

Warning to the Proprietors

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Letter To M. Victor Considérant

Editor of LA PHALANGE

On A Defence of Property

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Warning to the Proprietors

Monsieur Editor

I have read the pamphlet entitled: *Défense du fouriérisme, Réponse à MM. Proudhon, Lamennais, Reybaud, Louis Blanc, etc.*, and I am pleased with this publication, the author, despite the aberrations of his logic and the injustice of his reproaches, showing himself almost always a friend of progress and full of zeal for science and truth.

So I say to you in all confidence, monsieur Editor, that this Fourierist is one of us; a little sooner, a little later, you will see him in the ranks of equality: there is too much fairness and intelligence in him for the God of free men not to treat him according to his mercy and let him die an unbeliever.

However, I regret that from motives of which I am ignorant, but no doubt very respectable, your defender thought it necessary to remain anonymous. Why, like those heroes of a novel who suddenly appear to avenge the honour of a beauty, does he throw himself, visor lowered, without colours or motto that would make him recognisable, into this furious melee where at this moment the destinies of France and perhaps of the world are being decided? Why did he not at least reveal himself to the one he chose as his premier adversary? I would not have betrayed his confidence, and, however much enemies he wants us to be, his secret would have died in my heart. However, in spite of this discourteous reserve for which I would have the right to punish him, I will be content to counter his attacks and will not strike him: for, who knows? perhaps my critic is one of my friends; perhaps, if I knew him, I would prefer to win him over than to sacrifice him to my cause; perhaps finally... I have

not forgotten the deplorable story of Tancred and Clorinde, and how, believing he fought a pagan, the unfortunate crusader killed his mistress. Also, by the mildness of the argument, the lack of systematisation in the ideas, a certain flux of sentiment and style, and some traits of feminine anger, I believe I have recognised a woman in my black knight...

I admit however that I hold a grudge against him on one point: he seems to believe and he says that *I hate* all those I attack, all the representatives of the ideas and principles that I combat. What do you say to that, monsieur Editor? Your anonymous neophyte has not been planted in good Comtois soil, and does not know what it is to be a highlander of Jura. Me, hate someone, great God! because I am irritated by what I read and what I see; because I characterise, according to the degree of my feeble perception, ideas and acts, persons and things! It might as well be said that the doctor hates the patient, because he defines the illness. Certainly, I regard as very fortunate and I admire the one who, carrying the *speculum* into the depths of our ignominy, preserves his serenity and his phlegm; as for me, I declare it, I would not believe I would live and I would think little of myself if I resembled him. And I appeal to you, general of the societarian army, a man whom the imbecility of the century has driven to despair, what would you make of a soldier who marched into combat singing a priapeia, carrying the thyrsus of Bacchus as a sword, and the mantle of Epicurus as his breastplate? *A la guerre comme à la guerre*, says the old Galois proverb¹: when the enemy murders and insults you, is that the moment to say to him, with outstretched arms: Brother, friend!

But, without exaggerating anything, let us look at the facts, and judge the discourse.

If I read the journals, if I open a magazine, if I browse through some pamphlet from one of our political eagles, the first thing that strikes me is this clamour of blissful indignation against the *false doctrines*, the *dissolving doctrines*, the *execrable doctrines* that seduce the people and put society in peril. Why then are these doctrines of perversity not opposed by better instructions? Does governmental truth no longer have apostles? Would right-thinking men be badly paid? Or is the chest of secret funds empty? What! there exists a true doctrine, a salutary doctrine, a holy and immortal doctrine: a doctrine which is not that of constitutional monarchy, which we no longer want, nor that of the republic, which died on 9 thermidor; nor that of the legitimacy², which the people have twice condemned: and this doctrine, which everyone believes and which no one discovers, the government, far from seeking it, dreads it, the privileged curse it in advance and raise a hue and cry against those who speak of it! Indeed, the phalansterians have blasphemers and no judges; the communists, like the Christians of old, are declared enemies of the human race, probably because they are poor of heart as well as poor in goods; the egalitarians especially are abhorred, as exterminators of privilege and despisers of heroes and geniuses. Against these novelties there are anathemas and insults, but no reasons. Why then do the aged priests of fallen religions, why do the fossilised teachers of *pure morals* and *sound philosophy*, and *imperishable right*, disdain to join the fray and contest with us for the salvation of the people and the glory of God? Why do the Guizots, the Cousins, the Villemains, and their innumerable boarders, instead of battling for portfolios and positions, refuse to set out in search of the new order and to study the true discipline of nations?

