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MAN AND PROPERTY

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Of Received Ideas

Finally, the totalitarian revolutions, both right-wing and left-wing, of the 20th century confront us with the problem of liberty of thought, by which man escapes the fate of a robot, and with the problem of the social conditions of this liberty.

If Bonald's opinion that it is books that make revolutions is true, it will also be true that censorship and the authoritarian orientation of the manifestations of the mind ruin the valuable achievements of a revolution. We are thus led to consider liberty as a construct of philosophical thought involving an economy appropriate for distributing the material for thought.

It would therefore seem normal to define the liberty of "present-day" man in relation to modern philosophy. But while it is certain that knowledge influences the social environment, that major currents of ideas drive activities, and that science, translated into concepts, penetrates by a sort of osmosis even to the humblest of civilized men who perceive at least some vague hint of it, it is less obvious that this knowledge and these currents of ideas affect the individual in his innate determinism.

Of course, I do not attribute to personal determinism an absolute fatality, which would negate all effort and is happily refuted by the achievements of evolution, however modest they may be. I only mean that the banal philosophy of life takes on in each person the particular aspect required by his temperament, precisely his idiosyncrasy. On this, the contributions of knowledge applied by a few have little effect except through collective reactions, the fashionable prescriptions of physical and mental hygiene, that is, through conformity to the rules of custom. Hence the importance of generally accepted precepts. They govern the entire social structure.

These average rules are, like society itself, subject to ideological influences, sometimes revolutionary, sometimes inhibiting, which disrupt them in times of crisis. The external conditions of individual and group life are modified, but inner life is affected very little. It is only at intervals of centuries that a few fundamental ideas are affected, to which men adapt and which, despite their revolutions, keep them subject to powers whose names change without altering their essence.

In truth, nothing is profoundly transformed unless received ideas are rejected and ethics reconstructed. In this sense, early Christianity was a revolution, as was the work of the Encyclopedists. Both have been degraded by the revivals of earlier errors.

A Word on the Idea of God

The dominant key idea, since the appearance of anthropomorphic theogonies, has been that of some sovereign master of causes and ends, flanked, depending on the time and place, by a certain number of auxiliary deities and evil spirits bent on our destruction. However, it is remarkable how much the social life of religious people — and to a large extent their individual lives — is subject to behaviors of a mediocrity rarely reflected in the conception they have of the god or gods they serve with more superstition than faith. It is as if the notion of the divine were a simple eschatological relationship, established once and for all, to which one only needs to refer in order to fulfill a certain number of ritual obligations it entails. Ultimately, this is the crux of the problem of personal liberty, and of its givens, it is the least necessarily social, since it is the solution each person gives it or receives from others that determines moral personality. Specific to the individual, it should only affect them if we did not have to take into account the social encroachments of beliefs organized into active sects, which, through the opinions they govern, dominate the moral and often the economic conditions of each person's life.

Religion is improperly included in a chapter of social economy. Viewed from this perspective, it is merely a kind of spiritual agent of conservatism. It is enough to know this to be justified in judging its temporal action only on this level, where God, whom we are told is Father and Love, appears only as the Lord, the paragon justifying oppressive hierarchies.

As for religious concepts, they fall within the scope of philosophical criticism and are only given a place as a reminder in this study, which is limited to the situation of man in the social economy. Let us simply note, then, that while the idea of an abstract creator God is practically inconsequential, in that it merely substitutes a proper name for the metaphysical X corresponding to the current state of our real knowledge, the various gods, to whom anthropomorphism confers a concrete character reduced to the human scale, are *par excellence* the policemen of thought.

So go and oppose the defined and proclaimed wills of the supposed master of all things! Perhaps, to defend oneself and turn away from them, it would be enough to consider that the gods express themselves too constantly and too precisely in the language of the men who claim to be their interpreters, that their wills are too closely aligned with the interests of the powers that be for them to be both sovereign Creators — competing ones, moreover — and banally affected by all the jealous respectability and vindictive pettiness characteristic

of man. And isn't it curious, this exclusive preoccupation of divine authorities with our tiny, unremarkable planet, lost among the billions of stars in infinite space?

But an incomprehensible and mute Creator would be as confusing to ordinary humankind as pure atheism. This is how the temporal power of religions is constituted and sustained. It is in this matter that books alone are revolutionary. It is still necessary that they not be denied any audience by the constant interference and desire for supremacy of the Churches in all areas of education, teaching, art, and information.

Under the masks of liberalism, modernism and an apparent submission to laws that contradict it, every Church remains by nature the enemy of freedoms. The Catholic Church, in particular, provides proof of this when, bound by its dogmas, it is forced to affirm that religion "is not a private matter." If, in this way, the liberty of belief of individuals and the neutrality of the powers with regard to religions and their prescriptions are contested, where will liberty begin?

A few words about the family

The second idea, which has always been associated with the cult of the gods, except perhaps during the revolutionary upheavals of the early Christian Church, is that of the family, with all that it entails in terms of emotional spaces, internal rights and obligations, and rights and obligations within the collective order.

The family, a social unit, and therefore already a society, has played from the very beginning and still plays a preponderant role in the liberating evolution of individuals. A preponderant, not a determining, role — quite the contrary. The family is, by its very nature, conservative. It can be said that any principle stated in favor of any individual liberation runs up against a decisive objection. It is not a dualism; it is a contradiction. The individual is contradictory to the family, which he cannot do without, just as he is to the society, which is indispensable to him.

In practical terms, the problem of liberty, considered in relation to the family environment, consists of reducing or reconciling this contradiction. It is to the extent that reconciliation is achieved or rejected that solutions are obtained or not to the many questions that assail a conscience prey to the vicissitudes of contingencies.

Now, accommodations of this sort are also necessary with regard to the social sphere. They prove all the more difficult when they are not first achieved within the family environment. The more closely knit the family, the more hostile its members are to the social sphere, the more difficult their relationships are, and the more fleeting their solidarity is. The more narrowly defined its interests are,

the more cultivated and concentrated are the egoisms, and the more explosive are the hatreds that envy, misunderstandings, and natural enmities foment. As a corollary, the less this social unit harmonizes with the collective whole, the more parasitic cells tend to proliferate, those social cancers that are large families with feudal behavior.

The practice of independence within the family circle, without breaking with a few relatives, has always been and still remains difficult. This is because the contradiction between the individual and the group has no normal solution, because it breaks with the natural order. But nature would ultimately have destroyed man if it had not granted him a privilege, in that the human order is built on the exceptional.

It is the foolishness of all conservative doctrine to refer to both the natural order and the established order. An established order is natural only insofar as it is subject to the evolutionary laws specific to each species, and it is a fact that the human species obeys singular laws. It is the only one to ask the whys and wherefores, and consequently the only one to no longer live according to instinct. How, being thus constructed, could it conform to the impulses of instinctive forces? It submits to their fundamental, inescapable laws; it transgresses them in every way possible. It is in this, and only in this, that it manifests itself as a completely unique species and can be conceived as such. This exceptional nature of man is perhaps due, moreover, only to a teratological accident. Man is nonetheless rather proud of himself, and this is undoubtedly the only opinion common to all times and all environments. That being said, it is obvious that he cannot, without denying himself, refuse new experiences or renounce reducing the difficulties that oppose him to the normally “naturing” nature.

The family, unlike the individual, has all sorts of reasons for manifesting itself under the auspices of a conservatism that it claims to be original, constant, and irrefutable. The first of these reasons is that every social revolution and every individual evolution occur at its expense. It strives to deny this precisely because it knows it. There is no example of a major social change in which the family has subsequently found itself completely what it was before. It is true that there is also no example in which the family, thus disrupted, has not imperturbably continued to assert itself as similar to itself.

This is a significant aspect of the social importance of a climate of intellectual inertia maintained by temporalized, dogmatic, and conservative spiritual institutions by definition. For, ultimately, it must be recognized that for most individuals from all walks of life, even the educated, the Christian family is a family conforming to immemorial traditions. Few people consider that it is found nowhere in nature, nowhere among primitive and semi-primitive peoples, not even in the Scriptures, where polygamy, concubinage, levirate marriage and even incest are freely displayed.

Whoever studies without bias the sexual mores of beasts and man, from primitive to Christian, will encounter the virginity of pubescent girls, the fidelity of married women, effective monogamy only exceptionally. Within all elementary societies, the family is a community of which the couple is only one element, when there is a couple and not polygamy. Likewise, until several centuries after the Christian era, the *gens* of the Roman patrician included, with his male offspring and daughters-in-law, his grandchildren, his clients, and his freedmen, all subject to the authority of the *pater familias* alone. Did not Christianity destroy this latter form of the communal family, just as it destroyed the Germanic communities, because its action was based on the principle of the person?

What could be more individualistic than the invitation to leave one's own family to follow Jesus on the path to salvation? What could be more "anarchic," more antisocial, than Paul's advice to concede nothing in marriage except to escape, without sinning, an overly difficult continence? Ultimately, Paul, like Jesus, only led followers destined to leave the world into the path of sterility. But Christianity has singularly enlivened the philosophical concept of personality: it has warmed it with feeling and also with sentimentality. It is through this medium that love has entered the couple, as a parasite on the family spirit.

Love versus Family

Love, in its various forms, finds its own end. Only secondarily does this end involve the formation of a family. Even when two lovers intend to raise the fruits of their union together in a shared tenderness, the birth of a child is neither the primary condition nor the obligatory end of a loving marriage. This is amply demonstrated, not only by deliberately sterile unions, but also by suicide or voluntary celibacy following a destroyed or thwarted love.

