

HENRI DE  
SAINT-SIMON



READER



PRINCIPLES, PROPOSITIONS &  
DISCUSSIONS  
FOR LAND & FREEDOM

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD TO THE ‘ANARCHIVE’  
“Anarchy is Order!”

*I must Create a System or be enslav'd by  
another Man's.  
I will not Reason & Compare: my business  
is to Create'*  
(William Blake)

During the 19th century, anarchism has developed as a result of a social current which aims for freedom and happiness. A number of factors since World War I have made this movement, and its ideas, disappear little by little under the dust of history.

After the classical anarchism – of which the Spanish Revolution was one of the last representatives—a ‘new’ kind of resistance was founded in the sixties which claimed to be based (at least partly) on this anarchism. However this resistance is often limited to a few (and even then partly misunderstood) slogans such as ‘Anarchy is order’, ‘Property is theft’,...

Information about anarchism is often hard to come by, monopolised and intellectual; and therefore visibly disappearing. The ‘anarchive’ or ‘anarchist archive’ Anarchy is Order ( in short **A.O**) is an attempt to make the ‘**principles, propositions and discussions**’ of this tradition available again for anyone it concerns. We believe that these texts are part of our own heritage. They don’t belong to publishers, institutes or specialists.

These texts thus have to be available for all anarchists and other people interested. That is one of the conditions to give anarchism a new impulse, to let the ‘new anarchism’ outgrow the slogans. This is what makes this project relevant for us: we must find our roots to be able to renew ourselves. We have to learn from the mistakes of our socialist past. History has shown that a large number of the anarchist ideas remain

standing, even during the most recent social-economic developments.

**‘Anarchy Is Order’ does not make profits, everything is spread at the price of printing- and papercosts. This of course creates some limitations for these archives.**

**Everyone is invited to spread along the information we give . This can be done by copying our leaflets, printing texts from the CD (collecting all available texts at a given moment) that is available or copying it, e-mailing the texts to friends and new ones to us,... Become your own anarchivist!!!**

(Be aware though of copyright restrictions. We also want to make sure that the anarchist or non-commercial printers, publishers and authors are not being harmed. Our priority on the other hand remains to spread the ideas, not the ownership of them.)

The anarchivist offers these texts hoping that values like **freedom, solidarity and direct action** get a new meaning and will be lived again; so that the struggle continues against the

*“...demons of flesh and blood, that sway scepters down here;  
and the dirty microbes that send us dark diseases and wish to  
squash us like horseflies;  
and the will- ‘o-the-wisp of the saddest ignorance.”*

(L-P. Boon)

The rest depends as much on you as it depends on us. Don't mourn, Organise!

Comments, questions, criticism, cooperation can be sent to [A.O@advalvas.be](mailto:A.O@advalvas.be).

A complete list and updates are available on this address, new texts are always

welcome!!

# **CLAUDE HENRI DE ROUVROY, COMTE DE SAINT-SIMON, 1760-1825**

## **Contents:**

<b>CLAUDE HENRI DE ROUVROY, COMTE DE SAINT-SIMON, 1760-1825 .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Major Works of Saint-Simon.....	7
Resources on Saint-Simon.....	7
<b>SAINT-SIMON: THE PRECURSOR OF SOCIALISM</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Saint Simon et les Saint-simoniens.....</b>	<b>17</b>
1779-1783 .....	18
1814-1815 .....	20
1816-1818 .....	21
1819 : Sa parabole.....	22
La question de l'éducation.....	24
1823.....	25
1825.....	26
Ses successeurs après sa mort .....	27
Les saint-simoniens.....	28
Face à la révolte des canuts.....	29
Prosper Enfantin.....	33
La fin des saint-simoniens.....	34
Comment Blanqui critique les saint-simoniens.....	34
Le milieu patronal saint-simonien.....	35
La position de Marx .....	36
Sources bibliographiques .....	38
<b>Lettres d'un habitant de Genève à ses contemporains .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Series of the Development of Human Intelligence ...</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Society Does Not Really Need Government.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>On Social Organization .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>The Failure of European Liberalism .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>The Court of Louis XIV .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>The Court .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Life at Versailles .....</b>	<b>91</b>



Ruined aristocrat, an officer in the American Revolution war, a real estate speculator and journalist, Henri de Saint-Simon is reknowned as the founder of the "Saint-Simonian" movement, a type of semi-mystical "Christian-Scientific" [socialism](#) that pervaded the 19th Century. Saint-Simon envisaged the reorganization of society with an elite of philosophers, engineers and scientists leading a peaceful process of industrialization tamed by their "rational" Christian-Humanism. His advocacy of a "New Christianity" -- a secular humanist religion to replace the defunct traditional religions -- was to have scientists as priests. This priestly task was actually taken up by two of his followers -- Barthelemy-Prosper Enfantin (1796-1864) and Saint-Amand Bazard (1791-1832) -- who infected the whole movement with their bizarre mysticism and ritual.

Saint-Simon was crucial for the development of the social sciences: his call for a "science of society" on the same footing as the natural sciences, was highly influential on his disciple Auguste [Comte](#) and the [sociologists](#) and was the primary cause of the scientific pretensions of economics. One could count Thomas [Carlyle](#), Michel [Chevalier](#), John Stuart [Mill](#) and the young Léon [Walras](#) as adherents of Saint-Simonism.

Saint-Simon's vision was highly influential on French society ( and more generally, throughout Europe) all through the 19th Century, including the Emperor Napoleon III. The political highwater-mark of Saint-Simonism was perhaps the French July Revolution of 1830. But the influence of Saint-Simonism on future versions of [socialism](#) was more pronounced. Saint-Simon's "scientism" was particularly influential on the development of [Marxian](#) doctrine -- and, for that same reason, Saint-Simon was condemned by [Hayek](#) (1952).

Although Saint-Simon was one of the first to identify the process of "industrialization" as it was happening in Europe, his concern with the laboring classes was more reserved, although noting the "unnaturalness" of unemployment. In general, Saint-Simon's bourgeois elitism distinguished him from the later more "labor-orientated" [socialist](#) thinkers -- notably those radicalized by the 1848 Revolution, such as [Blanc](#) and [Proudhon](#). Indeed, Saint-Simon's enthusiasm for the "spontaneous harmony" of the "organism" of industrial society has led some to claim that he was really a [Classical Liberal](#) in disguise. The famed Saint-Simonian critique on private property was due more to his followers (notably *Enfantin*) than himself. But Saint-Simon was clearly a *dirigiste* in economic policy matters.

## MAJOR WORKS OF SAINT-SIMON

[Letters from an Inhabitant of Geneva to His Contemporaries](#), 1803 ([copy](#))

*Introduction aux Travaux Scientifiques du Dixneuvieme Siècle*, 1807.

[Memoire sur la Science de l'Homme](#), 1813.

*De la Réorganisation de la société européenne*, with A. Thierry, 1817.

*Industrie*, with A. [Comte](#), 1819.

*La Politique*, 1821.

[Du Système industriel](#), 1823.

[De l'Organisation Sociale](#), 1825

*Le Cathécisme des Industriels* with A. [Comte](#), 1825 ([extract](#))

*New Christianity*, 1825 - (English selections)

## RESOURCES ON SAINT-SIMON

[Exposition of the Doctrine of Saint-Simon](#) by Saint-Amand Bazard, 1828

[Portrait of Saint-Simon](#) at Duke.

["Claude Henri de Rouvrey Saint-Simon"](#) by Ken Tribe, from *New Palgrave*, 1987 (at Marburg)

["The Utopian Mayeux: Henri de Saint-Simon meets the Bossu a la Mode"](#), by Elizabeth Menon, 1998, *Canadian J of History*

[Saint-Simon](#)" and [Saint-Simonians](#)" by Robert Carlisle at Encyclopedia of Revolutions of 1848 (Ohio)

[Saint-Simon Page](#) at Marxists.org.

[Saint-Simon Page](#) at Thinkquest.

[Saint-Simon](#) at Britannica.com

[Saint-Simon](#) at Encyclopedia of Marxism

[Saint-Simon](#) at Univ. Richmond

[Fondation Saint-Simon](#)

## SAINT-SIMON: THE PRECURSOR OF SOCIALISM

---

Henri de Saint-Simon was an intellectual eccentric. He was a member of an aristocratic family who abandoned his title of Comte with a dramatic gesture in the French Revolution and spent most of his life in poverty. He was a rationalist and a moralist. He was a man of letters who never succeeded in writing or completing any coherent exposition of his ideas. After his death, he became the eponymous father of a sect devoted to the propagation of his teaching, which enjoyed a European reputation.

Saint-Simon lacked most of the traditional attributes of the great man. It is never easy to distinguish between what he himself thought and the much more coherent body of doctrine, some of it astonishingly penetrating, some not less astonishingly silly, which the sect built up round his name. It is certain that posterity has read back into some of his aphorisms a greater clarity and a greater significance than he himself gave to them. But the study of Saint-Simon often seems to suggest that the great French Revolution, not content with the ideas which inspired its leaders and which it spread over the contemporary world, also projected into the future a fresh ferment of ideas which, working beneath the surface, were to be the main agents of the social and political revolutions of one hundred years to come.

Of these ideas Saint-Simon provided the first inkling on the printed page. No one who studies about him can avoid applying to him the word "precursor." He was the precursor of socialism, the precursor of the technocrats, the precursor of totalitarianism—all these labels fit, not perfectly, but, considering the distance of time and the



originality of the conceptions as first formulated, with amazing appositeness.

Saint-Simon died at the age of sixty-five in 1825, on the eve of a period of unprecedented material progress and sweeping social and political change. His writings again and again gave an uncanny impression of one who has had a hurried preview of the next hundred years of history and, excited, confused and only half understanding, tried to set down disjointed fragments of what he had seen. He is the type of the great man as the reflector, rather than the maker, of history.

The approach of Saint-Simon to the phenomenon of man in society already has the modern stamp. In 1783, at the age of twenty-three, he had recorded his life's ambition: "To create a scientific work useful to humanity." Saint-Simon marks the transition from the deductive rationalism of the eighteenth to the inductive rationalism of the nineteenth century—from metaphysics to science. He inaugurates the cult of science and of the scientific method. He rejects equally the "divine order" of the theologians and the "natural order" of Adam Smith and the physiocrats. In his first published writing, *Letters of a Geneva Citizen*, he enunciated the principle that "social organization must be treated absolutely in the same way as any other scientific question." The term "sociology" was apparently the invention of Saint-Simon's most famous pupil, once his secretary, Auguste Comte. But the idea came from the master himself and was the essence of his philosophy.

Another of Saint-Simon's pupils, Augustin Thierry, was to become a famous historian. There is in Saint-Simon not only an embryonic sociology, but an embryonic theory of history which looks forward to a whole school from Buckle to Spengler. History is a study of the scientific laws governing human development, which is

divided into "organizing epochs" and "critical epochs." The continuity of past, present and future is clearly established. "History is social physics." No doubt later nineteenth-century and twentieth-century theories of history owe more to Hegel than to Saint-Simon. But they owe most of all to Karl Marx, who combined the metaphysical historicism of Hegel with Saint-Simon's sociological utilitarianism.

But perhaps Saint-Simon's most original insight—original enough at a moment when the French Revolution had consecrated the emancipation and enthronement of the individual after a struggle of three centuries—was his vision of the coming resubordination of the individual to society. Saint-Simon, though no partisan of revolution in principle (he once said flatly that dictatorship was preferable to revolution), never abated his enthusiasm for the revolution which had overthrown the ancien regime. Feudalism was always the enemy. It may well be due to Saint-Simon that "feudalism" became Marx's chosen label for the pre-bourgeois order of society. Nearly all Saint-Simon's contemporaries, and most western European thinkers for at least two generations to come, took it for granted that liberalism was the natural antithesis, and therefore the predestined successor, of "feudalism." Saint-Simon saw no reason for the assumption. He was not a reactionary, nor even a conservative; but he was not a liberal either. He was something different—and new.

It was clear to Saint-Simon that, after Descartes and Kant, after Rousseau and the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the cult of individual liberty, of the individual as an end in himself, could go no farther. There are some astonishingly modern echoes in a collection of essays under the title *Industry*, dating from 1816: The Declaration of the Rights of Man which has been

regarded as the solution of the problem of social liberty was in reality only the statement of the problem. A passage of *The Industrial System*, in which Saint-Simon a few years later sought to establish the new historical perspective, is worth quoting in full:

The maintenance of liberty was bound to be an object of primary attention so long as the feudal and theological system still had some power, because then liberty was exposed to serious and continuous attacks. But today one can no longer have the same anxiety in establishing the industrial and scientific system, since this system must necessarily, and without any direct concern in the matter, bring with it the highest degree of liberty in the temporal and in the social sphere.

Or again, and more emphatically:

The vague and metaphysical idea of liberty, in circulation today, if it continues to be taken as the basis of political doctrines, would tend pre-eminently to hamper the action of the mass on the individual. From this point of view it would be contrary to the development of civilization and to the organization of an ordered system which demands that the parties should be firmly bound to the whole and dependent on it.

The individual, as Saint-Simon puts it elsewhere, depends on "the mass," and it is the relations of each individual with this "progressively active, expanding and overwhelming mass" which have to be "studied and organized." Even the word "liberty," in the first two passages quoted has the question-begging adjective "social" quietly appended to it. The proper study of mankind is no longer man, but the masses.

In short, Saint-Simon stood at the point of transition from feudal to industrial civilization. He perceived the nature of the transition more clearly than his contemporaries, and read more of its implications. How

far he himself foresaw the practical application of science to industry cannot be ascertained. It was his disciples who hailed the building of railways with an almost religious fervor as the symbol and instrument of social progress (one recalls Lenin's definition of socialism as "the Soviets plus electrification" and other disciples who in 1840's founded the Society for the Study of the Suez Canal. But Saint-Simon insisted that industrial production was henceforth the main function of society. "Industry" "production", "organization"-these were the key words in the Saint-Simonist vocabulary.

Logically enough, therefore, Saint-Simon appears as one of the founders of the nineteenth-century cult of work. The beginnings of it are in Rousseau and Babeuf; but it was Saint-Simon who placed it in the very center of his system. The conception of leisure and contemplation as the highest state of mankind died with the last vestiges of the medieval order. "All men will work," wrote Saint-Simon in the Letter of a Geneva Citizen, where so many of his ideas appear in their primary and simplest form; "the obligation is imposed on every man to give constantly to his personal powers a direction useful to society." Indeed, in a later "Declaration of Principles," he defines society "as the sum total and union of men engaged in useful work." The new principle of morality is "man must work;" and "the happiest nation is the nation in which there are the fewest unemployed." Saint-Simon provided the moral foundation for the labor theory of value which was being worked out at the same period in England by Ricardo. He also looked forward to the prominence given one hundred years later in the new Soviet gospel to the precept: "he that does not work neither shall he eat."

The generation which followed Saint-Simon was fruitful in the creation of Utopias. His views on the organization

of society and the State, though there is no systematic exposition of them, were among the most popular of his speculations. It need hardly be said that the liberal conception of politics and economics, introduced into France by Adam Smith's disciple J. B. Say, was anathema to Saint-Simon, for whom "politics is the science of production." But the identification is achieved by the subordination of politics to economics, not of economics to politics. This is logical; for since "society rests wholly on industry," which is "the sole source of all riches and all prosperity," it follows that "the state of things most favorable to industry is for that very reason most favorable to society." Government in the old sense is a necessary evil. Its sole purpose is to put and keep men at work; for, unhappily, there are "thieves." But this is a minor and subsidiary function. The supreme authority will be an "economic parliament" (a notion which still had its attractions more than a century later), divided into three chambers concerned respectively with invention, examination and execution.