I search in the numerous categories of official persons, I traverse from high to low the hierarchical ladder of corporations and functionaries; everywhere I find men who consume and who declaim, but not one who contemplates and thinks. Who are those who work to enlighten the people and to unravel the chaos of the social and philosophical sciences? Are they our philosophers, greedy, shameless and pyrrhonian? Are they our priests, occupied, as in the heyday of their past, with indulgent nonsense, having Christian charity as their only social conscience, as if the precept of charity was a law of political organisation? Are they our magistrates, these stoic continuers of all the cowardice, all the baseness, all the follies of parliaments? Are they our academics, so backward, so fawning, so silly?

¹ In time of crisis, we can act accordingly. (*Black Flag*)

² Royalists who from 1830 onward supported the claims of the senior line of the house of Bourbon to be the legitimate king of France. They opposed not only republicans but also the other monarchist factions: the Orleanists (royalist adherents of the house of Bourbon-Orléans, who recognised Louis-Philippe as king of France after the July Revolution of 1830) and the Bonapartists (who favoured a restoration of the French Empire). (*Black Flag*)

Are they our journalists, these little tyrants of opinion, *whose name alone is enough to arouse laughter*? Are they our deputies, these praetorians of the constitutional regime, sellers of ministers and secret funds? Is it the government, finally, the most hypocritical, the most perverse, the most all-consuming, the most anti-national that ever was?

It must be recognised; it is a profoundly abnormal thing, a scourge for society, that preaching and teaching should pass from legitimate teachers to men without a mission and without authority; that I, a poor worker, who is neither deputy, nor magistrate, nor academic, nor journalist, nor priest; that a monsieur Considérant, an artillery captain, who should be at his cannons, or running a factory, or serving a railroad; that a Boyer, who could have lived from his type-setting without worrying about organisation and labour courts; that so many others finally who do not follow their trade, and meddle in that which does not concern them, we occupy ourselves with remaking the world, and are so bold as to touch the hand of justice or the staff of command? But, once again, whose fault is that? Is it not those *shepherds of the people*, as the good Homer said, who pasture us without bread and without work; these bureaucratic administrators, buried in their papers, incapable even of organising the festivals of monopoly and storing lanterns; these judges, who seem determined only to condemn vagabonds and listen to lawyers; this clergy without acquired doctrine³, these scholars who know nothing of what it is most important for us to know; all these hypnotisers of the political press, who want to bind the giant with a hundred arms under a mesh to catch butterflies? – stir yourself then, Briareos!⁴

And yet, see how the malevolence of our happy-medium [*juste-milieu*] bourgeois grows every day and is encouraged; how the greed of the monopolist advances more brazenly; how power and its accomplices give an impetus to their counter-reformist projects. – “Let us not be afraid,” they say. “let us not be afraid; the phalansterians are ridiculous, the communists despised, the egalitarians impossible; the last of the Saint-Simonians have just been lost by uniting with the Great Whore. Hurrah! Death to the revolutionaries! Woe to the vanquished!”

And you, apostle of a new faith, you hoped to make a spark of the sacred fire penetrate into these rotten and worm-eaten consciences! What have you achieved in the last fifteen years, by your reverences, your kindnesses, your pious frauds, your protests of preserving everything by renewing everything?... No, no, this is not the way to conduct a revolution. Recall the words of Danton, the day after the 10th of August, when insurgent France demanded of its citizens a counsel which would save the homeland: “*We must*,” cried Danton with an exterminating gesture, “*we must make the aristocrats fear*.” And three weeks later, the workers of Maillard responded to the voice of Danton. Danton did not warn; he struck. Well! today, if we want to escape a new September, we must speak truth to the proprietors.

I will, monsieur Editor, quickly examine, by reducing them to a small number of points, the criticisms of your anonymous. You have taken advantage of the defence, you will hear the reply: and I count on your fidelity to inform your readers, and all those in general who are interested in these debates.

³ A priest as enlightened as he was pious said to me: “Why do you harass us? We are surrounded by a circle of fire: we cannot express a political thought without being immediately accused of conspiracy and intrigue; the memory of our former power renders us suspect to all opinions and confines us to our ceremonies.” – “It is necessary,” I said to him, “to return to the ancient traditions; we must continue the work of the first Church, and die, if necessary, a second time for charity and justice.” – “Would to God,” he replied, “that it would take only our lives to give the world order and rest! But do you not see that far from rallying minds, we would increase the fire; that instead of martyrdom, we would reap only hatred and ridicule? Proletarians, we once begot liberty to you; march now in your strength, and when you have overcome, remember your spiritual fathers.”

