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Theory of the Four Movements and of the General Destinies

TRANSLATED BY IAN PATTERSON
1808 Introduction

At the outset of this work, as well as at its conclusion, I want to call attention to a truth quite new to civilised man: namely that the Theory of the Four Movements — social, animal, organic and material — is the only subject of study that reason should sanction. It is the study of the General System of Nature, a problem God gives all Globes to resolve; and their inhabitants can only achieve happiness after they have resolved it.

Hitherto you have neither solved this problem nor even studied it; you have reached no further than the fourth, and lowest, branch of the theory, the one that deals with material movement, whose laws have been unveiled by Newton and Leibniz. I shall have occasion more than once to criticise this slow development of human intelligence.

In advance of the publication of my theory (as advertised)¹ the present volume provides a slight glimpse of it, to which I have added some extended remarks on the political ignorance of Civilised Man, the two main examples of this ignorance being drawn:

In the 2nd part, from the vices of the conjugal system;
In the 3rd part, from the vices of the commercial system;
and from the stupidity of the philosophers, who have done nothing to seek any better arrangement for the union of the sexes and the exchange of industrial products.

These are, admittedly, somewhat minor arguments to adduce in support of an announcement as important as the discovery of the

¹ See p. 309, n.1.
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Laws of Movement; but it was necessary for me to expatiate on some of the absurdities of Civilised Politics in order to make my readers aware of the existence of a more exact Science which would refute the philosophic Sciences.

In the course of reading, it should be borne in mind that because the discovery it announces is more important on its own than all the scientific work done since the human race began, civilised people should henceforth concern themselves with one debate only: whether or not I have really discovered the Theory of the Four Movements; for if the answer is affirmative, all economic, moral and political theories will need to be thrown away, and preparations made for the most astounding, and happiest, event possible on this or any other globe, the transition from social chaos to universal harmony.
Preliminary discourse

On the stupidity of the civilised nations which have forgotten or scorned the two branches of research which lead to the theory of destinies: the study of Agricultural Association and the study of Passionate Attraction.

And on the dire results of this stupidity which, for 2,300 years, has needlessly prolonged the period of social chaos, i.e. savage, barbaric and civilised societies, which are far from being the destiny of the human race.

If we consider the wealth of great minds Civilisation has produced, especially during the eighteenth century, it is easy to imagine that they have exhausted all areas of investigation, and that, far from hoping for great discoveries, we cannot expect even insignificant ones.

This prejudice will be overcome: men will learn that the enlightenment that has been gained so far amounts to scarcely a quarter of that which remains still to be acquired, and which will be acquired in toto by means of the Theory of the Four Movements.¹ It is the key to all the discoveries of which the human mind is capable; it will rapidly initiate us into knowledge which, at the slow rate of current methods, could take another ten thousand years of study to attain.

The announcement of this theory is bound to arouse mistrust in the first instance, simply because it promises to raise men to an

¹ In the second edition this phrase is replaced by 'the theory of the “General Destinies”'.
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understanding of the destinies. I therefore intend to begin by describing the pointers which set me on the right track; this explanation will demonstrate that the discovery required no scientific effort, and that the meanest thinker ought to have been able to get there before I did, if only they had had the one quality necessary for this study, the absence of prejudices. It is on this point that, for the calculus of the destinies, I had an aptitude lacked by the Philosophers, who, for all their pretence at combating them, are actually supporters and propagators of prejudices.

I only include under the name of Philosophers authors in the speculative or inexact sciences: politicians, moralists, economists and others whose theories are not compatible with experience and are regulated only by their authors’ fantasies. Remember, then, that when I use the term the PHILOSOPHERS, I mean those of the inexact class, and not those who write about the definitive sciences.

Pointers and methods which led to this discovery

I had no idea originally that I would be conducting research into the destinies. I shared the general opinion that they are impenetrable, that any calculations on that subject belong with the visions of astrologers and magicians, whereas the investigations which led me to them were just concerned with the industrial and political problems which I shall now briefly outline.

Since the Philosophers demonstrated their ineptitude in their attempt to put their ideas into practice in the French Revolution, everybody has agreed in regarding their science as an aberration of the human mind, and their floods of political and moral enlightenment as no more than floods of illusion. How else, after all, can we view the writings of these scholars who, having taken twenty-five centuries to perfect their theories and having brought together the whole of ancient and modern wisdom, begin by creating as many calamities as they promised benefits, and lead civilised society back towards a state of barbarism?

Such was the effect of those first five years in which France became a testing-ground for philosophical theories.

