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LAMENNAIS AND BAZARD.

PHILOSOPHIES OF THE HISTORY OF CATHOLIC TRADITIONALISM
IN FRANCE AND OF SAINT-SIMONIANISM

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"Modern socialism," Engels explained in his essay, *Socialism Utopian and Scientific*, "appears originally as a more logical extension of the principles laid down by the great French philosophers of the eighteenth century."¹ Most historians of socialism would tend to agree with Engels.

That the French Revolution and its political philosophy were decisive in the development of modern socialism is beyond question. It is only in the post-revolutionary, post-Napoleonic world that socialism emerged from intellectual systems, in which it had existed since Plato, to become a mass movement trying to set its ideas into practice. The demand for economic justice for all is closely interwoven with the democratic demands of the Revolution. It should not be forgotten that the major socialist systems of early nineteenth century France and Germany were conceived during the aftermath of the Revolution and before the impact of industrialization had made itself felt. Within the socialist movements, which had their origin between the Revolution and 1848, we may distinguish two general trends: One of the trends marks much of French and British (Fourier, Proudhon, Owen, etc.) attempts to combine the achievement of social justice, of equal opportunity, and of a relative equality of wealth with the liberation of the individual from political tutelage. Fourier and Proudhon envisaged the elimination of capitalism and of competition by means of co-operative, voluntary associations independent of the state and democratically controlled. On the other hand, for the disciples of Saint-Simon, although not Saint-Simon himself, and for the German socialists from Weitling and Rodbertus to Marx and Lasalle, this demand for economic justice was to be achieved through the subordination of all social efforts to organized collectivity. Interestingly enough, these totalitarian socialists saw their intellectual ancestry not in the democratic absolutism of Rousseau or Robespierre but rather in the counter-revolutionary, organic theories of the early nineteenth century. Hegel, the official philosopher of Prussian absolutism in the post-1815 age--for whom the state, encompassing all of society, constituted the final demand of reason in history--marked the point of departure from the concept of society and the philosophy of history of Marx and Engels.

What Hegel was for Marx, the Catholic Restoration traditionalists (de Maistre, Bonald, and Lamennais) were in many ways for the Saint-Simonians. Like the Marxists, the Saint-Simonians attempted to transform an anti-liberal social philosophy in defense of the *status quo* into a dynamic, revolutionary philosophy. The political theories of the Restoration traditionalists, of which those of de Maistre and Lamennais had the strongest influence on the Saint-Simonians, arose as a reaction to the events of the French Revolution and the political principles upon which it was based. These political principles, the outcome of what de Maistre and Lamennais (in an oversimplified way) termed the "philosophy of the eighteenth century," in the opinion of Lamennais and de Maistre rested upon a fallacy concerning human nature. The "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" was based on the presupposition that there was an automatic harmony operating between the dictates of individual reason and social welfare. The law of nature which posited the natural rights of man was a universal, perennial norm of social organization which could be universally discovered by rational beings regardless of their social *milieu* or historical position. Only institutions which were the results of deliberative, rational action were held to be normative, while those based on history and social forces tended to violate the natural state of society. From this, liberal and even democratic implications such as the equality of men as rational beings, the origin of society in the deliberative action of rational beings, the limitations of the powers of government to the protection of the natural rights of the

individual, were drawn. Against the conception of the rational individual as a responsible and decisive agent in history, Restoration traditionalism posited the supremacy of historical forces and the vanity of abstract political ideals which were derived from transcendent norms rather than from concrete social realities. The attack on natural law philosophy by de Maistre and Lamennais was carried out actually in the name of an empirical rationalism which pointed out that the objective observation of society found nowhere universal and perennial laws of society and human rights, but merely positive laws and concrete social situations.

The interest of an analysis of the conservative influence on the Saint-Simonians lies in the fact that through the merger of the revolutionary idea of the emancipation of the masses and the concern with social justice of all with the conservative, anti-liberal conception of society, there came into being a totalitarian conception of the state which, in several aspects, foreshadowed the totalitarianism of Left and Right in the twentieth century.

The Social Basis of History. For the Catholic traditionalists, society was prior to the individual. The individual was conditioned in his actions and in his knowledge by the forces within which he had his existence. His knowledge of society derived not from *a priori* reasoning but from tradition. Every political event was deeply interwoven with all aspects of society and was the result of tradition.

