

Saint Simon and the liberal origins of the socialist critique of Political Economy

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In standard interpretations of the history of socialism, the cosmological and providential side of nineteenth century socialist thought tends to be ignored. What still today is often considered the core of socialist reasoning was its preoccupation with the claims of producers, its championing of the cause of the working class, its critique of political economy. In the twentieth century, the most characteristic goal of socialist parties - at least until the advent of Tony Blair - has been the socialisation of the means of production.

The particular association of socialism with a language of productivism - with work, producers, the character of labour, and a critique of political economy - goes back to the commentaries of the 1830s and 1840s. Adolphe Blanqui, the brother of the famous revolutionary, in his History of Political Economy in Europe published in 1837, described Fourier and Owen as 'utopian economists',¹ while Lorenz von Stein in his Der Sozialismus und Kommunismus des heutigen Frankreichs, first published in 1842, defined socialism as a theory which made work the sole basis of

¹ A. Blanqui, Histoire de L'Economie Politique en Europe depuis les Anciens jusqu'a Nos Jours, Paris 1837, ch.xliv. It should be noted that the chapter only refers to the 'systems' of Fourier and Owen. Saint-Simonians were treated in a separate chapter.

society and the state.²

The theoretical labours of Karl Marx from his first unpublished attempt to criticise the economists in 1844 through to his death almost forty years later, emphatically underlined this association and it was further reinforced in Engels's treatment of the history of socialism. Marx's major work, Capital, like his earlier 'economic and philosophical' manuscripts of 1844, was subtitled 'A Critique of Political Economy'. Engels, in his influential account of the origins of socialism, Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, implied that since its inception socialism had been striving towards the scientific formulation of such a critique, and connected its construction with the beginnings of the industrial revolution and the appearance of the new industrial proletariat.

This familiar picture is, however, misleading. First, it narrows the timescale of discussion to the period after the Revolution at the beginning of the nineteenth century, thereby eliminating previous eighteenth century debates about commercial society and its political consequences. Secondly, it removes most participants in such debates. The impression is given that it was only among the founders of socialism between 1800 and 1830 that new questions about the significance of work, labour or production and their relation to modern politics and society arose, and that

² 'Allein ist es fest zu halten, dass Alles was nicht zur Lehre von der Arbeit und ihrer Alleinherrschaft in Staat und Gesellschaft gehört, nicht zum eigentlichen Sozialismus zu rechnen ist'. Der Sozialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs, 2nd ed., 2 vols Leipzig, 1848, vol.2, p.211.

these were to remain the particular concern of socialists. The development of criticism of political economy is similarly presented as if it were the preserve of socialism, while liberalism is identified without differentiation with support for political economy, and associated with the increasingly uncritical endorsement of a particular form of laissez faire government.³

It is not solely, or even primarily, Engels who was responsible for this received picture of the origins and development of socialist thought in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Much of it went back to an earlier, and equally, formative depiction of the inception of a socialist picture of economy and society found in the so-called Doctrines de Saint-Simon. Exposition. Premiere Annee. 1828-1829. This was the comprehensive manifesto of the Saint Simonian school, enormously influential across Europe at the time in which it was produced. It contained a highly selective summary of the French debate on what was called 'industrie' - industrialism, though that term has

³ What was omitted among other things was any account of the criticism of commercial society generated by Smith's Wealth of Nations. In Britain for example, the early criticism of the manufacturing system largely built upon arguments from Smith. Ideas from Smith used in the early work of Godwin were followed up in Robert Southey's 1807 Letters from England by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella translated from the Spanish, often treated as the first 'romantic' attack on the industrial revolution. See D. Winch, Riches and Poverty: an intellectual history of political economy in Britain 1750-1834, Cambridge 1996, ch.12; and see also D. Craig, 'Republicanism becoming conservative: Robert Southey and political argument in Britain, 1790-1832', Cambridge Ph.D., 2000; the origins of radical antagonism towards political economy are by no means as straightforward, as they might at first seem. In the case of Cobbett's hostility to Malthus, see for example 'The Making of an Anti-Malthusian: William Cobbett, Political Economy

misleading connotations in English - and its relation to science, government and religion in the years after Waterloo. The Doctrine presented the notion of 'industrie' as if it had been the single-handed achievement of the 'genius' of their master, Saint Simon. In this way, the liberal origins, both of the doctrine of 'industrialism' and of the depiction of history as a class struggle between producers and idlers, were wholly obscured. Similarly, the Doctrine presented an extremely muffled account of the genesis of the Saint Simonians' own progression beyond 'industrialism', also implying that such a trajectory had been immanent in the development of the thought of Saint Simon. Once again, the crucial part played by liberals, in this case, the critique of industrialism, by Sismondi and others, was marginalised and obscured.

If, however, the origins of the theory of industrialism go back to a debate among liberals, and if the origins of the critique of the political economy of industrialism also go back to a liberal source, what then was the specifically Saint-Simonian or 'socialist' contribution to this debate? Once this question is posed, it is clear that the most distinctive addition made by Saint Simon to the theory of industrialism was a new religion, The New Christianity, and a new priesthood to go alongside it. This makes it possible to trace a continuity in Saint Simon's preoccupations from the Letters of a Citizen of Geneva, through to his final pronouncements about the necessity of a new religion on

and Radical Politics, 1805-1807' in P.J. Connell, Romanticism,

his deathbed in 1825. Similarly, after Saint Simon's death, the most distinctive addition made by his disciples, gathered together under the leadership of the new 'Fathers' of the Saint Simonian church, Enfantin and Bazard, was to conjoin the economic criticism of Sismondi with the cosmic rejection of 'civilisation` which they discovered in the work of Fourier. Thus, Sismondi's account of the malfunctioning of the post-war international and domestic economy was placed within a providentially inspired framework in which trade crisis, the ubiquity of egoism and the pervasiveness of social antagonism became portents of a new 'organic' age. These arguments will now be elaborated in greater detail.

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First, it is necessary to correct a double distortion of focus introduced first by the Saint Simonians' need to airbrush the liberals out of the story, and second by Engels's need to harness the development of socialist thought to the progress of industrialisation (hence Engels's story only starts in the early nineteenth century). Once this is done, it is clear that the theory of commercial society and the development of political economy, especially as it was elaborated in Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, had become a central preoccupation in European and North American thought long before statesmen, economists and social critics began to discuss the consequences of factories, steam engines, large towns and the new industrial labour force.