This modern intrusion of love into marriage is emphasized because it has changed its character, because the family of the past, and of not so long ago, was much more than a couple with their children. Formerly, it consisted of an entire clan, in other words, of society itself. In ancient times, and even in feudal times, it was a complex unit consisting — of slaves to the master — of couples, their children, and slaves, bound to a given estate. Through a variety of jobs and tasks rather than emotional relationships, they formed the social unit represented by the head of the estate. Even today, it is not only, nor is it primarily (except among people without any assets) the sentimental or passionate union of two people; it is often still an association of complementary interests, the whole of which forms the framework of the social edifice, where love, when it intervenes, is merely a trivial affection; otherwise, it disrupts the system's structure. The entire doctrine repudiating misalliances stems from this. Misalliance brings a moral or material imbalance, generally both, to the economy of the caste family.

It threatens it and sometimes ruins it. It therefore destroys a cell of society as it is established.

In love, there are couples who are well-matched or ill-matched, meaning lasting or fleeting; there is no misalliance. This is why love benefits, in the abstract, from the indulgences that unsatisfied hearts harbor within them. These same hearts are merciless to it in the concrete. It is one thing to love, another to establish a family and hold a place in society. As early as the Middle Ages, a court of love of the Countess of Champaigne formulated the expectations of this distinction.

All in all, within a mass of average temperaments, which customary disciplines quickly break, whose drastic deviations are well-hidden by the hypocrisy of conventions, the equilibrium would be maintained if the anarchy of love did not find free rein elsewhere, precisely where the absence of material interests to manage, defend, augment and transmit makes the family, in the truest sense, merely proletarian. Employees, salaried employees, modest civil servants, intellectuals in uncertain situations, shirk the obligations of custom as experience teaches them the vanity of hopes of enrichment. Here appears a serious social contradiction, specific to the capitalist organization of the modern world, namely that, without a fertile class of proletarians, the community is emptied of its substance while this class, doomed to proliferation, has no interest in fulfilling its function.

The Lesson of Family Laxity

As soon as the poor realize that the liberty they aspire to is based on property and that the majority cannot attain the possession of sufficient goods for their emancipation, they must seek the means to achieve their independence by restricting their needs.

It goes without saying that the wise proletarian, before restricting himself personally, first strives to reduce his expenses by avoiding excessive proliferation. In this, he is simply following the example of many property owners who guard themselves in the same way, both to avoid the dissociation of their assets and to be better equipped in the struggle against competition.

In the twentieth century, the initiative and interpersonal skills of bold, unscrupulous businessmen, free from tradition, more concerned with the golden belt than with good reputation, are thwarting the united strength of family feudalism. Family obligations are a shackles tightened by various tax officials, particularly ministerial officers responsible for the onerous formalities of inheritance divisions and the forced sales caused by dissension among heirs. The shackles are loosened and the number of sharers is limited.

A society embarked on this path is heading for the abyss. Sociologists are concerned about this and use it as a basis for condemning individualism, that is, individual liberty.

In what way is philosophical individualism, which is an egotism and which is maliciously transformed into an egoism, in what way is individualism culpable? Let us distinguish it from Manchesterian, proprietary individualism, which is an egoism, and incoherent to boot. The motives for antisocial restrictions, while driven by deliberate and inconsistent calculation at the top, are driven by an instinct for self-defense among the underprivileged. How can one obtain solidarity from the members of a community when privileged managers organize the disparity of interests? It is agreed that individualism manifested in these sordid guises is nothing more than an aberrant impulse toward liberty. Ultimately, it gives way to dictatorial enterprises and the enslavements that are the ultimate consequence of social disintegration. But, short of denying the right to individual freedoms, is the remedy to be found in a condemnation of individualism or in a rehabilitation of society? What would a liberty be that, in order to be social, excluded the individual?

It will escape no mind that is not uninformed that a sick society must be healed from its very cells. The family unit is suffering from an aging of its property-inheritance content, which affects its primary components: individuals. The remedy must therefore focus on the relationship between family, property and inheritance. Whatever the therapy, surgery or medication, these three elements are at stake.

Classical economists are not unaware of this diagnosis, nor are socialist economists. The former approach it in a spirit of conservatism, aggravated by the false idea they have, or pretend to have, of the natural constitution of the family. The latter view it narrowly, from an economic perspective, without adequately considering what is valid and constant in the emotional ties that bind individuals and families to certain aspects of the idea of property. They do not pay sufficient attention to the fact that this idea includes a certain guarantee of freedoms that collectivism rightly rejects, substituting another. But isn't this illusory when property becomes a state entity and its management an administrative function?

It is therefore important to analyze the real content of this third misconception: the right to property conceived as a natural right, founding and justifying the owner's exorbitant privilege.

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On the Nature of Property

The right to enrichment proclaimed by liberalism is inherent in the very flesh of the least well-off. Unfortunately, since the fact does not accord too well with right, the consequence of this principle is a sophism, and one can affirm, before any demonstration, that it has distorted the spiritual evolution of modern times by perverting the notion of liberty. There is no possibility of liberty in itself, of liberty proper to all men, where property is not strictly personal and can be increased through inheritance and speculation.

By proclaiming its intangibility and inviolability, almost without restriction, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* left the door open to abuse. Capitalism entered through this door. It then placed sentinels there. Finally, through his power of corruption and coercion, it has ruined all healthy and true liberty by transgressing with impunity the few defenses that the *Declaration* had decreed.

On Legitimate Ownership

Let's go back to the sources. We learn that the first humans never, anywhere, individually owned the land. The hunting ground belonged collectively to the tribe; the territory cultivated by a village was undivided. At this stage of agriculture, where significant development had already taken place, only the land cleared by it belonged to a family; precisely, only the products of that land belonged to it, since it was also occasionally abandoned to clear another. Some tribes, in the Amazon rainforest, for example, recognize that the fruits of the garden belong to the women who cultivate it.

It is in this same spirit that, where the longhouses inhabited communally have disappeared, each head of the family owns the hut he built with the voluntary help of his friends, the weapons and tools he made or acquired through trade and which he takes to his grave, which is sometimes his own hut.

Closer to our own evolution, within the communities of ancient Germany, where social equality was long maintained, land was constantly redistributed to prevent any hoarding and excessive enrichment.

We can therefore say that natural — and therefore legitimate — property is that which results from personal labor. "*The right to property, so respectable in its cause when that cause is none other than labor…*" wrote Proudhon, for whom property was theft only when it stemmed from the various forms of agio and speculation. This is why his plan for land redistribution (*General Idea of the Revolution*), through the organization of low-interest credit and the allocation of a portion of the rent to the eventual repurchase of the farm by the farmer, maintained ownership and inheritance, in accordance with the natural tendencies of the human heart. Yet precisely because the tendency to possess is

instinctive, and the tendency to possess more is no less so, as it can be detected in children as in nesting mammals, the redistribution of goods thus conceived can only be an act of relative and provisional justice, the starting point for a process leading to new hoardings. Any social transformation that redistributes the land to those who work it without prohibiting its sharing, free or hereditary devolution, is without lasting revolutionary significance.

Proudhon, who never ceased to contradict himself according to the circumstances of his time and his own evolution, wrote in *What Is Property?* that "*what belongs to each person is not what each person can possess, but what each person has the right to possess*," that is, what they need to live and the tools of their labor. Here, he distinguishes precisely between the "possession" of things, which is transitory, and "property," which is permanent and transmissible by inheritance, contrary to natural law.

Given that legitimate property comes from the product of labor, this view excludes the appropriation of soil and subsoil because, while labor makes them productive, it does not create them. It grants the right only to the fruits of exploitation, which must be distributed in proportion to the labor, initiative, invention and responsibility of each participant in the enterprise.

Bakunin went further when he denied any right to a hierarchy of profits. He explained this very well: "*Is not the spirit of the greatest genius on earth*," he wrote in an article, "*always nothing but the product of the collective intellectual and industrial labor of all past and present generations?... The more man is favored by nature, the more he takes from the community, from which it follows that the more he must give back in all justice*." However, as pertinent as this reasoning may be, it is incomplete. The realities of life in society obey a more complex logic.

It is true, as Bakunin says, that creative intellectual work "*carries its reward within itself and needs no other retribution*," at least for authentic moral elites; it is less certain that it finds a complementary reward "*in the esteem and recognition of contemporaries*." The active jealousy of competitors, the divergent points of view that give rise to disputes, lead to more reservations than acquiescence provokes admiration. Public opinion, which could be impartial if it were not conditioned by information that is rarely objective, is nonetheless disappointing in its powers of understanding and the quality of its choices.

Nevertheless, a transcendent task does without numerous approvals, even though one can be discouraged by this. The same is not true of a thousand eminently useful scientific and artistic endeavors, which involve constraints that are difficult to accept without personal gain. If every researcher were an amateur, their activity would be guided solely by their taste, their whim, and for their own satisfaction. Initiatives, concerted and targeted research, fruitful through their hearing and their interference, offer their anonymous authors no hope of reward other than their salary and some satisfaction in accomplishing

intelligent work. Society's need for them will always require them to be encouraged with some moral or material “bonus.”

Bakunin was right to dispute that the faculty of invention is a source of justifiable privileges. But to claim that the personal effort it entails, uncontrollable and therefore optional, provides no particular advantage, is to misunderstand human nature and perhaps also justice. I believe the same can be said of positions of responsibility. Since their harmful consequences are of a personal nature, it is only fair that they include equally personal compensation; otherwise, evading responsibility would be justified.

Moreover, I have always seen that the doctrinaires of an unqualified egalitarianism, if they did not lack theoretical intransigence, were much less intransigent about their own behavior. This is what I take lessons from, rather than abstract logic, the milieu not being enough to account for, among activists, inconsistent attitudes to life. We gain nothing but troubles and disappointments by wanting to build in opposition to the nature of things and the nature of men.

