

System of Economic Contradictions

Or, The Philosophy of Misery

Volume 2

(Translated by Iain McKay)

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CHAPTER XI: EIGHTH EPOCH – PROPERTY

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CHAPTER XI: EIGHTH EPOCH – PROPERTY

§I – Property is inexplicable apart from the economic series. – Of the organisation of common sense, or a problem of certainty.

The problem of property is after that of human destiny the greatest that reason can propose, the last that it will be able to resolve. Indeed, the theological problem, the enigma of religion, is explained; the philosophical problem, whose purpose is the value and legitimacy of knowledge, is resolved: there remains the social problem, which is one with these two, and whose solution, by everyone's admission, relates primarily to property.

I will present in this chapter the theory of property *in itself* [*en soi*], that is to say, in its origin, its spirit, its tendency, its relations with other economic categories. As for determining property *for itself* [*pour soi*], that is to say as it must be after the complete solution of the contradictions, and what it becomes every day, this is, as I have said, the last phase of the social constitution, the object of a new work, of which this one aims to provide a glimpse of the design and to lay the foundations.

To clearly understand the theory of property *in itself*, it is necessary to address the highest issues, and to present in a new aspect the essential identity of philosophy and political economy.

Just as civilisation, from the point of view of industry, aims to constitute the value of products and organise labour, and that society is nothing other than this constitution and this organisation; likewise the object of philosophy is to establish judgment by determining the value of knowledge and organising common sense; and what we call logic is nothing other than this determination and organisation.

Logic, society, which is to say always reason: such is then the destiny of our species here on earth, considered in its generative faculties, activity and intelligence. Thus humanity, by its successive manifestations, is a living logic: it is this what made us say, at the beginning of this work, that every economic fact is the expression of a law of the mind, and that, as there is nothing in the understanding that has not been previously in experience, neither is there anything in social practice that does not come from an abstraction of reason.

Society, like logic, therefore has for its primordial law the *agreement of reason and experience*. To make reason and experience agree, to make theory and practice advance in unison, is what the economist and the philosopher equally propose; that is the first and the last commandment imposed on every man who acts and thinks. A simple requirement, without doubt, if one considers it only in that seemingly so simple formula; a prodigious, sublime, effort, if we consider all that man has done from the beginning, as much to escape from it as to conform to it.

But what do we mean by the agreement of reason and experience, or, as we have called it, by this organisation of common sense, which is itself only logic?

First, I call common sense judgment insofar as it applies to things of an intuitive and immediately obviousness, the perception of which requires neither deduction nor research. Common sense is more than instinct: that has no consciousness of its determinations, while common sense knows what it wants and why it wants. Common sense is also not faith, genius

or habit, which are neither judged nor known: while common sense is known and judged, as it knows and judges all that surrounds it.

Common sense is equal in all men. It is from this that the highest degree of evidence and the most perfect certainty come to ideas: it is not this which has aroused philosophical doubt. Common sense is reason and experience simultaneously synthetically united: it is, once again, judgment but without dialectic or calculation.

But common sense, by this very fact that it falls only on things of an immediate obviousness, abhors general ideas, the linking of propositions, consequently method and science: so much so that the more a man indulges in speculation, the more he seems to depart from common sense, starting with certainty. How then can men equal in common sense become again equal by science, which they naturally dislike?

Common sense is not susceptible to increase nor decrease: judgment considered in itself cannot cease to be always the same, always equal to itself and identical. How, once again, is it possible not only to maintain equality of abilities outside of common sense, but also to raise in them knowledge above common sense?

That difficulty, so formidable at first sight, vanishes as soon as we look at it more closely. To organise the judiciary faculty, or common sense, is, properly speaking, to discover the general processes by means of which the mind goes from the known to the unknown by a series of judgments, all of which, taken in isolation, are obviously intuitive and immediate, but which together gives a formula that we could not have obtained without that progression, a formula which, consequently, surpasses the ordinary scope of common sense.

Thus the entire system of our knowledge rests on common sense; but raises itself indefinitely above common sense, which, bound to the particular and the immediate, cannot embrace the general with its mere gaze, and needs, in order to achieve that, to divide it: like a man who, covering in a step only the width of a furrow, by repeating the same movement a number of times, circles the globe.¹

Agreement of reason and experience, organisation of common sense, discovery of the general processes by which judgment, always identical, raises itself to the most sublime contemplations: such is the vital work of humanity, that which has given rise to the most extensive, most complicated and most dramatic peripeteia which has been accomplished on the earth. There can be no science, religion, society which has taken so long and deployed so much power to establish itself: scarcely has this great labour, begun thirty centuries ago, been able to define itself. Twenty volumes would barely suffice to tell the story: I will, in a few pages, retrace the principle phases. This summary is indispensable to explain the appearance of property.

I

The organisation of common sense presupposes the solution of another problem, the problem of certainty, which is divided into correlative types, certainty of subject and certainty of object. In other words, before searching for the laws of thought, we have to be sure of the reality of the

¹ The *dialectic* is simply the *progress* of the mind from one idea to another, through a superior idea, a series.

being that thinks as well as that of the being that is thought, otherwise we run the risk of seeking the laws of nothing.

The first moment of this great polemic is therefore that in which the self proceeds to the recognition of itself, examines itself, so to speak, and seeks the point of departure of its judgments. Who am I, it wonders; or rather, am I something? am I sure that I am? This is the first question that common sense had to answer.

And it is that question which it has effectively responded by that much admired judgment: *I think, therefore I am.*

I think, that is enough. I need know no more to be certain of my existence, since all that I can learn in that regard is that no being is proven if I do not affirm it, and that consequently without me nothing exists. The self: that is the point of departure for common sense, and its response to the first question of philosophy.

So common sense, or rather unknown, impenetrable nature, which thinks and speaks, the self ultimately, is not proven; it is *posited*. Its first judgment is an act of belief in itself: the reality of thought is declared by it as a fact-principle, necessary, an AXIOM finally, outside of which there is no place for reasoning.

But, whether by lack of judgment, or by subtlety of ideas, certain thinkers found this affirmation of common sense already too bold. They wanted common sense to produce its titles. Who guarantees, they said, that we think, that we are? What is the authority of the inner sense? What is an affirmation whose whole value comes from its very spontaneity?...

Lengthy debates began on this subject. Common sense put an end to them by this celebrated judgment: Since doubt concerning doubt itself is absurd; that investigation which has as its object the legitimacy of investigation is contradictory; that such scepticism is anti-sceptical, and only refutes itself; that it is a fact that we think and that we desire to know; that there is no reason to dispute this fact which embraces the universe and the eternal; consequently, that the only thing that remains to do is to know where thought can lead: Pyrron and his sect will be recognised by philosophy for an absurdity which reassures the self on its existence; for the rest, their opinion being convicted, by its own words, of contradiction to common sense, it is excommunicated from common sense.

Despite the energy of these considerations, some believed it necessary to protest still, and appeal for a reconsideration. The true sceptics, they claimed, are not those who doubt the reality of their doubt, such scepticism is ridiculous; it is those who doubt the reality of the content of doubt, and even more so the means of verifying if that content is real: which is very different....

It is then as if you said, replied common sense, for example, that you do not doubt the existence of religions, since religion is a phenomenon of thought, an accident of the self, but only of the reality of the object of religions, and even more so the possibility of determining that object; – or else that you do not doubt the oscillation of value, since that oscillation is a phenomenon of general thought, an accident of the collective self, but [doubt] the very reality of values, and even more so their measure. But if, in relation to man, the reality of things is not distinguishable from the law of things, as, for example, the reality of values which is and can only be the law of values; and if the law of things is nothing without the self which determines and creates it, as you are forced to agree: your distinction of the reality of doubt and of the reality of the content of

doubt, as well as the *a fortiori* which comes as a result, is absurd. The universe and the self become, by thought, identical and sufficient: so, once again, our task is to discover if, in relation to itself, the self can be misled; if, in the exercise of its faculties, it is subject to perturbations; what are the cause of these perturbations; what is the common measure of our ideas; and above all, what is the value of this concept of the *non-self*, which grasps the self as soon as it enters into action, and from which it is impossible for the self to separate itself.

Thus, in the judgment of common sense, the metaphysical theory of certainty is analogous to the economic theory of value, or, to put it better, these two theories are only one; and the sceptics who, while admitting the reality of doubt, deny however the reality of the content of doubt, and consequently the possibility of determining this content, resemble the economists who, affirming the oscillations of value, reject the possibility of determining these oscillations, and consequently the very reality of value. We have dealt with this contradiction of the economists [in chapter II], and we will soon see that as value is determined in society by a series of oscillations between supply and demand, likewise truth is constituted in us by a series of fluctuations between the reason that affirms and the experience that confirms, and that from doubt itself certainty is formed bit by bit.

The certainty of the subject thus obtained and determined, it remains then, before proceeding to the investigation of the laws of knowledge, to determine the certainty of the object, the basis of all of our relations with the universe. That was the second conquest of common sense, the second moment of philosophical labour.

We cannot feel, love, reason, act, exist finally, as long as we remain enclosed in ourselves: it is necessary that the self develops its faculties, that it unfold its being, that it somehow emerges from its nullity; that, after being posed, it *opposes*, that is to say, that it puts itself into contact with something which is or which seems to it to be other than itself, in a word, with a *non-self*.

God, the infinite being, that a little later our reason, established on its double base, will suppose invincibly, God, I say, because his essence embraces all, does not need to come out of himself in order to live and to know himself. His being unfolds itself entirely in himself; his thought is introspective: in him the self cannot grasp the non-self as I do, because both are infinite, the infinite is necessarily unique, and in God, consequently, time is identical to eternity, movement identical to resting, action synonymous with will, love without another object, without another determining cause than itself. God is perfect egoism, absolute solitude, supreme concentration. In all respects, God, the inverse nature of man, exists by himself and without opposition, or rather he produces within himself the non-self instead of seeking it outside; although he sets himself apart he is always self; his life is based on nothing else; as soon as he knows himself, he lives, and everything exists, everything is proven for him: *Ego sum qui sum*², he says. God is truly the incomprehensible, the ineffable, and yet necessary being: while reason is loath to say it, it is nonetheless forced to say it.

It is otherwise for man, for the finite being. This exists neither by himself nor in himself; his individuality requires a surrounding environment in which his reason is reflected, his life is stimulated, and his soul, like his organs, draws its sustenance. Such at least is the manner in which we conceive the development of our being: this point is admitted by all those who do not persist in the contradiction of the pyrrhonians.

² I am who I am. (Editor)

It is therefore a question of recognising the meaning of this phenomenon and of determining the quality of this non-self, that consciousness presents to us as an external reality, necessary to our existence, but independent of our existence.

Now, say the sceptics, let us admit that the self cannot reasonably doubt that it exists: by what right would it affirm an external reality, a reality which is not itself, which remains impenetrable to it, and which it describes as non-self? Are the objects that we see outside of ourselves truly outside of us? And if they exist outside of us, are they as we see them? Does what our senses relate of the laws of nature come from nature, or else is it just a product of our thinking activity, which shows us outside of it what it projects from its own midst? Does experience add anything to reason, or is it only reason manifested to itself? What means, finally, to verify the reality or non-reality of this non-self?...

That singular question, which common sense alone would never had asked, presented by the most profound geniuses that have honoured our race, and developed with an eloquence, a sagacity, a variety of marvellous forms, has given rise to an infinity of systems and conjectures, which it is very difficult to understand in their voluminous authors, but of which we can get an idea, by reducing them to a few lines.

Some initially pretended that the non-self does not exist. It was natural, and it was to be expected it. A non-self which is opposed to the self is like a man who comes to trouble another in his possession: the first movement of that one is to deny such a proximity. There is no body, they said, no nature, no apparitions apart from the self, no other essence than the self. Everything happens in the mind; matter is an abstraction, and whatever we see and affirm as the holder of an unknown experience is purely the product of our activity, which, in determining itself, imagines itself receiving from outside what it is of its essence to create, or, to put it more accurately, to become, since, relative to the soul, to be, to produce and to become, are synonymous.

But, observes common sense, we distinguish, willingly or unwillingly, in understanding, two modes, *deduction* and *acquisition*. By the first, the mind indeed seems to create everything that it learns: such is mathematics. By the second, on the contrary, the mind, ceaselessly arrested in its scientific progress, no longer advances except with the aid of a perpetual excitation, the cause of which is entirely involuntary and outside of the sovereignty of the self. How then, in spiritualism, can we explain this phenomenon, which it is impossible to ignore? How, if all science comes from the self alone, is it not spontaneous, complete from the beginning, equal in all individuals, and in the same individual at every moment of existence? How then to explain error and progress? Instead of solving the problem, spiritualism dismissed it: it ignores the best established, the most indubitable facts, namely the experimental discoveries of the self; it tortures reason; it is forced, in order to sustain itself, to cast doubt on its own principle, by denying the negative testimony of the mind. Spiritualism is contradictory, inadmissible.

Others then presented themselves, who maintained that only matter exists, and that it is the mind that is an abstraction. Nothing is true, they said, nothing is real outside of nature; nothing exists but what we can see, touch, count, weigh, measure, transform; nothing exists but bodies and their infinite modifications. We are ourselves bodies, organised and living bodies; what we call soul, mind, consciousness, or self, is only an entity serving to represent the harmony of this organism. It is the object which by the movement inherent in matter generates the subject: thought is a modification of matter; intelligence, will, virtue, progress, are only determinations of a certain order, of the attributes of matter, the essence of which, moreover, is unknown to us.

But, replies common sense, *si satanas in seipsum divisus est, quomodo stabit?*³ The materialist hypothesis presents a double impossibility. If the self is nothing other than the result of the organisation of the non-self; if man is the high point, the leader of nature; if it is nature itself raised to its highest power, how does it have the faculty to contradict nature, to torment it and remake it? How to explain this reaction of nature on itself, a reaction which produces industry, the sciences, the arts, an entire world outside of nature, and which has for its sole end conquering nature? How to reduce, then, to material modifications that which, according to the testimony of our senses, to which alone the materialists give credence, is produced outside of the laws of matter?

Furthermore, if man is only matter organised, his thought is the reflection of nature: how then does matter, how does nature know itself so badly? From whence comes religion, philosophy, doubt? What! Matter is everything, mind nothing: and when this matter has reached its highest manifestation, its supreme evolution; when it made itself man, finally, it no longer knows itself; it loses the memory of itself; it wanders, and advances only with the aid of *experience*, as if it were not matter, that is to say experience itself! What, then, is this nature forgetful of itself, which needs to learn to know itself as soon as it attains the fullness of its being, which becomes intelligent only to ignore itself, and which loses its infallibility at the precise instant when it acquires reason?

Spiritualism, denying the facts, succumbed under its own powerlessness; the facts overwhelm materialism by their testimony: the more these systems work to establish themselves, they more they show their contradiction.

Then, with a devout air and a collected countenance, came the mystics. – Mind and matter, thought and extent, they said, both exist. But we do not know it by ourselves: it is God who, through his revelation, attests to us their reality. And since all things have been created by God, that all exist in God, it is again in God, the infinite mind, from which our intelligence proceeds, that our intelligence can see them. Thus is explained the passage from the self to the non-self, and the relations of mind and matter become intelligible.

For the first time it was a question of God: the attention of the listeners redoubled.

Doubtless, says common sense, the mind being able to put itself in communication only with the mind, it is clever to make us see in God, who is mind, the corporal things which are his works. Unfortunately, this system rests on a vicious circle and a begging of the question. On one hand, before believing in God, we need to believe in ourselves: now, we only sense ourselves, we are only assured of our existence, only insofar as an external reaction makes us feel it, that is to say, only insofar as we admit a non-self, which is precisely the question. As for revelation, it has been made, according to its partisans, by miracles, by signs whose instruments are taken from nature. Now, how can we judge the miracle and believe in revelation, if we are not assured beforehand of the existence of the world, of the constancy of its laws, of the reality of its phenomena?

Mysticism therefore has this importance, that after having recognised the necessity of the subject and of the object, it sought to explain both by their *origin*. But this origin, which would be God, according to the mystics, that is to say a third term, an intelligent term like the self, and real like the non-self, no one defined it, no one proved it, no one explained it; on the contrary, by

³ If Satan is divided against himself, how will he stand? (Editor)

separating it from the world and from man, it was rendered inaccessible to intelligence, hence untrue. Mysticism is a mystification.

That was where the controversy was. Theists and unbelievers, spiritualists and materialists, sceptics and mystics, being unable to agree, the world did not know what to believe. They looked at each other without saying anything when, with a grave air and a modest mind, without any bombast, a philosopher, the most wily and the most subtle that ever was, began to speak.

He began by recognising the reality of the self and of the non-self, as well as the existence of God: but he claimed that it is radically impossible for the self to ascertain, by way of reasoning or experience, what is outside of it, and yet it cannot help but admit. Yes, he said, bodies exist: the manner in which knowledge is formed in us proves it. But we do not know these bodies, this non-self, in themselves, and all that experience tells us in this regard, derives only from our own resources. It is the proper fruit of our mind, which, solicited by its external apperceptions, applies to things its own laws, its categories, and then imagines that this form which it gives to nature is the form of nature. Yes, again, we must believe in the existence of God, in a sovereign essence, which serves as a sanction to morality and a complement to our life. But this belief in the Supreme Being is also only a postulate of our reason, an entirely subjective hypothesis, imagined for the need of our ignorance, and to which nothing, except the necessity of our dialectic, bears witness.

At these words there arose a long murmur. Some resigned themselves to believe that they were condemned to never be demonstrated; others claimed that there are grounds to believe [that are] superior to reason; these rejected a belief that had for it only its spontaneity, and whose object could be reduced to a mere formality of reason; those openly accused the critical philosopher of inconsistency. Almost all relapsed, some into spiritualism, some into materialism, some into mysticism, each taking advantage of the confessions of this philosopher for the system that pleased him most. At last a man, with a magnanimous heart, with a passionate soul, managed to overcome the noise and to turn attention to himself.

This philosophy, he observed with bitterness, which claims to have found the key to our judgments, and lays claim to pure reason, totally lacks unity and shines only by its incoherence. What is this God, which nothing, they say, proves, and which nevertheless arrives just for the conclusion? What is this objectivity which has no other function than to excite thought, without furnishing it with materials? If the self, nature and God exist as we seem to believe, they are in direct and reciprocal relations, and in that case we can know them: what are these relations? If, on the contrary, these relations are null, or if they are purely subjective, as it is still claimed, how dare we affirm the reality of the non-self, and the existence of God?

The self is essentially active: it therefore has no need of any excitation. It possesses the principles of science, it has to know and create, it enjoys creative power, and what you call experience in it is a veritable ejaculation. Like the worker who, by experiencing a new idea, creates the actual object of his experience, and thus produces a value appropriate to his own thought: thus in the universe the self is the creator of the non-self; consequently, it carries its sanction in itself, and has no need of the testimony of nature, nor of an intervention by divinity. Nature is not a chimera, since it is the work which manifests the worker; the non-self, as real as the self, is the product and the expression of the self; and God is no more than the abstract relation which unites the self and the non-self in an identical phenomenality: everything makes sense, everything is linked and explained. Experience is written science, the thought of the subject manifested, and regained by the subject.

For the first time, philosophy had given itself a system. Until that moment it had only oscillated from one contradiction to the other, proceeding by negation and exclusion, that is to say suppressing what it could not reconcile. At the most, it had tried to affirm its different theses simultaneously, but without hoping, without being able to resolve them. This stage was passed: a new period of investigation was about to begin.

To the conclusions that we just heard, someone retorts, there would be nothing to say, and the system they summarise would be unassailable, if it were demonstrated, and it is that which is always in question, that man knows something, that there exists in him a single idea prior to experience. It would be conceivable then that what he learns, he only deduces; what he experiences, he remembers. But it is not true that the self has no idea by itself; it is not true that it can create science *a priori*; and I challenge the proponent to lay the foundation stone of his edifice.

Here, he added in an inspired voice, is what reason and experience have taught me. The relation which unites the self and the non-self is not at all, as has been said, a relation of filiation and causality; it is a relation of coexistence. The self and the non-self exist equal and inseparable, but irreducible, with regard to each other, if not in a higher principle, subject-object, which engenders them both, in a word, in the absolute. That absolute is God, the creator of the self and non-self, or as the Nicene Creed says, of all things visible and invisible. This God, this absolute, embraces in his essence man and nature, thought and extent [*étendue*]: for he alone has fullness of being, he is All. The laws of reason and the forms of nature are therefore identical: thought manifests itself only with the aid of a reality; and reciprocally no reality shows itself unless penetrated by intelligence. That is where this marvellous agreement of experience and reason come from, which has made you take in turn mind as a modification of nature, and nature as a modification of mind. The self and the non-self, humanity and nature, are equally extant and real; humanity and nature are contemporary in the absolute; the only thing that distinguishes them is that in humanity the absolute develops with consciousness, while in nature it develops without consciousness. Thus thought and matter are inseparable and irreducible: they manifest themselves, according to the being, in unequal proportions, each of the constitutive principles of the absolute showing itself in creatures successively in inferiority or in predominance. It is an infinite evolution, a perpetual emission of forms, essences, lives, wills, powers, virtues, etc.

