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Title: Critical Miscellanies (Vol. 2 of 3), Essay 3: Condorcet

Author: John Morley

Release date: February 2, 2008 [eBook #24492]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Paul Murray, René Anderson Benitz and the  
Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

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# CRITICAL MISCELLANIES

BY

JOHN MORLEY

VOL. II.

Essay 3: Condorcet

London

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1905

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## CONDORCET.

Of the illustrious thinkers and writers who for two generations had been actively scattering the seed of revolution in France, only Condorcet survived to behold the first bitter ingathering of the harvest. Those who had sown the wind were no more; he only was left to see the reaping of the whirlwind, and to be swiftly and cruelly swept away by it. Voltaire and Diderot, Rousseau and Helvétius, had vanished, but Condorcet both assisted at the Encyclopædia and sat in the Convention; the one eminent man of those who had tended the tree, who also came in due season to partake of its fruit; at once a precursor, and a sharer in the fulfilment. In neither character has he attracted the goodwill of any of those considerable sections and schools into which criticism of the Revolution has been mainly divided. As a thinker he is roughly classed as an Economist, and as a practical politician he figured first in the Legislative Assembly, and then in the Convention. Now, as a rule, the political parties that have most admired the Convention have had least sympathy with the Economists, and the historians who are most favourable to Turgot and his followers, are usually most hostile to the actions and associations of the great revolutionary chamber successively swayed by a Vergniaud, a Danton, a Robespierre. Between the two, Condorcet's name has been allowed to lie hidden for the most part in a certain obscurity, or else has been covered with those taunts and innuendoes, which partisans are wont to lavish on men of whom they do not know exactly whether they are with or against them.

Generally the men of the Revolution are criticised in blocks and sections, and Condorcet cannot be accurately placed under any of these received schools. He was an Economist, but he was something more; for the most characteristic article in his creed was a passionate belief in the infinite perfectibility of human nature. He was more of a Girondin than a Jacobin, yet he did not always act, any more than he always thought, with the Girondins, and he did not fall when they fell, but was proscribed by a decree specially levelled at himself. Isolation of this kind is assuredly no merit in political action, but it explains the coldness with which Condorcet's memory has been treated; it flowed from some marked singularities both of character and opinion which are of the highest interest, if we consider the position of the man and the lustre of that ever-memorable time. 'Condorcet,' said D'Alembert, 'is a volcano covered with snow.' Said another, less picturesquely: 'He is a sheep in a passion.' 'You may say of the intelligence of Condorcet in relation to his person,' wrote Madame Roland, 'that it is a subtle essence soaked in cotton.' The curious mixture disclosed by sayings like these, of warm impulse and fine purpose with immovable reserve, only shows that he of whom they were spoken belonged to the class of natures which may be called non-conducting. They are not effective, because without this effluence of power and feeling from within, the hearer or onlooker is stirred by no sympathetic thrill. They cannot be the happiest, because consciousness of the inequality between expression and meaning, between the influence intended and the impression conveyed, must be as tormenting as to one who dreams is the vain effort to strike a blow. If to be of this non-conducting temperament is impossible in the really greatest characters, like St. Paul, St. Bernard, or Luther, at least it is no proper object of blame, for it is constantly the companion of lofty and generous aspiration. It was perhaps unfortunate that Condorcet should have permitted

himself to be drawn into a position where his want of that magical quality by which even Marat could gain the sympathies of men, should be so conspicuously made visible. The character of Condorcet, unlike so many of his contemporaries, offers nothing to the theatrical instinct. None the less on this account should we be willing to weigh the contributions which he made to the stock of science and social speculation, and recognise the fine elevation of his sentiments, his noble solicitude for human wellbeing, his eager and resolute belief in its indefinite expansion, and the devotion which sealed his faith by a destiny that was as tragical as any in those bloody and most tragical days.

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## I.

Until the outbreak of the Revolution, the circumstances of Condorcet's life were as little externally disturbed or specially remarkable as those of any other geometer and thinker of the time. He was born at a small town in Picardy, in the year 1743. His father was a cavalry officer, but as he died when his son was only three years old, he could have exerted no influence upon the future philosopher, save such as comes of transmission through blood and tissue. Condillac was his uncle, but there is no record of any intercourse between them. His mother was a devout and trembling soul, who dedicated her child to the Holy Virgin, and for eight years or more made him wear the dress of a little girl, by way of sheltering him against the temptations and unbelief of a vile world. So long as women are held by opinion and usage in a state of educational and political subjection, which prevents the growth of a large intelligence made healthy and energetic by knowledge and by activity, we may expect pious extravagances of this kind. Condorcet was weakened physically by much confinement and the constraint of cumbrous clothing; and not even his dedication to the Holy Virgin prevented him from growing up the most ardent of the admirers of Voltaire. His earliest instructors, as happened to most of the sceptical philosophers, were the Jesuits, then within a few years of their fall. That these adroit men, armed with all the arts and traditions which their order had acquired in three centuries, and with the training of the nation almost exclusively in their hands, should still have been unable to shield their persons from proscription and their creed from hatred, is a remarkable instance how little it avails ecclesiastical bodies to have a monopoly of official education, if the spirit of their teaching be out of harmony with those most potent agencies which we sum up as the spirit of the time. The Jesuits were the great official instructors of France for the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1764 the order was thrust forth from the country, and they left behind them an army of the bitterest enemies that Christianity has ever had. To do them justice, they were destroyed by weapons which they had themselves supplied. The intelligence which they had developed and sharpened, turned inevitably against the incurable faults in their own system. They were admirable teachers of mathematics. Condorcet, instructed by the Jesuits at Rheims, was able when he was only fifteen years old to go through such performances in analysis as to win especial applause from illustrious judges like D'Alembert and Clairaut. It was impossible, however, for Jesuits, as it has ever been for all enemies of movement, to constrain within prescribed limits the activity which has once been effectively stirred. Mathematics has always been in the eyes of the Church a harmless branch of knowledge, but the mental energy that mathematics first touched is sure to turn itself by and by to more complex and dangerous subjects in the scientific hierarchy.

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At any rate, Condorcet's curiosity was very speedily drawn to problems beyond those which geometry and algebra pretend to solve. 'For thirty years,' he wrote in 1790, 'I have hardly ever passed a single day without meditating on the political sciences.'<sup>[1]</sup> Thus, when only seventeen, when the ardour of even the choicest spirits is usually most purely intellectual, moral and social feeling was rising in Condorcet to that supremacy which it afterwards attained in him to so admirable a degree. He wrote essays on integral calculus, but he was already beginning to reflect upon the laws of human societies and the conditions of moral obligation. At the root of Condorcet's nature was a profound sensibility of constitution. One of his biographers explains his early enthusiasm for virtue and human welfare as the conclusion of a kind of syllogism. It is possible that the syllogism was only the later shape into which an instinctive impulse threw itself by way of rational entrenchment. His sensibility caused Condorcet to abandon the barbarous pleasures of the chase, which had at first powerfully attracted him.<sup>[2]</sup> To derive delight from what inflicts pain on any sentient creature revolted his conscience and offended his reason, because he perceived that the character which does not shrink from associating its own joy with the anguish of another, is either found or left mortally blunted to the finest impressions of humanity.

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It is thus assured that from the beginning Condorcet was unable to satisfy himself with the mere knowledge of the specialist, but felt the necessity of placing social aims at the head and front of his life, and of subordinating to them all other pursuits. That he values knowledge only as a means to social action, is one of the highest titles to our esteem that any philosopher can have. Such a temper of mind has penetrated no man more fully than Condorcet, though there are other thinkers to whom time and chance have been more favourable in making that temper permanently productive. There is a fine significance in his words, after the dismissal of the great and virtuous Turgot from office: 'We have had a delightful dream, but it was too brief. Now I mean to apply myself to geometry. It is terribly cold to be for the future labouring only for the *gloriole*, after flattering oneself for a while that one was working for the public weal.' It is true that a geometer, too, works for the public weal; but the process is tardier, and we may well pardon an impatience that sprung of reasoned zeal for the happiness of mankind. There is

something much more attractive about Condorcet's undisguised disappointment at having to exchange active public labour for geometrical problems, than in the affected satisfaction conventionally professed by statesmen when driven from place to their books. His correspondence shows that, even when his mind seemed to be most concentrated upon his special studies, he was incessantly on the alert for every new idea, book, transaction, that was likely to stimulate the love of virtue in individuals, or to increase the strength of justice in society. It would have been in one sense more fortunate for him to have cared less for high social interests, if we remember the contention of his latter days and the catastrophe which brought them to a frightful close. But Condorcet was not one of those natures who can think it happiness to look passively out from the tranquil literary watch-tower upon the mortal struggles of a society in revolution. In measuring other men of science—as his two volumes of *Éloges* abundantly show—one cannot help being struck by the eagerness with which he seizes on any trait of zeal for social improvement, any signal of anxiety that the lives and characters of our fellows should be better worth having. He was himself too absolutely possessed by this social spirit to have flinched from his career, even if he had foreseen the martyrdom which was to consummate it. 'You are very happy,' he once wrote to Turgot, 'in your passion for the public good and your power to satisfy it; it is a great consolation, and of an order very superior to that of study.'<sup>[3]</sup>

In 1769, at the age of six-and-twenty, Condorcet became connected with the Academy, to the mortification of his relations, who hardly pardoned him for not being a captain of horse as his father had been before him. About the same time, or a little later, he performed a pilgrimage of a kind that could hardly help making a mark upon a character so deeply impressible. In company with D'Alembert he went to Ferney and saw Voltaire.<sup>[4]</sup> To the position of Voltaire in Europe in 1770 there has never been any other man's position in any age wholly comparable. It is true that there had been one or two of the great popes, and a great ecclesiastic like St. Bernard, who had exercised a spiritual authority, pretty universally submitted to, or even spontaneously invoked, throughout western Europe. But these were the representatives of a powerful organisation and an accepted system. Voltaire filled a place before men's eyes in the eighteenth century as conspicuous and as authoritative as that of St. Bernard in the twelfth. The difference was that Voltaire's place was absolutely unofficial in its origin, and indebted to no system nor organisation for its maintenance. Again, there have been others, like Bacon or Descartes, destined to make a far more permanent contribution to the ideas which have extended the powers and elevated the happiness of men; but these great spirits for the most part laboured for the generation that followed them, and won comparatively slight recognition from their own age. Voltaire during his life enjoyed to the full not only the admiration that belongs to the poet, but something of the veneration that is paid to the thinker, and even something of the glory usually reserved for captains and conquerors of renown. No other man before or since ever hit so exactly the mark of his time on every side, so precisely met the conditions of fame for the moment, nor so thoroughly dazzled and reigned over the foremost men and women who were his contemporaries. Wherever else intellectual fame has approached the fame of Voltaire, it has been posthumous. With him it was immediate and splendid. Into the secret of this extraordinary circumstance we need not here particularly inquire. He was an unsurpassed master of the art of literary expression in a country where that art is more highly prized than anywhere else; he was the most brilliant of wits among a people whose relish for wit is a supreme passion; he won the admiration of the lighter souls by his plays, of the learned by his interest in science, of the men of letters by his never-ceasing flow of essays, criticisms, and articles, not one of which lacks vigour and freshness and sparkle; he was the most active, bitter, and telling foe of what was then the most justly abhorred of all institutions—the Church. Add to these remarkable titles to honour and popularity that he was no mere declaimer against oppression and injustice in the abstract, but the strenuous, persevering, and absolutely indefatigable champion of every victim of oppression or injustice whose case was once brought under his eye.

It is not difficult to perceive the fascination which Voltaire, with this character and this unrivalled splendour of public position, would have for a man like Condorcet. He conceived the warmest attachment to Voltaire, and Voltaire in turn the highest respect for him. Their correspondence (1770-1778) is perhaps as interesting as any letters of that period that we possess: Voltaire is always bright, playful, and affectionate; Condorcet more declamatory and less graceful, but full of reverence and loyalty for his 'dear and illustrious' master, and of his own peculiar eagerness for good causes and animosity against the defenders of evil ones. Condorcet was younger than the patriarch of Ferney by nearly half a century, but this did not prevent him from loyal remonstrances on more than one occasion against conduct on Voltaire's part in this matter or that, which he held to be unworthy of his character and reputation. He went so far as actually to decline to print in the *Mercure* a letter in which the writer in some fit of spleen placed Montesquieu below D'Aguesseau. 'My attachment,' he says, 'bids me say what will be best for you, and not what might please you most. If I loved you less, I should not have the courage to thwart you. I am aware of your grievances against Montesquieu; it is worthy of you to forget them.' There was perhaps as much moral courage in doing this as in defying the Men of the Mountain in the days of the Terror. It dispels some false impressions of Voltaire's supposed intolerance of criticism, to find him thanking Condorcet for one of these friendly protests. He showed himself worthy of such courageous conduct. 'One sees things ill,' he writes, 'when one sees them from too far off. After all, we ought never to blush to go to school if we are as old as Methuselah. I repeat my acknowledgments to you.'<sup>[5]</sup> Condorcet did not conceive that either to be blind to a man's errors or to compromise them is to prove yourself his friend. There is an integrity of friendship as in public concerns, and he adhered to it as manfully in one as in the other. Throughout his intercourse with intimate friends there is that happy and frank play of

direct personal allusion, which is as distinct from flattery when it is about another, as it is from egoism when it refers to the writer himself.

