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The Circulus in Universality

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1858

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constitutive members. God, the soul, the spirit are myths that Humanity approaching the age of reason must toss without regret into the rag basket like some dolls from our youth. Science, from now on, and no longer superstition, must occupy its thought. Let it not forget that it is a daughter of progress and fiancée of progress. The polichinelles, the good gods and the devils, all the Guignols and the puppets armed with sticks are of childishness unworthy of it, today that its minority comes to its end. It is time, high time, that it thinks of its emancipation; that it girds its forehead with the intellectual banner; that it finally prepares itself for its social destinies, if it does not want to serve forever as laughingstock for the Humanities of other globes.

To sum up, I say:

Movement, which is to say progress, being proven, the absolute can no more exist in the finite than in the infinite, and thus the absolute does not exist.

As a consequence, God, universal or absolute soul of the infinite, does not exist.

And as a further consequence, the soul, the absolute of man, individuality one and indivisible, eternally finished form, does not exist.

Matter is all. Movement is the attribute of matter, and progress the attribute of movement.

Like matter and movement, progress is eternal and infinite.

The circulus in universality does not lead to absolute perfection. It conducts to infinite perfectibility, to unlimited progress, consequence of eternal and universal movement.

Thus, absolute perfection does not exist, and cannot exist. If it existed, progress would not exist.

Absolute perfection is against all the evidence, and absurd.

Movement is, obviously, truth.

No transaction is possible between these two terms: it is necessary either to believe in God and in his diminutives and deny movement, or to affirm movement and invalidate God.

– God is the negation of Progress.

– Progress is the negation of God.

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order to destroy all of the secular theologies and with the authoritarian system which still serves as the basis of the organization of contemporary societies and postpones the fraternal communion of humans, is that with movement the absolute cannot exist; it is that the individuality of the man and of humanity like the individuality of all the atomic and sidereal beings cannot preserve for one single instant their absolute personality, it is that the movement revolutionize them without ceasing and constantly add something and take away something from them; it is that we all, minerals, vegetables, animals, men, stars, we would not know how to live in ourselves and by ourselves; that there is no life without movement, and that movement is an infinite transformation of the finite thing; it is that we live only on the condition of taking part in the lives of others, and that the life in us is as much more fruitful as we sow it outside the plots, plots which returns to us in ripe and abundant crops; and as much more lively as we give it more external elements, as we put passions in combustion on its hearth. Finally, it is that the more we give off light and caloric, the more we expend intelligence and love and the more we raise ourselves with swiftness from apotheosis to apotheosis in regions more and more superior, more and more ethereal.

Everything is solidary in universality. Everything is composed, decomposed and recomposed according to its reciprocal and progressive attractions, the atom like the man, the man like the stars, and the stars like the universes. The universes are atoms in universality, as the atom is itself a universe in its individuality. The infinite exists at the two antipodes of creation, for the divisibility on a small scale as for the multiplicity on a grand scale. The short view of the man, his weak understanding cannot sound its incommensurable depths. The finite cannot embrace the infinite, it can only sense it. But what the thinker, supplied in the powerful instrument that we call analogy, can touch and make thought touch, what he must proclaim by strokes of logic on all the places and in all the public papers, is that the individual being is not the consequence of the universal being, but that the being universal is the consequence of individual beings; it is the infinitely large group of which the infinitely small are the

generations and progress on progress. The better, the good, and the best, increase as a result of the efforts of each. But the planets, like men, are born, grow and die. At the death of men or globes, the purified humanities or cervellities rise by whatever fluid character they have towards spheres in formation or in expansion and of a more perfectible nature. The progress is eternal and infinite, after one step another step, after one life another life, and still and always.

Any being whatsoever, a man, or the superior or the inferior the man, is like a sack of grain or of molecules of all the sorts, that movement, that is to say life and death, fills and empties without ceasing. These grains, come from the field of production, returns to the field of production or, according to their degree of perfectibility, they produce rye or wheat. The content of the sack procreates a multitude of stalks, and on each stalk each of grains subdivides and multiplies in the ear. Nothing of that which is can preserve for one minute its full individuality. Life is a perpetual exchange to the profit of each. The richest in the perfectibility are the most lavish, those who venture the most of their being in circulation: the more the laborer sows and harvests! The poorest are the stingiest, those who have their gaze turned inward, who stack molecule on molecule in the hollows of their being, who seal themselves in innermost selves, and waste, in a stupid private contemplation, a capital of faculties, troves of sensations that external contact would have made bear fruit.