For a moment this system seemed to get approval. The fusion of the self and the non-self in the absolute; this distinction and this inseparability concurrently of thought and being, which constitutes creation; the incessant emission of the mind, and the progression of beings on an endless scale, delighted everyone. This enthusiasm passed like lightning. A new dialectician suddenly arose: This system, he said, needs only one thing, proof. The self and the non-self are merged in the absolute: what is that absolute? what is its nature? what proof can we have of its existence, since it does not manifest itself, and that it is even impossible that in its capacity as absolute it could manifest itself?... Thought and being, it is added, identical in the absolute, are irreducible in creation, although inseparable and homologous: how do we know that? How does the identity of the laws not imply the identity of essences, the identity of realities, since it is recognised that the only thing real for us is the law? And what use is it to resort to a mystical and impenetrable absolute, that serves to reproduce that old chimera of God, in order to reconcile two terms which, by the avowed identity of their laws, are completely reconciled?... Nature and humanity are the development of the absolute: why does the absolute develop? By virtue of what principle and according to what law? Where is the science of that development? What is

your ontology, your logic? And then, if the same laws govern matter and thought, it suffices to study the one to know the other: science, whatever you say, is possible, according to you, *a priori*: why then do you deny science and give us only experience, which explains nothing by itself, since it is not science?

Well! he added, I charge myself, without resorting to the absolute, and holding myself to the identity of thought and being, to construct this science of development which escapes you, and that you have not been able to find, because you distinguish that which cannot be admitted as distinct, mind and matter, that is to say both sides of the IDEA.

And we saw this Titan of philosophy undertake to overthrow eternal dualism by dualism itself; to establish identity on contradiction; to draw being from nothingness, and, with the help of his logic alone, to explain, to prophesise, what can I say?, to create nature and man! No one before him had penetrated so deeply the innermost laws of being; none had illuminated with so lively a light the mysteries of reason. He succeeds in giving a formula which, if it is not all science, nor even all logic, is at least the key to science and logic. But it soon became clear that even its author could only have constructed that logic by constantly mixing in experience and using its materials; that all his formulas followed observation, but never preceded it. And since, according to the system of the identity of thought and being, there was nothing more to expect from philosophy, that the circle was closed, it was demonstrated once and for all that science without experience is impossible; that if the self and the non-self are correlative, necessary to each other, inconceivable without each other, they are not identical; that their identity, as well as their reduction in an elusive absolute, is only a view of our intelligence, a postulate of reason, useful in certain cases for reasoning, but without the slightest reality; finally that the theory of contraries, of an incomparable power in order to control our opinions, to discover our errors and to determine the essential character of truth, is not however, the sole form of nature, the only revelation of experience, and consequently the only law of the mind.

Beginning with the *cogito*⁴ of Descartes, we are thus brought back, by an uninterrupted series of systems, to the *cogito* of Hegel. The philosophical revolution is accomplished; a new movement will begin: it is for common sense to make its conclusions and render its verdict.

Now, what says common sense?

With regard to knowledge: Since the being is revealed to itself only in two indissolubly linked moments that we call, first, consciousness of self, second, revelation of the non-self; that each subsequent step accomplished in knowledge always involves these two moments together; that this dualism is perpetual and irreducible; that outside of it, there no longer exists either subject or object; that the reality of one links essentially to the presence of the other; that it is as absurd to isolate them as to undertake to reduce them, since, in both cases, it is to deny the whole truth and abolish science: we will conclude first that the character of science is invincibly this: Agreement of reason and experience.

With regard to certainty: Since, despite the duality of the origin of knowledge, the certainty of the object is at bottom the same as the certainty of the subject; that this has been put beyond doubt against the anti-sceptical Pyrrhonians; that in this respect there is a force of the *res judicata*;⁵ that experience is as much a determination of the self as an appreciation of the non-

⁴ I think. (Editor)

⁵ A matter on which a final judgement has been passed by a competent court and therefore may not be pursued further by the same parties, i.e., no longer subject to appeal. (Editor)

self: it is enough for the satisfaction of reason. What more can we wish for than to be as assured of the existence of bodies as we are of our own? And what is the use of searching whether the subject and the object are identical or only adequate; whether, in science, it is we who lend our ideas to nature, or if it is nature which gives us its own; whereas, by this distinction, it is always supposed that the self and the non-self can exist in isolation, which is not so; or that they are resolvable, which implies contradiction?

Finally, with regard to God: Since it is a law of our soul and of nature, or, to include these two ideas into one, of creation, let it be ordered according to a progression which goes from existence to consciousness, from spontaneity to reflection, from instinct to analysis, from infallibility to error, from genus to species, from eternity to time, from the infinite to the finite, from the ideal to the real, etc.; it follows, from a logical necessity, that the chain of beings, all invariably constituted, but in different proportions, in self and non-self, lies between two antithetical terms, the one, that the vulgar call creator, or God, and which unites all the characteristics of infinity, spontaneity, eternity, infallibility, etc.; the other, which is man, assembling all the opposed characteristics of an evolutionary existence, reflective, temporary, subject to perturbation and error, and whose foresight forms the principal attribute, as the absolute science, that is to say instinct at its highest power is the essential attribute of Divinity. But man is known to us both by reason and experience; God on the contrary is still only revealed to us as a postulate of reason: in short, man is, God is possible.

Such has been, on the works of philosophy, the second judgment of common sense; a judgment whose reasons are drawn from the materials furnished by philosophy itself, a judgment without appeal, and which clearly occurred the day when philosophy recognised that reason can do nothing without experience; that with regard to God, we lack nothing but the evidence of fact, the experimental demonstration; and when covering its face with its cloak, it said goodbye to the world, and pronounced on it *consummatum est*.⁶

Is it possible to deny dualism, that we see erupt everywhere in the world? – No.

Is it possible to deny the progression of beings? – No again.

Now, the law of this progression being known, and the last term given, it is a necessity of reason that there exists a first term, and that this first term be the antipode of the last. Thus the infinite being, the great All, *in quo vivimus, movemur et sumus*⁷, the supreme Genus, from which man tends incessantly to free himself and to which he opposes himself as its antagonist, this eternal Essence, finally, will not be the absolute of the philosophers: like man, its adversary; it would also exist only by its distinction into self and non-self, subject and object, soul and body, mind and matter, that is to say under two generic aspects, also in diametrical opposition. Moreover, the attributes, faculties and manifestations of God would be the inverse of the attributes, faculties and determinations of man, as logic, as well as the infinite, inevitably leads us to believe: henceforth, all that is lacking for the truth of the hypothesis is only its realisation, that is to say the proof of fact. But all this deduction is ineluctable in itself: and if it were possible that it could be demonstrated false by arguments, the primordial dualism would have disappeared, man would no longer be man, reason would no longer be reason, pyrrhonism would become wisdom, and the absurd would be truth.

⁶ It is finished. (Editor)

⁷ In which we live, move and have our being. (Editor)

Yet this is what makes humanitarian philosophy tremble. It is so poorly delivered from the absolute, as from all its pantheistic fantasies; it has felt so great a joy, in believing to have discovered that man is all at once God and the absolute; it is so exhausted, so breathless after so many systems, that it does not have the courage to draw, against God and against man, the conclusion of its own doctrines. It dares not admit, this somnambulant philosophy, that the means necessarily suppose the extremes; that the last summons a first, the finite an infinite, the species a genus: – that this infinite, as real as the finite that divides it; this supreme genus, which becomes a species in its turn by the contrast of the progressive creation which emanates from its heart; this God, finally, antagonist of man, cannot be the absolute; that this is precisely what makes it possible; that if it is possible, it is necessary to seek what fact it corresponds to, and that to deny it under the pretext of resolving it in man, is to misunderstand our militant nature, and to create above, below and all around man an incomprehensible void, which philosophy is required to fill, under pain of annihilating man and seeing its idol perish.

For me, I regret to say it, since I sense that such a declaration separates me from the most intelligent party of socialism, it is impossible for me, the more I think about it, to subscribe to this definition of our species, which is only, at bottom, an echo of religious terrors amongst the new atheists; which, in the name of rehabilitating *humanism* and consecrating mysticism, brings into science prejudice, into morality habit, into social economy communism, that is to say apathy and misery; in logic, the absolute, the absurd. It is impossible for me, I say, to welcome this new religion, in which they seek in vain to interest me by saying that I am its god. And it is because I am forced to repudiate, in the name of logic and experience, this religion, as well as all its predecessors, that I must still admit as plausible the hypothesis of an infinite, but not an absolute, being, in which freedom and intelligence, the self and the non-self, exist in a special form, inconceivable but necessary, and against which my destiny is to struggle, like Israel against Jehovah, until death.

II

The subject and object of science are found; the truth of thought and being is authentically established: the method remains to be discovered.

Philosophy, in its more or less revealing researches on the object and legitimacy of knowledge, has not been slow to discover that it was following, without knowing it, certain forms of dialectic which recurred unceasingly, and which, studied more closely, were soon recognised as being the natural means for the investigation of common sense. The history of the sciences and the arts offers nothing more interesting than the invention of these machines of thought, true instruments of all our knowledges, *scientiarum organa*⁸, of which we will limit ourselves to indicating the main ones here.

First of all is syllogism.

Syllogism is by its nature and by temperament spiritualist. It belongs to that moment of philosophical investigation when the mind dominates the affirmation of matter, when the intoxication of the self causes the non-self to be neglected, and refuses, so to speak, any access to experience. This is the preferred argument of theology, the organ of the *a priori*, the formula of authority.

⁸ Organs or tools of science. (Editor)

Syllogism is essentially hypothetical. A general proposition and a subsidiary proposition or a particular case being given, syllogism teaches to deduce in a rigorous manner the consequence, but without guaranteeing the extrinsic truth of that consequence, since, by itself, it does not guarantee the truth of the premises. Syllogism therefore offers utility only as a means of linking one proposition to another proposition, but without being able to demonstrate its truth: like arithmetic, it responds with accuracy and precision to that which is asked of it; it does not teach how to ask the question. Aristotle, who traced the rules of syllogism, was not taken in by that instrument, whose faults he indicated, as he had analysed its mechanism.

Thus syllogism, proceeding invariably by an *a priori*, by a prejudice, does not know from whence it comes: little acquainted with observation, it poses its principle far more than it explains it; it tends, in a word, less to discover science than to create it.

The second instrument of the dialectic is induction.

Induction is the opposite or the negation of syllogism, as materialism, the exclusive affirmation of the non-self, is the opposite or negation of spiritualism. Everyone knows this form of reasoning, extolled and recommended by Bacon, and which, according to him, should renew the sciences. It consists in going back from the particular to the general, the reverse of syllogism, which descends from the general to the particular. Now, as the particular can be classified, according to the infinite variety of its aspects, into an innumerable multitude of categories, and as the principle of induction is to assume nothing that has not been previously established, it follows that as when encountering syllogism, which does not know where it comes from, induction does not know where it is going: it stays on the ground, and cannot rise nor reach. Like syllogism, then, induction has only the power to demonstrate the already known truth: it is without the power to discover. This can be seen today in France, where the absence of what is called the philosophical mind, that is to say the lack of superior dialectical instruments, holds science stationary, at the very moment when observations accumulate with a frightening abundance and speed. It is therefore true to say that the progress accomplished since Bacon is not due, as is so often repeated, to induction, but to the sustained observation of the small number of general prejudices that ancient philosophy has bequeathed to us, and which observation has only confirmed, modified or destroyed. Now that it seems we have worn out our framework, induction halts, science no longer advances.

In short, induction giving all to empiricism, syllogism giving all to *a priori*, knowledge oscillates between two voids: while the facts multiply, philosophy is diverted, and all too often experience remains lost.

What is needed at this moment is therefore a new instrument which, combining the properties of syllogism and induction, beginning simultaneously from the general and the particular, pursuing reason and experience, imitating, in a word, the dualism which constitutes the universe and which brings all existence out of nothingness, would always, infallibly lead to a positive truth.

Such is antinomy.

That an idea, a fact, presents a contradictory relation, and develops its consequences in two opposed series, by this alone there is room to anticipate a new and synthetic idea. Such is the principle, universal and consequently infinitely varied, of the new organ, formed from the opposition and combination of syllogism and induction, an organ only glimpsed by the ancients,

no matter what is said: which Kant revealed, and which has been put to work with so much force and brilliance by the most profound of his successors, Hegel.

Antinomy knows from whence it came, where it is going, and what it carries: the conclusion that it furnishes is true without condition of prior or subsequent evidence, true in itself, by itself and for itself.

Antinomy is the pure expression of necessity, the intimate law of beings, the principle of the fluctuations of the mind, and consequently of its progress, the condition *sine qua non* of life in society, as in the individual. We have, in the course of this book, sufficiently conveyed the mechanism of this marvellous instrument: what remains to be said finds its place successively in the parts that we still have to deal with.

But if antinomy can neither mislead nor lie, it is not the whole truth; and, limited to that instrument, the organisation of common sense would be incomplete, in that it would leave to the arbitrariness of the imagination the organisation of the specific ideas determined by antinomy, that it would not explain the genus, the species, the progression, the evolutions, the system finally, that is to say precisely what constitutes science. Antinomy would have quarried a multitude of stones; but those stones would remain scattered: there would be no structure.

This is how the most superficial observation suffices to show the distribution by pairs of the organs of the human body; but whoever knows only this dichotomy, a true incarnation of the great law of contraries, would be far from having an idea of our organisation, so complicated and yet so one. Another example. The line is formed by the movement of a point which is opposed to itself; the plane rises from a movement analogous to the line, and the solid from a similar movement of the plane. Mathematics is full of these dualistic insights: dualism, utilised alone, is nonetheless sterile for the understanding of mathematics. Try to deduce, by dualism, the triangle from the idea of the line? Try to extract, from the antithetical concepts of *quantity*, *quality*, etc., the idea of the beam of seven colours, of the scale of seven tones?... Thus ideas, after having been determined individually by their contradictory relations, still need a law that groups them, represents them, systematises them: without which they would remain isolated, like the stars which the whim of the first astronomers may well have gathered into fantastic constellations, but which were nonetheless strangers to one another, until the more profound science of Newton and Herschel discovered the relations which coordinate them in the firmament.

Science, such as it can result from antinomy, is not enough for the understanding of man and of nature: a last dialectical instrument therefore becomes necessary. Now, this instrument, what can it be, except a law of progression, classification and series; a law which embraces in its generality, syllogism, induction, antinomy itself, and which is to that last like song is to harmony in music?...

This law, known in all times, as we can convince ourselves by rereading the first chapter of Genesis, where we can see God creating the animals and plants according to their genera and their species, has been above all highlighted by modern naturalists; it is sovereign in mathematics; philosophers, as well as artists, have proclaimed it as being the pure essence of the beautiful and the true. But no one, as far as I know, has given the theory of it: I will therefore

be forgiven to referring for this subject to another work, in which you will doubtless find that I showed more good goodwill than ability.⁹

Progression, series, association of ideas by natural groups, such is the last step of philosophy in the organisation of common sense. All the other dialectical instruments are reduced to that: syllogism and induction are only fragments detached from a higher series, and considered in various senses; antinomy is like the theory of the two poles of a small world, excluding the middle points and the internal movements. The series embraces all the possible forms of classification of ideas, it is unity and variety, the true expression of nature, consequently the supreme form of reason. Nothing becomes intelligible to the mind except that which can be related to a series, or distributed in a series; and every creature, every phenomenon, every principle which appears to us as isolated, remains unintelligible for us. Despite the testimony of the senses, despite the certainty of fact, reason rejects and denies it, until it has found its antecedents, consequences and corollaries, that is to say its series, its family.

To render all this more sensible, let us apply it to the very issue which is the subject of this chapter, PROPERTY.

Property is unintelligible outside the economic series, we have said in the summary of this section. This means that property is not understood and not explained, in a sufficient manner, neither by any moral, metaphysical, or psychological *a priori* (formula of syllogism); nor by legislative or historical *a posteriori* (formula of induction); nor even by the exposing of its contradictory nature, as I have done it in my Memoir on Property (formula of antinomy). It must be recognised in which order of manifestations, analogies, similarities or adequacies, property is ordered; it is necessary, in short, to find its series. For everything that isolates itself, everything that affirms itself only in itself, by itself and for itself, does not enjoys a sufficient existence, does not fulfil all the conditions of intelligibility and duration: there still needs to be existence within the whole, by the whole and for the whole; it is necessary, in short, for internal relations to combine with external relations.

What is property? Where does property come from? What does property want? This is the problem that interests philosophy to the highest degree; the logical problem par excellence, the problem of the solution on which man, society, the world depend. For the problem of property is, in another form, the problem of certainty; property is man; property is God; property is everything.

Now, the jurists respond to this formidable question by stuttering their *a priori*. Property is the right to use and abuse, a right that results from an act of will manifested by occupation and appropriation; it is clear they teach us absolutely nothing. For, admitting that appropriation is necessary to the realisation of man's destiny and the exercise of his industry, all that can be concluded from this is that, appropriation being necessary for all men, possession must be equal, hence always changing and mobile, susceptible to increase and decrease, notwithstanding the consent of the possessors, which is the very negation of property. In the system of the jurists, the *a priori* reasoners, property, to be in agreement with itself, should be like freedom, reciprocal and inalienable: so that any acquisition, that is to say any subsequent exercise of the right of appropriation would be at the same time, on the part of the acquirer, the

⁹ *Création de l'ordre dans l'humanité*, 1 vol. in-12. Paris, Prévôt, rue Bourbon-Villeneuve, 65 ; Guillaumiin, rue Richelieu, 14.

enjoyment of a natural right and, with regard to his fellows, an usurpation: which is contradictory, impossible.

While the economists, supported by their utilitarian inductions, come in their turn and tell us: The origin of property is labour. Property is the right to live by working, to dispose freely and sovereignly of your own savings, of your own capital, of the fruits of your own intelligence and your industry; their system is no more solid. If labour, effective and fruitful occupation, is the principle of property, how do we explain the property of those who do not work? How do we justify tenant farming? How do we deduce from this formation of property through labour the right to own without working? How can we conceive that from hard work for thirty years results eternal property? If labour is the source of property, this means that property is the reward for labour: now, what is the value of labour? What is the common measure of products, whose exchange leads to such monstrous inequalities in property? Will it be said that property should be limited to the duration of actual occupation, to the duration of the work? Then property ceases to be personal, inalienable and transferable: it is property no longer. Is it not obvious that if the jurists' theory is purely arbitrary, that of the economists is purely routine? Besides, it seemed so dangerous in its consequences, that it was abandoned almost as soon it was discovered. The jurists across the Rhine, amongst others, almost all returned to the system of first occupation; a thing barely believable in the land of dialectics.

What to say about the ramblings of the mystics, of those whom reason horrifies, and for whom the fact is always sufficiently explained, justified, simply because it exists? Property, they say, is a creation of social spontaneity, the effect of a law of Providence, before which we only have to humiliate ourselves as before all that comes from God. Oh! What could we find more respectable, more authentic, more necessary and more sacred than that which the human race spontaneously wanted, and which it has accomplished by a permission from on high?

Thus, religion comes in its turn to consecrate property. By this sign, it is possible to judge the lack of solidity of this principle. But society, otherwise known as Providence, could not consent to property except with a view to the general good: is it permissible, without breaching the respect due to Providence, to ask from where then come the exclusions?... That if the general good does not require the absolute equality of property, at least it implies a certain responsibility on the part of the proprietor; and when the poor begs for alms, it is the sovereign who claims his tithe. So how is it that the proprietor is a master of never being accountable, of not admitting anyone, whoever it is and no matter how little it is, in the distribution [*en partage*]?

From all these points of view property remains unintelligible; and those who have attacked it could be certain in advance that they would not be answered, as they could also count on their criticisms not having the least effect. Property indeed exists; but reason condemns it: how to reconcile herein the reality and the idea? How to put reason into fact? This is what remains to be done, and which no one seems to have clearly comprehended yet. However, as long as property is defended by such poor means, property will be in danger; and as long as a new and more powerful fact is not opposed to property, the attacks on property will only be insignificant protests, good for stirring up the poor and irritating the proprietors.

Finally, a critic came who, proceeding with the aid of a new argument, said:

Property, in fact and in right, is essentially contradictory and it is for this very reason that it is anything at all. In fact,

Property is the right of occupancy; and at the same time the right of exclusion.

Property is the reward of labour; and the negation of labour.

Property is the spontaneous product of society; and the dissolution of society.

Property is an institution of justice; and property IS THEFT.

From all this it follows that one day property transformed will be a positive idea, complete, social and true; a property that will abolish the former property, and will become equally effective and beneficent for everyone. And what proves this is once again that property is a contradiction.

From this moment property began to be known: its intimate nature was unveiled, its future foreseen. And yet, it could be said that the critique had only fulfilled half of its task, since, to definitely constitute property, to remove its characteristic of exclusion and give it its synthetic form, it was not sufficient to have analysed it in itself, it was still necessary to find the order of ideas of which it was only a particular moment, the series that surrounded it, and outside of which it was impossible either to comprehend, or to undermine property. Without this condition, property, maintaining the *status quo*, remained unassailable as a fact, unintelligible as an idea; and any reform undertaken against this *status quo* could only be, with regard to society, nothing but a retreat, if not perhaps a parricide.

Let us deign to reflect, indeed, that, at the moment we write property is still everything for our legislative science as for our economic habits; that outside of property, despite the efforts made by socialism in recent times, we conceive, we imagine nothing; that neither in jurisprudence, nor in commerce and industry do we discover a way out; that property destroyed, society falls into an endless disorganisation, and that, having learned to know property in its antinomic nature, we do not know any better how it will realise its definite formula, how from the current order will emerge a new order of which nothing in the world yet gives us an idea; let us think, I say, on all these things, and then let us ask how, by virtue of the antinomy alone, from the present organisation, which exhausts at once our experience and our reason, will we be able to determine a social form for which we equally lack ideas and facts?

It must be recognised: antinomy, by demonstrating what property *in itself* is, has said its last word, it cannot go further. Another logical construction is needed, the progression of which property is only one of the terms must be found, to construct the series outside of which property, appearing only as an isolated fact, a solitary idea, remains always inconceivable and sterile; but also in which property taking its place and, consequently, its true form, will become an essential part of a harmonic and true whole, and, losing its negative qualities, will assume the positive attributes of equality, mutuality, responsibility and order.