De Maistre stressed this in his concept of the constitution which he believed could not be an isolated, abstract description of the political system but was rather the sum of forces operating in society.² Written principles could only be abstractions isolated from the total organism of society.

Bazard, the main author of the *Doctrine de Saint-Simon* which attempted to systematize the philosophy of history of Saint-Simon, also conceived of society as an organism. Aware of the work of de Maistre and Lamennais, Bazard held that the task of the social thinker included the positivistic observation of the forces functioning in society. Humanity was a collective being and history was social physiology.³ Every society was a totality, consisting of the interaction of these three modes of activity: science, industry, and the fine arts. Every event, deed, or institution had meaning only within the framework of the particular society.

Not only were all aspects of society interrelated, but each society formed a system possessing a peculiar character. The peculiar character of the society rested upon an idea, a fundamental belief, which expressed itself systematically in the society and expressed itself in its institutions and its ideological and artistic articulations. Without the affirmation of a basic belief, society disintegrated. Lamennais denoted this underlying idea by the Catholic term, "doctrine." While the doctrine had its intellectual expression insofar as it was consciously held by the members of the society, it was at the same time more fundamental than conscious affirmation. In the final analysis, the doctrine was the religion of the society and society was basically irrational.⁴ Similarly for the Saint-Simonians, every society had to rest upon what they termed a "general doctrine" or a "general idea." There had been no more philosophic doctrines than there had been general states of mankind.⁵ Only as long as a society rested on a general idea could it be "organic;" otherwise it became "critical," ceased to be a true society, became chaotic and atomistic in every aspect, from its means of production and distribution to its methods of scientific research.

Classification of Historical Epochs. Societies as defined above by both schools as systems integrating all human relationships on the basis of one principle were classified into two types, each of which recurred throughout history. This classification proceeded by differentiating the basic principles underlying societies into two types, one conducive to the total organization of society into an organic unit, the other tending to destroy social coherence. Both schools distinguished between an authoritarian and a libertarian type of society. The first type, representing the authoritarian consequences of the organic view of society expounded above, was based on the belief that all aspects of society must be subordinated to one idea and one authority, while the second type, that of the libertarian society, denied the exclusively organic nature of society.

For Lamennais the true society was the authoritarian, religious society. It realized that unity was the essence of order. Its fundamental doctrine was accepted by faith; its method of inquiry based on the acceptance of truth by faith was religious in an antiphilosophic sense. Its social structure was hierarchical. In order that there should be unity, each part was to be ordained with reference to the whole, each individual to the family, each profession in reference to society, society in reference to the religious order. In it there must be the sacrifice of the individual's interest to the interest of all. The authoritarian state took cognizance of the sinful and antisocial nature of man, incurred in the Fall, feeling that lack of authority would result in the dissolution of society and the war of all against all. The true society was the hereditary monarchy, resting on a religious foundation and ruling in co-operation with the religious hierarchy and obeying the authority of religion and of God's vicar, the Pope.⁶

Bazard called the authoritarian states of society the "organic epochs." Organic epochs were marked by the ideas of "legitimacy, sovereignty, and authority."⁷ The mode of knowledge was religious rather than philosophical, and the goal of social activity was clearly defined. There was close integration among all three modes of human activity--science, industry, and the fine arts--which stood in the service of a common social ideal. As in the Catholic state, society was ruled by a hierarchy⁸ which tried to achieve the total integration of society. The spirit of unity was extended from the political to the industrial, scientific, and artistic spheres, in the belief of the social utility of property and science and the prophetic, social character of art.

As against the authoritarian, organic state, there existed the liberal society. Both Lamennais and Bazard viewed the liberal society as possessing a negative character. In the final analysis, liberalism was for them not a principle of society, but the denial of organic society. Bazard named the liberal periods "critical epochs," to indicate their negative character. In contrast to the organic epochs which were essentially religious in character, the critical epochs were philosophic.⁹ They were periods of social disorganization in which all social bonds were scrutinized by human reason. The fundamental sentiment of such periods was egoism, the expression of individualistic interests. Lack of organization and planning marked every aspect of society. The integration of the sciences, industry, and the arts broke down because each now served particular rather than total social interests. The hierarchy of the capable--of the functionaries of society--was destroyed by the force of vested interest. The spirit of pacific association was replaced by antagonism. Disunity and antagonism expressed themselves in the factualism of science, the lack of planning and co-operation in scientific research, and in economic competition.