What I want to make well understood, and what I strive to generalize at the risk of repeating myself, is that the religions, the artificial or deceitful moralities have had their day, and that they are nothing more today than immorality or irreligion; it is that there is a morality, one natural religion to inaugurate on the rubble of the old superstitions, and that that morality or that religion can be found only in the science of man and of humanity, of humanity and of the universality; it is that the man like the universe, is one and not double: not matter and spirit, nor body and soul (matter or inert body, spirit or immaterial soul), but animated and passional substance, susceptible of thousands and thousands of metamorphoses and constrained by his animation and his passionality, by his attractions, to a perpetual upward movement. — What it is important to note in

I.

The circulus in universality is the destruction of every religion, of all arbitrariness, be it elysian or tartarean, heavenly or infernal. The movement in the infinite is infinite progress. This being the case, the world can no longer be a duality, mind and matter, body and soul, which is to say a mutable thing and an immutable one, which implies contradiction — movement excluding immobility and vice versa — but must be, quite to the contrary, an infinite unity of always-mutable and always-mobile substance, which implies perfectibility. It is by eternal and infinite movement that the infinite and eternal substance is constantly and universally transformed. It is by a fermentation of all instants; it is by passing through the filtering sieve of successive metamorphoses, by the progressive emancipation of species, from mineral to vegetable, from vegetable to animal and from instinct to intelligence; it is by an ascending and continuous rotation that it is raised gradually and constantly from the near inertia of the solid to the subtle agility of the fluid, and that, from vaporization to vaporization, it constantly approaches ever more pure affinities, always in a work of purification, in the great crucible of the universal laboratory of the worlds. Thus, movement is not separate from substance; it is identical to it. There is no substance without movement, as there is no movement without substance. What one calls matter is raw mind or spirit; what one calls mind or spirit is wrought matter.

As with the human being, summary of all the terrestrial beings, essence of all the inferior kingdoms, so with the universal being, encyclopedia of all the atomic and sidereal beings, infinite sphere of all the finite spheres — the universal being, like the human being, is perfectible. It has never been, it is not, and will never be perfect. Perfectibility is the negation of perfection. To limit the infinite is impossible, as it would no longer be infinite. As far as thought can pierce, it cannot discover its own limits. It is a sphere of extension which defies all calculations, where the generations of universes and of sidereal multiverses gravitate from evolution to evolution without ever being able to reach the end of the voyage, the ever more remote frontiers of the unknown. The absolute infinity in time and in space is eternal movement, eternal progress. Put a limit to that infinity

without limits — a God, any heaven whatsoever — and immediately one limits movement, limits progress. It is like putting it on a chain like the pendulum of a clock, and to saying to it: “When you’re at the end of your swing, stop! You shall go no further.” It is placing the finite in the place of the infinite. Well! Don’t we realize that perfection is always relative, that absolute perfection is immobility, and that consequently immobilized perfection is something absurd and impossible? Only the brains of idiots could dream this up. There is and can be no absolute but perfectibility in the universal infinity. The more a being is perfected, the more it aspires to perfect itself further. Would nature, which has given us infinite aspirations, have lied to us, promising more than it could give? Where has she ever been seen to lie? One must be a Christian and a civilizee, which is to say a cretin and a eunuch, to imagine as a place of delight a paradise in which old Jehovah is enthroned. Could one imagine anything more stupid and boring? Could one imagine these blessed ones, these saints cloistered in the clouds as in a convent, whose whole pleasure consists in telling their rosaries and ruminating, like brutes, on praises to the reverend father God, that unchanging superior, that pope of popes, that king of kings, having the mother abess Virgin Mary to his left, and to his right the child Jesus, the heir apparent, a great oaf who carries, with the air of a seminarian, his roll of thorns, and who, — in the representation of the mystery of the so-sacrosanct Trinity, — fills, with his immaculate mother cradling in her lap the peacock Holy Spirit, which spreads its tail, — the role of two thieves on the cross, nailed on each side of the greatest of criminals, the supreme and divine creator of all the oppressions and all the servitudes, of all the crimes and all the abjections, the Word and the incarnation of evil! In the earthly convents, at least, men and women can still console themselves for their imperfection, for their deadly tortures by thinking of a future perfection, of another and immortal life, of celestial bliss. But in heaven every aspiration more elevated is forbidden them: are they not at the apogee of their being? The very high and all-powerful magistrate, the one who judges without appeal and in last resort the living and the dead, has applied to them the maximum of beatitude. From now on, they have taken on the cassock of the elect; they drag, in paradise, in forced