So, when we wanted to discover the role and the philosophical meaning of money, of this fact which appears to us isolated and without connections [*comparse*] in the books of the economists and which for this reason had hitherto remained unexplained, we looked for the chain which we assumed money was a detached ring; and by this simple hypothesis, we discovered without difficulty that money was the first of our products whose value was socially constituted and that, for this reason, served as a model for all the others. So again, when we needed to know the nature and develop a theory of taxation, this other isolated fact, an object of so much clamour in political economy, we only had to complete the great family of workers, by bringing in as a GENRE *unproductive* workers, that is to say those whose remuneration does not take place by exchange and whose labour is in decline, while the labour of the other workers is growing.

Likewise, to attain full understanding of property, to acquire the idea of the social order, we have to do two things: 1st determine the series of contradictions of which property is part; 2nd give, by a general equation, the positive formula of this series.

If our hopes are not mistaken, we will soon have accomplished the first part of this task. Property is one of the general facts that determine oscillations in value; it is integrant part of this long series of spontaneous institutions which begin with the *division of labour* and ends with *community*, to resolve itself in the constitution of all values. Even now we will be able to show in *System of economic contradictions*, as in a tapestry viewed in reverse, the inverted image of our future organisation; so that in order to finish our work and solve the second part of the problem, we will only have to make, so to speak, a turnaround.

In principle, therefore, every solitary being, that is to say, not divided or without connection [*comparse*], is in itself unintelligible: it is, like mind and matter, like all non-manifested essences, or, what amounts to the same, not serialised, a thing inaccessible to understanding, and which is resolved by the mind into sentiment, into mystery. This is why the infinite Being, which logic already compels us to believe, will always for man, even after observation has confirmed its existence, as if it were not. Nothing in it nor outside of it can put an end to concentration and solitude, not eternity, not ubiquity, not omnipotence, not infinite science, not creation, not the progressive humanity of which it is the principle and sustenance, but from which it essentially distinguished, such a being remains forever unknown; and all that reason commands us in this regard is negation, or, what amounts to be the same, faith.

Syllogism, induction, antinomy and series thus form the complete armament of intelligence: it is easy to see that no other dialectic instrument can be further discovered.

Syllogism develops the idea, so to speak, from the top downwards;

Induction reproduces it from the bottom up;

Antinomy seizes it head-on and across;

Series chases it and penetrates it in solidity and depth.

Since the field of knowledge has no other dimensions, there are no other methods. Henceforth we can say that logic is done, common sense organised: and as the organisation of labour is the inevitable corollary of the organisation of common sense, it is impossible that society will not arrive soon at its certain and definitive constitution.

§II – Causes of the establishment of property.

Property occupies the eighth place in the chain of economic contradictions; this is the first point that we have to establish.

It is proven that the origin of property cannot be brought back to first-occupation any more than to labour. The first of these opinions is only a vicious circle, in which the phenomenon is given as an explanation of the phenomenon; the second is eminently subversive of property, since with labour as a supreme condition, it is impossible for property to be established. As for the theory which traces property back to an act of the collective power, it has the defect of remaining silent on the motives of this will: yet it was these motives that it was precisely important to ascertain.

However, although all these theories, considered separately, always end in contradiction, it is certain that they each contain a fragment of the truth; and it can even be supposed that if, instead of isolating them, all three were studied together and synthetically, the real theory would be discovered there, I mean the reason for the existence of property.

Yes, then, property begins, or to put it better it manifests itself by a sovereign, effective occupation, which excludes every idea of participation and community; yes, again, this occupation, in its legitimate and authentic form, is nothing other than work: without that, how could society have consented to concede and to enforce property? Yes, finally, society has desired property, and all the laws of the world have been made only for it.

Property was established by occupation, that is to say by labour: it must be recalled often, not for the preservation of property, but for the instruction of the workers. Labour seated in power, it must produce, by the elevation of its laws, property; just as it has given rise to the separation of industries, then the hierarchy of workers, then competition, monopoly, police, etc. All these antinomies are in the same way successive positions of labour, mileposts planted by it on its eternal road, and destined to formulate, by their synthetic union, the true right of the people. But fact is not right: property, the natural product of occupation and labour, was a principle of anticipation and invasion; it therefore needed to be recognised and legitimised by society: these two elements, occupation by labour and legislative sanction, which the jurists have inappropriately separated in their commentaries, came together to constitute property. Now, for us it is a question of knowing the providential motives of this concession, what role it plays in the economic system: such will be the object of this section.

Let us prove first that in order to establish property, social consent was necessary.

As long as property is not recognised and legitimised by the State, it remains an extra-social fact; it is in the same position as the child, who is supposed to become a member of the family, the city and the church, only by the recognition of the father, the inscription in the civil registry, and the ceremony of baptism. In the absence of these formalities, the child is as the propagation of animals: it is a useless member, a base and servile soul, unworthy of consideration; it is a bastard. Thus social recognition was necessary to property, and all property implies a primitive community. Without this recognition, property remains simple occupation, and can be contested by the first comer.

“The right to a thing,” said Kant,¹⁰ “is the right of private use of a thing in respect to which I am in a community of possession (primitive or subsequent) with all other men: for this common possession is the only condition under which I can forbid any other possessor the private use of the thing; because without the assumption of this possession, it would be impossible to conceive how I, who is not currently possessor of the thing, can be wronged by those who possess it and who use it. – My individual or unilateral will [*arbitre*] cannot oblige others to forbid themselves the use of a thing, if they were not otherwise obliged to do so. It can therefore only be compelled by wills united in a common possession. If it were not so, we would be in the need of conceiving a right in a thing, as if it had an obligation towards me, and from which would be derived in the last analysis the right against any possessor of this thing: a truly absurd concept.”

Thus, according to Kant, the right of property, that is to say the legitimacy of occupation, proceeds from the consent of the State, which originally implies common possession. It cannot, said Kant, be otherwise. Therefore every time that the proprietor dares to oppose his right to the

¹⁰ *Principes métaphysiques du droit*, translation by Tissot.

State, the latter, reminding the proprietor of the convention, can always end the dispute with this ultimatum: Either recognise my sovereignty, and submit to what the public interest demands; or I will declare that your property has ceased to be placed under the safeguard of the laws, and I withdraw my protection from it.

It follows from this that in the mind of the legislator the institution of property, like those of credit, commerce and monopoly, has been made with an aim of equilibrium, which ranks property first amongst the elements of organisation, and indicates it as one of the general means of constituting values. “The right to a thing,” said Kant, “is the right of private use of a thing in respect to which I am in a community of possession with all other men.” By virtue of this principle, any man deprived of property therefore can and must appeal to the community, guardian of the rights of all; from which it follows, as has been said, that in the sight of Providence, conditions must be equal.

This is what Kant, as well as Reid, clearly understood and expressed in the following passage: “One now asks how far does the faculty to take possession of a resource [*fonds*] extend? – As far as the faculty to have it in its power, that is to say is as far the one who appropriates it can defend it. As if the resource said: if you cannot defend me, you cannot command me either.”

I am not sure however whether or not this passage should be understood as referring to possession prior to property. For, Kant adds, the acquisition is only *peremptory* in society; in the state of nature, it is only *provisory*. We could therefore conclude from this that, in the thought of Kant, acquisition, once it has become peremptory by social consent, can increase indefinitely under social protection: which cannot take place in the state of nature, where the individual alone defends his property.

In any case, it at least follows from the principle of Kant, that in the state of nature acquisition extends for each family to all that it can defend, that is to say all to what it can cultivate; or better, is equal to a fraction of the cultivatable area divided by the number of families: since, if acquisition exceeds this quotient, it immediately encounters more enemies than it has defenders. Now, as in the state of nature this acquisition, thus limited, is still only provisory, the State, by putting an end to the provision, has wanted to put an end to the reciprocal hostility of the acquirers, by rendering their acquisitions peremptory. Equality has thus been the secret thought, the crucial object of the legislator, in the constitution of property. In this system, the only reasonable, the only admissible, property is my neighbour’s which is the guarantee of my property. I no longer say with the praetor,¹¹ *possideo quia possideo*; I say with the philosopher, *possideo quia possides*.¹²

We will see later that equality by property is just as chimerical as equality by credit, monopoly, competition, or any other economic category; and that in this respect the providential genius, while gathering from property the most precious and the most unexpected fruits, was none the less deceived in its hope, and came up against the impossible. Property contains neither more nor less truth than all the moments which preceded it in the economic evolution; like them it contributes, in equal proportion, to the development of well-being and to the increase of misery; it is not the form of order, it must change and disappear with order. Like the systems of

¹¹ An elected magistrate in Ancient Rome responsible for administering justice. (Editor)

¹² “I own because I own” (*possideo quia possideo*) and “I own because you own” (*possideo quia possides*). (Editor)

the philosophers on certainty, after having enriched logic with their insights, are resolved and disappear in the conclusions of common sense.

But in the end the thought that presided over the establishment of property was good: we therefore have to seek what justifies this establishment, in what way property serves wealth, which are the positive and determinant reasons that have caused it.

Let us first recall the general character of the economic movement.

The first epoch aimed to inaugurate labour on the earth by the separation of industries, to put an end to the inhospitality of nature, to pull man from his original poverty, and to convert his inert faculties into positive and active faculties, which were for him so many instruments of happiness. As in the creation of the universe the infinite force was divided; so, to create society, the providential genius divided labour. By this division, equality begins to manifest itself, no longer as identity in plurality, but as equivalence in variety; the social organism is constituted in principle, the germ has received the vivifying impulse, the collective man comes into existence.

But the division of labour supposes generalised functions and fragmented functions [*fonctions parcellaires*]: hence inequality of conditions amongst workers, lowering some, raising others; and from the first epoch, industrial antagonism replaces primitive community.

All subsequent evolutions tend simultaneously, on the one hand to restore the equilibrium of faculties, on the other to always develop industry and well-being. We have seen how, on the contrary, the providential effort always leads to an equal and divergent progress of poverty and wealth, of inability and science. In the second epoch, the selfish and injurious division capital and wage-labour appears; in the third, the evil is aggravated by commercial war; in the fourth, it is concentrated and generalised by monopoly; in the fifth, it receives the consecration of the State. International commerce and credit come in their turn to give a new impetus to the antagonism. Later, the fiction of the productivity of capital becoming, by the power of opinion, almost a reality, a new peril threatens society, the negation of labour itself by the overflow of capital. It is in this moment, it is from this extreme situation, that property rises theoretically: and such is the transition that we must understand well.

Thus far, if we ignore the ulterior goal of economic evolution, and consider it only in itself, all that society does, it does alternately for and against monopoly. Monopoly has been the pivot around which the various economic elements move and circulate. However, despite the necessity of its existence, despite the countless efforts that it has made for its development, despite the authority of universal consent that admits it, monopoly is still only provisional; it is supposed, as Kant said, to last only as long as the holder knows how to exploit and defend it. This is why sometimes it ends automatically on death, as in permanent, but non-venal, positions; sometimes it is reduced to a limited time, as in patents; sometimes it is lost by non-exercise, which has given rise to the theories of prescription, as well as annual possession, still in use amongst Arabs. At other times, monopoly is revocable at the will of the sovereign, as in the permission to build on military land, etc. So monopoly is only a form without reality; monopoly pertains to man, it does not entail material: it is the exclusive privilege of producing and selling, it is not yet the alienation of the instruments of labour, the alienation of the land. Monopoly is a kind of tenancy that interests man only by consideration of profit. The monopolist holds to no industry, to no instrument of labour, to no residence: he is cosmopolitan and omnifunctional; it matters little to him, provided that he gains; his soul is not chained to a point on the horizon, to a particle of matter. His existence remains vague, as long as society, which has

conferred the monopoly on him as a means of fortune, does not make that monopoly a necessity of life for him.

Now, monopoly, so precarious by itself, exposed to all incursions, all the indignities of competition, tormented by the State, pressured by credit, not held in the heart of the monopolist; monopoly tends incessantly, under the action of speculation, to depersonalise [*dépersonnaliser*]; so that humanity, delivered constantly to the financial storm by the general disengagement of capital, is at risk of detaching itself from labour itself, and to retrogress in its march.

Indeed, what was monopoly before the establishment of credit, before the reign of the bank? A privilege of *gain*, not a right of *sovereignty*; a privilege on the product, much more than a privilege on the instrument. The monopolist remained a foreigner on the land that he inhabited, but which he did not really own; he may multiply his exploitations, enlarge his manufactures, join lands together: he was always a steward, rather than a master; he did not imprint his character on things; he did not make them in his image; he did not love them for themselves, but only for the values they were to make him; in a word, he did not want monopoly as an end, but as a means.

After the development of credit institutions, the condition of monopoly is even worse.

The producers, whom it is a question of associating, have become totally incapable of association; they have lost the taste and the spirit of labour: they are gamblers. To the fanaticism of competition, they join the furies of roulette. The bankocracy has changed their character and their ideas. Once they lived together as masters and employees, vassals and suzerains: now they know each other only as borrowers and usurers, winners and losers. Labour has disappeared at the breath of credit; real value vanishes before fictitious value, production before speculation. Land, capital, talent, labour even, if there is still labour to be found somewhere, serves as stakes. We no longer care about privileges, monopolies, public functions, industry; we no longer demand wealth by labour, we await a roll of the dice. Credit, the theory said, needs a fixed basis; and behold credit has put everything in motion. It rests, it added, only on mortgages, and it puts those mortgages at risk. It seeks guarantees; and despite the theory that wants to see guarantees only in realities, as the pledge of credit is always the man, since it is the man who make the pledge worth-while, and that without the man the pledge would be absolutely ineffective and null, it happens that the man no longer holds on to the realities, with the guarantee of the man the pledge disappears, and credit remains that which it had vainly boasted not to be, a fiction.

Credit, in a word, by means of releasing capital, has finished by releasing man himself from society and from nature. In this universal idealism, man no longer holds on to the soil; he is suspended in the air by an invisible power. The land is covered with people, some basking in opulence, others hideous from poverty, and it is possessed by no one. It has only masters who despise it, and serfs who hate it: for they do not cultivate it for themselves, but for a coupon-clipper who no one knows, who they will never see, who may perhaps cross over this land without looking at it, without suspecting that it is his. The holder of the land, that is the possessor of the rent registrations, resembles the seller of bric-a-brac: he has in his portfolio smallholdings, pastures, rich harvests, excellent vineyards; what does it matter to him! He is ready to give it all up for an increase of ten cents: in the evening he will dispose of his estates, as in the morning he had gained them, without love and without regret.

Thus, by the fiction of the productivity of capital, credit has arrived at the fiction of wealth; the earth is no longer the workshop of the human race, it is a bank; and if it were possible that this bank would not constantly make new victims, forced to demand from labour the income that they have lost in gambling, and by that to sustain the reality of capital; if it were possible that bankruptcy would not come to interrupt that infernal orgy from time to time, the value of the guarantee always decreasing while the fiction multiplies its paper, real wealth would become null, and registered wealth would grow to infinity.

But society cannot regress: it must therefore redeem monopoly on pain of perishing, to save human individuality ready to ruin itself in an ideal pleasure; it must, in a word, consolidate, entrench monopoly. Monopoly was, so to speak, a bachelor: I want, says society, that it marry. It was the courtier of the land, the exploiter of capital: I want it to become its lord and spouse. Monopoly stopped at the individual, henceforth it will extend over the race. By it humankind only had heroes and barons; in the future, it will have dynasties. Monopoly familised, man will be attached to his land, to his industry, as to his wife and to his children, and man and nature will be united with an eternal affection.

The condition that credit had given to society was indeed the most detestable that we could imagine, one where man could abuse the most and possess the least. Now, in the view of Providence, in the destinies of humanity and of the globe, it was appropriate that man should be animated by a spirit of conservation and love for the instrument of his works, an instrument represented in general by the land. For man it is not only a question of exploiting the land, it is of cultivating it, of improving, of loving it: now, how can this aim be fulfilled other than by changing monopoly into property, cohabitation into marriage, *propriumque dicabo*¹³, opposing to the fiction that exhausts and defiles, the reality which fortifies and ennobles?

The revolution which is being prepared in monopoly therefore has above all in view the monopoly of land: for it is on this example, it is on the model of property in land that all properties are constituted. Conditional, temporary and lifelong, appropriation will thus become perpetual, transmissible and absolute. And to better defend the inviolability of property, goods will in the future be distinguished as *moveable* and *immoveable*; and laws will be made to regulate the transmission, alienation and expropriation of both.

In summary: The *constitution of mortgage* by domain, that is to say by the most intimate union of man to the land; the *constitution of the family*, by the perpetuity and transmissibility of monopoly; finally the *constitution of rent*, as a principle of equality between fortunes: such are the motives which, in the collective reason, have determined the establishment of property.

1° Credit requires *real* guarantees, all the economists are in agreement on this point. Hence the necessity, to organise credit, of developing the mortgage.

But the real guarantee is null, if it is not at the same time *personal*, as I believe I have sufficiently explained. From that the necessity also, to develop credit, of changing monopoly into property. In the order of economic evolutions, property is born from credit, although it is its prior condition; as the mortgage follows the loan, although it is the prior condition of the loan. This is what M. Augier seems to me to have meant, when, in the unfortunately too brief conclusion of his book, he expresses himself in these terms:

¹³ And I will declare it my own. (Editor)

“There is no mortgage without *free property*; necessarily no real credit without property... The people working for credit [*en travail de crédit*] suffer various trials in the formation of their mortgage, and of the kind of revenue which must constitute its basis...”

In fact, until the moment when the privileged, by forming a loan, comes to burden his business, we can only see in him the boss of the workers under his orders, the manager of a company, who acts as much in the name of his collaborators as in his own, in their interest, as also for his fortune. Monopoly is pledged to his person with privilege on the interests of the capital and the profits, but without guarantee of perpetuity and transmissibility, and under the condition of always actually and personally taking part in the business. For him, the right *in the thing* does not exist in its fullness: the head of an establishment could not risk and jeopardise the equipment still tainted with a certain character of community, without being guilty, at least inwardly; and this because he still only enjoys a privilege of exploitation, there is no property. The monopolist finally was a kind of agent: the necessity of credit made him king.

Could it be, in fact, that in engaging the instruments of production, the privileged was negotiating only in the capacity of a foreman, a plenipotentiary of a small republic? Certainly not: such a condition, imposed on the borrower, would have been a reduction of his gains, since it subjected him to his subordinates; that would have been a dissolution of the social pact, a retrogradation in the second phase.

So by this alone that society, forced by credit, recognised the right of the monopolist to borrow on the mortgage of his monopoly without taking account of his companions in labour, it made him proprietor. Property is the postulate of credit, as credit had been the postulate of commerce, and monopoly the postulate of competition. In practice, all these things are inseparable and simultaneous; but in theory they are distinct and consecutive; and property is no more monopoly than the machine is the division of labour, although monopoly is almost always and almost necessarily accompanied by property, as division almost always and almost necessarily supposes the use of machines.

Grave consequences were to result from this new arrangement, for society as for the individual.

First, by changing an precarious title into a perpetual right, society had to count, and it has indeed counted, on the part of the proprietor, on a more serious and more moral attachment to his industry, on a more profound and better reasoned love of well-being, consequently, on a less fierce greed for gain, on deeper sentiments of humanity, on a poetry of the birth place, a cult of heritage, which, extending to the lowliest workers, would rally all generations and constitute THE HOMELAND. The homeland has its origin in property: so consistent communists, by destroying property, work with all their strength, just as the economists do by free trade, to destroy differences of races, languages and climates: they both want no more nationalities, no more homelands. This is how exclusive sects, despite their hostility and hatred, at bottom are always in agreement: the antagonism of opinions is only a comedy.

Therefore I say that by assuring monopoly to the proprietor in perpetuity, society was at the same time working for the security of the proletarian: by making capital the very substance of the owner, it promised itself that all those who worked with him and for him, he would regard, no longer as his companions, but as his children. Children! This is the name that in popular language the boss gives to those he commands; it was, in the primitive languages, the common name of each people: Children of Israel, children of Mesraïm, children of Assur. The proprietor,

administering like a good father of a family, thereby found himself administering for the good of all: private interest was confused with social interest. Quite frankly, society, by decreeing property, believed it was organising, ennobling the patriarchate. It was not until inheritance, which, modified by the faculty of sale and exchange, was a new guarantee of stability: such as hereditary monarchy, the highest expression of the right of property, excluding the struggles of election, internally raising a barrier to civil war, and personified the people externally.

From the side of the individual, the amelioration was no less marked.

Through property, man takes definite possession of his domain, and declares himself master of the land. As we have seen in the theory of certainty, from the depths of consciousness, the self leaps forth and embraces the world; and in that communion of man and nature, in that kind of alienation of itself, his personality, far from weakening, doubles in energy. No one is stronger in character, more provident, more persevering than the proprietor. Like love, which can be defined as an emission of the soul, which is increased by possession, and which, the more that it pours out, the more it abounds: so, property adds to the human being, elevates it in strength and dignity. Rich man, noble, baron, proprietor, lord or sire, all these names are synonyms. In property, as in love, to possess and to be possessed, the active and the passive, always express only the same thing; one is possible only by the other, and it is only by this reciprocity that man, hitherto bound by a unilateral obligation, now enchained by the synallagmatic contract which he has just made with nature, alone knows all that he is and what he is worth, and enjoys the fullness of existence. And such is the revolution that property works in the heart of man, that far from materialising his affections, it spiritualises them: it is then that he learns to distinguish naked property from usufruct; the eminent, transcendental domain from simple possession; and this distinction which monopoly could not achieve is one more step towards the emancipation of the species and towards association, which consists in the union of wills and the agreement of principles, much more than in a puny community of goods, which oppresses both the soul and the body.