He could have added that the high ecclesiastical dignitaries, united in outlook with the men of power, would never allow the lower clergy to follow their generous and patriotic instincts. Thus the people no longer have anyone to rely on but themselves alone...

⁴ In Greek mythology, Briareus was one of three Hecatoncheires, monstrous giants each with fifty heads and one hundred arms. (Translator)

Theory of Property

3. – That since property destroys itself, it is irrational, from a practical point of view, to want to defend it.

Property is bad, but property destroys itself; such is, under the hand of Providence, the universal law of human affairs: *crime and punishment, action and reaction*.

But anonymous claims to evade this law: with an affectation of positivism as contrary to good philosophy as to Fourierist opinion, he confines himself to practice, as if practice, separated from theory, were anything else than routine. He says, on page 20:

“We will readily grant that society is moving of its own accord towards the extinction of property, provided that it is admitted that the goal is still a few centuries away from us, and that this perspective will not change in any way, for many years to come, alas! the present situation of men and things.”

If the hitherto unobserved movement which is carrying us towards a state of association where property will exist only in name and where absolute equality will exist in conditions and fortunes; if, I say, this movement is real, what does the critic reproach me for? Is it for asking for the acceleration of this movement? But in this I am only conforming to the will of nature, and it is the partisans of the *status quo* who disobey Providence. Society makes an effort to free itself from the past: what keeps it in its old swaddling clothes is force. Stop defending privilege and monopoly, let work and freedom act; then, if you cannot foresee it, wait for the result. Well! what is it that angers me, if not seeing rulers and the privileged agree to ward off fate, and abuse the public power to prevent equality from blossoming?

Would I have been wrong to conclude from the imminent and inevitable abolition of property its contingent existence, its entirely relative value, and hence in its absolute impossibility? But I could not confuse the transitory fact with the immutable right, the means with the end, one of the thousand phenomena of the work of organisation, that has been operating for four thousand years, with this organisation itself. It was in the conditions of the establishment of order within societies that there was a proprietary period, but it does not follow from this that property is eternal. If there is a contradiction somewhere, it is on the side of anonymous who, seeing in property a normal institution, a principle of absolute truth and of unalterable duration, nevertheless admits that it fades and disappears. That alone can alter and perish which lacks sanction and rule.

Finally, despite the incessant degradation of the right of property, would one regard as risky this consequence of my first two memoirs, that in the natural system of social organisation, a system that I would willingly call *human families*, the principle of property cannot be admitted, and is of no scientific value? and would one want to transform here the *fact* into *right*, under the pretext that no fact exists which does not have its reason and its legitimacy? But once again this would be to attribute to the first effort of nature a character of perfection which it does not have and which it is itself only destined to produce; it would be to want to eternalise the bubble of chaos. Yes, property was legitimate, but it was as a preparation for order, not as a definitive institution. The progress of civilisation condemns it to die; Providence and humanity are justified.

According to this, how can we conceive that anonymous accuses me of placing myself outside of nature, of building a tower in the air, of denying the traditions of peoples and of cursing the attempts of the legislators? This is how he formulates his conclusions:

“In summary, it seems to us beyond dispute that any philosopher who works for a better organisation, present and practical, must draw the materials for it from current society, and that property is the most indispensable of these materials.”

I take note of these words, which seem to be inspired, monsieur Editor, by your excellent pamphlet on *General Policy*; and I am not afraid to predict that he who wrote them, and his honourable patron, and

soon all Fourierists, will be led by the consequences of their own principles to abjure their whims of property and inequality. Yes, you yourself, monsieur Editor, sooner or later you will desert the phalanstery: always defend your flag, indulge in tireless propaganda, fight for property, preach both free love and the family, found colonies, organise series of contrasting groups, before five years, if you wish to understand, you will be freed from this phalansterian limbo where your poor soul languishes, so lively in its allure, so well made for exact and rigorous science, but so miserably subjugated by the hallucinations of an ignoramus and a lunatic.