After the catastrophe of 1793, illusions were dispelled and modern political sciences were irrevocably stigmatised and discredited. People thenceforth were forced to recognise that no good
was to be anticipated from any of the knowledge accumulated thus far, and that they would have to look to some new science to provide social well-being, and find new and original paths for political thought; it was obvious that neither the Philosophers nor their opponents were able to alleviate the miseries of society, and that their respective dogmas served only to mask the continuing presence of its worst scourges, including poverty.

It was pondering this that first led me to suspect the existence of a social science of which we were still unaware, and stimulated me to try to discover what it was. I was not at all disturbed by my lack of knowledge: I thought only of the honour of being the one to grasp what twenty-five centuries of learning had been unable to discover.

I was encouraged by numerous indications of irrationality, particularly by the spectacle of the scourges afflicting social industry, such as poverty, unemployment, thriving dishonesty, maritime piracy, commercial monopolies, the abduction of slaves, in fact too many misfortunes to enumerate, all of which caused me to wonder whether civilised industry was not a calamity invented by God as a punishment for the human race.

My next step was to suppose that industry was organised around some reversal of the natural order, that it operated perhaps in a way that was contrary to God’s designs, and that the persistence of so many scourges could be attributed to the absence of some form of organisation intended by God but unknown to our scholars. Finally I thought that if, as Montesquieu believed, human societies have fallen victim to ‘a wasting disease, an inner vice, a secret, hidden venom’, then the remedy might be found by ignoring the paths our inexact sciences have taken for so many centuries and with so little result. I therefore took as the rule governing my researches ABSOLUTE DOUBT AND ABSOLUTE SEPARATION, processes which need to be defined, as nobody has ever used them before.

1. Absolute doubt. Descartes had some notion of this but although he extolled and recommended doubt he made only limited and inappropriate use of it. He raised absurd doubts, like doubting his own existence, and spent his time refining the sophisms of the ancients instead of seeking truths that were useful.

Descartes’ successors made even less use of doubt than he did: they only applied it to things they did not like, as for instance
questioning the necessity of religion because they were antagonistic to priests. But they were very careful not to question the necessity of the moral and political sciences which provided their daily bread and butter, and which are nowadays recognised to be useless under strong governments, and dangerous under weak ones.

As I had no connection with any scientific school, I decided to apply doubt to all opinions without exception, even regarding with suspicion arrangements which had universal agreement; for although this Civilisation is the idol of all philosophical schools, and the one they believe to be most nearly perfect, what could be more imperfect than Civilisation, and all the scourges it brings with it? What more dubious than its necessity and its future permanence? Is it not far more likely that it is just one more rung on the ladder of human progress? Does it follow that because it was preceded by three other societies, Savagery, Patriarchate and Barbarism, this fourth must therefore be the last? Might it not give rise to others, so that we could have a fifth, sixth or seventh social order which might perhaps be less disastrous than Civilisation, but which are still unknown to us because nobody has ever tried to find them? Doubt must therefore be applied to Civilisation: we must doubt its necessity, its excellence and its permanence. These are problems which the philosophers do not dare to consider because if they started being suspicious of Civilisation they would risk invalidating their theories, which are all linked to Civilisation and which will all fall with it as soon as a better social order is found to replace it.

The philosophers have therefore restricted themselves to Partial Doubt because they have books and professional prejudices to defend, and for fear of compromising either the books or the coterie they have always equivocated over the important problems. I however, with no shared viewpoint to uphold, have been able to adopt absolute doubt and apply it above all to Civilisation and its most entrenched prejudices.

2. Absolute separation. My assumption was that the surest way of arriving at useful discoveries was to stand aloof in all ways from the paths followed by the inexact sciences, none of which has made any discovery remotely useful to the social body, and which, despite the immense progress of industry, have not even managed to prevent poverty. My task, as I saw it, was thus to maintain a constant oppositional stance vis-à-vis that body of knowledge. Looking at the
huge number of writers involved, I assumed that any subject they had dealt with must be thoroughly exhausted, and I decided to tackle only problems which none of them had attempted to investigate.

As a result I avoided any research which involved the interests of throne or altar, with both of which the philosophers had been ceaselessly occupied since their science began, always seeking social well-being through religious or governmental innovations; my approach, by contrast, sought good only in functions which had no connection with priesthood or administration, which would rely solely on domestic or industrial measures and which would be compatible with all governments without requiring their intervention.

