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CHARLES FOURIER

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*The Theory of the  
Four Movements*

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been expressed, with some examples to support their definition, I shall comply by appending a chapter to the third section, dealing with the hieroglyphic relationship between these two movements and the human passions and social mechanism.

### Epilogue: On the proximity of the social metamorphosis

What suspicions are likely to be aroused in people's minds as they reflect on this outline of past and future revolutions! At first they will be torn between curiosity and distrust, attracted by the idea of penetrating the mysteries of nature but afraid of being taken in by a clever fiction. Reason will tell them to doubt, while passion urges them to believe. Amazed to see a mere mortal unrolling the map of divine decrees before their eyes, providing a survey of eternity past and future, they will succumb to curiosity, they will tremble at the idea that a man has finally been able to

Dérober au destin ses augustes secrets;<sup>4</sup>

and before the announcement of the experiment, even before the publication of my theory, I may well have more disciples to calm down than sceptics to convince.

The idea of the General Destinies I have just sketched in is too superficial not to provoke hundreds of objections, all of which I can foresee because they have frequently been raised in lectures where I have been able to provide much fuller answers than I am able to do in this treatise. So it would be quite pointless for me to try to allay these doubts until after I have explained the mechanism of *progressive Series*, which will clarify whatever is obscure and settle all conceivable objections.

Until then I shall do no more than remind you that the first two treatises will not be concerned with the theory of Social Movement.

<sup>4</sup> 'Unlock the majestic secrets of destiny.'

Their only purpose will be to gratify people's impatience by providing a few glimpses of what people want to know (as I have done in the introduction), outlining the impending consequences of the combined order, and satisfying those enthusiasts who want to anticipate the publication of the treatise by receiving some indications that the theory of the destinies really has been discovered.

We are always prepared to believe in what we desire, and many readers will have complete trust in the discovery without expecting any fuller explanation; and it is because I want to sustain their hopes and strengthen the hope of those who are still hesitant that I have laid so much stress on the ease with which humankind can move immediately to the combined order. It is so easy in fact that this year - 1808 - could see the beginning of the organisation of the globe; if a prince were to employ one of the armies now inactive as result of the peace in a prototype canton, setting twenty thousand men to the preparatory work needed, they could, by transplanting the trees with their roots still in their native soil (as they do in Paris), and by only building in brick, they could speed the process up so much that the first *phalanx of progressive Series* would be in operation by the end of spring 1808. Then the chaos of savagery, barbarism and Civilisation would vanish instantly from the earth, taking with them the unanimous curses of mankind.

This shows how entirely right we are to shake off the lethargy, the apathetic resignation to misfortune and the discouragement spread by the philosophic dogmas that argue that providence has no influence over the social mechanism and that the human spirit has no power to determine our future destination.

For if the calculus of future events is beyond the grasp of man, whence comes the obsessive desire, common to all peoples, to probe the destinies, at the name of which even the most glacially detached individuals feel a trembling of impatience? This shows how impossible it is to eradicate the passion to know the future from the human heart. Why should God, who never does anything without a purpose, give us this burning desire, if he had not provided the means for satisfying it one day? Now at last that day has come, and mortals will share with God a foreknowledge of future events; and I have offered you this slender glimpse of them so that you will conclude that, as this wonderful and much-desired knowledge has to do with the theory of *agricultural association and passionate attraction*,

nothing is more worthy of stimulating your curiosity than the theory of association and attraction which is about to be communicated to you in the following treatises, and which will open for you the great book of the eternal decrees.

According to the philosophers, 'Nature is concealed under a brazen veil, that the united efforts of men and ages can never lift up the extremity of this covering.'<sup>5</sup> A very useful sophism for ignorance and vanity, trying to persuade people, as it does, that what has not been done can never be done. If nature is veiled, it is not with brass but with gauze; Newton's discovery of the fourth branch of her mysteries is an indication that we were not meant to be denied knowledge of the other three branches. When a beauty grants her lover one favour he would be very foolish to think she will not grant him any more. Why then have the philosophers given up on nature when she aroused them by letting them lift up a corner of her veil?

They boast about shedding streams of light everywhere, but where is this enlightenment's source? It cannot be in nature because nature, they say, is 'impenetrable to them and covered in a veil of brass'. It is in radiant paradoxes like this that the philosophers communicate their own discouragement and persuade humankind that where their science has been unable to discover anything there is nothing to be discovered.

Yet for all the incompetence of guides such as these, the social order still makes some progress, as in the abolition of slavery; but how slowly it recognises the good and puts it into into practice! Twenty centuries of scientific knowledge elapsed before the slightest amelioration in the lot of slaves was proposed. Thus it takes thousands of years for them to open our eyes to a truth, and suggest an act of justice! Our sciences, which pride themselves on love for the people, are utterly bankrupt when it comes to protecting them; modern attempts to emancipate the negroes have achieved nothing but bloodshed and exacerbation of the misery of those it was designed to help, and people are still unaware of the methods of emancipation, although modern customs have shown it to be a possibility.

<sup>5</sup> *Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece during the middle of the fourth century before the Christian Era*, Abbé Barthélemy. Translated from the French. Second edition (7 vols.), London, 1794, Vol. III, p. 149.

I repeat, we owe what little social progress we have made to chance, not to moral and political science. But chance only allows these discoveries at the cost of centuries of tumultuous failed attempts. The progress of our societies is rather like that of the sloth, whose every step is marked by a groan; like the sloth, Civilisation moves forward with unimaginable slowness, from one political torment to the next. It tries new systems in each generation but, like thorn-bushes, all they do is stain the people who grasp them with blood.

