

The Principle of the State

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At base, conquest is not only the origin, it is also the crowning aim of all States, great or small, powerful or weak, despotic or liberal, monarchic, aristocratic, democratic, and even socialist, supposing that the ideal of the German socialists, that of a great communist State, is ever realized.

That it has been the point of departure for all States, ancient and modern, can be doubted by no one, since each page of universal history proves it sufficiently. No one contests any longer that the large current States have conquest for their more or less confessed aim. But the middling States and even the small ones, we are told, think only of defending themselves and it would be absurd on their part to dream of conquest.

Mock as much as you want, but nonetheless it is their dream, as it is the dream of the smallest peasant proprietor to increase to the detriment of his neighbor, to increase, to enlarge, to conquer always and at any price. It is a fatal tendency inherent in every State, whatever its extensions, its weakness or its strength, because it is a necessity of its nature. What is the State if it is not the organization of power; but it is in the nature of all power to not be able to tolerate either superiors or equals—power having no other object than domination, and domination being real only when everything that hinders it is subjugated. No power tolerates another except when it is forced to, when it feels itself powerless to destroy or overthrow it. The mere fact of an equal power is a negation of its principle and a perpetual threat against its existence, for it is a manifestation and a proof of its powerlessness. Consequently, between all States that exist side by side, war is permanent and their peace is only a truce.

It is in the nature of the State to set itself up, for itself as well as for all its subjects, as the absolute objet. To serve its prosperity, its grandeur, its power is the crowning virtue of patriotism. The State recognizes no others [of its kind]: everything that serves it is good, and everything that is contrary to its interests is declared criminal. – Such is the morality of the State.

That is what political morality has been at all times not only foreign, but absolutely contrary to human morality. That contradiction is a consequence compelled by its principle: the State being only one part poses and imposes itself as the whole: it ignores the rights of everything that not being the State itself, finds itself outside of it, and when it can, without danger for itself, it violates them—the State is the negation of humanity.

Is there an absolute human right and human morality? The times which race, and seeing all that which occurs and is done to day in Europe, we are certainly forced to pose that question.

First, does the absolute exist, or isn't everything in the world relative? Thus for morals and rights: what we called right, yesterday, is no longer so today, and what appears moral in China, cannot be considered as such in Europe. From this point of view each country, each era should only be judged from the contemporary or local points of view, and there would be no universal human right, nor absolute human morality.

In this manner, after having dreamed one or the other, having been metaphysicians or Christian, [or] become positivists today, we should renounce this magnificent dream to pour fall back into the moral meanness of antiquity, which did not know even the name of humanity, at the point where all the Gods were only exclusively national, and only accessible to the privileged cults.

But today, when the heavens have become deserted and all the Gods, including naturally the Jehovah of the Jews, the Allah of the Mohammedans and the good God of the Christians, find themselves dethroned, today that would be even less: we fall back into the crass and brutal materialism of Bismark, Thiers and Frédéric II, according to which, "*God was always on the side of the large battalions*," as the last has excellently said, the sole object worthy of worship, the principle of all morality, of all right, will be force—it is the true religion of the State.

Well, no! Atheists we are, and precisely because we are atheists, we recognize an absolute human morality and human right. However, it is a question of being clear about the meaning of that word *absolute*.—We do not conceive of the universal absolute, encompassing the infinite totality of world and beings, because not only are we incapable of perceiving it with our senses, but we cannot even imagine it. Every attempt of this sort, lead us back to the void, so loved by the metaphysicians, of absolute abstraction.

The absolute as we intend it is a very relative absolute, and particularly relative exclusively to the human species. That species is far from being eternal: born on the earth, it will die with it, perhaps even before it, giving way, according to the system of Darwin, to a more powerful, more complete, more perfect species. But as long as it exists, it has a principle that is inherent to it, and which makes it precisely what it is: it is this principle which constitutes, by relation to it, the absolute. Let us see, what is the principle?

Of all the beings living on this earth, man is at once the most *social* and the most *individualist*. He is also indisputably the most *intelligent*. There perhaps exist some animals that are even more social than him, for example the bees and ants; but they are, on the contrary, so little individualist that the individuals belonging to these species are absolutely absorbed by these last and as good as annihilated in their society: they are all for the collectivity, nothing or next to nothing for themselves. It appears that there exists a natural law, according to which the higher a species of animals is raised on the scale of being, by its more complete organization, the more latitude, liberty or individuality it leaves to each member. The ferocious animals that unquestionably occupy the highest rank, are individualists to the utmost degree.