The Evaluation of Modern Society. For both the Catholic traditionalists and for the Saint-Simonians, the modern age occupied a precarious place in history as a libertarian, nonorganic period. For Lamennais, modern society had its roots in the Reformation.¹⁰ The Reformation marked the return to the ancient skeptical philosophy. The principle of examination had been substituted for that of authority. The secularization of the culture meant a growing relativism in respect to social values. The Saint-Simonians praised Lamennais for having understood the crisis of the modern society which had lost its common ideals.¹¹ They extended this critique to an analysis of disorganization in the various spheres of French life. Modern France, according to Bazard, presented a society in the post-Revolutionary phase of the critical period in which the spirit of the Revolution had been institutionalized.¹² Industry was marked by lack of planning, exploitation of the workers, competition. The laissez-faire economy rested upon the belief that personal interest was in harmony with social welfare, a belief that had been disproved in Bazard's mind by the several commercial crises in England and France in the 1810's and 1820's. The tools of production were considered not as social functions but as the private property of hereditary owners. The results were inefficiency and the exploitation of the working class.¹³ Science bore the typical mark of the critical period: the almost exclusive use of the empirical method in place of general philosophical conceptions and individual research with particular industrial purposes rather than systematic research in connection with the total productive effort of society.¹⁴ Art had lost its socioreligious purpose and was considered merely as a recreation.¹⁵

Significance of Social Change. Both Catholic traditionalists and Saint-Simonian philosophers of progress agreed that history rested upon a wide social basis and that the organic structure of society must be taken into account by the philosopher of history. It was in their conception of the relationship of the ultimate state of human society to historical change that they differed.

In any final sense, mankind could, of course, not reach perfection upon earth for Lamennais and de Maistre as Catholics. Harmonic societies for them were all those which rested upon the Catholic idea of authority and in which the traditional forces were accepted as true.¹⁶ There was thus a natural harmony between the true state of society and history insofar as only traditional states could be organic while revolution had to preclude an organic state. The meaning of history for the Catholic traditionalists might, therefore, be summed up thus: Whatever was traditional, i. e. historical, was true; whatever denied the historical was error.

For the Saint-Simonians, on the other hand, history, instead of justifying existing conditions, was rather constantly transforming the existing conditions toward perfection. History for Bazard was the course of the total integration of man into a social organism. It postulated the law of the constant decrease of antagonism as the underlying force in society and the constant growth of association.¹⁷ Universal association, the final outcome of history, was understood as the subjection of all social and personal activities to social direction. The evolution of total society did not take place, however, in a straight line. History developed as a dialectic and represented the collective human struggle to overcome the inner contradictions in society. Progress was achieved through a series of alternating organic and critical periods. The latter served a historical function in annihilating the principles of the past order that had become obsolete but ultimately had to give way to a new organic society. With the French Revolution, liberalism had fulfilled its historical function. The task was now to rebuild society on the framework which the destructive work of the critical epoch and the French Revolution had prepared. Mankind, according to the Saint-Simonians, stood before the moment of decision because of the social unrest which the culture of liberalism had created. The coming social revolution would bring the universal recognition of the principles which the study of history had recognized as the destiny of human society. It was here that the totally-organized and hierarchically-administered state would commence. The exploitation of man by man would end and the full exploitation of the globe begin. Any further social crises would be impossible because mankind would have reached its destiny and society would have come to the end of its provisional and preparatory state.¹⁸

The contribution of conservative political theory to Saint-Simonianism is clear from the above. From it Saint-Simonianism derived its conception of society as an all-extending organism, the concepts of the natural inequality among men and of the identity of state and society in normative periods. From here derived, too, the prejudice of the Saint-Simonians against such political institutions as the rights of man and the citizen and parliamentary government. But Saint-Simonianism is evidently not exhausted by the conservative idea. This idea became radical through its merger with certain phases of enlightenment and revolutionary thought although not with the basic conception of the state and of society of the French revolutionaries. From the Revolution, the Saint-Simonians inherited their concern for the masses. Saint-Simonianism saw politics not as the concern of a small aristocratic elite but as a concern of the masses. The basic aim of all political action was to be the welfare of the masses, the "most rapid amelioration of the physical, material, and moral welfare of the poorest and most numerous class." Government had to rest upon the will of the people but this consent gave rise neither to an electoral regime which, according to the Saint-Simonians, would enslave the competent minority to the incompetent majority,¹⁹ nor to the formation of social policy by public opinion. Public opinion was rather to be educated by the state and would automatically concur with the decisions of the leaders of the state, the superior men who acted in the interest of the people. At the head of the state was to stand the *grand homme*, the great man or living symbol, who emerged not from the ballot box but presented himself to the masses and governed through his charismatic qualities.²⁰ From the eighteenth century and the Revolution, Saint-Simonianism also inherited the attempt deliberately to subject nature and society to human rea-