The test of property has been made: it would be necessary to contradict the whole of history to deny it. We said, speaking of credit, that the French Revolution had been only an uprising for the agrarian law: now, what is the agrarian law at bottom, if not a conferring of property? By making the people proprietor, instead and in place of two castes that had become unworthy and powerless, the nation has given itself immense resources, which has permitted it in turn to meet the expenses of its victories and pay the costs of its setbacks. It is still property which today sustains the morale of our society, and places a barrier to the incessant dissolution of speculation. The merchant, the industrialist, even the capitalist, always have property in view: it is in property that all aspire to rest from the fatigues of competition and monopoly...

2° But it is above all in the family that the profound sense of property is discovered. Family and property advance side by side, supported by one another, each having significance and value only through the relationship that unites them.

With property, the role of woman begins. The household, this entirely ideal thing that we strive in vain to render ridiculous, the household is the kingdom of the woman, the monument of the family. Take away the household, take away this cornerstone of the home, centre of attraction of spouses, there will remain couples, [but] there are no more families. See, in the great cities, the working classes fall little by little, through the instability of the home, the futility of the household and the lack of property, into concubinage and drunkenness! Beings who possess nothing, who hold onto nothing and live from day to day, being unable to guarantee anything, also have no need to marry: better not to commit than to commit with nothing. The working

class is therefore doomed to infamy: this was what the right of the lord¹⁴ expressed in the Middle Ages, and amongst the Romans the prohibition of marriage to the proletarians.

Now, what is the household in relation to the surrounding society, if not all at once the rudiment and the fortress of property? The household is the first thing that the young girl dreams of: those who speak so much of attraction, and who want to abolish the household, should explain well this depravity of the instinct of the sex. For me, the more I think about it, the less I can account, outside of the family and the household, for the destiny of woman. Courtesan or housewife (housewife, I say, and not servant), I see no middle ground: what then is so humiliating about this alternative? In what way is the role of woman, charged with running the household, for all that is related to consumption and saving, inferior to that of man, whose proper function is the command of the workshop, that is, the government of production and exchange?

Man and woman are necessary to each other as the two constitutive principles of labour: marriage, in its indissoluble duality, is the incarnation of the economic dualism, which is expressed, as we know, by the general terms of consumption and production. It is with this in mind that the aptitudes of sexes have been regulated, labour for one, expenditure for the other; and woe to any union in which one of the two parties fails to do their duty! The happiness the spouses had promised each other will turn into pain and bitterness: let them blame themselves!...

If only women existed, they would live together like a flock of turtle doves; if there were only men, they would have no reason to raise themselves above monopoly and renounce speculation: one would see them all, masters or servants, seated at the gaming table or bent under the yoke. But mankind was created male and female: hence the necessity of the household and of property. Let the two sexes unite: immediately from this mystical union, the most astonishing of all human institutions, there is born, by an inconceivable prodigy, property, the division of the common heritage into individual sovereignties.

The household, then, is for every woman, in the economic order, the most desirable of goods; property, the workshop, labour on his own account are, along with a woman, what every man desires most. Love and marriage, labour and housekeeping, property and *domesticity*, which the reader, in favour of meaning, deigns here to supplement with the letter: all these terms are equivalents, all these ideas call for each other, and create for the future authors of the family a long prospect of happiness, as they reveal to the philosopher a whole system.

On all this, the human race is unanimous; less so, however, socialism, which alone, in the vagueness of its ideas, protests against the unanimity of the human race. Socialism wants to abolish the household, because it is too costly; the family, because it does harm to the homeland; property, because it is prejudicial to the State. Socialism wants to change the role of woman; from the queen that society has established her, it wants to make her a priestess of Kotys¹⁵. I will not enter into a direct discussion of socialist ideas in this regard. Socialism, on marriage as on association, has no ideas; and all its critique is resolved into a very explicit admission of ignorance, a type of argumentation without authority and without significance.

¹⁴ *Droit du seigneur* (right of the lord), also known as *jus primae noctis* (right of the first night), was a supposed legal right in medieval Europe, allowing feudal lords to have sexual relations with any female subject, particularly on her wedding night. (Editor)

¹⁵ Kotys, also called Korytto, was a Thracian goddess whose festival, the Koryttia was celebrated on hills with riotous proceedings and orgiastic rites, especially at night. (Editor)

Is it not obvious, in fact, that if the socialists believed it possible, with the aid of known means, to give ease and even luxury to each household, they would not rise up against the household? that if they could reconcile civic sentiments with domestic affections, they would not condemn the family? that if they had the secret to render wealth, not only common, which is nothing, but universal, which something else entirely, they would leave citizens to live individually as well as in common, and would not weary the public with their quarrels with the household? By the admission of the socialists, marriage, family, and property, are things which contribute powerfully to happiness: the only reproach that they have to make is that THEY DO NOT KNOW how to reconcile these things with the general good. Is this, I ask, a serious argument? As if they could conclude from their particular ignorance against the further development of human institutions! As if the aim of the legislator were not to realise for everyone, not to abolish, marriage, family, and property!

In order not to go into too much detail, I will content myself to dealing with the question under one of its principal aspects, inheritance. We will then generalise, *Ab uno disce omnes*¹⁶, as the poet says.

Inheritance is the hope of the household, the buttress of the family, the ultimate reason for property. Without inheritance, property is only a word; the role of woman becomes an enigma. What is the point, in the common workshop, of male workers and female workers? Why this distinction of sexes, which Plato, correcting nature, tried to make disappear in his republic? How can we explain this duplicity of the human being, the image of economic duality, real superfluity outside of the household and family?... Without inheritance, not only are there no longer husbands and wives, there are no more ancestors or descendants. What am I saying? There are not even relatives, since, despite the sublime metaphor of the citizen fraternity, it is clear that if everyone is my brother, I no longer have a brother. It is then that man, isolated in the midst of his companions, will feel the weight of his sad individuality, and that society, deprived of ligaments and viscera by the dissolution of families and the confusion of workshops, will crumble into dust like a shrivelled mummy...

But socialism has good cheer, it is not surprised by so little. M. Louis Blanc, semi-socialist, who wants the family without inheritance, as pure socialism wants humanity without the homeland and without the family, exclaims in his *Organisation of Labour*:

“The family comes from God; inheritance comes from men!”

This certainly does not prove that the family is better, nor inheritance worse. But everyone knows the style of M. Blanc. His perpetual appeals in favour of the Divinity are only a poetic superlative, as in the Hebrew language one calls fine wheaten bread the *bread of the gods*. This, moreover, is what M. Blanc clearly suggests:

“The family is like God, holy and immortal; inheritance is destined to follow the same path as societies that transform, and as men who die.”

Comparison, antithesis, well-turned phrase, elegance of tone, nothing is lacking, apart from the idea which, I am sorry for M. Blanc, is just contrary to common sense. It is because men die and societies are transformed that inheritance is necessary; it is because the family must never perish, that to the movement that incessantly carries away the generations it is necessary to oppose a principle of immortality which sustains them. What would become of the family if it

¹⁶ From one, learn all. That is, from one instance you may infer the whole. (Editor)

were unceasingly divided by death, if every morning it had to be reconstituted, because nothing would connect the father to the children? I see what offends you about inheritance: inheritance, according to you, is only good to maintain inequality. But inequality does not come from inheritance; it results from economic conflicts. Inheritance takes things as it finds them: create equality, and inheritance will render equality to you.

Saint-Simonism had seen the connection between inheritance and the family; it proscribed both. The progressive democracy, which dares not admit itself as being either socialist or communist, thought it was showing genius by separating inheritance from the family, the means from the end, and throwing itself into an eclecticism as puerile as that of the government that it mocks. It is curious to see M. Blanc flaunting such a beautiful discovery.

“The Saint-Simonians were told: without inheritance, no family. They replied: Well! Let us destroy the family and inheritance. The Saint-Simonians and their adversaries were equally mistaken in opposite senses. The truth is that the family is a *natural fact* which, in whatever hypothesis you choose, cannot be destroyed; while inheritance is a *social convention*, that the progress of society can make disappear.”

They are all mistaken together, those who see in the family and in the inheritance which protects it an obstacle to association, and who imagine that a social convention, as spontaneous, as universal as inheritance, is not a natural fact. The democrats, great speakers about divine things, great aficionados of the *Requiem*, do not seem to suspect that what comes from human consciousness is as natural as cohabitation and progeny; nature, for them, is matter. To believe them, humanity, by obeying the spontaneity of its inclinations, has deviated from nature; it must be brought back to it. And how so? By natural facts? No, the democrats do not pride themselves on being so consistent; but by CONVENTIONS! For what is more *conventional* than the system of mortmain, that the democrats speak of substituting for inheritance?

“Can we really explain the causes that have caused the question of the family and that of inheritance to be regarded as absolutely connected until now? That there is no doubt that in the present social order inheritance is inseparable from the family. And the reason for this is precisely in the vices of this social order that we fight. For, let a young man leave his family to enter the world; if he presents himself there without fortune and without any recommendation other than his merit, a thousand dangers await him: at every step he will find obstacles; his life will be worn out through a perpetual and terrible struggle, in which he may perhaps triumph, but in which he runs a great risk of succumbing. This is what paternal love is expected to foresee...”

Well! if paternal love ceases to provide for this, who will provide for him? It is, say the democrats, that invisible, intangible, immortal, all-powerful, all-good, all-wise being, which sees all, which does all, which responds for all; it is the STATE!

“Change the environment in which we live; make sure that every individual who presents himself to society to serve it is certain to find there the free use of his faculties and the means to enter into participation in the collective labour; paternal foresight is, in this case, replaced by social foresight. And this is what must be: for the child, the protection of the family; for the man, the protection of society.”

Yes, *change...*, *grant that...*, *replace* paternal foresight by social foresight! If I had not read you, I would have expected you to work. What a misfortune too that you cannot yet replace the labour of individuals by the labour of the State! What a calamity that the State cannot, in the place of

individuals, marry, have children, nourish and provide for them! But what am I saying? Are not free work and the production of children by couples *natural* things, and inheritance a thing of *convention*!

But how will you respond to this father who comes to tell you: When I make my will, I do not make it only for those whom I establish as my heirs, I also do it for myself. The act of my last will is a form by which I continue to enjoy my goods after I have ceased to live, a way of remaining in the society that I am leaving, a prolongation of my being amongst men. It is the bond of solidarity that unites me with my children, which renders between us common affections and obligations. You boast of your foresight, in exchange for which you ask of me my property. I count more on myself than on a proxy. You have too many cares to think of everything and in good time: besides, I do not know you. Who then are you, you who call yourself the State? Who has seen you? Where do you dwell? What guarantees are yours? Ah! You resemble the god of your priests, you promise the heavens, on the condition that you are given the earth. Show yourself then at last, show yourself once in your wisdom and your sovereign power!...

The abolition of inheritance proceeds, like all republican reveries, from that absurd ideology which consists in replacing everywhere the free action of man by the *force of initiative* of power, the real being by a being of reason, life and liberty by a chimera whose sad influence has been the cause of almost all social calamities.

“The abuse of these indirect successions [*successions collatérales*] is universally recognised”, continues M. Blanc; “these successions will be abolished, and the values which compose them declared communal properties.”

But, in order to abolish indirect successions, it is necessary to begin by abolishing property: without that I challenge you to touch family successions. Do you defend *fidéi-commis*, sunk funds, repurchase agreements, endowments? What! I would have the ability to leave my goods to everyone, namely the State, and I would not be able to give it to someone! I would be permitted to work, to save, to form capital, to acquire properties, to enjoy it exclusively from all others; and when it is a question of disposing of it, of increasing my well-being by establishing an adopted family in the place of a natural family that I do not have, I will be master of nothing! What then is the use of me being a proprietor? Are you a communist? Dare to say so; do not prevaricate; do not tire us any longer with your fictions of divinity, republic, and government, great words which are only chevilles in your poetic prose, and bait for imbeciles.

“The poor man today who has nothing to leave to his children, does that poor man have a family? If he has one, the family, in the impure environment in which we find ourselves, can then exist up to a certain point without inheritance. If he does not have one, justify your institutions. And hasten...; the family cannot be a privilege...”

Declamation! *Inheritance* exists in the family of the poor as in that of the rich: this sacred and inalienable right, the proletarian has absolutely conquered in our great revolution, and has opposed it as an insurmountable barrier to the depredations of the nobility. As the plebeian of Rome once freed himself from the tyranny of the patrician by obtaining *jus connubii*, the right of the family, reserved for a long time to the nobles alone. What the poor lacks is no longer heredity, it is an *inheritance*. Instead of abolishing inheritance, think rather of putting an end to *escheat*. For, it is you yourself who said it: The family cannot be a privilege. And that is why the right of the family is universal, not common; that heredity is necessary for it, and consequently inheritance. To proscribe heredity because it is not yet effective for everyone is to reason in a

materialist and counter-revolutionary manner; it is as if we condemned France to only eat potatoes and drink water, out of compassion for unfortunate Ireland.

“Take the family as far as inheritance: soon you will see an abyss open up between the social and the domestic interest...”

But, once again, where does this antagonism come from? Is it from heredity in itself, or from the inequality of inheritances? – With heredity, you say, inheritance cannot last long, let alone become a reality for everyone. – Who told you that? How do you know if heredity, like property, monopoly and competition, could not be turned by labour against capital, after having served capital against labour for so long? But you have so little understanding of economic contradictions that the idea would not occur to you to make them produce, by waging one against the other, results opposed to those that they give today: far from it, all your ideology tends only to erase them. To erase the principles of society from social science, to remove the civilising organs from civilisation, such is your philosophy! The democrats will not look at it so closely; the socialists will be delighted with the concessions that you have made to them; the patriotic press will celebrate your eloquence, and all will be for the best in the wisest of all possible democracies.

The lukewarm socialists attack the right of succession, because they do not know how to make of it a means to conserve equality; the Fourierists and Saint-Simonians attack the family, because their systems are incompatible with private industry, domestic life and free exchange; the communists attack property, because they do not know how property will cease to be abusive through the mutuality of services. Confession of ignorance! it is the argument of all these so-called reformist sects, an argument which carries its own refutation, and is alone enough to disgust us with the humanitarian preaching.

3° Credit guaranteed, the family constituted, the right of succession accorded to all, it remains then to distribute property, so that each could, in his turn, become head of the family, and that no one would be deprived of inheritance. But how shall we share the land? how to define the lots? how to maintain the equality of inheritances? Will the land suffice for so many patrimonies? Or will it be reserved for the cultivator, and the worker in industry [*industriel*], the unproductive, the merchant, etc., will be excluded from property! How will the transformations, compensations, liquidations be made? How will labour be regulated? How will the fruits be shared, etc.? As we can see, all economic questions are reproduced in property.

And it is to all these questions, so frightening in their number, their depth, their difficulties, their immense details, that society responds with this single word, *rent*.

In order to leave no doubt in the mind of the reader, I will proceed for rent as I have in the first volume for taxation. I will show that the organic idea contained in the constitution of rent, develops in three consecutive moments, the last of which, necessarily linked to the two others, is resolved in an operation of levelling.

And first of all, what is rent?

Rent, as we said in Chapter VI, has the greatest affinity with interest. However, it differs from it essentially, in that interest affects only the capital born of labour and accumulated by saving, while rent pertains to land, universal material of labour, primordial *substratum* of all value.

The characteristic of capital to render only sufficient interest for a time to reconstitute it with profit; the decreasing progression of interest, apart from any theoretical demonstration,

sufficiently attests this. Thus, when capital is scarce, when mortgages are without value and without guarantee, interest is perpetual, and sometimes bears an exorbitant rate. As capital abounds, interest diminishes; but as it can never disappear, as it cannot be that the loan for money becomes a simple exchange in which all the risks would be for the capitalists and the profits for the borrower, interest, having reached a certain rate, ceases to decrease and is transformed. From the perpetual income that it was, it becomes repayment with premium and by annuities, and it is then that interest returns to the role assigned to it by theory.

If therefore the capital or the object lent is consumed or perishes by the use that is made of it, as happens with wheat, wine, money, etc., the interest will end with the last annuity; if on the contrary the capital does not perish, the interest will be perpetual.

Rent is the interest paid for a capital that never perishes, namely, the earth. And as this capital is not susceptible to any increase as to the material, but only to an indefinite improvement as to the use, it happens that, while the interest or profit from the loan (*mutuum*) tends to diminish constantly with the abundance of capital, rent tends to increase always with the perfection of industry, from which results improvements in the use of land. From which it follows, in the last analysis, that interest is measured by the importance of the capital, while, relative to land, property is assessed by rent.

Such is, in its essence, rent: it is a question of studying it in its destination and its motives.

At the point of departure of the institution, rent is the fee for property: it is the emolument paid to the proprietor for the management which his new right confers on him. I will not return to what I said in the first number of this section, concerning the necessity in which society found itself, in the interest of labour and credit, of changing the condition of the privileged. I will merely recall that in the seventh epoch of the economic evolution, fiction having made reality vanish, human activity in danger of losing itself in the void, it had become necessary to reconnect man more strongly to nature: now, rent has been the price of this new contract. Without it, property would be only a nominal title, a purely honorific distinction: now, the sovereign reason which leads civilisation makes no use of this spirit of self-esteem; it pays, acquits its promises, not with words, but with reality. In the predictions of destiny, the proprietor fulfils the most important function of the social organism: he is a centre of action around which gravitate, gather and shelter those whom he calls upon to give value to his property, and who, from insolent and jealous wage-workers, must become his children.

For the rest, it must be said, even if it displeases us, that there are generally grand illusions about the happiness and the security of rentiers, compared to the well-being enjoyed by the working classes. The worker on 30 sous per day, who sees pass by the carriage of the rich proprietor with a 100,000 pounds of rent, cannot help but believe that such a man is a hundred times happier than he. We see in rent only a means of living without work and of obtaining all the pleasures, and we applaud the morality of the great who make it a kind of social duty to spend all their income. Hence, in the man of the people, a principle of jealousy and hatred as unjust as it is immoral, and an active cause of depravity and discouragement.

However, for those who look at things from on high and in their inflexible truth, the rentier, in a society on the way to organisation, is nothing other than the guardian of social economies, the curator of the capital formed by rent. According to the theory that all labour must leave after it a surplus, destined, in part to increase the well-being of the producer, in part to enhance the productive funds, capital can be defined as an extension by labour of the domain that nature

has given us. Exploitable land is contained within narrow limits; the entire globe already appears to us as only a cage in which we are held, without knowing why; a certain quantity of provisions and materials are given to us, by means of which we can improve, extend, heat and clean our cramped habitation. Every formation of capital is therefore equivalent for us to the conquest of land; now, the proprietor, as leader of the expedition, is the first to profit from the adventure. As a result, and despite the immense losses of capital which occur through the improvidence, cowardice or debauchery of the owners, this is how things happen in society: the great majority of rents are employed in new operations. France is going to spend two billion on canals and railroads: it is as if it added to its territory half of a department. Where does this marvellous extension come from? From collective savings, from rent.

It serves nothing to cite a few examples of the colossal fortunes whose revenues are consumed unproductively by owners, and which moreover vanish before the mass of average fortunes: these examples, the scandal of which disgusts labour and makes the destitute murmur, but whose punishment is rarely long in coming, confirm the theory. The proprietor who, ignoring his mission, lives only to destroy without taking any part in the management of his assets, does not take long to repent his indolence; as he puts nothing into savings, he soon borrows, he gets into debt, he loses the property, and falls in his turn into poverty. Providence outraged avenges itself in the end in a cruel manner. I have seen fortunes made and others lost: and I have always observed that it is almost as difficult a work to preserve property as to acquire it; that this preservation involves abstinence and economy, and that in the end the lot of the proprietor, good administrator and wise steward, is hardly above that of the worker who, with equal income, combines the same spirit of foresight and order. Complete consumption of the rent, and conservation of property are mutually exclusive things: in order to conserve, the proprietor is forced to save, to capitalise and to extend himself, that is to say, to always furnish more space and latitude to labour, in other words, to return to it in capital what it receives in products. In the projections of the legislator, the proprietor is no more worthy of envy than of pity; and the man who knows how to make himself useful, who understands that labour is an integral part of our well-being and that all abusive and disorderly consumption brings in its wake pain and remorse, who sees property, passing from hand to hand, fulfil its law without regard for the proprietor whom it kills as soon as he is unfaithful to it; this man, I say, if he considers in himself only the consumer and aspires only to justice, neither denies nor regrets property.

It was the misuse of rent which, much more than the barbarians, ruined Roman society and depopulated Italy. It was this abuse which prepared the way for the dispossession of the nobility in the Middle Ages, of which credit was subsequently the instrument. It is still the same lack of understanding of property which works so much ruin every day, and incessantly conveys property from one to the other. Thus, from the first moment of its evolution, the theory of rent acquired an unescapable mathematical certainty: the law is imperious, woe to those who cannot recognise it! Rent, like inheritance, is founded in reason and in right: it is not a privilege that we must think of destroying, it is a function that it is a question of rendering universal. The abuses of consumption that it is reproached for, and of which it is only the means, cannot be attributed to it: they come from the free will of man, and fall under the blame of the moralist; social economy has no business dealing with them. The disorder here accuses man: the institution is irreproachable.

We are touching upon the second aspect of the question.