Psychology of Belonging

On another level, somewhat spiritual, there is a very significant aspect of personal property that ethnology refers to as belonging. This is the ownership of intimate objects whose owner, in elementary societies, is the only one to use them; such are everyday objects, weapons, and, *a fortiori*, objects of worship and magic. These objects are conceived as belonging absolutely to the individual, who communicates something of their personality to them. They are so intimately united to them that by stealing them, one is, in a sense, taking possession of them. In primitive magic, it is accepted that one is condemned to death by destroying them.

If we transpose these primitive views into our time, we will say that objects belonging to the individual's privacy are absolutely personal property — and should be inviolable — that is to say, his familiar furniture (perhaps his house and garden up to a certain value), his work tools, papers, portraits, trinkets to which some memory is attached, books of his choice and, naturally, works of art or of the mind of which he is the author. Modern legislation takes into account, although in a very insufficient and very precarious way, the particular character of “belongings.” This character is sacred among peoples where colonial interventions have not completely destroyed the ancient rites. One can, for example, exchange the products of hunting and the soil, abandon a hut to build another (sometimes under the reserve of a taboo which protects the first where the bones of the ancestors often rest.) On the contrary, intimate objects are not parted with except under the cover of conjuration rites, and will be cremated or buried upon the death of their owner.

If we look closely, we will discover that, even today, most people are still attached to this psychological conception of property. This is why speculative and hoarding appropriation finds defenders among poor people who own nothing more than modest furnishings. This is also why, among other well-off classes, the fierceness to defend their property does not always stem solely from sordid self-interest. It stems from reasons of sentimental attachment to inheritance, to the point that positive interests are sacrificed for its preservation. This sentiment is in itself respectable. It does not follow that inheritance is equally so. An inheritance reaching a certain market value may well inspire deep family feelings that evoke pride, if not arrogance, but nevertheless, an acquisition of this order is unrelated to any personal effort and exceeds any form of justice. The laws that determine the rules of inheritance sometimes impose its sale. They would just as easily impose it to satisfy a fair social order.

It would be in vain to object that inheritance was the foundation of ancient cities and feudal organization, and has remained that of modern times. Its institution, in truth, cannot go back further than the emergence of paternal right, which, with the disappearance of matriarchal clans, led to the dissociation of communities governed by natural right. It has varied, moreover, and is doomed to disappear in its current form, just as its ancient forms have disappeared. It will no longer be sustained when men realize that the truism *property is the condition of liberty*, is relatively true only for a privileged few in a venal society, and only in peaceful times.

Except for what I have defined as legitimate (the acquired through labor, invention, creation) or sacred (private objects), accumulated and transmissible property has never been anything but the condition of a discriminatory and arbitrary liberty, rigorously subordinated to the coercive exploitation of slavery, serfdom or wage labor.

Because it is only the condition of an arbitrary liberty, it is in its very nature to lead, from this inherently abusive liberty, to greater abuses, to arouse in its holders a pride in power and an ever-increasing will to power through the production and accumulation of ill-gotten wealth. It thus distorts the laws of the economy, disrupts the social balance, and makes the demands of the dispossessed masses inevitable, and ultimately imperative.

The dispossessed masses, after their revolt, often remain more or less unchanged. However, over time, their condition appears to have improved. Emerging from them, the most capable or the most skilled establish some new order and grant them the ranks of civic promotion with the crumbs from the feast.

The new order takes a long time to find its formula. If not all its promoters are its beneficiaries, the formerly possessing class is invariably the victim. The struggle in Rome between the patricians and the plebeians gave rights to the

plebs without freeing the slaves. But it undermined the foundations of a society based on slavery, and the enriched plebs collapsed with the patriciate. The long struggle of the kings against the feudal lords aided the evolution of the bourgeoisie and enabled its rise to power. Feudal lords themselves, the kings destroyed their power by ruining feudalism. It was only natural that the successors of the *ancien régime* should borrow its errors, both the bad and the good, since they were initially driven by the desire to replace it. It is no less normal that similar abuses should lead them to similar downfalls.

The property-owning bourgeoisie adhered to its historical role. It was through its enrichment as much as through its knowledge and ability that it had gained a foothold in the State. Neither the free-thinking humanists, nor the reforming humanists — bourgeois themselves and, moreover, called upon by transcendent tasks — could do better than to censure the excesses, especially those of the Church, harassing and oppressive, which wealth diverted from its mission. Moreover, who in this Christian world had thought of returning to the communal equality of the primitive Church? Small sects, some of which had lost themselves in extravagance and all of which had ended their disorderly careers very badly. These were examples likely to reinforce the love of order well-established on respectable fortunes.

Property and Civilization

In bourgeois thought, the validity of the idea of property is unquestionable. It is an axiom. From the medieval corporate movement to the Physiocrats, whose views were enshrined in the French Revolution, all liberty was effectively acquired and maintained through access to the right to own property and the prerogatives attached to it. It was impossible for social philosophy, from the 16th to the 19th century, not to be dominated by this view. From very early times, examples abound that seem to unquestionably justify it.

It was through the establishment of individual property, followed by the establishment of inheritance through the paternal line, that primitive man freed himself from the strictures of clan rules, and the resulting free exercise of initiative promoted the progress that humanity has since made.

In the ancient city, the status of free man was linked to the possession of a patrimony, and it is by living off the income from this patrimony that, according to Aristotle, the citizen escapes the degradation of the mechanical arts, which “leave thought neither liberty nor elevation.” Aristotle encompasses within the term *mechanical* “any art, any science, that renders the body of free men, or their soul, or their intellect, incapable of the exercises of virtue.” Xenophon had already said of the manual arts, in his *Economics*, that they corrupt bodies and leave time “neither for one's friends nor for the republic.” While we cannot settle on such an aristocratic definition of the free man, it remains obvious, *mutatis mutandis*, that the obligation to mediocre tasks, without sufficient leisure time

to devote to chosen pursuits, leaves thought, even today, neither liberty nor elevation.

It was their financial situation that, during the troubled times of the Early Middle Ages, classified individuals. The sons of slaves naturally became serfs, but free men, impoverished settlers, were pushed to the edge of servitude, while wealthy landowners, Franks or Gallo-Romans, well-equipped for war, became powerful barons.

It was in England, a country where small landowners and freeholders were numerous, that civil liberties and personal guarantees were first established and best defended, despite the harsh blows dealt them by kings.

Finally, we know that it was often at the price of money, or through costly struggles, that bourgeois communes acquired their franchises and that, since then, organized into its municipalities and corporations, this same bourgeoisie has finally ousted the nobility and conquered the State.

This conquest, triumphant in the establishment of international capitalism in the 19th century, was not achieved solely through the interplay of economic forces, even those aided by knowledge and progress in the physical sciences. An entire philosophy was developed for its use, an entire culture contributed, directly or indirectly, to its achievement.

Now it is still to the possession of property that culture and free research owe their growth. As early as the 15th and 16th centuries, the less well-off among Renaissance artists, writers, and scholars had found within their families — or with some wealthy patron — the means for a career linked to a culture that was difficult to access. It is fortune that uses them for its own ends: high-ranking officials in the affairs of princes, artists in the service of their munificence.

On the censitary principle of the "elites"

How are so many consistent examples, succeeding one another with astonishing consistency across millennia, suddenly called into question by the 20th century? Could it be that social facts have finally invalidated them? They have opposed them a thousand times over the course of time; they have given rise to a thousand revolts and a hundred revolutions, which have changed the modes of property ownership without ever ruining the principle or destroying its glaring inequalities.

Ancient liberties and licenses flourished among a mass of slaves, feudal liberties and licenses among a mass of serfs, bourgeois and capitalist liberties and licenses among a mass of wage earners. All have at their origin the preeminence of a class that was indeed, in various ways, the elite corresponding to the needs of the time. The depravity of these successive elites, and even more so their inability to understand the causes of their regression, to conform to the new needs arising from internal developments and external events, led to the

collapse of the social systems they dominated. It could be said, in short, that revolutions broke out or eroded order, dissolved public forces, and exposed countries to invasions, when the Roman patricians no longer knew how to administer their villas and feed their slaves, when the nobility in advanced Europe was nothing more than a parasitic body, just as capitalism failed in the 20th century when it no longer provided work and wages to millions of unemployed.

All these collapses are those of various modes of property ownership. They clearly did not condemn property itself. But the case is open, as peoples in revolution throughout the world are pleading for it.

It was in an attempt to dismiss it that conservative minds, under the cover of pseudo-fascist revolutions, endeavored to firmly establish the counter-revolution and to arouse chauvinist reactions in the miseries of war. They drew, in their own way, the consequences of observations that they could not reject without immediately justifying the arguments of communist doctrines. They retreated to the summit of moral high ground. They proclaimed the necessary and salutary preponderance of elites. Of course; elites are in the nature of things, even though things do not always ensure their emergence. But which elites? Our people then affirmed the usefulness of a hierarchy of social and professional categories where the curious nose of singular prototypes pokes out. In fact, they have finally affirmed the normality of the general direction of the State by eminent figures from the obviously superior social class, since it is already this class that conducts private affairs: the category of big bosses, which includes senior collaborators trained by the same institutions and the upstart leaders of politics and the military, united under the umbrella of that great school of selflessness and progress that is the Church.

Two tests would suffice to put the hyperbole of these makers of prestige and fireworks into context if, in these kinds of competitions, common sense had any audience. Have these people ever considered that only confirmed and true elites were qualified to access important business? Have they ever considered that all children, without exception, should have access to formative faculties by means of capacity, *and only by this means?*

To allow this equality in sport, to accept this “fair play,” would be to ruin the idea of the boss-owner, since intelligence and ability are in no way guaranteed by the laws of heredity to the sons of those in power. The prerogatives of wealth are preserved by erecting a barrier at the gates of high schools, the incapacity of a proletariat systematically kept in a state of ignorance being, in our century, the only justification for the unchallenged power of artificial elites.

