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Of the Role of the Passions

Charles Fourier

1841

All those philosophical whims called duties have no relation whatever to Nature; duty proceeds from men, Attraction proceeds from God; now, if we desire to know the designs of God, we must study Attraction, Nature only, without any regard to duty, which varies with every age, while the nature of the passions has been and will remain invariable among all nations of men.

The learned world is wholly imbued with a doctrine termed MORALITY, which is a mortal enemy of passional attraction.

Morality teaches man to be at war with himself, to resist his passions, to repress them, to believe that God was incapable of organizing our souls, our passions wisely; that he needed the teachings of Plato and Seneca in order to know how to distribute characteristics and instincts. Imbued with these prejudices regarding the impotence of God, the learned world was not qualified to estimate the natural impulses or passional attractions, which morality proscribes and relegates to the rank of vices.

It is true that these impulses entice us only to evil, if we yield to them individually; but we must calculate their effect upon a body of about two thousand persons socially combined, and not upon families or isolated individuals: this is what the learned world has

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not thought of; in studying it, it would have recognized that as soon as the number of associates (*sociétaires*) has reached 1600, the natural impulses, termed attractions, tend to form series of contrasting groups, in which everything incites to industry, become attractive, and to virtue, become lucrative.

The passions, believed to be the enemies of concord, in reality conduce to that unity from which we deem them so far removed. But outside of the mechanism termed “*exalted*,” *emulatory*, *interlocked* (*engrenées*) *Series*, they are but unchained tigers, incomprehensible enigmas. It is this which has caused philosophers to say that we ought to repress them; an opinion doubly absurd inasmuch as we can only repress our passions by *violence* or *absorbing replacement*, which replacement is no repression. On the other hand, should they be efficiently repressed, the civilized order would rapidly decline and relapse into the nomad state, where the passions would still be malevolent as with us. The virtue of shepherds is as doubtful as that of their apologists, and our utopia-makers, by thus attributing virtues to imaginary peoples, only succeed in proving the impossibility of introducing virtue into civilization.

We are quite familiar with the five *sensitive* passions tending to Luxury, the four *affective* ones tending to Groups; it only remains for us to learn about the three *distributive* ones whose combined impulse produces *Series*, a social method of which the secret has been lost since the age of primitive mankind, who were unable to maintain the *Series* more than about 300 years.

The four *affective* passions tending to form the four groups of friendship, love, ambition, paternity or consanguinity are familiar enough; but no analyses or parallels or scales have been made of them.

The three others, termed distributive, are totally misunderstood, and bear only the title of vices, although they are infinitely precious; for these three possess the property of forming and directing the series of groups, the mainspring of social harmony. Since these

series are not formed in the civilized order, the three distributive passions cause disorder only. Let us define them.

10th. THE CABALIST is the passion that, like love, has the property of confounding ranks, drawing superiors and inferiors closer to each other. Everyone must recall occasions when he has been strongly drawn into some Path followed with complete success.

For instance: electoral cabal to elect a certain candidate; cabal on 'Change in the stock-jobbing game; cabal of two pairs of lovers, planning a *partie carrée* without the father's knowledge; a family cabal to secure a desirable match. If these intrigues are crowned with success, the participants become friends; in spite of some anxiety, they have passed happy moments together while conducting the intrigue; the emotions it arouses are necessities of the soul.

Far removed from the insipid calm whose charms are extolled by morality, the cabalistic spirit is the true destination of man. Plotting doubles his resources, enlarges his faculties. Compare the tone of a formal social gathering, its moral, stilted, languishing jargon, with the tone of these same people united in a cabal: they will appear transformed to you; you will admire their terseness, their animation, the quick play of ideas, the alertness of action, of decision; in a word, the rapidity of the spiritual or material motion. This fine development of the human faculties is the fruit of the cabalist or tenth passion, which constantly prevails in the labors and the reunions of a passionate series.

As it always results in some measure of success, and as its groups are all precious to each other, the attraction of the cabals becomes a potent bond of friendship between all the sectaires, even the most unequal.

The general perfection of industry will spring, then, from the passion which is most condemned by the philosophers; the cabalist or dissident, which has never been able to obtain among us the rank of a passion, notwithstanding that it is so strongly rooted even in the philosophers themselves, who are the greatest intriguers in the social world.

The cabalist is a favorite passion of women; they are excessively fond of intrigue, the rivalries and all the greater and lesser flights of a cabal. It is a proof of their eminent fitness (for the new social order, where cabals without number will be needed in every series, periodical schisms, in order to maintain a movement of coming and going among the sectaries of the different groups.