Man, the ferocious animal *par excellence*, is the most individualist of all. But at the same time, and this is one of his distinctive traits, he is eminently, instinctively and inevitably socialist. That is so true that even his intelligence, which renders him so superior to all the living beings and which establishes him in some way as the master of all, can develop and come to consciousness of itself only in society and through the cooperation of the entire collectivity.

And in fact, we know well that it is impossible to think without speech; apart from or before speech, there can no doubt be representations or images of things, but there are no thoughts.—Thought is born and develops only with speech. To think is thus to speak (mentally) in itself. But

every conversation supposes at least two persons.—One is you, but who is the other? It is every human being that you know.

Man, as an individual animal, like the animals of all the other species, at first glance and as soon as he begins to breathe, has the immediate sentiment of his individual existence; but he acquires reflective consciousness of himself, conscience which properly constitutes his personality, by means of intelligence, and consequently only in society. Your innermost personality, the consciousness that you have of yourself in your heart of hearts, is at it were only the reflection of your own image, echoed and sent back to you as if by so many mirrors, by the consciousness, both collective and individual, of all the human beings that make up your social world. Each man that you know and with whom you have found yourself in relations, whether direct or indirect, determines, more or less, your most intimate being, contributes to making you what you are, to forming your personality.

Consequently, if you are surrounded by slaves, though you are their master, you are no less a slave, the consciousness of the slaves only being able to reflect back your image in degraded form. The stupidity of everyone makes you stupid, while the intelligence of all enlightens you, raises you up; the vices of your social milieu are your vices, and you do not know how to be a really free man, if you are not surrounded by equally free men, the existence of a single slave is sufficient to diminish your liberty. In the immortal declaration of the rights of man, made by the National Convention we find clearly expressed that sublime truth that "*the slavery of one single human being is the slavery of all.*"

It contains all of human morality, precisely what we have dared to call *absolute morals*—absolute doubtless in relation to humanity only, not in relation to the rest of the being, even less in relation to the infinite totality of worlds, eternally unknown to us. We find its seeds, more or less, in all the moral systems that have been produced in history, of which it was like the latent illumination,—a light which is, besides, most often only manifested by some reflections as uncertain as they are imperfect. All that we see of the absolutely true, that is to say of the human, is due to itself alone. And how would it be otherwise, since all the moral systems that have been successively developed, in the past, as well as all the other developments of man in history—includes the theological and metaphysical developments, have never had any source but human nature, have only been its more or less imperfect manifestations. But that moral law that we call absolute, that it is, according to its purest, most complete, and most adequate expression, as the metaphysicians said, of that same human nature, essentially socialist and individualist at once.

The principal defect of the moral systems taught in the past was to have been either exclusively socialist or exclusively individualist. Thus the civic morality, as it has been transmitted to us by the Greeks and Romans, was an exclusively socialist morality, in the sense that it always sacrificed individuality to the collectivity. Without speaking of the myriads of slaves, which would constitute the whole basis of ancient civilization, not even counting them only as things, the individuality [of the] Greek or Roman citizen himself was always patriotically immolated for the profit of the collectivity established as a State. And when the citizens, tired of this permanent sacrifice, no longer wanted to allow it and would refuse the sacrifice, the republics, first Greek, then Roman, would collapse. The awakening of individualism caused the death of antiquity.

It finds its purest and most complete expression in the monotheistic religions, in Judaism, in Mohammedanism and in Christianity especially. The Jehovah of the Jews still addresses himself

to the collectivity, at least in certain regards, since he has a chosen people, although he already contains all the seeds of the exclusively individualist morality.

It had to be so: the gods of Greek and Roman antiquity were in the last analysis only symbols, the supreme representatives of the deified collectivity, of the State. by worshipping them, they worshipped the State, and all the morals that were taught in their name could consequently have no other object than the safety, grandeur and glory of the State.

The God of the Jews, a jealous, selfish and vain despot if there ever was one, took care not to identify, but only to mix his terrible person with the collectivity of his chosen people, chosen to serve him as preferred stepping-stone at most, but not to dare to raise themselves up to him—Between him and his people, there would always be an abyss. What is more, allowing no object of worship that himself, he could not tolerate the cult of the State. And he never demanded of the Jews, either collectively or individually, sacrifices except for himself, never for their collectivity or for the grandeur and glory of the State.

Moreover, the commandments of Jehovah as they have been transmitted by the Decalogue are addressed almost exclusively to the individual. Excepting only those among them whose execution surpasses the strength of an individual, requiring the cooperation of all: for example the order, so singularly human, qui enjoining the Jews to extirpate to the last, women and children included, all the pagans that they found in the promised land, an order truly worth of the Father of our holy Christian Trinity, who is distinguished, as we know, by his love for this poor human species.

