master of the Mnoia" (troop of slaves of the community).<sup>\*</sup> Caesar relates that the Suevi every year sent half of their male population on pillaging expeditions. The Scandinavians, when their planting was finished, boarded their vessels and went out to pillage the coasts of Europe. The Greeks, during the Trojan War, left the siege to give themselves up to brigandage. "The trade of piracy then had nothing shameful about it; it led to glory," said Thucydides. The capitalists hold it in high esteem. Colonial expeditions of civilized nations are nothing but wars of brigandage; but while the capitalists have their piracies committed by proletarians, the barbaric heroes paid in their own person. The only honorable way of gaining riches was then by war. Thus the savings of the son of a Roman family were called *peculium castrense* (money gathered in the camps). Later on when the dowry of the wife came to increase them they took on the name

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<sup>\*</sup>The cavaliers at the end of the Middle Ages, who had been ruined by the Crusades and dispossessed of their lands, by their internal dissensions, lived only by war, and like the Greek hero gave the name of the "Harvest of the Sword" to the booty gained in combat.

of *peculium quasi castrense*. This general state of brigandage made the Middle Age proverb literally true: "Who has land, has war." The proprietors of flocks and crops never laid aside their arms. They accomplished with their arms in their hands the functions of every day life. The life of the heroes was one long combat. They died young, like Achilles, like Hector. In the Achaean army there were but two old men, Nestor and Phoenix. To grow old was then a thing so exceptional that age became a privilege—the first that slipped into human societies.

The patricians, assuming the defense of the city, naturally reserved to themselves its government. This was confided to fathers of families; but when the development of commerce and industry had formed in the cities a numerous class of rich plebians, they were obliged after many civil struggles to make for them a place in the government. Servius Tullius created at Rome the Order of Knights with plebians possessing a fortune of at least 100,000 sesterces (about 1,000 dollars— as estimated by the census. Every five years, they revised the roll of the equestrian order, and the knights whose fortune had fallen below the census figure, or had incurred a censorial stigma, lost their dignity. Solon, who had grown rich through commerce, opened the Senate and tribunals of Athens to those who possessed the means of maintaining a war-horse and a yoke of oxen. In all cities, of which historical records have been preserved, we find traces of a similar revolution, and everywhere wealth, which comports with the support of a war-horse, gives political rights. This new aris-



ocracy, which took its origin in wealth amassed by commerce, industry and especially usury, could only gain acceptance and maintain itself in its social supremacy by adapting itself to the heroic ideal of the patricians and by assuming a part in the defense of the city, in whose government it shared.\*

There was a time in antiquity when it was as impossible to conceive of a proprietor without warlike virtues as in our days to imagine a superintendent of mines or of a factory of chemical products without some administrative capacity and scientific knowledge. Property was then exacting; it imposed physical and moral qualities upon the possessor. The very fact of being a proprietor presupposed the possession of the virtues of the heroic ideal, since property could be conquered and preserved only on condition of having these. The physical and moral virtues of the heroic ideal were in some fashion incorporated into the material goods which communicated them to their proprietors. It is thus that

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\*Aristophanes, an advocate of the aristocratic party and an adversary of the Athenian democracy, opposes the ancient manners to the new, and by a strange inconsistency, overwhelms with the most envenomed arrows of his satire Lamachus, Cleon and the demagogues, demanding that obtaining in spite of the opposition of the aristocrats, the continuance of the war against Sparta. The times had changed, the ancient aristocracy of blood and the new aristocracy of wealth had lost a great part of their warlike sentiments and preserved in its integrity only the proprietor sentiment. War no longer enriched them. It carried off their cattle, ravaged their fields, uprooted their olives and their vines, destroyed their crops and burned their houses. Aristophanes, himself, had estates in Euboea, which was one of the battle fields of the Peloponnesian war. Plato, who in his quality of idealist is an ardent defender of property, demands in his "Republic" that the Greeks decide that in every war among themselves, houses and crops should not be burned. These warrior pastimes should be permitted only in barbarous countries.