Perhaps we see him most characteristically in his correspondence with Turgot. What Turgot loved in Condorcet was his 'simplicity of character.'<sup>[6]</sup> Turgot was almost as much less vivacious than Condorcet, as Condorcet was less vivacious than Voltaire. They belonged to quite distinct types of character, but this may be a condition of the most perfect forms of sympathy. Each gives support where the other is most conscious of needing it. Turgot was one of those serene, capacious, and sure intelligences whose aspirations do not become low nor narrow by being watchfully held under the control of reason; whose ideas are no less vigorous or exuberant because they move in a steady and ordered train; and who, in their most fervent reactions against abuses or crimes, resist that vehement temptation to excess which is the besetting infirmity of generous natures. Condorcet was very different from this. Whatever he wished he wished unrestrainedly. As with most men of the epoch, the habit of making allowances was not his. We observe something theological in his hatred of theologians. Even in his letters the distant ground-swell of repressed passion sounds in the ear, and at every mention of false opinion or evil-doing a sombre and angry shadow seems to fall upon the page. Both he and Turgot clung to the doctrine of the infinite perfectibility of human nature, and the correspondingly infinite augmentation of human happiness; but Condorcet's ever-smouldering impetuosity would be content with nothing less than the arrival of at least a considerable instalment of this infinite quantity now and instantly. He went so far as to insist that by and by men would acquire the art of prolonging their lives for several generations, instead of being confined within the fatal span of threescore years and ten. He was impatient of any frittering away of life in scruple, tremors, and hesitations. 'For the most part,' he once wrote to Turgot, 'people abounding in scruple are not fit for great things: a Christian will throw away in subduing the darts of the flesh the time which he might have employed on things of use to mankind; or he will lack courage to rise against a tyrant for fear of his judgment being too hastily formed.'<sup>[7]</sup> Turgot's reply may illustrate the difference between the two men: 'No virtue, in whatever sense you take the word, dispenses with justice; and I think no more of the people who do great things—as you say—at the expense of justice, than of poets who fancy they produce great beauties of imagination without regularity. I know that excessive exactitude tends slightly to deaden the fire alike of composition and of action; but there is a mean in everything. It has never been a question in our controversy of a capuchin who throws away his time in quenching the darts of the flesh (though by the way, in the total of time thrown away the term that expresses the time lost in satisfying these lusts is most likely far greater); no more is it a question of a fool who is afraid of rising against tyrants for fear of forming a rash judgment.'<sup>[8]</sup>

This ability to conceive a mean case between two extremes was not among Condorcet's gifts. His mind dwelt too much in the region of excess, alike when he measured the possibilities of the good, and coloured the motives and the situation of those whom he counted the bad. A Christian was one who wasted his days in merely resisting the flesh; anybody who declined to rise against a tyrant was the victim of a slavish scrupulosity. He rather sympathises with a scientific traveller, to whom the especial charm of natural history resides in the buffets which, at each step that it takes, it inflicts upon Moses.<sup>[9]</sup> Well, this temper is not the richest nor the highest, but it often exists in alliance with rich and high qualities. It was so with Condorcet. And we are particularly bound to remember that with him a harsh and impatient humour was not, as is so often the case, the veil for an indolent reluctance to form painstaking judgments. Few workers have been so conscientious as he was, in the labour that he bestowed upon subjects which he held to be worthy of deliberate scrutiny and consideration. His defect was in finding too few of such subjects, and in having too many foregone conclusions. Turgot and Montesquieu are perhaps the only two eminent men in France during this part of the century, of whom the same defect might not be alleged. Again, Condorcet's impatience of underlying temperament did not prevent him from filling his compositions with solid, sober, and profound reflections, the products of grave and sustained meditation upon an experience, much of which must have been severely trying and repugnant to a man of his constitution. While recognising this trait, then, let us not overstate either it or its consequences.

The main currents of opinion and circumstance in France, when Condorcet came to take his place among her workers, are now well understood. The third quarter of the century was just closing. Lewis xv. died in 1774; and though his death was of little intrinsic consequence, except as the removal of every corrupt heart is of consequence, it is justly taken to mark the date of the beginning of the French Revolution. It was the accidental shifting of position which served to disclose that the existing system was smitten with a mortal paralysis. It is often said that what destroyed the French kingdom was despotism. A sounder explanation discovers the causes less in despotism than in anarchy—anarchy in every department where it could be most ruinous. No substantial reconstruction was possible, because all the evils came from the sinister interests of the nobles, the clergy, or the financiers; and these classes, informally bound together against the common weal, were too strong for either the sovereign or the ablest minister to thrust them aside. The material condition of France was one of supreme embarrassment and disorder, only curable by remedies which the political and social condition of the country made it impossible to employ.

This would explain why a change of some sort was inevitable. But why was the change which actually took place in that direction rather than another? Why did not France sink under her economical disorders, as greater empires than France had done? Why, instead of sinking and falling asunder, did the French people advance with a singleness of impulse unknown before in

their history to their own deliverance? How was it that they overthrew the system that was crushing them, and purged themselves with fire and sword of those who administered and maintained it, defying the hopes of the nation; and then successfully encountered the giant's task of beating back reactionary Europe with one arm, and reconstructing the fabric of their own society with the other? The answer to this question is found in the moral and spiritual condition of France. A generation aroused by the great social ideas of the eighteenth century, looking round to survey its own social state, found itself in the midst of the ruin and disorder of the disintegrated system of the twelfth century. The life was gone out of the ancient organisation of Catholicism and Feudalism, and it seemed as if nothing but corruption remained. What enabled the leaders of the nation to discern the horror and despair of this anarchic dissolution of the worn-out old, and what inspired them with hope and energy when they thought of the possible new, was the spiritual preparation that had been in swift progress since the third decade of the century. The forms and methods of this preparation were various, as the temperaments that came beneath its influence. But the school of Voltaire, the school of Rousseau, and the schools of Quesnay and Montesquieu, different as they were at the roots, all alike energetically familiarised the public mind with a firm belief in human reason, and the idea of the natural rights of man. They impregnated it with a growing enthusiasm for social justice. It is true that we find Voltaire complaining towards the close of his days, of the century being satiated and weary, *un siècle dégoûté*, not knowing well what it wanted. 'The public,' he said, 'has been eighty years at table, and now it drinks a little bad cognac at the end of its meal.'<sup>[10]</sup> In literature and art this was true; going deeper than these, the public was eager and sensitive with a freshness far more vital and more fruitful than it had known eighty years back. Sitting down with a keen appetite for taste, erudition, and literary knowledge, men had now risen up from a dazzling and palling board, with a new hunger and thirst after social righteousness. This was the noble faith that saved France, by this sign she was victorious. A people once saturated with a passionate conception of justice is not likely to fall into a Byzantine stage. That destiny only awaits nations where the spiritual power is rigorously confined in the hands of castes and official churches, which systematically and of their very constitution bury justice under the sterile accumulations of a fixed superstition.

Condorcet's principles were deeply coloured by ideas drawn from two sources. He was a Voltairean in the intensity of his antipathies to the Church, and in the depth and energy of his humanity. But while Voltaire flourished, the destructive movement only reached theology, and Voltaire, though he had more to do than anybody else with the original impulse, joined in no attack upon the State. It was from the economical writers and from Montesquieu that Condorcet learned to look upon societies with a scientific eye, to perceive the influence of institutions upon men, and that there are laws, susceptible of modification in practice, which regulate their growth. It was natural, therefore, that he should join with eagerness in the reforming movement which set in with such irrestrainable velocity after the death of Lewis xv. He was bitter and destructive with the bitterness of Voltaire; he was hopeful for the future with the faith of Turgot; and he was urgent, heated, impetuous, with a heavy vehemence all his own. In a word, he was the incarnation of the revolutionary spirit, as the revolutionary spirit existed in geometers and Encyclopædists; at once too reasonable and too little reasonable; too precise and scientific and too vague; too rigorously logical on the one hand and too abundantly passionate on the other. Perhaps there is no more fatal combination in politics than the deductive method worked by passion. When applied to the delicate and complex affairs of society, such machinery with such motive force is of ruinous potency.

Condorcet's peculiarities of political antipathy and preference can hardly be better illustrated than by his view of the two great revolutions in English history. The first was religious, and therefore he hated it; the second was accompanied by much argument, and had no religion about it, and therefore he extolled it. It is scientific knowledge, he said, which explains why efforts after liberty in unenlightened centuries are so fleeting, and so deeply stained by bloodshed. 'Compare these with the happy efforts of America and France; observe even in the same century, but at different epochs, the two revolutions of England fanatical and England enlightened. We see on the one side contemporaries of Prynne and Knox, while crying out that they are fighting for heaven and liberty, cover their unhappy country with blood in order to cement the tyranny of the hypocrite Cromwell; on the other, the contemporaries of Boyle and Newton establish with pacific wisdom the freest constitution in the world.'<sup>[11]</sup> It is not wonderful that his own revolution was misunderstood by one who thus loved English Whigs, but hated English Republicans; who could forgive an aristocratic faction grasping power for their order, but who could not sympathise with a nation rising and smiting its oppressor, where they smote in the name of the Lord and of Gideon, nor with a ruler who used his power with noble simplicity in the interests of his people, and established in the heart of the nation a respect for itself such as she has never known since, simply because this ruler knew nothing about *principes* or the Rights of Man. However, Nemesis comes. By and by Condorcet found himself writing a piece to show that our Revolution of 1688 was very inferior in lawfulness to the French Revolution of the Tenth of August.<sup>[12]</sup>

## II.

The course of events after 1774 is in its larger features well known to every reader. Turgot, after a month of office at the Admiralty, was in August made Controller-General of Finance. With his accession to power, the reforming ideas of the century became practical. He nominated

Condorcet to be Inspector of Coinage, an offer which Condorcet deprecated in these words: 'It is said of you in certain quarters that money costs you nothing when there is any question of obliging your friends. I should be bitterly ashamed of giving any semblance of foundation to these absurd speeches. I pray you, do nothing for me just now. Though not rich, I am not pressed for money. Entrust to me some important task—the reduction of measures for instance; then wait till my labours have really earned some reward.'<sup>[13]</sup> In this patriotic spirit he undertook, along with two other eminent men of science, the task of examining certain projects for canals which engaged the attention of the minister. 'People will tell you,' he wrote, 'that I have got an office worth two hundred and forty pounds. Utterly untrue. We undertook it out of friendship for M. Turgot; but we refused the payment that was offered.'<sup>[14]</sup> We may profitably contrast this devotion to the public interest with the rapacity of the clergy and nobles, who drove Turgot from office because he talked of taxing them like their neighbours, and declined to glut their insatiable craving for place and plunder.

Turgot was dismissed (May 1776), and presently Necker was installed in his place. Condorcet had defended with much vigour and some asperity the policy of free internal trade in corn against Necker, who was for the maintenance of the restrictions on commercial intercourse between the different provinces of the kingdom. Consequently, when the new minister came into office, Condorcet wrote to Maurepas resigning his post. 'I have,' he said, 'declared too decidedly what I think about both M. Necker and his works, to be able to keep any place that depends upon him.'<sup>[15]</sup> This was not the first taste that Maurepas had had of Condorcet's resolute self-respect. The Duke de la Vrillière, one of the most scandalous persons of the century, was an honorary member of the Academy, and he was the brother-in-law of Maurepas. It was expected from the perpetual secretary that he should compose a eulogy upon the occasion of his death, and Condorcet was warned by friends, who seldom reflect that a man above the common quality owes something more to himself than mere prudence, not to irritate the powerful minister by a slight upon his relation. He was inflexible. 'Would you rather have me persecuted,' he asked, 'for a wrong than for something just and moral? Think, too, that they will pardon my silence much more readily than they would pardon my words, for my mind is fixed not to betray the truth.'<sup>[16]</sup>

In 1782 Condorcet was elected into the Academy. His competitor was Bailly, over whom he had a majority of one. The true contest lay less between the two candidates than between D'Alembert and Buffon, who on this occasion are said to have fought one of the greatest battles in the not peaceful history of the Academy, for mighty anger burns even in celestial minds. D'Alembert is said to have exclaimed, we may hope with some exaggeration, that he was better pleased at winning that victory than he would have been to find out the squaring of the circle.<sup>[17]</sup> Destiny, which had so pitiful a doom in store for the two candidates of that day, soon closed D'Alembert's share in these struggles of the learned and in all others. He died in the following year, and by his last act testified to his trust in the generous character of Condorcet. Having by the benevolence of a lifetime left himself on his deathbed without resources, he confided to his friend's care two old and faithful servants, for whom he was unable to make provision. This charge the philosopher accepted cheerfully, and fulfilled to the end with pious scrupulosity. The affection between Condorcet and D'Alembert had been warm and close as that of some famous pairs of antiquity; a natural attraction of character had clothed community of pursuit and interest with the grace of the highest kind of friendship. Even Condorcet's too declamatory manner only adds a certain dignity to the pathetic passage with which he closes the noble *éloge* on his lost friend.<sup>[18]</sup> Voltaire had been dead these five years, and Turgot, too, was gone. Society offered the survivor no recompense. He found the great world tiresome and frivolous, and he described its pursuits in phrases that are still too faithful to the fact, as 'dissipation without pleasure, vanity without meaning, and idleness without repose.' It was perhaps to soften the oppression of these cruel and tender regrets that in 1786 Condorcet married.<sup>[19]</sup>

Events were now very close at hand, in comparison with which even the most critical private transactions of Condorcet's life were pale and insignificant. In the tranquil seasons of history, when the steady currents of circumstance bear men along noiseless, the importance of the relations which we contract seems superlative; in times of storm and social wreck these petty fortunes and private chances are engulfed and lost to sight. The ferment was now rapidly rising to its intensest height, and Condorcet was the last man in France to remain cold to the burning agitations of the time. We have already seen how decidedly ten years ago he expressed his preference for political activity over the meditative labours of the student. He now threw himself into the Revolution with all the force of an ardent character imbued with fixed and unalterable convictions. We may well imagine him deploring that the great ones whom he had known, the immortal Voltaire, the lofty-souled Turgot, had been carried away by the unkind gods, before their eyes had seen the restoration of their natural rights to men, and the reign of justice on the earth. The gods after all were kinder than he knew, for they veiled from the sight of the enthusiast of '89 the spectres of '93. History might possibly miss most of its striking episodes, if every actor could know the work to which he was putting his hand; and even Condorcet's faith might have wavered if he had known that between him and the fulfilment of his desires there was to intrude a long and deplorable period of despotism and corruption. Still, the vision which then presented itself to the eyes of good men was sublime; and just as, when some noble and devoted character has been taken away from us, it is a consolation to remember that we had the happiness of his friendship, so too when a generation awakes from one of these inspiring social dreams, the wreck of the aspiration is not total nor unrecompensed. The next best thing to the achievement of high and generous aims is to have sought them.