But Saint-Simon's city of the future presents other features still more curious. The division of functions is precise. The artists will appeal to the imagination of the worker and excite the appropriate passions. The men of learning "will establish the laws of health of the body social". (Incidentally these provisions show that the marshalling of art and science in the service of the State is neither new nor peculiar to any one part of Europe.) The "industrials" (in which term Saint-Simon includes producers of all kinds and even traders) will legislate and issue administrative orders. Finally the executive-it is an unexpected climax-will be composed of bankers.

It was the age of the great private banks. The power of credit in the affairs of government and of business was just becoming a current topic. For Saint-Simon, as for

Lenin nearly a century later, the banks were the hidden hand that made the wheels of production go round. It was as logical for Saint-Simon to give them a central place in his administrative scheme as for Lenin to treat the nationalization of the banks as the key measure necessary to destroy the economic stronghold of the bourgeoisie. But what is interesting is to find an embryonic philosophy of planning built up by Saint-Simon round this central executive function of the banks: The present anarchy of production, which corresponds to the fact that economic relations are being developed without uniform regulation, must give way to the organization of production. Production will not be directed by isolated entrepreneurs independent of each other and ignorant of the needs of the people; this task will be entrusted to a specific social institution. A central committee of administration, being able to review a broad field of social economy from a higher point of vantage, will regulate it in a manner useful to the whole society, will transfer the means of production into hands appropriate for this purpose, and will be specially concerned to maintain a constant harmony between production and demand. there are institutions which include among their actions a certain degree of organization of economic work: the banks.

Lenin, who quotes this passage at second-hand and is, perhaps, a little jealous for Marx's priority, calls it "a guess of genius, but still only a guess."

More directly fruitful than these visions of a distant future was the conception, running through Saint-Simon's writing about the State, of a distinction between "government" and "administration." It recurs in many shapes. Formerly there were spiritual and temporal "powers". Today these have given place to scientific and industrial "capacities." Power, which is an absolute of

government, is an oppressive force exercised by men over men; and "the action of man on man is in itself always harmful to the species." On the other hand, "the only useful action exercised by man is the action of man on things." This is administration; and "an enlightened society needs only to be administered." Society is "destined to pass from the governmental or military regime to the administrative or industrial regime after having made sufficient progress in positive sciences and in industry."

Saint-Simon does not say, like Engels, that the State will die away. Even Engels' phrase that "the government of men will be replaced by the administration of things" has not been traced textually to the works of Saint-Simon and his disciples. But the idea is borrowed direct from him. The influence of Saint-Simon on Proudhon and on the development of French syndicalist thought, with its contempt for the politics of government, is not less obvious.

How far should Saint-Simon be called, not merely a precursor of socialism, but himself a "socialist." The word had apparently not been coined in his lifetime. It cannot be traced back farther than 1827, when it appeared in England in an Owenite publication. Its first recorded use in French is in an article of 1832 in *Le Globe*, a newspaper edited by Saint-Simon's disciples after his death. In the sense of placing the stress on society rather than on the individual, Saint-Simon was a socialist. But in the more political modern sense many doubts arise. The only occasion when Saint-Simon placed a label on his own political opinions was when he said that he belonged neither to the Conservative Party nor to the Liberal Party but to the *parti industriel*; and while it may be misleading to translate *industriel* by "industrial", it can hardly be made to mean "Socialist" or

even "Labor" His legislature of industriels and executive of bankers came nearer to a benevolent despotism of technocrats or to the managerial society of later speculations.

On the other hand, Saint-Simon was constantly preoccupied with the well-being of those whom he called, in a much-quoted phrase, "the class more numerous and more poor." He stood in principle for equality of distribution ("luxury will become useful and moral when the whole nation envies it"), though he did not make this square with his desire to adjust rewards to capacities.

He believed that "the existence of society depends on the conservation of the right of property." But he added that every society must decide for itself what things could become objects of private property and on what conditions they might be held; for "the individual right of property can be based only on the common and general utility of the exercise of this right - a utility which may vary with the period."

Not only is the priority of the claims of society over those of the individual once more unequivocally asserted, but the idea of historical relativism is introduced to bar any absolute right. Rejection of the feudal conception of property as the absolute right on which society rests is fundamental to Saint-Simon's thought. The society of the future will be not a society of proprietors but a society of producers.

---

Send questions and suggestions to [Professor Gerhard Rempel](#), Department of History, Western New England College. Last Revised 12-18-95.



## SAINT SIMON ET LES SAINT-SIMONIENS

SOMMAIRE : [Milieu familial et social - 1779-1783](#) - [La Révolution française et l'Empire - 1814-1815](#) - [1816-1818](#) - [Le « \*système industriel\* » - 1819](#) : [Sa parabole](#) - [La question de l'éducation - 1823](#) - [1825](#) - [Ses successeurs après sa mort](#) - [Les saint-simoniens](#) - [Face à la révolte des canuts](#) - [Prosper Enfantin](#) - [La fin des saint-simoniens](#) - [Comment Blanqui critique les saint-simoniens](#) - [Le milieu patronal saint-simonien](#) - [La position de Marx](#) - [Dans le mouvement ouvrier français de la fin du XIXe siècle](#) - [Dans le mouvement communiste français à ses débuts](#)

Dans l'« après révolution française » les forces sociales ont continué à évoluer, les idées aussi et le militantisme a changé de visage.

Les parcours militants ne sont pas forcément liés à des luttes, ils se sont bien souvent tournés vers des directions qui se sont avérées des impasses mais ils ont à chaque fois nourri leurs successeurs. Les idées de Marx en particulier ne peuvent être assimilées si on ne prend pas en compte les rôles respectifs et différents de penseurs et militants tels Saint Simon, Fourier ou Comte. Voilà pourquoi il faut régulièrement parcourir les textes de ces trois « proto-socialistes ».

Un aspect enrichissant de ces trois mouvements de pensées, c'est que, issus incontestablement des idées des Lumières et de la Révolution française ils ne reviennent pas inlassablement, comme pour se doper, sur le passé, aussi riche soit-il. En outre, aucun de ces trois penseurs ne perd de temps à annoncer une nouvelle Révolution imminente. Ils ont déjà fort à faire à mettre au clair leurs idées, qui sont si riches et novatrices par elles-mêmes,

sans avoir besoin d'appeler à l'aide un avenir dont ils savent de toute façon qu'il ira dans le sens de l'émancipation de l'humanité.

Leur confiance dans les idées et dans l'Humanité est impressionnante. Un oeil sur le passé et un autre sur l'avenir, ils font des hypothèses toujours ambitieuses, et jamais répétitives. Ils ne s'arrêtent pas à un développement sous prétexte que le petit peuple ne le comprendrait pas. Ils ne cherchent pas non plus à tout prix l'« unité » avec d'autres penseurs ou d'autres mouvements. Ils ne cherchent pas non plus la polémique systématique. Et ils apparaissent avec leurs faiblesses, que Marx va mettre en évidence, et avec leur engagement et pour tout cela ils sont attachants, mais aussi précieux, tant leurs idées furent fécondes.

Milieu familial et social

Avec Saint Simon on n'est pas encore précisément dans le milieu militant du XIXe siècle. Sa famille prétendait descendre de Charlemagne, et lui-même affirmait que le même Charlemagne lui était un jour apparu ! Toujours est-il qu'il est né à Paris en 1760. Sa famille est noble, et lui-même a le titre de comte.

Il se fait remarquer très tôt, en refusant de faire sa première communion ! Du coup, son père le fait enfermer à Saint Lazare. Une fois libéré, il se tourne vers les livres de Rousseau et D'Alembert, qui l'enthousiasment. D'ailleurs D'Alembert aurait même été son précepteur.

1779-1783

Il part comme officier de marine en Amérique. Il participe à la Guerre américaine pour l'Indépendance. Mais c'est plus l'économie que la politique qui le fascine dans le Nouveau Monde. Aux États-Unis, en effet, il découvre l'essor de l'industrie naissante. Il découvre une

société où la religion a dé péri, et où la morale est fondée sur de nouvelles bases, celles de l'entreprise. Dans ses voyages, il visite aussi la Hollande et l'Espagne.

La Révolution française et l'Empire

Il en est un témoin actif. À cette époque, il vit en Picardie. Il participe à la rédaction des cahiers de doléances dans sa région. Ensuite, il fait moins de politique et plutôt des affaires financières. Il devient suspect, car il a des membres de sa famille qui ont rejoint le camp contre-révolutionnaire. Cela lui vaut un séjour en prison. De la Révolution, il tire surtout l'expérience réussie de ses spéculations sur les biens nationaux. Mais il refuse d'émigrer et s'enthousiasme pour les changements dans toute la société.

Les changements économiques du début du XIXe siècle renforcent son envie de donner la priorité à l'esprit d'entreprise. Saint Simon est aussi témoin des événements qui suivent la Révolution française, les guerres dans toute l'Europe, sous le commandement de Bonaparte. Il le considère d'abord comme un grand homme, un prince éclairé, fils de la Révolution. De plus il se trouve que Napoléon fonde l'Académie des Sciences naturelles et d'autres Académies des sciences et des arts. Pour Saint Simon, cette démarche va dans le même sens que ce qu'il voit dans toute la société. Il approuve l'idée de donner le plus possible de pouvoir à la nouvelle élite, les savants. Mais quand il s'aperçoit que ce n'est pas le vrai dessein de Napoléon et que celui-ci d'ailleurs repousse ses avances, il finit par s'en éloigner.

Il se met à écrire véritablement à partir de 1814. Il a pour amis puis secrétaires le jeune historien Augustin Thierry puis le jeune philosophe Auguste Comte.

1814-1815

Et dès ces années, Saint-Simon montre non seulement de l'audace politique, mais en plus du courage personnel : que ce soit en 1814, pendant l'occupation des troupes alliées dans Paris, ou en 1815 pendant les Cent Jours ou après Waterloo, quand il proclame que l'union de la France, de l'Angleterre et de l'Allemagne est nécessaire, et que c'est la seule voie pour le développement et la paix en Europe.

En 1814 il fait paraître *De la Réorganisation de la société européenne*, ouvrage écrit avec Augustin Thierry. On y lit notamment : « *Tout me dit que l'examen des grandes questions politiques sera le but des travaux de notre temps. La philosophie du siècle dernier a été révolutionnaire ; celle du XIXe siècle doit être organisatrice.* » Il imagine ainsi, grâce à cette bonne organisation, rendre la politique « *positive* » : « *L'âge d'or du genre humain n'est point derrière nous, il est au-devant, il est dans la perfection de l'ordre social ; nos pères ne l'ont point vu, nos enfants y arriveront un jour ; c'est à nous de leur en frayer la route.* »

Saint Simon est conscient de vivre une époque pleine de possibilités. Malgré les guerres en Europe, il perçoit ce qui est porteur d'avenir, en particulier le développement des sciences, qui lui semblent annoncer un progrès des techniques sans précédent. Il veut alors faire la synthèse des sciences, dépasser les Lumières et ouvrir la voie à la « positivité ». L'homme et la société sont objets de connaissance. Saint Simon poursuit ici les recherches de Montesquieu en matière de sciences que nous appelons aujourd'hui sociales.

Mais c'est aussi une avancée dans la science de la politique et du socialisme, comme le salue Engel, qui écrit dans son *Anti-Dürhing* : « *En 1816, [Saint Simon] proclame la politique science de la production et il*

*prédit la résorption entière de la politique dans l'économie. Si l'idée que la situation économique est la base des institutions politiques n'apparaît ici qu'en germe, le passage du gouvernement politique des hommes à une administration des choses et à une direction des opérations de production, donc l'abolition de l'Etat, dont on a fiât dernièrement tant de bruit, se trouve déjà clairement énoncée ici. »*

1816-1818

C'est dans *L'Industrie*, le recueil collectif que Saint Simon signe avec, entre autres, Thierry et Comte, qui paraît dans ces années 1816-1818, qu'on peut lire ses phrases fameuses : « *Tout par l'industrie, tout pour elle.* », « *L'économie politique est le véritable et unique fondement de la politique.* », « *La politique est donc, pour me résumer en deux mots, la science de la production.* »

L'économie doit donc être supérieure à la politique. Saint Simon considère son époque comme une transition qui ouvre une possibilité de planifier rationnellement la société. Mais la morale doit jouer un rôle central. « *Il faut refondre tout le système des idées morales ; il faut l'asseoir de nouvelles bases ; en un mot, il faut passer de la morale céleste à la morale terrestre.* » Il faut balayer définitivement « *l'espoir du paradis et la crainte de l'enfer* », déjà critiqués par les Lumières et la révolution, mais encore vivaces.

Saint Simon donne pour principe premier que « *L'homme doit travailler* ». Son texte est à la fois un hymne à la technique et les prémisses des idées socialistes. Il écrit : « *La société toute entière repose sur l'industrie. L'industrie est la seule garantie de son existence, la source unique de toutes les richesses.* »

Bien évidemment, l'« *industrie* » du début du XIXe siècle n'est pas l'industrie actuelle, ni même celle du milieu du XIXe siècle. Engels la décrit comme encore « immature », et Saint Simon y met un sens qui englobe tous les « gens utiles » du Tiers Etat.

Le « *système industriel* »

Saint Simon écrit plusieurs ouvrages pour édifier ce qu'il appelle son « *système industriel* ». Ce système est directement né de l'effondrement de la société d'Ancien régime. Dans cette société, du fait des guerres entre quelques uns, c'est l'obéissance de tous qui était exigée. Avec la société industrielle, c'est le règne de la production pour tous. Saint Simon étudie le « parti industriel », qui est composé des artistes, des banquiers, des artisans, des avocats. Il n'oublie pas la classe ouvrière, mais sans la considérer comme une force politique en tant que telle. D'ailleurs les termes de « classe ouvrière » et « prolétariat » ne peuvent recouvrir les mêmes réalités sociales qu'à l'époque de Marx. On voit surtout des classes pauvres, composées (hormis les mendiants) d'artisans, de paysans et de famille qui survivent à la fois par le travail en ville, parfois en usine, et par des revenus de la campagne.

#### 1819 : SA PARABOLE

Saint Simon présente son idée fondamentale sur la société à travers une parabole célèbre qu'on retrouve dans son texte *L'Organisateur*. En voici le contenu.

Si la France perdait ses cinquante meilleurs physiciens, artistes, militaires et entrepreneurs, elle ne s'en remettrait pas.