By following these two guides, absolute doubt about all prejudices, and absolute separation from all known theories, I was bound to open up a new field of thought, if there was such a thing, but I certainly did not expect to grasp the calculus of the destinies. Far from any such lofty aims, in fact, I began by thinking about quite ordinary problems, the most important of which were agricultural association and the indirect repression of the commercial monopoly of the islanders. I mention these two because both the problems and their solution are related. There is no way of indirectly combating the monopoly of island powers without operating agricultural association and, vice versa, as soon as some way of creating agricultural association has been found, it operates easily and inevitably to put an end to island monopolies, piracy, speculation, bankruptcy and other scourges which industry is prey to.

I hasten to set down these consequences in order to attract a degree of interest in the problem of agricultural association, which seems so unimportant that scholars have never condescended to consider it.

Let me at this point remind the reader that I have deemed it necessary to give him some awareness of the calculations which paved the way for my discovery. Consequently, I shall be expounding a subject which may appear to have very little to do with the destinies – agricultural association. When I myself began to speculate about this subject I had no idea that such a modest calculation might lead to the theory of the destinies; however, since it has become the key to them, it is essential that I should talk about them at some length.
Agricultural association

The solution to this much-despised problem led to the solution of all political problems. Everybody knows that very small instruments are often enough to carry out the largest tasks; a metal needle, for example, can control lightning or steer a ship through storms and darkness; and it is with comparably simple means that we can put an end to all forms of social disaster. It will thus be of interest to many, I am sure, to learn that, while Civilisation is bathing in blood in order to appease mercantile jealousies, an industrial operation is going to put an end to them for ever, without any combat, and that maritime might, hitherto so powerful, will sink into absolute oblivion as a result of agricultural association.

This mode of organisation was not practicable in antiquity, because agricultural workers were slaves; the Greeks and Romans sold farmworkers like beasts of burden, with the agreement of their philosophers who never appealed against this odious custom. These scholars were accustomed to thinking that anything they had not seen was impossible; they imagined that farmworkers could not be freed without a complete reversal of the social order, yet they have successfully attained their liberty, and the social order is merely better organised. The philosophers still have the same prejudice towards agricultural association as they once had towards slavery: because it has never existed, they think it is impossible. Seeing village families working unsystematically, they think there is no way of bringing them into closer association; or at least that is what they pretend to think, because on this point as on all others they have an interest in claiming as insoluble any problem which they are unable to solve.

Nonetheless, people have occasionally caught a glimpse of the incalculable economies and improvements that would result if the inhabitants of each hamlet could be brought together in industrial society, if two to three hundred families of unequal wealth could form an association proportionate to their capital and their industriousness to cultivate a canton.

At first sight the idea seems unwieldy and impractical because of the obstacle the passions would present to any such gathering, an obstacle which is all the more daunting as they cannot be overcome in gradual stages. Bringing twenty, thirty or forty individuals
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together, or even a hundred, is hardly sufficient to create an agricultural association: at least eight hundred are needed for the formation of a natural or attractive association. I mean by these terms a society whose members would be driven to work by competition, self-esteem and other stimuli compatible with self-interest; this new order will fill us with enthusiasm for agricultural work, although at present it is regarded as suitable only for the lowest, and is only done out of necessity and the fear of dying of hunger.

I shall not recount in detail the research I had to carry out into the problem of natural association, as it is such a different system from the one we are used to that it seems best to reveal it slowly; a mere description might make it seem ridiculous unless the reader has been disposed towards it by some glimpse of the enormous advantages which will result from it.

Agricultural associations, given something like a thousand people, offer such huge advantages to industry that it is hard to explain why modern philosophers have shown such a lack of interest in the subject, especially as there is one class of scientists, namely economists, whose job it is to calculate ways of improving industry. Their failure to search for a method of association is all the more difficult to imagine because they themselves have often pointed out the advantages it would bring. For example, they have acknowledged — as anyone else could have done — that three hundred families of associated villagers need have only one well-ordered granary, instead of three hundred ill-kept ones; only one wine-vat instead of three hundred, most of which will be inadequately looked after; and often, particularly in summer, no more than three or four large ovens instead of three hundred. Nor is there any need to send more than one milk-maid to town, with a large barrel of milk in a wagon, thus saving the hundred half-days lost when a hundred milk-maids all set off to town, each carrying her own jug of milk. These are just some of the savings perceived by different commentators; and yet they represent scarcely a twentieth of the benefits which agricultural association would confer.

It was thought to be impossible because nobody knew how to bring it into being. Was this, though, a reason to conclude that no way would ever be found and therefore that one should not be sought? Bearing in mind that it would triple the benefits of general exploitation, there can be no doubt that God was bound to reveal