

**Claude-Henri Saint-Simon**  
**Physiology Applied to the Improvement of Social Institutions:**  
**Supplementary Notes\***

The idle man is a burden upon himself, just as he is a weight upon society.

Idleness is the father of all vices,

Idleness constitutes a state of sickness in man.

Thus, according to the principles of politics and morals, as well as those of physiology and hygiene, the legislator must create a social organisation calculated to encourage all classes to do work, particularly the work most useful to society.

Social organisation at present, which accords the highest degree of respect to idleness and to the kind of work that is least useful to society, is thus essentially and radically defective.

The nobles first of all, then the bourgeoisie, are the two most respected classes. But their work is the least useful to society, and it is in these classes that the greatest number of idlers are to be found. .

The direction of society's interests is entrusted chiefly to the nobles, and after them to the rich bourgeoisie.

This political arrangement is monstrous, since the nobles and the bourgeoisie are precisely the classes which contribute least to national prosperity, are inevitably ignorant of the means needed to increase society's well-being, and, finally, have an interest in opposing the rapid development of industry, which tends to increase the respect accorded to workers and diminish that given to idlers.

The defect of the present social organisation is all the greater, in that the very basis of the system leads workers to aspire to enter or enable their children to enter the class of idlers; so that the whole of the present population is incited to use its maximum energy in seeking to enter a state of idleness . . .

Physiological observations have shown that societies as well as individuals are subject to two moral forces of equal intensity and acting alternately: one is the force of habit, the other the force that is born of the desire for new sensations.

After a certain time, habits inevitably become bad, because they were acquired in circumstances which no longer correspond to society's needs. It is then that the need for something new is felt, and that need, which amounts to a true revolutionary situation, inevitably lasts until the social order has been changed in accordance with the level of civilisation. Once it has been suitably reorganised, new habits are contracted, and the force of habit again becomes dominant.

The European population has been dominated by the revolutionary force since the fifteenth century, and this force will continue to dominate until a social system radically different from the theological and feudal system has been established in its place. To check the action of the revolutionary force, the first need was to conceive and present clearly the social system appropriate to the present level of enlightenment. That first operation has now been completed.

Space for Notes



It is clear that in the system which will overcome the force of revolution, the most important influence must be that of men with peaceful occupations and habits, and that the ablest of these men ought to be in charge of national interests-Now, the ablest men, since it is their work that contributes most to social prosperity, are the artists, scientists, and industrials . . .

Whenever a man or a society has passionately adopted the wrong course, it is not the language of reason that must be used to lead the man or society on to the right road, it is the language of passion.

There are only two ways of passing from a state of exaltation to a state of calm: by achieving the aim that has aroused one's passions, or by recognising the impossibility of achieving that aim. But it is fairly easy to pass from a badly directed enthusiasm to a beneficial one.

During the Revolution the French nation often went astray, although at the beginning its passions were directed to the public good. It was guilty of many acts diametrically opposed to morality, physiology, public hygiene, and most injurious to its interests.

As a result of the Revolution the French nation became accustomed to strong feelings. So, the Government acts in an entirely anti-physiological manner when it tries to make the nation more reasonable without allowing it to achieve the goal that has aroused its passions.

It is not to apathy that the French nation needs to be subjected.

All its citizens must be stirred to work as energetically as possible for the progress and applications of the sciences and the fine arts; and it is not under the direction of the nobility, to whom the greatest respect is paid and to whom almost exclusively the direction of public interests is entrusted, that the fine arts, the sciences, and industry can rise to the greatest heights of which they are capable, for nobody strives passionately for a subordinate position.

Physiologists have observed that the moral and physical forces of society act and react on each other, so that a great physical disturbance experienced by a nation is always followed by great moral productions, and conversely a great moral ferment always leads to great physical effort.

And in fact, it was after the physical crisis of the Fronde 9' that the great men appeared who gave the century of Louis XIV its glory.

Shortly after the English Revolution, Milton, Newton, and Locke published their immortal works.

The philosophers of the eighteenth century underwent and produced a great ferment; and it was the excitement they aroused in everybody's mind that caused the Revolution and set in motion all the physical forces of the French nation.