During the winter of '88 and '89, while all France was astir with elections and preparation for

elections for that meeting of the States-General, which was looked to as the nearing dawn after a long night of blackness and misery, Condorcet thought he could best serve the movement by calling the minds of the electors to certain sides of their duty which they might be in some danger of overlooking. One of the subjects, for example, on which he felt most strongly, but on which his countrymen have not shown any particular sensibility, was slavery and the slave trade.<sup>[20]</sup> With a terseness and force not always characteristic of his writings, he appealed to the electors, while they were reclaiming their own rights in the name of justice, not to forget the half-million blacks, whose rights had been still more shamefully torn away from them, and whose need of justice was more urgent than their own. In the same spirit he published a vehement and ingenious protest against the admission of representatives from the St. Domingo plantations to the National Assembly, showing how grossly inconsistent it was with every idea of a free and popular chamber that men should sit as representatives of others who had never chosen them, and that they should invoke natural rights in their own favour, when at the same instant they were violating the most elementary and undisputed natural rights of mankind in their own country.<sup>[21]</sup>

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Of general precepts he never tired; one series of them followed another. To us many of them may seem commonplace; but we should reflect that the election of representatives was an amazing novelty in France, and Condorcet knew men well enough to be aware of the hazards of political inexperience. Beware of choosing a clever knave, he said, because he will follow his own interest and not yours; but at the same time beware of choosing a man for no better reason than that he is honest, because you need ability quite as much as you need probity. Do not choose a man who has ever taken sides against the liberty of any portion of mankind; nor one whose principles were never known until he found out that he wanted your votes. Be careful not to mistake heat of head for heat of soul; because what you want is not heat but force, not violence but steadfastness. Be careful, too, to separate a man's actions from the accidents of his life; for one may be the enemy or the victim of a tyrant without being the friend of liberty. Do not be carried away by a candidate's solicitations; but at the same time, make allowance for the existing effervescence of spirits. Prefer those who have decided opinions to those who are always inventing plans of conciliation; those who are zealous for the rights of man to those who only profess pity for the misfortunes of the people; those who speak of justice and reason, to those who speak of political interests and of the prosperity of commerce. Distrust those who appeal to sentiment in matters that can be decided by reason; prefer light to eloquence; and pass over those who declare themselves ready to die for liberty, in favour of those who know in what liberty consists.<sup>[22]</sup>

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In another piece he drew up a list of the rights which the nation had a claim to have recognised, such as the right to make laws, to exact responsibility from the ministers of the crown, to the protection of personal liberty, and to the legal administration of justice by regular judges. These rights he declared it to be the first duty of the Assembly to draw up in a chart that should be the chief corner-stone of the new constitution. Then he proceeded to define the various tasks to which he conceived that the legislative body should forthwith apply itself; and among them, be it said, is no mention of any of those projects of confiscation which circumstances so speedily forced upon the Assembly when it met.<sup>[23]</sup>

Though many of these precepts designed to guide the electors in their choice of men are sagacious and admirable, they smack strongly of that absolute and abstract spirit which can never become powerful in politics without danger. It is certain that in the spring of '89, Condorcet held hereditary monarchy to be most suitable to 'the wealth, the population, the extent of France, and to the political system of Europe.'<sup>[24]</sup> Yet the reasons which he gives for thinking this are not very cogent, and he can hardly have felt them to be so. It is significant, however, of the little distance which all the most uncompromising and most thoughtful revolutionists saw in front of them, that even Condorcet should, so late as the eve of the assembly of the States-General, have talked about attachment to the forms of monarchy and respect for the royal person and prerogative; and should have represented the notion of the property of the Church undergoing any confiscation, as an invention of the enemies of freedom.<sup>[25]</sup> Before the year was out, the property of the Church had undergone confiscation; before two years had gone he was an ardent Republican; and in less than twelve months after that he had voted the guilt of the king.

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It is worth while to cite here a still more pointed example of the want of prevision, so common and so intelligible at that time. Writing in July 1791, he confutes those who asserted that an established and limited monarchy was a safeguard against a usurper, whose power is only limited by his own audacity and address, by pointing out that the extent of France, its divisions into departments, the separation between the various branches of the administration, the freedom of the press, the multitude of the public prints, were all so many insurmountable barriers against a French Cromwell. 'To anybody who has read with attention the history of the usurpation of Cromwell, it is clear that a single newspaper would have been enough to stop his success. It is clear that if the people of England had known how to read other books beside their Bible, the hypocritical tyrant, unmasked from his first step, would soon have ceased to be dangerous.' Again, is the nation to be cajoled by some ambitious general, gratifying its desire to be an empire-race? 'Is this what is asked by true friends of liberty, those who only seek that reason and right should have empire over men? *What provinces, conquered by a French general, will he despoil to buy our suffrages? Will he promise our soldiers, as the consuls promised the citizens of Rome, the pillage of Spain or of Syria?* No, assuredly; it is because we cannot be an empire-nation that we shall remain a free nation.'<sup>[26]</sup> How few years, alas, between this conclusive reasoning, and the pillage of Italy, the campaign in Syria, the seizure of Spain!

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Condorcet was not a member of the Assembly in whose formation and composition he had taken so vivid and practical an interest. The first political functions which he was invited to undertake were those of a member of the municipality of Paris. In the tremendous drama of which the scenes were now opening, the Town-hall of Paris was to prove itself far more truly the centre of movement and action than the Constituent Assembly. The efforts of the Constituent Assembly to build up were tardy and ineffectual. The activity of the municipality of Paris in pulling down was after a time ceaseless, and it was thoroughly successful. The first mayor was the astronomer Bailly, Condorcet's defeated competitor at the Academy. With the fall of the Bastille, summary hangings at the nearest lantern-post, October insurrection of women, and triumphant and bloody compulsion of king, queen, and Assembly to Paris from Versailles, the two rivals, now colleagues, must have felt that the contests for them were indeed no longer academic. The astronomy of the one and the geometry of the other were for ever done with; and Condorcet's longing for active political life in preference to mere study was gratified to the very full.

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Unhappily or not, the movement was beyond the control of anybody who, like Condorcet, had no other force than that of disciplined reason and principle. The Bastille no sooner fell, than the Revolution set in with oceanic violence, in the face of which patriotic intention and irrefragable arguments, even when both intention and arguments were loyally revolutionary, were powerless to save the State. In crises of this overwhelming kind, power of reasoning does not tell and mere goodwill does not tell. Exaltation reaches a pitch at which the physical sensibilities are so quickened as to be supreme over the rest of the nature; and in these moods it is the man gifted with the physical quality, as mysterious and indescribable as it is resistless, of a Marat, to take a bad example, or a Danton, to take a good one, who can 'ride the whirlwind and direct the storm.' Of this quality Condorcet had nothing. His personal presence inspired a decent respect, but no strong emotion either of fear or admiration or physical sympathy. His voice was feeble, his utterance indistinct; and he never got over that nervous apprehension which the spectacle of large and turbulent crowds naturally rouses in the student. In a revolution after the manner of Lord Somers he would have been invaluable. He thoroughly understood his own principles, and he was a master of the art, so useful in its place and time and so respectable in all places and times, of considering political projects point by point with reference to a definite framework of rational ideas. But this was no time for such an art; this was not a revolution to be guided by reason, not even reason like Condorcet's, streaked with jacobinical fibre. The national ideas in which it had arisen had transformed themselves into tumultuous passion, and from this into frenzied action.

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Every politician of real eminence as a reformer possesses one of three elements. One class of men is inspired by an intellectual attachment to certain ideas of justice and right reason: another is moved by a deep pity for the hard lot of the mass of every society: while the third, such men as Richelieu for example, have an instinctive appreciation and passion for wise and orderly government. The great and typical ruler is moved in varying degrees by all three in modern times, when the claims of the poor, the rank and file of the social army, have been raised to the permanent place that belongs to them. Each of the three types has its own peculiar conditions of success, and there are circumstances in which some one of the three is more able to grapple with the obstacles to order than either of the other two. It soon became very clear that the intellectual quality was not the element likely to quell the tempest that had arisen now.

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Let it be said, however, that Condorcet showed himself no pedantic nor fastidious trifler with the tremendous movement which he had contributed to set afoot. The same practical spirit which drove him into the strife, guided him in the midst of it. He never wrung his hands, nor wept, nor bewailed the unreason of the multitudes to whom in vain he preached reason. Unlike the typical man of letters—for he was without vanity—he did not abandon the cause of the Revolution because his suggestions were often repulsed. 'It would be better,' he said to the Girondins, 'if you cared less for personal matters and attended only to public interests.' Years ago, in his *éloge* on L'Hôpital, he had praised the famous Chancellor for incurring the hostility of both of the two envenomed factions, the League and the Huguenots, and for disregarding the approbation or disapprobation of the people. 'What operation,' he asked, 'capable of producing any durable good, can be understood by the people? How should they know to what extent good is possible? How judge of the means of producing it? It must ever be easier for a charlatan to mislead the people, than for a man of genius to save it.'<sup>[27]</sup> Remembering this law, he never lost patience. He was cool and intrepid, if his intrepidity was of the logical sort rather than physical; and he was steadfast to one or two simple aims, if he was on some occasions too rapid in changing his attitude as to special measures. He was never afraid of the spectre, as the incompetent revolutionist is. On the contrary, he understood its whole internal history; he knew what had raised it, what passion and what weakness gave to it substance, and he knew that presently reason would banish it and restore men to a right mind. The scientific spirit implanted in such a character as Condorcet's, and made robust by social meditation, builds up an impregnable fortitude in the face of incessant rebuffs and discouragements. Let us then picture Condorcet as surveying the terrific welter from the summer of 1789 to the summer of 1793, from the taking of the Bastille to the fall of the Girondins, with something of the firmness and self-possession of a Roman Cato.

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After the flight of the king in June, and his return in what was virtually captivity to Paris, Condorcet was one of the party, very small in numbers and entirely discountenanced by public opinion, then passing through the monarchical and constitutional stage, who boldly gave up the idea of a monarchy and proclaimed the idea of a republic. In July (1791) he published a piece strongly arguing for a negative answer to the question whether a king is necessary for the

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preservation of liberty.<sup>[28]</sup> In one sense, this composition is favourable to Condorcet's foresight; it was not every one who saw with him that the destruction of the monarchy was inevitable after the royal flight. This want of preparation in the public mind for every great change as it came, is one of the most striking circumstances of the Revolution, and it explains the violent, confused, and inadequate manner in which nearly every one of these changes was made. It was proposed at that time to appoint Condorcet to be governor to the young dauphin. But Condorcet in this piece took such pains to make his sentiments upon royalty known, that in the constitutional frame of mind in which the Assembly then was, the idea had to be abandoned. It was hardly likely that a man should be chosen for such an office, who had just declared the public will to be 'that the uselessness of a king, the needfulness of seeking means of displacing a power founded on illusions, should be one of the first truths offered to his reason; the obligation of concurring in this himself, one of the first of his moral duties; and the desire not to be freed from the yoke of law by an insulting inviolability, the first sentiment of his heart. People are well aware that at this moment the object is much less how to mould a king, than to teach him not to wish to be one.'<sup>[29]</sup> As all France was then bent on the new constitution, a king included, Condorcet's republican assurance was hardly warranted, and it was by no means well received.

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### III.

When the Constitution was accepted and the Legislative Assembly came to be chosen, Condorcet proved to have made so good an impression as a municipal officer, that the Parisians returned him for one of their deputies. The Declaration of Pilnitz in August 1791 had mitigated the loyalty that had even withstood the trial of the king's flight. When the Legislative Assembly met, it was found to contain an unmistakable element of republicanism of marked strength. Condorcet was chosen one of the secretaries, and he composed most of those multitudinous addresses in which this most unfortunate and least honoured of all parliamentary chambers tried to prove to the French people that it was actually in existence and at work. Condorcet was officially to the Legislative what Barère afterwards was to the Convention. But his addresses are turgid, labouring, and not effective for their purpose. They have neither the hard force of Napoleon's proclamations, nor the flowery eloquence of the Anacreon of the Guillotine. To compose such pieces well under such circumstances as those of the Assembly, a man must have much imagination and perhaps a slightly elastic conscience. Condorcet had neither one nor the other, but only reason—a hard anvil, out of which he laboriously struck flashes and single sounds.

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Perhaps, after all, nobody else could have done better. The situation of the Assembly, between a hostile court and a suspicious and distrustful nation, and unable by its very nature to break the bonds, was from the beginning desperate. In December 1791 the Legislative through its secretary informs France of the frankness and loyalty of the king's measures in the face of the menaces of foreign war.<sup>[30]</sup> Within eight months, when the king's person was in captivity and his power suspended, the same secretary has to avow that from the very beginning the king had treated the Assembly with dissimulation, and had been in virtual league with the national enemies. The documents issued by the Assembly after the violent events of the Tenth of August 1792 are not edifying, and imply in Condorcet, who composed them, a certain want of eye for revolutionary methods. They mark the beginning of that short but most momentous period in the history of the Revolution, when formulas, as Mr. Carlyle says, had to be stretched out until they cracked—a process truly called, 'especially in times of swift change, one of the sorrowfullest tasks poor humanity has.' You might read the *Exposition of the Motives from which the National Assembly have proclaimed the Convention, and suspended the Executive Power of the King*,<sup>[31]</sup> without dreaming that it is an account of a revolution which arose out of distrust or contempt for the Assembly, which had driven the king away from his palace and from power, and which had finally annihilated the very chamber that was thus professing to expound its motives for doing what the violence of Paris had really done in defiance of it. The power, in fact, was all outside the chamber, in Danton and the Commune. Under such circumstance it is of no interest to men to learn that 'in the midst of these disasters the National Assembly, afflicted but calm, took its oath to maintain equality and liberty, or to die at its post; took the oath to save France, and looked about for means.'<sup>[32]</sup> Still more impotent and hollow, because still more pompous, is the address of six days later.<sup>[33]</sup> A few days after this, occurred the massacres of prisoners in September—scenes very nearly, if not quite, as bloody and iniquitous as those which attended the suppression of the rebellion in Ireland six years afterwards by English troops.