*« Comme ces hommes sont les Français les plus essentiellement producteurs, ceux qui donnent les produits les plus importants, ceux qui dirigent les travaux les plus utiles à la nation, et qui la rendent*

*productive dans les sciences, les beaux-arts et les arts et métiers, ils sont réellement la fleur de la société française ; ils sont, de tous les Français, les plus utiles à leur pays, ceux qui lui procurent le plus de gloire, qui hâtent le plus sa civilisation ainsi que sa prospérité ; la nation deviendrait un corps sans âme à l'instant où elle les perdrait, elle tomberait immédiatement dans un état d'infériorité vis-à-vis des nations dont elle est aujourd'hui la rivale, et elle continuerait à rester subalterne à leur égard tant qu'elle n'aurait pas réparé cette perte, tant qu'il ne lui aurait pas repoussé une tête. »*

*Ensuite, « admettons que la France conserve tous les hommes de génie qu'elle possède dans les sciences, les beaux-arts et les arts et métiers, mais qu'elle ait le malheur de perdre, le même jour, Monsieur, frère du roi » la cour et toute la noblesse.*

*« Cet accident affligerait certainement les Français parce qu'ils sont bons, parce qu'ils ne sauraient voir avec indifférence la disparition subite d'un si grand nombre de leurs compatriotes. Mais cette perte de 30 000 individus, réputés les plus importants de l'État, ne les affligerait que sous un rapport sentimental, car il n'en résulterait aucun mal politique pour l'État.*

*D'abord, par la raison qu'il serait très facile de remplir les places qui seraient devenues vacantes : il existe un grand nombre de Français en état de remplir les fonctions de frère du roi aussi bien que Monsieur ; beaucoup sont capables d'occuper les places de princes tout aussi convenablement que Mgr le duc d'Angoulême, que Mgr le duc d'Orléans.*

*(...) Ces suppositions font voir que la société actuelle est véritablement un monde renversé (...) puisque (...) dans tous les genres d'occupation, ce sont des hommes incapables qui se trouvent chargés du soin de diriger les*

*hommes capables, que ce sont, sous le rapport de la moralité, les hommes les plus immoraux qui sont appelés à former les citoyens à la vertu, et que, sous le rapport de la justice distributive, ce sont les grands coupables qui sont préposés pour punir les fautes des petits délinquants. »*

Le sens de la parabole est clair : la noblesse ne peut que nuire au progrès des sciences et de la société. De plus, Saint Simon souligne la primauté des forces économiques et des producteurs dans la société.

#### LA QUESTION DE L'ÉDUCATION

À la fin de sa parabole, Saint Simon accorde une grande place à l'éducation. Le savoir est un produit direct du développement de la production. Saint Simon imagine une société fondée sur les sciences, avec un système éducatif centralisé et obligatoire. On retrouve là l'attachement pour les « lumières ». Sur l'éducation, il n'a pas écrit un livre particulier, mais c'est un thème récurrent dans son oeuvre. Il fait la distinction entre l'éducation et l'instruction, préférant la première à la seconde. Ainsi, écrit-il « *Le perfectionnement de l'éducation proprement dite est plus important pour l'accroissement du bien être social que celui de l'instruction.* » En effet, « *c'est l'éducation proprement dite qui forme les habitudes, qui développe les sentiments, qui épanouit la capacité en prévoyance générale, c'est elle qui apprend à chacun à faire application des principes et à s'en servir comme de guides certains pour diriger sa conduite.* » Pour Saint Simon des prolétaires français qui ne savent ni lire ni écrire mais qui ont reçu cette éducation, seront plus capables de travailler utilement que des paysans russes à qui leur riche propriétaire aura fait apprendre à lire et écrire. En effet, ces prolétaires français « *sont en état de bien administrer une propriété ; ceux qui sont attachés à*



*la culture sont capables de diriger des travaux de ce genre ; il en est de même pour ceux qui sont attachés à des travaux d'arts et métiers : tandis que les Russes, à qui on aura enseigné la lecture et l'écriture, n'auront reçu de leurs parents qu'une éducation semblable à celle que ceux-ci avaient reçue eux-mêmes, c'est-à-dire une éducation très mauvaise ; et si vous essayez de confier l'administration d'une propriété quelconque à ces Russes sachant lire et écrire, vous verrez ces propriétés dépérir dans leurs mains.* » Bien sûr, ces idées ne sont plus de mise aujourd'hui, mais ce qui est important c'est ce goût pour la réforme qui vise en particulier les jeunes des milieux pauvres, qui sont placés en situation de donner un avenir à la société. Saint Simon a donc des idées nombreuses sur l'éducation et l'instruction publique.

Cette instruction doit viser la « *propagation des connaissances* ». Le jeune doit apprendre à lire, compter, écrire, dessiner, faire de la musique. En tous les cas, il ne faut pas confier cette éducation à l'Église. Et Saint Simon est enthousiasmé par cette jeunesse populaire qui est « *avide d'instruction bien plus que les oisifs de nos salons.* » Et comme de nombreux révolutionnaires, Saint Simon s'intéresse de près à toute la jeunesse, qu'il divise entre trois groupes. Il y a l'enfant, de 0 à 7 ans ; puis vient l'adolescent de 7 à 14 ans, âge où les passions « *s'enflamment dans l'individu, en même temps qu'il acquiert la faculté de produire son semblable* » ; enfin, vient le jeune homme, de 14 à 21 ans.

1823

Ces idées ne font pas vivre Saint Simon. Celui-ci, qui perd au même moment l'amitié d'Auguste Comte, et qui a de gros problèmes d'argent, tente de se suicider. C'est

un banquier qui lui vient en aide, et lui permet de trouver des fonds pour travailler sur son *Nouveau Christianisme*.

1825

C'est l'année de la parution du *Nouveau Christianisme*. Dans cet ouvrage, il expose son opinion sur la religion. Il s'agit d'un dialogue entre un conservateur et un novateur. Ce dernier croit en Dieu, mais il veut réformer la religion chrétienne. Le clergé ne représente pas la religion. De celle-ci il retient une pensée, « *Les hommes doivent se conduire en frères à l'égard les uns des autres.* ». Et derrière, il donne cette interprétation : il s'agit de tous les hommes, donc la priorité doit être l'amélioration de la vie de la classe la plus pauvre. Saint Simon n'a de cesse de s'en prendre au Vatican, quartier général des Jésuites qui dominant toute la société. « *L'enseignement que le clergé catholique donne aux laïcs de sa communion est vicieux, il ne dirige point leur conduite dans la voie du christianisme.* » En assénant des litanies et des propos mystiques, continue Saint Simon, le but du clergé est de persuader les laïcs « *qu'ils ne sont point en état de se conduire par leurs propres lumières, et qu'ils doivent se laisser diriger par le clergé* ». Il accuse le Pape « *de se conduire en hérétique* », « *de tenir une conduite gouvernementale, plus contraire aux intérêts moraux et physiques de la classe indigente de ses sujets temporels, que celle d'aucun prince laïc envers ses sujets pauvres.* » On voit bien toute l'ambiguïté de Saint Simon qui veut trouver une nouvelle religion capable d'apporter le bonheur à tous. Pour lui, le clergé devrait dire : « *L'immense majorité de la population pourrait jouir d'une existence morale et physique plus satisfaisante que celle dont elle a joui jusqu'à ce jour ; et (...) les riches, en accroissant le bonheur des pauvres, amélioreraient leur existence.* »

Dans ce texte, il se prononce pour un socialisme, qui semble non démocratique mais plutôt technocratique, c'est-à-dire où le pouvoir serait entre les mains des chefs de l'industrie, mais pour le bien de tous, puisque la société devra être fondée sur le principe moral que tous les hommes doivent se conduire en frères. C'est le thème de ce dernier ouvrage, *Le Nouveau Christianisme*.

C'est en 1825 que Saint Simon meurt. Sa mort physiologique est d'une certaine manière accompagnée par la mort de ses conceptions en tant que telles. Après Saint Simon, les idées évoluent encore. Ce n'est guère étonnant : il en est de même pour d'autres domaines intellectuels, en particulier dans les sciences. Ainsi, au milieu des années 1820, les idées de Lamarck, souvent considéré comme l'auteur de la première théorie de l'évolution des êtres vivants, se répandent, non sans débat et opposition. En 1824, le physicien Joseph Fourier publie ses *Remarques générales sur les températures du globe terrestre et des espaces planétaires*, première théorie de l'effet de serre. Il en est de même dans le domaine de la préhistoire : en 1825, l'anglais Gideon Mantell est le premier à décrire le premier squelette d'iguanodon découvert en Angleterre. La science a depuis remis en question beaucoup de leurs conclusions, mais a utilisé toutes leurs recherches et leurs découvertes. C'est le même phénomène dans l'évolution des idées politiques. Cette période est donc fertile en avancées. Les idées de Saint Simon, déjà caduques en 1825, inspirent d'autres penseurs.

#### SES SUCCESSEURS APRÈS SA MORT

Ils sont nombreux, et dans toute l'Europe. En Suède l'homme d'État Nils Nilsson se revendique de lui. En Russie le philosophe socialiste Herzen est marqué par son oeuvre, ainsi que l'économiste anglais Stuart Mill.

En France, Saint Simon a beaucoup d'influence chez les grands industriels, en particulier ceux du chemin de fer. La pensée de Saint Simon a aussi beaucoup d'influence chez les intellectuels, plus que chez les ouvriers. Les socialistes se reconnaissent davantage dans ses travaux économiques que dans ses idées politiques. Ils approuvent, avec les anarchistes d'ailleurs, sa vision de la démocratie du producteur.

#### LES SAINT-SIMONIENS

Les principaux journaux saint-simoniens sont *Le Producteur* et *L'Organisateur*. Ils défendent trois préceptes fondamentaux : l'amélioration du sort des plus pauvres, l'abolition des privilèges de naissance, en particulier l'héritage, et enfin la devise « *À chacun selon ses capacités, à chaque capacité selon ses oeuvres* », devise qui montre bien qu'ils ne sont pas pour une société égalitaire, même si par ailleurs, les saint-simoniens continuent à s'opposer à la propriété des moyens de production. Ainsi pour que les « capacités » s'épanouissent véritablement, il faut que l'économie soit très organisée, notamment par un réseau bancaire très ramifié et contrôlé. Ils reprennent le slogan du « Maître » « *Tout pour et par l'Industrie !* ».

Le saint-simonisme est d'abord parisien, mais ses adeptes essaient dans de nombreuses villes de France, grâce à l'envoi de « missions ». Ils s'apparentent de plus en plus à des curés d'une nouvelle religion. On peut le constater en lisant cette phrase tirée de *L'Organisateur* du 15 mai 1830 : « *Moïse a promis aux hommes la fraternité, Jésus Christ l'a préparée, Saint Simon la réalise.* »

Beaucoup de saint-simoniens ont des comportements religieux, voire sectaires. C'est le cas du docteur Guépin, à Nantes, qui organise du travail pour les chômeurs et fonde des coopératives ouvrières. C'est un homme

puritain, et son austérité le rapproche des saint-simoniens. On peut citer un autre « disciple », Bazard, qui fonde une société secrète, « La Charbonnerie ». Dans son *Exposition de la doctrine de Saint Simon* (1829), il écrit : « *L'exploitation de l'homme par l'homme, voilà l'état des relations humaines dans le passé* », signifiant qu'il faut rompre avec cet état.

#### FACE À LA RÉVOLTE DES CANUTS

En novembre 1831, les ouvriers de la soie à Lyon, les canuts, demandent la fixation d'un tarif pour leur travail. En fait ils veulent que les fabricants qui leur fournissent la matière première et qui ont le monopole de la commercialisation ne changent pas de prix d'achat ou de salaire. Devant le refus de ces patrons, qui au nom du libéralisme ne veulent aucune « rigidité » dans les « charges », les canuts se révoltent. Armés et bien organisés, ils gardent le pouvoir dans la ville pendant quelques jours. Cette révolte provoque un débat dans tout le pays. Le gouvernement de Louis-Philippe se sent sur le grill.

Une remarque au passage : le statut des canuts doit attirer notre attention sur sa « modernité ». Ils n'étaient pas directement les employés des « soyeux lyonnais », mais appartenaient à une sorte de société prestataire de service à durée déterminée, qui n'avait pas de contrat permanent avec les « soyeux ». Ce modèle est repris aujourd'hui dans de nombreux secteurs de l'économie mondiale. Volkswagen s'est implanté au Brésil par des entreprises prestataires de service de ce genre. Mais revenons aux saint-simoniens.

Au moment de la révolte des canuts, la presse saint-simonienne considère que le mouvement est vraiment à l'avant garde du mouvement socialiste. Un avocat écrit dans *Le Globe* : « *Au milieu des ruines que le libéralisme*

*a faites, il ne reste plus de l'ancien édifice qu'une seule pierre, l'hérédité des biens, l'inégalité par droit de naissance. Ce dernier privilège doit périr.»* Le responsable des saint-simoniens à Lyon, Peiffer, écrit à propos des patrons saint-simoniens : *« Les fabricants se détournent de la doctrine devant l'intérêt que lui portent les ouvriers et les chefs d'atelier. »* On rappelle les luttes des ouvriers lyonnais pendant la Révolution. Mais les saint-simoniens autour de Peiffer avouent eux-mêmes leur surprise d'assister à une telle révolte. Au début des événements Peiffer est paniqué, comme on le perçoit dans une lettre du 21 novembre. Mais le 26, la presse saint-simonienne parvient à se prononcer clairement pour approuver sans réserve la révolte des canuts. *Le Globe*, journal saint-simonien, publie la lettre d'un « *original* » (c'est-à-dire de quelqu'un qui n'est pas un saint-simonien) qui contient ce passage : *« Si l'on reste persuadé que toute question politique était étrangère à ce funeste débat, si l'on considère la tendance toujours croissante aux émeutes chez la classe ouvrière tant en Angleterre qu'en France, il faut bien y reconnaître la manifestation d'un immense fait social résumé tout entier dans le mot de ralliement de l'émeute Vivre en travaillant ou mourir en combattant. »* L'auteur de la lettre continue en rappelant que depuis la Révolution de 1789 et celle de 1830, les richesses sont allées dans les poches des mêmes et jamais dans celles des travailleurs, pour conclure par : *« Le peuple français est las de liberté, il vous demande du bien être, gouvernants ! »* Ce texte publié par les saint-simoniens, mais non rédigé par un saint-simonien montre la radicalisation du groupe, qui n'entend pas se cantonner à des revendications en matière de liberté politiques mais qui veut que les riches fassent des sacrifices.

C'est exactement la lecture que ces riches font de la révolte lyonnaise des canuts, avec une conclusion opposée évidemment. Dans le journal *Le Temps* du 26 novembre 1831, un porte-parole évident des possédants écrit : « *Quand la propriété est menacée, il n'y a plus d'opinion politique, de nuance de ministériels et d'opposition.* » Cette peur que les prolétaires se mettent à faire de la politique a encore plus de résonance chez certains propriétaires qui se sentent encore peu sûrs de la pérennité de leurs biens, acquis tout récemment pendant et à la faveur de la Révolution. D'autant que cette même classe privilégiée vient de voir les ouvriers se battre en juillet 1830, renverser le régime de la Restauration... et se faire retirer le fruit de leur révolution. En effet, en juillet 1830, c'est bien à l'initiative d'ouvriers typographes et d'étudiants que l'insurrection qui devait mettre fin au règne de Charles X a commencé. Et de nouveau, une partie du prolétariat semble se révolter l'année suivante : décidément la société est bien en train d'évoluer !

Toute une partie de la classe moyenne sous l'effet de la peur se met alors à afficher qu'elle n'est pas l'ennemie des « *classes inférieures* ». Le journal réformiste *Le National* écrit : « *Les événements de Lyon viennent de prouver ce qui ressortait déjà de nos belles journées de Juillet, savoir que le peuple est désormais associé à toutes les idées de liberté, à tous les désirs de bien-être que la classe moyenne crut seule faire valoir contre le régime de la Restauration ; qu'entre les lumières, le courage, l'intelligence, les sentiments moraux de la classe moyenne, et ceux de la classe ouvrière, il y a peu de différence et, comme le nombre est de beaucoup en faveur de cette dernière, que si on ne lui fait pas équitablement sa part, elle voudra se la faire, et qu'elle peut y réussir.* » *Le National* se met à parler de plus en

plus d'« *économie sociale* », de l'honnêteté des ouvriers, de leur respect pour la propriété, histoire, en parlant de la classe ouvrière, de ne pas parler des révoltes des ouvriers.