It is a resounding tribute that material power pays to knowledge to exclude the children of the people as much as possible from it. But by thus emphasizing the supremacy of knowledge, we condemn the system of appropriation that arbitrarily limits culture.

A difficulty thwarts this ruse. It is that, in the modern world, no ruling caste can do without technicians educated in a minimum of the science required by their function. This minimum is the key to knowledge, which the true elites cannot be prevented from using against their will. Their difficulty in harnessing it irritates them; the stupidity of the arrogant disgusts them; open injustice revolts them. Thus, social struggles rise to the conquest of the University, which has become the palladium of the rights of every evolved person.

The popularization of education was the hallmark of the 19th century. The bourgeoisie owed too much to science, which had given it a doctrine, too much to education, which had given it access to high government positions, too much to the encyclopedist philosophers, who had given it its revolution. It could not do without exalting education; moreover, it needed scholars and technicians of all kinds to move and transform the cogs of its mechanized industry. However much inconvenience the ideas awakened among the people may have caused it, it had to consent to their learning to read.

In the West, the people know more or less how to read. They have not, for that reason, become entirely more intelligent, nor entirely educated, nor entirely ambitious for great things. But they know that lofty ambitions are not the preserve of the beneficiaries of wealth. They are aware of the value of their own elites, on whom they base their right to a certain respect. They are aware that the quality of man carries within it, with regard to all other men, a potential moral equality that requires that the nobility of the species be considered in each one. They finally realize, because history has made them discover it, that among men, there are some within the common people — in necessarily greater numbers than in a restricted class — who are suited to important functions. In order to free them from the mediocre tasks to which their original poverty confines them, the interest of society is in harmony with elementary fairness, so that everyone is given an equal opportunity from the start.

No one disputes any of this, which has the obviousness of a truism. Only, almost everyone, out of self-interest, out of caste solidarity, out of a false notion of what personal property is, almost everyone clings to venal property and sacrosanct inheritance, through which all social justice is a delusion.

Neither reformers nor revolutionaries can ignore this psychological fact, in this unstable domain of sociology where philosophical concepts are forced to concede to the nature of things. And justice is not in the nature of things. It is enough that it ranks high in human aspirations for it to be worthwhile to seek out the possibilities that present themselves to constrain the brutality of facts under the order of reason.

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Reflections on Fortune and Inheritance

I have enough attachment to the little I legitimately possess to be protected, in examining the problem of property, from the risks of abstract reasoning that would distance us from human reality. I readily maintain here the objectivity of someone who, having never sought or even truly desired fortune, regards it without hatred or envy.

This is not to say that I disdain it. If I sometimes despise those who possess it, it is for the degradation its possession has cost them, or for the moral slavery in which it holds them, or even for the vile use they make of it.

But we know too well what enviable works poverty aborts not to detest it in its extremes and, when it happens to be partly voluntary, it appears to me estimable only to the extent that a character is steeped in it and grows from it. Yet we are not entirely sure that the rare examples given to us by a few eminent men are sufficient to prove that, had they been less destitute, these men could not have dominated their fortune and magnificently enslaved it to their ends.

And then, is it really so exhilarating to live a life of punishment? To force oneself to be a Tantalus amidst the goods with which nature is bountiful and to consider it a pious act to forbid oneself their use? Yes, perhaps, if one is animated by a faith that makes abstinence the condition of eternal happiness. Since such a condition is, in the final analysis, only that of deferred hedonism, it must be permissible for others who are not filled with a similar faith to love life in all that it offers that is tangible and immediate. Faith is a state in which the will plays no part. Its consequences are debatable. Life, however, is a reality that imposes itself on all in its upheavals and its sorrows. It would be just if, in return, the goods it dispenses were equally accessible to all.

Let the ascetic's choice harm me in no way, let it not be imposed on me; I respect the ascetic's tastes. One would wish that a contrary choice were just as easily satisfied, especially since formal adherence to the Christian doctrine of renunciation is in no way sufficient to turn away from the goods of this world those who profess it with a proselytizing that is not always discreet enough.

But I maintain that the choice of poverty by a rationalist or an atheist is highly justified when it is deliberately chosen as the means to attain the supreme good that is the full liberty to think and live according to one's own thoughts.

On the Right to Property and Its Precariousness

Having said that, in order to acknowledge the importance that a human civilization owes to sentiment, we return to the emotional relationships that bind man to his possessions. Let us return to the three aspects of their dissociation as I have considered them: possessions acquired through individual

effort or free gift, marked by a personal imprint, regardless of their market value; possessions of a marketable nature, legitimately possessed in that they are the fruit of effective labor, initiative, or creation; finally, possessions derived from the unjust hazards of accumulated inheritances, interest and shameless speculation. The first is the absolute nature of property; the third is both illegitimate and contrary to the free play of the forces and initiatives of each generation. If the latter is legitimate insofar as the goods are owned by their actual producer, the latter's right to dispose of them should be limited to the duration of his own lifetime; otherwise they find themselves relegated, from the first generation, to the category of illegitimately owned goods.

Let us confront these postulates with social facts as they appear in action. We will come, without any bias, to agree that they take into account natural feelings much better than the legislators do under the guise of a theoretically inviolable but in reality constantly violated right of property.

It would suffice to recall that at no time have wars and revolutions respected even what I have called sacred property. It is accepted that every war and every revolution, disrupting the conditions of life, exciting the revival of the barbaric instincts of hatred and vindictiveness inherent in them, are exceptional conditions that do not contradict normal rules. It is nonetheless true that attacks on personal property are not only the work of the enemy or political adversary. Reasons of state, the overriding needs of a nation in danger, or the construction of a building of public interest require that private property, whatever it may be, be disposed of at will. The very principle of fair compensation is not always observed. Our times of barbaric amorality have seen collective solidarity often lacking and requisitions scandalously abusive.

Let us pass over, if we wish, condemnation of what will be considered cases of *force majeure*. The fact remains that, by the principle of the superior rights of the State, private property is only possessed precariously. Not only is it likely to be claimed by the community at any time of general interest, it is also indirectly destroyed by inconsistencies in taxation and speculation on commodities and currencies.

Is it better guaranteed in calmer times? Yes, to a certain extent, which reflects the prosperity of the wealthy. Any failure exposes them to creditors and the rigors of the tax authorities, and in this situation, personal property is more poorly protected than commercial property. It is understandable that the latter is subject to the fluctuations of the fortunes at stake. On the other hand, the auctioning off of familiar objects, torn from their unfortunate owner without much profit for the creditor, is scandalous and unjustifiable.

This scandal is so glaring that legislators have worked to reduce it. Reservations have been made regarding family property, minimum furniture, and work tools. In practice, these are illusory guarantees. It is a fact that

procedural imbroglios protect the speculator, the wheeler-dealer, and the swindler infinitely better than the unfortunate honest man.

Our civilizations have not advanced in this respect over primitive civilizations. While the rules of community are strict among them, and the strict laws of hospitality provide generous relief to the welcomed guest, the no less severe laws of reciprocity protect the ungrateful, and, above all, the sacred law of taboo provides absolute protection.

This is where personal property takes on its full meaning. Taboo personalizes an object; it makes it the intimate property of the individual who marked it with their sign. This object cannot be touched by anyone without causing a fatal disturbance in the magical world for the desecrator. A tabooed field, a hut, or an instrument are sacred. If necessity compels a passerby to seize some food, they will leave in exchange a friendly and conjuring token, a sort of acknowledgment of a debt they will know how to repay on occasion. How far we are from these "humane" mores!

Certainly, the principles of our morality are not divergent from them. Respect for property implies condemnation of theft. But the conditions of property, as they are established, tacitly endorse certain forms of theft. The owner has the right to refuse a loan of food, to grant or refuse employment to the salaried worker. He has the right to take advantage of any circumstance, to provoke it if necessary, to buy at a low price, hoard, and resell at a high price. The most "regular" person increases his wealth only by attributing to himself without sharing the surplus value acquired by a product through salaried labor or by levying an excessive brokerage fee paid by the user on exchanges. In this sense, property is effectively the theft of the fruits of labor, of which the worker is deprived in a hundred ways.

If certain forms of speculative squandering are condemned by morality and some by the laws, morality fails to conform to real mores and the laws fail to be effective. How could they be when an internal contradiction places political economy in a vicious circle?

The fundamental law sanctions absolute property and the free disposal of goods, subject only to the public interest. The public interest is affirmed and satisfied by the collection of taxes and duties, by which, let us note, the principle of the inviolability of property is undermined. It disappears completely through the operation of inheritance and transfer taxes, since no fortune is maintained unless it is constantly reformed. No property subject to transmission costs can be maintained by its income alone. The law that establishes it and, at the same time, undermines it, therefore forces it to levy a substantial depreciation on the work done on its behalf, to ransom its clients, to monopolize with all hands. Otherwise, it dissolves into the state coffers. The law is therefore inconsistent which requires speculation in order to preserve intact property for the heirs. In fact, if we accept that after two or three inheritance

levies, and assuming no fraud, the property is dissolved, this amounts to saying that from now on, the inheritance is confiscated in the second or third degree. If it is preserved beyond this by the means we have just described, it is no longer the initial inheritance that is transmitted, but the amount of the subtractions made from the income of the community. It is therefore ultimately the community that bears the cost of the devolution of supposedly personal fortunes. We can see from this that inheritance beyond the few legitimately possessed objects is immoral and confiscatory.

