

**THE INFLUENCE OF SCOTTISH PHILOSOPHY  
ON  
FRENCH PHILOSOPHY<sup>1</sup>**  
from *Études d'histoire de la philosophie* by Émile Boutroux

Translated from the French by  
Tau Bruno II

Messieurs,

A poet of exquisite originality, André Chénier, chatting on the method of work of his Muse, confides to us that it plunders from right and left and that it borrows without reckoning:

A supercilious judge, watches over my works,  
Suddenly in great cries denounces twenty passages  
Translates from such author whom he names...

And Chénier adds:

What does not come towards me? I will make him to know  
A thousand of my larcenies which he ignores perhaps...

I do not know why certain critics today imagine that it is sufficient to denounce an influence received by an author, in order to at once prove the latter guilty of mediocrity: as if the life of the spirit, as well as that of the body, was not a continual exchange, and as if the safer way to waste away into sterility was not to enclose oneself in it and to claim to be sufficient themselves. One is original when one makes his what one borrows. Philosophy in particular is itself often renewed thanks to foreign influences: witness the role played by Aristotle in the middle age, or the effect of Hume on Kant in modern times. Is this not the law of nature, that men help one another in the search for truth as in the care of the material life?

One of the more remarkable examples of these fecund intellectual relationships is the effect of Scottish Philosophy on French philosophy in the first half of this century. If this influence has not provoked a movement comparable to the great revolutions of thought, it has no less provoked thereof a new activity, of which the consequences are felt yet today. In what conditions these relationships are themselves produced, this is what the present study has for its object of investigation.

I

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, strictly speaking, France took an interest in the works of the Scots. A French translation of several philosophical works of Hume appeared in Amsterdam in the year 1760. Another appeared in London in 1788. The *Théorie des sentiments moraux*<sup>2</sup> of Adam Smith, from 1759, was translated into French in 1764 and retranslated in 1798 by Madame de Condorcet, who, at the school of its author, did her best to investigate thoroughly the nature of moral sympathy. A detailed examination here of the ideas in France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century could cover a large part in the trade with the Scots. However, these here were only isolated influences: and the Scottish metaphysics, properly called, that of Reid, stayed unknown. It is at the beginning of this century that the Scottish Philosophy, taken in its whole, is transported into France and is here incorporated into the natural

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<sup>1</sup> Conference held in Edimbourg, July 13, 1897, at the meeting of the Franco-Scottish Association, and published in the *Revue française d'Edimbourg* (Sept. 1897) and in *Transactions* of the Franco-Scottish Society (Scottish branch).

<sup>2</sup> *Theory of Moral Sentiments* – Trans.

philosophy. Did it only have here an accidental influence, or did the action of the Scottish philosophy explain itself by the conditions where the French philosophy was then found?

The end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as regards philosophy, was far, in France even, from having been unfruitful. It had produced the works of the ideologues. These scholars were the heirs of Condillac, and, like him, sought to deduce logically our ideas of what chronologically is the starting point thereof. But, whereas Condillac took for principle a fact characteristically psychic, sensation, a fact which was bent upon transforming according to a method analogous to the algebraic analysis, the ideologues searched for the cause of the psychic phenomena within the physiological conditions of the mental life, and tended to not see, within the analysis of the sensations and ideas, something other than a branch of natural history. There they found themselves lead to separate, more and more, the questions which usually occupied the philosophers, and to scorn or ignore the metaphysicians of all time.

Against this extreme conception, a reaction occurs within the ideology itself. The axiom of the school, this was the absolute passivity of the spirit. In this condition alone, understanding was able to come down to sensation and the latter to find its explanation within the physiological phenomena. Now, the ideologue Destutt de Tracy judged that alone, the voluntary movement, colliding with foreign obstacles, was able to account for our idea of exterior things. And yet, what is this voluntary movement? Does it come down to sensation? Since 1798, Dégerando estimates that, if sensation is changed into perception, it is elaborated by the attention, as by an original action of the spirit. And Maine de Biran preludes, from 1803, in his philosophy of effort, by exposing that the perception supposes our voluntary activity, and, as such, is irreducible to the sensation. Before long Ampère will bring out, from the sensible foundation of the spirit, the reason, considered as the faculty to see the relationships at the same time necessary and real. Finally, all by claiming to remain Condillacian, the ingenious Laromiguière explained the formation of our ideas through the application of the active forces of our spirit with our various means of feeling. Of itself then, the French ideology tends to broaden and transform itself, through the reintegration of the essentially active and rational elements within the constitution of the human spirit.