If rent is the fee for property, it is an exaction on cultivation; for, by conferring a remuneration without labour, it deviates from all the principles of social economy on production, distribution

and exchange. The origin of rent, as that of property, is, so to speak, extra-economic: it resides in considerations of psychology and morality, which are only very distantly related to the production of wealth, which even overturn the theory of wealth; it is a bridge built to another world in favour of the proprietor, and over which the settler is forbidden to follow. The proprietor is a demi-god; the settler is always only a man.

It is there, it is in this logical opposition, as we shall demonstrate later, that lies the true abuse, the contradiction inherent in property. But, as we have learned, that contradiction is the announcement of a forthcoming conciliation; and it is this that we are going to prove by anticipating a period or two in history, and making immediately known the subsequent purpose of rent.

Since, in the adjudication made to the proprietor by society of a perpetual income, the interest of the master is opposed to that of the tenant, just as value in exchange is in the opposite direction to use value, it follows that the rent to be paid to the proprietor is established by a series of oscillations, which must all resolve themselves into a formula of equilibrium. What is it then, from the higher point of view of the institution, that the tenant owes to the proprietor? What should be the proportion of the rent? For it already appears that the problem of rent is still, in a new form, only the problem of value.

The theory of Ricardo answers this question.

At the beginning of society, when man, new upon the earth, had before him only the immensity of the forests, when land was ample, and industry was just being born, rent was necessarily null. The land, not yet shaped by labour, was an object of utility; it was not a value for exchange. It was common, not social. Little by little, the multiplication of families and the progress of agriculture made the price of the land felt. Labour came to give the soil its value: from this was born rent. The more produce a field could yield with the same quantity of services, the more it was valued: also the tendency of the proprietors was always to allocate to themselves the totality of the products of the soil, less the wage of the tenant farmer, which is to say, less the costs of production.

Thus property follows labour to take from it everything in the product that exceeds the real costs. The proprietor fulfilling a mystical duty and representing the community vis-à-vis the settler, the tenant is no longer, in the expectations of Providence, anything but a responsible worker, who must give an account to society of all that he collects in addition to his legitimate wages; and the systems of tenant farming and sharecropping, livestock leases, emphyteutic leases, etc., are the oscillating forms of the contract which is then made, in the name of society, between the proprietor and the tenant farmer. Rent, like all values, is subject to supply and demand; but, also like all values, rent has its exact measure, which is expressed to the profit of the proprietor and to the detriment of the worker, by the totality of the product, after the deduction of the costs of production.

By essence and destination, rent is therefore an instrument of distributive justice, one of the thousand means that the economic genius implements to achieve equality. It is an immense land register executed contradictorily by the proprietors and tenant farmers, without possible collusion, in a higher interest, and whose definitive result must be to equalise the possession of the land between the workers of the soil and the workers in industry [*industriels*]. Rent, in short, is that much-desired agrarian law, which must render all workers, all men, equal possessors of the land and its fruits. It took nothing less than this magic of property to wrest from the settler

the surplus product that he cannot help but regard as his own, and of which he believes himself exclusively the author. Rent, or to put it better, property, has broken agricultural selfishness and created a solidarity that no power, no division of the land could have brought into being. Through property, equality between all men becomes definitely possible; rent operating between individuals like custom-duties between nations, all the causes, all the pretexts for inequality disappear, and society only awaits the lever which must give the impetus to this movement. How will the mythological proprietor be succeeded by the authentic proprietor? How, by destroying property, will all men become proprietors? Such is now the question to be resolved, but that question is insoluble without rent.

For the social genius does not proceed in the manner of ideologues and by sterile abstractions; it is not concerned with dynastic interests, nor with reason of State, nor with electoral rights, nor with representative theories, nor with humanitarian or patriotic sentiments. It always personifies or achieves its ideas: its system develops in a series of incarnations and facts, and to constitute society, it always addresses itself to the individual. After the grand epoch of credit, it was necessary to reconnect man to the land: the social genius institutes property. It was then a question of carrying out the land register of the globe: instead of publishing to the sound of trumpets a collective project, it sets individual interests into conflict, and from the war of the settler and the rentier results for society the most impartial arbitration. At present, the moral effect of property obtained, it remains to make the distribution of rent. Beware of convening primary assemblies, of calling your orators and tribunes, of strengthening your police, and, by this dictatorial apparatus, of frightening the world. A simple mutuality of exchange, aided by a few banking combinations, will suffice... For the greatest effects the simplest means: it is the supreme law of society and of nature.

Property is monopoly raised to its second power; it is, like monopoly, a spontaneous, necessary, universal fact. But property is favoured by opinion, while monopoly is regarded with contempt: we can judge, by this new example, that as society is established by struggle, so science only advances when pushed by controversy. It is thus that competition has been by turns exalted and scorned; that taxation, recognised as necessary by the economists, nonetheless displeases the economists; that lending at interest has been successively condemned and applauded; that the balance of trade, machines, the division of labour, have excited by turns public admiration and damnation. Property is sacred, monopoly is condemned: when will we see the end of our prejudices and our inconsistencies?

§III – How property is corrupted.

By property, society has realised a useful, laudable, and even inevitable thought: I am going to prove that in obeying an invincible necessity, it has cast itself into an impossible hypothesis. I believe that I have not forgotten or diminished any of the motives that presided over the establishment of property; I even dare say that I have given these motives a unity and an obviousness hitherto unknown. Let the reader supply, moreover, what I may have inadvertently omitted: I accept in advance all his arguments, and do not propose to contradict him. But let him then tell me, with this hand upon his conscience, what he finds to reply to the cross-proof that I am going to make.

Without doubt the collective reason, obeying the order of destiny which prescribed it, by a series of providential institutions, to consolidate monopoly, has done its duty: its conduct is irreproachable, and I do not accuse it. It is the triumph of humanity to know how to recognise what is inevitable in it, as the greatest effort of its virtue is to know how to submit to it. If then the

collective reason, in instituting property, has followed its orders, it does not deserve blame: its responsibility is covered.

But this property, which society, forced and constrained, if I dare say so, has brought to light, who guarantees that it will last? It is not society, which conceived it from on high, and has not been able to add, subtract, or modify anything. In conferring it on man, it has left property with its qualities and its defects; it has taken no precautions either against its constitutive vices or against the superior forces which could destroy it. If property in itself is corruptible, society knows nothing of it, it can do nothing about it. If this property is exposed to the attacks of a more powerful principle, society cannot do more. How, indeed, could society remedy the inherent defect of property, since property is the daughter of destiny? and how could it protect it against a higher idea, when it itself subsists only through property, does not conceive anything above property?

Here then is the proprietary theory.

Property is a providential necessity; the collective reason has received it from God and given it to man. But if now property is corruptible by its nature, or assailable by force majeure, society is irresponsible; and whoever, armed with this force, presents himself to combat property, society owes him submission and obedience.

It is therefore a question of knowing, first, whether property is in itself a corruptible thing and which gives rise to destruction; second, whether there exists somewhere in the economic arsenal an instrument which can vanquish it.

I will deal with the first question in this section; we will later seek to discover what the enemy is which threatens to engulf property.

Property is the right to *use* and *abuse*, in a word, DESPOTISM. Not that the despot is presumed ever to have the intention of destroying the thing: this is not what is meant by the right to use and abuse. Destruction for destruction's sake is not prejudged on the part of the proprietor; it is always assumed, whatever use he makes of his asset, that there is a motive of convenience and utility for him. By abuse, the legislator meant that the proprietor has the right to be mistaken in the use of his goods, without ever being able to be held responsible for this poor use, without being responsible to anyone for his error. The proprietor is always supposed to act in his own best interest; and it is in order to allow him more freedom in the pursuit of this interest that society has conferred upon him the right of use and abuse of his monopoly. Up to this point, then, the domain of property is irreproachable.

But let us recall that this domain has not been conceded solely in respect for the individual: there are, in the exposition of the motives for the concession, entirely social considerations; the contract is synallagmatic between society and man. This is so true, so admitted even by the proprietors, that whenever someone comes to attack their privilege, it is in the name and only in the name of society that they defend it.

Now, does proprietary despotism give satisfaction to society? For if it were otherwise, reciprocity being illusory, the pact would be null, and sooner or later either property or society would perish. I therefore repeat my question. Does proprietary despotism fulfil its obligation toward society? does proprietary despotism act as a good father? Is it, in its essence, just, social, humane? That is the question.

And this is what I answer without fear of denial:

If it is indubitable, from the point of view of individual freedom, that the concession of property has been necessary; from the juridical point of view, the concession of property is radically null, because it implies on the part of the concessionaire certain obligations which it is optional for him to fulfil or not fulfil. Now, by virtue of the principle that every convention founded on the fulfilment of a non-obligatory condition is not binding, the tacit contract of property, concluded between the privileged and the State, for the purposes that we have previously established, is clearly illusory; it is annulled by the non-reciprocity, by the injury of one of the parties. And since, as regards property, the fulfilment of the obligation cannot be enforced without the concession itself being thereby revoked, it follows that there is a contradiction in the definition and incoherence in the pact. Let the contracting parties, after this, persist in maintaining their treaty, the force of things takes care to prove to them that they are doing useless work: despite what they have, the inevitability of their antagonism brings discord between them.

All economists indicate the disadvantages for agricultural production of the fragmentation of territory. In agreement on this with the socialists, they would see with joy a general exploitation which, operating on a large scale, applying powerful processes of technique and making important economies on the material, would double, perhaps quadruple the product. But the proprietor says, *Veto*, I do not want it. And as he is within his rights, [as] no one in the world knows the means of changing this right other than by expropriation, and [as] that expropriation is nothingness, the legislator, the economist, the proletarian recoil with fear before the unknown, and are content to expect nowhere near the harvests promised. The proprietor is, by nature, envious of the public good: he could purge himself of this vice only by losing property.

Property therefore becomes an obstacle to work and wealth, an obstacle to the social economy: there is now scarcely anyone left but economists and the men of the law who are surprised by this. I am trying to find a way to make it enter into their minds in one go, without wasting words...

Is it not true that we are poor, each having only fifty-six and a half centimes to spend each day?
– Yes, is the response of M. Chevalier.

Is it not true that a better agricultural system will save nine-tenths on the costs of material, and will yield four times the product? – Yes, is the response of M. Arthur Young.

Is not true that there are in France six million landowners, eleven million land assessments, and one hundred twenty-three million plots of land? – Yes, is the response of M. Dunoyer.

So there are close to six million landowners, eleven million land assessments, and a hundred twenty-three million plots of land, but order does not reign in agriculture, and instead of 56 and a half centimes per head per day, we would have 2 fr. 25 c., which would make us all wealthy.

And why these hundred and forty million oppositions to public wealth? Because co-operation in labour would destroy the spell of property; because apart from property our eye has seen nothing, our ear has heard nothing, our heart has understood nothing; because, in the end, we are proprietors.

Let us suppose that the proprietor, by a chivalrous liberality, yields to the invitation of science, allows labour to improve and multiply his products. An immense benefit will result from this for the day-labourers and country-folk, whose fatigues, reduced by half, will still find themselves paid double by the lowering of the price of foodstuffs. But the proprietor: I would be pretty foolish, he says, to abandon a profit so clear! Instead of a hundred days of work, I will pay only fifty: it is not the proletarian who will profit, it is me. – But then, you observe, the proletarian will

be even more unhappy than before, since he will be unemployed once more. – That is none of my business, replies the proprietor. I am exercising my right. Let others buy property, if they can, or go elsewhere to seek their fortune, even if are thousands and millions!

Every proprietor nourishes, deep in his heart, this homicidal thought. And as by competition, monopoly and credit, the invasion always spreads, the workers find themselves incessantly eliminated from the soil: property is the depopulation of the earth.

Thus then the rent of the proprietor, combined with the progress of industry, changes into an abyss the pit dug beneath the feet of the worker by monopoly; the evil is aggravated by privilege. The rent of the proprietor is no longer the patrimony of the poor, I mean that portion of the agricultural product which remains after the costs of cultivation have been paid, and which should always serve as a new material for exploitation by labour, according to that beautiful theory which shows us accumulated capital as a land unceasingly offered to production, and which, the more we work it, the more it seems to expand. Rent has become for the proprietor the guarantee of his lechery, the instrument of his solitary pleasures. And note that the proprietor who abuses, guilty before charity and morality, remains blameless before the law, unassailable in political economy. To consume his income! What could be more beautiful, more noble, more legitimate? In the opinion of the people as in that of the great, unproductive consumption is the virtue par excellence of the proprietor. All the troubles of society arise from this indelible selfishness.

To facilitate the exploitation of the soil, and put the different localities in relation, a road, a canal is necessary. Already the plan is made; one will sacrifice an edge on this side, a strip on the other; a few hectares of poor terrain, and the way is open. But the proprietor cries out with his thundering voice: I do not want to! and in the face of this formidable veto, the praetor formerly did not dare to override it. Yet, in the end, the State dared to reply, I want it! But what hesitations, what fears, what trouble, before taking this heroic resolution! what arbitrations! what trials! The people have paid dearly for this coup of authority, whose promoters were even more stunned than the proprietors. For a precedent had just been established whose consequences seemed incalculable!... They promised themselves that after having crossed this Rubicon, the bridges were broken, that they would stop there. To do violence to property, what an omen! The shade of Spartacus would have seemed less terrible.

In the depths of a soil that is naturally poor, chance, and then science, born of chance, discovers treasures of fuel. It is a free gift of nature, deposited under the soil of the common habitation, and from which everyone has a right to claim his share. But the proprietor arrives, the proprietor to whom the concession of the soil was made solely for the purpose of cultivation. You shall not pass, he says; you will not violate my property! At this unexpected warning, great debate arises amongst the learned. Some say that the mine is not the same thing as the arable land, and must belong to the State; others maintain that the proprietor has property above and below, *Cujus est solum, ejus est usque ad inferos*¹⁷. For if the proprietor, a new Cerberus posted to guard the dark kingdoms, can place a ban on entry, the right of the State is only a fiction. It would be necessary to return to expropriation, and where would that lead? The State gives in: "Let us affirm it boldly," it says through the mouth of M. Dunoyer,

¹⁷ Better known as *Cuius est solum eius est usque ad coelum (et ad inferos)*: To whomsoever it belongs, it is his all the way to the heavens (and all the way to hell). This is a Roman private law maxim meaning that property or territory extends upward theoretically into the limits of the atmosphere and downward into the soil and substrate to the core of the Earth. (Editor)

supported by M. Troplong; “it is no more just and reasonable to say that the mines are the property of the nation, than it once was to claim that it was the property of the king. The mines are essentially part of the soil. It is with a perfect good sense that the common law has said that the property in what is above implies property in what is below. Where, in fact, would we make the separation?”

M. Dunoyer is troubled over a small thing. Who hesitates to separate the mine from the surface, just as we sometimes separate, in an inheritance, the ground floor from the first floor? This is what is done very well by the proprietors of the coalfields in the Loire department, where ownership of the *depths* has almost everywhere been separated from the surface ownership, and has been transformed into a sort of circulating value like the shares of a public limited company. Who still precludes us from regarding the mine as a new land for which an access road is needed?... But what! Napoleon, the inventor of the happy-medium, the prince of the doctrinaires, wanted it otherwise; the counsel of State, M. Troplong and M. Dunoyer applaud: there is nothing more to consider. A transaction has taken place under I know not what insignificant reservations; the proprietors were blessed by imperial munificence: how have they acknowledged this favour?

I have had occasion more than once to speak of the coalition of the Loire mines. I return to it for the last time. In that department, the richest in the kingdom in coal deposits, the exploitation was at first conducted in the most expensive and most absurd manner. The interest of the mines, that of the consumers and of the proprietors, demanded that the extraction be done jointly: We do not want it, the proprietors repeated for I do not know how many years. And they have engaged in a horrible competition, the initial costs of which have been paid for by the devastation of the mines. Were they within their rights? so much so, that we will see the State finds it bad that they relinquished them.

Finally the proprietors, at least most of them, managed to reach an agreement: they associated themselves. They have without doubt yielded to reason, to motives of conservation, of good order, of general as well as private interest. Henceforth, consumers would have fuel at a good price, miners regular work and guaranteed wages. What thunderous cheering from the public! what praise in the academies! what awards for this beautiful devotion! We will not inquire whether the combination is consistent with the text and the spirit of the law, which forbids the joining of concessions; we will only see the advantage of the combination, and we will have proven that the legislator has neither wanted nor could want anything other than the well-being of the people: *Salus populi suprema lex esto*.¹⁸

Deception! First, this is not the reason that the proprietors follow in forming a coalition: they submitted only to force. As competition ruins them, they side with the victor, and accelerate the rout of the dissidents by their growing mass. Then, the association constitutes itself into a collective monopoly: the price of the merchandise increases, so much for consumption; wages are reduced, so much for labour. Then, the public complains; the legislature thinks of intervening; the heavens threaten with a thunderbolt; the prosecution invokes article 419 of the Penal Code which forbids the coalitions, but which permits every monopolist to combine, and stipulates no measure for the price of goods; the administration appeals to the law of 1810 which, wishing to promote exploitation, while dividing the concessions, is rather more favourable than opposed to unity; and the lawyers prove by briefs, rulings, arguments, some that coalition is within its rights, others that it is not within its rights. Meanwhile the consumer

¹⁸ The welfare of the people shall be the supreme law. (Editor)

says to himself: Is it just that I pay the costs of speculation and of competition? is it just that what has been given to the proprietor for nothing in my greater interest should cost me so dearly? Let a price be established! We do not want it, respond the proprietors. And I defy the State to overcome their resistance other than by a coup of authority, which is to resolve nothing; or else by an indemnity, which is to abandon everything.

Property is unsocial, not only in ownership, but also in production. Absolute mistress of the instruments of labour, it renders only imperfect, fraudulent, detestable products. The consumer is no longer served, he is robbed of his money. – Should you not have known, they say to the rural proprietor, to wait a few days to pick these fruits, reap this wheat, dry this hay, not put water in this milk, rinse your barrels, take better care of your crops, seize less and do better? You are overburdened: return a part of your inheritance. – What a fool! responds the proprietor with a mocking air. Twenty acres badly worked always yield more than ten which would take as much time, and double the cost. With your system, the earth would once again feed more men: but what does it matter to me that there are more men? It is a question of my income. As for the quality of my products, they will always be good enough for those who eat them. You think yourself clever, my dear adviser, and you are only a child. What would be the use of being a proprietor, if one only sold what deserves to be put up for sale, and at a just price, at that?... I do not want to.

Well, you say, let the police do their duty!... The police! you forget that its action only begins when the evil is done. The police, instead of supervising production, inspects the product: after having allowed the proprietor to cultivate, harvest, manufacture without conscience, it appears to seize the green fruits, to spill the terrines of watered milk, the casks of adulterated beer and wine, to throw the prohibited meats into the street: all to the applause of the economists and the populace, who want property to be respected, but will not suffer trade being free. Heh, barbarians! it is the poverty of the consumer which provokes the flow of these impurities. Why, if you cannot prevent the proprietor from acting badly, do you prevent the poor from living badly? Is it not better for them to have colic than to die of hunger?

Tell that industrialist that it is a cowardly, immoral thing, to speculate on the distress of the poor, on the inexperience of children and of young girls: he simply will not understand you. Prove to him that by a reckless overproduction, by miscalculated enterprises, he compromises, along with his own fortune, the existence of his workers; that if his interests are not touched, those of so many families, grouped around him, merit consideration; that by the arbitrariness of his favours he creates around him discouragement, servility, hatred. The proprietor takes offence: Am I not the master? says he, parodying the legend; and because I am good to a few, do you claim to make of my kindness a right for all? Must I give an account to those who should obey me? This home is mine; what is proper for me to do for the management of my affairs, I alone am the judge. Are my workers my slaves? If my conditions displease them, and they find better, let them go! I will be the first to compliment them. Very excellent philanthropists, who then prevents you from starting workshops? Do so, give an example; instead of this delightful life that you lead while preaching virtue, set up a factory, get to work. Let us at last see through you association on the earth! As for me, I reject with all my strength such servitude. Associates! Rather bankruptcy, rather death!

Thus property separates man from man a hundred times more than monopoly did. The legislator, with an eminently social view, had believed it necessary to give stronger guarantees to ownership: and he found that he had taken away from the worker even hope, by guaranteeing to the monopolist, in perpetuity, the daily fruit of his plunders. What great proprietor does not

abuse his power to constrain the small? What scholar, established in dignity, does not derive a lucre from his influence and his patronage? What philosopher, accredited in the councils, does not find a way, under the pretext of translation, revision or commentary, to levy a tax on philosophy? What inspector of schools is not a merchant of primers? Is political economy free from all stock trading, and religion from all simony? I had the honour to be head of a printing-house, and I sold a dozen catechisms, five in-12 sheets, thirty sous. Since, the local bishop has assigned himself the monopoly on religious books, and the price of the catechism has increased from fifteen centimes to forty: monseigneur realises each year, on this item alone, a net profit of 50,000 francs. Such-and-such a question was posed by the academy only to give monsieur so-and-so the opportunity for a triumph; such-and-such a composition only won the prize because it came from monsieur such-and-such, professing the right doctrines, that is to say practicing the art of toadying alongside messieurs so-and-so, such-and-such, and so-and-so. Titled science bars the path of common science; the oak compels the reed to bow to it; religion and morals are exploited by privilege, like plaster and coal; privilege reaches even to the paragons of virtue, and the crowns awarded at the Mazarin Theatre, for the encouragement of the young and the progress of science, are nothing more than the insignia of academic feudalism.