Things proceed in this way quite normally, if we consider that the rights of the abstract State are, in practice, managed by property, in which real power is vested. How could the owners not thus have the last word? They still have it and manifest it harshly in troubled times, despite verbal altruism, slogans opposing the impatience of the crowds, calls for solidarity, and the supposed equality of sacrifices. Despite also the draconian laws whose consequences are simply met by a few weak or clumsy scapegoats, poorly established in the tacit congregation of great interests.

It cannot be otherwise, and it will not be otherwise as long as accumulated wealth can be maintained through inheritance within a class. And this will continue as long as the propertyless have not understood that the morality taught by those in power does not apply to those in power, that they use it and do not serve it, and that, consequently, their subjects will remain in a state of inferiority until they have established their own morality and rejected the self-serving precepts of the master class.

On Inheritance and Social Competition

Having the good fortune to be born to a wealthy father is a social condition exemplified by so many idiots, idlers, and incompetents promoted to business leaders and active members of the ruling classes that public malice has turned it into a proverb. It is clear that this good fortune “to have a father born before oneself” is a socially indefensible privilege. However, it seems that public opinion is content to brand as a defect those who are unworthy of having had this good fortune and accommodates itself to an institution believed to be natural.

This is how everything bad in human societies is perpetuated. Prevarication would be spontaneously prevented if everyone did not participate in it in their own way, whether small or large, with the nurtured hope of an increased share. A myopia from which it is doubtful that men will ever recover.

Nevertheless, social evolution, to the extent that it depends on economic evolution, obeys the facts. Theories intervene only to order mechanical forces and help them overcome the prejudices that hinder their growth. Thus, the upheaval in Europe, the great poverty into which it was plunged, with the

breakdown of international trade, and the unprecedented atrocities of the Second World War, led the most orthodox economists and the most conservative publicists to become, against their will, theorists of a directed and controlled economy that was odious to them, to consider employees as interested participants in the running of the companies through which they live and which they support and, as a consequence of this participation, to envisage a code of duties for employers and a restriction of their rights — with the obvious intention of preventing the worst and yielding the least. These reversals, however insincere most of them may be, when they are not merely a temporary mask, are weighty in significance and have lasting resonances in the public mind. It is clear that the dogma of property was singularly undermined by the double concession made to the rights of the community and the rights of wage-earning producers during the world wars. It no longer has any moral defense and is relegated to the questionable level of production efficiency, linked to the initiatives of self-interest.

It would be unfaithful to the objective method to reject the doctrine of self-interest without examination. Self-interest is clearly the motive behind all our normal actions, including the most generous. For we must consider a hierarchy of interests. Not all ambitions are based on banal vanity, social self-esteem, or familial pride. Perhaps it will be rightly observed that, in a society where profit reigns supreme, not all useful space, not all opportunities, are given to talent, especially to disinterested talent. Is this not, in the branches of positive social activity, in the higher spheres of pure science, art, and thought, a glaring liability to be included on the balance sheet of a society of interests?

But let us move on and assume that talent, pure thought, love of humanity, a passion for good, and the religion of greatness need no encouragement. We will then be led to say that the lure of gain and social ambition would be satisfied just as much by a gradation of remuneration based on initiative and ability, by a fair share of profits, by promotion to management positions in business and to honorable positions in the community — that is, by obtaining more abundant and luxurious goods to consume, and by the effective enjoyment of social respect — as by the accumulation of wealth to be transmitted posthumously.

Will it be objected that there are men of worth who are not solicited by any social ambition, whose needs are modest, and whose only incentive to effort and initiative is the love of their offspring? But here again, in this world where injustice and inequality are natural and where, consequently, the will of men can only tend to socially compensate for inequalities, a certain privilege benefits the children of a man in power. A well-paid position, close connections among business and community leaders, means for children a more pampered life, greater opportunities for study and careers. Provided that positions do not become hereditary, that the conditions of access to the great faculties are not such as to seriously handicap the less favored competitors, these appreciable

advantages would not scandalize too much minds open to the relativity of things. They would be enough to arouse the interest of a father, especially since there would be no injustice, in the event of an untimely death, in deferring one's inheritance to one's children until their majority.

Without insisting further on views that tend toward nothing more than analyzing the “current” psychological content of the idea of property, let us simply say that, in the chaos of the 20th century revolutions, while these views appear to have been overtaken by more radical experiences, these experiences, far from having reduced social inequalities, have enslaved humanity in such a way that it is uncertain whether more flexible and humane solutions would not lead, at less cost, to a revolution that would be authentic if its goal is liberty through equity and justice. There are, moreover, other means of social transformation. These are merely considered indications, designed to validate principles in the light of prejudices that thwart evolution.

Finally, let us consider another aspect of our question. If it is true that self-interest is a factor of initiative, is it not also true that it inhibits rational progress? We have an example of this when we see public funds subsidizing companies stuck in outdated methods, whose managers were neither able nor willing to bear the costs of necessary adaptation in a timely manner. Yet, inheritance according to democratic principles leads to a very similar anomaly.

The interests of heirs and formal justice have conspired to encourage the legislature to prohibit free wills and impose equal distribution. As a result, the testator is sometimes forced to oblige the ungrateful, which only contradicts justice, and to allow property that has been misused, or works that will be lost, to go to heirs he knows to be incapable. Let us also recognize that the proponents of the integral principle of free property logically demand the corollary right to free will, which is opposed by the sacred rights of the family. So true is it that a misconception ultimately leads to an inextricable web of incongruities. The consequence is a dissociation of property so completely contrary to the laws of economics that small property — particularly rural property — defends itself only through protectionism and tax exemptions that defy common sense.

In one way or another, such a situation, which condemns the very principle from which it is derived, will one day have to yield to the pressure of economic realities and social unrest.

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On a Middle Term of Collective Property

The extreme division of rural property in France is a typical case where the error and injustice of land appropriation combine with the disadvantages of irrational exploitation to reveal, with rigorous relevance, the social and economic advantages of inseparable agricultural units.

In an era dominated by industrial concentration and integration, piecemeal agriculture is an improbable contradiction. Maintaining it requires nothing less than the combined forces of inertia of peasant traditions and a narrow sense of self-interest.

Public authorities and farmers themselves have finally understood this. Land consolidation has been undertaken. But, not only do administrative interventions in this process inevitably give rise to anomalies and even abuses, the principle of inheritance introduces both factual and legal difficulties. Above a certain market value determined by the Power, a farm complex is not immune to partition. Below this value, the joint ownership that seeks to protect it causes dissension between heirs and, in practice, disadvantages some in favor of the heir-farmer. This palliative formula ultimately fails to integrate small and medium-sized properties into a farm large enough to allow for the depreciation of modern equipment.

Theoretically, the solution to the agricultural problem is contained within comprehensive communist systems. But the establishment of these systems presupposes a complete revolution, and, moreover, they are not without serious drawbacks regarding the condition of liberty. The various forms of communism are economic, social and political complexes with inseparable elements. As long as their totality is not simultaneously accepted or imposed, the isolated application of any one of its parts risks disrupting the order of things without correcting it.

Small and medium-sized rural farms are not, moreover, the ideal place for a demonstrative experiment. If it weren't for the tenacious opposition of psychological factors known since the first time a man was able to fence off a piece of land and settle there, the essential transition to technical development would still be lacking. A country where hills and valleys undulate in short waves cannot be cultivated like a plain in Ukraine or Argentina.

A solution is quite rightly sought in the dual formula of cooperation and unionism. This can be both a sustainable formula and a transitional path. It leads to technological development and a less backward agricultural economy. On the scale it has been applied in Scandinavian countries, especially for the production and processing of livestock products, the excellence of the results is such that both trustee capitalism and authoritarian communism strive to

conceal, minimize and even thwart them. However, when it comes to large-scale crops (wheat, beets, etc.) this formula does not resolve the problem of land division, and even less so that of property.

Of an Indicative and Transitory Socialization

However, in this area of transitory adaptations, there is a way to circumvent the difficulty by borrowing from capitalism itself its method of concentration, reduced to the scale of a small farm. By temporarily reserving the principle of personal property, one could easily persuade any well-rounded mind, that is, one receptive to the ideas of the time, that the private interest of the heirs who cut fields into strips would be perfectly reconciled with the requirements of optimum agricultural yield through the process of a partnership of shares, naturally simplified and consistent with its purpose, in which one of the heirs or any other tenant would assume, through contractual rent, the operation of the undivided domain.

As soon as we abandon the notion that it is a condition of happiness for each heir to include a souvenir plot in their assets — as useless to themselves as it is essential to a cultural whole — nothing stands in the way, except the prejudices of foolishness, of this equitable and practical form of land consolidation.

We understand how such a society not only interrupts the division of estates, but also allows for the easy and indefinite merger of companies established on the same territory. None of the psychological factors specific to the traditional peasant would oppose this form of integration, since everyone's interest is to obtain, through increased productivity, a more remunerative rent.

This process of invisible and seamless revolution applies to other activities (crafts, small businesses, small industries), which have also remained at an anachronistic stage and whose instability and retrograde personalism hinder the development of union and cooperative agreements. It can still be a means of organizing the ownership of rental properties according to their social function as a public housing service in cities.

Productive property, thus depersonalized, no longer ties its owner to a place. It leads them, in its movable form, to break with the ancestral and anaemic custom of sedentary living and constrictive sluggishness.

It goes without saying that this theoretical and summary outline has no other purpose than to incline conservative opinion toward a current — and not too worrying — way of thinking about the economy in terms of necessary developments. It shows how easy it is to share any productive property, regardless of its nature and importance, without dissociating it. Through such a system, any heir (as long as the inheritance subsists) can receive their fair share, enjoy it, or divest themselves of it at will without harming their co-sharers,

without being required either to sell their share of a divided asset improperly or to actually inherit a profession that does not suit them.