To return to what concerns me, where did anonymous see that in my research on property I rejected this same property as a means of transition and organisation? How does he know, for example, that the most disastrous rights of proprietors, tenant farming, renting, heredity in all degrees, gifts while alive and after death, inheritance in official positions, payments of annuities, etc., etc., are not, in my opinion, the natural auxiliaries which have been given to us to arrive at order, to combat property and to establish equilibrium itself? Alas! it must be said, we are still too young to do without these things! and this is what best demonstrates that our whole civilisation is still impregnated with barbarism; but does it follow that we must condemn ourselves to an eternal childhood? When the organised being awakens to life, it draws its first nourishment from a special source prepared for it alone; but now the plant grows, the child grows and becomes stronger; immediately the cotyledons fall, the breast withers and dries up. Do you not see that property is exhausted, and that its vigorous sons demand stronger nourishment?

In the second edition of my first memoir, I have written the programme of egalitarian organisation in the following terms, which I submit for the appreciation of the anonymous critic:

“To find a system of absolute equality, in which all current institutions, minus property, or the sum of the abuses of property, not only can find a place, but are themselves means of equality: individual freedom, division of powers, public prosecution, jury, administrative and judicial organisation, unity and integrity in education, marriage, family, direct and indirect line inheritance, right of sale and exchange, right to make a will, and even right of the first-born; – a system which, better suited, ensures the formation of capital and maintains general emulation; which, from a superior perspective, explains, corrects and completes the theories of association proposed up to this day, from Plato and Pythagoras, to Babeuf, Saint-Simon and Fourier; – a system finally which, serving itself as a means of transition, is immediately applicable.”⁵

This programme, where neither *passions*, nor *attractions*, nor *harmony* are spoken of, will no doubt seem very meagre to a Fourierist; but I defy anyone to reproach it with being outside the conditions of nature and society.

4. – That to reform property is to destroy it.

“Currently,” says anonymous, “property is abusive, despotic and jealous; the recent owners even outdid the old ones in this respect.” He draws from this the conclusion that property calls for a reform, but not a destruction. This is what he repeats in twenty places in his pamphlet.

This is how the instinct of self-preservation misleads the best minds and deceives them. Property is one of those things whose existence, to express myself like the school, is not *real* or *substantial*, but *formal*; in other words, property is not an *entity*, but a *formality*. To *reform* a thing whose whole existence is in the *form* is to replace it with another, it is to destroy it.

M. Blanqui had already spoken to me of reforming property without destroying it, and I had replied:

⁵ Heredity by itself is not a cause of social inequality; it only becomes so through the effect of monopoly and the right of property. Heredity is *a mode of transmission from the dead to the living*: now, according to existing law, fathers *arbitrarily* transmit to their children a *privilege*, while according to natural right they must *legitimately* transmit to them a *legitimate title*. I will demonstrate, by the most exact calculations, that in the system of egalitarian distribution and organisation, heredity can be maintained without resulting in either an increase or a decrease in advantages for anyone, or in a fragmentation in agricultural exploitation and industrial production.

“M. Blanqui recognises that there are a host of abuses in property: for my part, I call property exclusively the sum (or the principle) of these abuses. For one as for the other, property is a polygon whose angles must be knocked down: but, the operation done, M. Blanqui maintains that the figure will always be a polygon, whereas I claim that this figure will be a circle.”

Give a spherical wax mass a conical or pyramidal shape, it will still be wax: the substance is retained, but the sphericity is destroyed. Similarly, for the citizen who works, produces and consumes, uses and abuses, there are two great orders of facts which it is important not to confuse: the *goods* which he uses, and the *mode* or the *right* according to which he uses them. Whether the holder is a proprietor, a slave or a monk, the essence of the goods for him does not change; only the mode of enjoyment and exploitation varies. Here it is property, there it is renting, elsewhere community. Imagine a mode that is none of these. Will you say that this mode is *property*? With no less reason you could claim that it is *community* or *renting*.

Will you now say that I am quibbling, and should you be treated like those children terrified by masks? Let us return to the facts and we will agree later.

“Property,” says anonymous, “is today *abusive, despotic, jealous, capricious, ignorant, immoral*.” – I say no worse.

“It must be made social, beneficial, accessible to all; discipline it and make it more fruitful.” – I ask nothing better.

“For this, fragmented work, selfish competition, arbitrary distribution must be replaced by unitary exploitation, solidarity and a better distribution of products.” – That is what I never stop saying.

“Then,” he adds, “you will no longer declaim against property.” – No doubt, I reply, because then property will no longer exist.