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When the Convention was chosen, the electors of Paris rejected Condorcet. He was elected, however (Sept. 6), for the department of the Aisne, having among his colleagues in the deputation Tom Paine, and—a much more important personage—the youthful Saint-Just, who was so soon to stupefy the Convention by exclaiming, with mellow voice and face set immovable as bronze: 'An individual has no right to be either virtuous or celebrated in your eyes. A free people and a national assembly are not made to admire anybody.' The electors of the department of the Aisne had unconsciously sent two typical revolutionists: the man of intellectual ideas, and the man of passion heated as in the pit. In their persons the Encyclopædia and the Guillotine met. Condorcet, who had been extreme in the Legislative, but found himself a moderate in the Convention, gave wise counsel as to the true policy towards the new members: 'Better try to moderate them than quarrel.' But in this case, not even in their ruin, were fire and water reconciled.

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On the first great question that the Convention had to decide—the fate of the king—Condorcet voted on the two main issues very much as a wise man would have voted, knowing the event as we know it. He voted that the king was guilty of conspiring against liberty, and he voted for the punishment of exile in preference to that of death. On the intermediate issue, whether the decision of the Convention should be final, or should be submitted to the people for ratification, he voted as a wise man should not have done, in favour of an appeal to the people. Such an appeal must inevitably have led to violent and bloody local struggles, and laid France open to the enemy. It is a striking circumstance that, though Condorcet thus voted that the king was guilty, he had previously laid before the Convention a most careful argument to show that they were neither morally nor legally competent to try the king at all. How, he asked, without violating every principle of jurisprudence, can you act at the same time as legislators constituting the crime, as accusers, and as judges? His proposal was that Lewis xvi. should be tried by a tribunal whose jury and judges should be named by the electoral body of the departments.<sup>[34]</sup> With true respect for Condorcet's honourable anxiety that the conditions of justice should be rigorously observed—for, as he well said, 'there is no liberty in a country where positive law is not the single rule of judicial proceedings'—it is difficult to see why the Convention, coming as it did fresh from the electoral bodies, who must have had the question what was to be done with the imprisoned king foremost in their minds, why the members of the Convention should not form as legitimate a tribunal as any body whose composition and authority they had themselves defined and created, and which would be chosen by the very same persons who less than a month before had invested them with their own offices. Reading this most scrupulous and juristic composition, we might believe the writer to have forgotten that France lay mad and frenzied outside the hall where he stood, and that in political action the question what is possible is at least as important as what is compatible with the maxims of scientific jurisprudence. It was to Condorcet's honour as a juriconsult that he should have had so many scruples; it is as much to his credit as a politician that he laid them aside and tried the king after all.

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It is highly characteristic of Condorcet's tenacity of his own view of the Revolution and of its methods, that on the Saturday (January 19, 1793) when the king's fate was decided against Condorcet's conviction and against his vote—the execution taking place on the Monday morning—he should have appealed to the Convention, at all events to do their best to neutralise the effect of their verdict upon Europe, by instantly initiating a series of humane reforms in the law among them, including the abolition of the punishment of death. 'The English ministers,' he cried, 'are now seeking to excite that nation against us. Do you suppose that they will venture to continue their calumnious declamations, when you can say to them: "We have abolished the penalty of death, while you still preserve it for the theft of a few shillings? You hand over debtors to the greed or spite of their creditors; our laws, wiser and more humane, know how to respect poverty and misfortune. Judge between us and you, and see to which of the two peoples the reproach of inhumanity may be addressed with most justice."' <sup>[35]</sup> This was the eve of the Terror. Well may Comte distinguish Condorcet as the one philosopher who pursued in the midst of the tempest his regenerating meditations.

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But let us banish the notion that the history of the Convention is only the history of the guillotine. No chamber in the whole annals of governing assemblies ever displayed so much alertness, energy, and capacity, in the face of difficulties that might well have crushed them. Besides their efforts, justly held incomparable, to hurl back the enemy from the frontiers, they at once in the spirit of Condorcet's speech, made at so strange a season, set vigorously about the not less noble task of legal reforms and political reorganisation. The unrivalled ingenuity and fertility of the French character in all the arts of compact and geometric construction never showed itself so supreme. The civil code was drawn up in a month.<sup>[36]</sup> Constitutions abounded. Cynical historians laugh at the eagerness of the nation, during the months that followed the deposition of the king, to have a constitution; and, so far as they believed or hoped that a constitution would remedy all ills, their faith was assuredly not according to knowledge. It shows, however, the fundamental and seemingly ineradicable respect for authority which their history has engendered in the French, that even in this, their most chaotic hour, they craved order and its symbols.

Condorcet, along with Tom Paine, Sièyes, and others, was a member of the first committee for framing a constitution. They laboured assiduously from September to February 1793, when the project was laid upon the table, prefaced by an elaborate dissertation of Condorcet's composition.<sup>[37]</sup> The time was inauspicious. The animosities between the Girondins and the Mountain were becoming every day more furious and deadly. In the midst of this appalling storm of rage and hate and terror, Condorcet—at one moment wounding the Girondins by reproaches against their egotism and personalities, at another exasperating the Mountain by declaring of Robespierre that he had neither an idea in his head nor a feeling in his heart—still pertinaciously kept crying out for the acceptance of his constitution. It was of no avail. The revolution of the second of June came, and swept the Girondins out of the Chamber. Condorcet was not among them, but his political days were numbered. 'What did you do all that time?' somebody once asked of a member of the Convention, during the period which was now beginning and which lasted until Thermidor in 1794. 'I lived,' was the reply. Condorcet was of another temper. He cared as little for his life as Danton or Saint-Just cared for theirs. Instead of cowering down among the men of the Plain or the frogs of the Marsh, he withstood the Mountain to the face.

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Hérault de Séchelles, at the head of another committee, brought in a new constitution which was finally adopted and decreed (June 24, 1793). Of this, Sièyes said privately, that it was 'a bad table of contents.' Condorcet denounced it publicly, and, with a courage hardly excelled, he declared in so many words that the arrest of the Girondins had destroyed the integrity of the national

representation. The Bill he handled with a severity that inflicted the keenest smarts on the self-love of its designers. A few days later, the Capucin Chabot, one of those weak and excitable natures that in ordinary times divert men by the intensity, multiplicity, and brevity of their enthusiasms, but to whom the fiercer air of such an event as the Revolution is a real poison, rose and in the name of the Committee of General Security called the attention of the Chamber to what he styled a sequel of the Girondist Brissot. This was no more nor less than Condorcet's document criticising the new constitution. 'This man,' said Chabot, 'has sought to raise the department of the Aisne against you, imagining that, because he has happened to sit by the side of a handful of *savants* of the Academy, it is his duty to give laws to the French Republic.'<sup>[38]</sup> So a decree was passed putting Condorcet under arrest. His name was included in the list of those who were tried before the Revolutionary Tribunal on the Third of October for conspiring against the unity and indivisibility of the Republic. He was condemned in his absence, and declared to be *hors la loi*.

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This, then, was the calamitous close of his aspirations from boyhood upwards to be permitted to partake in doing something for the common weal. He had still the work to perform by which posterity will best remember his name, though only a few months intervened between his flight and his most cruel end. When the decree against him was enacted he fled. Friends found a refuge for him in the house of a Madame Vernet, a widow in moderate circumstances, who let lodgings to students, and one of those beneficent characters that show us how high humanity can reach. 'Is he an honest and virtuous man?' she asked; 'in that case let him come, and lose not a moment. Even while we talk he may be seized.' The same night Condorcet intrusted his life to her keeping, and for nine months he remained in hiding under her roof. When he heard of the execution of the Girondins condemned on the same day with himself, he perceived the risk to which he was subjecting his protectress, and made up his mind to flee. 'I am an outlaw,' he said, 'and if I am discovered you will be dragged to the same death.' 'The Convention,' Madame Vernet answered, with something of the heroism of more notable women of that time, 'may put you out of the law; it has not the power to put you out of humanity. You stay.' This was no speech of the theatre. The whole household kept the most vigorous watch over the prisoner thus generously detained, and for many months Madame Vernet's humane firmness was successful in preventing his escape. This time—his soul grievously burdened by anxiety as to the fate of his wife and child, and by a restless eagerness not to compromise his benefactress, a bloody death staring him every moment in the face—Condorcet spent in the composition, without the aid of a single book, of his memorable work on the progress of the human mind. Among the many wonders of an epoch of portents, this feat of intellectual abstraction is not the least amazing.

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When his task was accomplished, Condorcet felt with more keenness than ever the deadly peril in which his presence placed Madame Vernet. He was aware that to leave her house was to seek death, but he did not fear. He drew up a paper of directions to be given one day to his little daughter, when she should be of years to understand and follow them. They are written with minute care, and though tender and solicitous, they show perfect composure. His daughter is above all things to banish from her mind every revengeful sentiment against her father's enemies; to distrust her filial sensibility, and to make this sacrifice for her father's own sake. This done, he marched downstairs, and having by an artful stratagem thrown Madame Vernet off her guard, he went out at ten o'clock in the morning imperfectly disguised into the street. This was the fifth of April 1794. By three in the afternoon, exhausted by fatigue which his strict confinement for nine months made excessive, he reached the house of a friend in the country, and prayed for a night's shelter. His presence excited less pity than alarm. The people gave him refreshment, and he borrowed a little pocket copy of Horace, with which he went forth into the loneliness of the night. He promised himself shelter amid the stone quarries of Clamart. What he suffered during this night, the whole day of the sixth of April, the night, and again the next day, there is no one to tell.

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The door of the house in the Rue Servandoni was left on the latch night and day for a whole week. But Madame Vernet's generous hope was in vain; while she still hoped and watched, the end had come. On the evening of the seventh, Condorcet, with one of his legs torn or broken, his garments in rags, with visage gaunt and hunger-stricken, entered an inn in the hamlet of Clamart, and called for an omelette. Asked how many eggs he would have in it, the famishing man answered a dozen. Carpenters, for such he had given himself to be, do not have a dozen eggs in their omelettes. Suspicion was aroused, his hands were not the hands of a workman, and he had no papers to show, but only the pocket Horace. The villagers seized him and hastened to drag him, bound hand and foot, to Bourg-la-Reine, then called for a season Bourg-l'Égalité. On the road he fainted, and they set him on a horse offered by a pitying wayfarer. When they reached the prison, Condorcet, starving, bleeding, way-worn, was flung into his cell. On the morrow, when the gaolers came to seek him, they found him stretched upon the ground, dead and stark. So he perished—of hunger and weariness, say some; of poison ever carried by him in a ring, say others.<sup>[39]</sup> So, to the last revolving supreme cares, this high spirit was overtaken by annihilation. His memory is left to us, the fruit of his ideas, and the impression of his character.

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An eminent man, who escaped by one accident from the hatchets of the Septembriseurs, and by another from the guillotine of the Terror, while in hiding and in momentary expectation of capture and death, wrote thus in condemnation of suicide, 'the one crime which leaves no possibility of return to virtue.' 'Even at this incomprehensible moment'—the spring of 1793

—'when morality, enlightenment, energetic love of country, only render death at the prison-wicket or on the scaffold more inevitable; when it might be allowable to choose among the ways of leaving a life that can no longer be preserved, and to rob tigers in human form of the accursed pleasure of dragging you forth and drinking your blood; yes, on the fatal tumbril itself, with nothing free but voice, I could still cry, *Take care*, to a child that should come too near the wheel: perhaps he may owe his life to me, perhaps the country shall one day owe its salvation to him.'<sup>[40]</sup>

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More than one career in those days, famous or obscure, was marked by this noble tenacity to lofty public ideas even in the final moments of existence. Its general acceptance as a binding duty, exorcising the mournful and insignificant egotisms that haunt and wearily fret and make waste the remnants of so many lives, will produce the profoundest of all possible improvements in men's knowledge of the sublime art of the happiness of their kind. The closing words of Condorcet's last composition show the solace which perseverance in taking thought for mankind brought to him in the depths of personal calamity. He had concluded his survey of the past history of the race, and had drawn what seemed in his eyes a moderate and reasonable picture of its future. 'How this picture,' he exclaims, with the knell of his own doom sounding full in the ear while he wrote, 'this picture of the human race freed from all its fetters, withdrawn from the empire of chance, as from that of the enemies of progress, and walking with firm and assured step in the way of truth, of virtue, and happiness, presents to the philosopher a sight that consoles him for the errors, the crimes, the injustice, with which the earth is yet stained, and of which he is not seldom the victim! It is in the contemplation of this picture that he receives the reward of his efforts for the progress of reason, for the defence of liberty. He ventures to link them with the eternal chain of the destinies of man: it is there that he finds the true recompense of virtue, the pleasure of having done a lasting good. Fate can no longer undo it by any disastrous compensation that shall restore prejudice and bondage. This contemplation is for him a refuge, into which the recollection of his persecutors can never follow him; in which, living in thought with man reinstated in the rights and the dignity of his nature, he forgets man tormented and corrupted by greed, by base fear, by envy; it is here that he truly abides with his fellows, in an elysium that his reason has known how to create for itself, and that his love for humanity adorns with all purest delights.'<sup>[41]</sup>

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It has long been the fashion among the followers of that reaction which Coleridge led and Carlyle has spread and popularised, to dwell exclusively on the coldness and hardness, the excess of scepticism and the defect of enthusiasm, that are supposed to have characterised the eighteenth century. Because the official religion of the century both in England and France was lifeless and mechanical, it has been taken for granted that the level of thought and feeling was a low one universally; as if the highest moods of every era necessarily clothed themselves in religious forms. The truth is that, working in such natures as Condorcet's, the principles of the eighteenth century, its homage to reason and rational methods, its exaltation of the happiness of men, not excluding their material wellbeing, into the highest place, its passion for justice and law, its large illumination, all engendered a fervour as truly religious as that of Catholicism or of Calvinism at their best, while its sentiment was infinitely less interested and personal. The passage just quoted is as little mechanical, as little material, as the most rapturous ejaculations of the Christian saints and confessors. Read in connection with the circumstances of its composition, it may show that the eighteenth century was able at any rate to inspire its sons with a faith that could rob death of its sting and the grave of its victory, as effectually as if it had rested on a mystery instead of on reason, and been supported by the sanctions of eternal pain and eternal bliss, instead of moving from a confident devotion to humanity.