Everywhere in the second half of the eighteenth century, the

Economics and the Question of 'Culture', Oxford 2001.

picture of commercial society and the modern division of labour found in the writings of Hume, Smith, Millar, Tucker and others could be deployed against appeals to classical republican institutions, to ancient virtue or to Christian ideals. The wars of the period - not only the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, but also the earlier Seven Years War (1756-1763), even perhaps, the humiliating defeat of the clan-based Highlanders in the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 - also contributed to a growing awareness that in modern times the power of a nation depended more upon the skills and productivity of its citizens than upon the valour of its warriors on the field of battle.

Beyond this general level of awareness, understanding of the political implications of the rise of commercial society, and interest in the potential of political economy as a new basis for conceptions of society and the state varied sharply according to national and political context. In Britain in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, it became a widely held belief, particularly among sophisticated supporters of the whig ascendancy, that commerce was the motor force behind the growth of manners and the progress of society, that as the division of labour created increasingly complex social relations, the passions were refined, sympathy developed and there was a general improvement in the arts and sciences.⁴

⁴ See A.O.Hirschman, The Passions and the Interests: political arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph, Princeton 1977; I.Hont & M.Ignatieff, 'Needs and Justice in The Wealth of Nations' in I.Hont & M.Ignatieff, (eds.), Wealth and Virtue, Cambridge 1983; D.Winch, Adam Smith's Politics, Cambridge

The notion that economic, cultural and moral progress were conjoined was encapsulated for contemporaries in the idea of doux commerce (ie. that 'commerce' possessed a softening, 'polishing' role, whether as trade and more generally as social interaction). Rousseau powerfully attacked this idea in the early 1750s in his two Discourses. But in Britain, it was not until after the outbreak of the French Revolution, that this optimistic assumption was first powerfully challenged by Edmund Burke. According to Burke observing the first attacks upon aristocratic rule and ecclesiastical property in France in his Reflections on the Revolution in France in 1790, commerce was not the determinant of political stability and cultural progress. Burke fully endorsed Smith's picture of economic progress, but questioned the assumption found in Hume and Tucker that commerce of itself polished manners. On the contrary, he argued, it was the church and the nobility which had originally nurtured the progress of manners and in England still did so. Indeed, it was not commerce that produced the growth of manners. Rather manners formed the precondition of the growth of commerce itself.⁵

Thus, in Britain the most powerful check to the pretensions of political economy to provide a total view of society, derived not from radicalism or proto-socialism, but from Burke's Reflections, seen by many as the formative moment of modern

1978.

⁵ see J.G.A.Pocock, Virtue, Commerce and History, Cambridge 1985, pp.186-191.

conservatism. For Burke's challenge formed part of an argument which explicitly legitimated tradition, hierarchy and a distrust of reason. Therefore, even before the attack upon Godwin and Condorcet launched by Malthus in his Theory of Population of 1798, the potentially radical claims of political economy as a basis for social and political reasoning had already been blunted by a theory which endowed church and aristocracy with a crucial cultural and civilising function otherwise lacking in commercial society. Burke's intervention helps to explain the increasing divergence between social thought in Britain and France. In France in the 1820s and 1830s the Saint Simonians were to play a crucial part in bringing together conservative and radical-liberal perspectives on commercial society. But in Britain, despite the efforts of John Stuart Mill, the followers of Burke, Coleridge, Carlyle and Arnold felt no affinity with the followers of Bentham, Godwin and Owen.

In the German-speaking lands, similarly, the implications of commercial society had been examined extensively in the second half of the eighteenth century. But the radically individualist and libertarian possibilities of the concept of commercial society were generally resisted, even when in particular instances landowners and cameralist officials educated at the University of Gottingen welcomed Smithian arguments for free trade and economic liberalisation. Among romantic intellectuals in the first decades of the nineteenth century, especially Adam Müller, hostility to Smith's picture of a society, in which even land had become a

commodity, was extreme and unlike in Britain often took on feudal or patriarchal forms.⁶ On the radical side, expressed most powerfully in Fichte's Geschlossene Handelsstadt, commercial society also gained little acceptance. Equality and political virtue were to be maintained through autarky and the wholesale control of economic life.

The most profound engagement with the general implications of the theories of commercial society, juxtaposed to the classical ideal of politics found in Aristotle and Plato, was that of Hegel. Hegel was particularly disturbed by the prevalence of individualist notions of economic and political life derived from the close association between political economy and modern natural law.⁷ In his first lectures at Jena in 1802 and 1803, the so-called System of Ethical Life, Hegel attempted to contain and subordinate Smith's conception of commercial society within a re-stated aristotelian theory of the polis. This meant the division of society between a class of warriors, who conducted the affairs of state and embodied 'the whole', and an 'honest class' of ex-slaves, now burghers, confined to productive activity and sunk in the particularity of everyday material concerns.⁸

⁶ See E.Rothschild, '*Smithianismus* and Enlightenment in 19th Century Europe', Centre for History and Economics, 1998; K. Tribe, Governing Economy: The Reformation of German Economic Discourse 1750-1840, Cambridge 1988, chs.7,8.

⁷ see in particular L.Dickey, Hegel: Religion, Economics and the Politics of Spirit 1770-1807, Cambridge 1987.

⁸ H.S.Harris & T.M.Knox, (trs. & eds.), Hegel: System of Ethical Life and First Philosophy of Spirit, (1802) 1979 pp.153-154.

However, Hegel did not long remain persuaded by his initial attempt to resist political economy's reversal of the classical priority of praxis (the activity of the citizen, the concern of the polis) over poiesis (labour, the concern of the oikos, the household). In his lectures of 1804 and 1805 Hegel no longer presented 'work' as a subordinate component of practical philosophy, but rather as the central moment in the constitution of 'spirit'. Labour now became identified with the activity of the subject of transcendental idealism. The interaction between the self and the not-self, now enriched by a new concept of labour, was extended to incorporate the whole of mankind's struggle with nature. In the ancient classical picture there had been no interaction between work and the worker. Work did not express the shaping activity of the worker, it was simply for the use of the master. Now labour became the 'self-objectification of consciousness'; it was defined in terms of its origin, as the negation of human desire and also of what in transcendental philosophy had constituted the object both because it was work for another and because it was the negation of nature or the naturalness of the object. Labour, in other words, had become the means by which man had transformed both the natural world and himself.