All the other commandments are only addressed to the individual: you shall not kill (except in the very frequent cases where I order it myself, he should have added); you shall not steal, either property, not the wife of another, (also considered in some sense as a property); you shall respect your parents. But above all you will worship me, the jealous, selfish, vain and terrible God, and if you do not want to incur my wrath you will sing my praises and you will prostrate yourself eternally before me.

In Mohammedanism there is not even a shadow of the collectivism, national and limited, which dominates the ancient religions antiques, and of which we still find some feeble remnants until the Judaic worship. The Koran knows no chosen people, all the believers, whatever nation or community they belong to, are individually, not collectively, God's elect. And the caliphs, successors of Mahomet, were never called anything but the leaders of the believers.

But no religion pushed the cult of individualism as far as the Christian religion. Before the threats of Hell and the absolutely individual promises of Paradise, accompanied by that terrible declaration that "*of the many that are called but a few are chosen*," there was a confusion, a general *every man for himself*; a sort of cross-country scramble in which each was only urged on by a single preoccupation: that of saving his poor little soul. We understand that such a religion could and should have given the *coup de grâce* to ancient civilization antique, based exclusively on the worship of the collectivity, of the homeland, of the State and dissolved all of its organizations, especially in an era when it was already dying of old age. Individualism is such a powerful solvent! We see the proof of it in the present bourgeois world.

In our view, that is from the point of view of human morality, all the monotheistic religions, but especially the Christian religion, as the most complete and most substantial of all, are fundamentally, essentially, and principally immoral: in creating their God, they have proclaimed the degeneration of all men, whose solidarity they concede only in sin; and in posing the exclusively

individual principle of salvation, they have renounced and destroyed, insofar as it was in their power to do so, the human collectivity, that is to say the very principle of humanity.

Isn't it strange that we have credited to Christianity the honor of having created the idea of humanity, of which it was, on the contrary, the most complete and most absolute negation? There is, however, one sense in which it can claim that honor, but only the one sense: it has contributed in a negative manner, by cooperating powerfully in the destruction of the limited, partial collectivities of antiquity, by hastening the natural decadence of the homelands and cities, which, being deified in their Gods, formed an obstacle to the constitution of humanity; but it is absolutely false to say that Christianity had ever had a thought of establishing that humanity, or that it has understood, or even foreseen, what we today call the solidarity of men, humanity, which is an entirely modern idea, glimpsed by the Renaissance, but conceived and formulated in a clear and precise manner only in the eighteenth century.

Christianity had absolutely nothing to do with humanity, for the simple that is sole object is Divinity; but one excludes the other.—The idea of humanity rests on the inevitable, natural solidarity of all men among themselves. But Christianity, we have said, recognizes that solidarity only in sin, and absolutely rejects it in salvation, in the kingdom of that God who of the many who are called spares only a very few, and who in his *loveable* justice, driven doubtless by that infinite love which distinguished him, even before men were born on this earth, by having condemned the immense majority to the eternal sufferings of Hell, and that to punish them for a sin committed, not by themselves, but by their first ancestors, who were forced to make themselves capable of it, to commit it, in order to avoid one more terrible still, that of inflicting a refutation on the divine prescience.

Such is the divine logic and the basis of all Christian morals. What have they to do with human logic and morality?

It is in vain that we attempt to prove that Christianity recognized the solidarity of men, by citing some words from the Gospel which seem to foretell the coming of a day where there will be more than one shepherd and one flock; or by pointing to the Roman Catholic church, tending constantly towards the realization of that aim through the subjection of the entire world to the government of the Pope. The transformation of all of humanity into a flock, as well as the realization, happily impossible, of that universal divine monarchy has absolutely nothing to do with the principle of human solidarity, which alone constitutes what we call humanity. There is not even the shadow of that solidarity, in society such as the Christian dream of it and in which one is not by the grace of men, entirely by the grace of God, a veritable flock of scattered sheep, who have, and must have, no immediate and natural relations among them, to the point that they are prohibited from uniting for the reproduction of the species, without the permission or the benediction of their shepherd: the priest alone having the right to marry them in the name of God, which is the only legitimate trait of union among them: separated outside of him, the Christians only unite, and can only unite, in him. Apart from that divine sanction, all human relations, even the bonds of family, are subject to the general curse which strikes the creation, and are damned: the tenderness of parents, of spouses, of children, friendship based on sympathy and mutual esteem, the love and respect of men, the passion for the true, the just and the beautiful, the passion for liberty, and the greatest of all, the one which implies all the others, the passion for humanity—all of that is accursed and can be rehabilitated only by the grace of God. All the relations between men must be sanctified by divine intervention divine; but that intervention twists them, demoralizes them, and destroys them. The divine kills the human and

the whole Christian cult consists properly only of this perpetual immolation humanity in honor of the Divinity.