It is also, for revolutionary minds — when their inclination is averse to solutions involving violence and coercion — a path likely to lead to the disappearance of inheritance without resorting to the constraints of state ownership. The intervention of the State, currently the priority heir through the collection of taxes, is thus limited, in the numerous cases of forced sales, to the auctioning of shares. These automatically enter the system without affecting the invested capital and without disrupting businesses. Thus, through the mere evolution of things, a socialization is established and developed in a sort of contractual manner, without interference from the State function. It is the public limited company, but simplified at the base, democratized and generalized. The possible abolition of inheritance would change nothing, except that any death of a shareholder would lead to the redistribution of these shares.

Inheritance and Demographic Problems

Let's approach the disappearance of inheritance from another angle. If we consider that, beyond national communities, balanced solutions are desirable in competitive relationships between nations, in adapting to the resources and labor needs of population density, it will become apparent that inheritance is an obstacle to any demographic policy. This is true, whatever one may think, of both birth control and birth proliferation. Indeed, no “birth control” holds when one has assets that one wishes to transmit through continuous lineage. This fact is especially evident from the classic perspective — which must be taken into account — of nationalisms and imperialisms confronting each other in a stupid competition of material forces, where major private interests play a role.

We have seen how, in the current state of the family, paternal concern for foresight, the desire to avoid ruinous divisions, and the will to raise one's offspring one rank on the social ladder all restrict the birth rate. It is not without reason that the word “proletarian” has become synonymous with “poor.” The number of children within a family is most often inversely proportional to the means available to educate, place and provide for them. Even religious prescriptions are powerless to break this rule.

It is certain that, without these concerns, the individual would give birth according to the immediate conditions of his or her life, and that society, by influencing these conditions — materially through a proper distribution of consumer goods, psychologically through concrete education and propaganda — would easily conform the birth rate to needs and resources. For the concerted limitation of births is one thing, considered as a demographic regulator whose barbaric use has never ceased to be used by war and epidemics, and another is an individual Malthusism suggested, sometimes imposed against desire and instinct, by a lack of social guarantees.

Let active policy take care of promoting appropriate solutions according to circumstances; they are diverse, and as long as they anticipate the event, the more carefully considered are not exempt from a large element of utopianism, in that, by the time they are implemented, a change in mores has occurred that no longer allows them to be adopted as-is. It is useful, however, that their logical construction sufficiently demonstrates that the critique of a given social state is valid, since that state appears capable of being transformed.

The Lesson of Subjugation to Property

Individual liberty is incompatible with an overly keen attachment to material goods. This lesson is not new. Masterfully taught by Diogenes and by all the hermits, monks, and missionaries of active Christianity, by all the staunch militants promoted by revolutionary movements and, especially, libertarian ideas, by all the unrepentant bedridden people exalted by science and the arts, the activity of these men, and sometimes their glory, demonstrated their excellence without inspiring only exceptional vocations.

This is because these spirits, devoted exclusively to a transcendent cause, not only detach themselves from the possession of goods, they abstain from that which is not strictly essential to them. One can neither ask nor advise men given over without any particular passion to daily life to renounce its pleasures. And this is in no way desirable. But it is possible to make them realize that by allowing themselves to be bound by the goods they possess, they disrupt their enjoyment with worries and concerns, thereby denying themselves other enjoyments.

The prejudice for tangible and immobile property, which we inherit from our peasant or bourgeois ancestry, distracts us from thinking that use equals possession, when in truth there is only possession through use. A striking illustration of this theme is offered to us by the persistence of Judaism through centuries of persecution and incessant exodus. When a Jew is a Maimonides, a Spinoza, intent on an absolute, exile or poverty are merely secondary contingencies; he is immensely rich and enveloped in the idea by which he lives. When he's not out of his depth, he's only too familiar with the instability of things to postpone the pleasures that lie ahead. Strangely combining spiritualism and materialism, he takes them from all sides, as easily impassioned during the moment he devotes to an art, to an idea, as he is, the moment after, fond of a good meal, enchanted by a beautiful piece of furniture. The quality of a piece of jewelry holds him back even more. A piece of jewelry can be carried in your pocket, like a fiduciary security, and is exempt from the risk of depreciation. The Jewish taste for jewelry is a whole philosophy.

During the 1940 exodus, imposed upon us by the military's negligence, how many French people did not feel like Jews for a moment? And when, having abandoned a home they thought would be left with nothing in the face of

bombing or looting, they went back to living somewhere, burdened only by their papers and what truly valuable assets they possessed, how did they pull themselves together?

Those who left behind only furniture and everyday objects, however beautiful and precious, took stock. They had lost the equivalent of a sum of money. If they had their papers in their suitcase, a few of those memories that cannot be replaced, everything would have been saved along with their lives. Time and work would make up the money for new furniture.

All was lost, on the contrary, for those who had to abandon a “home” they had over-personalized. They had tied a part of their sensitive being to objects that are daily threatened by fire, flood, and burglar. What good was it? A good armchair is a good armchair. What does it matter if we change it? We'll have to leave it one day, and the heirs rarely retain the worship you devote to it in memory of a loved one who once sat there. It is in you that the loved one lives the life of the heart, not in a piece of furniture where one finds only the melancholic illusion of an erased imprint. Beyond our intimate remembrance, it is through a letter, a drawing expressing his thoughts, his sensitivity, his essential “ego,” through a portrait, which remains a reflection of his living expression, that he is present to us.

I know others who will never be consoled for having lost the works of art and rare books they had lovingly assembled under the bombs. I pity their suffering, and I understand them, having felt what they feel before correcting myself. But let us not mourn the paintings and books with them, except as we would mourn the destruction of a museum. It is indeed in the museum and the public library that the place of the book, the sculpture, the canvas is, when they have ceased to fulfill their normal use in the study, in the harmonious ensemble of a piece of furniture or in the living decor of an architectural monument. In the museum where everyone can enjoy them and not in the home of a private individual who, like a selfish maniac, deprives so many amateurs and artists of them. What is the point, moreover, of this hoarding? The richest of collectors owns little. If his taste is better than a mania or a speculation, he must, like others, run to exhibitions.

As for living art, as for the comfort of the “home,” the harmony of its decor, the beauty of the furniture, they have nothing to do with the gathering of disparate objects, most often made to be used elsewhere, in other times whose mark they bear. There are current artists and craftsmen to express, construct and adorn to your taste, who, consequently, can reconstruct if necessary. Similarly, if the study is lightened by the charm of a beautiful typography and a splendid binding, only the old copy is irreplaceable. Now, is it not lost in fact when it sleeps on a shelf where only rare guests are allowed to touch it? Entrust the irreplaceable to the community and, by surrounding yourself with the works of your time, give yourself the joys of an enlightened Patron, satisfied to have

promoted the work that, in advance, he bequeaths to posterity. *Sic transit gloria*... Such is wisdom.

It is permissible to oppose all sorts of ifs and buts to these views. I readily agree that this particular case must be reserved, and I do not intend that these views should constitute a system. They are nevertheless an indication of conformity to the nature of things, of conformity also to human nature, which has been depraved in a hundred ways by the institution of property.

It is hardly a paradox to suggest that the only man who begins to be free is he who, even if he is extremely rich, can gather, along with the securities of his fortune, all the objects worth holding dear in one or two small suitcases.

For anyone who doubts this, despite the exoduses, the flights, the exiles of our troubled times, let us recall this unpleasant truism: the time comes when one must make the definitive transfer of all one's possessions. It's making the great farewell unnecessarily more difficult to have to regret more than the joy of living.

From this perspective, we understand that all true collectivism carries within itself one of the conditions of individual liberty. It is regrettable that collectivist social systems imply a tendency for leaders to demand an orthodoxy from those governed, which quickly draws the individual into new meshes. This must be avoided, for once the meshes are woven, they are not easily loosened.

But, in one form or another, can social organization escape all abuse, all deviation? And is it not in the habit of detachment from things and in the passion for liberty that we acquire foresight and the will to resist the abuses of the power?

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State, Labor, Property

Drawing out the broad outlines of a general system of life in society is futile if we lose sight of the ideal end of this system, which can only be conscious individual liberty. Since every economic and social system is by definition a collective order, it appears that, in order to escape the abuses of a class society where selfishness and combativeness corrupt reason, we run a serious risk of becoming entangled, by adopting a collectivist organization, in the inextricable web of laws, decrees, and regulations that civil servants excel at crafting in the service of the state.

This risks a dangerous sluggishness of public opinion, a numbness of minds anesthetized by slogans dedicated to militant herd mentality, a harshness, and a dehumanization that are characteristic of the systemic spirit.

The Individual in the Collective

The permanent fact, if we do not create an illusory representation of human evolution, is the striving toward the greatest independence of individuals. We can already suggest that any system, or any consequence of a system, which denies or hinders this tendency, opposes the norm of human aspirations and the achievements of evolution. But this, which is true of doctrines, may no longer be true in complex reality. There is, in fact, no possible organization that does not thwart the independence of the individual, and yet the independence of the individual is maintained only by these contradictions, to the extent that reciprocity founds and governs them. It is therefore appropriate, in setting the liberty of individuals as our goal, not to forget that this goal must be conceived as proper to all men and not to a privileged few. From which it follows that the standard for criticism and choice of a system cannot be the interest, even if legitimate, of one category of people, but that of all, without regard to class or origin.