Mais *Le National* reste très en avance par rapport à des fractions entières de la classe dirigeante. Le Président du conseil, le 17 décembre 1831, déclare au sujet de la révolte des canuts : « *L'événement est resté étranger à toute pensée politique.* » Et bien des conservateurs, qui se retrouvent dans le *Journal des Débats*, sont d'avis que la classe ouvrière de 1831 est très primitive, et en tout cas incapable de la moindre idée politique.

Dans la foulée de cette révolte, les saint-simoniens sont décidés, eux, à poursuivre plus que jamais leur propagande en faveur exclusivement de « *la classe la plus nombreuse et la plus pauvre.* » La situation est évidemment très dure, surtout à Lyon, où l'ordre bourgeois règne et où c'est plutôt les cercles philanthropiques qui se développent. Dans une lettre de Douai au *Globe*, datée de janvier 1832, un sympathisant s'adresse aux saint-simoniens en ces termes : « *si vos doctrines retentissaient dans les masses, elles pourraient, contre votre gré, faire beaucoup de mal.* » C'est qu'on est en train de prendre conscience que la rencontre des masses exploitées et des idées socialistes font un mélange révolutionnaire et représentent réellement un danger pour l'ordre établi. Le directeur du *Globe*, Michel Chevalier écrit : « *Les événements de Lyon ont changé le sens du mot politique ; ils l'ont élargi. Les intérêts du travail sont décidément entrés dans le cercle politique et vont s'y étendre de plus en plus.* »

On a vu que la bourgeoisie ne croit pas que la classe ouvrière soit capable d'idée et de programme politique. Mais, idée proche des saint-simoniens (qu'on relise la



lettre au *Globe* de l'« *original* »), elle ne passe pas sous silence la question de la révolte ouvrière. Pour les rédacteurs du *Journal des Débats*, il faut que les prolétaires accèdent à la propriété. En développant l'industrie, on fera disparaître la misère et on promouvra l'intégration par la propriété.

Le problème c'est qu'en 1834, les canuts de Lyon se révoltent à nouveau. Cette fois il n'y a plus de place à l'« intégration ». Leur révolte est écrasée dans le sang. Et la bourgeoisie continue à tenir ce refrain qui l'arrange : il faut développer l'industrie et « *la propriété* », discours repris notamment par Lamartine.

#### PROSPER ENFANTIN

Il est le plus connu des « disciples » du « Maître ». Il écrit *Mémoires d'un industriel de l'an 2240* en 1838. Ces « mémoires » sont soi-disant celles du fils d'un maître tisserand des soieries de Lyon. Enfantin décrit notamment l'éducation qu'a reçue ce jeune. Pour avoir un métier, l'apprenti doit être au fait des connaissances scientifiques de son époque et doit avoir de grandes valeurs morales et religieuses. Sa formation est payée par une banque, à laquelle sont affiliés les membres de la corporation des soieries. Et Enfantin décrit un système économique où toutes les banques sont chapeautées par une grande banque centrale, ce qui indique un certain niveau de planification. Dans cette société de 2240, il n'y a pas plus de guerre, et l'Europe est dominée par une seule économie et une seule monnaie. Devenu adulte, le héros se marie et fonde une ville. La société selon Enfantin d'ailleurs est très dictatoriale : le saint-simonisme n'est pas le libéralisme.

## LA FIN DES SAINT-SIMONIENS

Les révoltes de Lyon ont eu deux conséquences fâcheuses pour la bourgeoisie. D'une part, elles ont permis aux masses populaires, qui représentent la majorité de la population, de faire irruption dans le débat politique. D'autre part, elles ont eu le soutien des saint-simoniens, c'est-à-dire d'un courant socialiste, d'un courant d'opinion politique. À défaut de pouvoir éliminer les travailleurs, les bourgeois décident d'écarter les saint-simoniens. Toute une campagne est menée pour considérer comme immoral l'esprit de réforme politique. Infantin et Michel Chevalier se voient intenter un procès pour « *outrage à la morale publique* » et « *désobéissance aux lois qui régissent la propriété* ». À l'issue de ce procès, la Société saint-simonienne est interdite. Cette mort judiciaire accompagne la mort politique d'un groupe qui n'a pas vraiment survécu à son créateur, mais dont l'esprit va féconder d'autres courants socialistes.

## COMMENT BLANQUI CRITIQUE LES SAINT-SIMONIENS

Alors que la société industrielle donne naissance à grande vitesse à la classe ouvrière, les saint-simoniens se retrouvent comme dépassés par cette pression sociale et ils apparaissent vite désuets, voire réactionnaires. Blanqui les condamne, comme il condamne, au nom de son opposition à l'utopie, le fouriérisme et le positivisme, ces « *nouvelles religions* ». Les saint-simoniens, écrit Blanqui, veulent « *greffer le germe d'une nouvelle société sur un trône vermoulu tombé en poussière.* » Pire, ils sont « *les piliers de l'Empire* » et du Capital. En outre, Blanqui regrette que Saint Simon, comme Fourier d'ailleurs, s'éloigne des idées des philosophes du XVIIIe siècle en accordant plus d'importance à l'économique qu'au politique. Blanqui pour sa part insiste beaucoup sur

la place de l'État dans la société. De même, il fait un lien fort entre la République et le changement de société, la première étant gage du second, selon Blanqui. Il écrit par exemple : « *Si, en effet, nous nous disons républicains, c'est que nous espérons de la République une refonte sociale que la France réclame impérieusement.* » Dans une brochure écrite avec Hadot-Desages, le fondateur de la société secrète des Familles, il écrit : « *Nous avons bien moins en vue un changement politique qu'une refonte sociale.* » On constate ainsi que Blanqui va bien plus loin que Saint Simon, mais sans encore voir le rôle historique des classes sociales, sans voir même réellement ces classes sociales. D'ailleurs, à ce niveau, il est encore assez proche de Saint Simon, puisque, au moment de la Monarchie de Juillet, il emploie l'expression « *les hommes de l'atelier* » pour parler tout ensemble des travailleurs, des usiniers et des patrons. Ces « *hommes de l'atelier* » sont, comme chez Saint Simon, opposés aux « *oisifs* ». D'ailleurs le même Blanqui écrit : « *Selon l'idée socialiste (...) le profit de l'exploitant ne devrait pas dépasser celui d'un ouvrier.* »

#### LE MILIEU PATRONAL SAINT-SIMONIEN

Ferdinand de Lesseps, l'auteur entre autres du projet du canal de Suez, est proche des saint-simoniens. Et dans les années 1830, ces derniers se passionnent pour nombre de projets industriels, dont les projets ferroviaires. Beaucoup d'entrepreneurs partent du saint-simonisme pour évoluer vers le libéralisme. Ils s'écartent de contenu socialisant de leur précurseur pour ne garder que son enthousiasme pour l'industrie et le commerce. On les retrouve à la tête de grandes compagnies bancaires et commerciales, à la direction d'entreprises de chemins de fer ou de canaux. Partis de la formule de Saint Simon « *Tout pour et par l'Industrie !* », ils sont

arrivés logiquement à celle de Guizot : « *Enrichissez-vous !* ».

#### LA POSITION DE MARX

Marx et Engels sont eux aussi inspirés par l'école des socialistes dits utopistes. Dans ses *Manuscrits de 1844*, Marx se réfère à Saint Simon, Fourier, Pecqueur, Proudhon et Cabet.

C'est en particulier le cas pour leurs idées sur l'éducation. Marx se réfère beaucoup à Owen (du fait des expériences de celui-ci à New-Lanarck), à Saint Simon, à Morelly. C'est chez eux que Marx trouve les idées qui le convainquent que les enfants peuvent avoir un rôle social et travailler dès l'âge de 10 ans, idée qu'il développe avec Engels dans le *Manifeste*.

Mais Marx se dégage assez vite de nombre d'idées fausses de Saint Simon, et le présente notamment comme un doctrinaire et non un scientifique. C'est toute l'ambiguïté d'une période dans laquelle pourtant on prétend toujours avoir une démarche scientifique. Saint Simon croyait même être le fondateur d'une nouvelle science de la société industrielle.

L'analyse de Marx ne gagne pas aussitôt la conscience des travailleurs : ses critiques contre Saint Simon, mais aussi Proudhon et Blanqui ne convaincront qu'après la Commune de 1871. Cela montre dans quel contexte s'est forgée la pensée de Marx, à savoir dans un contexte de lutte idéologique implacable, dont il est certes ressorti avec une influence déterminante dans des couches importantes du mouvement socialiste, mais près de trente ans après avoir commencé à élaborer sa pensée et la défendre.

Dans le mouvement ouvrier français de la fin du XIXe siècle

Lafargue dans son texte *Le Déterminisme économique*, écrit : « *Les socialistes utopistes étaient plutôt les représentants du collectivisme capitaliste que de l'émancipation ouvrière. Leur âge d'or n'était que l'âge de l'argent.* » C'est être bien réducteur et s'éloigner d'ailleurs totalement de l'enthousiasme de Engels dans son *Anti-Dühring*.

Jules Guesde souligne d'avantage l'influence de Saint Simon, au même titre que Lassalle ou Robert Owen.

Dans le mouvement communiste français à ses débuts : Le Parti communiste des années 1921-1922 accorde une place importante à la formation de ses militants, et dans cette formation il insiste sur l' « événement choc de la Révolution française », selon les mots d'Ernest Labrousse un des formateurs du parti. D'ailleurs le même militant raconte que dans les meetings, l'évocation de la Révolution française « *provoquait toujours un frémissement* ». Un autre formateur, Rappoport, fait remonter les connaissances de base des militants à Platon, et fait référence à Comte et Saint Simon, « *qui fut le précurseur de Marx, le cofondateur du positivisme d'Auguste Comte* ». Les saint-simoniens, affirme-t-il, étaient « *des marxistes empiriques avant la lettre, des marxistes pratiquants, des marxistes organisateurs de la production.* » Et ces deux auteurs sont associés à d'autres courants de pensée, à toute une série de grands intellectuels. Le professeur Albert Mary assure une série de cinq cours consacrés à la biologie et à la sociologie comparée. Les futurs militants et cadres lisent des passages de Comte, Darwin et Fabre. De même, les éditions de la Librairie de L'Humanité publient des textes de science et de philosophie, des récits d'expédition scientifiques, des ouvrages sur l'évolution de l'humanité, des livres de Comte, Darwin, Kropotkine, Reclus, Jaurès

(*De la Réalité du monde sensible*), Taine, Charcot, Tolstoï, Bergson.

**Le 19 décembre 2002**

**ANDRÉ LEPIC**



SOURCES BIBLIOGRAPHIQUES

Bard Édouard « Climat : vers un changement majeur ? »  
*Le Monde*, 13 novembre 2002

Bron Jean *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier français*, Les  
Éditions ouvrières, Éditions sociales, 1968, pages 79-94

Castagnez-Ruggiu Noëlline *Histoire des idées  
socialistes*, La Découverte, Repères, 1997, pages 9-16

Crick Bernard *Socialism*, University of Minnessota Press,  
1987, pages 29, 32-34

Docherty James C. *Historical Dictionary of Socialism*,  
The Scarecrow Press Inc. 1997, pages 204-205

Dommanget Maurice *Henri de Saint Simon*, Les Grands  
éducateurs socialistes, Société Universitaire d'éditions et  
de librairie, 1953, pages 3-19

Dommanget Maurice *Les Idées politiques et sociales  
d'Auguste Blanqui*, Bibliothèque des Sciences politiques  
sociales, Librairie Marcel Rivière et Cie, Paris, 1957,  
pages 139, 145-147, 234

Dommanget Maurice *L'Introduction du Marxisme en  
France*, Rencontre, 1969, pages 37, 216

Dommanget Maurice *Karl Marx et Frédéric Engels*, Les  
Grands éducateurs socialistes, Éditions SUDEL, 1951,  
pages 18-20

Engels Friedrich *Anti-Dühring*, Editions sociales, 1977,  
pages 294-296

Grondeux Jérôme *Histoire des idées politiques en  
France au XIXe siècle*, Repères, La Découverte, 1998,  
pages 60-75

Lafargue Paul *La Méthode historique de Marx*  
Luchetta Claude « Ecole et précarité » *Carré rouge*, mai 1999  
Moret-Lespinet Isabelle « Les deux vecteurs de l'aventure industrielle » *Textes et Documents pour la classe*, 736  
Musso Pierre *Saint Simon et le saint-simonisme*, PUF, Que sais-je ?, 1999, pages 47-63  
Pilbeam Pamela M. *Republicans in Nineteenth Century France, 1814-1871*, European Studies Series, Macmillan, 1995, pages 155-184  
Rappoport Charles « Le Début d'une ère communiste en France » *La Revue Communiste*, janvier 1921  
Riot-Sarcey Michèle *Le Réel de l'utopie*, Bibliothèque Albin Michel, Histoire, 1998, pages 167-201  
Russ Jacqueline *Le Socialisme utopique français*, Bordas, Pour Connaître, 1988, pages 74-84 et 147-150  
Saint Simon *Nouveau Christianisme*, Paris, Les Livres français, pages 9-23  
Tartakowsky Danielle *Écoles et éditions communistes 1921-1933*, Thèse pour le doctorat de troisième cycle sous la direction de Claude Willard, Université de Paris VIII, 1977, pages 23-83  
Wright Tony *Socialisms*, London and New York, 1996, pages 26 et 37



URL d'origine de cette page  
[http://culture.revolution.free.fr/en\\_question/2002-12-19-Saint\\_Simon.html](http://culture.revolution.free.fr/en_question/2002-12-19-Saint_Simon.html)

# LETTRES D'UN HABITANT DE GENÈVE À SES CONTEMPORAINS

SAINT-SIMON

Source of core text unknown ; added missing text from *Letters from an Inhabitant of Geneva to His Contemporaries*, (1803). *The Political Thought of Saint-Simon*, Oxford University Press, 1976. 'Letters', omitting hypothetical 'Reply'.

---

I am no longer young, I have observed and reflected actively all my life and your happiness has been the end to which all my work has been directed; I have thought of a project which I think might be useful to you and I now propose to tell you about it.

Open a subscription in honour of Newton's memory: allow everyone, no matter who he may be, to subscribe as much as he wishes.

Let each subscriber nominate three mathematicians, three physicists, three chemists, three physiologists, three authors, three painters and three musicians.

The subscriptions and nominations should be renewed annually, although everyone should be completely free to renominate the same people indefinitely.

Divide the amount of the subscriptions between the three mathematicians, the three physicists, etc., who have obtained the most votes.

Invite the President of the Royal Society in London to receive the subscriptions for the first year. In subsequent years, entrust this honourable duty to whomsoever has given the highest subscription.



Make it a proviso that those who have been nominated should accept no posts, honours or money from any special group, but leave each man absolutely free to use his gifts as he wills.

Men of genius will in this Way enjoy a reward which is worthy of themselves and of you; this reward is the only one which will supply them with the means to give you all the service of which they are capable; it will become the object of the ambition of the most active minds and will deflect them from anything which might disturb your peace of mind.

Finally, by doing this you will be providing leaders for those who are working for the progress of your enlightenment; you will be endowing these leaders with great prestige and you will be placing considerable financial resources at their disposal.

[1] I have addressed this plan directly to humanity because it interests humanity collectively. But I have not succumbed to the mad hope of seeing it suddenly put into effect. I have always thought that success would depend on the efforts made by persons of great influence on this occasion. The best way to win their approval is to clarify the question as much as possible. That is the purpose of my addressing the different sections of humanity, which I divide into three classes: the first (to which you and I are honoured to belong under the standard of the progress of the human mind, and is composed of the scientists, artists, and all men of liberal ideas; on the banner of the second is written 'no innovation' - all the property owners who do not belong to the first class are attached to the second.