Wretched nations, you are very close to the great metamorphosis which seemed to be announced by a universal upheaval. Today the present is indeed pregnant with the future, and excessive suffering must be leading towards the moment of salvation. From the continual sequence of vast political tremors it looks as if nature is straining to shake off an oppressive burden. Wars and revolutions are constantly flaring up in every corner of the globe; no sooner is one disturbance warded off than another rises from its ashes, like the Hydra's heads multiplying beneath Hercules' sword. Peace is no more than a glimmer, a momentary dream. Industry has become a torturer of whole peoples, with an island of buccaneers impeding communications, demoralising the cultivation of both continents and transforming their workshops into breeding-grounds for beggars. Colonial ambitions have created a new, smouldering volcano; the implacable fury of the negroes will soon turn America into a huge graveyard, avenging the annihilated native races by torturing their conquerors. The mercantile spirit has opened new opportunities for crime; with every war its ravages extend over both hemispheres and take the scandal of Civilisation's greed into the heart of the savage regions. Our ships circumnavigate the globe for no other reason than to make barbarians and savages party to our vices and our furies. Civilisation does indeed become more hateful as it approaches its fall. All the Earth offers today is hideous political chaos which demands the strength of a new Hercules to purge it of the social monstrosities which disfigure it.

This new Hercules is here. His great labours have already caused his name to resound from pole to pole, and humanity, accustomed by him to the sight of marvellous deeds, awaits a miracle which will alter the fate of the world. Peoples, your presentiments will soon be realised. The most glorious mission is reserved for the

greatest of heroes. He it is who shall raise universal harmony on the ruins of barbarism and Civilisation. Breathe again, forget your former sorrows. Rejoice, for a happy discovery at last brings you the *Social Compass*<sup>m</sup> which you might have discovered on a thousand occasions if you had not all been so moulded by godlessness, so culpably distrustful of providence. Learn (and I cannot repeat this often enough) that it had above all to deal with the organisation of the *social mechanism* because that is the noblest branch of the universal movement whose direction belongs entirely and alone to God.

Instead of acknowledging the truth of this, instead of devoting yourselves to discovering what God's designs for the social order are and how he can reveal them to us, you have rejected every argument which might have admitted God's intervention in human affairs. You have vilified and defamed *passionate attraction*, the eternal interpreter of his decrees, and entrusted yourselves to the guidance of the philosophers who tried to relegate the divinity to a level below their own, arrogating his highest function to themselves by setting themselves up as regulators of Social Movement. To cover them in shame, God allowed humanity to bathe in blood, under their auspices, for twenty-three scientific centuries, and to run the full gamut of misery, ineptitude and crime. And as a final disgrace God has decided that these modern Titans should be brought down by a discoverer from outside the realm of the sciences, and that it should fall to the lot of a near-illiterate to reveal the theory of universal movement. It is a shop-sergeant who is going to confound all the voluminous writings of the politicians and moralists, the shameful products of ancient and modern quackery. And this is not the first time that God has made use of the humble to put down the proud and mighty, nor the first time that he has chosen the obscurest man to bring the most important message to the world.

*End of the first part*

<sup>m</sup> *The Social Compass*. This name is extremely appropriate for the *progressive series* because this simple operation resolves all conceivable problems of social happiness, and is enough on its own to guide human politics through the labyrinth of the passions, just as a compass needle is enough on its own to guide ships through the darkness of storms and the vastness of the seas.

limited to the feeble resources provided by Civilisation, forgetting that all these social miracles will be worked by *progressive Series* and not by *incoherent families* which have the opposite qualities.

But as irony is the chief pleasure of the civilised, let them hasten to express their malignity: as agricultural association could be given a trial within six months, the *impossibles* will not have much time to find fault, and the more eloquent their criticism, the more pitiful they will look when they have to retract it all. Then people will recall their sarcastic comments and take no notice of their unconvincing words of praise, thus reducing them to silence. This is the best punishment for curs like these who are so rabidly opposed to all new discoveries, people whom La Fontaine has so accurately called

Minds of the lowest order  
Who, being good for nothing themselves, try to savage everybody else.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, their manic response may seem excusable, given the way society has so often been taken in by the inexact sciences. We should not be surprised if the moderns, after all the hoaxes of the sophists, tend to be increasingly distrustful, nor that there should be such a fondness for irony in Civilisation today, as everybody is tired of having new philosophical theories advertised every day which are incompatible with experience and nature. But these absurd sciences are approaching their end. Politics and ethics have already annihilated each other in the revolutions of the eighteenth century: a commercial science has survived them, namely *political economy*, but it will not be long before that ends even more shamefully than the moralists it has crushed. [I shall review their reciprocal stupidities, and provide a glimpse of the outcome which awaits the victor as it awaited the victim.]

<sup>6</sup> *Fables*, v.16, 14-15.

## On the abandonment of moral philosophy

Civilised nations, you are about to take a giant step forward in the social world. By passing directly into universal harmony you are escaping twenty revolutions which could bathe the world in blood for another twenty centuries before the theory of the destinies was discovered. You will be jumping two thousand years of social progress, something you will find no equal of in the history of prejudices. Reject the ideas of mediocrity and the moderate desires that impotent philosophy whispers to you. Now that you are going to enjoy the benefit of the divine laws, imagine the prospect of a happiness as immense as the wisdom of the God who has shaped its design. Look at the universe which he has arranged so magnificently, at the millions of worlds he has set rotating in harmony, and you will recognise that so great a being could never be reconciled with mediocrity and philosophy, and that it would be an insult to him to expect moderate pleasures in a social order he had created.