Let no one object that Christianity commands children to love their parents, parents to love their children, and spouses to be mutually affectionate. Yes, but it commands, and does not permit them to love immediately, naturally, and for themselves, but only in God and for the love of God; it accepts all these natural relations only on the condition that God is found there as a third party, and that terrible third kills the spouses. Divine love destroys human love. Christianity commands us, it is true, to love our fellow man as much as ourselves, but it commands us at the same time to love God more than ourselves and consequently more than our fellows, that is to sacrifice our fellows for the salvation of ourselves, for in the final account, the Christian only worships God for the salvation of his soul.

God being given, all of that is a strict consequence: God is the infinite, the absolute, the Eternal, the all-powerful; man is the finite, the powerless. In comparison to God, in all relations, he is nothing. The Divine alone is just, true, beautiful and good, and everything that is human in man must be, by the same logic, declared false, sinful, detestable and miserable. The contact of the Divinity with that poor humanity, must then necessarily devour, consume, and destroy all that remains of the human in men.

But also divine intervention in human affairs had never failed to produce extremely disastrous effects. It has perverted all the relations of men among themselves and replaced their natural solidarity by the hypocritical and noxious practices of the religious communities, where, under the guise of charity, each thinks only of the salvation of his soul, making thus, under the pretext of divine love, extremely refined human selfishness, full of concern for himself and indifference, malice, even cruelty for his fellow man. That explains the intimate alliance which has always existed between the hangman and the priest, an alliance frankly avowed by the celebrated champion de ultramontanism, Mr. Joseph de Maitre of which the most eloquent, after having deified the Pope, has not failed to rehabilitate the executioner—the one being, in fact, the necessary complement of the other.

But it is not only in the Catholic church that this excessive tenderness for the hangman appears. The sincerely religious and believing ministers of the different protestant denominations; have they not unanimously protested in our time against the abolition of the death penalty, so true is it that the divine love kills, in the hearts which it has penetrated, the love of men; so true is it in general that all the religions, but among them Christianity especially, have never had any object but to sacrifice men to their Gods. And of all the divinities of which history has spoken, is there one who has made as many tears and as much blood flow as this good God of the Christians, or who has perverted to the same extent the intelligences, the hearts, and all the relations of men among themselves?

Under this unhealthy influence, the mind is obscured and the ardent search for truth is transformed into a complaisant worship of lies; human dignity is debased, honesty becomes treacherous, kindness cruel, justice iniquitous and human respect is transformed into an arrogant disdain for men; the instinct for liberty leads to the establishment of servitude, and Charity, becoming informer and persecutor, ordered the massacre of the heretics and the bloody orgies of the inquisition—the religious man was called Jesuit, momier or pietist—renouncing humanity, he aims for sanctity—and the saint under the guise of a more or less hypocritical humility and charity, conceal the pride and immense selfishness of an absolutely isolated human ego, which worships itself in its God. For we must not be mistaken, what the religious man seeks above

all and thinks that he finds in the Divinity that he worships, is still himself, but glorified, invested with infinite power and immortalized. And he has too often drawn from it pretexts and instruments to enslave and exploit the human world.

That then is the last word of the Christian cult; it is the exaltation selfishness, which, breaking all social solidarity, worships itself in its God and imposes itself on the ignorant mass of men in the name of that God, which is to say in the name of its human Self, consciously or unconsciously exalted and deified by itself. That is also why religious men are ordinarily so fierce: in defending their God, they take part for their selfishness, their pride, and their vanity.

From all this it results that Christianity is the most decisive and more complete negation of all solidarity between men, that is of society, and consequently also of morals, since outside of society, there can be no morality, there remains only the religious relations of the isolated man with his God, which is to say with himself.

The modern metaphysicians, since the seventeenth century, have attempted to reestablish morality, basing it not on God, but on man. Unfortunately, obedient to the tendencies of their century, they have taken for their point of departure not the social man, living and real, who is the double product of nature and society, but the abstract Self of the individual, apart from all its natural and social links, the very one deified by Christian selfishness, which all the churches, whether catholic or protestant, worship as their God.