[2] The third class, which rallies to the word 'equality, comprises the rest of humanity.

[3] To the first class I shall say: everyone with whom I have discussed my plan for humanity has approved it in the end, usually after quite a short discussion. They have all told me that they wish it success, but at the same time they have all revealed a fear that the plan will not succeed.

[4] In view of the unanimity of their opinion, it seems likely that I shall find all men, or at least the majority, similarly disposed. If this prediction is correct, only the force of inertia will stand in the way of my ideas.

[5] Scientists, artists, and also those of you who devote some of your power and resources to the progress of enlightenment: you are the section of humanity with the greatest intellectual energy, the section most able to appreciate a new idea, and most directly interested in the subscription's success. It is up to you to defeat the force of inertia. So, mathematicians; as you are the vanguard, begin!

[6] Scientists, artists: look with your eye of genius at the present condition of the human mind. You will see that the sceptre of public opinion is in your hands. Seize it vigorously! You can secure your own happiness as well as that of your contemporaries. You can protect posterity against the evils which we have suffered and those which we still endure. Subscribe, all of you.

[7] I shall then speak as follows to the property owners of the second class:

[8] Gentlemen,

Compared with those who do not own property you are numerically very small. Why, then, are they willing to obey you? It is because your superior enlightenment enables you to combine your powers against them, and this is usually enough to give you the advantage in the natural and inevitable struggle which always exists between you and them.

[9] Once this principle has been established, it is clearly in your interest to admit to your ranks all the non-proprietors who prove their intellectual superiority through their important discoveries. It is equally clear that as this is in the interest of the whole of your class, every member should contribute . . .

**Gentlemen**, I have spent much of my time among scientists and artists; I have observed them closely and I can assure you that they will exert pressure on you until you decide to sacrifice your pride and the money needed to place *their* leaders in the most respected positions and to provide them with the necessary financial means to exploit their ideas fully. I would be guilty of exaggeration, gentlemen, if I allowed you to believe that I have found this intention fully formulated in the minds of scientists and artists: No! Gentlemen, no! I can only say that such an intention exists in a vague form; but I am convinced, by a long series of observations, of the existence of such an intention and of the influence which it can exert on the ideas of scientists and artists.

[10] As long as you do not adopt my proposal, gentlemen, each of you will be exposed, in your own particular country, to such calamities as have befallen those members of your class living in France. You need only reflect upon the course of events in that country

since 1789 to be convinced of what I am saying. The first popular movement there was secretly stirred up by the scientists and artists. As soon as the insurrection assumed legitimacy, through its success, they declared themselves to be its leaders. When their attempt to destroy every institution which offended their self-esteem met with resistance, they aroused the ignorant even more, breaking all the links of subordination which checked the fiery passions of the non-proprietors. They succeeded in their aim: all the institutions they originally intended to destroy were inevitably overthrown. In short, they won the battle and you lost it. The cost of victory was high; but you who were defeated suffered even more. Some scientists and artists, victims of their army's insubordination, were massacred by their own soldiers. From the moral point of view they all had to endure your reproaches, as they appeared to be responsible for the atrocities committed against you, and for all the disorder their mob had caused through the savage impulse of their ignorance.

[11] Once the misfortunes had reached their height, the remedy became possible. You offered no more resistance. The scientists and artists, having learned from experience, and recognising your superiority in enlightenment over the non-proprietors, wanted you to be given the necessary power to regulate the organisation of society. The non-proprietors had to suffer almost the whole burden of the famine, which was the outcome of the extravagant measures to which they had been led. They were curbed.

[12] The French population, although forced by circumstances to seek a return to order, could only be

reorganised socially by a man of genius. Bonaparte undertook the task and succeeded.

[13] In the course of presenting my ideas to you, I have expressed the view that you lost the battle. If you still have any doubts on this score, compare the esteem and the comforts enjoyed by French scientists and artists today with their situation before 1789.

[14] Avoid a quarrel with these men, gentlemen, for you will be defeated in every war you allow them to fight against you. You will suffer more than they will during the hostilities, and peace will be to your disadvantage. Show your worth and do with a good grace what sooner or later the scientists, artists, and men of liberal ideas, reunited with the non-proprietors, would compel you to do. Subscribe, all of you. It is the only way to prevent the misfortunes I now see threatening you.

[15] Now that this matter has been broached, let us have the courage not to leave it until we have glanced at the political situation in the most enlightened part of the globe.

[16] In Europe the activity of governments is not at present troubled by any ostensible opposition from the governed. But in view of the climate of opinion in England, Germany, and Italy, it is easy to see that this calm will not last for long unless the necessary precautions are taken in time. For, gentlemen, the fact does not have to be concealed from you that the present crisis of the human mind is common to all enlightened peoples. The symptoms that were to be observed in France during that country's terrible explosion are now

visible (to the intelligent observer) among the English and even the Germans.

[17] Gentlemen, by adopting my proposal, you will reduce the crises which these peoples must undergo (and which no power on earth can prevent) to simple governmental and financial changes, and you will save them from the kind of general upheaval experienced by the French, an upheaval which upsets social relations so that anarchy, the greatest of all scourges, is free to play havoc until it finally plunges the whole nation into such misery that the souls of the most ignorant are filled with the desire to see order restored . . .

I would appear to be underestimating your intelligence, gentlemen, if I were to add further proofs to those which I have just submitted, to prove to you that it is in your own interest to adopt the measure which I propose, in the light of the evils from which it can save you.

[18] I now take pleasure in presenting this plan from a point of view which will appeal to your self-esteem. Think of yourselves as men who control the progress of the human mind. You can play this role, because through the subscription you can give the men of genius esteem and ease, and since it is a provision of this subscription that those who are elected should not occupy any governmental posts, you will thereby be protecting yourselves and the rest of humanity from the danger which would arise if they were given direct power.

[19] Experience has proved that new, powerful and just conceptions which serve as a basis for discoveries are, to begin with, usually mixed up with false ideas. In spite of

this the inventor, if he had his way, would often apply these conceptions. This is one particular example of the kind of danger involved, but there is another which is absolutely general: Every time that a discovery, in order to be put into practice, requires a change in people's habits, it is a treasure which the existing generation should enjoy only through its affection for the generation destined to benefit from it. I shall end this short discourse, which I venture to address to you, gentlemen, by saying that if you remain in the second class it is only because you choose to do so for you have the power to rise to the first.

[20] Finally, I speak to the third class:

[21] My Friends,

In England there are many scientists. Educated Englishmen have more respect for scientists than for kings. In England everyone knows how to read, write, and count. And, my friends, in this country the workers in the towns and even in the country eat meat every day!

[22] In Russia, when a scientist displeases the Emperor, they cut off his nose and ears, and send him to Siberia. In Russia the peasants are as ignorant as their horses. And, my friends, the Russian peasants are badly fed, badly clothed, and badly beaten!

[23] Hitherto the rich have done nothing except order you about. Force them to educate themselves and instruct you. They make you put your hands to work for them; make them put their heads to work for you. Do them a service by relieving them of the heavy weight of their boredom. They pay you with money; pay them with respect. Respect is a very precious currency. Fortunately,

even the poorest man possesses some of it. If you spend what you have sensibly, your condition will quickly improve. So that you can judge my advice, and can appreciate the possible advantages of executing my plan for humanity, I shall have to elaborate it. I shall concentrate on those details which seem to me to be most essential.

[24] A scientist, my friends, is a man who predicts. It is because science provides the means of making predictions that it is useful, and that scientists are superior to all other men. All known phenomena have been divided into different classes. Here is one classification which has been adopted: astronomical, physical, chemical, and physiological phenomena. Every man engaged in scientific work has a particular interest in one of these fields. Some of the predictions which astronomers make are known to you. For example, you know that they announce eclipses. But they make many other predictions with which you are not concerned, and which I shall not bother to discuss now. I just want to say a few words about the applications of this knowledge, the usefulness of which is well known to you. Astronomical predictions have enabled us to determine the exact positions of different points on the earth. They have also provided a means of navigating on the largest seas. You are familiar with some of the predictions of chemists. A chemist tells you what stone to use to make lime, and what stone not to use. He tells you how you can bleach your linen by using a certain quantity of ashes from one kind of tree, or a larger quantity from another tree. He tells you what to expect, by way of appearance and quality, when you mix two substances together.



[25] When you are ill the physiologist (who is concerned with organic phenomena) tells you: you will try such a thing today, and tomorrow you will be in such a condition.

[26] Do not think I am suggesting that scientists can predict everything. They certainly cannot. I am indeed certain that they can predict accurately only a very small number of things. But you will agree that it is the scientists, working in their various fields, who are able to make the most predictions. We can be certain of that, since they only acquired their scientific reputations through the verifications which were made of their predictions. That, at least, is how things stand today; but it has not always been so. This requires us to look at the progress of the human mind . . . ; **despite my efforts to express myself clearly, I am not absolutely sure that you will understand me at first reading, but if you think about it a little, you will do so in the end.**

[27] The first phenomena to be observed systematically were astronomical phenomena. There is a good reason for this: they are the simplest phenomena. When astronomical studies first began, man confused the facts he observed with those he imagined, and through this elementary rigmorale he made the best calculations he could in order to satisfy all the demands of prediction. He then successively relinquished those facts created by his imagination, and finally, after a great deal of work, he was able to adopt a certain method of perfecting this science. Astronomers no longer accepted any facts which were not verified by observation. They chose the best system of linking these facts, and they have not put a foot wrong in science since then . . . **I would appear to be underestimating your intelligence, gentlemen, if I were to add further proofs to those which I have just**

submitted, to prove to you that it is in your own interest to adopt the measure which I propose, in the light of the evils from which it can save you.

[28] Because chemical phenomena are more complex than astronomical phenomena, it was a long time before man began to study them. In chemistry he repeated the same mistakes he had made in the study of astronomy. Finally, however, the chemists rid themselves of the alchemists.

[29] Physiology is still at the undeveloped stage through which the astronomical and chemical sciences have passed. The physiologists must expel the philosophers, moralists, and metaphysicians, just as the astronomers expelled the astrologers, and the chemists expelled the alchemists.

[30] My friends, we ourselves are organic bodies. It is by considering our social relations as physiological phenomena that I have conceived the present plan; and by using ideas borrowed from the system of linking physiological facts I shall prove that the plan is a good one.

[31] A fact proved by a long series of observations is that every man experiences to a certain extent the desire to dominate all other men. Reason clearly confirms one thing: every man who is not isolated is both actively and passively involved in relations of domination with other men.

[32] I urge you to make use of the small degree of domination you exercise over the rich. But before going

any further I must examine a fact which grieves you greatly. You may say: we are ten, twenty, a hundred times more numerous than the property owners; yet the property owners dominate us much more than we dominate them. I concede, my friends, that it is most vexing. But you must observe that the property owners, although inferior in numbers, are more enlightened than you, and that for the sake of the general good, domination should be proportionate to enlightenment. Look at what happened in France when your comrades were in control: they caused a famine.

[33] Let me return to my proposal. By adopting and then executing it, you will place permanently in the hands of humanity's twenty-one most enlightened men the two great instruments of domination: respect and money. For a thousand reasons the result will be rapid progress in the sciences. It is recognised that every scientific advance makes the study of the sciences that much easier. Thus, those who, like yourselves, can devote only a small amount of time to their education will be able to learn more, and by becoming more educated they will lessen the domination exercised over them by the rich. You will not have to wait long, my friends, for favourable results .

. . . **But I do not want to waste time in speaking to you of the remote consequences of a course of action which you have still not decided to take. Let us rather speak about what you can see before your eyes at this very moment.**

**You give your respect, that is to say you voluntarily give a measure of power to men who, in your view do things you consider to be of use to you. Your mistake, which you share with all mankind, is that you do not make a clear enough distinction between temporary and lasting benefits; between benefits of local interest and those of universal interest; between things which benefit a part of**

mankind at the expense of the rest, and those which increase the happiness of the whole of mankind. In short, you have not yet noticed that there is only one interest common to all mankind: that of the progress of the sciences.

If the mayor of your village obtains a concession for you over the neighbouring villages, you are pleased with him, you respect him; city-dwellers exhibit the same desire to exercise superiority over other towns in the vicinity. The provinces compete with each other, and there are struggles of personal interest between nations which are called wars., Among the efforts made by all these factions of mankind, can we see any which aims *directly* at the common good? It is a very small effort indeed-which is not surprising, considering that mankind has not yet taken any steps to agree *collectively* on the subject of rewards for those who succeed in doing something for the common good. I do not think that a better method can be found than the one which I propose, for uniting as far as possible all those forces acting in so many, often contrary, directions; for leading them as far as possible in the only direction which points to the betterment of mankind. Now, for the time being, enough about the scientists. [34] Let us now consider the artists.

[35] On Sundays eloquence charms you. It gives you pleasure to read a well-written book, to see beautiful paintings and statues, or to listen to a captivating piece of music. It takes a great deal of work to speak or write in an entertaining manner, to create a pleasing painting or statue, or to compose interesting music. Is it not perfectly fair, my friends, that you should reward the artists who fill your leisure time with the most intellectually

satisfying pleasures by stimulating the most delicate aspects of your feelings?

[36] Subscribe, all of you, my friends. However small your individual subscriptions, there are so many of you that the total sum will be considerable. Besides, those who are elected will be held in such great esteem that their strength will be incalculable. The rich, you will see, will strive to distinguish themselves in the sciences and the arts when that is the route which leads to the highest degree of respect . . . **Even if you only succeed in diverting them from the quarrels born of their idleness, over how many of you should be under their command, quarrels in which you are always embroiled and of which you are always the dupes, you will have gained much.**

[37] If you accept my plan you will have only one problem to face: the choice. I shall tell you, my friends, what I would do. I would ask all the mathematicians I know, who, in their opinion, are the three best mathematicians, and I would nominate the three mathematicians who received the most votes from those persons I consulted. I would do the same for the physicists. Etc.

[38] My friend,  
After dividing humanity into three sections, and presenting each of them with the arguments in favour of my plan. I shall now address my contemporaries collectively, and present them with my reflections on the French Revolution.

[39] The suppression of the privileges of birth, the strain of which broke the bonds of social organisation, was not an obstacle to social reorganisation; but the frequent appeal to all members of society to assume the functions

of a deliberate assembly was unsuccessful. Apart from the terrible atrocities to which such an application of the principle of equality naturally led, by placing power in the hands of the ignorant, it finally gave rise to an absolutely impracticable form of government under which there were so many rulers (including, in the end, the non-proprietors) that the labour of the governed was insufficient to maintain them. This led to a result which was absolutely contrary to the most steadfast desire of the non- proprietors: to pay low taxes.

[40] Here is an idea which seems sound: The primary needs of life are the most important. The non-proprietors cannot satisfy them completely. To a physiologist it is clear that their most steadfast desire should be to decrease taxation or increase wages, which amounts to the same thing.

[41] I believe that all social classes would benefit from this organisation: spiritual power in the hands of the savants; temporal power in the hands of the property owners; the power to elect the leaders of humanity in the hands of everyone; the reward of the rulers, respect.

[42] Let us continue tomorrow, my friend. I think that is enough for today.

[43] Is it an apparition? Is it only a dream? I do not know; but I am certain that I did experience what I am now about to recount.