Let us conclude from all the forgoing that property, like everything that pertains to social institutions, is an organic and embryonic nature, so to speak; that in developing it becomes transmuted; that, just like the human foetus, in turn worm, fish, lizard, finally man, the social order is produced through a series of transformations, the first of which contains the rudiments of the others, although it differs essentially from them, and the last presupposes the preceding ones, although it does not resemble them any more.⁶

5. – Exposition of Adam Smith’s formula on equality in exchanges

For anyone who reflect upon what is happening, it thereby remains proven, it seems to me:

1. That administrative law tends to absorb civil law;
2. That individual property, always deforming itself, passes to a particular state of *possession*, of which history offers some analogues, but no examples.
3. That thanks to this double progress, an imperceptible levelling takes place in conditions and fortunes.

When the facts speak, the true philosopher accepts their decision and knows only to submit. But equality of conditions is something so marvellous, so eccentric to our prejudices, that at the sight of it most readers recoil and, without taking into account the demonstrations, whether historic or economic, fall back onto arguments of impossibility capable, before analysis, of halting the mind for a moment, but which soon disappear in the face of criticism. “It is absurd,” exclaims anonymous, “to put Rachel at the level of the last onlooker; it is absurd to value an agate as much as a pebble; it is the whim of opinion that fixes the value of things; it is the inequality of faculties which causes the inequality of fortunes.”

⁶ Everything that has just been said on the transformation or transmutation of property, and on the mode of transition from this phase to the next, was indicated in my first memoir: it was up to the alarmists to see it and understand it, before sounding the tocsin.

With this way of reasoning, I would refute the princes of modern philosophy, Newton and Descartes. I would say to the first: Your gravitation is a contradiction in terms; for if, for example, the moon continually *falls* on the earth, how is it that it has not yet approached it by more than half a diameter? If, on the contrary, it is carried away by centrifugal force, how does it not disappear into the depths of space? Finally, if the centripetal force and the centrifugal force, equal to each other, act simultaneously on our satellite, nothing can result from this double action but immobility. – I would say to the second: Your application of algebra to geometry is absurd; for what can there be in common between entirely metaphysical formulas and the measurement of a surface and a solid? Between these two orders of operations there is no possible relation, any more than between thought and extent.

What, I ask, would this gibberish prove? nothing but the stupidity and impertinence of the critic.

I will, as far as *labour*, *talent* and *wages* are concerned, to re-establish the question from its true point of view, contenting myself with referring for the details to the 3rd and 4th chapters of my first memoir, as well as to my next essay on organisation.

Adam Smith, and after him Germain Garnier and Ricardo, was the first to notice that the true measure of values was the labour of men. Hence these famous formulas: *Labour was the first price, the currency paid for the purchase of all things. – Labour is the only universal measure, the only exact measure of values: it is the sole standard that can serve us to compare the values of different commodities, at all times and in all places. – The constituent parts of the price of commodities are found in the costs of production*, or, as I have said myself, *in the sum of time and expense*.

Anonymous, who reproaches me so bitterly for my polemic against economists, did not even suspect that by criticising my formula he was putting himself in contradiction with the purest economic doctrine. When one attacks an author as affirmative as I am claimed to be, one should at least ensure that this author is unfounded in his assertions.

Adam Smith then develops his thought by comparisons and examples; he even goes so far as to investigate what would have happened if men had been faithful to this law of equality in exchanges, and what causes led to its transgression everywhere.

“In that early and rude state of society,” he says “which precedes both the accumulation of stock and the appropriation of land, the proportion between the quantities of labour necessary for acquiring different objects seems to be the only circumstance which can afford any rule for exchanging them for one another. If among a nation of hunters, for example, it usually costs twice the labour to kill a beaver which it does to kill a deer, one beaver should naturally exchange for or be worth two deer. It is natural that what is usually the produce of two days’ or two hours’ labour, should be worth double of what is usually the produce of one day’s or one hour’s labour.”

Adam Smith then remarks that in estimating the time and expense that each product costs, account must be taken of the nature of the labour, the trouble it requires, the consumption it entails, etc. For example, a farmer consuming more in food, drink, clothing, etc., than a clerk, it follows that the salary of the farmer must be in proportion to this additional consumption. Thus the absolute law of exchange is a composite ratio of *labour* (considered in its intensity and duration) and of the *expense* necessary to the producer. The consequences of this system were developed by Ricardo in his *Principles of Political Economy*.

Adam Smith continues: “In that original state of things, which precedes both the appropriation of land and the accumulation of stock, the whole produce of labour belongs to the labourer. He has neither landlord nor master to share with him. Had this state continued, the wages of labour would have augmented with all those improvements in its productive powers, to which the division of labour gives occasion. All things would gradually have become cheaper. They would have been produced by a smaller quantity of labour; and as the commodities produced by equal quantities of labour would naturally in this state of things be exchanged for one another, they would have been purchased likewise with the produce of a smaller quantity.