The physical activity of the French nation has lost its former excitement, and has taken a more measured road, that of industrial labour. After physical efforts as prodigious as those of the French nation during the last forty years, moral productions of the greatest importance can, must be expected. Thus, there should be nothing surprising in the appearance of a new system of social organisation, a system which will respect religion and vanquish superstition, a system which will

strengthen the monarchy while nevertheless destroying all rights originally based on conquest, that is, on the law of the strongest.

According to the observations of physiologists, peoples experience two kinds of political need which are quite distinct: they also possess two kinds of means for satisfying these needs.

One part of these needs and means is common to all peoples. These common needs and means are derived directly from the organisation of the human race and from its general tendency to improve its social system.

To satisfy these general and common needs, different peoples can employ only the same means. It is through moral exaltation and reasoning that they can achieve their aim; it is the capacity of the artists combined with that of the scientists that must produce new principles, demonstrate their superiority over those adopted by previous generations; and bring about their adoption by the present generation.

Every people also has different secondary needs and means, peculiar to itself, which have as their cause or foundation the nature of the soil and the climate in which it lives, its geographical position, and the habits it has acquired.

We shall limit ourselves for the moment to applying this observation to the two peoples which are unquestionably the most enlightened and the most advanced in practical civilisation, that is, we shall consider first together and then separately the English and French nations.

Since the fifteenth century, the period in which the human mind made its greatest effort to move towards things of direct and positive utility, the English and French nations have been the two peoples which have worked most consistently and energetically for the improvement of their social existence and the establishment of a political system organised directly for the public good.

Let us look at the political conduct of these two peoples.

We shall examine separately the individual efforts of each of them, and shall then say what has been common to their work in the field of politics.

Let us speak first of the particular efforts made by the English nation to free itself from the theological and feudal yoke.

In order to rid themselves of the theological yoke, the English made their King head of the Anglican Church.

In order to make the feudal yoke which they continued to bear less burdensome and less painful, the English forced their lords to exercise their governmental action only in combination with the commons in Parliament.

In France, in order to achieve the same aim in respect of theology, the people acted on behalf of royal power against papal power. Since the fifteenth century they have refused to recognise papal bulls unless they have been given royal sanction.

In order to curtail feudal powers and to prepare the complete destruction of the nobility, the French people became royalist and supported the efforts of kings to abolish all sovereign rights in the hands of the nobles.

Independently of these particular efforts made by the English and French nations to rid themselves of theological and feudal supremacy, the philosophers of these two nations worked together towards the same end.

Their work consisted of scientific research which sought to establish a new political theory, quite distinct from the theological and feudal theory, a theory which would as far as possible direct the peoples' work towards the improvement of their moral and physical existence.

These theoretical studies have not yet produced clear, positive, and satisfactory results.

The debate on the constitution of spiritual power and its prerogatives began in the fifteenth century. Philosophers have not yet managed to bring about an agreement between Protestants and Catholics. All they have done is to establish a truce between them which must last until the discovery of the principles by which these two Christian sects can be led to adopt the same doctrine.

The debate on the constitution of temporal power and its prerogatives has been vigorous ever since the English Revolution, which gave it a positive character. One of the two parties in that country is called Whigs, the other Tories. In France these two parties have taken the names constitutional royalists and theological and feudal royalists. In France the first of these parties wants the King to entrust the direction of the national interests to the men who have shown the greatest capacity in matters of positive utility. The other maintains that the nation should be directed above all by the clergy and the nobility.

The slow pace of scientific work on the theory of politics has made society tired, and as a result of its weariness it has adopted as a principle the very false idea that politics is by nature a purely practical branch of knowledge, so that in that field theoretical considerations should be seen only as dreams of varying ingenuity.

This error, generally accepted by the mass of the ruled, and especially adopted by the rulers, who have an interest in propagating it, should in no way astonish philosophers; it should not be taken by them as a pretext for working less zealously to fulfil their task. The truth is that it took three centuries of preliminary and preparatory studies to place the human mind in a condition to conceive clearly a new social system. It was only when two great revolutions, those of England and France, had brightened the political horizon with regard to theological beliefs and feudal principles that the eye of the philosopher was able to discover the system of public good.