These are truisms that no modern philosophy would dare openly challenge, with the possible exception of rare theories of cynical reaction. However, it is as if these truisms were considered pleasant sophisms, sweet utopias unrelated to social realities. In the practical sphere, their implications are distorted by the distinctions that politics develops to serve interests. In the realm of the mind, they do not escape the distortions imposed by the molds of conformism. All of this combines strangely to blind men to the outbursts of sectarian passions.

It must also be noted that the application of reasoned principles goes only as far as the most elementary principles rooted in the people allow it to be, principles which are better in accord with inclinations, with instincts and are, therefore, more stable, more generally accepted as the foundations of society. In

this respect, the term “people” encompasses all classes, just as within each of them are found the clear-sighted minorities through whom, ultimately, truths effectively become truisms. This is why the positive conditions of liberty, as well as the opinion formed of it, vary with time, place, and ethnicity.

If philosophical schools — particularly sociological schools — give the concept of liberty definitions as diverse as the pragmatic elements of their doctrines are, all must agree, explicitly or implicitly, that liberty is an attribute of an essentially particular nature. Whether it concerns nations, classes, or individuals, it is always that of a nation, a class or an individual; otherwise, its definition would be nothing more than a fallacy.

The idea of liberty is so deeply rooted in people's minds, after millennia of struggles in which humankind has slowly freed itself from its natural and social chains, but also so closely linked to the memory of the violent struggles to which it was subjected, that the notion of authority — long and still considered by many to be its antinomy — paradoxically asserts itself today as the Palladium of liberty, established within the coercive order, of course.

It remains to be seen whether there is a congruent order to guarantee liberty by reconciling it with the validity that the fickleness, inconsistency, and selfishness of humankind confer on this conception of a justificatory authority.

The Spirit of the Laws provided the definition: “...political liberty,” wrote Montesquieu, “does not consist in doing what one wants... In a society where there are laws, liberty can only consist in being able to do what one must want, and in not being forced to do what one must not want... liberty is the right to do everything the laws permit; if a citizen could do what they forbid, there would no longer be liberty, because others would still have this power.”

We find in these precepts the political sources of the “Declaration of the Rights of Man,” just as we find its moral foundations in this other definition of personal liberty that Montesquieu gives: “Philosophical liberty,” he wrote, “consists in the exercise of one’s will, or at least... in the opinion one has that one is exercising one’s will. Political liberty consists in security, or at least in the opinion one has of one’s safety.”

These precepts, let's agree, have not lost all value today, precisely because they were mostly forgotten during the 19th century. They are even more so in the revolutions of the 20th century, corrupted both by the occult intrigues of international trusts and by the brutal reactions of the authoritarian parties of the far right and the far left, each organized into war and police machines. In the constitutions, principles have never been anything more than a stylistic clause, for the sufficient reason that all systems involve — in one form or another — the omnipotent intervention of the State, that is to say, of the sovereign and unconscious bureaucracy.

The Vices of the State

The State, the framework of the nationalized and partially standardized political-social body, creator and facilitator of generally expensive but indispensable public services, has, by its very nature, an irrepressible tendency to rule everything. This dangerous flaw is maintained and cultivated with traditional care by an administration that dates back, through its continuous antecedents in most European nations, to absolute monarchy, to say nothing of the model provided by the Roman administration. While its aging paralyzes those of its useful cogs in times of crisis, its spirit remains, quick to seize any opportunity to expand the scope of its responsibilities and its misdeeds.

This congenital and universal aptitude can lead to disasters in that, far from inclining civil servants to lend themselves to the evolution of people and things, it tends to subject people and things to bureaucratic routines.

Since state administration is conservative by training, through smugness, arrogance, laziness, and a fear of responsibility, the automatism of its reactions sets it against free initiatives. It seems to be constantly guided by Aristotle's view that “the political system must be adapted to each government,” as a result of which the administration orients policy according to the established regime of which it is the client — that is, in fact, the client of the dominant social class. This is true of countries under totalitarian regimes as well as democracies, and probably more so.

It is in this way that the state, oppressive by functional training, becomes odious by identifying itself with privilege. It is in this spirit that high-ranking officials, those ambitious for power or in the avenues of power, still considering with Aristotle that “the mores appropriate to each government preserve it and even establish it on a solid foundation,” tend to impose a conformism of morals and opinions in which the liberty of individuals is annihilated.

Education is at the forefront of the means used by the State, because it is obvious, again according to Aristotle, that “the most useful laws... will be of no use if mores and education are not in conformity with the principles of the constitution.”

These views, designed to ensure the continuity of governments and their enterprises, borrow from a seductive dialectic an appearance of common sense and practical reason. In truth, apart from the fact that the State thus conceived corrupts itself in the service of the prebendary more surely than it ultimately saves the latter, these are only views of the mind, which, confronted with changing realities, prove disastrous to the general interest. Their dogmatic rigidity, reinforced by the imperatives of obtuse privilege, prevents the State from fulfilling its task of coordinating the active elements of social evolution. A realism of stock market traders, when it is not a realism of gangsters in the service of a dictatorship, opposes the civil service to the transcendence of continuous reality.

The continuous reality is man and men in society, of whom we know, through the general lines of their evolution, that they have never ceased to struggle to conquer, against nature and against themselves, a liberty that they are unable to define in depth or fully grasp, but which, as it is, seduces them all the more because it always leaves them dissatisfied.

Now, the continuity of this conquest entails, in the economic and mechanical realms, a necessity for free initiative. This is indispensable, not only for material progress, but also for the simple maintenance of daily production and exchanges.

It entails, in the realm of the mind that governs morality, an even greater independence. To impose a limit on the creations of the mind is to annihilate the creative impulse; it is therefore to condemn a people to imbecility, rather than to subject its thought leaders to canons. For it is one thing to maintain mores within the limits necessary for the physical and mental health of a society, and quite another to prevent the evolution of these mores by forcing them into a state that corresponds neither to the "climate" of an era nor to the aspirations that emerged with that era.

In this order of mind, which is also that of ethics, we can immediately conclude that the role of government and its administration should in no case exceed the limits of objective and prudent control, within the strict framework of generally accepted laws, that is, those that the natural evolution of average judgments has not allowed to fall into disuse.

A government is in no way qualified to decide on moral matters to which its function is contrary. Nearly two centuries later, the definition of government given by Jean-Jacques in 1767, in a "Letter to the Marquis de Mirabeau," reappears, is still valid: "The science of government is only a science of combination, application, and exception, according to times, places, and circumstances. The public can never clearly see the relationships between all this." This inclines us to say that it is better for public morality to have only a purely theoretical relationship with that of government. It is already too much for reasons of state, in the perils of war as in those of revolution, to deny the right to moral existence and even the right to physical existence of individuals.

In all parts of the world, we have been able to appreciate, for six or seven decades, the consequences of the legal subversion of the right of nations: anesthesia of sensibility, atrophy of consciences, perversion of the moral sense. It is decidedly better, when the State returns to its normal state, for it to leave it to free initiative to redress the consciences it has distorted and for it to consent to allow itself to be censored because, as Mirabeau wrote in his *Erotika Biblion*, "the true source of authority is in the opinion and hearts of the subjects."

But, if it is true that “only honest people truly know how to obey the laws,” Mirabeau exaggerated when he argued that only good people know how to administer them. Machiavelli, while describing as execrable the vices “that are manifest in those who sit in courts, who occupy positions, who hold authority and who want to be worshipped,” had no doubt that the skill of a Prince could be more useful in public affairs than good morals. However, one might think that good morals do not absolutely harm skill and that, if police officers are only recruited in heaven from among the archangels, it is preferable that an archangel statute limits the scope of their exploits.

On the Role of Public Opinion

For a government, the statute of an archangel is that dictated by public opinion. “How,” Machiavelli also noted, “could it ensure the obedience and loyalty of the people if they separated their own interests from its own?” It is also necessary that the “prince” be informed of the people's feelings, that the people be able to express them, and that these feelings not be systematically distorted by all kinds of propaganda, exploiting their lack of information and critical thinking.

Here we encounter the driving force of political liberties. Political liberty is indestructible; it can only be perverted. The harshest coercion would be ineffective against it if the vast majority of a people were not rendered incapable of distinguishing truth from falsehood. Yet it is through the perversion of the spirit of liberty that overly rigorous regimes ultimately collapse, when each individual ends up having no other purpose than to defraud the law.

The process of this dissociation is described in a single sentence by Mirabeau in *La Tropoïde:* “When the hope of impunity is enough to encourage breaking the law, or when one is content provided one has evaded it, the general interest is no longer that of anyone, and all particular interests unite against it; vices then have infinitely more power to undermine laws than laws to repress vices.”

We will deduce from this that if conventional powers must be very broad in their organization of major affairs, both internal and external, and if their arbitration can be imposed to maintain acceptable conditions of competition and opposition between the diverse interests of individuals and associations of all kinds, it is desirable that economic management in general, and social affairs in particular, be left to appropriate and responsible organizations. It is essential that neither the power nor its agents escape the control of public opinion. The difficulty lies in providing public opinion with means of expression such that no opposition is silenced and that neither the government, nor the coalition of factions, nor aroused passions can corrupt the civil service.

Here, I am giving the terms “state,” “power,” and “government” a very broad meaning. Every society, through the collective organization of a people,

necessarily constitutes a state, and the coordination of activities a government. Similarly, the highest authority of a federation becomes, by delegation, a power. It ultimately constitutes a government, with all its human drawbacks. We see this, for example, *mutatis mutandis*, in trade unions organized into hierarchical federations. The problem lies in the delimitation and restriction of the powers of the state, whatever it may be. It is childish to think that we are absolutely condemning it by removing its name.

Even in a completely communist, federalist, and libertarian regime, man finds himself confronted by the natural vices of his function, by the instinctive inclinations of vanity, authoritarianism, and personal animadversions. It is either dreamlike or sectarian to deny this.