in the feudal epoch the title of nobility was welded to the land. The baron, dispossessed of his manor, lost his title of nobility, which was added to those of his conqueror. It was the same with the dues and services; they were regulated according to the conditions of land and not according to the persons occupying it. Thus nothing was more natural than the barbaric anthropomorphism which endowed material goods with moral virtues.\*

The role of defender of the nation, which the proprietors reserved to themselves, was not a sinecure. Aristotle remarks in his "Politics" that during the Peloponnesian Wars the defeats on land and sea decimated the rich classes of Athens; that in the war against the Iapyges the upper classes of Tarentum lost so many of their members that it was possible to establish a democracy and that thirty years before, following certain unhappy combats, the number of citizens had fallen so low at Argos that they were obliged to grant the right of citizenship to the *perioeci* (colonists living outside of the city walls). War made such ravages in its ranks that the warlike Spartan aristocracy feared to engage in it. The fortune of the rich, as well as their persons, was at the absolute disposition of the state. The

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\*An inverted phenomenon of hippomorphism was produced in the Middle Ages. The nobles, having reserved to themselves the right of bearing arms on horseback, had by this fact such superiority in combats that the horse appeared to communicate to the feudal baron certain warlike virtues; so he took, like the rich men of ancient republics, the name of his mounts and called himself chevalier, caballero, etc. His most highly prized virtues were those of the horse as *chevaleresques*, *caballerescos*, chivalrous. Don Quixote judged the horse so important a personage in errant chivalry that it required all his casuistry to permit Sancho Panza to follow him mounted on an ass.

Greeks designated among them the Liturgists, the Trierarchists, etc., who were obliged to defray the expenses of the public feasts and of the armament of the ships of the fleet. When after the Persian Wars it was necessary to reconstruct the walls of Athens destroyed by the Persians, public and private edifices were demolished in order to procure the materials to reconstruct them.

Since it was permitted only to the proprietors of real and personal property to be brave and to possess the virtues of the heroic ideal; since without the possession of material goods, these moral qualities were useless and even hurtful to their possessors, as is proved by the massacre of the 2,000 Helots, related above; since the possession of material goods was the justification of the moral virtues—nothing was then more logical and natural than to identify moral qualities with material goods and to confuse them under the same word.

## II

## THE DECOMPOSITION OF THE HEROIC IDEAL

Economic phenomena and the political events which they engendered took it upon themselves to ruin the heroic ideal and to dissolve the primitive union of moral virtues and material goods, which language records in so artless a manner.

The division of the arable lands, possessed in common by all the members of the clan began to introduce inequality among them. The lands under the action of multiple causes became concentrated into the hands of a few families of the clan and ended by falling into the possession of strangers, to such an extent that increasing numbers of patricians found themselves dispossessed of their goods. They took refuge in the cities, where they lived as parasites, hornets, Socrates calls them. It could not be otherwise; for in ancient societies, and in fact every society based on slavery, manual and even intellectual labor, being performed only by slaves and foreigners, is poorly paid and is considered as degrading, except indeed for agriculture and the care of flocks.

The political situation created by the economic phenomena is explained by Plato in the Eighth Book of the "Republic," with a strength and clearness of vision which cannot be too much admired. A violent class struggle was troubling the cities of Greece. The oligarchical state, that is to say

the one based on the census, says Socrates, "is not one in its nature, it necessarily contains two states; one composed of the rich, the other of the poor, who inhabit the same ground, and conspire one against the other." Socrates does not include among the poor the artisans and still less the slaves, but simply the ruined patricians.

"The greatest vice of the oligarchical state is that under it a man may sell all that he has, and another may acquire it, yet after the sale he may dwell in the city of which he is no longer a part, being neither trader, nor artisan, nor horseman nor hoplite, but only a poor, helpless creature.\* It is impossible to prevent this disorder, for if it were prevented, a part would not possess excessive wealth, while others are reduced to extreme misery. The members of the ruling class, owing their authority only to the great property they possess, refrain from repressing by severe laws the libertinism of the dissipated young men and preventing them from ruining themselves by excessive expenditures, for they have the intention of buying their goods and appropriating them through usury, to increase their own wealth and power."