At the same time, society, attentive to the relationship of the ideas to the facts, was concerned about the practical consequences of Condillacism. Indeed, moral improvement had been the constant preoccupation of the ideologues. But these philosophers waited for this improvement of the pure and simple application of a science wholly physical in its principles. Now, one wonders if truly, by this path, it was possible to lead to the moral of the tradition and consciousness, to the moral, in the vulgar sense of the word. One rendered the Condillacian method responsible for the practical materialism which was produced in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. One came thereof to judge the moral compromise so it was not placed apart, as possessing its principles to it, independent of the principles of speculation. This was the moment where Chateaubriand demonstrated the excellence of the Christian religion by its accord with the desires and needs of the human heart. More explicit, Madam de Staël protests against the sovereignty of the argument, the calculation, the cold logic, and praised the sentiment, the enthusiasm, sole source, said she, of the true moral ideas. And she succeeded, not only in reclaiming for the moral of the proper and independent principles, but in searching for, in the practical consequences, the touchstone of all philosophical truth. What this state of the spirits called, not only a progress of the existing doctrines, but the formation of a new philosophy, this is what was clearly indicated, from 1804, by the ideologue Degérando himself, in his *Histoire compare des systems de philosophie*<sup>3</sup>. To reconcile the moral and knowledge, such is, according to him, the true goal of philosophy. Without doubt philosophy ought to be the work of reason, not inspiration; but it is necessary that it satisfy all the needs of the human nature. We believe, declares Degérando, the cause of experience almost won. There is the principle and the inviolable rule. But it is a question of pulling from the experience which is truly found here. Now the experience, taken in its totality, holds, and from the first speculative truths, the foundation of our knowledge, and from the primitive and independent practical truths, the foundation of the moral. Reason, for the philosopher, will then be held thereof, like the instinct for the vulgar, as evidence for the conscience. Far from being humiliated from this encounter, the philosopher "will congratulate himself on finding the principle of the legislation which ought to direct his life and assure his bliss within the fundamental conditions of his proper nature and he will say: *Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*<sup>4</sup>."

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<sup>3</sup> *Comparative History of the Systems of Philosophy* – Trans

<sup>4</sup> "I am human, nothing human remains alien to me." – Trans.

Such is, said Degérando, the philosophy which it is a question of constituting. But is this here only a dream, a wish for the imagination? So one manages to preserve it here, in France, this philosophy, begins to manifest itself. In the same sense, Germany, for some time, searches with depth for the titles of the human spirit. More precisely Scotland, in recent philosophical works, has proposed for task the very object that we claim. And it has employed here the true method, the method of observation by the conscience, and not, like Condillac, a degenerate mixture of observation and hypothesis, or, like the Germans, a method a priori which goes against the principle of modern science. This is not all: the Scots have the brisker concern for the true morals. Hutcheson has returned to the notions of the beautiful and the good a proper and natural character, as regards the notions separately: "The University of Glasgow has seen the exact method of Aristotle reconcile itself with the eloquent ideas of Plato." Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Reid, Beattie, Oswald, Ferguson, Adam Smith, Dugald Stewart, all these judicious and keen spirits, by proceeding with continuation and according to the good method, made a solid and durable work, a necessary beginning for every true philosophy.

Thus it is that, from 1804, the *Histoire compare des systèmes*<sup>5</sup>, of Degérando, at the same time that it showed to the French philosophers a new path, invited them to take the Scottish for guide.

## II

As a matter of fact, the Scottish philosophy was already taught in Geneva by the professor Pierre Prévost, and it was in part through him that Degérando had been informed on this philosophy. Prévost translated the *Essais philosophiques*<sup>6</sup> by Adam Smith (1797), and the *Eléments de philosophie de l'esprit humain*<sup>7</sup> by Dugald Stewart (1808). In the *Essais de philosophie*<sup>8</sup> which he published himself in the year XIII, he presents the Scottish school as the true heir of the method from Bacon dealing with science of the human spirit. He praised the scientific exactitude of its analysis, its preoccupation with the practical, its effort to establish the rules of morality, through examination of the human constitution; finally, the form at the same time serious and elegant, natural, precise and perfectly clear of which it knows to clothe its teachings. "It is difficult," said he, "by engaging in the commerce of these philosophers, to refrain from some sentiment of enthusiasm in their favor."