or they are freed from it; whether their populations are more or less given over to pauperism and aristocracy, or rich with equality and fraternity; whether these small diminutives of men are more or less penned up between national barriers and the fences of private property, or circulate more or less easily from a passional eminence, home or homeland, to another, and from a craneologic continent to another continent; finally, according to whether they are more or less free or more or less slaves, and also, whether we ourselves are more or less dignified, more or less close to slavery or liberty. — The cervelain being, like the human being, takes in through diet everything that is below it, discharges from the lower organs that which is too coarse, assimilates that which is perfectible enough to become incarnate in it, and exhales outside, on the wings of human thought, that which is too subtle to remain captive in it. Thus it is wrongly that we make that classification of mind and matter as being two distinct things, the one mobile and immutable, the other mutable and immobile, the one invisible and impalpable, the other palpable and visible. Everything that is mobile is mutable, and everything that is mutable is mobile. That which is palpable and visible for the human being, the infinitely large, is invisible and impalpable for the cervelain being, the infinitely small. That which is impalpable and invisible for the human being is visible and palpable for the being placed higher in the hierarchy of beings, the humanitarian beings or the terrestrial being. For the beings infinitely more perfected than us, — the humanities of the astral spheres, I suppose, — what we will regard, ourselves, as a fluid, they will themselves consider as a solid; and what they will regard as fluid is regarded as solid by the humanities still more elevated in superiority. The most subtle, here, for the one, is, there, for the other, what becomes the coarsest. Everything depends on the point of view and the condition in which the being is placed. The last word of the cervelain being is certainly not the skull, as the last word of the human being is certainly not the terrestrial skull. The man is not the absolute of the one, humanity is not the absolute of the other. Without doubt, the cervellity gives birth to generations which, like the human generations, produce and transmit ideas, and accumulate in the memory of the man of gigantic labors. Without doubt also, humanity piles generations on

That humanity is called the brain. It is towards it that gravitate all the kingdoms or all the molecular species of the human body. These molecules, — the most filthy as well as what one could call the most inert, — all tend to rise from their beds and their lower natures to that type of superiority which lives under the human skull. And, as humanity, the intelligent part of the brain of the terrestrial body, is perfectible, the cervellity, or intelligent part of the brain, which is the humanity of the human body, is also perfectible. While outside of the brain, the lower molecules only act mechanically, so to speak, and with more inertia the lower they are place on the scale of the progression of the kingdoms or species; in the brain, on the contrary, capstone of hominal creation, the movement is rapid and intelligent. The brain of the man, like the brain of the planet, also has its three, or rather its four gradations which corresponds to the four kingdoms: the mineral, the vegetable, the animal and the hominal. The cretin, for example, who in the human race is the being most dispossessed of intelligence, has, in the brain, in the state of development, only matter recumbent and vegetative, that which correspond to the mineral and vegetable, but where the mineral prevails in volume over the vegetable. The imbecile is the one in whose brain the vegetable prevails over the mineral, and where there can be found a little of the animal, which is to say of matter of a creeping and somewhat instinctive sort. In the civilizee, all three kingdoms are developed in his brain, but the animal kingdom prevails over the other two. That which corresponds to the hominal, which is to say to intelligent matter, is still in the state of infancy or savagery and dispersed under the skull amid the virgin forests of the vegetal system, between the blocks of rock of the mineral system and exposed in its weakness and nudity to the ferocity of the animal system. — It is then the industrial and scientific labors of these generations of perfectible atoms moving between our two temples as between two poles; it is their joys and their pains, their science or their ignorance, their individual and social struggles which constitute our thought. Depending on whether these infinitesimals are more or less in the harmonic state; whether they obey among them the natural law of liberty, to anarchy, to autonomy, or the artificial law of authority, to monarchy, to tyranny; whether they are under the empire of superstition

idleness, the ball and chain of their days; and they are condemned for all time! There is no appeal for mercy possible; no hope of change, no glimmer of future movement can reach down to them. The hatch of progress is forever sealed above their heads; and, like the conscript-for-life in his hulk, immortal galley slaves, they are forever fastened to the chain of the centuries in the eternal heavenly stay!