[44] Last night I heard these words:

[45] 'Rome will renounce its claim to be the headquarters of my Church. The Pope, the cardinals, bishops, and

priests will cease speaking in my name. Man will be filled with shame for his ungodliness in recognising such improvident men as my representatives .

[46] 'I forbade Adam to make the distinction between good and evil. He disobeyed me. I expelled him from paradise, but I provided his descendants with the means of appeasing my wrath: If they work to perfect themselves through the knowledge of good and evil, I shall improve their condition. The day will come when I shall make a paradise of the earth.

[47] 'All men who have founded religions received their power from me, but they did not clearly understand my instructions. They all believed that I shared my divine knowledge with them. Their self-esteem led them to draw a dividing-line between good and evil in the most trifling aspects of man's life. But they all neglected the most essential part of their mission: to found an establishment which will provide human intelligence with the quickest way of returning indefinitely to the care of my divine providence. They all forgot to warn my priests that I would take away from them the power to speak in my name once they were no longer more learned than their flock, and allowed themselves to be dominated by the temporal power.

[48] 'Hear this: I have placed Newton at my side, to control enlightenment and command the inhabitants of all planets. Hear this also: the man who proved himself to be the greatest enemy of enlightenment {Robespierre} has been hurled into darkness, and is destined to remain there for eternity, agent and object of my vengeance.

[49] 'The assembly of the twenty-one elect of humanity will be called the Council of Newton. The Council of Newton will represent me on earth. It will divide humanity into four divisions: English, French, German, Italian. Each division will have its own council, with the same composition as the council-in-chief. Every man, in whatever part of the globe he lives, will be associated with one of these divisions, and will subscribe for both the council-in-chief and his own divisional council. Every man who fails to obey this commandment will be regarded and treated by others as an animal. Women will be allowed to subscribe and stand for election. After their deaths the faithful will receive the treatment they earned for themselves during their lives.

[50] 'Members of the divisional councils will have to be approved by the council-in-chief, which will admit only those men who have demonstrated the most superior knowledge, each in the particular field for which he has been elected.

[51] 'The inhabitants of any part of the globe, whatever its location and size, may at any time establish their own section within a particular division, and elect their own Council of Newton. The members of this council will have to be approved by the divisional council. Permanent delegations from the divisional councils will attend the council-in-chief. Similarly, delegations from the sectional councils will attend their divisional council. These delegations will consist of seven members, one from each class.

[52] 'In every council the mathematician who receives the most votes will be president.



[53] 'Every council will be divided into two divisions: the first will be composed of the first four classes, and the second of the last three classes. When the second division assembles separately, its president will be the author who receives the most votes.

[54] 'Every council will have a temple built containing a mausoleum in honour of Newton. This temple will be divided into two parts: the one containing the mausoleum will be decorated by the artists, who should use all the resources at their disposal; the other part will be constructed and decorated so as to give men an idea of the eternal fate which awaits all those who hinder the progress of the sciences and the arts. The mausoleum of Newton will lead down into an underground temple.

[55] 'The first division will control the form of worship inside the mausoleum. No human beings other than members of the first divisions of the councils will be allowed to enter the underground temple without the president's express permission.

[56] 'The second division of the council will control the form of worship outside the mausoleum, making sure that a majestic and brilliant spectacle is presented. Every distinguished service to humanity, every action which has been of great use to the propagation of the faith will be honoured. The assembled council will decide what honours are to be awarded.

[57] 'All the faithful who live at least one day's walk away from a temple will go down into the mausoleum of Newton once each year through an entrance consecrated for that purpose. Children will be brought there by their parents as soon as possible after their birth. Everyone

who fails to obey this commandment will be regarded by the faithful as an enemy of the religion.

**[58]** 'Any mortal who enters the mausoleum may be transported to another planet if Newton considers it to be necessary for my purpose.

**[59]** 'Laboratories, workshops, and a college will be built in the vicinity of the temple. All magnificence will be confined to the temple. The laboratories and workshops, the college, and the residences of councillors and council delegations will be built and decorated in a simple fashion. The library will never contain more than five hundred volumes.

**[60]** 'Each year every councillor will nominate five persons:

**[61]** 'First, a deputy who will have the right to a seat and a deliberative vote when the councillor who nominates him is absent.

**[62]** 'Secondly, a minister, chosen from the five hundred most generous subscribers, who will officiate at major ceremonies.

**[63]** 'Thirdly, one person whose work has contributed to the progress of the sciences and the arts.

**[64]** 'Fourthly, one person who has made useful applications of the sciences and the arts.

**[65]** 'Fifthly, one person for whom the councillor has a particular affection.

[66] 'These nominations will not be valid until they have been approved by a majority of the council, and they will be renewed each year. Nominees will hold office for one year only, after which they will be eligible for re-election.

[67] 'The president of each council will nominate a guardian of the holy territory on which the temple and its out-buildings stand. The guardian will be an agent of the police. He will be the treasurer, administering all expenses according to the orders of the council. He will be chosen from the hundred most generous subscribers, and will have the right to a council seat. His nomination will not be valid until it has been approved by a majority of the council.

[68] 'Distinctive badges will be made for the councillors and their nominees. They will be made in such a way that they can be shown or hidden according to the wishes of those who wear them.

[69] 'The council-in-chief will have an office in every division, and will reside in a different division each year.

[70] 'The founder of this religion will be a man of great power. As a reward he will have the right to join all the councils and preside over them. He will retain this right for life, and after his death he will be buried in the tomb of Newton. The faithful will give him the title Captain of the Newtonian Guard.

[71] 'All men will work. They will all regard themselves as workers attached to a workshop whose task is to raise human intelligence to the level of my divine providence. The Council-in-Chief of Newton will supervise this

work, and will do its best to achieve a thorough understanding of the effects of universal gravitation, which is the single law to which I have subjected the universe.

[72] 'The council-in-chief will have the right to increase or decrease the number of divisional councils.

[73] 'All the Councils of Newton will respect the division between spiritual and temporal power.

[74] 'As soon as elections for the council-in-chief and the divisional councils have taken place, Europe will be for ever rid of the scourge of war.

[75] 'Hear this: Europeans are the children of Abel. Asia and Africa are inhabited by the descendants of Cain. Just observe how bloodthirsty these Africans are. Look at the indolence of the Asians. These impure men gave up their first attempt to raise themselves to the level of my divine providence. Europeans will unite their forces and free their Greek brothers from the domination of the Turks. The founder of the religion will be commander-in-chief of the armies of the faithful. These armies will subject the children of Cain to the religion, and cover the entire earth with defences for the protection of the members of the Councils of Newton. who will make all the journeys they consider necessary for the progress of the human mind.'

[76] Sleep .

When I awoke I found what you have just read engraved quite clearly on my memory.

## SECOND LETTER

[1] It was God who had spoken to me. Could a man have invented a religion superior to all those that have ever existed? It would first of all have to be supposed that none of them was of divine origin. Look at the religion revealed to me! See how clear its basic principle is, and how certain it is to be executed. The obligation is imposed on everyone to constantly use their personal powers for the benefit of humanity. The hands of the poor will continue to nourish the rich but the rich man is commanded to put his brain to work, and if his brain is not up to the task, he will then have to work with his hands For Newton will certainly not allow any workers to remain useless on thus planet (which is one of the nearest to the sun)

[2] We shall no longer have a religion whose ministers have the right to elect the leaders of humanity. All the faithful will nominate their guides, every year. And the qualities by which they will recognise God's chosen representatives will no longer be insignificant virtues such as chastity and continence; they will be real talents the greatest talents.

[3] I shall not prolong this subject. Every man who believes in revelation will inevitably be convinced that only God could have provided humanity with a means of forcing each of its members to follow the rule of brotherly love.

**SERIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF**  
**HUMAN INTELLIGENCE**  
**FROM: MÉMOIRE SUR LA SCIENCE DE**  
**L'HOMME (1813)**

**H DE SAINT-SIMON**

[1.1]. . . Without any further preamble let us establish the series of the various stages observed in the development of human intelligence.

**First Stage**

[2.1] The superiority of the first men over other animals was no more than that which resulted directly from their superior organisation. Their memory was not much better than that of the beaver or the elephant. This may be included in the class of observed facts, because it was clearly observed in the savage of Aveyron.

**Second Stage**

[3.1] The human race in the condition discovered by Captain Cook in the Magellan Straits: living in caves, not knowing how to construct dwelling-places, without leaders, not knowing how to make fire.

**Third Stage**

[4.1] The human race in the condition discovered by Captain Cook in the northern parts of the northwest coast of America: with constructed dwellings, the beginnings of political organisation (since they recognised leaders), and the beginnings of a language, which was still very limited since its numerals only went up to three.

**Fourth Stage**

[5.1] The human race in the condition discovered by Captain Cook and other navigators on the north-west coast of America towards the 50th degree of northern latitude: with a fairly complete language, completely subject to leaders, actively cannibalistic. This stage is even more evident in New Zealand.

### **Fifth Stage**

[6.1] The inhabitants of the Friendly Islands and the islands of Soci t  and Sandwich. Civilisation is already very advanced in these countries: the language spoken is not poor, and cannibalism is almost completely abolished. The inhabitants are divided into two classes: the Eares and the Toutous. There is a religious cult with an organised clergy which is respected by all classes in society.

### **Sixth Stage**

[7.1] The Peruvians and Mexicans in the condition revealed by the Spaniards when they discovered and conquered their countries. At this time they formed two very large and quite distinct political societies. The arts and crafts and the fine arts had already made striking progress, as these peoples had discovered methods of mining metals, working them, and using them for decorating buildings.

### **Seventh Stage**

[8.1] The Egyptians, whose progress in the arts and fine arts had been greater than that of the Peruvians, and who were superior to the latter in the moral sciences and the sciences of observation.

[8.2] The Egyptians took one of the most difficult steps which human intelligence has ever had to take in the

long course of its development: they invented conventional written symbols.

[8.3] We may readily attribute to them the invention of writing. Whether they actually invented it or merely re-invented it makes little difference, for our object is to establish clearly the series of the development of the progress of the human mind, and with tentative ideas it would be impossible to attain this end.

[8.4] I regard the age of the Egyptians as a second point of departure for human intelligence, and it seems to me that a more detailed examination of its subsequent progress is necessary, an examination involving a division between the views of the men engaged in the sciences, who were working to discover causes and to co-ordinate their ideas on causes with those on effects, and the beliefs of the mass of the people which, ever since, have always been abstract beliefs . .

[8.5] Egypt's scientific community fulfilled the functions of the priesthood. It was the chief, the only political power in the country, and its power was absolute. The community had two doctrines: one which it taught to the people, and one which it reserved for itself and a small number of initiates to whom it was communicated.

[8.6] The doctrine taught to the people was idolatry, materialism, the belief that visible causes are first causes. They were taught to worship the Nile, the God Apis (the ox), the crocodile, the onion, as well as the sun, the moon, the various constellations, etc.

[8.7] The doctrine reserved for the scientists was of a much higher order, and was much more metaphysical. It regarded visible causes as no more than secondary causes, as nothing but the effects of higher causes, which were thought to be invisible.

[8.8] The Egyptian scientists very carefully collected all the observations made by their predecessors on the



movement of the stars, the rising of the Nile, and various other aspects of physics. They worked with great fervour to add to this precious knowledge.

[8.9] No other historical age presents us with such a clear division between thinkers and believers. It is through a study of this people's history that one becomes convinced of the fact that the priestly power and the scientific capacity are essentially the same. By that I mean that the clergy of any religion must be the most educated body; that when it ceases to be the most educated body it successively loses respect and falls into debasement until it is finally destroyed and replaced by an association of the most learned men; and that this change occurs when there is an improvement in the general idea. We must not be too eager to develop this idea now: it will become perfectly clear when it is seen to be simply the result of an observation on the advancement of the human mind. For the moment let it suffice to say that it is with the Egyptians that this observation has its starting-point.

### **Eighth Stage**

[9.1] In this second part of the series of the progress of the human mind we shall never have to consider more than one people or at least one political society at a time, since in every major period there has always been one political society which has gained a decisive ascendancy over all others, an ascendancy in both the sciences and in war. Hence, it is solely to that society that we have to attribute the human mind's progress during the age when it flourished.

[9.2] We began this second part of the series with a discussion of the Egyptians. We shall now go on to discuss the Greeks, then the Romans, the Saracens, and finally the modern peoples.

[9.3] The vital intellectual force which united the Greeks and made them the scientific vanguard of the human race for several centuries was first revealed in the person of Homer. Homer, the earliest Greek of whom we have any historical record, and whose own writings have been preserved, was the founder of polytheism, in the sense that he was its organiser . . .

[9.4] The whole of the Greek population adopted the belief in the existence of invisible causes. It was this view which served as the basis of the religion of polytheism, the religion shared by all Greeks.

[9.5] It was with the Greeks that the human mind first began to concern itself seriously with social organisation. It was they who laid down the principles of politics. They applied themselves to this science in both its practical and its theoretical aspects. They gave birth to great legislators such as Lycurgus, Draco, and Solon. It was not just a small number of people who were engaged in this science: it was the subject of ordinary conversation among several thousand citizens; principles and their application were often discussed in the public assemblies. . . .

[9.6] Religion was the general link of Greek society. The Temple of Delphi was common to all the Greek peoples and independent of each of them, for it had been built on land which was regarded as sacred, on which neighbouring peoples had no right, and which was respected by their neighbours in even the fiercest wars. The priests of Delphi took care, in their oracles, to uphold the union of the Greek peoples, and to inspire them to oppose the Persian assaults on their liberty . . .

[9.7] Under the Greeks the religious system and the political system shared exactly the same basis, or rather the religious system served as the basis of the political system, the latter being made in imitation of the former

and copied from it. The Greek Olympus was in fact a republican assembly, and the national constitutions of all the Greek peoples, although different from each other, were also republican . . .

[9.8] A conception of general science discovered in one period is always put into effect in the following period. It was the Egyptian priests who invented polytheism, but it was the Greeks who were polytheists that is, who believed in the existence of several invisible causes and worshipped them. It was the same with theism: Socrates was its inventor, but it was the Romans who were theists, five hundred years after Socrates' death.

[9.9] Socrates was the greatest man who has ever existed. No man will ever equal Socrates, because this pre-eminent genius produced the greatest conception which the human mind is capable of creating . . . It consisted of two general and elementary ideas: First, a system must be a whole, organised in such a way that secondary principles may be deduced from a single general principle, and may themselves serve as the starting-point for the deduction of tertiary principles. In this way one would be able to move along a moral scale, divided into equal gradations, from the single general principle to the most particular ideas. The other idea entering into the composition of his conception was that man, in order to organise his scientific system, that is, to co-ordinate his ideas on the organisation of the universe and to establish a firm basis for his knowledge of the composition and movement of phenomena, must proceed alternately a priori and a posteriori in the co-ordination of his ideas. Because his intellectual powers are extremely limited his attention always tends to see things from the same point of view, and his only means of hastening its progress is to change direction. Thus, if after making an effort to descend from the idea of a

single cause ruling the universe to the most particular effects, his attention is so tired that he can no longer discover anything new, and his abstract and concrete ideas are so mixed up that he can no longer sort them out, the best thing he can do is to change direction: he should adopt the opposite, a posteriori approach and rise from the consideration of particular facts to more general facts, making his way by the most direct route possible to the most general fact. In short, Socrates invented method, and none of his successors apart from Bacon has been able to equal the loftiness of this idea. None of his disciples had a mind of such vast scope, so his school split up some time after the death of its leader and founder.