By the time Hegel returned to problems of politics and the state in 1816 and after, it had already become clear to him that the old Aristotelian division between the polis and the oikos could no longer capture the complexity of modern politics. He,

therefore, introduced between state and family his new notion of 'civil society' as a concept designed to encompass the modern exchange economy, 'the system of needs', and the framework of law and welfare necessary to sustain it.⁹ Hegel, however, in common with most German writers and officials in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, did not believe that the economy was self-regulating.¹⁰ Furthermore, like Burke, he refused any simple correlation between the development of civilisation and the progress of commercial society. Thus, his deployment of the concept of 'civil society' derived less from a desire to endorse commercial liberty than from a determination to contain it within a larger ethical-political system. It was only as the empirical pretensions of this ethical-political system became increasingly threadbare and implausible in the 1830s and 1840s, that it became possible for the young Marx to treat Hegel's state, as no more than the creature of 'civil society' and to strip down the notion of 'civil society' itself to 'the system of needs'. Since Marx considered political economy to be 'the anatomy of civil society',¹¹ it then followed that the critique of political

⁹ The term first appeared in Heidelberg in early 1818 in a marginal addition to the brief political sections of the Encyclopaedia which Hegel had published in 1816. See K.H. Ilting (ed.), Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie 1818-1831, (4 vols.), vol.1.p.189.

¹⁰ See N. Waszek, The Scottish Enlightenment and Hegel's Account of Civil Society, Dordrecht 1988.

¹¹ See K. Marx, 'Preface' to Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, 1859; on the genealogy of the Young Hegelians' bleak reading of 'civil society' as part of the pathology of Christianity see W. Breckman, Marx, the Young Hegelians and the

economy became the first task of socialism.

The point, then, about the treatment of political economy in Britain and in the German speaking lands, was that with the partial exception of Marx, state and government continued to be regarded as necessary components of theories of society. Mainstream discussion of the political implications of the new conception of commercial society did not lead in radically libertarian directions. Following Smith, the state might be urged to retreat from the mercantilist or cameralist policies which it had previously espoused, but there was no question of state authority as such withering away. In France, on the other hand, in part because of the need to break with the pro-absolutist legacy of physiocracy, and in part because of a disenchantment with government born of the experience of the years between 1789 and 1795, political economy became identified with the goal of removing from the state all but a residual administrative function.

The usefulness of political economy in redefining the nation and its political system after the dismantling of the Ancien Regime was clearly grasped from the outset by the Abbé Sieyès, the author of the most famous revolutionary pamphlet, What is the Third Estate? The nation, according to Sieyès, was first the unity of individuals that was the constituent power, the body

origins of radical social theory, Cambridge 1999; see also G. Stedman Jones ed. K. Marx and F. Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Introduction, ch. 5, 'Political Economy and the True Natural History of Man', pp.120-140, Penguin, 2002.

politic, and secondly, the combination of labour that made up a rationally organised society. Already in the 1770s, and in contrast to the physiocratic identification of wealth and land, Sieyes derived all wealth from labour - a view which he claimed to have arrived at independently of Adam Smith.¹² It was in turn his conception of the modern division of labour which provided the basis of his argument for representative government against ancient democracy. As he stated in his speech on the Rights of Man and the Citizen in September 1789: 'the desire for wealth seems to make all the states of Europe into nothing other than immense workshops; much more thought is given in them to consumption and production than to happiness. Political systems too are today founded exclusively on work; we scarcely know how to make use of the moral faculties which could nevertheless become the most fruitful source of true enjoyments. We are thus compelled to regard the greater part of humanity as nothing other than work machines. However you cannot refuse the status of citizen and civil rights to this uneducated multitude whom compulsory labour absorbs in its entirety. Since they must obey the law, just like you, they ought to participate, like you in making it'. 'This participation must be equal', wrote Sieyes but it should also be congruent with the specialisation which followed from the modern division of labour. The 'uneducated multitude' should therefore 'nominate representatives more capable than themselves of knowing

¹² See M.Forsyth, Reason and Revolution: The Political Thought of the Abbe Sieyes, 1987, p.141.

the general interest and of interpreting their own will'.¹³ Thus the point which Lorenz von Stein considered constitutive of socialism, that work be considered the basis of society, was already presupposed in the founding declarations of the revolution.

But it was not until the period of Thermidor, and the decline of faith in political institutions following the Terror, that the possibilities of constructing a stable social order based upon the organisation of work came to be explored. Renewed interest in political economy formed part of the Idéologue programme of a unified social science. The ideal of what came to be called 'industrialism', industrie, was stated early on by Pierre Roederer: society was organised for economic production.¹⁴ Work was the best remedy against anti-social passions. Once it was shown that the rich had acquired their wealth through labour, the strength of their example would encourage all men to work in harmony. Alongside the increasing importance attached to labour as a factor of production, went a sharp reaction against the physiocratic notion of the productive process as one in which man did little more than assist the productive forces of nature and in which land was the sole source of all wealth. According to the leading Idéologue, Destutt de Tracy, the physiocrats confused wealth with raw material and even Smith had considered agriculture to be

¹³ ibid.p. 135.

¹⁴ P.L.Roederer,Oeuvres,8,p.130, cited in T.E.Kaiser,'Politics and Political Economy in the thought of the Ideologues',History of Political Economy,12 2,1980,p.148.

peculiarly productive since 'nature labours along with man'. Production, in Tracy's view, had nothing to do with the creation of matter, but only with the production of utility. Moreover, in the process of creating wealth, 'there was nothing in the world but labour'.¹⁵

Along with this switch away from agriculture went a much sharper interest in the organisation of work and the increase of production. Just as Saint Simon in his Letters from an Inhabitant of Geneva had put forward the progress of science as the goal which would harmonise the interests of all, so among those promoting the cause of industrie, it was believed that the future of the republic could be best secured by its identification with the goal of progress of production.¹⁶ An interest in the maximisation of production was not a political goal, but a statement of the nature of things, uncovered by political economy as a science based upon observation and analysis. Education in the principles of this science would replace the vain injunctions of moralists and the ignorant incitement of demagogues.¹⁷

Starting from these premisses, society was now differentiated into functional components based upon the division of labour, and

¹⁵ A.L.C. Destutt de Tracy, Commentaire sur "L'Esprit des Lois" de Montesquieu, Paris 1819, p.292 and see Kaiser op.cit. pp.154-155.

¹⁶ C.H. de Saint-Simon, 'Lettres d'un habitant de Geneve a ses Contemporains', Oeuvres de Claude-Henri de Saint Simon, Paris 1966, vol.1, pp. 1-32.

¹⁷ see J.B. Say, 'Discours Preliminaire', Traite d'Economie Politique, 5th ed. Paris 1826, pp.i-cviii.

a far sharper distinction was drawn between those who worked and those who did not. Those who did not work were the enemies of society, a condemnation which applied both to idlers from the old aristocracy and to the dependent poor. According to Cabanis, 'the laziness of the savage can hurt only himself; that of social man harms all citizens'.¹⁸ Public assistance to the able-bodied unemployed should therefore be abolished.