All the diversion these poor souls enjoy consists of chanting hymns and prostrating themselves before the sovereign master, that cruel old man who, in the times of Moses, wore a blue robe and curly beard, and who according to the current fashion, must wear today a black coat and a stiff collar, mutton-chop sideburns or an imperial goatee, spittle in place of the heart, and a rainbow of satin around the neck. The Empress Marie and her divine ladies-in-waiting most certainly have crinolines under their petticoats, and most certainly the saints, in the livery of court, are starched, cravated, pomaded and curled neither more nor less than the diplomats. Their blessed grandesses doubtless bang away at the piano all of the holy eternity, and their blessed excellencies turn the hand of the organ-of-paradise . . . What fun they must have! That must be amusing! It is true that I am not rich, but I would certainly still give some few sous to see such a spectacle — to watch for a moment, you understand, not to remain there; and only on the condition of paying on the way out, if I was pleased and satisfied. But, on reflection, I find it hard to believe that what goes on inside is worth even a trifling sum at the door. Is it not said: “Happy are the poor in spirit, the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.” That property will never delight me. Definitely, at times the holy Gospels display a naïveté that is . . . amusing: bestow then some donkey’s ears on all the laureates of the faith! These first fathers of the Church must have been mischievous: might as well confess right off that paradise is not worth the four fetters of a . . . Christian. And to admit that women have been left to take the promises of these Lovelaces of superstition, that they have smiled at all these cretinous seductions, that they have given their love for this anti- and ultra-human paradise! To admit that the men have been taken in like the women, that they have believed all these ignoble ones — nonsense, that they have worshipped them! — Poor human nature! — However, one will

admit that it would be difficult to invent anything more detrimental to the happiness of humans who have not absolutely the pleasure of being poor in spirit. In truth, I would reckon myself happier to be a convict in prison than one of the chosen in paradise. In prison, I would still live by my hopes. Every outcome of progress would not be completely closed to me, and my thought, like my physical strength, could attempt an escape from the galleys. And then the eternity of the life of a man is less long than the perpetuity of the life of a saint. The universal movement, by transforming me from life to death will finally deliver me from my torture. I will be reborn free. While with the heavenly imprisonment it is immobility without end, knees bent, hands clasped, head bowed, brow void of hope, which is to say an unprecedented torture, with body and soul, muscles and fibers put to the question under the inquisitorial eye of God. . .

When I think that, profiting from the deterioration of my faculties, brought on by age or illness, a priest could come at the hour of my death, and give me, one way or another, the absolution of my sins, of my heresies; that he could deliver to me, a subject suspected or convicted of *lèse-divinité*, a *lettre de cachet* for heaven, and send me to rot in that divine Bastille without a ray of hope of ever leaving it, brrrrrr! . . . that gives me shivers. Happily, the expected paradises are like castles in Spain: they only exist in imaginations struck by mental alienation; or, like the houses of cards, the least breath of reason is enough to knock them down. However, I declare it here: On the day when death weighs down on me, let those who can surround me then, if they are my friends, if they respect the wishes of my reason, and not allow my agony to be soiled by a priest and my cadaver sullied by the church. A free thinker, I want to die as I have lived, in rebellion. Living and upright, I protest strongly and in advance against every such profanation of my remains. A particle of humanity, I want to serve still after my death the education and the life of humanity; that is why I leave my body to the practitioner who wants to make an autopsy of it and study the organs of a man who did all that he could to be worthy of that name; and that I ask him, if it is possible, to inter the remains, as fertilizer in a sown field.