Now that these two conditions are at last completely fulfilled, philosophy can today begin to speak in clear, firm, and satisfactory language about the social organisation which suits the enlightened peoples of the nineteenth century.

English and French philosophers will now immediately combine their efforts in order to bring about the adoption in England and France of the basic institutions of the social system of public good.

These philosophers will make the practitioners of the two nations aware of the fact that in politics, just as in other sciences, theory and practice must lend each other mutual support. They will point out to them that the experience of England and France, in the course of their revolutions, has clearly shown that the most enthusiastic practitioners, the most energetic revolutionaries, were quite unable to

bring about a radical change in social institutions without the intervention and cooperation of theorists.

Their doctrine will be quite different from the one professed in the eighteenth century by Voltaire, Diderot, d'Alembert, and all the other Encyclopaedists. They will not set themselves the same goal; they will not employ the same means, and will bring about totally contrary results.

The Encyclopaedists of the eighteenth century worked to overthrow the old system. These philosophers will work to establish a new system in harmony with the needs of society in the present state of its enlightenment and civilisation.

Instead of rousing the ruled against the rulers they will show that it is possible, in fact easy, to have persons directing public affairs whose interests are identical with those of the people.

Far from considering religion to be an obstacle to the progress of civilisation, as in the eighteenth century, they will regard Christianity as providing the best weapons with which to fight the prejudices introduced into the minds of the multitude by the Catholic and Anglican clergies. They will remind the faithful that it is chiefly to the Christian religion that men are indebted for the destruction of slavery, and that the spirit of Christianity today urges society towards the establishment of the regime which can improve as quickly as possible the moral and physical existence of the poorest class. Finally, they will show that lay scientists are today, by virtue of their sentiments and their enlightenment, very much better Christians than the professional theologians, and that consequently the clergies of the various Christian sects should be subject to the direction of the body of lay scientists.

The philosophers of the eighteenth century decried monarchy by showing it to be inevitably allied with theology and feudalism; those of the nineteenth century will be essentially royalist, and will show that monarchy must have as its support and close advisers the most distinguished scientists and artists (in the spiritual sphere), and the most important industrials (in the temporal sphere) . . .

Why do doctors at present lead such a pitiful and inferior existence, when among the Greeks that class of scientists enjoyed great respect and exerted a great political influence over the rulers?

What means must doctors employ to recover their former importance?

The answers to those two questions will lead to enormous progress for civilisation. We shall limit ourselves for the moment to giving a first outline of our opinion on the subject.

We say then: As a result of the establishment of Christianity the science of man was divided into two parts. Priests were given special responsibility for the study of spiritual man and the direction of social conduct in the realm of sentiment.

And from that time onwards it was with physical man that doctors were principally concerned. They directed their studies above all towards the preservation of man's material health.

The religions which existed before Christianity were essentially applications of the fine arts.

The study of the science of man was not divided. Doctors cultivated this science to the full, in all its aspects. Hippocrates gave prescriptions for both moral and physical illnesses; he gave them to peoples as well as to individuals.

Now that these facts have been established, and a reasoned judgement has been offered as the basis of our opinion, we shall reply to the first question:

Among the Greeks Hippocrates practised the science of man in all its aspects; this is why he enjoyed such enormous respect, and why he exerted such a great influence over the rulers of his time.

Doctors today are concerned above all only with physical man; and the *subordinate* moral role accorded to them in society is the inevitable result of the *subordination* of the functions they perform in society.

It can be seen that the answer to the second question is to be found in the answer to the first; for it is clear that in order to recover their former importance doctors must again see observations on spiritual or moral man as a part of their province, and they must satisfy society's greatest need at present by giving it, in the form of a medical prescription, the system of social organisation best suited to the present state of its enlightenment and civilization.

(Extracts from *De la physiologie appliquee a l'amelioration des institutions sociales. Continuation, Opin. litt.*, 1825)[*Opin litt.*, pp.246-64, 268-70.]