We ought to point out this first essay for the introduction of the Scottish philosophy into France. But Prévost mixes, a little at random, Reid with Tracy and Condillac, and, furthermore, his influence was mediocre. The one who caused us to know the Scottish philosophy in its purity and its beauty, and who excited among us the enthusiasm of which it has been the object, this was Royer-Collard.

The imperial government, after having reestablished philosophical teaching in the grammar-schools, had created two courses of philosophy at the Faculté des lettres of Paris. In 1810, one of the chairs became vacant. The name of Royer-Collard was mentioned before the emperor; and the latter, who concerned himself with restoring the spirit to the conservative ideas of the social order, chose it over what he knew of his life and character.

Royer-Collard had been raised in a Jansenist environment. Nourished by his mother and by his masters in the tradition of Port-Royal, he had contracted the habits of dignity, seriousness, of respect for moral and religious things, which married in him a sharp witty eloquence and a rich imagination. He had studied and even taught mathematics. He had read Descartes, Bacon, Leibnitz, Pascal and Bossuet. In 1794, proscribed in his capacity as moderate, he hid in Champagne and engaged here in the work of plowing. On the shaft of his plow was a stand intended to hold a book of piety: he placed here a book of Plato. He united action to thought. So he had not maintained religious faith properly called, he had dwelled very hostile to the materialist doctrines of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The nomination on Oct. 24, 1810, of which he was the object, found him not at all a stranger to the preoccupations and even to the philosophical knowledges. However, he was not prepared to teach, and he prepared himself here for more than a year. One day as he walked on the wharfs, searching without doubt for

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<sup>5</sup> *The Comparative History of Systems* – Trans.

<sup>6</sup> *Philosophic Essays* – Trans.

<sup>7</sup> *Elements of Philosophy of the Human Spirit* – Trans.

<sup>8</sup> *Essays on Philosophy* – Trans.

proper works to furnish him with material, he found the *Recherche sur l'entendement humain*<sup>9</sup> by Thomas Reid. The name of the author and the value of the work could not fail to be known to him. He skimmed through the book, was delighted thereof, and bought it for a price to his too modest pleasure.

This incident played a role in the direction of his teaching as occasional cause. He is not therefore a professor as a writer. It is necessary that the professor supplies, at the indicated hour, a doctrine, ideas and decided, precise results easily distinguishable. Now, often, his own ideas are yet confused and badly established. The best than is that he comments upon a good author and rests on him in order to search in his turn. Classical method, moreover, in which Kant himself submitted, for he read first, in his lessons, Wolff and Baumgartner: his originality lost nothing here. For what is here for Royer-Collard, a distinctive trait of his character was the anxious sentiment for responsibility. He resolved then to first take refuge behind Reid, behind the proven master who had travelled with success the career which he himself proposed to enter.

When he opened his course, on Sept. 4, 1811, he spoke principally on the method which fit the philosophy. One persists, said he, by laying down right away a unique principle and by descending by the path of synthesis, at the risk of not rejoining the facts. This is the contrary path which it is necessary to follow. It is necessary to raise oneself progressively from the facts to the causes, without claiming to arrive, nonetheless, at a unique cause. Let us follow the Scottish in that. The celebrated schools of Edimbourg and Glasgow make, from the observation clearly defined as observation by the conscious, the constant source of the science of the human spirit. They are prohibited from rising to the causes, but they do not think to determine thereof the number in advance, but they admit as many primitive facts as the psychological analysis allows to exist thereof. And it happens that by following this truly scientific method, it alone which may legitimately use Bacon and Newton as their authority, the Scottish have furnished the best means to combat the principle enemy of the human soul in the life of the individual and of society: skepticism. One does not make out in skepticism its part, said Royer-Collard in 1813: who doubts the reality of the exterior world, has no reason to believe in the existence of the person and the value of the moral bond which unites them. Now, the Scottish philosophy destroys skepticism, and, there, it satisfies our most urgent needs, as much practical as speculative.

It is thus that the hard to please and independent Royer-Collard entrusted docilely to Thomas Reid. In the beginning, he contented himself with translating and commenting before his audience on numerous passages of its author. Then, he searched by himself, plunging into this problem of the exterior perception, of which the study formed one of the more solid parts of the work of Reid. He sets himself with weapons forged by Reid against Hume in order to refute Condillac. Then he investigated thoroughly the consequences of the distinction of sensation and perception. Since the soul places itself into perception, this is why its own energy is the source of knowledge. Our philosopher analyzes the knowledge that the soul gives in this way to itself: causality, substance, space, duration, and works to assemble this knowledge into a rational synthesis.