son. But while reason for the *philosophes* was an epistemological guide to universal social truth, "substantial reason," as K. Mannheim would call it, reason for the Saint-Simonians was merely "functional reason," a neutral instrument to total social planning. The organic society was ultimately one in which not only the relation between superiors and inferiors was regularized and the legitimate rulers restored, as for de Maistre and Lamennais, but one in which all phases of social and personal behavior were subjected to planning. The religion of the Saint-Simonians, often misunderstood as vague mysticism, sensualism, or neo-Catholicism, provides the key to their radical totalitarianism by setting all social reality within God and identifying the hierarchical church with the state. The essence of religion was contained in its being a link between man and society rather than in its conception of the deity.²¹ Medieval Catholicism through its hierarchy constituted the truest religion yet, but it was incomplete in excluding from the hierarchy the realm of Caesar, the socio-economic world.²² Because religion, morality, and society were fused in this system, religious ethics in the traditional Judaeo-Christian sense lost their position of independence and consequently the character of independent sanctions as did the appeals against the constituted powers on the basis of natural rights and conscience. All spheres of cultural activity thus became subject to political control. This control was to be vested in the hands of a hierarchy of the capable, a bureaucracy of experts, equally open to all citizens on the basis of merit. Three hierarchical structures were to be established, each to be guided by a general priest--the industrial and the scientific priest being subordinated to the general or religious priest.²³ The task of the general priest was to see to it that the basic philosophy of the society was applied to all aspects of human behavior. This basic doctrine was not known through reason but rather became revealed to the leadership through intuition when the historical moment had become ripe.²⁴ The scientist could only confirm this doctrine or discover details of nature. It was not his task to discover the fundamental social truths. The task of the general hierarchy, in addition to the regulation of the other two, extended to the spheres of art in the widest sense and to education. Art rather than being concerned with the recreation of the aesthetic for its own sake stood in the service of society, had to have a social content, and was to popularize the basic doctrines of the society.²⁵ The Saint-Simonian state was not to be understood as a mechanical despotism based upon force but rather as a family, an organic unit, in which the inferiors and superiors were bound by a feeling of comradeship, as in the army. For the anomalous situation in which the charismatic appeal of the rulers did not suffice, the courts and penal institutions were retained.²⁶ The absolutism of the state was reflected in the demand for the abolition of jury trials and lawyers, since true justice could be meted out only by superiors who had greater insight than the tried.²⁷ The totalitarianism of the state became evident in the provision for industrial, scientific, and artistic courts to deal with crimes in those spheres. The prisons, rather than being penitentiaries, were to be regarded as reeducation centers in which the criminal against society was to be readjusted industrially, scientifically, or artistically to the doctrines and functions of society.²⁸

It should be evident from the above that the socialism of the Saint-Simonians was basically different from the extension of democratic principles to the problems of an industrial society and went far beyond the conception of society of the Restoration counter-revolutionaries in authoritarianism and totalitarianism. The social philosophy of the Saint-Simonians foreshadowed basic components of the practice of twentieth century totalitarianism of the Right as well as of the Left. In Fascism, too, a conservative doctrine of the state, which emerged as a defense against the forces of the revolution in the early nineteenth century, has merged with the appeal to the masses and the use of planning reason to apply a basically-irrational doctrine to all aspects of society. The practice of contemporary Bolshevism recognized the need for the present, at least, of inequalities in distribution and of hierarchical control. For both Fascism and Bolshevism, the state became the supreme reality and not only economics and politics but all phases of cultural life were subordinated to the fundamental political and philosophical ideology. In Fascism as well as in Bolshevik practice, even if not Communist theory, there emerged the concepts of the charismatic ruler and the organic nation. It is, therefore, not surprising that Mussolini held the Saint-Simonians in high esteem. The arguments against liberal democracy in Mussolini's article, "The Doctrine of Fas-