How was the one God of the Monotheists born? By the successive elimination of all the real, living beings.

To explain what we mean by that, it becomes necessary to say a few words about religion. We would prefer not to speak of it at all, but nowadays it becomes impossible to treat political and social questions without touching on the religious question.

It is wrong to claim that the religious sentiment is proper to men; we find all the fundamental elements perfectly in the animal world, and among these elements the principal one is fear. "The fear of God," say the theologians, "is the beginning of wisdom." Well, isn't that fear found, extremely well developed, in the beasts, and are all the animals not constantly frightened?—All feel an instinctive terror instinctive with respect to the all-powerful nature that produces them, raises and nourishes them, it is true, but which at the same time crushes them, envelops them on all sides, threatening their existence at each hour, and always ends by killing them.

As the animals of all the other species lack that power of abstraction and generalization with which man is gifted, they do not apprehend that totality of beings that we call nature, but they sense it and they fear it. That is the true beginning of the religious sentiment.

Even worship is not lacking. Without speaking of the quiver of joy felt by all living beings at the rising of the sun, nor of their whining at the approach of one of those terrible natural catastrophes which destroy them by the millions, we have only to consider, for example, the attitude of the dog in the presence of its master. Isn't it just exactly that of man with regard to his God?

Man also did not begin with the generalization of natural phenomena, and he has arrived at the idea of nature as a unique being, only after many centuries of social development. The primitive man, the savage, little different from the gorilla, doubtless shared for a long time all the sensations and instinctive representations of the gorilla—it was only over a very long time that he began to make them the object of his initially very infantile reflections, to give them a name, and by this means to fix them in his nascent mind.

It was in this way that the religious sentiment that he had in common with the animals of other species became embodied, became a permanent representation in him, like the beginning of an idea: that of the occult existence of a being superior to and much more powerful than him, and generally very hostile and very destructive, of the being which made him fear, in short, of his God.

Such was the first God, so rudimentary, it is true, that the savage who sought to conjure him everywhere, something thought they found him in a bit of wood, in a rag, a bone or stone—this was the era of the *Fetishism* of which we still find some vestiges today in Catholicism.

It doubtless requires centuries more for the savage man to pass from the worship of inanimate fetishes to that of living fetishes, to the cult of different animals and in the end to that of *magicians*. He arrives there by a long series of experiments and by the process of elimination: Not finding the formidable power that he wanted to conjure in the fetishes, he sought it in the God-Man, the *sorcerer*.

Later, and always by this same process of elimination and setting aside the magician, whose experiment had finally shown him his powerlessness, the savage man worshipped by turns the grandest and most terrible phenomena of nature: the tempest, the thunder, the wind, and continuing in this way, from elimination to elimination, he rose finally to the worship of the sun and planets. It appears that the honor of having created this cult belongs to the herding peoples.

That was already a great progress.—The more the Divinity, the power that they feared, was separated from man, the more respectable and grandiose it appeared.—There was now but one great step to take, for the definitive establishment of the religious world—this was to arrive at the worship of an invisible Divinity.

Until this fatal somersault from the worship of the visible to the worship of the invisible, the animals of the other species had been able, in a pinch, to accompany their younger brother, man, in all his theological experiments. For they also worshipped, in their way, all the phenomena of nature. We don't know what they can feel for the other planets, however, we are certain that the moon and especially the sun exert a very noticeable influence on them. But the invisible Divinity invisible could only have been invented by man.

But man himself, by what process could he discover this Invisible Being, of which none of his senses, not even his sight, could help him to observe the real existence, and by means of what artifice could he recognize its nature qualities? What finally is that supposedly absolute Being, which man thought he had found above and outside of everything?

The process was nothing other than that well known operation of the mind that we call abstraction or elimination; and the final result of that operation could only be the abstract absolute, nothing, the void.—And it is precisely this nothing that man worships as his God.

By raising himself by his mind above all real and living things, including his own body, by disregarding all that is sensible or even just visible, including the firmament and all the stars, man finds himself facing the absolute Void, the indeterminate, infinite Void, without any content, as it is without any limit.

In this Void, the mind of the man, who had produced it by means of the elimination of all things, can necessarily encounter nothing but himself, in the state of abstractive power which having destroyed everything and having nothing more to eliminate, falls back on itself in a state of absolute inaction, and which seeing itself in this complete inertion, which appears sublime to it, like a Being different from itself, poses as its own God and worships itself.

God is therefore nothing other than the human Self become absolutely Void by means of abstraction or the elimination of all that is real and living. It is precisely in that way that the Buddha has been conceived, who of all the religious révélateurs was certainly the most profound, the most sincere, and the most true.