The concentration of property creates in the state a class of "people—armed with stings like hornets, some overwhelmed with debt, others marked with infamy, others who have at the same time lost their property and their honors—in a state of hostility and constant conspiracy against

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\*Socrates means that not being able to maintain a war-horse and not having the means to buy a complete armor, they could not serve either as a horseman or as a hoplite,—that is to say, a fully armed warrior.

those who have enriched themselves with the wreck of their fortunes and against the rest of the citizens; and loving but one thing, revolution. Nevertheless, the greedy usurers, with their heads down and without seeming to perceive those whom they had ruined, since others keep coming, inflict large wounds upon them by means of the money which they loaned them at high interest; and while multiplying their own revenues, they multiply in the state the breed of hornets and mendicants."

When the hornets became by their number and their turbulence a menace to the security of the governing class, they were sent out to found colonies, and when this resource failed, the wealthy citizens and the state tried to calm them by distributions of food and money. Pericles could maintain himself in power only by exporting and feeding the hornets. He sent one thousand citizens of Athens to colonize the Chersonesus, five hundred to Naxos, two hundred fifty to Andros, one thousand to Thrace, as many to Sicily and to Thurium. He distributed to them by lot the lands of the Island of Aegina, whose inhabitants had been massacred or banished. He paid the hornets, of whom he could not relieve Athens. He gave them money, even for going to the theatre. It was he who introduced the custom of paying six thousand citizens, that is to say nearly half the population enjoying political rights, for exercising the function of judges (dikasts).\* The pay of the judges, which at first

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\*The number of citizens at Athens having political rights was 14,040, as is proved by the census made by Pericles, for the distribution of the grain which was sent to them as a present from Egypt.

was one obol per day was raised to three by the demagogue Cleon. The annual sum amounted to 5,560 talents, or \$180,000, which was a considerable sum even for a city like Athens. So when Peisander abolished the democratic government, he decreed that the judges should no longer be paid, that the soldiers alone should receive wages, and that the management of the public affairs should be entrusted to but five thousand citizens, capable of serving the state with their fortune and their person. Pericles, to restrain and satisfy the artisans, who made common cause with the hornets, had been obliged to undertake great public works.

The economic phenomena, which, by dispossessing a part of the patrician class, created a class of unclassed, ruined revolutionaries, developed more rapidly in the cities, which by their maritime position became centers of commercial and industrial activity. The class of plebeians enriched by commerce, industry and usury, increased in proportion as the number of ruined patricians and parasites increased. These enriched plebeians, to snatch political rights from the rulers, leagued themselves with the dispossessed nobles and when they had obtained political rights, they united with the rulers to combat the impoverished patricians and the plebeians with little or no fortune; and these latter, when they became masters of the city, abolished debts, banished the wealthy and divided up their property. The banished rich implored the assistance of foreigners to return to their city, and in their turn massacred their conquerors. These class struggles ensanguined all the cities of Greece and prepared them for the dominance of Macedonia and Rome.

The economic phenomena and the class struggles which they engendered had overthrown the conditions of life, in the midst of which the heroic ideal had been elaborated.

The manner of making war had been profoundly transformed by the economic phenomena. Piracy and brigandage, these favorite industries of barbaric heroes, had been rendered difficult, since the improved fortifications of the cities sheltered them from surprises. Solon, although at the head of a commercial city and himself a merchant, had been obliged out of complaisance for inveterate habits, to found at Athens a college of pirates, but the establishment of numerous colonies along the shores of the Mediterranean, and the commercial development resulting from this, had forced the maritime cities to police the seas and give chase to the pirates, whose industry lost prestige in proportion as its profits diminished.