And all these abuses of authority, these schemes, these villainies, come, not from illegal abuse, but from the legal, very legal use of property. Without doubt the functionary whose supervision is required for the free circulation of merchandise, or the acceptance of provisions, has no right to tamper with this supervision. So this is not how they go about it. Such an act would be repugnant to the virtue of the agents of authority, would fall under the condemnation of the Penal Code, and I will not concern myself with it. But it will be agreed that he who approves, cannot approve anything better than what he knows how to do, since his approval is necessarily in proportion to his means. Now, as it is not forbidden for the inspectors and regulators of authority to do for themselves what they are charged with approving in others, and even more so to take part and be interested in what must be submitted for their approval, and as in all sorts of service, wages and profits are legitimate, it follows that the mission assigned, for example, to the university and to the bishops, to approve or disapprove certain works, constitutes a monopoly for the benefit of the bishops and academics. And if the law, contradicting itself, claims to prevent it, the force of things, more powerful than the law, restores it constantly, and instead of a government, we no longer have anything but venality and fiction...

A poor worker whose wife was in childbirth, the midwife, in despair, sought the assistance of a doctor. – I must have 200 francs, says the doctor, or I will not budge. – My God! replied the worker, my household is not worth 200 francs; so my wife must die, or else we must all go around naked, the child, her and me!

This obstetrician, may God rejoice! was nevertheless a worthy man, benevolent, melancholy and gentle, a member of several learned and charitable societies: on his mantelpiece a bronze of Hippocrates, refusing the gifts of Artaxerxes. He was incapable of upsetting a child, and would have sacrificed himself for his cat. His refusal did not come from hardness; it was tactical. For a doctor who understands business, devotion has only one season: once the clientele is acquired, once a reputation is made, he reserves himself for the wealthy who pay, and, save for opportunities for show, he dismisses the indiscreet. Where would we be, if it were necessary to heal the sick indiscriminately? Talent and reputation are precious properties that must be exploited, not squandered.

The trait that I have just cited is one of the most benign; what horrors, if I were to penetrate to the bottom of this medical matter! Let no one tell me that there are exceptions: I except everyone. I criticise property, not men. Property, in [the hands of] Vincent de Paul as in Harpagon, is always atrocious; and until the service of medicine is organised, it will be the same for the physician as for the scientist, for the lawyer as for the artist: he will be a being degraded by his own title, by the title of proprietor.

This is what this judge did not understand, too good a man for his time, who, yielding to the indignation of his conscience, one day took it into his head to express public censure of the guild of lawyers. It was an immoral thing, according to him, scandalous, that the ease with which these gentlemen welcome all sorts of causes. If this censure, issued from on high, had been supported and commented on by the press, it would perhaps have been the end for the legal profession. But the honourable company could not perish by a censure, any more than property can die from a diatribe, any more than the press can die of its own venom. Besides, is not the judiciary integral with the guild of lawyers? is it not, like the other, instituted by and for property? What would become of Perrin-Dandin¹⁹, if he were forbidden to judge? and what would we argue about, without property? The Bar Association therefore rose up; journalism, the pettifoggery of the pen, came to the aid of the pettifoggery of words: the revolt continued rumbling and growing until the imprudent magistrate, involuntary organ of the public conscience, had made amends to sophistry, and retracted the truth that had arisen spontaneously through him.

One day, a minister announced that he was going to reform the notary profession. – We do not want to be reformed, the notaries cried. We are not men of chicanery; speak to the lawyers. The notary is, par excellence, a man honest and without reproach. A stranger to usury, guardian of deposits, faithful interpreter of the will of the dying, impartial arbitrator in all contracts, his office is the sanctuary of property. And it is by him that property would be violated! No, no... – And the government, in the person of its minister, retracted it.

I would like, said another timidly, to repay the creditors to whom I pay 5 percent interest, and replace them with others to whom I would only pay 4. – What are you thinking? cry the rentiers in dread. The *interests* of which you speak are RENTS; they were constituted as RENTS; and when you propose to reduce them, it is as if you were proposing an expropriation without compensation. Expropriate, if you please; but a law is needed, plus prior compensation. What then! when it is well known that money continually loses its value; when 10,000 francs of rent today is worth no more than 8,000 at the time of the registration; when, by an irrefutable consequence, it would be the rentier, whose property diminishes every day, to demand an increase in income, in order to preserve his rent, since that rent does not represent a metallic capital, but real estate, this is when we talk of conversion! Conversion is bankruptcy! And the government, convinced, on the one hand, that it had the right, like every debtor, to free itself by repayment, but uncertain, on the other, of the nature of its debt and intimidated by the proprietary clamour, did not know what to resolve.

Thus property becomes more unsocial to the extent that it is distributed over a greater number of heads. What seems to have to soften, humanise property, collective privilege, is precisely

¹⁹ Perrin Dandin is a fictional character in *The Third Book* (1546) by French writer François Rabelais (unknown-1553), who seats himself judge-wise on the first stump that offers and passes offhand a sentence in any matter of litigation for personal advantage. It designates an ignorant or greedy opportunistic judge. (Editor)

what shows property in its hideousness: divided property, impersonal property, is the worst of properties. Who does not realise today that France is covered with *great companies*, more formidable, more greedy for booty, than the famous bands from which the brave Duguesclin delivered France!...

Let us beware of taking community of property for association. The individual-proprietor can still show himself accessible to mercy, justice, and shame; the corporate-proprietor is heartless, without remorse. It is a fantastic, inflexible being, freed from all passion and all love, which moves in the circle of its ideas as the millstone in its revolutions crushes grain. It is not by becoming common that property can become social: one does not remedy rabies by biting everyone. Property will end by the transformation of its principle, not by an unlimited co-shareholding. And this is why democracy, which a few men, as intractable as they are blind, persist in preaching to the people, a system of universal property, is powerless to create society.

Of all properties, the most detestable is that which has talent for a pretext.

Prove to an artist, by comparing times and men, that the inequality of works of art in different centuries stems above all from the oscillatory movements of society, from the change of beliefs and of the state of minds; that whatever society is worth, so is the worth of the artist; that between the artist and his contemporaries there exists a community of needs and ideas, from which results the system of their obligations and their relations, so much so that merit, like wages, can always be rigorously defined; that a time will come when the rules of taste, the laws of invention, composition and execution having been discovered, art will lose its divinatory character and will cease to be the privilege of a few exceptional natures: all these ideas will appear excessively ridiculous to the artist.

Tell him: You have made a statue, and you propose that I buy it. I am willing. But this statue, to be truly a statue and for me to give the price for it, must meet certain conditions of poetry and sculpting which I shall be able to discover by the mere appearance of it, although I have never seen a statue, and I am completely incapable of making one. If these conditions are not fulfilled, whatever difficulties you have overcome, however superior to my profession your art may appear, you have made a *useless* work. Your labour is WORTH nothing: it does not fulfil the goal, and only serves to excite my regrets by manifesting your impotence. For it is not a comparison between you and me that it is a question of establishing; it is a comparison between your labour and your ideal. Will you ask me, after that, what price you must expect in the event of success? I answer you that this price is necessarily proportionate to my faculties, and determined as an aliquot part of my expenses. Now, what is this proportion? just the equivalent of what the statue will have cost you.

If it were possible that the artist to whom such language was addressed would feel its force and accuracy, it was because reason would replace imagination in him; he would begin to no longer be an artist.

What particularly shocks this class of men is that one dares to put a price on their talents. To hear them tell it, weights and measures are incompatible with the dignity of art: this mania for haggling over everything is the sign of a decadent society, in which masterpieces will no longer be produced, because one does not know how to recognise them. And this is what I like to enlighten the minds of men of art about, not with arguments and theories that they could not follow, but by a fact.

At the last exposition, 4,200 objects of art were sent by about 1,800 artists. By taking the commercial value of each of these objects (statues, paintings, portraits, engravings, etc.) at 300 francs, on average, we are certain not to remain too far below the truth. So then a total value of 1,260,000 francs, product of 1,800 artists. Supposing that the outlay for marble, canvas, gilding, frame, models, studies, practices, meditations, etc., at 100 francs on average, and the labour at three months, there remains a net 840,000 francs, that is 466 fr. 65 cents per head for 90 days.

But if we consider that the 4,200 articles sent to the exposition, and of which nearly half were eliminated by the jury, form in the judgment of the authors themselves, the best and most beautiful of the artistic production during the year; that a great part of these products consists of portraits, the very gracious reward for which far surpasses the current price for objects of art; that a considerable quantity of the values exhibited remained unsold; that outside of this fair a crowd of manufacturers work at prices much lower than the price list of the exposition; that similar observations apply to music, to dance, and to all the categories of art: we will find that the average salary of the artist does not reach 1,200 francs, and that, for the artistic population as for the industrial, well-being is expressed by the crushing formula of M. Chevalier, *fifty-six centimes per day and per head*.

And as poverty stands out more by contrast, and as the function of the artist is entirely one for luxury, it has become a proverb that no poverty is equal to his: *Si est dolor, sicut dolor meus!*²⁰

And why this equality before the social economy of the labours of art and of industry? It is that outside the proportionality of products, there is no wealth, and that art, sovereign expression of wealth which is essentially equality and proportion, is by that the symbol of equality and of human fraternity. In vain does pride revolt, and everywhere creates its distinctions and privileges: the proportion remains inflexible. The workers remain united amongst themselves, and nature is charged with punishing their infractions. If society consumes 5% of its product in luxury goods, it will occupy a twentieth of its workers in this production. The share of artists, in society, will then necessarily be equal to that of the industrious. As for individual division, society leaves it to the trades: for society, which accomplishes everything through the individual, can do nothing for the individual without his consent. So when an artist takes for himself alone one hundred shares of the general remuneration, there are ninety-nine of his fellows who prostitute themselves for him or who die penniless: this calculation is as certain, as proven, as a liquidation of the stock market.

Let the artists therefore know: it is not, as they say, the grocer who haggles, it is necessity itself which has fixed the price of things. If, in some epochs, the products of art have been on the rise, as in the centuries of Leo X, the Roman emperors and Pericles, this was due to special causes of favouritism which have ceased to exist. It was the gold of Christianity, the tribute of indulgences, which paid the Italian artists; it was the gold of the conquered nations which, under the emperors, paid the Greek artists; it was the labour of the slaves which paid them under Pericles. Equality has come: do the *liberal arts* want to bring back slavery, and abdicate their name?

Talent is usually the attribute of a disgraced nature, in which the disharmony of aptitudes produces an extraordinary, monstrous specialty. A man having no hands writes with his stomach, there is the image of talent. Also we are all born artists: our soul, like our face, always strays more or less from its ideal; our schools are orthopaedic institutions where, by directing

²⁰ Is there any suffering like my suffering (Lamentations 1:12). (Editor)

growth, we correct the deformities of nature. That is why education tends more and more to universality, that is to say, to the equilibrium of talents and knowledges; why also the artist is only possible surrounded by a society in luxurious community with him. In matters of art, society does almost everything: the artist is much more in the mind of the amateur than in the mutilated being who excites his admiration.

Under the influence of property, the artist, depraved in his reason, dissolute in his morals, full of contempt for his colleagues whose publicity alone gives him value, venal and without dignity, is the impure image of selfishness. For him, good morals are only a matter of convention, a matter of figures. The idea of the just and of the honest slides over his heart without taking root; and of all classes of society, that of artists is the poorest in strong souls and noble characters. If we were to rank the social professions according to the influence they have exercised on civilisation by the energy of will, the greatness of feelings, the power of passions, the enthusiasm for truth and justice, and setting aside the value of the doctrines: priests and philosophers would appear at the first rank; men of State and captains would come after; then merchants, workers in industry and tillers of the soil; finally, scholars and artists. While the priest, in his poetic language, is regarded as the living temple of God; while philosopher speaks to himself. Act in such a way that each of your actions can serve as a model and a rule: the artist remains indifferent to the meaning of his work; he does not seek to personify in himself the type that he wants to render, he abstracts himself from it; he uses the beautiful and the sublime, he does not adore them; he puts Christ on the canvas, but he does not carry him, like Saint Ignatius, in his chest.

The people, whose instinct is always so sure, preserve the memories of legislators and heroes; they concern themselves little with the names of artists. For a long time even, in its rude innocence, it felt for them only repulsion and contempt, as if it had recognised in these illuminators of human life the instigators of its vices, the accomplices of its oppression. The philosopher has recorded in his books this distrust of the people for the arts of luxury; the legislator has denounced them to the magistrate; religion, obeying the same sentiment, has struck them with its anathemas. Art, that is to say luxury, pleasure, voluptuousness, is the works and pomps of Satan, which deliver the Christian to eternal damnation. And without wishing to incriminate a class of men that the general corruption has rendered as estimable as any other, and who after all make use of their rights, I dare say that the Christian myth is justified. More than ever, art is a perpetual outrage to public poverty, a mask for debauchery. By property, that which is best in man incessantly becomes that which is worst in man, *corruptio optimi pessima*.²¹

Work, the economists repeat ceaselessly to the people; work, save, capitalise, become proprietors in your turn. As if they were saying: Workers, you are the recruits of property. Each of you carries in his sack²² the rod which serves to correct you, and which may one day serve to correct others.²³ Raise yourself by labour to property; and when you have the taste for human flesh, you will no longer want any other meat, and you will make up for your long abstinences.

²¹ The corruption of the best is the worst. (Editor)

²² This is an allusion to tradesmen who owned their own tools and carried them in a bag or sack. The expression “get the sack” is derived from the 17th century French expression “On luy a donné son sac”. (Editor)

²³ There is a play-on-words as *corriger*, as well as meaning “to correct”, also means “to give a good hiding to” or “to punish.” (Editor)

To fall from the proletariat into property! from slavery into tyranny, which is to say, following Plato, always into slavery! what a prospect! And yet it is inevitable, the condition of the slave is no longer tenable. You must advance, free yourself from wage-labour, become a capitalist, become a tyrant! You must, do you understand, proletarians? Property is not an optional thing for humanity, it is the absolute order of destiny. You will only be free after you redeem yourselves, by subjugation to your masters, from the servitude that they impose upon you.

One beautiful summer Sunday, the people of the great cities leave their dark and damp homes, and seek the vigorous and pure air of the countryside. But what! there is no more countryside! The land, divided into a thousand closed cells, crossed by long galleries, the land is no longer to be found; the sight of fields exists for the people of the cities only in the theatre and the museum: the birds alone contemplate the real landscape from high in the air. The proprietor, who pays very dearly for a lodge on this riven land, enjoys, selfish and solitary, some strip of grass that he calls his countryside: except for this corner, he is exiled from the soil like the poor. How many people can boast of never having seen their native land! It is necessary to go far, into the wilderness, in order to find this poor nature, which we violate in a brutal manner, instead of enjoying, as chaste spouses, its divine embraces.

Thus property, which was supposed to make us free, makes us prisoners. What am I saying? It degrades us, by making us servants and tyrants to one another.

Do we really know what wage-labour is? To work under a master, watchful of his prejudices as much and more than of his bidding; whose dignity consists above all in demanding, *sic volo, sic jubeo*²⁴, and never explaining; that we often scorn and mock! having no thoughts of your own, constantly considering the thought of others, knowing no stimulant but [your] daily bread, and the fear of losing a job?

The wage-worker is a man to whom the proprietor who hires his services makes this speech: What you have to do does not concern you in any way: you do not control it, you do not answer for it. Every observation is forbidden to you; there is no profit for you to hope for save from your wage, no risk to run, no blame to fear.

Thus the journalist is told: Lend us your columns, and even, if that suits you, your office. This is what you have to say, and this is what you have to conceal. Whatever you think of our ideas, of our ends and of our means, always defend our party, assert our opinions. This cannot compromise you, must not worry you: the character of the journalist is anonymous. Here, for your fees, are ten thousand francs and a hundred subscriptions. Does that suit you? And the journalist, like the slanderous Jesuit, responds with a sigh: *I must live!*

The lawyer is told: This case presents pros and cons; it is a game I am determined to take a chance on, and for which I have need of a man of your profession. If not you, it will be your colleague, your rival; and there are a thousand crowns for the lawyer if I win my case, five hundred francs if I lose it. And the lawyer bows respectfully, saying to his murmuring conscience: *I must live!*

The priest is told: Here is money for three hundred masses. You need not worry yourself about the morality of the deceased: it is probable that he will never see God, having died in hypocrisy, his hands full of other's goods, and laden with the curses of the people. It is none of your

²⁴ Thus I wish, thus I command. (Editor)

business: we pay, speak anyway! And the priest, raising his eyes to heaven, says: *Amen*, I must live.

The arms dealer is told: We need thirty thousand rifles, ten thousand sabres, a thousand quintals of shot, a hundred barrels of powder. What can be done with them is not your concern; it is possible that all will pass to the enemy: but there will be two hundred thousand francs of profit. That is good, responds the supplier: each to his own trade, everyone must live!... Make a tour of society; and after having noted the universal absolutism, you will have noted the universal indignity. What immorality in this system of servility! what blight in this mechanism!

The closer man gets to the grave, the more irreconcilable the proprietor becomes. This is what Christianity has depicted in its terrifying myth of the final impenitence.²⁵

Explain to this lecherous or devout old man that the housekeeper that he intends to favour to the detriment of his closest relatives is unworthy of his cares; that the church is rich enough, and that an honest man has no need of prayers; that his relation is poor, hardworking, honest; that there are brave sons to establish, and young daughters to endow; that by leaving them his fortune, he ensures their gratitude, and does good for several generations; that it is the spirit of the law that wills serve the unity and prosperity of families. I do not want it! responds the proprietor curtly; and the scandal of the wills surpasses the immorality of the fortunes. Now, try to modify this right of appanage and transfer, which is a part of the sovereign authority, and you fall back immediately into monopoly. You change property into usufruct, rent into a life annuity; you replace proprietary despotism by absolutism of the State, and then one of two things happens: either by reverting to feudal and inalienable property, you stop the circulation of capital and make society regress; or you fall into community, into nothingness

The proprietary contradiction does not end for man with the will, it passes to the succession. *The dead seize the living*, says the law; thus the fatal influence of property passes from the bequeather to the heir.

A father of a family dies and leaves seven sons, whom he had raised in the ancient manor. How will the transmission of his assets take place? Two systems present themselves, tried in turn, corrected, modified, but always without success. The formidable enigma remains to be solved.

Under the right of primogeniture, property is assigned to the eldest: the six other brothers receive a trousseau, and are expelled from the paternal domain. The father dead, they are strangers on the earth, without assets and without credit. From comfort, they pass without transition to poverty: as children, they had in their father a provider: as brothers, they can only see in their eldest brother an enemy... Everything has been said against the right primogeniture: let us see the reverse of the system.

With equal division, all the children are called to the preservation of the patrimony, to the perpetuity of the family. But how can seven possess what is sufficient for only one? The auction takes place, the inheriting family is dispossessed. It is a stranger who, by means of cash, finds himself inheritor. Instead of the patrimony, each of the children receives money, with a ninety-nine chance against one of soon having nothing. As long as the father lived, there was a family; now, there are only adventurers. The right of primogeniture at least ensured the perpetuity of the

²⁵ In Christian theology, this refers to dying unreconciled with God whether through loss of faith, or through despair, or through a blasphemous rejection of God's love which leads to self-condemnation to Hell. (Editor)

name: it was for the old man a guarantee that the monument founded by his fathers and preserved by his hands will remain in his people. The equality of division has destroyed the temple of the family; there are no more household gods. With sedentary property, the civilised have discovered the secret of living as nomads: what use then has inheritance been?

Let us suppose that instead of selling the estate, the heirs divide it. The land is partitioned, truncated, trimmed. Boundaries are planted, ditches are dug, barriers are built; lawsuits and hatreds are sown. The property is cut into pieces, unity is broken: wherever you look, property leads to the negation of society, to the negation of its purpose.

Thus property, which was supposed to consummate the holy union of man and nature, leads only to an infamous prostitution. The sultan uses and abuses his slave: the land is for him an instrument of lechery... I find here more than a metaphor; I discover a profound analogy.

What is it that, in the relations of the sexes, distinguishes marriage from concubinage? Everyone senses the difference between these two things; few people would be in a position to render an account of it, so obscure has the question become by the licence of custom and effrontery of novels.

Is it the offspring? We see illicit intercourse produce as much and as well as the most fecund of legitimate unions. – Is it the duration? Many bachelors keep a mistress for ten or twenty years, who, at first humiliated and degraded, in her turn subjugates and degrades her unworthy lover. Besides, the perpetuity of the marriage can very well change from being obligatory to becoming optional by means of divorce, without marriage losing any of its character. Perpetuity is the vow of love and the hope of the family, no doubt: but it is not essential to marriage; it can always, without offending the sacrament, be, for certain reasons, interrupted. – Is it, finally, the wedding ceremony, four words pronounced in front of a deputy and a priest? What virtue can such a formality have for love, steadfastness, devotion? Marat, like Jean-Jacques [Rousseau], had married his housekeeper in the woods, in the face of the sun. The holy man had contracted in very good faith, and did not doubt that his alliance was as decent and respectable as if it had been counter-signed by the municipal clerk. Marat, in the most important act of his life, had judged it appropriate to do without the intervention of the Republic: he placed, in accordance with the ideas of M. Louis Blanc, *natural fact* above *convention*. Who then prevents us from all doing as Marat did? And what is meant by this word marriage?

What constitutes marriage is that society is present in it, not only at the moment of the promises, but for as long as the spouses live together. Society, I say, alone receives for each spouse the oath of the other; it alone gives them rights, since it alone can make these rights authentic; and while seeming to impose only mutual duties on the contracting parties, it actually stipulates for itself. “We are united in God,” said Tobias to Sarah²⁶, “before we are between ourselves; the children of the saints cannot be joined in the manner of beasts and barbarians.” In this union consecrated by the magistrate, the visible organ of society, and in the presence of witnesses who represent it, love is supposed free and reciprocal and posterity is predicted as in casual unions; the perpetuity of the love is intended, provoked, but not guaranteed; even voluptuousness is permitted: the whole difference, but this difference is an abyss, is that in concubinage selfishness alone presides over the union, while in marriage the intervention of society purifies this selfishness.