Except that Buddha did not know, and could not now, that the human mind itself had created this God-Void. It was hardly until the end of the last century that we began to perceive it, and it is only in our own century that thanks to much more extensive studies on the nature and operations of the human mind, we have managed to take full account of it.

While the human mind created God, it proceeded with the most complete naïveté; it still had no knowledge of itself and without doubting itself in the least, it could worship itself in its God-Void.

However, it could not stop before this Void that it had made itself, it must absolutely fill it and make it descend to earth, into the living reality. It arrived at this end always with the same naïveté and by the simplest, most natural process. After having deified its own Self, in this state of abstraction or absolute Void, it bowed before it, worshipped it and proclaimed it the cause and author of all things.—That was the beginning of theology.

Then he made a complete reversal, decisive, fatal, and no doubt historically inevitable, but all the same extremely disastrous in all human conceptions:

God—the absolute Void, was proclaimed the sole living Being, powerful and real, and the living world and as an inevitable consequence, nature, all the things really real and living as compared to that God, were declared Void.—It is proper to theology to make the Void into the real and the real into nothing.

Always proceeding with the same naïveté, and without the least consciousness of what he did, man used a means at once very ingenious and very natural to fill the frightening void of his divinity: He simply attributed to it, by exaggerating them however to monstrous proportions, all the actions, all the forces, all the qualities and properties, good or bad, beneficial or harmful, that it found as much in nature as in society. Thus it was that the earth, pillaged, was impoverished for the profit of the heaven that is enriched by its remains.

It results from this that the more heaven, the habitation of the Divinity, was enriched, the more miserable the earth became, and that it was enough for a thing to be worshipped in heaven, in order for the complete opposite of that to find itself realized in this lower world. It is what we call religious fictions—to each of these fictions correspond, we know only too well, some monstrous reality—thus celestial love has never had any other effect than terrestrial hatred, divine goodness has always produced only evil, and liberty in God means slavery here below. We will soon see that it is the same with all of the political and juridical fictions, both being only consequences or transformations of the religious fiction.

It is not in a single stroke that the Divinity assumes this absolutely destructive character. In the pantheistic religions of the Orient, in the cult of the Brahmans and that of the priests of Egypt, as well as in the beliefs of the Phoenicians and Syrians, it already presents itself in a very terrible aspect—the Orient was at all times, and still remains today, to a certain degree *au moi*, the homeland of the despotic Divinity, crushing and fierce, negation of the mind and of humanity. It is also the homeland of slaves, of absolute monarchs, and of castes.

In Greece the Divinity was humanized—its mysterious unity recognized only by the priests, its dark and dreadful character relegated to the background of the Hellenic mythology.—Polytheism

followed Pantheism. Olympus, image of the federation of the Greek cities, is a sort of republic very weakly governed by the father of the gods, Jupiter, who himself obeys the decrees of Destiny.

Destiny is impersonal; it is inevitability itself, the irresistible force of things, before which all must bend, men and Gods. Moreover, among these Gods, created by the poets, none is absolute; each represents only one side, one part, either of man, or of nature in general, without for all that ceasing to be concrete and living Beings.—They complement one another and together form an ensemble which is very lively, very gracious, and above all very human.

There is nothing somber in this religion, the theology of which was invented by the poets, each adding freely some God or some new dogma, according to the needs of the Greek cities, each of which had the honor of having its tutelary divinity, representing its collecting spirit. This was not the religion of individuals, but of the collectivity of the citizens as much as homelands restrained and partially free, linked moreover among themselves more or less by a sort of federation, very imperfectly organized and very weak.

Of all the religious cults that history shows us this was certainly the least theological, the least serious, the least divine, and for those very reasons the least destructive, the one which least hinders the free development of human society.—The multiplicity of Gods roughly equal in power was by itself a guarantee against absolutism; persecuted by some, one could seek protection among the others, and the evil caused by one God found its compensation in the good produced by another. So there is not in the Greek mythology that logically as well as morally monstrous contradiction, the Good and Evil, Beauty and Ugliness, Goodness and Malice, hate and love, find themselves concentrated in one single person, like that inevitably present in the one God of Monotheism.

We find that monstrosity entirely in the God of the Jews and Christians. It was a necessary consequence of divine unity; and indeed, that unity once accepted, how can we explain the coexistence of Good and Evil? The ancient Persians had at least imagined two God: one of Light and Good, Ohrmazd; the other of evil and darkness, Ahriman; thus it was natural that they would combat one another, as good and evil combat and prevail in turn in nature and in society. But how to explain that one and the same Good, almighty, all truth, all love, all Beauty, could give birth to Evil, hatred, ugliness, and falsehood?