Moralists, what purpose can you have in recommending third-rate incomes? Those who are fortunate enough to be above the average will never want to come down to that level. No argument will persuade a man with an income of 100,000 francs to give 80,000 of it away in order to reduce himself to a modest 20,000 francs because it is the *aurea mediocritas*; conversely, those whose incomes are only average have no intention of being satisfied with them, and are quite justified in believing that they do not bring real happiness, as long as the rich refuse to come down to their level despite the ease with which that could be done. It is thus quite clear that aver-

age, modest incomes hold no attraction for the two classes who can enjoy them, and it is absurd to advise them to do so because they have experienced them, and they all agree that wealth is to be preferred. As for those who are below the average, it is quite wrong to recommend it to them as they would have great difficulty reaching it. People who are badly off are more likely to decline and fail than to improve their fortune. Politics has already been the object of the bitterest criticism for not being able to provide people with necessities, so it is obviously pointless to set about encouraging them with a taste for the average, when they cannot even be guaranteed their less exalted lot.

Theology sings the praises of poverty as the path to eternal fortune. Politics praises the riches of this world while waiting for those of the next: both suit the human heart, which does not readily adapt to mediocrity. The only reason for you moralists to have preached the virtues of mediocrity was because of your obsession with saying something new rather than echoing the dicta of religion and politics; with the former preaching poverty and the latter so enthusiastic about wealth, mediocrity and averageness are all you had left to take up.

This is the danger of taking on a role which the others have scorned. By its praise of mediocrity alone your science stands accused of ineptitude or charlatanry. If the praise is sincere, it is inept; if you really believe that mediocrity can fulfil man's desires, that it can allay his perpetual anxiety, then you do not understand man, and you should go back to school yourselves instead of giving us lessons. And if the praise is merely oratorical trickery, it is illogical to recommend mediocrity so highly when those who can enjoy it do not like it, and when you do not know how to provide it for those who have not got it. Whichever of the two you choose, it reduces your dogmas to something well below mediocrity.

Do you think the question of intention will save you? That providing man with consolations will validate your efforts? If you had any sincere intention of consoling the unfortunate you would look for other means than your dogmas, which by your own admission have proved powerless. Witness a modern moralist who says of the masters of the art, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, 'To sustain me in misfortune you give me the staff of philosophy, and say: walk stead-

ily, go through the world begging your bread, and you will be just as happy as we are in our castles, with our wives and the respect of our neighbours. But the principal thing I lack is the very reason which you want me to use as my support. All your fine dialectics disappear when they are most needed; they are like a reed in the hands of a sick man, etc.'<sup>7</sup>

Moral philosophy is thus discredited by its own authors, but in fact their own actions should have been enough to disabuse us, without waiting for their disavowals. Ask the virtuous Seneca why he sings the praises of poverty at the same time as accumulating a personal fortune of 80 million pounds (current value): no doubt he thought poverty and mediocrity better in prospect than in reality, like badly finished statues that only look good when viewed from a distance. We might come round to Seneca's way of seeing things if, like him, we could consign poverty and mediocrity to dusty libraries.

As both your actions and your admissions attest to the powerlessness of your knowledge to deliver the help it promises, what should we take your intentions to be if you persist in dispensing this useless aid? It is surely ironic for you to want to habituate us to deprivation when what we are asking you for is real wealth and real pleasure. You philosophers have more practised minds and senses than most people, and are thus more acutely aware of the pleasures of wealth: are you not absolutely delighted to learn that the collapse of your systems is going to bring you the sort of fortune you long for, even while you pretend to despise it?

Do not be afraid to confess your errors in full: the disgrace will be borne by all scholars collectively, not by any one group in particular. Do you think doctors and writers will be able to avoid their share of the blame? Have they not, like you, enough rationality and good sense to perceive and criticise the general absurdity? Yes, the *absurdity is general* as long as you are unable to remedy the most scandalous social disorder, *poverty*. As long as poverty continues,

<sup>7</sup> The quotation is from Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Etudes de la Nature*, vol. III, *Œuvres Complètes de Jacques-Henri-Bernardin de Saint-Pierre* (Paris, 12 vols., 1818), vol. V, pp. 5-6. (Fourier has altered the original by adding the first phrase, failing to indicate several ellipses, and by rewriting the final sentence so that it is reduced to a short clause.)

all your profound sciences are no more than certificates of your insanity and uselessness. For all your wisdom, you are no more than a legion of madmen.

You claim to be interpreters of reason. Remain silent, then, as long as the civilised order lasts, for it is incompatible with reason to recommend both truth and moderation. Where has Civilisation made progress? In cities like Athens, Paris and London, where men have never had anything to do with moderation or with truth, but have been enslaved by their passions and devoted to sensual luxury and intrigue. And where has Civilisation declined and remained mired in mediocrity? In Sparta and primitive Rome where the passions of sensual pleasure and luxury were scarcely developed at all. After that, can there be any doubt that the civilised order is incompatible with reason, when you say the latter's purpose is to moderate the passions? Can there be any doubt that this kind of reason must be banished if the civilised order is to continue and progress?

Your science enjoyed something of a vogue in antiquity, but the reason for this was that it indulged the passions; there was little to fuel the imagination and curiosity in that period, when literature and the sciences were still in their infancy. People thus became very enthusiastic about dogmas which opened the way to so much controversy and intrigue, and hypothetical philosophy was sustained by its union with the established sciences and with religion. Pythagoras, the doyen of ethics, was also a skilled geometrician and a respected prelate. He founded a monastery where he worked miracles like bringing the dead back to life and similar pranks. His followers were subjected to the harshest conditions, as Trappists are today. So if moralists won popular favour, it was because in mythological religion they formed an accessory to the priesthood, like monks in the catholic church.