Royer-Collard only taught for two years and some months, and before a very restrained public; but in the audience are found curious and ardent youths, particularly the students of the normal School called to become professors in the grammar schools. The effects of these courses were immediately considerable.

We had above all, said Jouffroy to us, the sentiment of deliverance. We were then hushed up in the prison of the systems. With difficulty a doctrine appeared plausible, as it was supposed to exhaust the entire object of philosophy. Now, when some philosophy has obtained one such ascendancy, the philosophy itself is compromised: for philosophy is the search for truth on the human spirit, and, if the entire truth is known on this object, it remains to teach it, not to discover it. We inhaled, when one was heard to proclaim that the entire system, in philosophy as elsewhere, is only an artificial barrier imposed to the effort of intelligence. A new era appeared to open, an era of independent research, where one would have to only reckon with the facts and reality, not with ideas and formulas interposed between the facts and us. "We could not pardon," said Jouffroy, "to the disciples of Reid or M. Royer-Collard for enclosing themselves within the circle of their ideas; not at all searching incessantly to pass through it, could be in a way a lack of respect in their teaching."

At the same time, one observed with joy the philosophy finally in possession of a method which permitted it to establish itself and to advance, little by little, like the other sciences, instead of indulging in fallacious triumphs, without future and without results. Thanks to Scottish philosophy, which Royer-Collard had opposed,

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<sup>9</sup> *Research on Human Understanding* – Trans.

genuinely Jansenist, in the arrogance of the makers of systems, they expected to finally obtain lasting, accumulable results, and to place a term to the eternal beginning so much reproached to the philosophy.

So without doubt, one appreciated the agreement of the new teaching with the moral needs which manifested themselves with force in society. But one did not intend to subordinate the researches to this interest. One had no inclination to mysticism. Even on morals they searched for scientific demonstrations. It was by the certain resolution of the theoretical problems that one thought to place himself in a position to resolve the practical problems.

As early as 1815, Royer-Collard was replaced by Victor Cousin. The latter, won over to the philosophy of Laromiguière, had at first been Condillacian. Bit by bit, the lectures of Royer-Collard modified his ideas and forced him to enter the path "at that time painful and infrequent," said he, of the Scottish philosophy. A third master, Biran, formed it on his part on the interior observation. Cousin studied, like Royer-Collard, the external perception. And his students had the pleasure to rediscover in his teaching this aversion for the spirit of system, this perfect liberty of spirit and sincerity in the search, which they ascribed to the successful influence of the Scots. Thus presented, the philosophy seduced the imaginations as far as it satisfied the intelligences.

Victor Cousin was a curious spirit, ardent, eager for innovations, and to some extent, for revelations. From a journey in Germany, which he made in 1817, he returned impassioned for the metaphysical and inclined to pantheism. He intended however to dwell faithful to the method of observation. Not only expressing what's in the conscience, but expressing all which happens here: such is his maxim. And, although, henceforth, he was attracted by Kant and the Germans, he studied the Scottish philosophy with an evident sympathy. Twelve lessons of his course from 1819-1820 are devoted to this philosophy. It is one of the beautiful parts of his teaching. The mourned Mac Cosh, in the introduction to his history of the Scottish philosophy, said of this work by Cousin: "*the best history of the Scottish philosophy is by a Frenchman. Cousin has a thorough appreciation of the excellencies of the Scottish metaphysicians, and, when he finds faults, his criticisms are always worthy of being considered.*" Cousin points out the relationship of our genius with that of the Scots. He observes for his contemporaries, in the Scottish philosophy, the natural transition between Locke and the German philosophy. He strongly commends the qualities that the Scots have contracted in the teaching: clarity, method, respect for the common senses. So Malebranche had ought to profess, said he, that he had been less lavish with paradoxes. It is necessary to bring out the merits from the doctrine. The Scottish have definitively established the analogy of the mental sciences and the physical sciences. By his indefatigable polemic against the representative ideas, Reid has prepared for the arrival of a grand philosophy. He celebrates the predilection of the Scottish for the moral, and the successful alliance, in this matter, of their method of psychological observation and of the natural elevation of their sentiments.

It is in this way that Cousin persisted in seeing, within psychology, and probably within the Scottish philosophy, the beginning of all philosophy. But more and more he aspires to go beyond this psychology in order to approach the great metaphysical problems of which nourished the philosophy of Plato, Descartes, Leibnitz, and that the Germans, since Kant, restored in honor. In 1828, psychology itself is no more than a springboard from where he rushes into ontology, in the system of impersonal reason. Is the Scottish influence, then, decidedly dominated by the German influence? Will it only have served to arrange a transition between two contrary developments?