Changes of great importance had been made in the military organization on sea and land. The Homeric heroes, like the Scandinavians who later on were to ravage the European shores of the Atlantic, when they started on a maritime expedition took no rowers and sailors with them. Their flat-bottomed ships, which they built themselves and which according to Homer could not have carried more than from fifty to one hundred and twenty men, were manned only by warriors who rowed and fought. The battles were on land only. The *Iliad* mentions no engagement on the sea. The improvements which the Corinthians introduced into ship building and the increase of naval strength made necessary the use of mercenary



rowers and sailors, who took no part in the battles in which the hoplites and other less heavily armed warriors engaged on sea and land. The mercenary once acclimated in the fleet, pushed himself into the land armies. These were at first composed only of citizens taking the field with three or four days' rations, which they furnished themselves, as well as their horses and arms. They foraged on the enemy when their provisions gave out and returned to their firesides when the expedition, always of short duration, was ended. But when the war, carried on at a distance, required a long attendance of the army, the state was obliged to provide for the support of the warrior. Pericles at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War gave for the first time at Athens pay to the warriors, who then became soldiers—that is to say, wage-workers, mercenaries. The pay amounted to two drachmas (about forty cents) a day, for the hoplites. Diodorus Siculus says that it was at the siege of Veii that the Romans introduced pay into their armies. From the moment when pay was given for fighting, war became a lucrative profession, as in the Homeric times; corps of soldiers were formed in which the poor citizens and the unclassed and ruined patricians enrolled themselves, just as there existed already bands of mercenary rowers and sailors, selling their services to the highest bidder.\*

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\*Thucydides relates that the ambassadors of Corinth, in order to influence the Spartans, intimidated by the naval forces of Athens, to join them in declaring war, said to them: "We need only make a loan to entice away with higher wage the rowers of Athens." Nicias, in the letter which he addresses from Sicily to the Athenian assembly, complains of the desertion of the mercenaries. Some years

Socrates said that an oligarchical state—that is to say, one governed by the rich, “is powerless to make war, because it is obliged to arm the multitude and consequently to have more to fear from it than from the enemy; or else not to use it and go into battle with an army truly oligarchical;”—that is to say reduced to the rich citizens. But the new necessities of war forced the rich to repress their fears and to violate the ancient customs. They were obliged to arm the poor and even the slaves. The Athenians enrolled slaves in their fleet, promising them liberty, and they liberated those who had fought valiantly at Arginousæ (B. C. 406-. The Spartans, themselves, were obliged to arm and liberate Helots. They sent to the relief of the Syracusans, besieged by the Athenians, a corps of 600 hoplites composed of Helots and Neodamodes (newly admitted to citizenship); while the government of the Spartan Republic branded with infamy the Spartans who had laid down their arms at Sphacteria, although several of them had occupied high political positions, it granted liberty to the Helots who had smuggled provisions through to them while

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later the sailors left the Athenian fleet in Asia Minor to pass over to that of Lysander, who gave them higher pay.

The Carthaginians, to fight the Greek army in Sicily, enrolled Greek soldiers who were working at the trade of fighting for pay. Alexander found in the service of Darius Greek mercenaries whom he incorporated in his own army after having pardoned them for fighting on the side of the barbarians against the Greeks. Fighting for pay abolished the patriotic sentiment so savage and deep-rooted in the barbarian. Greek mercenaries were found fighting in all armies. When the stoics and cynics, long before the Christians, spoke of human brotherhood arising above the narrow walls of the ancient city, they were merely giving a humanitarian and philosophical expression to the fact accomplished by economic and political events.

they were besieged by the Athenians. The wage which transformed the warrior into a mercenary, into a soldier,\* becomes in a short time an instrument of social dissolution. The Greeks had sworn at Platea that "they would bequeath to their children's children hatred against the Persians, that this hatred might last as long as the rivers should flow to the sea," nevertheless half a century after this proud oath Athenians, Spartans and Peloponnesians paid eager court to the king of Persia in order to obtain subsidies to pay their sailors and their soldiers. The Peloponnesian War hastened the fall of the aristocratic parties and brought out into broad daylight the ruin of heroic customs, which the economic phenomena had silently prepared.

The rich who had reserved to themselves as the first of their privileges the right to bear arms and to defend their country rapidly acquired the custom of replacing themselves in the army by mercenaries. A century after the innovation of Pericles the bulk of the Athenian armies was composed of paid soldiers. Demosthenes says in one of his Olynthiacs that in the army sent against Olynthus there were 4,000 citizens and 10,000 mercenaries; that in that which Phillip defeated at Chaeronea there were 2,000 Athenians and Thebans and 15,000 mercenaries. The rich, although not fighting, reaped the benefits of war. "The rich are excellent for keeping riches," said

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\*The word *soldat*, which in European languages has replaced *warrior* (*soldier*, English; *soldat*, German; *soldado*, Spanish; *soldato*, Italian, etc.) comes from *solidus*, a small coin, from which is derived *solde*, pay. It is from the wage he receives that the soldier derives his name. Historically, the soldier is the first wage worker.