While the strict moralists of ancient philosophy seduced the people by practising austerity and studying the useful sciences, other, more accommodating Series [like that of Epicurus] won the support of high society and formed cabbalistic coteries, over which the idle rich of Greece would take sides, in the same way as their equivalents in Paris today develop enthusiasms for some theatre or actor. It must therefore be clear that this ancient Greek vogue for ethics was based on nothing but the superstition of the poor and

the idleness of the rich; that is, on luck favouring the passions, not on the influence of reason.

Different periods have different customs, though, and the ethical coteries were no longer fashionable among the Romans; Cato, talking about an intrigue which had involved several Greek sophists, expressed a wish to have all philosophers driven out of Rome, proof that there was no longer the odour of sanctity about them.

And moral philosophy has only reappeared among the moderns in order to die a natural death. At first it slavishly followed in the footsteps of the ancients, re-hashing their diatribes against the passions and wealth, but in vain since what once amused Athens no longer amuses Paris and London. The speculative sciences are like fashion: they only last a certain length of time. The coterie of moralists is all but extinct; cut off from religion and the exact sciences it scarcely dares to show itself except by masquerading in fashionable terminology like the *analytical methods* it still relies on to venture a few meaningless words on the passions and launch a feeble dart in their direction, like old men in the chimney-corner muttering against the current century which no longer recognises them.

Although moral philosophy accuses our century of perversity for being indifferent to its charms, it is easy to demonstrate that its abandonment is the only rational act this century can boast; it is an odd fact that the places where the writings of its adherents have been most widely taught are those where they have been least followed. Sparta and Rome are often cited as centres of ethics, but Sparta had hardly any moralists, indeed did not even want to put up with Diogenes, the great advocate of poverty; there were even fewer moralists in Rome, when Cincinnatus had his radishes cooked. Men were no better for being poor: their display of austerity was just a product of circumstances. In Rome, as elsewhere, the growth of wealth provided more refined forms of ambition: the more developed Civilisation becomes, the less respect there is for austerity and moderation. Philosophy's attempts to reinstate these political pruderies are simply an indication of their unsuitability. The more ethical theories a people accumulates, the less likely they are to follow their precepts. The moralist coterie is the child of luxury: by inveighing against luxury it repudiates its own father. The number of volumes and systems it produces increases as luxury progresses, and if luxury comes to an end, it takes ethical theories

with it, without the ruined nation becoming any better. The present-day Greeks, for example, who have no philosophers, are no more advanced in their customs than their classical predecessors; ethical controversy stems from, and is sustained by, luxury alone. When luxury rules it can gain credence as a romantic vision, amusement for the idle, so long as it is appropriate to the circumstances. Far from being able to moderate the passions, it is reduced to flattering the dominant vices for fear of being ignored entirely: it has thus become much milder in tone in order to deal with the moderns, who no longer respect radishes.

Morality is under a serious delusion if it thinks it has any autonomous existence. It is clearly superfluous and powerless in the social mechanism, as whenever a matter arises that ought to fall within its domain, such as theft or adultery, etc., the action appropriate to the established order is easily determined by reference to politics or religion. As for instituting reforms in manners or custom, if religion and politics have failed, ethics will fail even more badly. Its only role in the body of the systematic knowledge is to be the fifth wheel on a cart, impotence in action. Wherever it combats vice alone you can be sure of its defeat. It is like a bad regiment which allows itself to be beaten in all its encounters and ought to be ignominiously dispersed. That is the treatment the rest of the sciences ought to give to ethics for all the services it has done them.

Politics and theology may have shown some respect for you moralists from time to time, and allowed you to join with them in the struggle against vice, but this is only so that they can leave you to bear the shame of defeat while all the benefit of their corruption accrues to them. For them, you are merely

The servile instrument  
Cast scornfully aside when not of use  
And coldly smashed when it grows dangerous.

Look at the way they treated you at decisive moments of history, like St Bartholomew's Day and the French Revolution. If you doubt their contempt for your tenets, try to find the opposite views to theirs and you will have an idea of your importance.

An incident which occurred during the seventeenth century has provided you with a final revelation of these disturbing truths. There was a split in philosophy which gave rise to the new science

of political and commercial economy. The rapid progress it made should have forewarned you of the triumph of ideas friendly to luxury and the downfall of the moralists.

They realised very late that political economy was taking over the whole domain of charlatanism. From the mid-eighteenth century all minds rallied to this new science which announced itself as a dispenser of wealth and promised nations huge riches, in which everybody flattered themselves they would share. The economists had already usurped the field when the moralists were still struggling away, singing the praises of poverty. When the French Revolution finally dispelled all their illusions about republican virtues, they tried to reach a compromise by putting forward ambiguous ideas like *being indifferent to wealth, neither loving nor hating it*; very amusing ideas, but with no hope of saving the ethical coterie. The economists were by now powerful enough not to need allies and rejected all moves towards compromise, arguing instead that we needed *greater and greater wealth, with a vast trade in a multiplicity of merchandise*. From then on the moralists sank into obscurity and their work has been ruthlessly reclassified as fiction. Their sect died with the eighteenth century; it is politically dead and no longer has any credibility among scholars and scientists, especially in France, where it no longer figures in the academies.

The ethical coterie has died a natural, and edifying, death. They ended up like those atheists who decide at the last moment that they do believe in God. When they realised that they were irretrievably defeated they admitted what they had been denying for 2,300 years. They recognised that wisdom and an income of 100,000 écus go very well together, as can be seen in the poem about the countryman who practises wisdom in a fine château, with his hounds and huntsmen, cards and suppers where corks are popped for virtue's sake. This is indisputably the sort of wisdom that can win converts, as I shall explain in the third part when I talk about freemasonry.