“But this original state of things, in which the labourer enjoyed the whole produce of his own labour, could not last beyond the first introduction of the appropriation of land and the accumulation of stock... As soon as land becomes private property, the landlord demands a share of almost all the produce which the labourer can either raise, or collect from it. His *rent* makes the first deduction from the produce of the labour which is employed upon land.” (*An Inquiry on the Nature and the Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, volume 1.)

Here, then, is property described as theft and pillage by the father of political economy, and this in consequence of the law that *labour is the only measure and the only currency of values*.

But other economists, amongst whom J.-B. Say and M. Rossi stand out in the first rank, have argued that Adam Smith’s formula is insufficient and inaccurate: their reasons must be heard and weighed.

All objections are reduced to two:

1. Value in use is a quality inherent to the material. Labour does not create it; it only develops it, or, to put it better, puts it more within our reach. Labour, absolutely speaking, is a sterile exercise that borrows all its utility from the object to which it is applied: how could it become the measure of values?

“Two men,” says M. Rossi, “each seize a tree and they become owners, one of a wild apple tree, the other of a coconut tree laden with fruit. They used the same axe and gave the same number of blows. If there is no wealth except through the effort that man has made to obtain it, wealth is only the difficulty overcome. If this is so, when one has seized the wild apple tree with ten axe strokes and the other the coconut tree with ten axe strokes, they possess the same wealth. (ROSSI, *Course in Political Economy*, 11th lesson.)

M. Rossi is not even to the question. Adam Smith did not claim that labour was the measure of value in use, which is inherent in matter, and can neither be sold nor bought; but of value in exchange. Utility, as M. Rossi very well says, use-value does not come essentially from labour: it does not fall under the *production* of man, but under his *appropriation*. In other words, there are for natural values, there are not producers, only usufructuaries. That two savages, who do not engage in any kind of commerce with each other, should cut down, one a coconut tree, the other a wild apple tree, is a matter that is personal to each of them, a more or less advantageous fact of appropriation, an *isolated* act, therefore without any *economic* significance. For where there is no society, there is no economy.

But admit that in a horde there is a need for firewood, chairs, tables, cupboards, etc., as well as clothing and food: immediately the labour is divided, and it is then that, according to Adam Smith, the labour of the man who cuts down an apple tree is worth the labour of the one who cuts down a coconut tree. If, then, value in kind has utility for its measure, value in exchange has labour for its measure. Usurpation of the former constitutes property or monopoly; understanding of the second gradually leads to equality.

To refute M. Rossi’s argument, it suffices to hear it clearly. Two peasant women spend the same number of hours, and with equal effort, one singing, the other picking vegetables: it is clear that if it is a question of dinner afterwards, the song of the first does is not worth a bean and that she runs the risk of being hungry. But transport these two women to the centre of civilisation: the singer becomes a Malibran and the housewife a gourmet chef. The conditions are reversed, but no more fair. For there to be justice, it is necessary both to cultivate talent and to ennoble domestic work. But, in our proprietary society, one function is always sacrificed to another function, one product degraded by another product.

2. One insists: “It is utility,” says Say, “which causes the demand for the thing we make. On the other hand, the sacrifices that must be made for it to be produced, in other words, the costs of production, create scarcity, limit the quantity of this thing. Its value rises all the more it is demanded and the less it is supplied, and rises all the less when it is supplied more and demanded less. This principle is fundamental in political economy...”

In short, *utility* gives rise to *supply* and *demand*, and these in their turn, varying perpetually, produce all the oscillations of value.

But who does not see that these eternal variations of *supply* and *demand* result precisely from competition, from monopoly, from divergent and fragmented industry, in a word, from the lack of organisation? If we work haphazardly, if consequently our products are sometimes above, sometimes below consumption, if the various industries lack proportion and balance, is this not the effect of the right of property? Now, in the question which occupies us, the issue of property being identical to that of inequality of conditions, it follows that in order to justify property, property is assumed.

Say's error comes from the fact that, disdaining history, the comparison of legislations and religious traditions, he took a transitory form of society for a permanent state, an exception for an aphorism, and that, conceiving the economy only in property, he wanted to base and immobilise science on a pure anomaly.

Such is also the cause of my recriminations against this economist whom I accuse, on the one hand, of having recognised that property is a monopoly; on the other, of having distinguished value in kind from value in exchange; then, with the most incredible aplomb, with the most insulting contempt for philosophy and morality, which at all times have preached equality and condemned usury, to have established the inequality of exchanges on the inviolability of monopoly.