### III

At the same time when Victor Cousin moved more and more away from Reid in order to go and rejoin, through Kant and Fichte, Plato and even Plotinus, his disciple Jouffroy, who since 1819 taught philosophy at the Training College, and who, after 1822, the College having been closed by the counter-revolution, had continued his care of him for hand-picked youth, judged useful to return purely and simply to the method of Reid. This was like a second call to the beneficent action of the Scottish philosophy.

The anxiety of Jouffroy had not for unique cause his timidity in metaphysics. Materialism, which one had believed rose above with the Condillacian ideology, reappeared, more precise and more declared, in the writings of all the physiologists and physicians. Magendie taught that, according to the demands of the scientific method, one ought to henceforth deal with the human intelligence as if it was the product of an organ of the body. He maintained that the ideas which come to us from the outside are more distinct of their nature than those which

come to us from the inside. Broussais, at the end of his courses, passed through the place of the School of Medicine surrounded by a group of enthusiastic students, which he incited, in the name of the principles of Cabanis, against the representatives of the new philosophy. He worked on this celebrated *Traité de l'irritation et de la folie*<sup>10</sup>, which appeared in 1828.

As early as 1826, Jouffroy published a French translation of *Esquisses de philosophie morale*<sup>11</sup>, by Dugald Stewart, with a very extensive introduction where he claims for psychology the right to exist apart, outside of physiology. He demonstrates, according to the Scots, that the sensible facts are not able to observe themselves alone; that the conscience is, it too, an instrument of observation, a means to discover the truths as a matter of fact of indisputable value. He adds that in a similar matter it does not suffice to destroy a false method and to indicate thereof a new. The legitimacy of the experimental method applied to the facts of the human spirit can only be plainly demonstrated by the results. Now, until the new French philosophical school had produced or published positive works which give consistency to its doctrines, nothing appears more useful than to place under the eyes of the public the works of this Scottish school, which, first, has practiced this method with rigor, with continuation and with success. To read Dugald Stewart, one sees, by the very facts, that psychology is possible as a distinct science; one realizes, by the example as by the theory, the conditions of its existence and of its progress.

This preface from Jouffroy was a true literary event. It gave to the new school a point of precise support in order to combat materialism, at the same time that a new light conducts itself into the theoretical researches.

Supported by public favor, Jouffroy undertook, with his student Adolphe Garnier, the translation of the complete works of Thomas Reid. The first volume appeared in 1828. The translation was finished in 1836. Retracing the services rendered by Scottish philosophy, Jouffroy sets forth, in a new preface, that which has hindered the progress of philosophy, this is the indiscrete precipitation with which one has posed first the more abstruse metaphysical questions. It is necessary to go from the observations to the questions, not from the questions to the observations. It is necessary to know to postpone the problems, as long as the knowledges of observations do not make them to be born from itself. Is the soul spiritual, immortal? This is what one may only usefully examine at the conclusion of science. The great merit of the Scottish, is to have extracted philosophy in the servitude of the questions and to have rendered it to itself, that is to say in the free observation of the phenomena of the human spirit. By proceeding thus, the Scottish have truly created philosophy as a science. That it settles down into its whole according to the principles which they have established, and it will advance, slowly perhaps, but surely, worthy emulator thereof, of the sciences of the physical world.

Jouffroy only addressed two criticisms to the Scottish doctrine.

On the one hand, he found it really too circumspect in metaphysics. Dugald Stewart claims that the questions relative to the nature of the human spirit were insoluble and foreign to science. This is going too far. One cannot lose interest in these questions; a materialism could stay legitimate, at least as a hypothesis, if one should keep to the assertion of Dugald Stewart. We attach here an important difference between the Scottish philosophy and the French philosophy. The first does not have the pretension to be sufficient to man. It does not form the Scottish soul, it supposes it. Its characteristic of moral elevation, said Mac Cosh<sup>12</sup>, is nothing other than a reflection of the religious faith peculiar to the Scottish nation. On the contrary, the rationalist Jouffroy would like to find in philosophy the principles of moral life which painful experience no longer allowed him to ask of religion.

On the other hand, related to the question of certitude, Jouffroy remarks that Reid and Kant, agreed in order to reestablish the element a priori into human knowledge, parts company on the point of knowing if these principles of our reason have an absolute value or are only profitable for this very reason. He does not agree that with the Scottish one removes this question by invoking the natural beliefs of the human spirit, and he concluded in favor of the irrefutability of the transcendental idealism of Kant.