Even more important was the new theory of entrepreneurship, put forward by Jean Baptiste Say in his Traité d'économie politique of 1803 and reiterated with greater emphasis in the second edition of 1814. In Say's picture, 'industrie', in which he merged agriculture, manufacture and commerce, was the sole legitimate activity in modern society, and the 'industrieux' - the savants, entrepreneurs and ouvriers associated with the process of production - were its sole legitimate members. They were counterposed to the 'oisifs', the non-working landowners and rentiers, whose property was the residue of conquest or occupation. The notion of the entrepreneur was designed, not primarily as a technical refinement in economic science, but similarly as a means to widen the moral and economic breach between those who worked and those who did not. Mobilising investment and initiating production were to be distinguished sharply from the mere ownership of stock. The argument was particularly directed against Adam Smith who had included both

¹⁸ P.J.G.Cabanis, Oeuvres Philosophiques de Cabanis, (C.Lehec & J.Caseneuve eds.), Paris 1956, vol.2, p.23; and see Kaiser, op.cit. p.156.

these components without discrimination in his conception of capital.¹⁹

The debate on industrialism, like the debate on a new religion, was brought to an abrupt conclusion by Napoleonic censorship. But it was rapidly rekindled from the time of the restoration of Louis XVIII in 1814 and considerably sharpened in the years following Napoleon's hundred days. The theory also changed its shape. Around the turn of the century, it had centred upon the coupling of political economy with a physiological science of man, elaborated by the Ideologues along the lines of Condillac. During the period of the Restoration, however, it came to encompass a large-scale panorama of the historical ascent of Say's 'industrieux' beginning with the emancipation of the 'communes' in the twelfth century and culminating in their imminent triumph in politics and government once the universal demands of industry were conceded.²⁰

In large part, this change in direction was provoked by the appearance in 1814 of De la Monarchie française by the Comte de Montlosier.²¹ According to Montlosier, who had originally

¹⁹ Say, op.cit. vol.1, pp.1-44; see also M.James, 'Pierre Louis Roederer, Jean-Baptiste Say, and the concept of industrie', History of Political Economy, 9:4, 1977.pp.455-475.

²⁰ See especially the section added in the second edition of Say's Traite, 'De l'independance nee chez les modernes des progres de l'industrie', op.cit. vol.2, pp.195-301.

²¹ The importance of the debate prompted by the appearance of Montlosier's book has been highlighted in S.M.Gruner, 'Political Historiography in Restoration France', History and Theory, 8 1969, pp.346-365.

intended his book for Napoleon, France contained two peoples; first the Franks, a 'noble' race imbued with a true love of liberty and hatred of slavish custom; and secondly, the conquered people, the 'ignoble' Gauls. The mission of the Franks was to uplift the Gauls to their own level and all went well until shortage of money occasioned by the Crusades forced the crown to enfranchise the communes. As a result, the history of France had been the struggle between two peoples, the one the representative of valour, nobility and martial spirit, the other the bearers of commercialism and determined to destroy all traces of the other. Montlosier's work was a rallying call for the Legitimists and Ultras, pushing for the monarchical rule by divine right and elimination of all traces of the Revolution.

This contrast between warrior and merchant, ancient and modern world, was strongly reinforced by the appearance of Benjamin Constant's The Spirit of Conquest and Usurpation and their Relation to European Civilisation - originally a polemic against Napoleon.²² Constant's argument was that however great Napoleon's ostensible triumphs, his rule would not last since it infringed the basic conditions of modern liberty. The only liberty known by the ancients was that of being a citizen and participating in public, collective decision-making in a situation of endemic war and plunder. Modern liberty on the other hand presupposed the value of individuality and the distinction between

²² B.Constant, 'The Spirit of Conquest and Usurpation and their relation to European Civilisation' in B.Constant, Political Writings, (ed.B.Fontana), Cambridge 1988, ch.18.

private and civil rights. Modern man did not like the Ancients, live for the state, the modern ideal was cosmopolitan and pacific. 'The sole aim of modern nations', Constant wrote, was 'repose, and with repose comfort, and as a source of comfort, industry'.²³ Constant provided an economic explanation for the difference between the ancient and modern ideals. The reason why history need no longer be thought cyclical had been the growth of commerce and the free circulation of goods. Peace and commerce - the doux commerce of eighteenth century observers - was in the long term not reversible.

The move towards industrialism between 1814 and 1820 was not simply inspired by the work of Constant and Say or provoked by the arguments of Montlosier. It also took shape under the impact of political events. Just as the period of Thermidor had been governed by the search for a general science capable of founding a social order which would by-pass the volatile world of politics, so the successors of the Ideologues in the early years of the Restoration, were once again pushed into the search for a non-political basis of order. This was to become the principal task of of the journal, Le Censeur europeen, edited by two young followers of the Ideologues, Charles Comte and Charles Dunoyer. It was they who were responsible for the pioneering elaboration of the notion of industrie.²⁴

²³ ibid.p.54

²⁴ See E.Harpaz, '"Le Censeur Europeen" Histoire d'un Journal Industrialiste', Revue d'Histoire Economique et Sociale, vol.xxxvii 1959, pp.185-218, pp.328-357.

The Journal had begun in 1814, as Le Censeur, committed to the defence of individual liberties and to the support of Louis XVIII's moderate liberal Charter. Not only did the journal oppose the return of the the Ancien Regime aristocracy and church, it also refused to recognise Napoleon's rule during the Hundred Days - a sequence of events which made a deep impact upon the thinking of the journal. Once again as in 1794-5, the people had opted for despotism, once again the fragility of representative institutions had been revealed. As a result, when they restarted the journal as Le Censeur europeen in 1817, Comte and Dunoyer had come to realise that industrie was not already the goal of modern nations, as Constant maintained, but rather that it ought to be.²⁵

This helps to explain why a journal which had begun by emphasising rights and constitutional liberties, shifted its attention so radically to a virtually non-political and strongly determinist position based upon an industrialist conception of society and history. The focal point of this new agenda no longer concerned representative institutions, but rather the nature of economic exploitation and class power. This analysis was in turn buttressed by a view of history which started from the impact of the economy upon the development of political culture and attempted to explain the transition from one social stage to the next.

²⁵ Oeuvres de Dunoyer, vol.111, p.180. This point is discussed by Harpaz, op.cit.p.197. Dunoyer's retrospect on the origin of the notion of 'industrialism originally appeared in 1827 in answer to the claims of the Saint Simonians, 'Notice historique sur l'Industrialisme', Revue Encyclopedique, feb.1827, vol.xxxiii.