To these objections of specialised men, which I have reported in order to make the discussion as complete as it is serious, anonymous thought it necessary to add his phalansterian quibbles. I would very much like to pass over them in silence; but my adversary would triumph, and I know only too well what politeness obliges me to do. He must be satisfied soon.

6. – Demonstration of the equality of conditions by Adam Smith's formula

To summarise: The first cause of the inequality in conditions, resulting from the uncertainty of values, is annulled by Adam Smith's formula: *Each product is worth what it has cost in time and expense.*

Against this general and truly organic formula, it is objected: 1. that utility resulting from the properties of matter as much and more than from the very fact of labour, the latter cannot be taken as a comparative measure of values; 2. that supply and demand constantly varying according to fashion, whim, opinion, and other accidents of social life, value is essentially variable.

To which it is answered, on the one hand, that political economy being concerned only with value in exchange, and not at all with value in kind, to which all men have an equal right, the question remains as posed by Adam Smith; on the other, that the variations in values currently coming from the lack of organisation, and in no way from the intrinsic fact of the exchange, there is a need to deal with the formula of organisation, but no longer with the formula of distribution.

These so clear conclusions do not have the good fortune to please anonymous, who goes so far as to discover that by this means the rights of labour and talent would be compromised. Immortal Smith! you would never have suspected that, having eliminated as elements of value monopoly, opinion, fashion and all the disastrous results of our antisocial civilisation, you would be accused of being the enemy of labour, of the labour whose scientific value and fundamentality in economics you first saw.

"By what dreadful despotism," exclaims anonymous who preaches much more than he reasons, "will you break the instrument of labour in the hands of the strong?... Can you prevent the industrious and intelligent worker from relaxing from his material task in the study of the sciences and the arts? Now, will this second work be productive or not? and how are you to prevent it from being so in a free and intelligent society?... So it will become a new source of wealth and enjoyment unknown to the weak. What then does equality of wages mean? It does not exist, or else it is the most horrible and the most unbearable of tyrannies: *Summum jus, summa injuria.*"

In order to find objections, anonymous confuses and confounds what we have taken care to untangle just now. What do we look for in POLITICAL ECONOMY? Notice that name! The laws of *social production* and *exchange*. From this definition alone, as from a mathematical axiom, flow these marvellous consequences, which are as many transformations of each other:

1. That individual, arbitrary, unrequested labour has value only for the individual, but not for the associate; consequently that it cannot be taken into account in the estimation of *wages*, or, what comes to the same thing, of labour purchased by society;
2. That by the principle of the division of labour, each worker becoming an employee of the same society, and his product having to be proportional to the needs of this society, it follows that for all the *guarantee* is the same, the *salary* the same, the duties and obligations the same;
3. That if, his social task completed and his duty as an employee fulfilled, the worker engages in any free exercise, the *private* product that results from it cannot determine an increase in the salary of this individual, any more than today the magistrate who occupied himself with painting obtains an increase in salary from the State;
4. That this private product, finally, entailing neither an increase nor a decrease in salary for anyone, cannot become a cause of social inequality, because, in order to produce this product, the associate had to consume time and supplies, and that, in this respect, he has deducted something, either in his pleasures, or in his expenditure; because then he cannot exchange, even privately, his product except for an equivalent, which in no way modifies the respective position of the contracting parties; because finally, with the aid of individual products or savings, it is impossible, I mean it must be forbidden within society, to monopolise the instruments of labour.

Distinguish then between *social* labour and *private* labour, between the things of daily consumption and the instruments of production, between the exchange of the former and the inalienability of the latter.

But anonymous, who claims to have understood something about the phalanstery, finds these distinctions too *subtle* and describes them as *circumlocutions*. It is above all in favour of *talent* that he tries to rehabilitate the value of opinion, the absurdity of supply and demand, the immorality of monopoly.

Response to Accusations

[...]

[...] Workers, labourers, men of the people, whoever you are, the initiative of reform belongs to you. It is you who will accomplish this synthesis or social composition, which will be the masterpiece of creation; and you alone can accomplish it. For everything that comes from the people is profoundly synthetic; philosophers only have the talent for marquetry. You have already understood that the most salient characteristic of our reform should be labour and industry; and I felt my heart quiver with enthusiasm while listening to the song of the Parisian workers:

Forward! courage!
Let us be the first to march:
From the heart to work,
Brave workers!