Moreover the writers grasped the situation too late to give a rational colouring to ethics: it would have been like sending reinforcements to somewhere that had already capitulated. And anyway by its last-minute confession that one can be wiser in a château than in rags, that science showed only how inadequate it is to lead us to wisdom and happiness. We can reach those goals under the auspices of politics and theology, the only bodies of



knowledge which provide châteaux for their favourites: there is not even the most minor position to be gained by enlisting under the flag of ethics.

Just as a defeated army regroups in scattered bands which continue to infest the countryside for months afterwards, the remnants of the ethical coterie form groups which march around without order, system or purpose. Like drowning men they clutch at anything, at metaphysics, at commerce, at any novelty. They are literary bandits who infest the high road of knowledge and try to intervene wherever they are not wanted. They rack their brains to find some safe haven for their exiled science; you listen to their pitiful mutterings about morality, rather as you smile at distant thunder after a storm. They are just *busybodies*: no reign could be more conclusively finished than theirs.

There are no depths to which they will not sink in their attempt to regain the approval of the passions they have insulted for so many centuries. On this issue, let me quote the words of another writer, lest I should be accused of vilifying a science fallen upon hard times. 'It has become much more humane. Gentler, more indulgent, it teaches compliance rather than combat. The art of satisfying and sustaining the passions, reviving them when they fail, finding new tastes when they die completely, these are the principal aims of its lessons.' (*Gazette de France*, 17 January 1808).

Returned to their senses by their disgrace, they behave like dethroned princes who acknowledge too late their inability to govern. But assuming that Civilisation could prolong its life, do you believe that the economists who have eclipsed the ethical sects are firmly ensconced on the throne of public opinion? No, these ephemeral sciences attack each other like revolutionary parties. In the third part I shall demonstrate that political economy is already heading towards ruin, and that the downfall of the moralists prepared the way for the fall of their rivals. One might apply Danton's words on the scaffold to these literary groups: when he had been fastened with one strap he said to the executioner, 'Keep the other one for Robespierre, he'll soon be following me.' The moralists might similarly say, as they are sacrificed by their executioner, public opinion, 'Keep the other strap for the economists, they'll soon be following us.'

If ever Civilisation ought to blush at its scientific aberrations and its capacity to be taken in by charlatanism it should do so today, as it tramples under foot the tenets it has revered for thousands of years and as the philosophical sciences grovel before passionate attraction, which they previously wanted to *repress, correct and moderate*. One of the two sciences, political economy, arouses a love of wealth, while the other, ethics, allows you not to hate it, summoning its dying voice to make honourable amends to the passions. The human mind thus has the capacity to feed for thousands of years on sophisms which in the end make it blush with embarrassment; how, then, do you civilised nations know that your modern visions, your *economic* dreams, are not even more ridiculous, and will not bring down more contempt upon the *nineteenth* century than the ethical visions which you are ashamed of today? Do you think you are coming closer to truth and nature by deifying commerce, which is the constant exercise of lying and trickery? Do you not think God may have imagined some honest and equitable method of managing the exchange which lies at the heart of the social mechanism? It is this that I shall be talking about in the third section of this prospectus.

Meanwhile let me remind you that it is not enough merely to acknowledge the authority of nature, whose sovereign influence you admit. It is not enough to repudiate moral philosophy and its claims to change the passions: in order to reingratiate yourself with nature you must study her decrees in *passionate attraction*, which is her interpreter. You make a great show of your theories of metaphysics: what good are they if you scorn to study attraction, which is what governs your souls and your passions? Your metaphysicians lose themselves in the minutiae of ideology. But what on earth does all this scientific twaddle matter? I who know nothing about the mechanism of ideas, I who have never read Locke or Condillac, have I not got enough ideas to discover the entire system of universal movement, which it has taken you 2,500 years of scientific effort to discover one quarter of?

I am not claiming that my perspectives are vast because they extend to points yours have never reached: I have done what thousands of others were able to do before me, but I have had only one end in view and I have worked with no established method and no

beaten track to show the way. Alone, I have confounded twenty centuries of political imbecility, and it is to me alone that present and future generations will owe the initiation of their immense happiness. Before me, humanity wasted several thousand years in a foolish struggle against nature; I am the first to have bent the knee before her, by studying attraction, the organ of her decrees. And she has deigned to smile upon the only mortal to have idolised her, and revealed all her treasures to me. As the possessor of the book of destinies I have swept away political and moral darkness, and on the ruins of the speculative sciences I raise the theory of Universal Harmony.

*Exegi monumentum aere perennius<sup>8</sup>*

*End of the second part*

<sup>8</sup> 'I have finished a monument more lasting than bronze' (Horace, *Odes*, 3, xxx, i).

### Third Part

Confirmation derived from the inadequacy of the inexact sciences to deal with all the problems that the civilised mechanism presents

#### Preamble on systematic thoughtlessness

Aristotle, one of the most highly regarded of our sages, considered his own understanding to be woefully slight. His motto was 'What do I know?', which was probably the best thing he said. The moderns are not much inclined to modesty of that sort; yet are they wiser than Aristotle when it comes to social policy? No. The situation has not changed since classical times: there is still nothing to be found but poverty, fraud and revolutions. And judging by the storms that our modern philosophers have inflicted on the present generation, there can hardly ever have been a century in which Aristotle's motto was more needed.