Athenagoras, the Syracusan demagogue, "they leave dangers to the multitude, and not content with seizing the greater part of the advantages of war, they usurped them all."

The barbarian patricians, trained from childhood to all the labors of war, were warriors who defied all comparison. The newly rich, on the contrary, could endure war with difficulty, as Socrates states: "When the rich and the poor find themselves together in the army on land or sea and observe each other mutually in circumstances of danger, the rich then have no reason to despise the poor; on the contrary, when the poor man, wiry and sunburned, posted on the battle field by the side of a rich man, brought up in the shade and weighed down with superfluous flesh, sees him all out of breath and troubled with his body,—what thought do you think comes to him at that moment? Does he not say to himself that these people owe their riches only to the cowardice of the poor, and when they are by themselves, do they not say to each other, 'Of a truth, these rich are not good for much.'"

The rich, deserting the military service and putting mercenaries in their place to defend their country, lost the physical and moral qualities of the heroic ideal while preserving the material property which justified their existence. It happened then, as Aristotle observes, that wealth, far from being the reward of virtue, excused men from being virtuous.\*

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\*A similar phenomenon reappeared toward the end of the Middle Ages. The feudal lord had no right to the rents in kind or the personal service of his serfs and vassals, except on condition of defending them against the numerous

But the heroic virtues, no longer cultivated by the rich, became the appanage of mercenaries, freedmen and slaves, who possessed no material goods; and these virtues, which led the barbaric heroes to property, sufficed only to enable the soldiers to live miserably on their pay. Economic phenomena had thus decreed the divorce of the material goods and the moral qualities, formerly so intimately united.\*

Among these mercenaries with heroic virtues were found a considerable number of patricians who had lost their property through usury and civil wars, while the rich included in their ranks many people enriched by commerce, usury, and even by war, carried on by others. Thus at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, when Corinth prepared its expedition against Corcyra, Thucydides relates that the state promised its citizens, who should enroll themselves a share in the conquered lands and offered the same advantages to those who, without taking part in the campaign, should give 50 drachmas.

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enemies which surrounded them; but when in the course of economic and political events there was a general pacification within the country, the lord no longer had to fulfill his role of protector, yet this did not prevent him from preserving and even aggravating the services and the rents in kind, which had lost their justification.

\*The capitalistic epoch has seen an analogous divorce, quite as brutal and quite as fertile in revolutionary consequences. At the beginning of the capitalistic epoch, during the first years of the nineteenth century, the ideal of the small trader and the artisan acquired a certain consistency in public opinion: labor, order and economy were considered as closely bound to property. These moral virtues then led to the possession of material goods. The economists and the bourgeois moralists may still, like paroquets, repeat that property is the fruit of labor, but it is no longer its reward. The virtues of the ideal artisan and the small trader no longer lead the wage-worker anywhere but to the bureau of charities and the hospital.

The heroic ideal had fallen to pieces, sowing disorder and confusion in moral ideas, and this confusion was reflected in the religious ideas. The grossest superstition continued to flourish even at Athens: which condemned to death Anaxagoras, Diagoras and Socrates; which burned the works of Protagoras for impiety against the gods. Nevertheless the comic authors launched against the gods and the priests, which was still bolder, the most audacious and the most cynical attacks. The demagogues and tyrants profaned their temples and pillaged their sacred treasures; and debauchees defiled and overturned by night the statues of the gods placed in the streets. The religious legends, handed down from the most remote antiquity and accepted naively as long as they agreed with current customs, had become shocking by their grossness. Pythagoras and Socrates demanded their suppression, even though it were necessary to mutilate Homer and Hesiod, or to forbid the reading of their poems. Epicurus declared that to believe in the legends about the gods and to repeat them were the acts of atheism. The Christians of the first centuries did nothing but generalize and systematize the criticisms which the pagans had made in the midst of paganism.