Except for these two criticisms, Jouffroy opposes with confidence the Scottish philosophy to the German philosophy, of which Victor Cousin is the enthusiastic champion. It is solely by walking in the path opened by the Scottish that one will be able to establish philosophy as science.

Jouffroy found zealous continuators in Damiron, the moralist and preacher of the school, then in Garnier, the patient observer, more eager for results than for brilliant theories. This last, scrupulously applying the Scottish

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<sup>10</sup> *Treatise on Irritation and Madness* – Trans.

<sup>11</sup> *Sketches of Moral Philosophy* – Trans.

<sup>12</sup> *The Scottish philosophy, etc.*, p. 303.

method, consulting from elsewhere, not only his own conscience, but poets, moralists, historians, and even the animals, has left, under the title of *Traité des faculté de l'ame*<sup>13</sup>, a modest work, but substantial, rich in subtle and exact analysis, notably on the power to love, and a lasting usefulness to those who occupy themselves with moral philosophy, in whatever school they belong.

Thus is established the supremacy of the Scottish philosophy within the eminent teaching of France. A brilliant writer, remarkable as a statesman, publicist, moralist, historian and well read, Charles de Rémusat, gave himself for task to spread within society the new philosophy, yet confined in the schools, and also to broaden it and for him to open perspectives on all the great subjects of classical philosophy. He appealed expressly to Reid and Royer Collard. "There," said he, "is our origin of everything." He wrote with love an excellent *Vie de Reid*<sup>14</sup>. In his *Essais de philosophie*<sup>15</sup>, composed from 1829 to 1842, he said that he took for chiefs Descartes, Reid and Kant. If Descartes has truly invented the modern philosophic method, by placing the principle of science, thinking, within the I, it is Reid who has begun the work itself. He has only made the first steps, but these are those which are the most difficult and the most important. Moreover, it will always be necessary to grant to Reid that which is the basis for all his dogmatism: the existence of indemonstrable primitive facts. On this same basis, Rémusat, more bold than Jouffroy, is eager to rebuild metaphysics. He disputes, in particular, this Scottish doctrine, that, from our soul, we only attain the phenomenal manifestations. He remarks that, by this concession, the new philosophy was able to satisfy Broussais, who, in his *Cours de phrénologie*<sup>16</sup>, found that it begins rather well. He insists that the observation goes further; that, exceeding the analysis, by the reflection properly called, to make out the very principles which envelop the inductions of the consciousness. The I, in this way, attaches itself directly, as substance and as cause.

This question of the nature and bearing of the interior observation, that early French philosophers had themselves posed regarding the Scottish doctrines, provoked on their part new researches, as soon as they were in the current of the philosophy of Hamilton. Hamilton, to tell the truth, was not an unknown for them. When this philosopher stood as a candidate for the chair of logic and metaphysics for the University of Edimbourg, Victor Cousin, whose ideas Hamilton had criticized in the *Revue d'Edimbourg* (1829), wrote to Monsieur Pillaus, professor of the University (June 1, 1836), in order to support his candidature. "Monsieur Hamilton," he said, "represents excellently in Europe the Scottish spirit. He never deviated from the great path of the common senses; and at the same time he has a lot of spirit and wisdom; and I assure you (I know it from experience) that his dialectics are not at all convenient for his opponent." But it was only in 1840 that one translated into French some writings of Hamilton. The learned and acute Louis Peisse, versed in medicine, friend of the higher speculations, judged that he could contribute to the movement of philosophic thought in France, as well as to the educations of the intelligences, by publishing the translation of the principle treatises by Hamilton. Now, the principle question which emits from these fragments is that of the comprehension of the psychological method. He denies, as regards it, with Hamilton, that this method can lead legitimately to ontology.

Regarding this publication, Monsieur Felix Ravaisson wrote, under the title of "Philosophie contemporaine"<sup>17</sup> (*Revue des Deux-Mondes*<sup>18</sup>, 1840), an article of great beauty where, departing from this thesis of Hamilton that the subject and object are only known to us in their correlation and their opposition, he strove to lead the Scottish philosophy to pass through the circle where the latter believes themselves necessarily enclosed. Empirical observation and induction are not, said Monsieur Ravaisson, when it is a question of our soul, our sole means to understand. The apperception which has defined Leibnitz, the human reflection properly called, makes out, beyond the phenomena and laws of the soul, a self will, tendency, love, which meets the conditions for substance and cause.