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#### IV.

The shape of Condorcet's ideas upon history arose from the twofold necessity which his character imposed upon him, at once of appeasing his aspirations on behalf of mankind, and of satisfying a disciplined and scientific intelligence. He was of too robust an understanding to find adequate gratification in the artificial construction of hypothetical utopias. Conviction was as indispensable as hope; and distinct grounds for the faith that was in him, as essential as the faith itself. The result of this fact of mental constitution, the intellectual conditions of the time being what they were, was the rise in his mind of the great and central conception of there being a law in the succession of social states, to be ascertained by an examination of the collective phenomena of past history. The merit of this admirable effort, and of the work in which it found expression, is very easily underrated, because the effort was insufficient and merely preparatory, while modern thought has already carried us far beyond it, and at least into sight of the more complete truths to which this effort only pointed the way. Let us remember, however, that it did point the way distinctly and unmistakably. A very brief survey of the state of history as a subject of systematic study enables us to appreciate with precision what service it was that Condorcet rendered; for it carries us back from the present comparatively advanced condition of the science of society to a time before his memorable attempt, when conceptions now become so familiar were not in existence, and when even the most instructed students of human affairs no more felt the need of a scientific theory of the manner in which social effects follow social causes, than the least instructed portion of the literary public feels such a need in our own time. It is difficult after a subject has been separated from the nebulous mass of unclassified knowledge, after it has taken independent shape, and begun to move in lines of its own, to realise the process by which all this

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was effected, or the way in which before all this the facts concerned presented themselves to the thinker's mind. That we should overcome the difficulty is one of the conditions of our being able to do justice to the great army of the precursors.

Two movements of thought went on in France during the middle of the eighteenth century, which have been comparatively little dwelt upon by historians; their main anxiety has been to justify the foregone conclusion, so gratifying alike to the partisans of the social reaction and to the disciples of modern transcendentalism in its many disguises, that the eighteenth century was almost exclusively negative, critical, and destructive. Each of these two currents was positive in the highest degree, and their influence undeniably constructive, if we consider that it was from their union into a common channel, a work fully accomplished first in the mind of Condorcet, that the notion of the scientific treatment of history and society took its earliest start.

The first of the two movements, and that which has been most unaccountably neglected, consisted in the remarkable attempts of Quesnay and his immediate followers to withdraw the organisation of society from the sphere of empiricism, and to substitute for the vulgar conception of arbitrary and artificial institutions as the sole foundation of this organisation, the idea that there is a certain Natural Order, conformity to which in all social arrangements is the essential condition of their being advantageous to the members of the social union. Natural Order in the minds of this school was no metaphysical figment evolved from uninstructed consciousness, but a set of circumstances to be discovered by continuous and methodical observation. It consisted of physical law and moral law. Physical law is the regulated course of every physical circumstance in the order evidently most advantageous to the human race. Moral law is the rule of every human action in the moral order, conformed to the physical order evidently most advantageous to the human race. This order is the base of the most perfect government, and the fundamental rule of all positive laws; for positive laws are only such laws as are required to keep up and maintain the natural order that is evidently most advantageous to the race.<sup>[42]</sup>

Towards the close of the reign of Lewis XIV. the frightful impoverishment of the realm attracted the attention of one or two enlightened observers, and among them of Boisguillebert and Vauban. They had exposed, the former of them with especial force and amplitude, the absurdity of the general system of administration, which seemed to have been devised for the express purpose of paralysing both agriculture and commerce, and exhausting all the sources of the national wealth.<sup>[43]</sup> But these speculations had been mainly of a fiscal kind, and pointed not much further than to a readjustment of taxation and an improvement in the modes of its collection. The disciples of the New Science, as it was called, the Physiocrats, or believers in the supremacy of Natural Order, went much beyond this, and in theory sought to lay open the whole ground of the fabric of society. Practically they dealt with scarcely any but the economic circumstances of societies, though some of them mix up with their reasonings upon commerce and agriculture crude and incomplete hints upon forms of government and other questions that belong not to the economical but to the political side of social science.<sup>[44]</sup> Quesnay's famous *Maxims* open with a declaration in favour of the unity of the sovereign authority, and against the system of counterbalancing forces in government. Almost immediately he passes on to the ground of political economy, and elaborates the conditions of material prosperity in an agricultural realm. With the correctness of the definitions and principles of economic science as laid down by these writers, we have here nothing to do. Their peculiar distinction in the present connection is the grasp which they had of the principle of there being a natural, and therefore a scientific, order in the conditions of a society; that order being natural in the sense that they attached to the term, which from the circumstances of the case is most beneficial to the race. From this point of view they approach some of the problems of what is now classified as social statics; and they assume, without any consciousness of another aspect being possible, that the society which they are discussing is in a state of equilibrium.

It is evident that with this restriction of the speculative horizon, they were and must remain wholly unable to emerge into the full light of the completely constituted science of society, with laws of movement as well as laws of equilibrium, with definite methods of interpreting past and predicting future states. They could account for and describe the genesis of the social union, as Plato and Aristotle had in different ways been able to do many centuries before; and they could prescribe some of the conditions of its being maintained in vigour and compactness. Some of them could even see in a vague way the interdependence of peoples and the community of the real interests of different nations, each nation, as De la Rivière expressed it, being only a province of the vast kingdom of nature, a branch from the same trunk as the rest.<sup>[45]</sup> What they could not see was the great fact of social evolution; and here too, in the succession of social states, there has been a natural and observable order. In a word, they tried to understand society without the aid of history. Consequently they laid down the truths which they discovered as absolute and fixed, when they were no more than conditional and relative.

Fortunately inquirers in another field had set a movement afoot, which was destined to furnish the supplement of their own speculation. This was the remarkable development of the conception of history, which Montesquieu's two memorable books first made conspicuous. Bossuet's well-known discourse on universal history, teeming as it does with religious prejudice, just as Condorcet's sketch teems with prejudice against religion, and egregiously imperfect in execution as it must be pronounced when judged from even the meanest historical standard, had perhaps partially introduced the spirit of Universality, as Comte says, into the study of history. But it was impossible from the nature of the case for any theologian to know fully what this spirit means; and it was not until the very middle of the following century that any effective approach was

made to that universality which Bossuet did little more than talk about. Then it came not from theology, but from the much more hopeful sources of a rational philosophy. Before Montesquieu no single stone of the foundation of scientific history can be said to have been laid. Of course, far earlier writers had sought after the circumstances which brought about a given transaction. Thucydides, for example, had attributed the cause of the Peloponnesian war to the alarm of the Lacedæmonians at the greatness of the power of Athens.<sup>[46]</sup> It is this sense of the need of explanation, however rudimentary it may be, which distinguishes the great historian from the chronicler, even from a very superior chronicler like Livy, who in his account of even so great an event as the Second Punic War plunges straightway into narrative of what happened, without concerning himself why it happened. Tacitus had begun his *Histories* with remarks upon the condition of Rome, the feeling of the various armies, the attitude of the provinces, so that, as he says, '*non modo casus eventusque rerum, qui plerumque fortuiti sunt, sed ratio etiam causæque noscantur.*'<sup>[47]</sup> But these and the like instances in historical literature were only political explanations, more or less adequate, of particular transactions; they were no more than the sagacious remarks of men with statesmanlike minds, upon the origin of some single set of circumstances.

The rise from this to the high degree of generality which marks the speculations of Montesquieu, empirical as they are, was as great as the rise from the mere maxims of worldly wisdom to the widest principles of ethical philosophy. Polybius, indeed, in the remarkable chapters with which his *Histories* open, uses expressions that are so modern as almost to startle us. 'People who study history,' he says, 'in separate and detached portions, without reference to one another, and suppose that from them they acquire a knowledge of the whole, are like a man who in looking on the severed members of what had once been an animated and comely creature, should think that this was enough to give him an idea of its beauty and force when alive. The empire of Rome was what by its extent in Italy, Africa, Asia, Greece, brought history into the condition of being organic (*σωματοειδής*).' His object was to examine the general and collective ordering of events; when it came into existence; whence it had its source; how it had this special completion and fulfilment—the universal empire of Rome.<sup>[48]</sup> Striking as this is, and admirable as it is, there is not in it any real trace of the abstract conception of social history. Polybius recognises the unity of history, so far as that could be understood in the second century before Christ, but he treats his subject in the concrete, describing the chain of events, but not attempting to seek their law. It was Montesquieu who first applied the comparative method to social institutions; who first considered physical conditions in connection with the laws of a country; who first perceived and illustrated how that natural order which the Physiocrats only considered in relation to the phenomena of wealth and its production, really extended over its political phenomena as well; who first set the example of viewing a great number of social facts all over the world in groups and classes; and who first definitely and systematically inquired into the causes of a set of complex historical events and institutions, as being both discoverable and intelligible. This was a very marked advance upon both of the ideas, by one or other of which men had previously been content to explain to themselves the course of circumstances in the world; either the inscrutable decrees of an inhuman providence, or the fortuitous vagaries of an eyeless destiny.

It was Turgot, however, who completed the historical conception of Montesquieu, in a piece written in 1750, two years after the appearance of the *Esprit des Lois*, and in one or two other fragmentary compositions of about the same time, which are not the less remarkable because the writer was only twenty-three years old when these advanced ideas presented themselves to his intelligence. Vico in Italy had insisted on the doctrine that the course of human affairs is in a cycle, and that they move in a constant and self-repeating orbit.<sup>[49]</sup> Turgot, on the contrary, with more wisdom, at the opening of his subject is careful to distinguish the ever-varying spectacle of the succession of men from generation to generation, from the circle of identical revolutions in which the phenomena of nature are enclosed. In the one case time only restores at each instant the image of what it has just caused to disappear; in the other, the reason and the passions are ever incessantly producing new events. 'All the ages are linked together by a succession of causes and effects which bind the state of the world to all the states that have gone before. The multiplied signs of speech and writing, in supplying men with the means of an assured possession of their thoughts and of communicating them to one another, have formed a common treasure that one generation transmits to another, as an inheritance constantly augmented by the discoveries of each generation; and the human race, looked at from its origin, appears in the eyes of the philosopher one immense whole, which, just as in the case of each individual, has its infancy and its growth.'<sup>[50]</sup>

Pascal and others in ancient and modern times<sup>[51]</sup> had compared in casual and unfruitful remarks the history of the race to the history of the individual, but Turgot was able in some sort to see the full meaning and extent of the analogy, as well as the limitations proper to it, and to draw from it some of the larger principles which the idea involved. The first proposition in the passage just quoted, that a chain of causes and effects unites each age with every other age that has gone before, is one of the most memorable sentences in the history of thought. And Turgot not only saw that there is a relation of cause and effect between successive states of society; he had glimpses into some of the conditions of that relation. To a generation that stands on loftier heights his attempts seem rudimentary and strangely simple, but it was these attempts which cut the steps for our ascent. How is it, he asked, for instance, that the succession of social states is not uniform? that they follow with unequal step along the track marked out for them? He found the answer in the inequality of natural advantages, and he was able to discern the necessity of including in these advantages the presence, apparently accidental, in some communities and not in others of men of especial genius or capacity in some important direction.<sup>[52]</sup> Again, he saw that

just as in one way natural advantages accelerate the progress of a society, in another natural obstacles also accelerate it, by stimulating men to the efforts necessary to overcome them: *le besoin perfectionne l'instrument*.<sup>[53]</sup> The importance of following the march of the human mind over all the grooves along which it travels to further knowledge, was fully present to him, and he dwells repeatedly on the constant play going on between discoveries in one science and those in another. In no writer is there a fuller and more distinct sense of the essential unity and integrity of the history of mankind, nor of the multitude of the mansions into which this vast house is divided, and the many keys which he must possess that would open and enter in.

Even in empirical explanations Turgot shows a breadth and accuracy of vision truly surprising, considering his own youth and what we may venture to call the youth of his subject. The reader will be able to appreciate this, and to discern at the same time the arbitrary nature of Montesquieu's method, if he will contrast, for example, the remarks of this writer upon polygamy with the far wider and more sagacious explanation of the circumstances of such an institution given by Turgot.<sup>[54]</sup> Unfortunately, he has left us only short and fragmentary pieces, but they suggest more than many large and complete works. That they had a very powerful and direct influence upon Condorcet there is no doubt, as well from the similarity of general conception between him and Turgot, as from the nearly perfect identity of leading passages in their writings. Let us add that in Turgot's fragments we have what is unhappily not a characteristic of Condorcet, the peculiar satisfaction and delight in scientific history of a style which states a fact in such phrases as serve also to reveal its origin, bearings, significance, in which every successive piece of description is so worded as to be self-evidently a link in the chain of explanation, an ordered term in a series of social conditions.

Before returning to Condorcet we ought to glance at the remarkable piece, written in 1784, in which Kant propounded his idea of a universal or cosmo-political history, which contemplating the agency of the human will upon a large scale should unfold to our view a regular stream of tendency in the great succession of events.<sup>[55]</sup> The will metaphysically considered, Kant said, is free, but its manifestations, that is to say, human actions, 'are as much under the control of universal laws of nature as any other physical phenomena.'