But let us return to our subject, the circulus in universality. The unlimited sphericity of the infinite and its absolute movement of

are candles lit by the creator God in honor of Adam and Eve and their descendants? And if you no longer believe in these supposed revelations, in these charlatanries or in this aberration of the faith, and if you believe in what science and the genius of observation teaches you, in virtue of what reason would you want spirit to be distinct from matter? And, even being distinct, that the one be the movement and the other inertia, and that precisely the one to which you attribute movement was never-changing in his individuality? Inexplicable paradox! Well, observation tells you, by my testimony, that all that which has been vapor or dust and is grouped and has taken finished, definite form, will come away grain by grain, drop by drop, molecule by molecule and will scatter in the undefined in order to assume, not another form, but a multiplicity of other forms, and will leave anew these multiple forms in order to divide again and multiply and progress eternally in the infinite. In order to be convinced of it, there is no need of having studied Greek or Latin, it is only necessary to examine the analogy, to infer and deduce.

I have established that all that which is inferior to man tends to gravitate towards him. Man is the summary of terrestrial creation. The Earth is a being animated like all beings and endowed with various organs proper to life. Humanity is its brain, or rather it is that part of it which, with regard to the human brain, one has called the gray matter, that is to say the eminently intelligent part, for the animal and the vegetal, and the mineral even, — in a certain proportion, — also live under the terrestrial skull and form the ensemble of its brain. Alone, of all the atoms which live obscurely in the innards of the planetary body or rest, vegetate, crawl, walk or fly by the light between the soil and the atmosphere, — man is a perfectible species. He possesses some faculties unknown to the other beings or which are hardly sensible among them, that of memory, for example, or calculation; that of the emission and transmission of idea. Unlike the mineral, vegetable and animal, the hominal generations succeed and do not resemble one another; they always progress and do not know the limit of their perfectibility. Eh! well, that which exists for the earth obviously exists for man. The man is another globe, a small world which also has in it its privileged race, its humanity in miniature, ideal of all the atomic species that people and form its body.

Israelite, a Muslim, a Hindu, a believing philosopher or a philosophical believer, each would not want and not be able to see anything but the God of his own imagination. Finally, these three cabalistic letters will represent as many different Gods as there are readers or listeners. I do not see what need the dialectic could have of it, and I believe that it would do better and more wisely to do without it. New things require new words. I know that there are many other expressions which we use, myself as much as anyone, and which do not have the same meaning for everyone: it is an evil which it is necessary to try to remedy, otherwise we would discuss a long time without understanding each other. **God** being the first cause of all the social falsities, the source of all the human errors, the capital lie, **God** can no longer be employed in the discussion except as an abusive term, as a spatter spit from our lips or our pen. It is not enough to be atheist, it is necessary to be a theocide. It is not enough to deny the Absolute; it is necessary to affirm Progress, and to affirm it in all and everywhere.

Defects in logic, that is what misleads the greatest thinkers, what carries perturbation to the mass of intelligences. It is because one is not in agreement with themselves that often one cannot come to agreement with others. All of us who affirm the movement in the infinite and consequently infinite progress, the single and solidary universality, equally affirm the movement in us and consequently progress, the single and solidary individuality. Let us deny duality in the finite as we deny it in the infinite. Let us reject that absurd hypothesis of the immortality of the soul, which is to say of the absolute in the finite, when we have the proof by the body that every finite thing is perishable, which is to say divisible and multipliable, which is to say progressively perfectible. Matter is not one thing and spirit another thing, but one same and single thing that movement constantly diversifies. The spiritual is only the result of the corporeal; this is not a matter of spirituality but of spirituousity. The soul or, to put it better, thought is to the man what alcohol is to wine. When one speaks of the spirit of wine, it is certainly of an entirely material thing. Why should it be otherwise when it is a question of the spirit of man! Do you still believe then that the earth is flat, that the heavens are a cupola to serve it as a dome, and that the sun and stars

rotation and gravitation, — its perfectibility, in short, is demonstrated by all that which strikes our view and our understanding. Everything turns in us and around us, but never precisely in the same circle. Every rotation tends to raise itself, to approach a purer ideal, a remote utopia which will be realized one day in order to make place for another utopia, and thus progressively from ideal to ideal and from realization to realization.