²⁶ The Book of Tobit. (Editor)

And see the consequences. Society, which avenges adultery and punishes perjury, does not receive the complaint of concubine against concubine: such loves are no more its concern than the couplings of dogs, *foris canes et impudici*!²⁷ It turns away from them in disgust. Society rejects the widow and the orphan of the concubine, and does not admit them to the inheritance; in its eyes the mother is a prostitute, the child, a bastard. As if it were saying to one: You gave yourself up without me; you can defend and provide for yourself without me. To the other: Your father begot you for his pleasure; it does not please me to adopt you. Whoever insults marriage cannot claim the guarantee of marriage: such is the social law, a rigorous law, but just, which only socialist hypocrisy, those who want both chaste and obscene love, could denigrate.

This feeling for social intervention in the most personal and most voluntary act of man, this indefinable respect for a present God, which increases love by rending it chaste, is for the spouses a source of mysterious affections, unknown apart from it. In marriage, man is the lover of all women, because in marriage alone he feels true love, which unites him sympathetically to the whole sex; but he knows only his spouse, and by knowing only her, he loves more, because without this carnal exclusion marriage would disappear, and love with it. The platonic community, demanded again with increased facilities by contemporary reformers, does not give love, it only offers *caput mortuum*²⁸; because, in this communism of bodies and souls, love, not determining itself, remains in a state of abstraction and dream.

Marriage is the true community of loves and the model of all individual possession. In all his relations with persons and things, man truly contracts only with society, which is to say, in the end, with himself, with the ideal and holy being which lives in him. Destroy this respect for self, for society, this fear of God, as the Bible says, which is present in all our actions, in all our thoughts; and man, abusing his soul, his mind, his faculties, abusing nature, man, sullied and polluted, becomes, by an irresistible degradation, libertine, tyrant, wretched.

Now, just as by the mystical intervention of society, impure love becomes chaste love, while haphazard fornication is transformed into a peaceful and holy marriage; likewise, in the economic order and in the forecasts of society, property, the prostitution of capital, is only the first moment of a social and legitimate possession. Until then the proprietor abuses rather than enjoys; his happiness is a lewd dream: he grasps, but does not possess. Property is always that abominable right of the lord which once stirred up the outraged serf, and which the French Revolution was not able to abolish. Under the dominion of this right, all the products of labour are filthy: competition is a mutual incitement to debauchery; the privileges accorded to talent, [are] the wages of prostitution. In vain, does the State, by its police, try to oblige fathers to acknowledge their children, and to support the shameful fruits of their deeds: the stain is indelible; the bastard, conceived in iniquity, heralds the turpitude of its author. Commerce is nothing more than a traffic in slaves destined, these to the pleasure of the rich, those to the cult of the vulgar Venus²⁹; and society is a vast system of whore-mongering in which everyone

²⁷ Outside are the dogs and the unclean (Revelation 22:15). (Editor)

²⁸ Literally “dead head” (or “worthless remains”). It was used in alchemy to signify a useless substance left over from a chemical operation, a worthless residue. (Editor)

²⁹ A reference to the Symposium (385 BCE) by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato which discusses the nature of love. Pausanias, the second speaker in the dialogue, distinguishes between two aspects of the goddess Venus – the vulgar and the heavenly – to discuss two discrete types of love. The first, inspired by the cult *Aphrodite Pandemos* (i.e., vulgar Venus), is base love, a profane type under the influence of which the lover seeks only sexual gratification. The second type of love, inspired by the cult *Aphrodite Urania* (i.e., heavenly Venus), encourages honourable and virtuous love. (Editor)

discouraged from love, the honest man because his love is betrayed, the man of good fortune because the variety of intrigues is a supplement to love, rushes and rolls in the orgy.

Abuse! cry the jurists, perversity of man! It is not property that makes us envious and greedy, that makes our passions surge, and arms our bad faith with its sophisms. It is our passions, our vices, on the contrary, which sully and corrupt property.

I would like to be told that it is not concubinage that sullies man, but that it is man who, by his passions and vices, sullies and corrupts concubinage. But, doctors, the facts that I denounce, are they, or are they not, of the essence of property? Are they not, from the legal point of view, irreprehensible, protected from all legal action? Can I bring before the judge, summon before the tribunals, this journalist who prostitutes his pen for money? that lawyer, this priest, who sells to iniquity, one his words, the other his prayers? this doctor who lets the poor man perish, if he does not deposit in advance the required fee? that old satyr who cheats his children for a courtesan? Can I prevent an auction which will abolish the memory of my forefathers, and render their posterity without ancestors, as if it were of incestuous or adulterous stock? Can I compel the proprietor, without compensating him beyond what he owns, that is to say without ruining society, to submit himself to the needs of society?...

Property, you say, is innocent of the crime of the proprietor; property is good and useful in itself: it is our passions and our vices which corrupt it.

So, in order to save property, you distinguish it from morality! Why not immediately distinguish it from society? That is precisely the reasoning of the economists. Political economy, says M. Rossi, is good and useful in itself; but it is not moral: it proceeds separately from all morality; it is up to us not to abuse its theories, to profit from its teachings, according to the higher laws of morality. As if he said: Political economy, the economy of society is not society; the economy of society proceeds separately from any society; it is up to us not to abuse its theories, to profit from its teachings, according to the higher laws of society! What chaos!

I not only maintain with the economists that property is neither morality nor society; but also that it is by its principle directly contrary to morality and society, just as political economy is anti-social, because its theories are diametrically opposed to the social interest.

According to the definition, property is the right of use and abuse, that is to say the absolute, irresponsible domain of man over his person and his goods. If property ceased to be the right of abuse, it would cease to be property. I have taken my examples from the category of abusive acts permitted to the proprietor: what happens there that is not of a legal, of an impeccable property? Has not the proprietor the right to give his goods to whomever he pleases, to let his neighbour burn without crying fire, to oppose the public good, to squander his patrimony, to exploit and fleece the worker, to produce badly and sell badly? Can the proprietor be legally compelled to use his property well? Can he be disturbed in his abuse? What am I saying? Is property, precisely because it is abusive, not the most sacred thing for the legislator? Can one conceive of a property whose use would be determined and whose abuse suppressed by the police? And is it not evident, finally, that if one wanted to introduce justice into property, one would destroy property; as the law, by introducing honesty into concubinage, has destroyed concubinage?

Property, in principle and in essence, is therefore immoral: this proposition is henceforth accepted by the critique. Consequently the [legal] code, which, in determining the rights of the proprietor, has not reserved those of morality, is a code of immorality; jurisprudence, that so-

called science of right, which is nothing other than the collection of proprietary rubrics, is immoral. And justice, instituted to protect the free and peaceful abuse of property; justice, which orders assistance against those who would oppose that abuse; which *afflicts* and *brands with infamy* whoever is bold enough to claim to mend the outrages of property, justice is infamous. If a child, supplanted in paternal affection by an unworthy mistress, destroys the deed that disinherits and dishonours him, he will answer before justice. Accused, convicted, condemned, he would go to prison to make honourable amends to property, while the prostitute will be sent into ownership. Where then is the immorality here? where is the infamy? is it not on the side of justice? Let us continue to unwind this chain, and we will soon know the whole truth we seek. Not only is justice, instituted to protect property, even if abusive, even if immoral, infamous; but the penal sanction is infamous, the police infamous, the executioner and the gallows, infamous. And property, which embraces this whole series, property, from which this odious lineage has sprung, property is infamous.

Judges armed to defend it, magistrates whose zeal is a permanent threat to those who accuse it, I challenge you. What have you seen in property that could so subjugate your conscience and corrupt your judgment? What principle, superior without doubt to property, more worthy of your respect than property, makes it so precious to you? When its works declare it infamous, how do you proclaim it holy and sacred? What consideration, what prejudice affects you?

Is it the majestic order of human societies, which you do not know, but of which you suppose that property is the unshakeable foundation? – No, since property, as it is, is for you order itself; since moreover it is proven that property is by nature abusive, that is to say disorderly, anti-social.

Is it Necessity, or Providence, whose laws you do not understand, but whose intentions you adore? – No, since, according to the analysis, property being contradictory and corruptible, it is by that very fact a negation of Necessity, an insult to Providence.

Is it a superior philosophy considering from on high human miseries, and seeking by evil to obtain the good? – No, since philosophy is the agreement of reason and experience, and in the judgment of reason as in that of experience, property is condemned.

Could it be religion? – Perhaps!...

§IV – Demonstration of the hypothesis of God by property.

If God did not exist, there would be no proprietors: this is the conclusion of political economy.

And the conclusion of social science is this: Property is the crime of the Supreme Being. There is for man only one duty, only one religion, it is to renounce God. *Hoc est primum and maximum mandatum*.³⁰

It is proven that the establishment of property amongst men was not a matter of choice and philosophy: its origin, like that of royalty, like that of languages and religions, is entirely spontaneous, mystical, in a word, divine. Property belongs to the great family of instinctive beliefs, which, under the cloak of religion and authority, still reign everywhere over our proud species. Property, in a word, is itself a religion: it has its theology, political economy; its

³⁰ This is the first and greatest commandment ("Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. " Mathew 22:37-38) (Editor)

casuistry, jurisprudence; its mythology and its symbols, in the external forms of justice and of contracts. The historical origin of property, like that of every religion, is hidden in obscurity. When questioned about itself, it responds with the fact of its existence; it explains itself with legends, and gives allegories for proofs. Finally, property, again like every religion, is subject to the law of development. Thus we see it by turns as a simple right of use and habitation, as amongst the Germans and the Arabs; patrimonial possession, inalienable in perpetuity, as amongst the Jews; feudal and emphyteutic, as in the Middle Ages; absolute and transferable at the will of the proprietor, more or less as the Romans knew it, and as we have it today. But property, having already reached its peak, turns towards its decline: attacked by partnerships [*commandite*], by the new mortgage laws, by expropriation for reasons of public utility, by the innovations in agricultural credit, by new theories on renting³¹ [*louage*], etc., the moment approaches when it will no longer be anything but the shadow of itself.

By these general traits, the religious character of property cannot be ignored.

This mystical and progressive character shows itself above all in the singular illusion that property causes its own theoreticians, and which consists in the fact that the more we develop, reform and improve property, the more we advance its ruin, and that we always imagine that we believe in it more when in reality we believe in it less: an illusion which, moreover, is common to all religions.

Thus it is that the Christianity of Saint Paul, the most philosophical of the apostles, is no longer the Christianity of Saint John; the theology of Thomas Aquinas is not the same as that of Augustine and Athanasius; and the Catholicism of MM. Bautain, Bûchez and Lacordaire is not the Catholicism of Bourdaloue and Bossuet. Religion, for the modern mystics, who imagine they are extending the old ideas while they strangle them, is hardly anything more than human fraternity, the unity of peoples, solidarity and harmony in the management of the globe. Religion is above all love, always love. Pascal would have been scandalised by the erotic aspirations of the devout of our time. God, in the nineteenth century, *is the purest love*; religion is love; morality, love again. Whereas for Bossuet dogma was everything, because from dogma must arise charity and the works of charity; charity is placed by the moderns in the first rank, and dogma is reduced to a formula insignificant by itself and which draws all its value from its content, namely, love, or, more properly, morality.

This is why the true enemies of religion, those who in all times worked most for its ruin, were always those who interpreted it with the most zeal, seeking a philosophical meaning in it, and striving to make it *reasonable*, according to the vow of Saint Paul, one of the first who devoted themselves to this impossible work of the *agreement of reason with faith*. The true enemies of religion, I say, are those quasi-rationalists who claim to return it to what they call its principles, without realising that they are driving it to the grave, and who, under the pretext of freeing religion from the *letter that kills*, that is to say, from the symbolism which is its essence, and of teaching it according to the *spirit that gives life*, in other words, according to the reason which doubts and the science which demonstrates, ceaselessly revising tradition, distorting faith, twisting the meaning of the scriptures, arrive, by an imperceptible degradation of dogma, to the formal negation of dogma. Religion, say these false logicians on the faith of an etymology of

³¹ See Troplong, *Contrat de louage [Rental Contract]*, 1st volume, where he maintains, alone against all the aforementioned jurists, both predecessors and contemporaries, and rightly, in our opinion, that in rental the renter acquires a right in the things, and that the lease gives rise to a real and personal share at the same time.

Cicero, religion is the *bond* of humanity; while they should say: religion is the sign, the emblem of the social law. Now, this emblem being eroded every day by the friction of critique, there remains only the expectation of a reality which positive science alone can determine and attain.

Likewise property, once we have ceased to defend it in its original brutality, and we speak of disciplining it, of subjecting it to morality, of subordinating it to the State, in a word of socialising it, property collapses, it perishes. It perishes, I say, because it is progressive; because its idea is incomplete and its nature has nothing definite about it; because it is the principle moment of a series of which the whole alone can give a true idea, in a word because it is a religion. What we seem to be *preserving*, and which in reality we are *pursuing* under the name of property, is no longer property; it is a new form of possession, without example in the past, and that we strive to deduce from the presumed principles or motives of property, following that illusion of logic which always makes us suppose at the *origin* or at the *end* of a thing what we must seek *in* the thing itself, namely, its meaning and its scope.

But if property is a religion, and if, like every religion, it is progressive, it has, also like every religion, its own specific object. Christianity and Buddhism are religions of penance, or of the education of humanity; Mohammedanism is the religion of fate; monarchy and democracy are one and the same religion, the religion of authority; philosophy itself is the religion of reason. What then is this particular religion, the most tenacious of religions, which must drag all the others down with it and nevertheless will only perish last, in which its cultists no longer believe, property?

Since property manifests itself by occupation and use, since its aim is to strengthen and extend monopoly by domain and inheritance, since by means of the rent it gathers without work, and by mortgages jeopardises without security, since it is refractory to society, since its rule is whim, and since it must perish by justice, property is the religion of FORCE.

Religious fables bear witness to this. *Cain*, the proprietor, according to Genesis, conquers the land with his spear, surrounds it with stakes, makes it a property, and kills *Abel*, the pauper, the proletarian, son like him of *Adam*, man, but of inferior caste, of servile condition. These etymologies are instructive: they say more by their naïveté than all the commentaries.³² Men have always spoken the same language; the problem of the unity of language is demonstrated by the identity of the ideas that it expresses: it is ridiculous to argue over variants of sounds and characters.

Thus, according to grammar, as according to fable and according to analysis, property, religion of force, is at the same time the religion of servitude. Depending on whether it is seized by force of arms, or whether it proceeds by exclusion and monopoly, it engenders two kinds of servitude: one, the ancient proletariat, the result of the primitive fact of conquest or of the violent division of *Adam*, humanity, into *Cain* and *Abel*, patricians and plebeians; the other, the modern proletariat, the *working class* of the economists, caused by the development of the economic phases, which are all summed up, as we have seen, in the key fact of the consecration of monopoly by domain, inheritance and rent.

³² *Qain*, stake, spear, javelin; *qaneh*, lat. *canah*, cane, reed, material of the javelin; *qanah*, to surround with stakes, to acquire; *qiné*, to be jealous, like the proprietor who fences himself in. – *Bal*, adv. of negation; *belimah*, nothing at all, nothingness; *bula*, to wear out, to grow old, to come to nothing; *habal*, to vanish; *habel*, man of nothing, of nothingness.

Now, property, that is to say, in its most simple expression, the right of force, could not long retain its original coarseness; from day one, it began to compose its physiognomy, to counterfeit itself, to conceal itself under a multitude of disguises. It was to the point that the name of proprietor, synonym, in principle, for brigand and thief, became in the end, by the imperceptible transformation of property, and by one of those anticipations of the future so frequent in the religious style, precisely the opposite of the thief and brigand. I have recounted in another work this degradation of property: I will reproduce it with some developments.³³

The theft of the goods of others is practiced by an infinity of means, which the legislators have meticulously distinguished and classified, according to their degree of brutality or subtlety, as if they had sometimes wanted to punish, sometimes to encourage larceny. Thus we steal by murder on the public highway, alone or in a gang, by breaking and entering, cat-burglary, etc., by simple embezzlement, by forging public or private accounts, by fabrication of counterfeit money

This type includes all the thieves who exercise no other means than overt force or fraud: bandits, brigands, pirates, scum of land and sea. The ancient heroes glorified in these honourable names, and regarded their profession as both noble and lucrative. Nimrod, Theseus, Jason and his Argonauts, Japheth, David, Cacus, Romulus, Clovis and his Merovingian successors, Robert Guiscard, Tancred of Hauteville, Bohemond and most of the Norman adventurers, were brigands and thieves. Brigandage was the sole occupation, the sole means of existence for the nobles of the Middle Ages; it is to it that England owes all its colonies. We know the hatred of the savage peoples for work; honour, in their eyes, is not to produce, it is to take. May you cultivate a field! they say to each other as a form of curse. The heroic character of the thief is expressed in this verse from Horace, speaking of Achilles: *Jura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis*;³⁴ and by these words from the testament of Jacob, which Jews apply to David, and Christians mystically to Christ: *Manus ejus contra omnes*.³⁵ This disposition to plunder has always been inherent in the profession of arms, and if Napoleon succumbed at Waterloo, one can say that justice was done by him for the brigandage of his heroes. *With my lance and my shield, I have gold, wine and women*, General de Brossard said not long ago.

Today the thief, the strong-armed man of the Bible, is pursued like wolves and hyenas; the police have killed his noble industry; under the terms of the [legal] Code he is liable, according to his specialty and skills, to severe and infamous penalties, from imprisonment to the scaffold. The right of conquest, sung by Voltaire, is no longer tolerated: nations have become extremely sensitive to one another in this regard. As to individual occupation, carried out without a concession or the assistance of the State, we no longer see any example of it.

We steal by fraud, breach of trust, lottery and gambling.

This second type of theft was esteemed in Sparta and approved of by Lycurgus, with a view of sharpening the mind and of arousing the genius of invention amongst young people. It is the category of Solon, Sinon, Ulysses, Jews ancient and modern, from Jacob to Deutz, Bohemians; Arabs and all savages. The savage steals without shame and without remorse, not because he is depraved, but because he is naive. Under Louis XIII and Louis XIV, one was not dishonoured for cheating at gambling: that was part of the rules; honest men had no qualms about correcting,

³³ A reference to Chapter V, Part Second, section 2 of Proudhon's *What is Property? An Inquiry into the Principle of Right and of Government* (1840). (Editor)

³⁴ He says that laws were not framed for him; he claims everything by force of arms (Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 122). (Editor)

³⁵ His hand will be against every man (Genesis 16:12). (Editor)

by an adroit artifice, the outrages of fortune. Even today, and throughout the world, it is a kind of merit highly regarded amongst peasants in high or petty commerce, to *know how to make a deal*, which means to deceive his world. The first virtue of the mother of a family is to know how to rob those who sell to her or whom she hires, by constantly withholding wages and prices; and if we are not all sons of flirts, as Paul-Louis said, we are at least all sons of scoundrels.

We know with what difficulty the government resigned itself to the abolition of lotteries: it had just lost one of its most precious properties. It was not yet sixty years since confiscation has ceased to dishonour our laws: at all times the first thought of the magistrate who punishes, like that of the brigand who murders, was to despoil his victim. All our taxes, all our customs laws, have theft as their point of departure.

The crook, the swindler, the charlatan, those who speak in the name of God or who represents society, like those who sell charms, above all makes use of the dexterity of his hand, of the subtlety of his mind, of the prestige of eloquence and of a great fecundity of imagination. His talent consists in knowing how to arouse greed at the right moment. So the legislator, wanting to show his esteem for talent and kindness, has created below the category of *crimes* where only force and ambush are used, and which carry the most terrible punishments, the category of *offences*, punishable only by correctional, not ignominious, punishments. How droll of spiritualism!

We steal by usury.

This type, so odious in the Church in the past and punished so severely even in our times, is indistinguishable from lending at interest, one of the most energetic springs of production, and forms the transition between forbidden and authorised thefts. Also it gives rise, by its equivocal nature, to a host of contradictions in the laws and in morality, contradictions very simply exploited by the men of the palace, of finance and of commerce.

Thus the usurer who lends at 10 percent on a mortgage incurs an enormous fine, if he is caught; the banker who receives the same interest, not, it is true, from a loan, but as a *commission*, is protected by royal privilege. It would take too long to enumerate all the kinds of thefts which are committed by finance: suffice to say that amongst all ancient peoples the profession of money-changer, banker, excise-man or tax-collector was deemed dishonourable. Today the capitalists who place their funds either in the State, or in commerce, at a perpetual interest of 3, 4, or 5 percent, that is to say, who receive, in addition of the legitimate price of the loan, an interest less than that received by the bankers and usurers, are the flower of society. It is always the same system: moderation in theft makes our virtue.

We steal by the constitution of rent, farm-rent, house-rent, and leases.

Rent, considered in its principle and its destination, is the agrarian law by which all men must become guaranteed and irremovable proprietors of the soil; as for its importance, it represents the portion of the results which exceeds the wage of the producer, and which belongs to the community. During the period of organisation, this rent is paid, in the name of society which always manifests itself by individualisation as it is explained by facts, to the proprietor. But the proprietor does more than receive the rent, he alone enjoys it; he renders nothing to the community, he does not share with his fellows, he devours, without putting in any of his own, the product of collective labour. There is therefore theft, legal theft if you wish, but real theft.