The very same course of incidents, which taken separately and individually would have seemed perplexed and incoherent, 'yet viewed in their connection and as the action of the human *species* and not of independent beings, never fail to observe a steady and continuous, though slow, development of certain great predispositions in our nature.' As it is impossible to presume in the human race any *rational* purpose of its own, we must seek to observe some *natural* purpose in the current of human actions. Thus a history of creatures with no plan of their own, may yet admit a systematic form as a history of creatures blindly pursuing a plan of nature. Now we know that all predispositions are destined to develop themselves according to their final purpose. Man's rational predispositions are destined to develop themselves in the species and not in the individual. History then is the progress of the development of all the tendencies laid in man by nature. The method of development is the antagonism of these tendencies in the social state, and its source the *unsocial sociality* of man—a tendency to enter the social state, combined with a perpetual resistance to that tendency, which is ever threatening to dissolve it. The play of these two tendencies unfolds talents of every kind, and by gradual increase of light a preparation is made for such a mode of thinking as is capable of 'exalting a social concert that had been *pathologically* extorted from the mere necessities of situation, into a *moral* union founded on the reasonable choice.' Hence the highest problem for man is the establishment of a universal civil society, founded on the empire of political justice; and 'the history of the human species as a whole may be regarded as the unravelling of a hidden plan of nature for accomplishing a perfect state of civil constitution for society in its internal relations (and, as the condition of that, in its external relations also), as the sole state of society in which the tendencies of human nature can be all and fully developed.' Nor is this all. We shall not only be able to unravel the intricate web of past affairs, but shall also find a clue for the guidance of future statesmen in the art of political prediction. Nay more, this clue 'will open a consolatory prospect into futurity, in which at a remote distance we shall observe the human species seated upon an eminence won by infinite toil, where all the germs are unfolded which nature has implanted within it, and its destination on this earth accomplished.'

That this conception involves an assumption about tendencies and final purposes which reverses the true method of history, and moreover reduces what ought to be a scientific inquiry to be a foregone justification of nature or providence, should not prevent us from appreciating its signal merits in insisting on a systematic presentation of the collective activity of the race, and in pointing out, however cursorily, the use of such an elucidation of the past in furnishing the grounds of practical guidance in dealing with the future and in preparing it. Considering the brevity of this little tract, its pregnancy and suggestiveness have not often been equalled. We have seen enough of it here to enable us to realise the differences between this and the French school. We miss the wholesome objectivity, resulting from the stage which had been reached in France by the physical sciences. Condorcet's series of *éloges* shows unmistakably how deep an impression the history of physical discovery had made upon him, and how clearly he understood the value of its methods. The peculiar study which their composition had occasioned him is of itself almost enough to account for the fact that a conception which had long been preparing in the superior minds of the time, should fully develop itself in him rather than in anybody else.

The Physiocrats, as we have seen, had introduced the idea of there being a natural order in social circumstances, that order being natural which is most advantageous to mankind. Turgot had declared that one age is bound to another by a chain of causation. Condorcet fused these two conceptions. He viewed the history of the ages as a whole, and found in their succession a natural order; an order which, when uninterrupted and undisturbed, tended to accumulate untold advantages upon the human race, which was every day becoming more plain to the vision of men, and therefore every day more and more assured from disturbance by ignorant prejudice and sinister interests. There is an order at once among the circumstances of a given generation, and among the successive sets of circumstances of successive generations. 'If we consider the development of human faculties in its results, so far as they relate to the individuals who exist at the same time on a given space, and if we follow that development from generation to generation, then we have before us the picture of the progress of the human mind. This progress is subject to the same general laws that are to be observed in the development of the faculties of individuals, for it is the result of that development, considered at the same time in a great number of individuals united in society. But the result that presents itself at any one instant depends upon that which was offered by the instants preceding; in turn it influences the result in times still to follow.'

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This picture will be of a historical character, inasmuch as being subject to perpetual variations it is formed by the observation in due order of different human societies in different epochs through which they have passed. It will expose the order of the various changes, the influence exercised by each period over the next, and thus will show in the modifications impressed upon the race, ever renewing itself in the immensity of the ages, the track that it has followed, and the exact steps that it has taken towards truth and happiness. Such observation of what man has been and of what he is, will then lead us to means proper for assuring and accelerating the fresh progress that his nature allows us to anticipate still further.<sup>[56]</sup>

'If a man is able to predict with nearly perfect confidence, phenomena with whose laws he is acquainted; if, even when they are unknown to him, he is able, in accordance with the experience of the past, to foresee with a large degree of probability the events of the future, why should we treat it as a chimerical enterprise, to trace with some verisimilitude the picture of the future destinies of the human race in accordance with the results of its history? The only foundation of belief in the natural sciences is this idea, that the general laws, known or unknown, which regulate the phenomena of the universe are necessary and constant; and why should this principle be less true for the development of the moral and intellectual faculties of man than for other natural operations? In short, opinions grounded on past experience in objects of the same order being the single rule of conduct for even the wisest men, why should the philosopher be forbidden to rest his conjectures on the same base, provided that he never attributes to them a degree of certainty beyond what is warranted by the number, the constancy, and the accuracy of his observations?'<sup>[57]</sup>

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Thus Condorcet's purpose was not to justify nature, as it had been with Kant, but to search in the past for rational grounds of a belief in the unbounded splendour of men's future destinies. His view of the character of the relations among the circumstances of the social union, either at a given moment or in a succession of periods, was both accurate and far-sighted. When he came actually to execute his own great idea, and to specify the manner in which those relations arose and operated, he instantly diverged from the right path. Progress in his mind is exclusively produced by improvement in intelligence. It is the necessary result of man's activity in the face of that disproportion ever existing between what he knows and what he desires and feels the necessity to know.<sup>[58]</sup> Hence the most fatal of the errors of Condorcet's sketch. He measures only the contributions made by nations and eras to what we know; leaving out of sight their failures and successes in the elevation of moral standards and ideals, and in the purification of human passions.

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Now even if we hold the intellectual principle only to be progressive, and the moral elements to be fixed, being coloured and shaped and quickened by the surrounding intellectual conditions, still, inasmuch as the manner of this shaping and colouring is continually changing and leading to the most important transformations of human activity and sentiment, it must obviously be a radical deficiency in any picture of social progress to leave out the development of ethics, whether it be a derivative or an independent and spontaneous development. One seeks in vain in Condorcet's sketch for any account of the natural history of western morals, or for any sign of consciousness on his part that the difference in ethical discipline and feeling between the most ferocious of primitive tribes and the most enlightened eighteenth-century Frenchmen, was a result of evolution that needed historical explanation, quite as much as the difference between the astrology of one age and the astronomy of another. We find no recognition of the propriety of recounting the various steps of that long process by which, to use Kant's pregnant phrase, the relations born of pathological necessity were metamorphosed into those of moral union. The grave and lofty feeling, for example, which inspired the last words of the *Tableau*—whence came it? Of what long-drawn chain of causes in the past was it the last effect? It is not enough to refer us generally to previous advances in knowledge and intellectual emancipation, because even supposing the successive modifications of our moral sensibilities to be fundamentally due to the progress of intellectual enlightenment, we still want to know in the first place something about the influences which harness one process to the other, and in the second place, something about

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the particular directions which these modifications of moral constitution have taken.

If this is one very radical omission in Condorcet's scheme, his angry and vehement aversion for the various religions of the world (with perhaps one exception) is a sin of commission still more damaging to its completeness. That he should detest the corrupt and oppressive forms of religion of his own century was neither surprising nor blamable. An unfavourable view of the influences upon human development of the Christian belief, even in its least corrupt forms, was not by any means untenable. Nay, he was at liberty to go further than this, and to depict religion as a natural infirmity of the human mind in its immature stages, just as there are specific disorders incident in childhood to the human body. Even on this theory, he was bound to handle it with the same calmness which he would have expected to find in a pathological treatise by a physician. Who would write of the sweating sickness with indignation, or describe zymotic diseases with resentment? Condorcet's pertinacious anger against theology is just as irrational as this would be, from the scientific point of view which he pretends to have assumed. Theology, in fact, was partly avenged of her assailants, for she had in the struggle contrived to infect them with the bitter contagion of her own traditional spirit.

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From the earliest times to the latest it is all one story according to Condorcet. He can speak with respect of philosophies even when, as in the case of the Scotch school of the last century, he dislikes and condemns them.<sup>[59]</sup> Of religion his contempt and hatred only vary slightly in degree. Barbarous tribes have sorcerers, trading on the gross superstitions of their dupes: so in other guise and with different names have civilised nations to-day. As other arts progressed, superstition, too, became less rude; priestly families kept all knowledge in their own hands, and thus preserved their hypocritical and tyrannical assumptions from detection. They disclosed nothing to the people without some supernatural admixture, the better to maintain their personal pretensions. They had two doctrines, one for themselves, and the other for the people. Sometimes, as they were divided into several orders, each of them reserved to itself certain mysteries. Thus all the inferior orders were at once rogues and dupes, and the great system of hypocrisy was only known in all its completeness to a few adepts. Christianity belonged to the same class. Its priests, we must admit, 'in spite of their knaveries and their vices, were enthusiasts ready to perish for their doctrines.' In vain did Julian endeavour to deliver the empire from the scourge. Its triumph was the signal for the incurable decay of all art and knowledge. The Church may seem to have done some good in things where her interests did not happen to clash with the interests of Europe, as in helping to abolish slavery, for instance; but after all 'circumstances and manners' would have produced the result necessarily and of themselves. Morality, which was taught by the priests only, contained those universal principles that have been unknown to no sect; but it created a host of purely religious duties, and of imaginary sins. These duties were more rigorously enjoined than those of nature, and actions that were indifferent, legitimate, or even virtuous, were more severely rebuked and punished than real crimes. Yet, on the other hand, a moment of repentance, consecrated by the absolution of a priest, opened the gates of heaven to the worst miscreants.<sup>[60]</sup>

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In the opening of the last of these remarks there is much justice. So there is in the striking suggestion made in another place, that we should not bless erroneous systems for their utility, simply because they help to repair some small part of the mischief of which they have themselves been the principal cause.<sup>[61]</sup> But on the whole it is obvious that Condorcet was unfitted by his temper, and that of the school to which he most belonged, from accepting religion as a fact in the history of the human mind that must have some positive explanation. To look at it in this way as the creation of a handful of selfish impostors in each community, was to show a radical incompetence to carry out the scheme which had been so scientifically projected. The picture is ruined by the angry caricature of what ought to have been one of the most important figures in it. To this place the Christian Church is undeniably entitled, however we may be disposed to strike the balance between the undoubted injuries and the undoubted advantages which it has been the means of dealing to the civilisation of the west. Never perhaps was there so thorough an inversion of the true view of the comparative elevation of different parts of human character, as is implied in Condorcet's strange hint that Cromwell's satellites would have been much better men if they had carried instead of the Bible at their saddle-bows some merry book of the stamp of Voltaire's *Pucelle*.<sup>[62]</sup>

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Apart from the misreading of history in explaining religion by the folly of the many and the frauds of a few, Condorcet's interpretation involved the profoundest infidelity to his own doctrine of the intrinsic purity and exaltation of human nature. This doctrine ought in all reason to have led him to look for the secret of the popular acceptance of beliefs that to him seemed most outrageous, in some possibly finer side which they might possess for others, appealing not to the lower but to the higher qualities of a nature with instincts of perfection. Take his account of Purgatory, for instance. The priests, he says, drew up so minute and comprehensive a table of sins that nobody could hope to escape from censure. Here you come upon one of the most lucrative branches of the sacerdotal trafficking; people were taught to imagine a hell of limited duration, which the priests only had the power to abridge; and this grace they sold, first to the living, then to the kinsmen and friends of the dead.<sup>[63]</sup> Now it was surely more worthy of a belief in the natural depravity than in the natural perfectibility of the sons of Adam, thus to assume without parley or proviso a base mercenariness on the one hand, and grovelling terror on the other, as the origin of a doctrine which was obviously susceptible of a kinder explanation. Would it not have been more consistent with belief in human goodness to refer the doctrine to a merciful and affectionate and truly humanising anxiety to assuage the horrors of what is perhaps the most frightful idea that has ever corroded human character, the idea of eternal punishment? We could in part have

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pardoned Condorcet if he had striven to invent ever so fanciful origins for opinions and belief in his solicitude for the credit of humanity. As it is, he distorts the history of religion only to humanity's discredit. How, if the people were always predisposed to virtue, were priests, sprung of the same people and bred in the same traditions, so invariably and incurably devoted to baseness and hypocrisy? Was the nature of a priest absolutely devoid of what physicians call recuperative force, restoring him to a sound mind, in spite of professional perversion? In fine, if man had been so grossly enslaved in moral nature from the beginning of the world down to the year 1789 or thereabouts, how was it possible that notwithstanding the admitted slowness of civilising processes, he should suddenly spring forth the very perfectible and nearly perfected being that Condorcet passionately imagined him to be?<sup>[64]</sup>

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It has already been hinted that there was one partial exception to Condorcet's otherwise all-embracing animosity against religion. This was Mahometanism. Towards this his attitude is fully appreciative, though of course he deplores the superstitions which mixed themselves up with the Arabian prophet's efforts for the purification of the men of his nation. After the seven vials of fiery wrath have been poured out upon the creed of Palestine, it is refreshing to find the creed of Arabia almost patronised and praised. The writer who could not have found in his heart to think Gregory the Great or Hildebrand other than a mercenary impostor, nor Cromwell other than an ambitious hypocrite, admits with exquisite blandness of Mahomet that he had the art of employing all the means of subjugating men *avec adresse, mais avec grandeur*.<sup>[65]</sup> Another reason, no doubt, besides his hatred of the Church, lay at the bottom of Condorcet's tolerance or more towards Mahometanism. The Arabian superstition was not fatal to knowledge, Arabian activity in algebra, chemistry, optics, and astronomy, atoned in Condorcet's eyes for the Koran.