[9.10] Plato and Aristotle were the two most distinguished members of the Socratic school, and they divided it into two quite distinct parts with different names and whose work proceeded in quite different directions. One was called the School of Academicians, the other was the School of Peripatetics. The names prioricians and posterioricians would have been preferable, since they indicate the doctrines which were taught by each of these philosophers.

[9.11] I am not claiming that Plato reasoned exclusively a priori, or that Aristotle reasoned exclusively a posteriori, but only that the former believed and taught that a priori considerations took precedence over a posteriori considerations, while the latter taught the opposite . . .

### **Ninth Stage**

[10.1] . . . It was the Romans who organised theism and who founded public law, and who made the greatest progress in that science. These are the two contributions

of this people to the development of general intelligence

...

[10.2] These two advances were certainly important, for a large political society composed of peoples with different languages and customs, living in different climates, and with different agricultural products could not possibly be founded on polytheism, which is a religion with no unitary character . . .

[10.3] About a thousand years after the establishment of polytheism in Greece, the Romans, who had adopted it with some modifications, were plunged into the greatest political crisis recorded by history, on the occasion of the transition from the idea of several gods to that of a single god. This change in the general idea was the major cause of the terrible disorder into which the huge Roman Empire fell for several centuries, a state of disorder which has been attributed in the past to mere secondary causes . . .

### **Tenth Stage**

[11.1] It was the Saracens, that is, the Arabs, who advanced the human mind through its tenth stage by inventing algebra and founding the sciences of observation.

[11.2] The Saracens had this in common with the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans: they assumed the role of vanguard in the development of human intelligence; and they lived in a country separated from its neighbours by natural barriers, the sea for a large part, and the desert for the rest. But in many respects they were different from the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, in fact from all other known peoples (excluding the Arabs): Since only a very small part of their country was suitable for farming, the population remained chiefly nomadic. There was no development, no

improvement in general government. The people lived in separate tribes, independent of each other. Such a social organisation did not lend itself to despotism, but once it was exported into cultivated lands with large towns and an established seat of government it was bound to degenerate quickly into despotism. This is what happened to those Arabs who settled outside the boundaries of Arabia, when the Arabs became conquerors . . .

### **Eleventh Stage**

[12.1] Charlemagne was the founder of European society. It was he who firmly united the different European peoples by means of a religious link with Rome, and by securing that city's independence from all temporal power. Since Charlemagne Europe has remained the strongest society in material terms, but in terms of intelligence it has been in the first rank only since the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, and it has still to advance the human mind one general step. All the scientific progress made by this society has been partial progress, that is, it has only improved the particular sciences. Its works up to the present can thus be considered only as a preparation for the realisation of a general improvement in the system of ideas. An analysis of its works since the fifteenth century shows that the result has been the complete disorganisation of the scientific system organised two thousand years ago, and considerable progress towards the organisation of the scientific system founded by the Arabs under the caliphate of Al-Mamoun. But this result, I repeat, does not amount to a general advance: modern Europeans do not yet deserve to be ranked by the impartial historian, the man who does not seek to flatter his contemporaries, with the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and Saracens. The

first established the division between ideas of cause and effect, and organised the system of religious ideas; the second organised polytheism; the third organised theism; and the last replaced the idea of one animate cause which is theism, by the idea of a universe ruled by laws. Let us now look at what we have done. We have, I repeat, continued and improved the work of the Saracens; but we have not allowed the idea of several laws to develop into the idea of one single law, or at least we have not yet reorganised the scientific system and the system of application in accordance with the conception of a single law. As this operation has not yet been carried out it must belong to the future, which obliges us to establish a twelfth stage . . .

### **Twelfth Stage**

[13.1] The general system of our knowledge will be reorganised on the basis of the belief that the universe is ruled by a single immutable law. All the systems of application, such as the systems of religion, politics, morals, and civil law will be placed in harmony with the new system of knowledge. . .

[Return to Seminar Topics](#) ..... [Top of page](#)

## SOCIETY DOES NOT REALLY NEED GOVERNMENT

From Saint-Simon, Henri. *Deuxième extrait de mon ouvrage sur l'organisation sociale, L'Organisatuer*. As reproduced in *Henri Saint-Simon: selected writings on science, industry, and social organization*, trans. Keith Taylor, ed. Keith Taylor (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1975), 207-210.

Hitherto rulers have regarded nations as patrimonies. The essential aim of all their political arrangements has been to exploit or expand these domains. Even those arrangements which have benefited the governed were really conceived by the rulers only as means of rendering their property either more productive or more secure. The resulting advantages have been regarded even by the people as favours, not as duties binding on the rulers. Undoubtedly, this situation has undergone successive modifications, but only modifications; that is, the progress of enlightenment has always reduced governmental action more and more, but it has not yet changed its nature. Today this action is exercised less freely and in a smaller sphere, but it retains the same character. The old principle that kings are, by divine right, the born owners of their peoples is still accepted, at least in theory, as the fundamental principle. This is proved by the fact that every attempt to refute it is treated by the law as a crime against the state. Nevertheless, on the other hand, a new general principle has been put forward by the governed. It has been recognized that the rulers are only the administrators of society, that they must direct it in conformity with the



interests and will of the ruled, and that, in short, the happiness of nations is the sole and exclusive purpose of social organization. This principle has been adopted by the rulers, or at least it has already been accepted by them together with the old principle; that is, the rulers have recognized that they should administrate in this sense, although they still regard themselves as born administrators. One may consider the new principle to be established, since it is the constitutional function of one of the three parliamentary powers (the House of Commons) to defend it and turn it to account.

The establishment of this principle is undoubtedly a thoroughly capital step towards the organization of a new political system; but nevertheless this principle cannot, in its present state, have any really important consequence. One cannot hide the fact that hitherto it has been only a modifying principle, not a guiding principle. This is because it is much too vague actually to become the basis and point of departure of a new social order. It will not definitely assume this character until it is stated precisely, or rather completed. This is what we shall now endeavor to develop and prove.

In the present situation it is acknowledged that the permanent and sole duty of governments is to work for the happiness of society. But how is society's happiness to be achieved? This is a subject on which public opinion has not yet pronounced at all, on which, perhaps, there is not even one definite and generally accepted idea. And what has been the result? The general direction of society is inevitably left entirely to the arbitrary decision of the rulers. . . .

Without entering into more detailed considerations, every person who thinks about it for a moment will be convinced that as long as society merely orders its rulers in a vague fashion to make it happy, without having

decided how [or in what direction] . . . [its direction and] rule will inevitably be arbitrary. . . .

In the new political order, the sole and permanent object of social organization should be to apply as well as possible the knowledge acquired in the sciences, fine arts, and arts and crafts to the satisfaction of men's needs; to disseminate that knowledge, improve it and increase it as much as possible; in short, to combine [it all] in as useful a way as possible. . . .

Hitherto men have, so to speak, exercised on nature only purely individual and isolated efforts. Furthermore, their forces have always in large measure destroyed each other, since the human race has hitherto been divided into two unequal parts, and the smaller has constantly employed all its power, and often even some of the power of the larger part, in order to dominate the latter, while the larger part has used up a great deal of its power in order to withstand domination. Nevertheless, it is certain that in spite of this enormous loss of power, the human race has, in the most civilized countries, achieved a quite remarkable degree of comfort and prosperity. From this one may judge the level it would reach if almost no power were lost, if men, instead of commanding one another, organized themselves to exercise their combined effort on nature, and if nations adopted the same system! . . .

In a society organized for the positive aim of working for its prosperity through the sciences, fine arts, and arts and crafts, the most important political act, the act which involves determining the direction in which society is to advance, no longer belongs to men invested [only] with social functions; it is exercised by the social body itself, in such a way that society, taken collectively, can really exercise [a] sovereignty . . . which then consists not in an arbitrary opinion established in law . . . but in a principle

derived from the very nature of things, whose justice men have only to recognize and whose necessity they have only to proclaim. . . . The act of governing, in the sense of commanding, plays no or almost no part. All the questions which have to be debated in such a political system . . . are eminently positive and answerable; [the correct] decisions can only be the result of scientific demonstrations, absolutely independent of all human will, which may be discussed by those educated enough to understand them. . . . And just as every question of social interest will then inevitably be decided as well as it can be with acquired knowledge, so will all social functions be entrusted to the men most capable of performing them in conformity with the association's general aim. Thus . . . the three principal disadvantages of the present political system--arbitrariness, incapacity, and intrigue--will be seen to disappear at once.

. . . The functions which are peculiarly concerned with maintenance of social order will be classed . . . only according to their natural rank, as subordinate police functions.

. . . This part of social action is the only one in the new system requiring a certain degree of command in relations between men, since all the rest . . . involve the action of principles. It follows that the action of governing . . . will then be limited as much as possible. In this order men will consequently enjoy the highest degree of liberty compatible with the state of society. It must also be noted that this function of maintaining order can then easily become, almost entirely, a task shared by all citizens, whether it be to contain trouble-makers or to settle disputes. . . .

Hitherto rulers have regarded nations as patrimonies. The essential aim of all their political arrangements has been to exploit or expand these domains. Even those arrangements which have benefited the governed were really conceived by the rulers only as means of rendering their property either more productive or more secure. The resulting advantages have been regarded even by the people as favours, not as duties binding on the rulers.

Undoubtedly, this situation has undergone successive modifications, but only modifications; that is, the progress of enlightenment has always reduced governmental action more and more, but it has not yet changed its nature. Today this action is exercised less freely and in a smaller sphere, but it retains the same character. The old principle that kings are, by divine right, the born owners of their peoples is still accepted, at least in theory, as the fundamental principle. This is proved by the fact that every attempt to refute it is treated by the law as a crime against the state.

Nevertheless, on the other hand, a new general principle has been put forward by the governed. It has been recognized that the rulers are only the administrators of society, that they must direct it in conformity with the interests and will of the ruled, and that, in short, the happiness of nations is the sole and exclusive purpose of social organization. This principle has been adopted by the rulers, or at least it has already been accepted by them together with the old principle; that is, the rulers have recognized that they should administrate in this sense, although they still regard themselves as born administrators. One may consider the new principle to be established, since it is the constitutional function of one of the three parliamentary powers (the House of Commons) to defend it and turn it to account.

The establishment of this principle is undoubtedly a thoroughly capital step towards the organization of a new political system; but nevertheless this principle cannot, in its present state, have any really important consequence. One cannot hide the fact that hitherto it has been only a modifying principle, not a guiding principle. This is because it is much too vague actually to become the basis and point of departure of a new social order. It will not definitely assume this character until it is stated precisely, or rather completed. This is what we shall now endeavor to develop and prove.

In the present situation it is acknowledged that the permanent and sole duty of governments is to work for the happiness of society. But how is society's happiness to be achieved? This is a subject on which public opinion has not yet pronounced at all, on which, perhaps, there is not even one definite and generally accepted idea. And what has been the result? The general direction of society is inevitably left entirely to the arbitrary decision of the rulers. . . .

Without entering into more detailed considerations, every person who thinks about it for a moment will be convinced that as long as society merely orders its rulers in a vague fashion to make it happy, without having decided how [or in what direction] . . . [its direction and] rule will inevitably be arbitrary. . . .

In the new political order, the sole and permanent object of social organization should be to apply as well as possible the knowledge acquired in the sciences, fine arts, and arts and crafts to the satisfaction of men's needs; to disseminate that knowledge, improve it and increase it as much as possible; in short, to combine [it all] in as useful a way as possible. . . .

Hitherto men have, so to speak, exercised on nature only purely individual and isolated efforts. Furthermore, their

forces have always in large measure destroyed each other, since the human race has hitherto been divided into two unequal parts, and the smaller has constantly employed all its power, and often even some of the power of the larger part, in order to dominate the latter, while the larger part has used up a great deal of its power in order to withstand domination. Nevertheless, it is certain that in spite of this enormous loss of power, the human race has, in the most civilized countries, achieved a quite remarkable degree of comfort and prosperity. From this one may judge the level it would reach if almost no power were lost, if men, instead of commanding one another, organized themselves to exercise their combined effort on nature, and if nations adopted the same system! . . .

In a society organized for the positive aim of working for its prosperity through the sciences, fine arts, and arts and crafts, the most important political act, the act which involves determining the direction in which society is to advance, no longer belongs to men invested [only] with social functions; it is exercised by the social body itself, in such a way that society, taken collectively, can really exercise [a] sovereignty . . . which then consists not in an arbitrary opinion established in law . . . but in a principle derived from the very nature of things, whose justice men have only to recognize and whose necessity they have only to proclaim. . . . The act of governing, in the sense of commanding, plays no or almost no part. All the questions which have to be debated in such a political system . . . are eminently positive and answerable; [the correct] decisions can only be the result of scientific demonstrations, absolutely independent of all human will, which may be discussed by those educated enough to understand them. . . . And just as every question of social interest will then inevitably be decided as well as

it can be with acquired knowledge, so will all social functions be entrusted to the men most capable of performing them in conformity with the association's general aim. Thus . . . the three principal disadvantages of the present political system--arbitrariness, incapacity, and intrigue--will be seen to disappear at once.

. . . The functions which are peculiarly concerned with maintenance of social order will be classed . . . only according to their natural rank, as subordinate police functions.

. . . This part of social action is the only one in the new system requiring a certain degree of command in relations between men, since all the rest . . . involve the action of principles. It follows that the action of governing . . . will then be limited as much as possible. In this order men will consequently enjoy the highest degree of liberty compatible with the state of society. It must also be noted that this function of maintaining order can then easily become, almost entirely, a task shared by all citizens, whether it be to contain trouble-makers or to settle disputes. . . .

# ON SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

(1825)

BY HENRI SAINT-SIMON

[*O.C.*, vol. 39, pp. 125-132]

THE mechanism of social organization was inevitably very complicated so long as the majority of individuals remained in a state of ignorance and improvidence which rendered them incapable of administering their own affairs. In this state of incomplete intellectual development they were swayed by brutal passions which urged them to revolt and every kind of anarchy.

In such a situation, which was the necessary prelude to a better social order, it was necessary for the minority to be organized on military lines, to obtain a monopoly of legislation, and so to keep all power to itself, in order to hold the majority in tutelage and subject the nation to strong discipline. Thus the main energies of the community have till now been directed to maintaining itself as a community, and any efforts directed to improving the moral and physical welfare of the nation have necessarily been regarded as secondary.

Today this state of affairs can and should be completely altered. The main effort should be directed to the improvement of our moral and physical welfare; only a small amount of force is now required to maintain public order, since the majority have become used to work (which eliminates disorder) and now consists of men who have recently proved that they are capable of administering property, whether in land or money.

As the minority no longer has need of force to keep the proletarian class in subordination, the course which it should adopt is as follows:



- (1) A policy by which the proletariat will have the strongest interest in maintaining public order.
- (2) (2) A policy which aims at making the inheritance of landed property as easy as possible.
- (3) (3) A policy which aims at giving the highest political importance to the workers.

Such a policy is quite simple and obvious, if one takes the trouble to judge the situation by one's own intelligence, and to shake off the yoke enforced on our minds by the political principles of our ancestors -- principles which were sound and useful in their own day, but are no longer applicable to present circumstances. The mass of the population is now composed of men (apart from exceptions which occur more or less equally in every class) who are capable of administering property whether in land or in money, and therefore we can and must work directly for the improvement of the moral and physical welfare of the community.

The most direct method of improving the moral and physical welfare of the majority of the population is to give priority in State expenditure to ensuring work for all fit men, to secure their physical existence; spreading throughout the proletarian class a knowledge of positive science; ensuring for this class forms of recreation and interests which will develop their intelligence.