There is theft, in commerce and industry, whenever the entrepreneur withholds something from the worker's wages, or receives a bonus in addition to what is due him.³⁶

I have proven, in dealing with value, that all labour must leave a surplus; so that assuming the consumption of the worker to be always the same, his labour should create, in addition to his subsistence, an ever greater capital. Under the regime of property, the surplus of labour, essentially collective, passes entirely, like rent, to the proprietor: now, between this disguised appropriation and the fraudulent usurpation of a communal good, where is the difference?

The consequence of this usurpation is that the worker, whose share in the collective product is constantly confiscated by the entrepreneur, is always in poverty, while the capitalist is always in profit; that commerce, the exchange of essentially equal values, is no more than the art of buying for 3 francs what is worth 6, and of selling for 6 francs that which is worth 3; and that political economy, that upholds and advocates that regime, is the theory of theft, as property, the respect for which maintains such a state of things, is the religion of force. It is just, M. Blanqui said recently to the Academy of Moral Sciences in a speech on coalitions, that labour participates in the wealth that it produces. If then it does not participate, it is unjust; and if it is unjust, it is thief, and the proprietors are thieves. Speak plainly then, economists!...

Justice, emerging from the negative community, called by the ancient poets the *golden age*, is thus the right of force. In a society that is born of organisation, the inequality of faculties awakens the idea of value; this leads to the idea of proportion between merit and fortune; and as the first and only merit then recognised is force, it is the strongest, the *aristos* (superlative *ares*, fort, proper name of the god Mars), who, being the most deserving, the best, *aristos*, has a right to the largest portion; and if that portion is refused to him, quite naturally he seizes it. From there to arrogating to himself the right of ownership over all things there is only a step.

Such was heroic right, preserved, at least in memory, amongst the Greeks and Romans, until the last days of their republics. Plato, in the *Gorgias*, introduces a character named Callicles, who by specious reasons upholds the right of the strongest, and whom Socrates, the defender of equality, *tou isou*³⁷, refutes with more eloquence than logic. It is said of the great Pompey that he readily blushed, and yet one day this escaped his lips: *That I respect the laws, when I bear arms!* This trait depicts the man in whom ambition and conscience are in conflict, and who seeks to justify his passion with a heroic maxim, a thief's proverb.

The right of force was succeeded by the right of cunning, which was only a degradation of the first, and a new manifestation of justice: a right detested by the heroes who did not shine in it and lost too much by it. The well-known story of Oedipus and the Sphinx is an allusion to this right of subtlety, according to which the victor was master, as in war, of the life of the vanquished. Skill in deceiving a rival by insidious propositions also seemed to deserve its reward; but, by a reaction which already revealed the true sentiment of the just, and which was nevertheless only an inconsistency, the strong always extolled good faith and simplicity, while the clever despised the strong, calling them brutal and barbaric.

In that time, respect for one's word and observation of oaths were of a literal rather than a logical rigour: *Uti lingua nuncupassit, ita jus esto*, as the tongue has spoken, so shall the right

³⁶ "The produce of labour constitutes the natural recompense or wages of labour" (Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations*, Book 1, Chapter VIII ["On the Wages of Labour"]). (Editor)

³⁷ Of Equal. (Editor)

be, says the law of the twelve tables.³⁸ Nascent reason is less attached to substance than to form; it instinctively senses from that it is the form, the method, which imparts all its certainty. Cunning, or rather perfidy, was almost the entire policy of ancient Rome. Amongst other examples, Vico cites this one, also related by Montesquieu: The Romans had assured the Carthaginians the preservation of their goods and their *city*, deliberately using the word *civitas*, which means society, State. The Carthaginians, on the contrary, who had understood the physical city, *urbs*, having begun to rebuild their walls, were attacked for breaching the treaty by the Romans, who, following in this heroic right, did not believe, after having deceived their enemies by an equivocation, that they were waging an unjust war. Modern diplomacy has changed nothing of these ancient customs.

In theft, such as forbidden by law, force and cunning are used alone and without accessories. In authorised theft they are disguised under some utility, which they use as a tool for despoiling their victim.

The direct recourse to violence and deceit was rejected early and with a unanimous voice; it is this agreement of peoples to renounce force that constitutes and distinguishes civilisation. No nation has yet succeeded in freeing itself from theft disguised as work, talent and possession.

The right of force and the right of cunning, celebrated by the rhapsodists in the poems of the Iliad and the Odyssey, inspired the Greek republics and filled Roman laws with their spirit, from which they have passed into our customs and our [legal] codes. Christianity has changed nothing: Christianity, having established itself as a religion, hostile from the beginning to philosophy and contemptuous of science, could not fail to welcome everything that was of a religious essence. Thus, after having professed equality and common sense in Saint Matthew and Saint Paul, it gradually rallied around it the superstitions that it had at first proscribed: polytheism, dualism, trinitarianism, magic, necromancy, hierarchy, monarchy, property, all the religions and abominations of the earth.

The ignorance of the pontiffs and councils, on all that concerns morality, has equalled that of the forum and of praetors; and this profound ignorance of society and of right is what has ruined the Church and forever dishonours its teaching. Moreover, the infidelity has been general; all Christian sects have misunderstood the precept of Christ; all have erred in morality, because they erred in doctrine: all are guilty of false propositions, full of iniquity and homicide. Let it ask for forgiveness from society, this Church which declared itself infallible, and which has not been able to preserve what was entrusted to it; let its so-called reformed sisters humiliate themselves... and the people, disillusioned but merciful, will advise.

Thus property, the *conventional* right, as different from justice as eclecticism differs from truth, and value from the market price list [*mercurial*], is constituted by a series of oscillations between the two extremes of injustice, brutal force and perfidious cunning, between which the contenders always stop at a convention. But justice comes after compromise; the convention will sooner or later express reality; true right is constantly emerging from the sophistic and arbitrary right; reform is brought about by the struggle of intelligence and force; and it is to this vast movement, whose point of departure is in the darkness of savagery, and which expires the day when society rises to the synthetic idea of possession and value; it is this ensemble of

³⁸ Ancient Roman law rested upon *Lex Duodecim Tabularum*, or The Twelve Tables. Table VI, which has to do with property, includes “As the tongue has spoken, so be the law”. This pertained to spoken words in legal transactions, particularly in the context of contracts and sales, formalising the notion that spoken declarations were binding and enforceable. (Editor)

transformations and of revolutions instinctively accomplished and which seeks its scientific and definitive solution, that I call the religion of property.

But if property, spontaneous and progressive, is a religion, it is, like monarchy and priesthood, of divine right. Similarly, inequality of conditions and fortunes, poverty, is of divine right; perjury and theft are of divine institution; the exploitation of man by man is an affirmation, what am I saying?, a manifestation of God. The true theists are the proprietors; the defenders of property are all God-fearing men; the sentences to death and hardship, which they carry out on one another as a result of their misunderstandings about property, are human sacrifices offered to the god of force. Those, on the contrary, who proclaim the imminent end of property, who raise with Jesus Christ and Saint Paul the abolition of property; who think about the production, the consumption and the distribution of wealth, are the anarchists and the atheists; and society, which visibly advances towards equality and science, society is the incessant negation of God.

A demonstration of the hypothesis of God by property, and the necessity of atheism for the physical, moral and intellectual improvement of man, such is the strange problem which remains for us to resolve. A few words will suffice: the facts are known, our proof is made.

The dominant idea of the century, the most commonplace and the most authentic idea today is the idea of PROGRESS. Since Lessing, progress, having become the basis of social beliefs, plays in minds the same role as revelation once did, which we would say it denies, when in reality it only translates it. The Latin *revelatio*, like the Greek *apokulupsis*, literally means unfolding, progress: but religious antiquity saw this unfolding in a story recounted, before the event, by God himself, while the philosophical reason of the moderns sees it in the succession of accomplished facts. Prophecy is not the opposite, it is the myth of the philosophy of history.

The development of humanity, then, but with an ever-expanding awareness, is our most profound and most comprehensive idea: development of language and laws; development of religions and philosophies; economic and industrial development; development of justice, by force, cunning, and conventions; development of the sciences and arts. And Christianity, which embraces every religion, which opposes every philosophy, which relies on one side on revelation, on the other on penance, that is to say which believes in the education of man by reason and experience, Christianity, in its entirety, is the symbolisation of progress.

In front of this sublime, fertile and highly rational idea of progress, persists and seems to revive yet another idea, gigantic, enigmatic, impenetrable to our dialectical instruments like the depths of the firmament are to a telescope: it is the idea of God.

What is God?

God is, hypothetically, the eternal, the all-powerful, the infallible, the immutable, the spontaneous, in a word, the infinite in all faculties, properties and manifestations. God is the being in whom intelligence and activity, elevated to an infinite power, become adequate and identical to fate itself: *Summa lex, summa libertas, summa necessitas*.³⁹ God, then, is by essence anti-progressive and anti-providential: *Dictum factum*⁴⁰, there is his motto, his one and only law. And as in him eternity excludes Providence, just so infallibility excludes the perception of error, and as a consequence the perception of evil: *sanctus in omnibus operibus suis*.⁴¹ But

³⁹ The highest law, the highest freedom, the highest necessity. (Editor)

⁴⁰ What is said is done. (Editor)

⁴¹ Holy in all his works (*Psalms* 145). (Editor)

God, by his quality of infinity in every sense, acquires a specification of his own, consequently a possibility of existence resulting from his opposition to the finite, progressive and providential being, which conceives him as its antagonist. God, in short, having nothing contradictory in his concept, is possible, and it is necessary to verify this involuntary hypothesis of our reason.

All these notions have been provided to us by the analysis of the human being, considered in its moral and intellectual constitution; they presented themselves, following an irrefutable dialectic, as the necessary postulate of our contingent nature and of our function on the globe.

Later, what we had first conceived only as a simple possibility of existence, was raised by the theory, from irreducible dualism and the progression of beings, to the importance of a probability. We have noted that the now established fact in science of a progressive creation, which unfolds on a dualistic substance, and whose reason and final term are already given to us, implied at its origin another fact, that of an essence infinite in spontaneity, efficacy and certainty, whose attributes, consequently, would be the opposite of those of man.

It remains then to bring to the light this probable fact, that existence *sine qua non* that reason demands, that observation suggests, but that nothing yet demonstrates, and that, in any case, its infinity and its solitude deprive us of the hope of understanding. It remains to demonstrate the indemonstrable, to penetrate the inaccessible, to place, in short, the infinite under the gaze of mortal man.

This problem, insoluble at first glance, contradictory in [its] terms, is reduced, if we take the trouble to reflect on it, to the following theorem, in which all contradiction disappears: To equate inevitability and progress, in such a manner that infinite existence and progressive existence, adequate to each other, but not identical, and on the contrary opposite, penetrating each other, but not merging, serving mutually as expression and law, appear to us in turn, as do the mind and matter that constitute them, but on another dimension, like the two inseparable and irreducible faces of the being.

We have seen, and we have been careful to note more than once, that in social science ideas are all equally eternal and evolving, simple and complex, aphoristic and subordinate. For a transcendent intelligence, there is in the economic system neither principle, nor consequence, nor demonstration, nor deduction: the truth is one and identical, without condition of sequence, because it is truth everywhere, under an infinity of aspects, and in an infinity of theories and systems. It is only by the didactic exposition that the series of propositions is manifested. Society is like a scholar who, having science lodged in his brain, embraces it in its entirety, conceives it without beginning or end, grasps it simultaneously and distinctly in all its parts, and finds in each one equal evidence and priority. But does this same man want to produce science? He is forced to unfold it in successive words, propositions and discourses, that is to say, to present as a progression what appears to him as an indivisible whole.

Thus, the ideas of liberty, equality, mine and thine, merit and demerit, credit and debit, servant and master, proportion, value, competition, monopoly, taxation, exchange, division of labour, machines, customs, rent, inheritance, etc., etc., all the categories, all the oppositions, all the syntheses named from the beginning of the world in the economic vocabulary, are contemporary in reason. And yet, to constitute a science that is accessible to us, these ideas need to be arranged according to a theory that shows them engendering one another, and that has its beginning, middle and end. In order to enter into human practice and be realised in an effective manner, these same ideas must be posed in a series of oscillating institutions,

accompanied by a thousand unforeseen accidents and lengthy trial-and-errors. In short, as in science there is the absolute and transcendental truth and the theoretical truth, so in society there is at once inevitability and providence, spontaneity and reflection, the second of these two powers constantly working to supplant the first, but always in reality doing only the same task.

Inevitability is therefore one form of being and of the idea; deduction, progress, another form.

But inevitability, progress, these are abstractions of language that nature does not know, in which everything is realised or is not. There is, then, in humanity, the *inevitable being* and the *progressive being*, inseparable, but distinct; opposed, antagonistic, but forever irreducible.

As creatures endowed with an unreflective and involuntary spontaneity, subject to the laws of a physical and social organism, ordered for all eternity, immutable in its terms, irresistible in its whole, and which fulfils and realises itself by development and growth; insofar as we live, grow and die, as we labour, exchange, love, etc., we are the inevitable being, *in quo vivimus, movemur et sumus*.⁴² We are its substance, its soul, its body, its face, in the same way and neither less nor more than animals, plants and stones.

But insofar as we observe, reflect, learn and act accordingly; insofar as we submit nature to ourselves and become masters of ourselves, we are the progressive being; we are men. God, *natura naturans*, is the basis, the eternal substance of society; and society, *natura naturata*, is the inevitable being in perpetual emission of itself.⁴³ Physiology represents, though imperfectly, this duality, in its well-known distinction between *organic* life and the life of *relation*. God does not exist solely in society, he is in all of nature: but it is only in society that God is perceived, by his opposition with the progressive being; it is society, it is man who by his evolution puts an end to the original pantheism, and this is why the naturalist who immerses himself and absorbs himself in physiology and matter, without ever studying society or man, gradually loses the feeling of divinity. Everything is God for him, which is to say, there is no God.

God and man, different in nature, are therefore distinguished by their ideas and their acts, in a word, by their language.

The world is the consciousness of God. The ideas or facts of consciousness in God are attraction, movement, life, number, measure, unity, opposition, progression, series, equilibrium: all the ideas conceived and produced eternally, consequently without succession, foresight or error. The language of God, the signs of his ideas, are all beings and their phenomena.

The ideas or facts of consciousness in man are attention, comparison, memory, judgment, reasoning, imagination, time, space, causality, the beautiful and the sublime, love and hate, pain and pleasure. These ideas, man produces them externally by specific signs: languages,

⁴² In Whom we live, are moved, and have our being. (Editor)

⁴³ The terms “*Natura naturans*” and “*Natura naturata*” goes back to at least the thirteenth century. “*Natura naturans*” is literally “naturing nature” while “*Natura naturata*” is “natured nature.” These terms are most commonly associated with the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677). For Spinoza, *natura naturans* refers to the self-causing activity of nature, while *natura naturata* refers to nature considered as a passive product of an infinite causal chain. For Spinoza, Nature and God were the same. (Editor)

industry, agriculture, sciences and arts, religions, philosophies, laws, governments, wars, conquests, joyous and gloomy ceremonies, revolutions, progress.

The ideas of God are common to man, who comes from God like nature; who is even only the consciousness of nature; who takes the ideas of God for principles and materials all of his own, and converts into his being and assimilates incessantly the divine substance. But the ideas of man are foreign to God, who does not understand our progress, and for whom all the products of our imagination are monsters, or nothingness. This is why man speaks the language of God as his own, while God is powerless to speak the language of man; and no conversation, no pact between them, is possible. This is why everything in humanity that comes from God, ends at God or returns to God, is hostile to man, harmful to his development and to his perfection.

God creates the world, driving, so to speak, man from his bosom, because he is infinite power, and his essence is to engender progress eternally: *Pater ab ævo se videns parem sibi gignit natum*, says Catholic theology.⁴⁴ God and man are therefore necessary to one another, and one of the two cannot be denied without the other disappearing at the same time. What would progress be without an absolute and immutable law? What would fate be, if it did not unfold outside? Let us suppose, by some impossibility, that the activity in God suddenly ceased: creation returns to a chaotic existence; it returns to the state of matter without forms, of mind without ideas, of unintelligible fate. God ceases to act, God is no more.

But God and man, despite the necessity which binds them, are irreducible; what the moralists have called, by a pious calumny, the war of man with himself, and which is at bottom only the war of man against God, the war of reflection against instinct, the war of the reason which prepares, chooses and temporises, against the impetuous and fatal passion, is its irrefutable proof. The existence of God and man is proven by their eternal antagonism: here is what explains the contradiction of the cults, which sometimes implore God to spare man, not to deliver him to temptation, like Phædra beseeching Venus to tear the love of Hippolytus from her heart;⁴⁵ sometimes ask God for wisdom and understanding, like the sons of David when he ascended to the throne, as we still do in our masses of the Holy-Spirit. This is what explains, finally, most of the civil and religious wars, the persecution of ideas, the fanaticism of customs, the hatred of science, the horror of progress, primary causes of all the evils which afflict our species.

Man, as man, can never be found in contradiction with himself; he senses trouble and rupture only by the resistance of God who is in him. In man is united all the spontaneities of nature, all the instigations of inevitable Being, all the gods and demons of the universe. To subdue these powers, to discipline this anarchy, man has only his reason, his progressive thought: and this is what constitutes the sublime drama whose vicissitudes form, in their entirety, the ultimate reason for all the existences. The destiny of nature and of man is the metamorphosis of God: but God is inexhaustible, and our struggle eternal.

Let us not be surprised then if everything that professes mysticism and religion, everything that belongs to or claims to be God, everything that strives to regress towards primitive ignorance, everything that advocates the satisfaction of the flesh and the worship of the passions, shows

⁴⁴ The Father, seeing himself from eternity, begets a son equal to himself. (Editor)

⁴⁵ In Greek mythology, Phædra was a Cretan princess the daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë, and the wife of Theseus. Later in life, Phædra fell in love with her stepson, Hippolytus. After he rejected her advances, she accused him of trying to rape her. In response, Theseus prayed to Poseidon and asked the god to kill Hippolytus, which he did. Phædra then committed suicide. (Editor)

itself a partisan of property, an enemy of equality and of justice. We are on the eve of a battle in which all the enemies of man will be summoned against him, the senses, the heart, the imagination, pride, sloth, doubt: *Astiterunt reges terræ adversus Christum!*...⁴⁶ The cause of property is the cause of dynasties and of priesthoods, of demagoguery and of sophistry, of the unproductive and of the parasitic. No hypocrisy, no seduction will be spared to defend it. To lead the people, they will begin by feeling pity for its misery; they will arouse in it love and tenderness, everything that can lessen courage and bend the will; they will raise above philosophical reflection and science its blissful instinct. Then they will preach to it national glories; they will stir its patriotism; they will speak to it of its great men, and little by little, the worship of Reason, always proscribed, will be replaced by the worship of exploiters, the idolatry of aristocrats.

For the people, like nature, loves to realise its ideas: to theoretical questions, it prefers questions of persons. If it revolts against Ferdinand, it is in order to obey Mazaniello. It requires a Lafayette, a Mirabeau, a Napoleon, a demi-god. In general, it will not accept its salvation from the hands of a clerk, unless it dresses him. Also see how the worship of idols prospers! See the fanatics of Fourier and of the good Icarian⁴⁷, great men who want to organise society, and have never been able to establish a kitchen; see the democrats, making greatness and virtue consist of a success of the tribune, always ready to race to the Rhine, like the Athenians to Chaeronea, at the voice of some Demosthenes who the day before will have received the gold of Philip, and will cast his shield into the battle.

No one is concerned with ideas, principles, the understanding of accomplished facts: it seems that we already have ancient wisdom. The democracy is at Rousseau; the dynastics and legitimists dream of Louis XIV; the bourgeois go back to Louis the Fat; the priests stop only at Gregory VII, and the socialists at Jesus: it is a question of who will go back the farthest. In this universal collapse, study is no longer, like fragmented labour, anything but a way of becoming stupefied; critique is reduced to insipid farce; all philosophy expires.

Is this not what we saw a few months ago, when, to cite just a one example of it, a scholar, a friend of the people, professing to teach history and progress, through a deluge of elegiac and dithyrambic phrases, was only able to express this pitiful judgment on the social question:

“As for communism, a word suffices. The last country where property will be abolished is precisely France. If, as someone of that school said, *Property is theft*, there are twenty-five million proprietors here who will not part with it tomorrow.”

The author of this mockery is M. MICHELET, professor at the College of France, member of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences; and the *someone* to whom he alludes, is me. M. Michelet could name me without me blushing: the definition of property is mine, and my whole ambition is to prove that I have understood its meaning and extent. *Property is theft!* there are not two words like that said in a thousand years. I have no other asset on earth than this definition of property: but I hold it more precious than the millions of Rothschild, and I dare say that it will be the most significant event of the government of Louis-Philippe.

But who has told M. Michelet that the negation of property necessarily implied communism? How does he know that France is the last country in the world where property will be abolished?

⁴⁶ The kings of the earth stood together against Christ. (Editor)

⁴⁷ Étienne Cabet (1788-1856) was a philosopher and socialist who published *Voyage en Icarie* (1839), translated in 1840 as *Travels in Icaria*, which described an ideal society. Proudhon considered him a utopian socialist. (Editor)

Why, instead of *twenty-five* million proprietors, did he not say *thirty-four*? Where has he seen that we accuse persons, as we accuse institutions? And when he adds that the twenty-five million proprietors who own France will not relinquish tomorrow, who gives him the right to suppose that their consent is needed for this? In five lines M. Michelet had the talent to be absurd five times: he was no doubt keen to fulfil the prediction that I once made against anyone who would try in the future to defend property. But what is to be said to a man who, after forty years of studying history, has come to preach in the nineteenth century, for all science, emancipation by INSTINCT?... Let another discuss with M. Michelet: as for me, I refer him to the chronology.