The problem of the State therefore remains, more or less difficult but constant, under any regime whatsoever. The idea of a stateless society is a fallacy, and I have shown elsewhere[1] how Proudhon himself foresaw its reconstitution from the conditions he posed, which we now know could not be met.

Proudhon ultimately attacked the abuses of the State and its centralized governments, supported by an all-powerful and practically irresponsible administration. It is therefore by delimiting and restricting the power of governments, by emphasizing a tendency to leave to associations of the people the responsibility and initiative for the many matters that can be handled without state intervention, by developing the spirit of cooperation to produce and distribute, the spirit of association to extend and protect culture, to increase knowledge, by placing trade unionism in conditions of objectivity suitable for safeguarding free opinions in the defense of professional interests, that the abusive functions of the state will return to the limits where they are useful and become bearable.

This is what I will consider in a final article.

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[1] *The Democrat Before Authority*.

The Syndicalist Safeguard

The Lesson of the Duty of Labor

The political and social struggles that pitted conservative forces against revolutionary potential for a century were fruitful. Workers' syndicalism, based on defense and advocacy, stemming from libertarian views, gave rise to professional solidarity organizations in all categories of economic activity. Due to the diversity and frequent opposition of the interests it represents, it is a prime example of an effective means of controlling political power, a kind of grand council whose technical expertise is capable of freeing the administration from its traditional errors. On the other hand, it confers renewed prestige on the State when it invites the government to exercise, between opposing categories, an arbitration that restores it to one of the functions that are — in principle — its justification.

It would still be necessary for each party to maintain its role, so that there would be no pressure, on the one hand, through disorderly violence and, on the other, no “act of the prince” through partial authority. The syndicate, whatever it may be (except the domesticated union of totalitarian countries), thwarts the political game of governments, which tend to limit its means of action, especially when they are those of the proletariat. This is because the people, according to Émile de Girardin's observation, would achieve omnipotence simply by sitting back and doing nothing. This force, manifested through strikes, has constantly worried the powers that would like to dominate it. In this ever-latent and sometimes resolved conflict against the workers, liberty is too deeply engaged for us not to dwell on it.

The social necessity of labor effectively confers on the community rights over the individual considered as a worker. The same right, moreover, should be exercised against the industrialist and the merchant-distributor. But let us include employer functions in the category of necessary labor. What happens? Necessary labor is too demanding for everyone not to aspire to free themselves from it to a greater or lesser extent. Since the amount of production cannot be reduced, a double consequence follows: the skilled and the well-born relieve themselves of a part of the obligatory labor (the hardest, obviously) by shifting it onto others. They only benefit sustainably from this exemption by imposing on a sacrificed class the arduous and small-profit tasks as their normal condition. Subjection to labor deviates from subjection by labor. Low wages and job insecurity keep the average worker in a state of ignorance that limits their abilities, in the torments of impecuniosity, and in the fear of uncertain futures that compel or predispose them to degradation.

These consequences, moreover, do not affect employees alone. All professions involve risks of failure and ruin, compromises and compromises that oppose the free development of the personality.

Earning a living is the major obstacle to free activity and determines all others. Natural and, therefore, irreducible, it governs social problems. To escape this servitude, man strives to organize the means of earning a living with a minimum of physical constraints (this is the purpose of technical progress) and a maximum of guarantees against adversity (this is the purpose of social progress.)

Now, the conditions for social progress are contained in the right of association, which organizes mutual aid. Any legislation that tends to restrict it is therefore a regression. However, when an association is powerful enough to overstep its bounds and take action against institutions, the problem of its limitation arises, through which the arbitrary power is given license. It is sometimes very difficult to determine the limit at which an association oversteps its rights. Let us take the most significant example of syndical association to try to elucidate this point.

The Normal Functions of Syndicalism and the Relationship Between Politics and Syndicalism

It is obvious that the purpose of a syndicate is not only to obtain acceptable material living conditions, since we have just noted that all aspects of life are linked to working conditions. Syndical strength therefore rightly intervenes when union members are in any way affected by their profession. It intervenes no less rightly when the material interests of the members are harmed by some social discrimination resulting from their professional status, such as, for example, the unequal tax burden on the incomes of various professional categories. But if we do not distinguish (and this distinction is sometimes difficult) between harm suffered by an individual in the course of their employment and harm suffered by the same individual in their capacity as a citizen, a confusion occurs between professional social action and general social action, which falls within the scope of politics. Beyond the fact that this confusion divides members who are united by their profession but separated by the diversity of their opinions, it is clear that the syndicates intervention in matters outside its purview distorts the functioning of the public constitution. Contrary to certain views, which are more doctrinal than objective, it must be considered that syndical organization cannot be anything other than professional. It would be substituting one arbitrary factor for another to empower delegates to interfere — except in the realm of solidarity as long as class inequalities persist — in the various aspects of individual and social life, whose liberty requires that they escape the constraints of their profession. This is true of all associations: economic, philosophical, religious, etc. Their intrusion into areas that do not directly concern them always results in social dissension, a weakening of institutional guarantees, and, consequently, a weakening of liberties. The result is unrest, with the inevitable corollary of a reflex of authority at the expense of liberties of association.

Employees, as a class, are oppressed, dispossessed and deprived of their social rights in a hundred ways, regardless of their professional status. It is natural that they tend to use their syndicates to further their social demands. Nothing, at any time, has been granted to them, either spontaneously or by free agreement. Their status has only been elevated through revolts and violent struggles. What they have acquired, they have paid for with their blood, their imprisonment and enforced unemployment. But once the rights of their professional associations are established and recognized, workers' syndicates must guard against ill-considered impulses that expose them to the backlash of political bickering.

In advanced nations, the right to strike, the most normal of all and yet the most hated by those in power, has endowed organized employees with a power that could be non-violent, were it not for the intervention of provocation disguised in the colors of order. This is where political bad faith works against the worker.

Official power, allied with the unofficial power of the wealthy who dominate it, claims the need for order and the public interest against strikes. It tends to restrict them. Under authoritarian regimes, it suppresses them. It could not be better served, to justify its restrictive interventions, than if it could invoke the political nature of a strike, the encroachment on the responsibilities of qualified organizations. It exploits differences of opinion, which then divide the working class and leave it unarmed. Except in exceptional cases, such as the defense of fundamental rights on which the right to unionize itself is based, workers' associations have everything to lose by openly going beyond the confines of labor.

It is this that was perfectly understood by the drafters of the so-called Amiens syndical charter, inspired by the libertarian spirit, which prohibited any specifically political activity within trade unionism and refused to allow unions to be subservient to a party. Such a doctrine is beneficial to the union members, whom it protects against any attack on their opinions, and to the syndicate, which does not provide a pretext for the state to intervene against them.

If the employers' unions also guarded against encroachments in non-professional areas, the political power would have the authority to reconcile, and arbitrate if necessary, social conflicts, since its impartiality, predetermined by its independence from the parties, would be superior to them due to the generality of the interests for which it is responsible. But for this to be so would presuppose that the social question had been resolved.

It took a century for this paradox of liberty to be considered valid, from power to power, with authority, and for employees to be able to contract collectively with employers. How long will it take for this new right to be smoothly incorporated into reality through tradition? How long will it take for the people to move from the organization of material interests, through a liberty

of expression of divergent concepts, to an organization of defense and emulation on the level of their no less essential spiritual interests?

It is, however, only through specific, constitutionally integrated associations that the role of the State can be limited, totalitarian servitudes eliminated and the fruitful diversity of opinions safeguarded, even if they are opposed to liberty itself. It is through the initiatives and the competing vigilance of such associations that the parties in power and power itself can be sometimes contained, sometimes guided, animated, compelled to act or arbitrate in this higher domain of intellectual activities which, with economic and social balance assured, fill the entire emotional and thinking life of the being: philosophy or religion, morals, leisure activities, arts, literature, and sciences.

There is no one of these activities in which the individual is not directly engaged, none in which free initiatives are more necessary, none in which passions make competition more fierce and demand a more constant impartiality of power.

But this domain is not one in which the lure of immediately tangible profit (except for parasites entrenched even in philanthropy) opens to understanding the indolent mind of the impassively quotidian man. It is no less by the artificial excitement of these passions, by the maneuvers of those who are skilled in using them, that social problems are oriented, political positions are determined, including those of the detractors of politics. It would be good if we became aware of this so that, through the competing influence of associations, acting on the margins of the parties, escaping their tricks, their servitudes and keeping them awake, the State would be forced by them to administer justice... as much as justice can be among men who assemble in sects when they are not in classes.

All Evolution Stumbles upon Property-Inheritance.

Are these views utopian? If so, any idea of evolution toward justice is an illusion. In truth, they are consistent with the changing dynamics of the struggle for existence. In a society structured in this way, the interests of a person that bind them to their professional group do not necessarily bind them to the same people in their social or cultural group. This softens oppositions and develops a pacifying sense of reciprocity.

But we immediately understand that the institution of property-inheritance is an absolute obstacle to this kind of social relations. It is at the root of the great vices of the State. It leads to the formation of castes, whose interests govern spiritual as well as social behavior. The defense of property-inheritance implies a proprietary morality that extends to all aspects of life. It imposes a conservatism that any new idea threatens. It pits classes against each other instead of confronting people. It confines itself to principles instead of opening itself to ideas.

Conformist by necessity, complacent by defensive reflex, the proprietor is the natural enemy of intelligence. He combats it by narrowing it down to the graduated, controllable and limited scale of technical knowledge.

As a proprietor, he holds his own, within his own narrow measure. It is intelligence that fails to hold its own when it persists in supporting a principle that subordinates and constantly degrades it.

Ch.-Auguste BONTEMPS.