They have all gone laughably wrong, because in every science they have overlooked the fundamental question, the one that is the pivot of the whole of that science. For example:

If they are concerned with *industrial economy* they neglect to deal with *association* which is the basis of every economy. If they are concerned with politics they neglect to say anything about *population*, the right size of which is the basis of a people's well-being.

body subject to the public taxes which they are presently able to evade.

6. And last, it will establish good faith in trading relations. Not to the extent that will be apparent in the combined order, it is true, but to a vast extent in comparison with the dishonesty that prevails at the moment.

This glimpse of what is to come may whet your appetite for a chapter on societary competition, but as I have pointed out, this prospectus is limited to demonstrating the ignorance of the philosophers and pointing out the aims they ought to have set themselves. And anyway, why pause on ways of perfecting Civilisation borrowed from the sixth period, like societary competition? What do the improvements of the sixth and seventh periods really matter, when we can jump right over them and move straight to the eighth, which thus becomes the only period worth thinking about?

When we have achieved that goal, when we are enjoying to the full the comfort of the combined order, then we can argue as long as we like about the vices of Civilisation and their remedies. Like war, it will look *better when it is over*. Then we shall be able to enjoy ourselves by analysing the civilised mechanism, which is the strangest of them all, as it has the greatest complexity of incentives. But our task now is to emerge from it, rather than studying it or improving it. This is why I am always trying to persuade readers of the necessity of rejecting all half-measures and going straight to the goal by immediately founding a canton of progressive Series. By providing a demonstration of passionate harmony, these will remove the philosophical cataract from the eyes of mankind, and rapidly raise all civilised, barbarous and savage nations to their social destiny of universal unity.

## Epilogue: On the social chaos of the globe

You authors of the inexact sciences claim to be working for the good of the whole human race. Do you think that the six hundred million barbarians and savages are not part of it? Yet they suffer. And what have you done for them? Nothing. Your systems are only applicable in Civilisation, whose misfortunes are aggravated each time your policies are put into practice. When you possess the art of making us happy, perhaps you will think you are fulfilling God's design by trying to limit happiness to the inhabitants of Civilisation, who occupy only a tiny part of the globe. But God sees the human race as a single family, all of whose members have a right to its blessings. He wants either the whole of mankind to be happy, or nobody at all.

If you want to promote the wishes of God you must seek for a social order that is applicable to the whole of the globe, not just to a few nations. The vastly greater number of savages and barbarians ought to warn you that they must be governed and controlled by attraction, not by force. Do you imagine you could win them over by the prospect of your customs, which can only be maintained by the use of gallows and bayonets? Customs which even your own people hate, and which all countries would rise up against if they were not held back by fear of the whip!

Far from governing the human race and bringing it into unity, your theories arouse nothing but profound scorn among barbarians, and your customs provoke the savage's irony, whose most potent curse on an enemy is to say, '*May you be reduced to ploughing a field.*' These words could be regarded as a curse from nature itself;

and it is indeed quite right that civilised industry should be rebuked by nature since it is abhorred by free peoples who would embrace it at once if it accorded with the natural passions of man.

Which is why God has never permitted this kind of work to spread, and has not allowed civilised agriculture, which is such thankless work for those who bear the weight of it, to be extended to the rest of the globe. He has confined it to a few areas in China, India and Europe where there are teeming numbers of indigents, reserve bodies to help organise the combined order and ensure that from the outset it will be adequately supplied with a mass of agricultural workers. These wretches will then be able to be moved from the areas where they are an encumbrance, and directed by the Emperor of Unity to appropriate places in order to begin the process towards the full exploitation of the globe.

All your attempts to extend civilised industry and spread incoherent labour across the globe are in vain, though. God (for a variety of reasons which I cannot go into here) would never allow an order so contrary to his designs to extend to all cultivable lands and has taken precautions to confine it either by civil wars or by invasions of barbarians.

Industry may have made some progress in Europe, but it has lost vast areas of Asia. Civilisation may have founded a few feeble colonies in America, now threatened with collapse by the revolt of the negroes, but has it not lost vast empires nearer home, Egypt, Greece, Asia Minor, Carthage, Chaldea and part of Western Asia? Industry has been stifled in large and beautiful regions such as Bactria, where it had begun to become established, and the empire of Samarkand, once famous in the Orient, and all the regions between the Oxus and the mouth of the Indus, have regressed politically and formed hordes once again. The vast empire of Hindustan is rapidly approaching ruin under English tyranny, provoking a distaste for agriculture, and assimilation into the Marattas whose hordes already form a powerful nucleus of Tartars in the centre of the Moghul. In time they will be able to take up a position in the Western and Eastern Ghats, and bring together the peoples of the Malabar and Coromandel Coasts, turning them against industry by their incursions.

The hordes are making daily inroads into the cultivated areas of Asia, spilling further and further beyond their natural boundary,

the Himalayan mountain range that stretches from Bokhara to China. At our very gates, the hordes are surging all over Turkey. Fifty more years of persecution from the Ottoman Empire and we shall see the whole of that fine empire returned to the life of nomads or Tartars, who are making terrifying progress against Turkish domination. Other formerly flourishing Empires, such as Pegu and Siam, have relapsed into total weakness and degradation, and their culture, like that of Turkey, seems to have hardly more than a century of life left. If the current disorder of the globe is prolonged, the vast expanse that is Asia will start abandoning industry everywhere. Even China itself, that colossus of tight-fistedness and absurdity, is visibly declining. The most recent reports of Van-Braam have certainly disabused us about its pretended splendour.<sup>7</sup> The social spirit has been debased since the influx of Tartars; the hordes occupy huge areas of territory, and for all this great empire's much-vaunted industry, only four leagues from Peking you come across fine land almost unknown and untouched. In the southern provinces, meanwhile, the priests appeal in vain to the people to work the fields: whole regions are left fallow as more and more people join the hordes. The horde is a volcano, always ready to engulf Civilisation. It is inveterate, no sooner stifled than ready to erupt again, reappearing as soon as no steps are taken to hold it in check. In the end, this universal tendency of wage-earners to go back to living in hordes brings all political questions back to one single problem: *Finding a new social order that ensures the least important workers enough comfort for them constantly and passionately to prefer work to the state of inertia and brigandage they aspire to today.*