12th. THE COMPOSITE. – This passion requires in every action a composite allurements or pleasure of the senses and of the soul, and consequently the blind enthusiasm which is born only of the mingling of the two kinds of pleasure. These conditions are but little compatible with civilized labor, which, far from offering any allurements either to the senses or the soul, is only a double torment even in the most vaunted of work-shops, such as the spinning factories of England where the people, even the children, work fifteen hours a day, under the lash, in premises devoid of air.

The composite is the most beautiful of the twelve passions, the one which enhances the value of all the others. A love is not beautiful unless it is a composite love, combining the charm of the senses and of the soul. It becomes trifling or deception if it limits itself to one of these springs. An ambition is not vehement unless it brings into play the two springs, glory and interest. It is then that it becomes capable of brilliant efforts.

The *composite* commands so great a respect, that all are agreed in despising people inclined to simple pleasure. Let a man provide himself with fine viands, fine wines, with the intention of enjoying them alone, of giving himself up to gormandizing by himself, and he exposes himself to well-merited gibes. But if this man gathers a select company in his house, where one may enjoy at the same time the pleasure of the senses by good cheer, and the pleasure of the soul by companionship, he will be lauded, because these banquets will be a composite and not a simple pleasure.

If general opinion despises simple material pleasure, the same is true as well of simple spiritual pleasure, of gatherings where there is neither refreshment, nor dancing, nor love, nor anything for the

productions; for there would be no sale for mediocre ones, such as bitter melons, bitter peaches, which certain kinds of soil yield, upon which neither melons nor peaches would be cultivated; every district would confine itself to productions which its soil is capable of raising to perfection; it would fetch earth for spots where the soil is poor, or perhaps convert them into forests, artificial meadows, or whatever else might yield products of good quality. It is not that the passionate Series do not consume ordinary eatables and stuffs; but they desire, even in ordinary things such as beans and coarse cloth, the most perfect quality possible, in conformity to the proportions which Nature has established in industrial attraction.

The principle which must be our starting-point is, *that a general perfection in industry will be attained by the universal demands and refinement of the consumers, regarding food and clothing, furniture and amusements.*

My theory confines itself to *utilizing the passions now condemned, just as Nature has given them to us and without in any way changing them.* That is the whole mystery, the whole secret of the calculus of passionate Attraction. There is no arguing there whether God was right or wrong in giving mankind these or those passions; the associative order avails itself of them without changing them, and as God has given them to us.

Its mechanism produces coincidence in every respect between individual interest and collective interest, in civilization always divergent.

It makes use of men as they are, utilizing the discords arising from antipathies, and other motives accounted vicious, and vindicating the Creator from the reproach of a lacuna in providence, in the matter of general unity and individual foresight.

Finally, it in nowise disturbs the established order, limiting itself to trial on a small scale, which will incite to imitation by the double allurements of quadruple proceeds and attractive industry.

attraction. It will be recognized *that God did well what he did*, that he was right in attracting children to milk-foods, fruit, and sweet pastries; and that, instead of foolishly losing three thousand years in declaiming against God's wisest work, against the distribution of tastes and passionate attractions, it would have been better to study its aim, by reckoning with all those impulses combined, which morality insults singly, under the pretext that they are hurtful to the civilized and barbarous orders; this is true, but God did not create the passions for the civilized and barbarous orders. If he had wished to maintain these two forms of society exclusively, he would have given children a fondness for dry bread, and to the parents a love of poverty, since that is the lot of the immense majority of mankind in civilization and barbarism.

In the civilized state, love of eating does not ally itself to industry because the *laboring* producer does not enjoy the commodities which he has cultivated or manufactured. This passion therefore becomes an attribute of the idle; and through that alone it would be vicious, were it not so already by the outlay and the excesses which it occasions.

In the associative state love of eating plays an entirely opposite *role*; it is no longer a reward of idleness but of industry; because there the poorest tiller of the soil participates in the consumption of choice commodities. Moreover, its only influence will be to preserve us from excess, by dint of variety, and to stimulate us to work by allying the intrigues of consumption to those of production, preparation, and distribution. Production being the most important of the four, let us first state the principle which must guide it; it is the generalization of epicurism. In point of fact.

If the whole human race could be raised to a high degree of gastronomic refinement, even in regard to the most ordinary kinds of food, such as cabbages and radishes, and everyone be given a competence which would allow him to refuse all edibles which are mediocre in quality or treatment, the result would be that every cultivated country would, after a few years, be covered with delicious

senses, where one enjoys oneself only in imagination. Such a gathering, devoid of the composite or pleasure of the senses and the soul, becomes insipid to its participants, and it is not long before it "grows bored and dissolves."