The hour had sounded for the bourgeois society, then springing up—for the society based on individual property and commercial production—to formulate a moral ideal and a religion corresponding to the new social conditions fashioned by economic phenomena; and it is the eternal honor of the sophisticated philosophy of Greece to have

traced the principal lines of the new religion and the new moral ideal. The ethical work of Socrates and Plato has not yet been surpassed.\*

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\*We must understand by mercantile production the form of production in which the laborer produces not for his consumption or that of his family, but for sale. This form of production, which characterizes bourgeois society, is distinguished absolutely from the forms which preceded it, in which production was for one's own consumption, whether employing slaves, serfs or wage-workers. The patrician families of antiquity, like the lords of the Middle Ages, had produced on their estates and in their workshop, food, clothing, arms, etc.; in a word, almost everything they had need of, and they exchanged only the surplus above their consumption at certain periods of the year.

## III

## THE BOURGEOIS MORAL IDEAL

The heroic ideal simple and logical, reflected in thought the surrounding reality without disguises and without distortions. It erected into primary virtues of the human soul the physical and moral qualities which the barbarian heroes had to possess in order to conquer and preserve the material goods which classed them among the first citizens and the happy men of earth.

The reality of the rising democratic bourgeois society no longer corresponded to this ideal. Riches, honors and enjoyments were no longer the prize of valor and of the other heroic virtues any more than in our capitalistic society property is the recompense of labor, method and economy. Nevertheless, riches continued always to be the end of human activity and even became more and more its sole and supreme end. To reach this end, so ardently desired, it was no longer necessary to put in action the heroic qualities formerly so prized; but as human nature was not despoiled of these qualities, while in the new social conditions they had become useless and even hurtful for making one's way in life, and as they became in the ancient republics causes of trouble and civil war, there was urgent need of subduing and domesticating them by giving them a *platonian* satisfaction in order to utilize them for the prosperity and preservation of the new social order.



The sophists undertook the task. Some, like the Cyrenaics, not trying to disguise the reality, recognized squarely and proclaimed loudly that the possession of wealth was "the sovereign good" and that the physical and intellectual enjoyments which it procures were "the chief end of man." They professed boldly the art of gaining wealth by all means, lawful and unlawful, and of escaping the disagreeable consequences which might ensue from the unskilful violation of laws and customs. Other sophists, like the cynics and many of the stoics, in open revolt against the laws and customs, wished to return to the pre-social state and to "live according to nature." They affected contempt of wealth; "The wise man alone is rich," they shouted ostentatiously. But this disdain for the wealth beyond their reach, was too violently opposed to the trend of the day and the general sentiment, and was often too declamatory to be taken seriously. Moreover, neither group gave any tendency of social utility to their moral theories, and it was precisely this that the bourgeois democracy demanded. Other sophists, like Socrates, Plato and a great number of stoics faced the moral problem squarely. They did not erect contempt for riches into a dogma, but on the contrary they recognized they were one of the conditions of happiness, and even of virtue, though they had ceased to be its recompense. The just man ought no longer to call on the outside world for the reward of his virtues but to seek for it within his inner sanctuary, in his conscience, which should be guided by eternal principles placed outside the world of reality, and he

could hope to obtain this reward only in another life.\*

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\*The soul, a metaphysical entity, existing by itself, independently of the body, which it animates during life and abandons after death, is an invention of the savages. They had found nothing simpler to explain the phenomena of the dream than to divide man in two; the body buried in sleep, remained in its place deprived of life, while the soul, which they called the double, set off on a journey, hunted, fought, avenged itself and acted; then returned to reanimate its corporal envelope, which came to life. The double after death continued to live. Thus at funerals they sacrificed animals and broke weapons in order that their doubles might continue to serve the dead. The souls of savages and barbarians living the communal life of the clan, those of women as well as those of men, betook themselves after death to an extra-terrestrial dwelling where they lived again an existence analogous to that which they had lived on earth. The soul of the Esquimaux hunted the seal; that of the Redskin chased the bison; that of the Scandinavian fought by day and banqueted by night in Valhalla with the Valkyries.