According to this theory, man was a creature of needs with the faculty to fulfil them. Liberty was the power to use one's faculties, to live by work and to obtain the product of one's work. Evil was identified with any force which prevented man from fulfilling this law. Man followed his interest, there was no place for morality and any supposed conflict between duty and interest was based upon ignorance of the laws of economics. Since these were the laws of man's being, he had but to follow them to be happy. Charles Comte could claim that 'the organisation of man is as invariable as the organisation of a plant and the general phenomena which result from it are as independent of the moralist or the legislator as the phenomena which result from the organisation of inanimate beings.... In all its parts, nature follows a constant and invariable path'.²⁶ It was only if man, through ignorance, departed from this path, that he was made unhappy. But this was no longer necessary. Nor was there need to go on thinking about a right to be free, when it was now known how to create the conditions in which man would be free. Sentiment could be united with interest and the wellbeing of one would coincide with the wellbeing of all. Industrialism was the goal of man's strivings, a state in which he could freely exercise his faculties without the obstruction of force or fraud in a peaceful life without war or exploitation.

The main addition to a conception of political economy as

²⁶ Comte's review of Say's Traité in Le Censeur Europeen, 1 1817, p.165 cited in S.M.Gruner, Economic Moralism and Social Materialism, Hague 1973 p.95.

master component in a science of man derived from Tracy and Say was the elaboration of a theory of history born of the need to answer Montlosier. It was in this way that Montlosier's 'ignoble Gauls' became 'la classe industrielle' (adopted from Say's term, Les Industrioux), Montlosier's noble and chivalrous Franks became 'la classe oisive et devorante'. French History became the conflict between these two classes. Indeed, it soon developed into a vision of all history. As Charles Comte was to put it in his Traité de Legislation of 1826: 'in all nations one part of the population dominates or seeks to dominate others, and it is to avoid the more or less burdensome physical evils that the group of men called the governed, subjects or slaves obey or attempt to avoid the action imposed upon them. The history of the human species is comprised in one word, of struggles which have arisen from the desire to seize the physical enjoyments of the entire species and to impose upon others all the pain of the same kind'.²⁷

This class struggle, however, largely referred to the past. Comte and Dunoyer agreed with Constant that in the modern world trade was replacing war, and as a result - and Say's law of markets was designed to show the non-antagonistic nature of trade crises - the military role of government would dwindle away. Similarly, since production was now inevitably becoming the supreme goal of society, and government, justice, national

²⁷ C.Comte, Traité de Legislation, Paris 1826, bk.11, p.91; for a discussion on the political theory of Comte and Dunoyer, see D.Hart, 'Class, Slavery and the Industrialist Theory of History in French Liberal Thought 1814-1830: the Contribution of Charles Comte and Charles Dunoyer', Cambridge Ph.D.1993.

representation and even the church were no more than means towards the promotion of production, it followed that a new social hierarchy was emerging, in which the leading roles would be played by bankers, manufacturers and traders.

The culminating point of this analysis was a vision of the imminent disappearance of the state. The industrialist ideal was a society in which all would work and no-one would govern. With the decline of force and fraud, exemplified by the case of the slavery and the diminution of exploitation of industrious people by warrior people, government itself would become less and less necessary. The government of men, as the later Saint Simonian slogan had it, would give way to the administration of things. Thus every diminution in the power of the state marked a step nearer to the triumph of industrie. For the industrial stage was 'a state where the right (of enriching oneself by the exercise of political domination) would be the privilege of no-one, where neither a few men nor many men would be able to make their fortune by pillaging the rest of the population, where work would be the common means of enrichment and government a public work, which the community would award (like all work of this nature) to men of its choice for a reasonable and publicly debated cost'.²⁸ As Dunoyer put it, 'the work of perfection would be reached if all the world worked and no one governed'.²⁹ In that situation, all social and

²⁸ cited in Hart, p.101.

²⁹ C.Dunoyer, 'Considerations sur l'etat present de l'Europe', Le Censeur Europeen, vol.2, 1817, p.105, cited in Harpaz, p.207.

individual needs would be provided through the market and the state would either disappear or be broken down into radically decentralised municipal units.

Why, then, did 1789 not witness the final triumph of the industrious class? Here the industrialist analysis faltered. According to Thierry's picture of the history of England, a thinly veiled judgement of French events, the industrious had been conquered and enserfed by warrior invaders in 1066, but 1640 represented a revolt of the producers against their ancient masters. Sadly, however, the triumph of the industrious had been thwarted by the military conquests of Cromwell and Monk and the final settlement of 1689 had represented an unsatisfactory compromise between the old and new forces: a state of affairs still in existence.³⁰ A similar fate had befallen the French Revolution. Comte blamed the failure of the revolution on aristocratic prejudice and the pretensions of the philosophes. Montesquieu, Mably and Rousseau had encouraged a return to the warlike ideals of the ancient republic. Thus the Revolution had ended in Caesarean despotism. In addition, Dunoyer put increasing emphasis upon what he called 'the love of place' and the parasitic role of the state itself. The restoration had therefore meant a further centralisation of political and bureaucratic power. The advent of industrie was blocked by a proliferating mire of

³⁰ A.Thierry, 'Vues des Revolutions d'Angleterre', Le Censeur Europeen, vol.4, p.20 et.seq.; Harpaz p.212.

clientelism.³¹ Like Marx in The Civil War in France fifty years later, the failed advent of industrialism in the revolutionary period could be blamed on the distortion imposed upon French history by 'une administration gigantesque'.

In 1827 Charles Dunoyer, mainly in response to the claims of the disciples of Saint Simon, wrote a retrospective memoir on the origins of the theory of industrie.³² He stated that Say, Constant and Montlosier had provided the initial inspiration to himself and Charles Comte and that Saint Simon had played no part in the formation of the idea. The reason why Saint Simon might have had a claim was that in the years between 1814 and the end of 1816 he had taken on the nineteen year old Augustin Thierry, both as his secretary and even in some texts as his 'adopted son'. The doctrine of 'industrialism' was first publicly stated in a manifesto by Thierry, Des Nations, which appeared in January 1817 in the first number of the journal, L'Industrie, jointly edited by Saint Simon and Thierry. The first number of Le Censeur europeen appeared in February 1817. Furthermore, soon after this, Thierry left L'Industrie and joined Le Censeur Europeen, being replaced as Saint Simon's secretary by Auguste Comte. It is, however, pointless to place too much stress upon the precise sequence of publications. Since both journals were published from the same address and all were members of the salon of Jean Baptiste Say, in which these ideas were initially developed. Certainly Saint Simon

³¹ for a resume of Dunoyer's position see Hart, op.cit. ch.4

³² see footnote 25.

himself did not claim any special originality in developing the industrialist argument and in an 1818 number of the journal credited the origin of the idea to Adam Smith, Jean-Baptiste Say and Charles Comte.³³

But Saint Simon was never a simple proselytiser of the industrialist position. While he enthusiastically endorsed industrialist ideas between 1817 and 1820, it was mainly as a new solution to a set of problems about religion and science, temporal and spiritual authority with which he had been preoccupied ever since his proposal of a 'religion of Newton' in 1802. It was also a preoccupation with these same problems in the more hostile political climate following the assassination by a Buonapartist of the heir to the throne, the Duc de Berry on February 12th 1820, which led to his renewed divergence from the theorists of 'industrialism'. Less than a year before de Berry's death, Saint Simon had published his famous 'parable', in which he had compared the impact upon France of the death of fifty of its most capable 'industriels' with that of the death of fifty members of the royal house. Not surprisingly, he was arrested and imprisoned. After his release, Saint Simon increasingly shifted away from the Comte-Dunoyer position.