In order to resolve that contradiction, the Jewish and Christian theologies have had recourse to the most revolting and senseless inventions.—First they would attribute all evil to Satan. But where did Satan come from? Is he, like Ahriman, the equal of God? Not at all. Like all the rest of the creation, he is the work of God.—So it was God who engendered evil.—No, respond the theologians, Satan was first an angel of light, and it was only after his revolt against God that he became the angel of the darkness.—But if revolt is an evil—which is very doubtful, and we believe on the contrary that it is a good, since without it we would never have social emancipation—if it constitutes a crime, who created the possibility of this evil? Good, undoubtedly, the same theologians will respond, but he has only made evil possible in order to allow to angels, as to men, free will; and what is free will? It is the faculty of choosing between good and evil, and of deciding spontaneously either for one or for the other. But in order that angels and men could choose evil, that they could decide on evil, it is necessary that evil exist independent of them, and who could have given it existence, if not God?

Also, claim the theologians, after the fall of Satan, which preceded that of man, God, no doubt enlightened by that experiment, not wanting the other angels to follow the fatal example of Satan, deprived them of free will, leaving them only their faculty for good, so that from then on they

were necessarily virtuous and no longer imagined any happiness but to serve eternally as lackeys to this terrible lord.

However, it appears that God was not sufficiently informed by his first experiment, since, after the fall of Satan, he created man, and through blindness or malice, did not fail to grant him this fatal gift of free will which had doomed Satan and which should doom him as well.

The fall of man, as well as that of Satan, was inevitable, since it had been determined, for all Eternity, in the divine prescience. Moreover, without going so far, we take the liberty of observing that the simple experience of an honest father would have prevented the good God from subjecting these unfortunate first men to the notorious temptation. The simplest father knows very well that it is enough to forbid children from touching a thing in order for an invincible instinct of curiosity to absolutely force them to touch it. So if he loves his children and if he is really just and good, won't he spare them this test, as useless as it is cruel?

God had neither that reason, nor that goodness, nor that justice, and although he knew in advance that Adam and Eve must succumb to the temptation, no sooner was the fault committed, than he let himself be carried away by a truly divine wrath. He was not content to curse the disobedient wretches; he cursed all their descendants until the end of time, vowing hellish torments for billions of people who were obviously innocent, since they had not even been born with the fault was committed.—He did not even content himself with cursing men, but cursed with them all of nature, his one creation, that he himself had found so well made.

If a father had acted in this same way, wouldn't we declare him stark raving mad? How then have the theologians dared to attribute to their God what they would have found absurd, cruel, and dishonorable on the part of a man. Ah! It is because they need that absurdity! How then would they have explained the existence of evil in this World which should have emerged perfect from the hands of so perfect a worker, of this World created by God himself?

But once the fall of man is accepted, all the difficulties are smoothed over and all the complexities are explained. The claim it, at least. Nature, perfect at first, becomes suddenly imperfect, the whole apparatus is thrown out of gear; the primitive harmony is succeeded by the disordered clash of forces; the peace which reigned at first among all the species of animals, gives place to a terrifying carnage, to a mutual devouring; and man, the king of nature, surpasses it in ferocity.—The earth become the vale of blood and tears., and the law of Darwin—the pitiless, terrible struggle for existence—triumphs in nature and in society. Evil overwhelms Good, and Satan smothers God.

And all of that because the first two humans, disobeying the Lord and allowing themselves to be seduced by the serpent, had dared to taste the forbidden fruit!

And such ineptitude, in a fable as ridiculous, revolting, and monstrous, has been seriously repeated by great doctors of theology, for more than fifteen centuries, and still is repeated today: more than that, it is officially, compulsorily taught in all the schools of Europe. What must we think of the human race after that? And aren't those a thousand times right who claim that we betray even today our very close kinship with the gorilla?

But the mind of the Christian theologians does not stop there. In the fall of man and in its consequences, as disastrous for nature as for himself, they have worshipped the manifestation of divine justice. Then they recalled that God was not only justice, but that he was also absolute love, and to reconcile one with the other here is what they have invented:

After having left that poor humanity for thousands of years in the grip of his terrible curse, which had the consequence of dooming billions of human beings to eternal torture, he felt love

reawaken within him. So what did he do? Did he withdraw the unfortunate torture victims from hell? No, not at all; that would have been contrary to his eternal justice. But he had an only son; how and why he had him is one of those profound mysteries that the theologians, who have given it to me, declare impenetrable, which is a naturally handy manner of getting out of the situation and resolving all the difficulties. So, this father full of love, in his supreme wisdom, decided to send this only son to earth, so that he could be killed by men, in order to save, not the generations passed, nor even the generations to come, but among these last, as the Gospel itself declares, and as the church, whether catholic or protestant, repeats each day, only a very small number of the Elect.