Following and resulting from the transformation of primitive communism, the notion of the extra-terrestrial dwelling slipped away from the human mind, and that of the soul became obscured,—to the point that during the patriarchal period, the head of the family was the only one who was thought to live after death; but his soul instead of betaking itself to paradise, led a supremely sad life in his tomb. The head of the family, who in his quality of administrator of the property had centralized in his person the rights of the members of his family, equally concentrated in himself their immortal souls. Then another explanation of the dream was discovered. Dreams were communications from the divinity, which had to be interpreted to understand one's destiny. I spoke above of the role played by the immortality of the soul of the head of the family in the establishment of the right of primogeniture. The new explanation of the dream gave birth to a new order of exploiters of human stupidity, practicing the trade of dream-interpreter. They flourished in the time of Socrates.

At the time of the dissolution of the patriarchate, all members of the family, women excepted, in regaining their independence, found again, at the same time with their rights, their immortal souls, which had been confiscated by the head of the family. But as most of those who had re-entered into the possession of their souls had on the contrary lost their house and terrestrial goods, they were greatly embarrassed to know where they should lodge after death. They were obliged to reinvent the extra-terrestrial dwelling of the savages. Socrates and Plato were ardent in utilizing the immortality of the soul as an instrument for governing men, disengaging it from the ruins of the patriarchal family. They had been preceded on this path by the Pythagorians. But it was Christianity which carried the exploitation of the soul to its highest perfection.

They did not revolt against the laws and customs, like the cynics; on the contrary they advised conformity to them and counseled each to remain in his place and to adjust himself to his social station. It is thus that St. Augustine and the fathers of the church imposed as a duty upon Christian slaves to redouble their zeal for their earthly master in order to merit the favors of their heavenly master.\*

Socrates, who had lived in intimacy with Pericles, and Plato, who had frequented the courts of the Tyrants of Syracuse, were profound politicians, seeing in ethics and religions nothing but instruments for governing men and maintaining social order.

These two subtle geniuses of sophistical philosophy are the founders of the individualistic ethics of the bourgeoisie—of the ethics which can only end by putting words and acts into contradiction, and by giving a philosophical sanction to the division of life into two parts; the ideal life, pure, and the practical life, impure—one being the antithesis of the other. It is thus, that “very noble and very honorable ladies” of the seventeenth century had succeeded in making love in a double fashion, consoling themselves for their intellectual love with platonic lovers by solid enjoyment of physical love with their husbands, completed according to their need by one or several lovers for good measure.

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\*The cynics, and after them the first Christians, could demand the abolition of slavery. They were revolutionaries, but Socrates and the fathers of the church undertook rather the mission of propping the existing social institutions by the aid of morals and religion.

It is impossible for the ethics of any society based on mercantile production to escape this contradiction, which is the consequence of the conflicts in which the capitalist struggles: if to succeed in his commercial and industrial enterprises, he must capture the good opinion of the public by adorning himself with virtues, he cannot put them into practice if he wishes to prosper. But he understands that these virtues of parade are for others imperious—"categorical imperatives," as Kant says. It is thus that if he unloads worthless merchandise, he demands payment in good money.\* The bourgeoisie, if it maintains its class dictatorship only by brutal strength, has need of sapping the revolutionary energy of the oppressed classes by making them believe that its social order is the realization as nearly as possible of the eternal principles which

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\*The pagans did not try to disguise the truth and they put commerce under the patronage of Mercury, the god of thieves. The Catholics are more Jesuitical. The religious orders, which are not exclusively consecrated to the capture of inheritances, make of commerce and industry their principal and even their only occupation, although they pretend to worship a God pure of all falsehood and innocent of all fraud.

The first act of the capitalistic bourgeoisie on coming into power in 1789 was to proclaim the liberty of theft, by relieving commerce and industry from all control. The guild masters of the Middle Ages, working only for the local market, for their neighbors, had established a severe control over production. The syndics of the guilds were authorized to enter workshops at any hour in order to examine the material and the manner in which it was worked. To facilitate their inspection the doors and the windows of the workshop remained open while the work was going on. The artisans of the Middle Ages worked literally under the eyes of the public. The goods before being put on sale were controlled by the syndics and marked with a seal or some other sign attesting that the guild guaranteed their good quality. This incessant control, which hampered and repressed the flight of the thieving genius of the capitalistic bourgeoisie, was one of its most serious grievances against the guilds.

adorn the liberal philosophy, and which Socrates and Plato had partially formulated more than four centuries before Jesus Christ.