Saint Simon, a descendant of the famous diarist at the court of Louis XIV, and tutored - so he alleged - by D'Alembert to regard religion 'with a Voltairean smile', spent part of his youth

³³ C.de Saint Simon, 'L'Industrie' (1818), Oeuvres, vol.2, p.153.

fighting in the American Revolution.³⁴ He seems to have spent most of the early years of the Revolution speculating in assignats, the new paper currency. By the end of the 1790s, however, these financial adventures had left him effectively bankrupt. His career thereafter is best described as that of an intellectual projector, passionate to resolve the disharmony of mankind and his own liquidity problem in one full swoop. During the 1790s he had been on the fringes of the Ideologues and had also dabbled with Theophilanthropy. But what made his generally disordered thoughts so distinctive was the way in which he combined the faith in scientific progress found in Condorcet and the Ideologues with an insistence upon the primordial importance of religion as the binding force of the social and political order found in counter-revolutionary thinkers, in particular Chateaubriand, de Maistre and de Bonald.

These seemingly discordant pre-occupations were connected by a large and important work of erudition which made a major intellectual impact from the time it appeared in 1795, L'Origine de tous les cultes ou Religion Universelle by the jacobin, Charles Dupuis. Dupuis's argument was that man created God, that God was simply a name for the universal cause unifying natural phenomena; and therefore that the history of man's conception of God was none other than the history of man's conception of nature. There was

³⁴ The best account of the early life of Saint Simon are to be found in F.Manuel, The New World of Henri Saint-Simon, Cambridge Mass.1956; and H.Gouhier, La Jeunesse d'Auguste Comte et la Formation du Positivisme, vol.11, 'Saint-Simon jusqu'a la Restauration', 2nd ed.Paris 1964.

thus an intimate connection from the earliest times between man's astronomical and his religious ideas. Christianity was classified as one of a whole family of oriental religions, in which light came from the east, the serpent who inaugurated the physical disorder symbolised by the fall came in the autumn and Christ came in the Spring. Once the abstractions and mystifications of priests were removed, it was clear that religious ideas changed in parallel with scientific progress. Hence the only justification now was of an undemoninational cult of nature without priestly mediation.

Saint Simon adopted the parallelism between religious and scientific ideas, but rejected Dupuis's hostility towards priests and organised religion. Here he was most influenced by the counter-revolutionary and theocratic thinker, Louis de Bonald and in particular his critique of Condorcet which had appeared as an appendix to his Theorie du Pouvoir politique et religieux of 1796.

³⁵ Bonald, according to Saint Simon, was an author who 'has profoundly felt the utility of systematic unity'.³⁶ What interested him was not Bonald's defence of Christianity, but the anti-individualist character of his theory of religion and power. Bonald attacked Condorcet for depicting the advance of reason while forgetting the passions. The advance of civilisation is not

³⁵ L.de Bonald, 'Supplement aux deux premieres parties de la Theorie du Pouvoir politique et religieux', in Oeuvres completes de M.de Bonald Abbe Migne (ed.) 1864, vol.1,pp.722-742.

³⁶ Saint Simon, 'Introduction aux Travaux scientifiques du dix-neuvieme siecle', Oeuvres, vol.6, p.167.

necessarily accompanied by the advance of morality, since civilisation multiplies needs, proliferates luxury and accentuates passions; and passions are responsible for disorder and disunity.

Secondly, Bonald argued, 'Condorcet would have it that it is man who perfects society, and I maintain on the contrary that it is only society which perfects man as an understanding and physical being. Bonald maintained that 'man as an intelligent being perfects himself more to the extent that a religious society is constituted and physical man perfects himself more to the extent that a political society is more constituted. Civil society, according to Bonald, was the unity between political and religious society and his argument was that there could be no society without order, no order without power, no power without an unique source of inspiration. Civil society was a natural society in the sense that gravity was a natural phenomenon. Man could no more provide a constitution to religious or political society than he could give weight to bodies. But he could ruin this order by giving free play to the passions. Religion in this view was an intrinsic part of any social order, as was indicated by the etymology of the latin word, religare, to bind. Religion was therefore the mental order that binds minds together - the primordial source of unity and order itself. The breakdown brought about by the Revolution culminating in the Terror was offered as empirical proof.

The impact of these ideas on Saint Simon was evident not only in the 'Religion of Newton' but in the criticism of Condorcet

which he wrote around 1807-1808 in his Introduction to the Scientific Works of the 19th Century and again in his 'Correspondence with M.de Redern' in 1811. Saint Simon attacks Condorcet's Sketch as the product of 'republican passion'. He had overstated 'perfectibility' by conceiving it additively rather than organically; he had like D'Alembert misunderstood the positive contribution of the middle ages; and he was mistaken about religion, deriving the vices of Catholicism from its senescence rather than recognising its positive contribution to manners and the arts after the fall of Rome.³⁷

Some of these points were again reiterated in a resume of his intellectual development included within his Introduction to the Science of Man written in 1813. There his scientific project which he dated back to discussion with another Ideologue, Dr Burdin in 1798, included among its six propositions, point three: physiology was now becoming a positive science and would become the single master science of man providing a foundation to medicine, ethics and politics; and point six: that every religion has a theoretical component which is simply the scientific system or philosophy of its time - once more the law of attraction and its cosmic arrangement of fluids and solids. The establishment of a science of man and a positive philosophy will overturn the theoretical part of the established religion and will demand the formation of a new clergy. Saint Simon concluded the Introduction

³⁷ Saint Simon, 'Correspondence avec M.de Redern', Oeuvres, vol.1, pp.113-116.

with a practical proposal, that world renowned scientists gather in Rome and elect a new pope.³⁸