cism,"²⁹ in the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, while probably indirectly influenced by the Saint-Simonians, resembled strongly the attacks of the Saint-Simonians on the abstract equality of voters, the confusions of parliamentarianism, and the rule of the unable majority. It may not be entirely unjustified to say that in important aspects Soviet practice is more in accord with Saint-Simonian than with orthodox Marxist theory, which held to a basic equality among the working class and the ultimate abolition of coercion. That the Soviets are sensing this, at least, becomes apparent in the "Introduction" by V. P. Volgin to the post-World War II Russian translation of the *Doctrine de Saint-Simon*, published by the Academy of Science of the U.S.S.R.³⁰ Volgin, unlike earlier Marxist writers, sharply distinguished between the doctrines of Saint-Simon and of his disciples and stressed the authoritarian elements in the political doctrines of the latter, although judging their system in the end as an autocracy of the intelligentsia sharply to be distinguished from Soviet proletarian "democracy."³¹ In two important points, Volgin deviated from the orthodox interpretation of the Saint-Simonians as utopian socialists set forth by Engels in *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*. Volgin saw the main contribution of the Saint-Simonians to scientific socialism in their recognition of the need of inequality within a socialist community, since a state which would not recompense on the basis of merit would undermine the very spirit of equality.³² While Engels had seen in Saint-Simon (not to be confused with his disciples) a forerunner of the "scientific" socialist principle of the withering away of the state,³³ Volgin termed "utopian" any socialist theory which held that social co-operation was possible on the basis of voluntary assent and neglected "the inner organized social force which appears in the scientific communism of the proletariat."³⁴

¹Frederick Engels, *Socialism Utopian and Scientific* (New York: International Publishers, 1935), p. 31.

²Joseph de Maistre, "Essai sur le principe generateur," *Oeuvres* (Lyon: Vitte & Perrusse, 1884). I, 235ff.

³*Doctrine de Saint-Simon. Exposition. Premiere Annee, 1829*, ed. C. Bougle and E. Halevy (Paris: Librairie des Sciences Politiques et Morales, Marcel Riviere, 1924), pp. 160f.

⁴H. F. de Lamennais, *Essai sur l'indifference en matiere de religion* (Paris, n.d.), I, 30, 35ff.

⁵*Doctrine*, p. 126.

⁶Lamennais, *Essai*, I, 262ff.

⁷*Doctrine*, p. 196.

⁸Henri de Saint-Simon, Prosper Enfantin, et al., *Oeuvres de Saint-Simon et d'Enfantin* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1865-78), XLII, 321ff.

⁹*Doctrine*, p. 199.

¹⁰Lamennais, *De la religion considerée dans ses rapports avec l'ordre politique et civile* (Paris, 1826), p. 96.

¹¹*Globe* (Paris), January 1, 1831.

¹²*Doctrine*, pp. 129ff.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 137ff.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 131ff.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 142ff.

¹⁶Lamennais, *Essai*, I, 32.

¹⁷*Doctrine*, pp. 161ff.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 221.

¹⁹*Organisateur* (Paris), November 29, 1829.

²⁰*Globe* (Paris), March 23, 1832.

²¹Eugene Rodrigues, "Letters," *Nouveau Christianisme* (Paris, 1832), p. 138.

²²*Oeuvres de Saint-Simon et d'Enfantin*, XLII, 265ff.

²³*Ibid.*, XLII, 321ff.

²⁴*Doctrine*, p. 190.

²⁵Cf. Emile Barrault, *Aux artistes* (Paris, 1830).

²⁶Cf. "Seance XII," *Doctrine*, pp. 367ff.

²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 387ff.

²⁸*Globe* (Paris), September 13, 1831.

²⁹For an English translation, see *Great Political Thinkers*, ed. William Ebenhaus (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1951), pp. 590-599.

³⁰*Izlozhenie ucheniya Sen-Simona*, transl. M.E. Landau (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSR, 1947). Introduction by V. P. Volgin.

³¹*Ibid.*, pp. 49f.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 38

³³Engels, p. 38.

³⁴*Izlozhenie*, p. 46.