And now the course is opened; it is, as we said above, a sort of scramble, a steeplechase, an *every man for himself*, for those who would save their souls. Here the Catholics and Protestants divide: the first claiming that we enter paradise only with the special permission of the holy father, the Pope; the protestants affirming on their side that the immediate and direct grace of the Good God alone opens its gates.—That serious disputes still continues today; we will not get mixed up in it.

Let us summarize the Christian doctrine in a few words.

There is one God: an absolute, eternal, infinite, all-powerful being, he is absolute omniscience, truth, justice, Beauty, Happiness, Love and Good. In him everything is infinitely great; outside of him is Void. He is, in the final account, Being itself, the Unique Being.

But here is the Void,—which, as a result, appears to have a separate existence, outside of him—which implies a contradiction and an absurdity, since God existing everywhere, filling infinite space with his being, nothing, not even the Void can exist outside of him, which suggests that the Void of which the Bible speaks to us was in God, that is to say that it was the divine Being himself who was the Void.—From that Void God created the world.

This itself raises a question: was the creation accomplished for all eternity, or else at a given moment in eternity? In the first case, it is eternal as God himself and cannot have been created, by God or by anyone; for the idea of the creation implies the precedence of the creator to the creature.—Like all the other theological ideas, the idea of the creation is an entirely human idea, taken in practice from human society.—Thus the watchmaker creates a watch, the architect a house, etc. In every case the producer exists before the product, apart from the product, and this is what principally constitutes the imperfection, the relative and, as it were, dependent character of both producer and product.

But theology, as it has always done, by the way, has taken that idea and that very human fact of production, and applied it to its God, extending it to the infinite and making it exceed, thereby, its natural proportions, it has made of it an imagination as monstrous as absurd.

So if the creation is eternal, it is not creation. The world has not been created by God, consequently there is an existence and a development independent of him—the Eternity of the World is the very negation of God—God being essentially the God-Creator.

So the world is no longer eternal.—There was a period in Eternity when it did not exist.—So there passed a whole Eternity during which God, absolute, almighty, and infinite, was not a Creator-God, or was only so potentially, but not in fact.

What wasn't he? What that by a caprice on his part, or did he need to develop to arriver in the end at the actual power to create?

These are unfathomable mysteries, say the theologians.—They are absurdities dreamed up by yourselves, we respond. You being by inventing the absurd, then you impose it on us as a divine, unfathomable mystery, more profound as it is more absurd.

It is always the same process.

Credo quem absurdum est.

Another question: was the creation, as it came from the hands of God, perfect? If it was not, if could not be the creation of God, for the worker, the Gospel itself says, is judged according to the perfection of his work. An imperfect creation would necessarily suppose an imperfect creator. So the creation was perfect.

But if it was perfect, it could not have been created by anyone; for the idea of absolute perfection excludes any idea of dependence or even of relation. Apart from it nothing could exist. If the world is perfect, God cannot exist.

The creation, respond the theologians, was certainly perfect, but only in relation to all that nature or men can produce, not in relation to God. It was no doubt perfect, but not as perfect as God.

We respond once more that this idea of perfection does not allow of degrees, like the idea of the infinite or that of the absolute.—There can neither be more of it nor less. Perfection is one. If then the creation was less perfect than the creator, it would be imperfect. And thus we would come back to saying that God, Creator of an imperfect world, is only an imperfect creator—that would be once again the negation of God.

We see that every manner of the existence of God is incompatible with that of the world. But as the World exists, God cannot be.—Let us move on.

So this perfect God created a more or less imperfect world. He created it in a given moment of Eternity, capriciously and no doubt to relieve his majestic solitude. Otherwise, why would he have created it? These are unfathomable mysteries, cry the theologians. Insufferable nonsense, we reply to them.

But the Bible itself explains to us the motives for the creation. God is an essentially vain Being: he has created the heavens and earth in order to be praised and worshipped by them. Others maintain that the creation was the effect of his infinite love—For whom? For a world, for beings that did not exist, or that existed at first only in his idea, that is to say always for him—[the manuscript stops here]

[Working translation by Shawn P. Wilbur]

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