Four years later when Saint Simon acquired financial backing to run a journal from the banker Jacques Laffitte, what became evident was not so much a substantial shift of ideas as a shift in emphasis. Saint Simon was now happy to see industrie rather than universal gravitation as the binding idea of the new social order capable of terminating the disorder of the revolution. But he remained equally enthusiastic about the old ideologue project of replacing ethics by science. According to I`Industrie, 'the production of useful things is the only reasonable and positive end which politics can set itself'. 'As the whole of mankind has a common purpose and common interests, each man ought to regard himself in his social relations as engaged in a company of workers'. 'Politics, therefore to sum up in two words, is the science of production'.³⁹ But these were statements which were not too far away from what had already been stated in The Letters of the Inhabitant of Geneva, where it was pronounced, 'all men will work; they will regard themselves as labourers attached to one workshop' with the original rather sinister-sounding rider that anyone not complying with these instructions would be treated by the others 'as a quadruped'.⁴⁰

³⁸ Saint Simon, 'Memoire sur la science de l'homme', Oeuvres, vol.5, p.303

³⁹ Saint Simon, 'L'Industrie ou Discussions morales et politiques', Oeuvres, vol.1, p.188.

⁴⁰ Saint Simon, 'Lettres d'un Habitant de Geneve', Oeuvres,

The latent differences between the libertarian tendency of Comte and Dunoyer and the authoritarian and hierarchical thinking of Saint Simon emerged fully in the aftermath of the Duc de Berry's assassination and the closure of Le Censeur Europeen. In Saint Simon's writings, politics and government would give way to administration, but administration, as he presented it, virtually attained the size of the government it replaced. It became the managing organ of society conceived as one great workshop. In Dunoyer's version on the other hand there was no need for administration since there would be no particular interests to be represented.⁴¹

This difference between Saint Simon and Dunoyer pointed to a deeper divergence on the question of morality and religion. Unlike Le Censeur europeen, Saint Simon felt the need to provide a systematic explanation for the failure of industrialism to triumph in 1789. Having initially followed Le Censeur europeen in attributing this failure to the legacy of the philosophes and the pressures of war, Saint Simon came to believe that the failure of the 'industriels' was the result of their lack of a general idea and their willingness to consign their cause to what he called 'legists' (lawyers) like the Girondins or Robespierre or to a new feudal or 'bourgeois' aristocracy formed around Napoleon. It was for this reason that after his trial, Saint Simon called for an alliance between the bourbon monarch and the 'industriels' against

vol.1, p.55.

⁴¹ See Gruner, op.cit.ch.15.

the 'bourgeois' and the legists.⁴²

But industrialism would not triumph solely on the basis of an appeal to self-interest. During the 1817-1820 period and still occasionally in the years between 1820 and 1825, Saint Simon had concurred with Le Censeur europeen that religion as the basis of morals could be replaced by positive facts derived from observation. Christianity had laid down the principle of this morality. But the 'ought' could now be removed. Instead of the injunction to love one's neighbour, human beings would be organised in society in such a way that each would find greatest advantage in employing moral and physical force in a way beneficial both to the self and to humankind.⁴³ Now, however, Saint Simon once again drew upon Bonald, de Maistre and Lamennais to make his point about the necessity of spiritual unity and to advocate the brotherhood of man not as the epitome of self interest, but as a divine command. His new position was that the thinkers who understood industrial progress did not see that it presupposed the establishment of a new moral doctrine. But those who saw the moral precondition of the social order did not understand that this morality had to be industrial'.⁴⁴

Industrialism, therefore, would not simply mean a mode of

⁴² see Saint Simon, 'Catechisme des Industriels', Oeuvres, vol.6.

⁴³ see for example, Saint Simon, 'L'Organisateur', Oeuvres, vol.2, p.106

⁴⁴ See Saint Simon, 'Catechisme des Industriels', Oeuvres, vol.6, p.173; and see H.Gouhier, 'Auguste Comte et Saint Simon', La Jeunesse d'Auguste Comte, vol.111, p.149.

production accompanied by a liberal legal and political system designed to protect liberty and the individual right to property. It would depend as much upon the emergence of three natural classes, scientists, artists and industriels to replace the traditional governing classes. It would require a new religion, what Saint Simon called in his book, The New Christianity. 'The Christians of today', he stated, 'are called to draw the great political consequences of the general principle which was revealed to primitive Christians'. ⁴⁵ Science and industry would be the means of its realisation.

What Saint Simon bequeathed to his followers was the idea of a new church, a creed which would be carried across the globe by his disciples, an appeal no longer to the rationally choosing and acting man of the Ideologues, but to the inspired 'devotion' of the artist-priest. According to Rodrigues, the closest disciple of Saint Simon's last years, his dying words were that nothing could be accomplished without enthusiasm, and that religion could not disappear from the world, it could only be transformed.

What Saint Simon did not bequeath to his followers, however, was the conception of industrialism, as it had been developed between 1817 and the early 1820s. Saint Simonian and socialist depiction of the economy, both as it appeared in the Doctrine de Saint Simon and as it developed in the 1830s and after, started not from a reiteration of the gospel of industrie as found in the

⁴⁵ Saint Simon, 'Du Systeme industriel', Oeuvres, vol.3, 231

writings of Say, Comte, Dunoyer, Thierry or Saint Simon, but principally from the critique of the new system of manufacture and by extension most of the optimistic assumptions upon which the original doctrine of industrie had been based, set out in New Principles of Political Economy by Simonde de Sismondi in 1819, and even more strongly emphasised by him in a second edition in 1827.⁴⁶

In the New Principles and elsewhere, Sismondi expressed his fears about the political and social dangers of the new system of manufacture. His book highlighted the growth of a volatile world market, sucking rural workers into centres of manufacture where their livelihood was uncertain and liable to displacement by machinery. Employers refused to take responsibility for this new rootless industrial population. This 'proletariat' was without property, education, religion or country. Laissez faire, once the liberating watchword of Turgot and Smith, had permitted the growth of a new class, whose miserable condition threatened society and the state.

When set beside the notion of industrie, Sismondi's account undermined the idea that there could be any automatic equation between the unhindered pursuit of interest and the maximisation of happiness. The progress of industry meant the growth of inequality. There was no single industrial class. Rather, there were two classes - capitalists and proletarians - and the gulf

⁴⁶ J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi, Nouveaux Principes d'Economie Politique ou de la Richesse dans ses Rapports avec la Population, 2 vols, Paris 1819.

between them was widening. In this process of polarisation, intermediate strata were pauperised or forced into the proletariat. The increasingly volatile behaviour of markets and the swelling mass of poverty and unemployment could not be dismissed as the temporary effects of the transition from war to peace. Nor, more seriously, could they be viewed as the remnants of force and fraud. They were, in fact, the effects of what seemed to be a new system of economic production and could only be removed by the transformation of that economic system itself.