As long as you continue to leave this problem unresolved, nature will subject you to perpetual attack. You will raise up empires only to see them become playthings of nature, which loves to plunge them into revolutions. You are a burden to nature, a prey nature uses for her own vengeance. Your scientific miracles always lead to indigence and reversals; your heroes and legislators are building on sand, and all the foresight of a Frederick cannot prevent weak successors seizing the throne the moment he is dead. Civilisation creates new heroes for the sole purpose of humiliating the heroes of

<sup>7</sup> Andreas Everard van Braam Houckgeest, *Voyage de l'Ambassade de la Compagnie des Indes orientales hollandaises, vers l'Empereur de la Chine dans les années 1794 et 1795* (Paris, 1798).

the past, using the former to belittle the figures who were responsible for all the lustre Civilisation possesses. Surely this prospect of being followed by weak successors must make great men worry, and prevent them from enjoying their present triumphs because of the painful thought of the changes to come? Surely they must hate the treachery of Civilisation which uproots and overturns their work the moment they are dead? The civilised order is indeed increasingly insecure. The first eruption of the volcano created by the philosophers, in 1789, will be followed by others as soon as a weak ruler makes the conditions right for agitation. The war of the poor against the rich has been such a success that schemers in every country want to start it again. There is no point in trying to stop them: nature makes fun of our understanding and foresight and can start revolutions with the measures we think we are taking to ensure calm. If Civilisation continues for another fifty years, how many children will be begging at the door of their fathers' house? I do not dare say any more without including the calculus that will guide politics through the maze of the passions and free the world from Civilisation as it becomes more revolutionary and hateful than ever.

Civilised nations! Barbarians do not have your understanding, but they can sustain their societies and institutions over thousands of years; why then are yours eclipsed so quickly, often in the same century that they were created? You are always lamenting the fragility of our works and the cruelty of nature for causing the wonders of man to crumble into dust. You must stop attributing these reversals to time and chance: they are the effect of divine vengeance on your criminal societies and their utter failure to provide work and subsistence for the poor. It is in order to get you to admit your ignorance that nature puts your empires to the sword and thrives on their rubble.

Let me echo your political elegies for a moment: What has become of the monuments of civilised vanity? Thebes and Babylon, Athens and Carthage, are turned to piles of ashes! Not a good prognostication for Paris and London and these modern empires where the craze for mercantilism is a burden on reason and nature alike. So, tired of our societies, nature overturns them, one by one, ridiculing our virtues and our crimes without distinction. Laws regarded as oracles of wisdom or ephemeral codes cobbled together by agitators – both lead equally to political shipwreck.

To add insult to injury, the crude laws of China and India have withstood the hands of time for 4,000 years, while miracles of civilised philosophy disappear like shadows. Despite all our efforts to consolidate empires, the sum total of our knowledge seems to have provided nothing but toys for vandalism, which re-emerges periodically and in a short time destroys the work of several centuries.

A few monuments have survived, but only to bring shame on politics. Rome and Byzantium, once capitals of the greatest empire in the world, have become cities of ridicule. The temples of the Caesars on the Capitol have been taken over by the gods of obscure Judaea. The christian basilicas on the Bosphorus have been sullied by the gods of ignorance. In the one place, Jesus stands on the pedestal of Jupiter, in the other Mahomet is placed at the altar of Jesus. Nature preserved you, Rome and Byzantium, to be objects of scorn to the nations you enslaved; you have become two arenas of political masquerade, two Pandora's boxes spreading vandalism and plague in the East and superstition and its frenzies in the West. Through your debasement, nature jeers at the great empire it destroyed. You are like two mummies, preserved to ornament nature's triumphal chariot, and to give modern cities a foretaste of the fate in store for the monuments and works of Civilisation.

Nature seems to enjoy raising this hateful society for the pleasure of destroying it and proving, by this hundredfold repeated fall, the absurdity of the sciences that control it. Like Sisyphus pushing his rock up the hill only to have it roll down again as he reaches the top, Civilisation seems condemned to ascend towards an ideal state and then fall back just as it can see an end to its misfortunes. The most wisely considered reforms end in appalling bloodshed. Yet the centuries pass, the people groan in torment, waiting for new revolutions to plunge our tottering empires into chaos; for they are destined to destroy each other as long as they continue to trust philosophy, a science that is the enemy of unitary politics, a mask for intrigue, and good for nothing but fanning the flames of each revolution that time brings.

To the disgrace of our philosophers, the seeds of disintegration that threaten our frail societies are multiplying day by day. Yesterday academic arguments about equality toppled thrones, altars and the laws of property; Europe was heading towards barbarism: tomorrow nature will discover new weapons to use against us, and

Civilisation, put to new tests, will fail again. It narrowly avoids death every century: it was in its death-throes when the Turks were besieging Vienna and would have died if the Turks had adopted the European tactic. In our own time it has been within a hair's breadth of ruin: the revolutionary war could have led to the invasion and dismemberment of France, after which Austria and Russia would have shared Europe between them; in the subsequent arguments, Russia (which has means unknown to the world and to itself) would have been able to crush Austria and Civilisation. The destiny of this criminal society is to shine for a few centuries and then become eclipsed, to rise again and then to fall once more. If the civilised order could make human beings happy, God would have an interest in saving it and would have taken steps to ensure that it was indestructible. So why does he allow your societies to be engulfed by revolutions when they have only lasted a short time? In order to confound your writers and thinkers, who base social theories on their own caprices, while God, with less vanity than the philosophers, does not regulate the laws of the universe in accordance with his own wishes, but in all his works reconciles those with the eternal arbiter of justice, mathematics; its truth is independent of God and yet he follows its laws rigorously.