On the earth, all beings, our subalterns, at whatever degree they are placed in the hierarchy of kingdoms or of species, minerals, vegetables or animals, tend towards the human ideal. As with the infinitely small, so with the infinitely large — our globe and the multitude of globes which follow it from a distance in one single whirl, tend equally, whatever their relative superiority or inferiority, towards their luminous ideal, the sun. And all approach it each day, however insensibly: the man like the sun tends in his turn towards some more utopian spheres, by an ascending and continuous gradation; and always thus until the end of ends, or rather without end nor term. — The mineral pivots imperceptibly on itself and draws to itself all that it can appropriate of the lesser orders; it grows and extends itself, and then it entrusts to some conducting agents a few fragments of its exuberance and feeds the plant. — In its turn, the plant grows, rocking in the breeze and blossoming in the light. The insects gather pollen from it; it offers them its honey and its fibers, everything it has stolen from the bowels of the earth and that it has made to rise to the light of day through the filters of its tissues. The insects and worms then become the prey of the birds; the plant itself is feed for the large animals. Already the mineral has been transformed into flesh and bone, and the sap has become blood; instinct is more prompt, and movement more pronounced. The gravitation continues. Man assimilates the vegetable and the animal, the grass and the grain, the honey and the fruit, the flesh and the blood, the gas and the sap, the breezes and rays. Terrestrial star, he pumps through all his pores the emanations of his inferiors; he raises them drop by drop, bit by bit, to his level and returns to them to knead again that which is still too coarse for him to incarnate within himself. In just the same way, he exhales by thought the aromas too pure to be retained in his chalice, and he scatters them

on humanity. Humanity, after having incorporated them, integrates everything that can identify with its degree of perfection, and returns for kneading to the instinctive species, to the inferior orders, that which is too coarse for it in these fluids, and exhales that which is too subtle towards the higher humanities of the outer spheres.

Thus it is with the planets moving around the sun, and with the sun moving in its turn with all its satellites around another more elevated center, star of that star.

Now, if everything turns first in a spiral, from its need for preservation, and if, turning on itself, everything reaches beneath itself, from its need for alimentation, and raises itself above itself, from its need for expression; if life is a perpetual revolution, a circle always in movement, each movement of which modifies its nature; if all movement is a progress, and if the more rapid the movement of rotation and gravitation is, the more it accelerates progress in us; men and women, to whom analogy demonstrates all these things, can we do less than to bow to the evidence? Can we not desire to be revolutionaries, and, being revolutionaries, not want to be more revolutionary still? For the human being, to live the life of the mineral, vegetable or animal, to live the life of stones or brutes, is not to live; and to live the life of the civilizees is to live the life of stones and brutes. Humans, let us not stiffen against our destiny, but deliver ourselves with passion to its teachings; let us advance boldly to the discovery of the unknown; reach out to progress in order to accomplish with it humanitarian evolution in the great circle of perfectible beings and societies; let us initiate ourselves fearlessly into the mysteries of the eternal and universal revolution in the infinite. The infinite alone is great, and the revolution only has malice for those who would remain outside its circle. Let us live by movement for movement, by progress and for progress, regardless of whether the grave is close and the cradle far. What is death to us, if death is still movement, and if movement is still progress? If that death is only a regeneration, the dissolution of our crumbling unity, an organism incapable for the moment of moving itself perfectly in its continuous disaggregation, and, moreover, the re-aggregation of the plurality of our being in younger and more perfectible organisms? If that death, finally, is only the passage from our state of senility to the embryonic state,