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It is fair to add further, that Condorcet showed a more just appreciation of the effects of Protestantism upon western development than has been common among French thinkers. He recognises that men who had learnt, however imperfectly, to submit their religious prejudices to rational examination, would naturally be likely to extend the process to political prejudices also. Moreover, if the reformed churches refused to render to reason all its rights, still they agreed that its prison should be less narrow; the chain was not broken, but it ceased to be either so heavy or so short as it had been. And in countries where what was by the dominant sect insolently styled tolerance succeeded in establishing itself, it was possible to maintain the tolerated doctrines with a more or less complete freedom. So there arose in Europe a sort of freedom of thought, not for men, but for Christians; and, 'if we except France, it is only for Christians that it exists anywhere else at the present day,' a limitation which has now fortunately ceased to be altogether exact.<sup>[66]</sup>

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If we have smiled at the ease with which what is rank craftiness in a Christian is toned down into address in a Mahometan, we may be amused too at the leniency that describes some of the propagandist methods of the eighteenth century. Condorcet becomes rapturous as he tells in a paragraph of fine sustention with what admixture of the wisdom of the serpent the humane philosophers of his century 'covered the truth with a veil that prevented it from hurting too weak sight, and left the pleasure of conjecturing it; caressing prejudices with address, to deal them the more certain blows; scarcely ever threatening them, nor ever more than one at once, nor even one in its integrity; sometimes consoling the enemies of reason by pretending to desire no more than a half-tolerance in religion and half-liberty in politics; conciliating despotism while they combated the absurdities of religion, and religion when they rose against despotism; attacking these two scourges in their principle, even when they seemed only to bear ill-will to revolting or ridiculous abuses, and striking these poisonous trees in their very roots, while they appeared to be doing no more than pruning crooked branches.'<sup>[67]</sup> Imagine the holy rage with which such acts would have been attacked, if Condorcet had happened to be writing about the Jesuits. Alas! the stern and serene composure of the historical conscience was as unknown to him as it is always to orthodox apologists. It is to be said, moreover, that he had less excuse for being without it, for he rested on the goodness of men, and not, as theologians rest, on their vileness. It is a most interesting thing, we may notice in passing, to consider what was the effect upon the Revolution of this artfulness or prudence with which its theoretic precursors sowed the seed. Was it as truly wise as Condorcet supposed? Or did it weaken, almost corrupt, the very roots? Was it the secret of the thoroughness with which the work of demolition was done? Was it, too, the secret of the many and disastrous failures in the task of reconstruction?<sup>[68]</sup>

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There are one or two detached remarks suggested by Condorcet's picture, which it may be worth while to make. He is fully alive, for example, to the importance to mankind of the appearance among them of one of those men of creative genius, like Archimedes or like Newton, whose lives constitute an epoch in human history. Their very existence he saw to be among the greatest benefits conferred on the race by Nature. He hardly seems to have been struck, on the other hand, with the appalling and incessant waste of these benefits that goes on; with the number of men of Newtonian capacity who are undoubtedly born into the world only to chronicle small beer; with the hosts of high and worthy souls who labour and flit away like shadows, perishing in the accomplishment of minor and subordinate ends. We may suspect that the notion of all this immeasurable profusion of priceless treasures, its position as one of the laws of the condition of man on the globe, would be unspeakably hard of endurance to one holding Condorcet's peculiar form of optimism.

Again, if we had space, it would be worth while to examine some of the acute and ingenious hints which Condorcet throws out by the way. It would be interesting to consider, as he suggests, the influence upon the progress of the human mind of the change from writing on such subjects as

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science, philosophy, and jurisprudence in Latin, to the usual language of each country. That change rendered the sciences more popular, but it increased the trouble of the scientific men in following the general march of knowledge. It caused a book to be read in one country by more men of inferior competence, but less read throughout Europe by men of superior light. And though it relieves men who have no leisure for extensive study from the trouble of learning Latin, it imposes upon profounder persons the necessity of learning a variety of modern languages.<sup>[69]</sup> Again, ground is broken for the most important reflection, in the remark that men preserve the prejudices of their childhood, their country, and their age, long after they have recognised all the truths necessary to destroy them.<sup>[70]</sup> Perhaps most instructive and most tranquillising of all is this, that the progress of physical knowledge is constantly destroying in silence erroneous opinions which had never seemed to be attacked.<sup>[71]</sup> And in reading history, how much ignorance and misinterpretation would have been avoided, if the student had but been careful to remember that 'the law as written and the law as administered; the principles of those in power, and the modification of their action by the sentiments of the governed; an institution as it emanates from those who form it, and the same institution realised; the religion of books, and that of the people; the apparent universality of a prejudice, and the substantial adhesion that it receives; these may all differ in such a way that the effects absolutely cease to answer to the public and recognised causes.'<sup>[72]</sup>

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## VI.

We have now seen something of Condorcet's ideas of the past, and of his conception of what he was perhaps the first to call the Science of Man. Let us turn to his hopes for the future, and one or two of the details to which his study of the science of man conducted him. It is well to perceive at the outset that Condorcet's views of the Tenth Epoch, as he counts the period extending from the French Revolution to the era of the indefinite perfection of man, were in truth not the result of any scientific processes whatever, properly so called. He saw, and this is his merit, that such processes were applicable to the affairs of society; and that, as he put it, all political and moral errors rest upon error in philosophy, which in turn is bound up with erroneous methods in physical science.<sup>[73]</sup> But in the execution of his plan he does not succeed in showing the nature of the relations of these connected forces; still less does he practise the scientific duty, for illustrating which he gives such well-deserved glory to Newton,<sup>[74]</sup> of not only accounting for phenomena, but also of measuring the *quantity* of forces. His conception, therefore, of future progress, however near conjecture may possibly have brought him to the truth, is yet no more than conjecture. The root of it is found in nothing more precise, definite, or quantified than a general notion gathered from history, that some portions of the race had made perceptible advances in freedom and enlightenment, and that we might therefore confidently expect still further advances to be made in the same direction with an accelerated rapidity, and with certain advantageous effects upon the happiness of the whole mass of the human race. In short, the end of the speculation is a confirmed and heightened conviction of the indefinite perfectibility of the species, with certain foreshadowings of the direction which this perfectibility would ultimately follow. The same rebellion against the disorder and misery of the century, which drove some thinkers and politicians into fierce yearnings for an imaginary state of nature, and others into an extravagant admiration for the ancient republics, caused a third school, and Condorcet among them, to turn their eyes with equally boundless confidence and yearning towards an imaginary future. It was at all events the least desperate error of the three.

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Our expectations for the future, Condorcet held, may be reduced to these three points: the destruction of inequality among nations; the progress of equality among the people of any given nation; and, finally the substantial perfecting (*perfectionnement réel*) of man.

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I. With reference to the first of these great aspirations, it will be brought about by the abandonment by European peoples of their commercial monopolies, their treacherous practices, their mischievous and extravagant proselytising, and their sanguinary contempt for those of another colour or another creed. Vast countries, now a prey to barbarism and violence, will present in one region numerous populations only waiting to receive the means and instruments of civilisation from us, and as soon as they find brothers in the Europeans, will joyfully become their friends and pupils; and in another region, nations enslaved under the yoke of despots or conquerors, crying aloud for so many ages for liberators. In yet other regions, it is true, there are tribes almost savage, cut off by the harshness of their climate from a perfected civilisation, or else conquering hordes, ignorant of every law but violence and every trade but brigandage. The progress of these last two descriptions of people will naturally be more tardy, and attended by more storm and convulsion. It is possible even, that reduced in number, in proportion as they see themselves repulsed by civilised nations, they will end by insensibly disappearing.<sup>[75]</sup> It is perhaps a little hard to expect Esquimaux or the barbaric marauders of the sandy expanses of Central Asia insensibly to disappear, lest by their cheerless presence they should destroy the unity and harmony of the transformation scene in the great drama of Perfectibility.

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II. The principal causes of the inequality that unfortunately exists among the people of the same community are three in number:—inequality in wealth; inequality of condition between the man whose means of subsistence are both assured and transmissible, and him for whom these means depend upon the duration of his working life; thirdly, inequality of instruction. How are we to establish a continual tendency in these three sources of inequality to diminish in activity and

power? To lessen, though not to demolish, inequalities in wealth, it will be necessary for all artificial restrictions and exclusive advantages to be removed from fiscal or other legal arrangements, by which property is either acquired or accumulated: and among social changes tending in this direction will be the banishment by public opinion of an avaricious or mercenary spirit from marriage. Again, inequality between permanent and precarious incomes will be radically modified by the development of the application of the calculation of probabilities to life. The extension of annuities and insurance will not only benefit many individuals, but will benefit society at large by putting an end to that periodical ruin of a large number of families, which is such an ever-renewing source of misery and degradation. Another means to the same end will be found in discovering, by the same doctrine of probabilities, some other equally solid base for credit instead of a large capital, and for rendering the progress of industry and the activity of commerce more independent of the existence of great capitalists. Something approaching to equality of instruction, even for those who can only spare a few of their early years for study, and in after times only a few hours of leisure, will become more attainable by improved selection of subjects, and improved methods of teaching them. The dwellers in one country will cease to be distinguished by the use of a rude or of a refined dialect; and this, it may be said in passing, has actually been the result of the school system in the United States. One portion of them will no longer be dependent upon any other for guidance in the smallest affairs. We cannot obliterate nor ignore natural differences of capacity, but after public instruction has been properly developed, 'the difference will be between men of superior enlightenment, and men of an upright character who feel the value of light without being dazzled by it; between talent or genius, and that good sense which knows how to appreciate and to enjoy both. Even if this difference were greater than has been said, if we compare the force and extent of faculty, it would become none the less insensible, if we compare their respective effects upon the relations of men among themselves, upon all that affects their independence and their happiness.'<sup>[76]</sup>

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III. What are the changes that we may expect from the substantial perfecting of human nature and society? If, before making this forecast, we reflect with what feeble means the race has arrived at its present knowledge of useful and important truths, we shall not fear the reproach of temerity in our anticipations for a time when the force of all these means shall have been indefinitely increased. The progress of agricultural science will make the same land more productive, and the same labour more efficient. Nay, who shall predict what the art of converting elementary substances into food for our use may one day become? The constant tendency of population to advance to the limits of the means of subsistence thus amplified, will be checked by a rising consciousness in men, that if they have obligations in respect of creatures still unborn, these obligations consist in giving them, not existence but happiness, in adding to the wellbeing of the family, and not cumbering the earth with useless and unfortunate beings. This changed view upon population will partly follow from the substitution of rational ideas for those prejudices which have penetrated morals with an austerity that is corrupting and degrading.<sup>[77]</sup> The movement will be further aided by one of the most important steps in human progress—the destruction, namely, of the prejudices that have established inequality of rights between the two sexes, and which are so mischievous even to the sex that seems to be most favoured.<sup>[78]</sup> We seek in vain for any justification of such an inequality in difference of physical organisation, in force of intelligence, or in moral sensibility. It has no other origin than abuse of strength, and it is to no purpose that attempts are made to excuse it by sophisms. The destruction of the usages springing from this custom will render common those domestic virtues which are the foundation of all others, and will encourage education as well as make it more general, both because instruction would be imparted to both sexes with more equality, and because it cannot become general even for males without the aid of the mother of the family.<sup>[79]</sup>

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Among other improvements under our third head will be the attainment of greater perfection in language, leading at once to increased accuracy and increased concision. Laws and institutions, following the progress of knowledge, will be constantly undergoing modifications tending to identify individual with collective interests. Wars will grow less frequent with the extinction of those ideas of hereditary and dynastic rights, that have occasioned so many bloody contests. The art of learning will be facilitated by the institution of a Universal Language; and the art of teaching by resort to Technical Methods, or systems which unite in orderly arrangement a great number of different objects, so that their relations are perceived at a single glance.<sup>[80]</sup>

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Finally, progress in medicine, the use of more wholesome food and healthy houses, the diminution of the two most active causes of deterioration, namely, misery and excessive wealth, must prolong the average duration of life, as well as raise the tone of health while it lasts. The force of transmissible diseases will be gradually weakened, until their quality of transmission vanishes. May we then not hope for the arrival of a time when death will cease to be anything but the effect either of extraordinary accidents, or of the destruction, ever slower and slower, of the vital forces? May we not believe that the duration of the middle interval between birth and this destruction has no assignable term? Man will never become immortal, but is it a mere chimera to hold that the term fixed to his years is slowly and perpetually receding further and further from the moment at which his existence begins?<sup>[81]</sup>

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The rapidity and the necessary incompleteness with which Condorcet threw out in isolated hints his ideas of the future state of society, impart to his conception a certain mechanical aspect, which conveys an incorrect impression of his notion of the sources whence social change must

flow. His admirable and most careful remarks upon the moral training of children prove him to have been as far removed as possible from any of those theories of the formation of character which merely prescribe the imposition of moulds and casts from without, instead of carefully tending the many spontaneous and sensitive processes of growth within.<sup>[82]</sup> Nobody has shown a finer appreciation of the delicacy of the material out of which character is to be made, and of the susceptibility of its elementary structure; nor of the fact that education consists in such a discipline of the primitive impulses as shall lead men to do right, not by the constraint of mechanical external sanctions, but by an instant, spontaneous, and almost inarticulate repugnance to cowardice, cruelty, apathy, self-indulgence, and the other great roots and centres of wrong-doing. It was to a society composed of men and women whose characters had been shaped on this principle, that Condorcet looked for the realisation of his exalted hopes for humanity.<sup>[83]</sup>

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With machinery and organisation, in truth, Condorcet did not greatly concern himself; probably too little rather than too much. The central idea of all his aspirations was to procure the emancipation of reason, free and ample room for its exercise, and improved competence among men in the use of it. The subjugation of the modern intelligence beneath the disembodied fancies of the grotesque and sombre imagination of the Middle Ages, did not offend him more than the idea of any fixed organisation of the spiritual power, or any final and settled and universally accepted solution of belief and order would have done. With De Maistre and Comte the problem was the organised and systematic reconstruction of an anarchic society. With Condorcet it was how to persuade men to exert the individual reason methodically and independently, not without co-operation, but without anything like official or other subordination.

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His cardinal belief and precept was, as with Socrates, that the βίος ἀνεξέταστος is not to be lived by man. As we have seen, the freedom of the reason was so dear to him, that he counted it an abuse for a parent to instil his own convictions into the defenceless minds of his young children. This was the natural outcome of Condorcet's mode of viewing history as the record of intellectual emancipation, while to Comte its deepest interest was as a record of moral and emotional cultivation. If we value in one type of thinker the intellectual conscientiousness, which refrains from perplexing men by propounding problems unless the solution can be set forth also, perhaps we owe no less honour in the thinker of another type to that intellectual self-denial which makes him very careful lest the too rigid projection of his own specific conclusions should by any means obstruct the access of a single ray of fertilising light. This religious scrupulosity, which made him abhor all interference with the freedom and openness of the understanding as the worst kind of sacrilege, was Condorcet's eminent distinction. If, as some think, the world will gradually transform its fear or love of unknowable gods into a devout reverence for those who have stirred in men a sense of the dignity of their own nature and of its large and multitudinous possibilities, then will his name not fail of deep and perpetual recollection.