To the influence of Hamilton is connected an important phase of the philosophical development of Monsieur Renouvier. This philosopher, after having first admitted as cognizable the conciliation of the finite and

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<sup>13</sup> *Treatise on the Faculties of the Soul* – Trans.

<sup>14</sup> *Life of Reid* – Trans.

<sup>15</sup> *Essays on Philosophy* – Trans.

<sup>16</sup> *Course on Phrenology* – Trans.

<sup>17</sup> *Contemporary Philosophy* – Trans.

<sup>18</sup> *Review of the Two-Worlds* – Trans.

the infinite, declares before long, with Hamilton, that the union of these two terms escapes our understanding, which ought to lead it to remove entirely the second.

To this order of the ideas, and in particular to the celebrated opposition of the absolute and the infinite in Hamilton, is attached equally a grand and profound work by Monsieur Vacherot, *La métaphysique et la science*<sup>19</sup> (1858), where, the eminent thinker, after having knowingly criticized all the existing systems, placed us before the antimony of the infinite and the perfect, and resolves this antimony by making from the perfect, the ideal, and from the infinite, the real.

Finally, the great rival school of the spiritualist schools which grew in France since 1830 owed, it also, much to the Scottish, since Auguste Comte called Hume his principle precursor in philosophy.

It is thus that the Scottish philosophy, according to the spirits that it encountered in France, has provoked either delicate and detailed analysis, or original speculations on the meaning of consciousness, on nature and the value of the first principles.

It has played yet another role, more modest, but very important, by the place which it has held in the teaching of the colleges. It remains for us to consider thereof the action on this special terrain.

#### IV

The teaching of philosophy in our colleges, at the beginning of this century, was a mixture of scholasticism and Condillacism. It began in logic and was continued in metaphysics and morality.

Now, from 1816, a professor of philosophy from the royal College of Bourbon, named Mauger, proposed to reorganize this instruction according to the principles set forth by Royer-Collard in Sorbonne, that is to say according to the principles of Reid. The Scottish philosophy, said he, is the application of the study of the human spirit by the Baconian method, which is the true scientific method. It has man for subject of study, and not a hypothetical primitive man. Furthermore, it has an essentially moral character. Until a new philosophy is born in France from the meditations of Descartes, Pascal and Bossuet, the philosophy of Reid is the best we are able to adopt into our teaching. The philosophy has moreover roots in France; for its authors acknowledge that they have drawn several of their fundamental doctrines from Descartes and from P. Buffier. And Mauger proposed that, in accordance with the ideas of Reid, one replaced the old division: Logic, metaphysics, morality, with the following division: 1<sup>st</sup>, metaphysics (this word signifying the study of the faculties of the soul by means of the inner senses); 2<sup>nd</sup>, Logic; 3<sup>rd</sup>, morality.

This first attempt did not succeed. However, the new philosophy slipped little by little into the instruction, with that of Laromiguière, thanks to the influence of the Training College.

In 1821, the teaching of the abbot of the Rivière at the college Louis-le-Grand caused to proceed the logic of general psychological considerations on the origin of our ideas. This professor taught that the sensations are the first means of instruction furnished to man; but at the same time he admitted, under the name of reason, of the universal notions resulting from our intellectual constitution.

As early as 1820, the clerical reaction had begun. In 1822, the Training College was suppressed and the scholastic teaching in Latin reestablished.

Following the revolution of 1830, Victor Cousin, as advisor for the University, made to draft a new program, which was promulgated in 1832 and lasted until 1852. The writers were Laromiguière and Jouffroy, under the presidency of Cousin. This program was therefore an arrangement between the Scottish and Condillacien philosophies. But the Scottish element dominated here, as proves the formal introduction of the psychology of observation, and this place of honor attributed to this science. The order of the material: psychology, logic, morality, history of philosophy. And the authors of the program did not hesitate to present this innovation as obligatory. They put it this way: "Of the true philosophical method. It is necessary to begin the study of philosophy with the study of psychology." This was the Scottish philosophy erected in our country as official philosophy. According to these principles was composed the treaty on philosophy by Amédée Jacques, Jules Simon and Émile Saisset, who was the manual for numerous generations of pupils.

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<sup>19</sup> *Metaphysics and Science* – Trans.