Sismondi's critique, however, was not that of a socialist, but of a liberal republican. He was not sympathetic to the original notion of industrie which he wrongly attributed to Saint Simon, but nor could he approve of the millennial solution of Robert Owen. He had been a close student of Adam Smith and in 1803 had published a treatise on political economy largely along Smithian lines. In The New Principles, despite his mounting doubts about *laissez faire* and economic liberalisation, he continued to profess himself a follower of Adam Smith. He had no major political or economic remedy to propose. He urged a number of remedial measures, but his overall analysis was pessimistic. He could see no way in which a republican form of government could coexist with the new system of production.

Much of what Sismondi wrote became part of the standard repertoire of socialist criticism of modern industry. But in itself, it did not possess any specifically socialist component. It did not situate modern manufacture within a large-scale

philosophy of history. It did not point to the existence or possibility of any other social or economic order with which to contrast with the present. Nor was there any indication that the economic system was soon to experience mounting crises or collapse. Sismondi's writings did not suggest the imminence of great systemic change. Nor did they point to any beneficiaries or agents of transformation. Nothing was said about women and the account of workers was largely confined to the enumeration of the many circumstances in which they became prone to distress.

Nor could many of these points have been derived from Saint Simon. In many of his writings, Saint Simon approved of free competition and egoism. He never gave up his belief in industrialism or in the economics of J.B.Say.⁴⁷ He would therefore have found it difficult to accept that serious misery could be attributed to the industrial system itself, despite Sismondi's attack. He never showed any serious interest in the condition of women and although writing about the imperative need to aid the poorest and most numerous class in his final years, he never took any sustained interest in the conditions of workers or in the abruptness of the economic cycle to which they were subject.

The presence of all or most of these elements already in the Doctrine de Saint Simon in 1829 suggests only one other plausible

⁴⁷ In the Second edition of 1827, Sismondi attacked Saint Simon's exaltation of 'the powers of industry' along with Say and Ricardo. 'Ces trois sectes d'economie politique differant sur des principes fondamentaux, etaient loin to d'agir de concert, mais elles etaient toutes trois d'accord contre moi. J'attaquais ce qui a leur yeux faisait la gloire de l'industrie'. Nouveaux Principes, 2nd ed. 1827, vol.2, p.371

source. It was above all Fourier who considered industry to be organised 'around some reversal of the natural order'.⁴⁸ Lacking any principle of association, it needlessly multiplied tasks and its mode of work was scarcely better than slavery. For 'it is the same of every order which rests on violence; every class coerced directly, like slaves, or indirectly like wage-earners, is deprived of the support of providence which uses no other agency on this globe than attraction'.⁴⁹ The disorganisation of industry was associated with poverty, the main scandal of civilisation. The people lacked the right to work or any guaranteed minimum and saw 'their wretchedness increase in direct proportion to the advance of industry'.⁵⁰

Above all, civilised industry was a system in which the producers were victims of the deprivations of commerce. Fourier followed Quesnay and the Physiocrats in his negative assessment of the merchant and of the inability of commerce to add to the existing sum of wealth.⁵¹ Commerce was 'the constant exercise of

⁴⁸ C.Fourier, The Theory of the Four Movements, Cambridge 1996, p.7. On the relationship between Fourier and the Saint Simonians see H.Louvancour, De Henri Saint-Simon a Charles Fourier. Etude sur le socialisme romantique francaise de 1830(These), Chartres 1913, chs.4, 13-15. The main intermediary between Fourier and the Saint-Simonians was Enfantin, one of the two 'fathers' of the Saint Simonian church, who enunciated the 'doctrine of Saint Simon' in 1828-1829.

⁴⁹ Oeuvres completes de Charles Fourier, 12 vols Paris 1966-8, vol.6, p.354.

⁵⁰ J.Beecher, Charles Fourier. The Visionary and his World, Berkeley, CA.1986, p.197.

⁵¹ See Fourier, 'Du commerce et des commercants', Oeuvres Completes, vol.11, pp.84-5.

lying and trickery'; it robbed industry through bankruptcy, hoarding, speculation and waste. Since 'philosophy started preaching a love of trade', merchants swarmed everywhere. Since 1788, this had produced an alarming multiplication of every type of 'superfluous agent' who 'robs society without producing anything'. Commercial systems 'deprave civilisation and disorganise it in every way'; the 'commercial spirit corrupts people's morals and politics', as the examples of England and Carthage proved. It enabled Jews to roam the streets of London, 'inciting sons to rob their fathers and servants to rob their masters, and who pay for the stolen goods in base coin'.⁵²

Similarly, long before Lenin noted the onset of monopoly as characteristic of the imperialist phase of capitalism, Fourier had noted that just as 'extremes touch' so free competition was turning into its opposite, the rule of monopolists, 'commercial vassalage' and 'industrial feudalism'.⁵³ Amidst wars, revolutions and speculation, industry with its monopolies and excesses had become a form of punishment in which people starved in the midst of plenty: this is Fourier's depiction of the 'crises plethoriques' or periodic crises of overproduction, which so impressed Engels.⁵⁴

Finally it was also from Fourier that the Saint Simonians

⁵² all these citations come from Theory of Four Movements.

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ For Fourier's definition of 'crises pléthoriques', see Oeuvres Complètes, vol.6, p.43.

and later Marx learnt to situate 'civilisation', 'commercial society', 'the critical epoch' or 'modern industry' as one dark but ephemeral phase in the march of progress. Under the domination of commerce, according to Fourier, civilisation had `reached the very bottom of the abyss'. But this marked the fourth and last phase of civilisation. Humanity had reached the end of its `social calamities', `the end of the political childhood of the globe'. The present was already `ripe with the future' and `an excess of suffering must hasten the moment of salvation'.⁵⁵ In the coming sixth period of `guaranteeism', the commercial body would be subordinated to the interests of the producers, manufacturers, farmers and proprietors'.⁵⁶ The mass would no longer be impoverished to the advantage of the few. Thanks to the growth of `large scale agriculture and industry', the progress in the sciences and the arts and finally the discovery of the true theory, a peaceful transition to the `combined order' could now begin.

It was in this way that what later nineteenth century Marxists were to call Zusammenbruchstheorie - the end crisis of capitalism - started life as God's providential punishment of the human race for living outside the 'serial code'.

⁵⁵ Fourier, 'Traité de l'association domestique-agricole', Oeuvres Complètes, vol.2, p.69.

⁵⁶ Theory of the Four Movements, part III.