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## FOOTNOTES:

[1] *Œuv. de Condorcet* (12 vols. 1847-49), ix. 489.

[2] *Ib.* i. 220.

[3] *Œuv.* i. 201. See Turgot's wise reply, p. 202.

[4] Sept. 1770. Voltaire's *Corr.* vol. lxxi. p. 147.

[5] *Œuv.* i. 41.

[6] *Œuv. de Turgot*, ii. 817.

[7] *Œuv.* i. 228.

[8] *Ib.* i. 232.

[9] *Œuv.* i. 29.

[10] Letters to Condorcet (1774). *Œuv.* i. 35.

[11] *Éloge de Franklin*, iii. 422.

[12] *Réflexions sur la Rév. de 1688, et sur celle du 10 Août*, xii. 197.

[13] *Œuv.* i. 71.

[14] *Ib.* i. 73, 74.

[15] *Œuv.* i. 296.

[16] *Ib.* i. 78.

[17] *Œuv.* i. 89. Condorcet had 16 votes, and Bailly 15. '*Jamais aucune élection,*' says La Harpe, who was all for Buffon, '*n'avait offert ni ce nombre ni ce partage.*'—*Philos. du 18ième Siècle*, i. 77. A full account of the election, and of Condorcet's reception, in Grimm's *Corr. Lit.* xi. 50-56.

[18] *Œuv.* iii. 109, 110.

[19] His wife, said to be one of the most beautiful women of her time, was twenty-three years younger than himself, and survived until 1822. Cabanis married another sister, and

Marshal Grouchy was her brother. Madame Condorcet wrote nothing of her own, except some notes to a translation which she made of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

- [20] Montesquieu, Raynal, and one or two other writers, had attacked slavery long before, and Condorcet published a very effective piece against it in 1781 (*Réflexions sur l'Esclavage des Nègres*; *Œuv.* vii. 63), with an epistle dedicated to the enslaved blacks. About the same time an Abolition Society was formed in France, following the example set in England.
- [21] *Au Corps Electoral, contre l'Esclavage des Noirs*. 3 Fév. 1789. *Sur l'Admission des Députés des Planteurs de Saint Domingue*. 1789. ix. 469-485.
- [22] *Lettres d'un Gentilhomme aux Messieurs du Tiers Etat*, ix. 255-259.
- [23] *Réflexions sur les Pouvoirs et Instructions à donner par les Provinces à leurs Députés aux Etats-Généraux*, ix. 263, 283.
- [24] *Ib.* ix. 266.
- [25] *Réflexions sur les Pouvoirs et Instructions à donner par les Provinces à leurs Députés aux Etats-Généraux*, ix. 264.
- [26] *Réflexions sur les Pouvoirs et Instructions à donner par les Provinces à leurs Députés aux Etats-Généraux*, xii. 228, 229, 234.
- [27] *Œuv.* iii. 533. As this was written in 1777, Condorcet was perhaps thinking of Turgot and Necker. Of the latter, his daughter tells us repeatedly, without any consciousness that she is recording a most ignominious trait, that public approbation was the very breath of his nostrils, the thing for which he lived, the thing without which he was wretched.—See vol. i. of *Madame de Staël's Considerations*.
- [28] *Œuv.* iii. 227. It was followed by a letter, nominally by a young mechanic, offering to construct an automaton sovereign, like Kempel's chess-player, who would answer all constitutional purposes perfectly.—*Ib.* 239-241.
- [29] *Œuv.* xii. 236.
- [30] *Déclaration de l'Assemblée Nationale*, 29 Déc. 1791. *Œuv.* xii. 25.
- [31] 13th August 1792. *Œuv.* x. 547.
- [32] *Ib.* x. 560.
- [33] 19th August. *Ib.* x. 565.
- [34] *Opinion sur le Jugement de Louis XVI*. Nov. 1792 *Œuv.* xii. 267-303.
- [35] 19th Jan. 1793. *Œuv.* xii. 311.
- [36] See M. Edgar Quinet's remarks on this achievement. *La Révolution*, ii. 110.
- [37] *Œuv.* xii. 333, 417. M. Louis Blanc has contrasted the principles laid down as the basis of this project with Robespierre's rival Declaration of the Rights of Man, printing the two side by side in parallel columns. '*Les voilà donc face à face, après leur commune victoire sur le principe d'autorité, ces deux principes d'individualisme et de fraternité, entre lesquels, aujourd'hui même, le monde balance, invinciblement ému! D'un côté la philosophie du rationalisme pur, qui divise; d'un autre côté la philosophie du sentiment, qui rapproche et réunit. Ici Voltaire et Condorcet, là J. J. Rousseau et Robespierre.*' *Hist. de la Révol. Fran.* bk. ix. ch. v.
- [38] *Extrait du Moniteur*. *Œuv.* xii. 677.
- [39] The Abbé Morellet, in his narrative of the death of Condorcet (*Mémoires*, c. xxiv.), says that he died of poison, a mixture of stramonium and opium. He adds that the surgeon described death as due to apoplexy. See Musset-Pathay's *J. J. Rousseau*, ii. 42.
- [40] Dupont de Nemours. *Les Physiocrates*, i. 326.
- [41] *Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*. *Œuv.* vi. 276.
- [42] Quesnay; *Droit Naturel*, ch. v. *Les Physiocrates*, i. 52.
- [43] *Economistes Financiers du 18ième Siècle*. Vauban's *Projet d'une Dime Royale* (p. 33), and Boisguillebert's *Factum de la France*, etc. (p. 248 *et seq.*)
- [44] De la Rivière, for instance, very notably. Cf. his *Ordre Naturel des Sociétés Politiques*. *Physiocrates*, ii. 469, 636, etc. See also Baudeau on the superiority of the Economic Monarchy *Ib.* pp. 783-791.
- [45] *Ordre Nat. des Soc. Pol.* p. 526.
- [46] Bk. i. 23.
- [47] *Hist.* i. 4.
- [48] Polyb. *Hist.* I. iii. 4; iv. 3, 7.
- [49] The well-known words of Thucydides may contain the germ of the same idea, when he speaks of the future as being likely to represent again, after the fashion of human things, 'if not the very image, yet the near resemblance of the past.' Bk. i. 22, 4.
- [50] *Discours en Sorbonne*. *Œuv. de Turgot*, ii. 597. (Ed. of 1844).
- [51] Cf. Sir G. C. Lewis's *Methods of Observation in Politics*, ii. 439, note.

- [52] *Œuv. de Turgot*, ii. 599, 645, etc.
- [53] *Ib.* ii. 601.
- [54] *Esprit des Lois*, xvi. cc. 2-4. And *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle*, in Turgot's Works, ii. 640, 641. For a further account of Turgot's speculations, see article "Turgot" in the present volume.
- [55] *Idea of a Universal History on a Cosmo-Political Plan*. It was translated by De Quincey, and is to be found in vol. xiii. of his collected works, pp. 133-152.
- [56] *Tableau des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*. *Œuv.* vi. 12, 13.
- [57] *Œuv.* vi. 236.
- [58] *Ib.* vi. 21.
- [59] *Œuv.* vi. 186.
- [60] *Œuv.* vi. pp. 35, 55, 101, 102, 111, 117, 118, etc.
- [61] *Dissertation sur cette question: S'il est utile aux hommes d'être trompés?*—one of the best of Condorcet's writings. *Œuv.* v. 360.
- [62] See Condorcet's vindication of the *Pucelle* in his Life of Voltaire. *Œuv.* iv. 88, 89. See also Comte's *Phil. Pos.* v. 450.
- [63] *Œuv.* vi. 118.
- [64] As M. Comte says in his remarks on Condorcet (*Phil. Pos.* iv. 185-193): '*Le progrès total finalement accompli ne peut être sans doute que le résultat général de l'accumulation spontanée des divers progrès partiels successivement réalisés depuis l'origine de la civilisation, en vertu de la marche successivement lente et graduelle de la nature humaine;*' so that Condorcet's picture presents a standing miracle, '*où l'on s'est même interdit d'abord la ressource vulgaire de la Providence.*' Comte's criticism, however, seems to leave out of sight what full justice Condorcet did to the various partial advances in the intellectual order.
- [65] *Œuv.* vi. 120-123.
- [66] *Œuv.* vi. 149, 153.
- [67] *Ib.* 187-189.
- [68] It is worth while to quote on this subject a passage from Condorcet as historically instructive as it is morally dangerous. '*La nécessité de mentir pour désavouer un ouvrage est une extrémité qui répugne également à la conscience et à la noblesse du caractère; mais le crime est pour les hommes injustes qui rendent ce désaveu nécessaire à la sûreté de celui qu'ils y forcent. Si vous avez érigé en crime ce qui n'en est pas un, si vous avez porté atteinte, par des lois absurdes ou par des lois arbitraires, au droit naturel qu'ont tous les hommes, non seulement d'avoir une opinion, mais de la rendre publique, alors vous méritez de perdre celui qu'a chaque homme d'entendre la vérité de la bouche d'un autre, droit qui fonde seul l'obligation rigoureuse de ne pas mentir. S'il n'est pas permis de tromper, c'est parceque tromper quelqu'un, c'est lui faire un tort, ou s'exposer à lui en faire un; mais le tort suppose un droit, et personne n'a celui de chercher, à s'assurer les moyens de commettre une injustice.*' *Vie de Voltaire; Œuv.* iv. 33, 34. Condorcet might have found some countenance for his sophisms in Plato (*Republ.* ii. 383); but even Plato restricted the privilege of lying to statesmen (iii. 389). He was in a wiser mood when he declared (*Œuv.* v. 384) that it is better to be imprudent than a hypocrite,—though for that matter these are hardly the only alternatives.
- [69] *Œuv.* vi. 163.
- [70] *Ib.* vi. 22.
- [71] *Ib.* p. 220.
- [72] *Œuv.* p. 234.
- [73] *Ib.* p. 223.
- [74] *Ib.* p. 206.
- [75] *Œuv.* pp. 239-244.
- [76] *Œuv.* pp. 244-251.
- [77] *Œuv.* pp. 257, 258.
- [78] Condorcet had already assailed the prejudices that keep women in subjection in an excellent tract, published in 1790; *Sur l'Admission des Femmes au Droit de Cité*. *Œuv.* x. 121-130.
- [79] *Œuv.* p. 264. The rest of the passage is not perfectly intelligible to me, so I give it as it stands. '*Cet hommage trop tardif, rendu enfin à l'équité et au bon sens, ne tarirait-il pas une source trop féconde d'injustices, de cruautés et de crimes, en faisant disparaître une opposition si dangereuse entre le penchant naturel le plus vif, le plus difficile à réprimer, et les devoirs de l'homme ou les intérêts de la société? Ne produirait-il pas, enfin, des mœurs nationales douces et pures, formées non de privations orgueilleuses, d'apparences hypocrites, de réserves imposées par la crainte de la honte ou les terreurs religieuses, mais d'habitudes librement contractées, inspirées par la nature, avouées par la raison?*' Can these habitudes be the habitudes of Free Love, or what are they? Condorcet, we know, thought the indissolubility of marriage a monstrously bad thing,

but the grounds which he gives for his thinking so would certainly lead to the infinite dissolubility of society. See a truly astounding passage in the *Fragment on the Tenth Epoch*, vi. 523-526. See also some curious words in a letter to Turgot, i. 221, 222.

[80] *Œuv.* pp. 269-272.

[81] *Œuv.* pp. 272-275. Also p. 618.

[82] See *Fragment de l'Histoire de la X<sup>e</sup> Epoque*. 'Il ne faut pas leur dire, mais les accoutumer à croire, à trouver au dedans a'eux-mêmes, que la bonté et la justice sont nécessaires au bonheur, comme une respiration facile et libre l'est à la santé.' Of books for the young: 'Il faut qu'ils n'excèdent jamais l'étendue ou la délicatesse de la sensibilité.' 'Il faut renoncer à l'idée de parler aux enfans de ce que ni leur esprit ni leur âme ne peuvent encore comprendre; ne pas leur faire admirer une constitution et réciter par cœur les droits politiques de l'homme quand ils ont à peine une idée nette de leurs relations avec leur famille et leurs camarades.'

Still more objectionable, we may be sure, would he have found the practice of drilling little children by the hearth or at the school-desk in creeds, catechisms, and the like repositories of mysteries baleful to the growing intelligence. '*Aidons le développement des facultés humaines pendant la faiblesse de l'enfance*,' he said admirably, '*mais n'abusons pas de cette faiblesse pour les mouler au gré de nos opinions de nos intérêts, ou de notre orgueil*.'—*Œuv.* vi. 543-554.

Cf. also v. 363-365, where there are some deserved strictures on the malpractice of teaching children as truth what the parents themselves believe to be superstition or even falsehood.

The reader may remember the speech of the Patriarch, in Lessing's play, against the Jew:

*Der mit Gewalt ein armes Christenkind  
Dem Bunde seiner Tauf' entreisst! Denn ist  
Nicht alles, was man Kindern thut, Gewalt?  
Zu sagen: ausgenommen, was die Kirch',  
An Kindern thut.*

[83] His *Mémoires sur l'Instruction Publique*, written in 1791-1792, and printed in the seventh volume of the works, are still very well worth turning to.

#### Transcribers' Notes:

Minor printer errors (omitted or incorrect punctuation) have been amended without note. Other errors have been amended and are listed below.

#### List of Amendments:

[Page 201](#): colleagues amended to colleagues; "... among his colleagues in the deputation ..."

[Page 240](#): added missing footnote anchor [66] to paragraph ending "... ceased to be altogether exact."

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CRITICAL MISCELLANIES (VOL. 2 OF 3),  
ESSAY 3: CONDORCET \*\*\*

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