We must add to this the measures necessary to ensure that the national wealth is administered by men most fitted for it, and most concerned in its administration, that is to say the most important industrialists.

Thus the community, by means of these fundamental arrangements, will be organized in a way which will completely satisfy reasonable men of every class.'

There will no longer be a fear of insurrection, and consequently no longer a need to maintain large standing

armies to suppress it; no longer a need to spend enormous sums on a police force; no longer a fear of foreign danger, for a body of thirty millions of men who are a contented community would easily repel attack, even if the whole human race combined against them.

We might add that neither princes nor peoples would be so mad as to attack a nation of thirty millions who displayed no aggressive intentions against their neighbours, and were united internally by mutual interests.

Furthermore, there would no longer be a need for a system of police spying in a community in which the vast majority had an interest in maintaining the established order.

The men who brought about the Revolution, the men who directed it, and the men who, since 1789 and up to the present day, have guided the nation, have committed a great political mistake. They have all sought to improve the governmental machine, whereas they should have subordinated it and put administration in the first place.

They should have begun by asking a question the solution of which is simple and obvious. They should have asked who, in the present state of morals and enlightenment, are the men most fitted to manage the affairs of the nation. They would have been forced to recognize the fact that the scientists, artists and industrialists, and the heads of industrial concerns are the men who possess the most eminent, varied, and most positively useful ability, for the guidance of men's minds at the present time. They would have recognized the fact that the work of the scientists, artists, and industrialists is that which, in discovery and application, contributes most to national prosperity.

They would have reached the conclusion that the scientists, artists and leaders of industrial enterprises are the men who should be entrusted with administrative power, that is to say, with the responsibility for managing the national interests; and that the functions of government should be limited to maintaining public order.'

The reformers of 1789 should have said to themselves as follows.

The kings of England have given a good example to monarchy by agreeing to give no order without the approval and signature of a minister. The magnanimity of the kings of France demands that they shew still greater generosity to their people, and that they should agree to make no decision affecting the general interests of the nation without the approval of the men most fitted to judge their decisions that is to say, without the approval of the scientists and the most eminent artists, without the approval of the most important industrialists.

The community has often been compared to a pyramid. I admit that the nation should be composed as a pyramid; I am profoundly convinced that the national pyramid should be crowned by the monarchy, but I assert that from the base of the pyramid to its summit the layers should be composed of more and more precious materials. If we consider the present pyramid, it appears that the base is made of granite, that up to a certain height the layers are composed of valuable materials, but that the upper part, supporting a magnificent diamond, is composed of nothing but plaster and gilt.

The base of the present national pyramid consists of workers in their routine occupations; the first layers above this base are the leaders of industrial enterprises, the scientists who improve the methods of manufacture and widen their application, the artists who give the

stamp of good taste to all their products. The upper layers, which I assert to be composed of nothing but plaster, which is easily recognizable despite the gilding, are the courtiers, the mass of nobles whether of ancient or recent creation, the idle rich, the governing class from the prime minister to the humblest clerk. The monarchy is the magnificent diamond which crowns the pyramid.

From F.M.H. Markham (ed), *Henri Compté de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) Selected Writings*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952.

# THE FAILURE OF EUROPEAN LIBERALISM

## (EXTRACT FROM DEUXIÈME APPENDICE SUR LE LIBÉRALISME ET L'INDUSTRIALISME, CATÉCHISME DES INDUSTRIELS, BK.II, 1824)

H. DE SAINT-SIMON,

[1] We invite all industrials who are zealous for the public good and who understand the relationship between the general interests of society and those of industry, not to tolerate any longer the designation liberals. We invite them to unfurl a new flag and inscribe on their banner the emblem: Industrialism.

[2] We address the same invitation to all persons, whatever their estate or profession, who share our profound conviction that the only way to establish a calm and stable order is to entrust the high administration of national wealth to those who contribute most to the public treasury and who take out the least. We invite them to declare themselves industrialists.

[3] It is mainly to the true royalists that we address this invitation, that is, we address it especially to those who want to base the peace and happiness of the House of Bourbon on national prosperity.

[4] Q What benefit do you expect from this change of name? What advantage do you see in substituting the word industrialism for liberalism? What, therefore, are the disadvantages attached to the word liberalism which make you stress the importance of abandoning it?

A. You are asking too many questions at once. Which one do you want us to answer first?

[5] Q. Tell us what disadvantages attach to the word liberalism, and what benefit can result from its

abandonment by the party which wants to improve social organisation by using only loyal, legal, and peaceful means.

A. In our view the designation liberalism has three great disadvantages for all well-intentioned men who march under this banner.

**[6] Q.** What is the first of these disadvantages?

A. The word liberalism designates an order of sentiments; it does not denote a class of interests, with the result that this designation is vague and consequently defective.

**[7] Q** What is the second of these disadvantages?

A. Most of those who allow themselves to be known as liberals are peaceful men, men inspired by the desire to put an end to revolution by establishing through loyal, legal, and peaceful means a calm and stable order proportionate to the state of enlightenment and civilisation. But the leaders of this party are men who have maintained the critical, that is, revolutionary character of the eighteenth century. All who played a role in the Revolution, first as patriots, then as Bonapartists, today claim to be liberals. Thus, the party which is reputedly liberal is today composed of two classes of men with different, even contrary opinions. The founders of this party are men whose principal aim is to overthrow every possible government so that they can take over themselves; whereas the majority of this same party are inclined to establish the most stable and most powerful government provided that it clearly acts in the national interest.

**[8]** The designation liberalism, having been chosen, adopted, and proclaimed by the remnants of the patriotic and Bonapartist parties, is most inconvenient for the men whose essential aim is to constitute a sound order by peaceful means.

[9] We are not suggesting that the patriots and Bonapartists have been of no service to society. Their energy has been useful, for it was necessary to demolish in order to be able to construct. But today the revolutionary spirit which inspired them is in direct opposition to the public good. Today, a designation which does not denote a spirit absolutely opposed to the revolutionary spirit cannot be right for enlightened and well-intentioned men.

[10] Q What is the third disadvantage involved in the name liberalism?

A. The party which is called liberal has been defeated not only in France, but also in Naples, Spain, and England. The members of the extreme Left in France cut no better a figure than M M Brougham and Robert Wilson in England. The repeated defeats of the liberals have proved that nations as well as governments did not wish to adopt their political opinions. Now, when sensible men are shown that they have followed the wrong road and chosen bad guides, they hurry to change direction.

[11] We conclude from the three reasons just given that peaceful men whose opinion favours a calm and stable state of affairs must hasten to proclaim their desire no longer to be designated liberals, and must inscribe a new emblem on their banner . . .

[Return to Seminar Topics](#) ..... [Top of page](#)

## THE COURT OF LOUIS XIV

### DUC DE SAINT-SIMON:

---

*The Duc de Saint-Simon resided for many years at Versailles. He left an account of Life there.*

#### THE COURT

His natural talents were below mediocrity; but he had a mind capable of improvement, of receiving polish, of assimilating what was best in the minds of others without slavish imitation; and he profited greatly throughout his life from having associated with the ablest and wittiest persons, of both sexes, and of various stations. He entered the world (if I may use such an expression in speaking of a King who had already completed his twenty-third year), at a fortunate moment, for men of distinction abounded. His Ministers and Generals at this time, with their successors trained in their schools, are universally acknowledged to have been the ablest in Europe; for the domestic troubles and foreign wars under which France had suffered ever since the death of Louis XIII had brought to the front a number of brilliant names, and the Court was made up of capable and illustrious personages.... Glory was his passion, but he also liked order and regularity in all things; he was naturally prudent, moderate, and reserved; always master of his tongue and his emotions. Will it be believed? he was also naturally kind-hearted and just. God had given him all that was necessary for him to be a good King, perhaps also to be a fairly great one. All his faults were produced by his surroundings. In his childhood he was so much neglected that no one dared go near his rooms. He was often heard to speak of those times with great bitterness; he used to relate how, through the



carelessness of his attendants, he was found one evening in the basin of a fountain in the Palais-Royal gardens....

His Ministers, generals, mistresses, and courtiers soon found out his weak point, namely, his love of hearing his own praises. There was nothing he liked so much as flattery, or, to put it more plainly, adulation; the coarser and clumsier it was, the more he relished it. That was the only way to approach him; if he ever took a liking to a man it was invariably due to some lucky stroke of flattery in the first instance, and to indefatigable perseverance in the same line afterwards. His Ministers owed much of their influence to their frequent opportunities for burning incense before him....

It was this love of praise which made it easy for Louvois to engage him in serious wars, for he persuaded him that he had greater talents for war than any of his Generals, greater both in design and in execution, and the Generals themselves encouraged him in this notion, to keep in favour with him. I mean such Generals as Condé and Turenne; much more, of course, those who came after them. He took to himself the credit of their successes with admirable complacency, and honestly believed that he was all his flatterers told him. Hence arose his fondness for reviews, which he carried so far that his enemies called him, in derision, "the King of reviews"; hence also his liking for sieges, where he could make a cheap parade of bravery, and exhibit his vigilance, forethought, and endurance of fatigue; for his robust constitution enabled him to bear fatigue marvellously; he cared nothing for hunger, heat, cold, or bad weather. He liked also, as he rode through the lines, to hear people praising his dignified bearing and fine appearance on horseback. His campaigns were his favourite topic when talking to his mistresses. He talked well, expressed himself clearly in well-chosen language; and no man

could tell a story better. His conversation, even on the most ordinary subjects, was always marked by a certain natural dignity.

His mind was occupied with small things rather than with great, and he delighted in all sorts of petty details, such as the dress and drill of his soldiers; and it was just the same with regard to his building operations, his household, and even his cookery. He always thought he could teach something of their own craft even to the most skilful professional men; and they, for their part, used to listen gratefully to lessons which they had long ago learnt by heart. He imagined that all this showed his indefatigable industry; in reality, it was a great waste of time, and his Ministers turned it to good account for their own purposes, as soon as they had learnt the art of managing him; they kept his attention engaged with a mass of details, while they contrived to get their own way in more important matters.

His vanity, which was perpetually nourished - for even preachers used to praise him to his face from the pulpit - was the cause of the aggrandisement of his Ministers. He imagined that they were great only through him, mere mouthpieces through which he expressed his will; consequently he made no objection when they gradually encroached on the privileges of the greatest noblemen. He felt that he could at any moment reduce them to their original obscurity; whereas, in the case of a nobleman, though he could make him feel the weight of his displeasure, he could not deprive him or his family of the advantages due to his birth. For this reason he made it a rule never to admit a *seigneur* to his Councils, to which the Duke de Beauvilliers was the only exception....

But for the fear of the devil, which, by God's grace, never forsook him even in his wildest excesses, he would

have caused himself to be worshipped as a deity. He would not have lacked worshippers....

#### LIFE AT VERSAILLES

Very early in the reign of Louis XIV the Court was removed from Paris, never to return. The troubles of the minority had given him a dislike to that city; his enforced and surreptitious flight from it still rankled in his memory; he did not consider himself safe there, and thought cabals would be more easily detected if the Court was in the country, where the movements and temporary absences of any of its members would be more easily noticed.... No doubt that he was also influenced by the feeling that he would be regarded with greater awe and veneration when no longer exposed every day to the gaze of the multitude.

His love-affair with Mademoiselle de la Vallière, which at first was covered as far as possible with a veil of mystery, was the cause of frequent excursions to Versailles. This was at that time at small country house, built by Louis XIII to avoid the unpleasant necessity, which had sometimes befallen him, of sleeping at a wretched wayside tavern or in a windmill, when benighted out hunting in the forest of St. Leger.... The visits of Louis XIV becoming more frequent, he enlarged the *château* by degrees till its immense buildings afforded better accommodation for the Court than was to be found at St. Germain, where most of the courtiers had to put up with uncomfortable lodgings in the town. The Court was therefore removed to Versailles in 1682, not long before the Queen's death. The new building contained an infinite number of rooms for courtiers, and the King liked the grant of these rooms to be regarded as a coveted privilege.

He availed himself of the frequent festivities at Versailles, and his excursions to other places, as a means of making the courtiers assiduous in their attendance and anxious to please him; for he nominated beforehand those who were to take part in them, and could thus gratify some and inflict a snub on others. He was conscious that the substantial favours he had to bestow were not nearly sufficient to produce a continual effect; he had therefore to invent imaginary ones, and no one was so clever in devising petty distinctions and preferences which aroused jealousy and emulation. The visits to Marly later on were very useful to him in this way; also those to Trianon, where certain ladies, chosen beforehand, were admitted to his table. It was another distinction to hold his candlestick at his *coucher*; as soon as he had finished his prayers he used to name the courtier to whom it was to be handed, always choosing one of the highest rank among those present....

Not only did he expect all persons of distinction to be in continual attendance at Court, but he was quick to notice the absence of those of inferior degree; at his *lever*, his *coucher*, his meals, in the gardens of Versailles (the only place where the courtiers in general were allowed to follow him), he used to cast his eyes to right and left; nothing escaped him, he saw everybody. If any one habitually living at Court absented himself he insisted on knowing the reason; those who came there only for flying visits had also to give a satisfactory explanation; any one who seldom or never appeared there was certain to incur his displeasure. If asked to bestow a favour on such persons he would reply haughtily: "I do not know him"; of such as rarely presented themselves he would say, "He is a man I never see"; and from these judgements there was no appeal.

He always took great pains to find out what was going on in public places, in society, in private houses, even family secrets, and maintained an immense number of spies and tale-bearers. These were of all sorts; some did not know that their reports were carried to him; others did know it; there were others, again, who used to write to him directly, through channels which he prescribed; others who were admitted by the backstairs and saw him in his private room. Many a man in all ranks of life was ruined by these methods, often very unjustly, without ever being able to discover the reason; and when the King had once taken a prejudice against a man, he hardly ever got over it....

No one understood better than Louis XIV the art of enhancing the value of a favour by his manner of bestowing it; he knew how to make the most of a word, a smile, even of a glance. If he addressed any one, were it but to ask a trifling question or make some commonplace remark, all eyes were turned on the person so honored; it was a mark of favour which always gave rise to comment....

He loved splendour, magnificence, and profusion in all things, and encouraged similar tastes in his Court; to spend money freely on equipages and buildings, on feasting and at cards, was a sure way to gain his favour, perhaps to obtain the honour of a word from him. Motives of policy had something to do with this; by making expensive habits the fashion, and, for people in a certain position, a necessity, he compelled his courtiers to live beyond their income, and gradually reduced them to depend on his bounty for the means of subsistence. This was a plague which, once introduced, became a scourge to the whole country, for it did not take long to spread to Paris, and thence to the armies and the provinces; so that a man of any position is now estimated

entirely according to his expenditure on his table and other luxuries. This folly, sustained by pride and ostentation, has already produced widespread confusion; it threatens to end in nothing short of ruin and a general overthrow.

From *The Memoirs of the Duke de Saint-Simon*, ed. F. Arkwright (New York Brentano's, n.d.), Vol. V, pp. 254, 259-63, 271-274, 276-278

---

This text is part of the [Internet Modern History Sourcebook](#). The Sourcebook is a collection of public domain and copy-permitted texts for introductory level classes in modern European and World history.

Unless otherwise indicated the specific electronic form of the document is copyright. Permission is granted for electronic copying, distribution in print form for educational purposes and personal use. If you do reduplicate the document, indicate the source. No permission is granted for commercial use of the Sourcebook.

(c)Paul Halsall Aug 1997

[halsall@murray.fordham.edu](mailto:halsall@murray.fordham.edu)

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.  
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.