Do not be surprised, therefore, if your societies destroy each other, and do not hope for any stability under laws that derive from man alone, from sciences opposed to the divine spirit that will lead to the establishment of unity on the globe as in the firmament. Is not a world with no unitary leader and no central government like a universe with no God to direct it, where the stars revolve with no fixed orbits, colliding into each other for perpetuity? For, to a wise man, your nations look like wild beasts in a ring, eager to destroy each other and each others' works.

When you lament the successive downfall of your societies, you forget that they were opposed to God's design. Now that the discovery of his plans has been announced, you must instantly have been disabused about the excellence of Civilisation, and must have realised that it has exhausted human patience, and that a new social order is needed to lead us to happiness; that if we are to adopt God's plans we must find a social order that is applicable to the whole earth, not just to the corner of it occupied by civilised man, and that we therefore

need to study the social vices of the human race, not just those of Civilisation, which accounts for only a part of humanity.

On this basis let us state the argument for the political infirmity of the globe.

*The earth is shared among three societies, Civilisation, barbarism and savagery. One of the three is necessarily better than the other two. The two less developed societies, which do not improve and do not identify with the best of the three, are the victims of that disease of listlessness which Montesquieu rightly described as afflicting the human race.*

*As for the third society, which is supposed to be the best, but which cannot or will not encourage the others to imitate it, it is clearly inadequate to improve the lot of mankind since it leaves the majority of it languishing in a state inferior to its own.*

*As a result, two of the three present societies have become paralysed, and the third is politically powerless. Can you say, after that, to which of the three societies these morbid characters, which have visibly affected the social mechanism of the whole globe, should be apportioned?*

Discussing this argument, you will recognise the two paralysed societies as Savagery and Barbarism, which do nothing to improve their situation and obstinately stagnate in their customs, good or bad. As for Civilisation, that is the one afflicted with political powerlessness: it is constantly in movement, trying new measures every day in its attempt to escape its discomforts.

In passing from savage inertia to barbarous and civilised industry, humans have thus passed from a state of apathy to one of active misery, for the savage does not complain about his lot or try to change it, whereas civilised man is never content, constantly gnawed by desires despite being surrounded by opulence.

He burns with an incurable fire,  
Not so much rich in his possessions  
As poor in what he does not have.

[J.-B. Rousseau.]<sup>8</sup>

Apostles of error! Moralists and politicians! Can you still claim that you are bringing enlightenment to mankind after so much evidence of your blindness? The nations will reply, 'If your sciences are the

<sup>8</sup> *Odes*, Book II, Ode IX, 'A M. le Marquis de la Fare'.

product of wisdom and yet have done nothing but perpetuate poverty and destruction, perhaps you should try sciences dictated by folly, as long as they diminish these frenzies and relieve people's misery.'

You promised happiness but instead you have reduced man to the level of the beasts. Animals may sometimes lack for necessities, but they do not have the anxiety of providing for their wants before they feel them. The lion is well-clothed and well-armed and takes its food where it finds it without having the worry of looking after a family and taking measures to guard against future uncertainties. Its lot is far preferable to that of the shameful numbers of the poor who crowd your cities, impoverished workers deprived of jobs, harassed by creditors and bailiffs, subjected to one humiliation after another until they finally turn to begging and parade their sores, their nakedness and their starving children through your cities, which resound with their doleful laments. Philosophers, these are the bitter fruits of your sciences: poverty and more poverty. Yet you claim to have achieved the perfection of reason, when all you have done is lead us from one abyss to another. Yesterday you denounced the fanaticism of St Bartholomew's Day: today the prisons of the September massacres denounce you; yesterday it was the crusades that depopulated Europe: today equality is the cause that mows down three million young men, and tomorrow some other fantasy will bathe the civilised empires in blood. Treacherous thinkers, you have reduced man and society to a state of utter abjection! The governments you praise so highly do well to be suspicious of your aid! You have always inspired terror, even in the sovereigns you counted as your disciples. Sparta cast you out and Cato wanted you hounded out of Rome. In our time, Frederick the Great said that if he wanted to punish one of his provinces he would give them to the philosophers to govern, and Napoleon has banished politics and ethics from the temple of the useful sciences. And do you still not distrust yourselves? Will you not admit that in your manipulation of the passions you have been like children playing with fireworks amidst barrels of gunpowder! The French Revolution has set the final seal on this truth, and covered your sciences with a disgrace that can never be expunged.

You knew that these absurd sciences would be destroyed the moment they were assailed by doubt, and so you have united to

stifle the voices of the few who set out to tell the truth, such as Hobbes and Rousseau, who saw in Civilisation an inversion of nature's wishes, a systematic development of all the vices. You spurned these rays of light in order to win an audience for your boasts about social improvement.

The scene is changing, and the truth you pretend to be seeking is about to appear and overwhelm you. There is nothing for you to do but die honourably, like defeated gladiators. Prepare the hecatomb you owe to truth, seize the torch, set up the stake, and consign the rubbish of your philosophical libraries to the flames.

*End of the third part*