March, singing, to the conquest of the new world, predestined race; labour, teach one another, brave workers! Your refrain is more beautiful than that of Rouget de Lisle.⁷

And you, men in power, angry magistrates, cowardly proprietors, have you finally understood me? Your property is indefensible; but your acquired condition, but the well-being of your children and the present advantages of your families, founded on an order of things that you did not make, are inviolable and sacred. Fear nothing for yourselves or for your pleasures: your pleasures! There is not

⁷ Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle (1760-1836) was a French army officer of the French Revolutionary Wars, best known for writing the words and music of the *Chant de guerre pour l'armée du Rhin*, which would later become *La Marseillaise*. While it had been and would become again the French national anthem, it was not so when Proudhon was writing. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *La Marseillaise* was recognized as the anthem of the international revolutionary movement. (Translator)

an intelligent communist, not an egalitarian worthy of the name, who wants them for his own. Thieves and looters are more odious to us than to you, proprietors enriched by our sweat: what we ask is therefore not your abasement, but the means of equalling you; it is order, work, education and bread. Your role today, know it well, is that of *emancipators of the people*; your goods are ours which have been handed over to you in guardianship; your sons are our brothers whom you endow with our legitimacy. Proprietor! your wards have grown; every day the idea of their rights shines more ardently in their enlightened eyes: tremble lest they declare themselves emancipated before their time, and lest a horrible vengeance makes you atone for too-long hesitations. Catastrophes are henceforth to be feared only from your selfishness and your ignorance, obstinate conservatives: the people know today that order can only be the fruit of a regular and uninterrupted development. For in the life of society, as in the life of the individual, there is no interruption: interruption is death! but there is no stopping either, because to stop, for it, is to end. Do not hope, therefore, either by concessions or by reasoning, to bring us back from what you call *fanaticism* and *chimeras*, and which is only the feeling of our just rights: the enthusiasm that possesses us, the enthusiasm for equality, is unknown to you. It is an intoxication stronger than wine, more penetrating than love, passion or divine fury, which the delirium of Leonidas, Saint Bernard and Michelangelo never equalled. Do not listen to the sophists who reassure you: expect nothing from your courts; do not despise our helpless poverty; do not count on your gold, nor on the number of your battalions, nor on the help of your allies: for, like the torrent that thunders, like the lightning that devours, like the hail that kills, so passes the anger of the people. Above all, do not provoke the outbursts of our despair, because, when your soldiers and your gendarmes succeed in oppressing us, you will not hold out against our last resource. It is neither regicide, nor assassination, nor poisoning, nor arson, nor refusal to work, nor emigration, nor insurrection, nor suicide: it is something more terrible than all that and more effective, something that has been seen, but which cannot be said.

I thank you, monsieur Editor, for the honourable terms in which you have expressed yourself several times on my account, and I deeply regret not being able to respond to them with a more favourable opinion of Fourier. For six whole weeks I was the captive of that bizarre genius; and every time I think of it again, it makes me laugh and terrifies me. But the habit that I have formed of never stopping at one system as long as I had others to explore soon freed me from this fascination that men with fixed ideas and strong wills exert on those who read or listen to them, and I have no doubt that the same thing would have happened to you yourself, monsieur Editor, if, instead of indulging in premature propaganda, you had pursued your studies and given your enthusiasm time to cool. Oh! what would I not give to meet with you under the same flag, fighting for the same cause! I would follow you from afar as my leader and my guide; you would encourage me with your voice and your gaze; and if the proprietors still balked, you would see what your compatriot can do.

I hope, monsieur Editor, that seeing your theory more strongly shaken every day, you will not despair of this science which you have loved so much, and to which you have made such great sacrifices. And besides, do we not live in a century where everything must be questioned, so that henceforth nothing is believed that is not demonstrated? Blind is he who is scandalised by our disputes! Men are needed for attack and men for defence: he who would claim to do everything by himself would discover nothing. Your role, monsieur Editor, is to pose problems: that is why you are a Fourierist; mine is to make comparisons and draw conclusions: this is how I became an egalitarian.

Always defend your hypothesis until there is definitive evidence to the contrary; it is your right: he who has never believed anything hypothetically has learned nothing. But do not forget that if the hypothesis is the universal method of invention, the demonstration of truth, in our poor human sciences, is most often only the elimination of error.

I am, monsieur Editor, with all the consideration your talents and character deserve,

Your devoted servant,

P.-J. Proudhon.

Besançon, 1st January 1842