Religious ethics does not escape this fatal contradiction. If the highest formula of Christianity is "love one another," the Christian churches, to draw customers to their shops, think only of converting the heretics by fire and sword, in order to save them, as they assure us, from the eternal fires of hell.

The barbarian social environment, engendered by war and the communism of the clan, resulted in stretching to their extreme limit the noble qualities of the human being—physical strength and courage and moral stoicism, the devotion of body and goods to the community, to the city. The bourgeois social environment, based on individual property and mercantile production, erects on the contrary into cardinal virtues the worst qualities of the human soul, egotism, hypocrisy, intrigue, profligacy and pilfering.\*

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\*The bourgeois writers are accustomed to heaping all the vices of civilization upon the savages and barbarians, whom the capitalists rob, exploit and exterminate under pretext of civilizing them, and it is they who corrupt them physically and morally with alcoholism, syphilis, the Bible, obligatory labor and commerce.

The travelers who come in contact with savage nations not contaminated by civilization, are struck by their moral virtues; and Leibniz, who alone is worth all the philosophers of liberalism, could not refrain from paying homage to them: "I know beyond doubt," he wrote, "that the savages of Canada live together in peace, although there is no sort of magistrate among them. We never, or scarcely ever, see in that part of the world quarrels, hatreds or wars, if not between men of different nations and different languages. I should almost dare call this a political miracle unknown to Aristotle, and which Hobbes has not observed. Even the children playing together rarely come to blows, and when they begin to warm up a little too much, they are soon restrained by their comrades. Do not imagine that the peace in which they live is the effect of a sluggish and in-

Bourgeois ethics, although Plato claims that it descends from the heavens and that it is on a plane above vile interests, reflects so modestly the vulgar reality, that the sophists instead of elaborating a new word to designate this principle, which according to Victor Cousin, who is a good judge of it, is "ethics in its entirety," took the current word and called it the Good—to *agathon*. When the Christian ideal was formulated by the side of and in the train of the philosophical ideal, it underwent the same necessity. The fathers of the church impressed upon it the seal of vulgar reality.

*Beatus*, which the pagans employed for rich, and which Varro defines as "he who possesses much goods," *qui multa bona possidet*, becomes in ecclesiastic Latin, "he who possesses the grace of God."—*beatitudo*, which Petronius and the writers of the Decadence employ for riches, means under the pen of St. Jerome, heavenly felicity;—*beatissimus*, the epithet given by the authors of paganism to the opulent man, becomes that of the patriarchs, of the fathers of the church and the saints.

Language has revealed to us that the barbarians, by their habitual anthropomorphic way of proceeding, had incorporated their moral virtues into material goods. But the economic phenomena and the political events which prepared the

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sensible character, for nothing equals their activity against the enemy, and the sentiment of honor among them is active to the last degree, as is testified by the ardor which they show for vengeance and the fortitude with which they die in the midst of torments. If these people, with such great natural qualities could some day add to them our arts and science we should by the side of them be mere abortions."

ground for the mode of production and exchange of the bourgeoisie, dissolved the primitive union of the moral and the material. The barbarian did not blush for this union, since it was the physical and moral qualities of which he was the proudest which were set in action for the conquest and the preservation of material goods. The bourgeois, on the contrary, is ashamed of the low virtues which he is forced to put in play to arrive at his fortune, so he wishes to make believe, and he ends by believing, that his soul wanders above matter and feeds on eternal truths and immutable principles; but language, the incorrigible tell-tale, unveils to us that under the thick clouds of the must purified ethics hides the sovereign idol of the capitalists, the Good, the Property-god.

Ethics, like the other phenomena of human activity, is subject to the law of economic materialism formulated by Marx: The mode of production of the material life dominates in general the development of the social, political and intellectual life.

FINIS.