itself by working itself ceaselessly, by a mechanism or organism that is constantly more rectified . . . But all that absolutely contradicts the idea of a God from which everything emanates and towards which everything returns, the idea that everything has been created, by God, from nothingness, in order to be annihilated in the bosom of the same God — which is to say, something starting from nothing in order to lead to nothing, going beyond the absurd in order to fall back into the absurd. God, source of all things, central point from which everything follows and towards which all returns, is one of these contradictory rationales that one can give to the children of men and to the humanities-in-infancy, because their still-sleeping intelligence cannot yet respond. But it is absolutely absurd. A river cannot flow back towards its source; the source is no more eternal than the river. They both exist only on the condition of movement, which is to say of progress, of birth and of death, of generation and regeneration. Like the river, the source has a cause. It is not everything, this small central point from which gushes the living water which produces the stream. The opening is only an effect, it is not a cause; and, by returning from the effect to the cause, one would find that the cause is still only the effect of another cause, and so forth. God explains nothing. It is a word to cross out of the vocabulary of men, since it serves to quibble with the difficulty without resolving it. God is only a mannequin, the breastplate (or shirtfront) of ignorance, a stick in the wheels of progress, a snuffer on the light, a . . . rag in a lantern! It is time to cleanse the universal language of it. Excrement of human cretinism, from now on it belongs to the Academy Domange and the consorts: let it reign in the pits of the Vilette, and let it, reduced to powder and cast to the four winds, serve finally as fertilizer to movement, to the eternal and universal and perfectible creation, to the unlimited development of the infinite.

God! . . . in truth is it possible that two men agree on the meaning that they give to this word? I do not accept that for the needs of the dialectic it should be necessary to resort to it. Let a philosopher employ it in his writings, and, if it is a Catholic who reads them, he would only want to see, — whatever cautions the author has given, — the God of his own religion. If he is a Calvinist, a Lutheran, a

not only against all degeneration, but against all that which is not regeneration and perfectibilization. Ignorance and superstition have supposed the immortality of the soul and the heavenly resurrection. I believe I have demonstrated that there is no soul distinct from the body; and there would be duality, which is not admissible, if that soul still obeyed the same laws of the decomposition of the body. The absolute soul and absolute paradise would be the negation of progress; and we can no more deny progress than we can movement. God, in the religious as in the philosophical sense, can no longer exist with regard to us, as we ourselves cannot exist as God with regard to the myriads of atoms of which our body is the Great-All. It is not the human body, in its small universality, which creates and directs these myriads of atoms of which it is composed; it is these atoms, instead, that create it and direct it by moving according to their passionate attractions. Far from being their God, the man is hardly anything but their temple: he is the beehive or anthill animated by these innumerable multitudes of the imperceptible. The universal being would not, any more than the human being, be the creator nor the director of the colossal multitudes of worlds of which it is made up; it is these worlds, instead, which create and direct it. Far from being their maker, their producer — their God, as the metaphysicians say — the universal being is hardly anything but the workshop or, at most, the product of the infinity of beings. How then would he be the motor of each, if he is only the machine of which each is the motor? God and the absolute is denied by everything in nature that has life. The progress which is movement and the movement which is progress issue him a certificate of non-existence, characterize him as an imposter. If the absolute could exist above us, we would be the absolute for that which is below us, and movement and progress would not exist. Life would be nothingness, and nothingness cannot be conceived. All that we know is that life exists: thus movement exists, thus progress exists, and thus the absolute does not exist. All that we can conclude is that the *circulus* exists in universality as it exists in individuality. Like every individuality, the universality, however infinite it may be, is itself only a rotation and a spherical gravitation which, moving more and more from the darkness and chaos and approaching more and more light and harmony, perfects

the mold, the matrix of a more turbulent life, the crucible of a purer existence, a transmutation of our brass into gold and a transfiguration of that gold into a thousand coins, animated and diverse, and all stamped with the effigy of Progress? Death is only frightening for those who basks in his muck and is transfixed in his porcine husk. For, at the hour of the decomposition of his organs, it will adhere by its heaviness and vileness, as it adhered during his life, to all that which is mud and stone, stench and torpor. But the man who, instead of growing fat and sinking willingly in his ignominy, burned his fat to produce light; the man who acted with his voice and strength, with heart and intelligence which will be invigorated by labor and love, by movement — that one, at the hour when the last of his days is used up; when he has no more oil in his lamp nor elasticity in his works; when the largest part of his substance, long since volatilized, journeys already with the fluids; that one, I tell you, will be himself reborn, in conditions made more perfectible to the degree this he had labored at his own perfectibilization. Moreover, does not death have a place in all the instants of the lives of beings? Can the body of a man preserve for a single moment the same molecules? Does not every contact constantly modify it? Can it not breathe, drink, eat, digest, think, feel? Every modification is at once a new death and a new life, more painful and more inferior to the degree that the alimentation and the physical and moral digestion have been idler or more coarse; easier and superior to the degree that they have been more active or refined.