11th. THE PAPILLONNE [Butterfly] or *Alternating*. Although eleventh according to rank, it should be examined after the twelfth, because it serves as a link between the other two, the tenth and the twelfth. If the sessions of the series were meant to be prolonged twelve or fifteen hours like those of civilized workmen, who, from morning till night, *stupefy themselves* by being engaged in insipid duties without any diversion, God would have given us a taste for monotony, an abhorrence of variety. But as the sessions of the series are to be very short, and the enthusiasm inspired by the composite is incapable of being prolonged beyond an hour and a half, God, in conformity to this industrial order, had to endow us with the passion of *papillonage*, the craving for periodic variety in the phases of life, and for frequent variety in our occupations. Instead of working twelve hours with a scant intermission for a poor, dull dinner, the associative state will never extend its sessions of labor beyond an hour and a half or at most two; besides, it will diffuse a host of pleasures, reunions of the two sexes terminating in a repast, from which one will proceed to new diversions, with different company and cabals.

Without this hypothesis of associative labor, arranged in the order I have described, it would be impossible to conceive for what purpose God should have given us three passions so antagonistic to the monotony experienced in civilization, and so unreasonable that, in the existing state, they have not even been accorded the rank of passions, but are termed only vices.

A series, on the contrary, could not be organized without the permanent cooperation of these three passions. They are bound to intervene constantly and simultaneously in the serial play of intrigue. Hence it comes that these three passions could not be discerned until the invention of the serial mechanism, and that up

to that time they had to be regarded as vices. When the social order for which God has destined us shall be known in detail, it will be seen that these pretended vices, *the Cabalist*, *the Papillonne*, *the Composite*, become there three pledges of virtue and riches; that God did indeed know how to create passions such as are demanded by social unity; that He would have been wrong to change them in order to please Seneca and Plato; that on the contrary human reason ought to strive to discover a social condition which shall be in affinity with these passions. No moral theory will ever change them, and, in accordance with the rules of the duality of tendency, they will intervene for ever to lead us TO EVIL in the disjointed state or social limbo, and TO GOOD in the *regime* of association or serial labor.

The seven “affective” and “distributive” passions depend more upon the spirit than upon matter; they rank as PRIMITIVES. Their combined action engenders a collective passion or one formed by the union of the other seven, as white is formed by the union of the seven colors of a ray of light; I shall call this thirteenth passion *Harmonism* or *Unityism*; it is even less known than the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth, of which I have not spoken.

Unityism is the inclination of the individual to reconcile his own happiness with that of all surrounding him, and of all human kind, to-day so odious. It is an unbounded philanthropy, a universal good-will which can only be developed when the entire human race shall be rich, free, and just.

Questions regarding gallantry and the love of eating are treated facetiously by the Civilized, who do not comprehend the importance that God attaches to our pleasures. Voluptuousness is the sole arm which God can employ to master us and lead us to carry out his designs; he rules the universe *by Attraction and not by Force*; therefore the enjoyments of his creatures are the most important object of the calculations of God.

I shall, in order to dispose others to share my confidence, explain the object of one of these impulses, accounted as vicious.

I select a propensity which is the most general and the most thwarted by education: it is the gluttony of children, their fondness for dainties, in opposition to the advice of the pedagogues who counsel them to like bread, to eat more bread than their allowance.

Nature, then, is very clumsy to endow children with tastes so opposed to sound doctrines! every child regards a breakfast of dry bread as a punishment; he would wish for sugared cream, sweetened milk-food and pastry, marmalades and stewed fruit, raw and preserved fruit, lemonades and orangeades, mild white wines. Let us observe closely these tastes which prevail among all children; on this point a great case is to be adjudged: the question to be determined is who is wrong, God or morality?

God, dispenser of attraction, gives all children a liking for dainties: it was in his power to give them a liking for dry bread and water; it would have suited the views of morality; why then does he knowingly militate against sound civilized doctrines? Let us explain these motives.

God has given children a liking for substances which will be the least costly in the associative state. When the entire globe shall be populated and cultivated, enjoying free-trade, exempt from all duties, the sweet viands mentioned above will be much less expensive than bread; the abundant edibles will be fruit, milk-foods, and sugar, but not bread, whose price will be greatly raised, because the labor incident to the growing of grain and the daily making of bread is wearisome and little attractive; these kinds of labor would have to be paid much higher than that in orchards or confectioneries.

And as it is fitting that the food and maintenance of children should involve less expense than those of their parents, God has acted judiciously in attracting them to those sweetmeats and dainties which will be cheaper than bread as soon as we shall have entered upon the associative state. Then the sound moral doctrines will be found to be altogether erroneous concerning the nourishment of children, as well as upon all other points which oppose