II.

Just as man digests the vegetable and animal, assimilates their juice or essence and discharges their skin and excremental detritus as the manure that will give birth to lesser beings; just so man digests the hominal and the generations of hominals, their juice or essence and discharges their skin and excremental detritus as the manure on which will wallow and pasture the bestial and vegetative societies.

Like the works of a mill, the individual organism of man and the organism of humanity grind in their gears the fruit of good and evil,

and separate the good from the bad, the bran from the flour. The bran is cast in the trough for the livestock, the flour is gathered by man and serves his nutrition. The good is destined to the highest classes of beings, the bad to the lowest. The one is transformed into white bread or into cake and is set on the table on trays of porcelain or silver at the feast of the intelligences; the other remains raw or is transformed into slops, and falls in the feed trough for the farm stock or beasts of burden. The good or bad grain, and each grain of that grain, is treated according to its value, punished or rewarded according to its merit. Each carries within itself its chastisement and its recompense, the man as much as the grain; its purity or impurity makes its paradise or hell in the present, its hell or heaven in the future.

All labor is an instrument of progress, all idleness is litter for decrepitude. Labor is the universal law; it is the organ of purification for all beings. No one can take it away without committing suicide, for one can be born and grow, form and develop only by labor. It is by labor that the grain sprout in the furrow, put up its stalk and is crowned with a rich fruit; it is also by labor that the human fetus closes off and encircles itself in the womb of the mother, and that, obeying an imperious attraction, it appears by escaping from the organ of generation; it is by labor that the child stands on its feet, grows, and that, become a man, he is crowned with the double fruit of his manual and intellectual faculties; it is also by labor that he matures physically and morally before falling under the scythe of Time, that universal and eternal reaper, in order to begin again, in the eternal and universal life, a new work and new destinies. — The being, whatever it be, is called to labor to the degree that its attractions are lofty; and its sensations are voluptuous to the degree that they are purified by labor.

Happy are those whose productive faculties are overexcited by the love of the good and the beautiful: they will be fruitful in goodness and in beauty; no labor is fruitless. Unhappy are those whose productive faculties sleep shrouded in the apathy of the horrible and of evil: they will not know the joys that hard-working and generous passions give. All inertia is infertile; all narcissism, every exclusive adoration of itself is doomed to sterility. Happiness is a fruit that

can be picked only on the high summits, and that has a delicious flavor only after having been cultivated. For the idle, the inert, as for the powerless fox, it is too green a fruit: it ripens only for the agile, the laborers. It is not by sequestering it in his being, by isolating his breast from the breasts of his brothers that one can obtain it; it does not belong to the fratricidal but to the fraternal. Those alone can harvest it who do not fear to put arms and heart and head in the air, and make communion from individual efforts.

Man and humanity carry within them the seed of individual and social well-being; it is up to individual and social labor to cultivate it, if they want to savor its fruits.

It is for having tasted the fruit of the tree of science that, according to the Jewish and Christian mythologies, we have lost the terrestrial paradise. Ah! If instead of having only a taste, Humanity had tried to eat its fill of it, it would not be difficult to recover that Eden, so narrow and so little regrettable. Then, we could have had it, prodigiously, unlimited and replete with felicities with a very different appeal than those of the primitive ages. I do not say that with the aid of science we could, like the alleged gods, make something from nothing, but we could regenerate that which exists, make from the world a better world, from our societies in the civilized state a society in the harmonic state, and enter almost without transition from the life of present ages into the life of future ages.

The religions, as absurd as they are, nonetheless represent the need for an ideal innate in man. All the fables of the past and present represent future hopes, the sense of immortality in mortals. Ignorance and superstition have made shapeless monsters of these aspirations; it is up to science, reason freed from its swaddling clothes, to give them humanitarian forms. Man and humanity, as perfected as they will be one day, will nonetheless experience desires which will never find satisfaction in any present time. The future will always be a beacon towards which all their efforts will tend, the object of their constant longings; the call of progress will always resonate in their ears. Perception will always be higher and will always carry farther than the realization. Man senses clearly that all is not closed forever under the lid of the coffin. The idea of progress protests not only against all destruction, but also against all degeneration; and