The spirit which had dictated the program of 1832 was one equally concerned for the conditions of science and for the needs of the practical life. But before long there appeared in society sharp alarms on the subject of the programs of skepticism and materialism. I found proof thereof in an article from the *Bibliographie universelle de Genève*, published in 1836, on the state of philosophy in France. The author indicates, from 1830, a singular mixture of doubt, indifference, practical materialism, intellectual license. Scepticism, said he, having no place to be aggressive because the beliefs are no longer oppressive, changes into indifference. Now, the teaching of philosophy, such as it is understood, does not oppose to this malady of the souls as abstractions and theories. In a country where one becomes governess, not by birth, but by intelligence, it is from the culture of the intelligence and of the soul that depends the future of the nation. The task of philosophy here is no longer to adorn the spirit, but to direct, to form the activity. It ought to be above all educative, and to adjust its teachings upon the needs of society. That it protects itself well moreover from rejecting the assistance of other conservative forces. The union of philosophy and religion is especially necessary, in a time when all conspire to be the ruin of society, if one does not rescue morality.

The man who was then at the head of education in France, Victor Cousin, envisaged things more and more from this point of view. Briskly attacked by the clergy, he hesitated especially to counter as he judges fatal to society a war between religion and philosophy. In 1850, he said to Monsieur de Rémusat: "Prepare yourself for a great atheistic movement within Europe." From this direction turned particularly his attention, and the instruction of philosophy appeared now as a secular priesthood, whose mission is to combat evil doctrines. The Scottish is the auxiliary to which he appealed to. He finds in it the model of a sound and salutary philosophy. Gradually he adapted his works in this sense. His old course from 1817-1818, developed the *Traité du Vrai, du Beau et du Bien*<sup>20</sup>, which, more and more amended, he felt, finally, completely Scottish. And the work was reprinted eleven times between 1845 and 1865.

From then on, the Scottish doctrines were truly the substance of the philosophic instruction in our colleges. Although imposed by authority and presented as a sort of State philosophy destined to serve political and social ends, which, in themselves, are conscientious and patient enquiries and not dogmas, charmed a number of spirits and maintained within an important part of society a real liking for philosophical studies. They consisted of a clear and simple instruction, within reach of the majority of the students; they called for the continual reestablishment of harmonious relations with the realities of the moral and social life; they provoked individual reflection and gave to each the hope to make, by observing with method, some small find; they did not ask that one use grand words, clever and obscure, of which the sense vary with the authors, but they were content with the common language, which allowed them to manage with spirit and elegance. For all these reasons, the Scottish philosophy was long upheld in our secondary instruction. In 1870, it dominated here still; and even today, more than one paterfamilias, with this sense for merits of the past which characterize old people, delight in extolling before the new generation, eager for abstruse science, the charming lessons which has opened its spirits to the worship of moral things, which has excited it to think without throwing it into indiscipline and intellectual licentiousness, and which has left it a dear and beneficent souvenir.

Thus is realized, in part, the desire which had formed Charles de Rémusat, to see the Scottish philosophy penetrate into society and to spread here its spirit of liberty and respect, of criticism and good sense, of sincere observation, of aversion for systems, and of inviolable attachment to the instinctive beliefs of humanity.

And this education of the spirits was greatly profitable to philosophy itself. At this school was formed solid and brilliant writers such as Saisset, Barni, Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, Jules Simon, Bersot, Franck, Caro, Messrs. Bouillier, Lévêque, Waddington, Nourrisson, Janet, of which recently yet the professor presented to the British public the *Traité des causes finales*<sup>21</sup>, translated into English; wholly a phalanx of masters who, by their theoretic, polemic, historic writings, have valiantly upheld, according to Cousin and Jouffroy, the cause of the Platonic and Cartesian spiritism.

Although, for about thirty years, the Scottish philosophy no longer formed the base of our programs, that is not to say that its influence had disappeared. The concern for metaphysical problems is in our country again become very alive. But, if the French are afraid of losing their way following the bold dialecticians of Germany, they returned constantly to the living and given realities, of the sole possible source and to the touchstone

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<sup>20</sup> *Treatise on the Truth, the Beautiful and the Good* – Trans.

<sup>21</sup> *Treatise on Final Causes* – Trans.

necessary for the higher ideas, is it not that something of the Scottish spirit has dwelled in their intellectual temperament? And if our psychologists maintain the value of the psychic element properly called and do not believe they ought to study the uniquely mental life in its physical conditions, by exterior observation, or in its hypothetical elements, by abstraction and reasoning, is it not that they also have removed more than one had only called it sometimes of this prudent method which had gone at first to the real, to the immediate given, to the realities directly perceived by the consciousness, without asking from elsewhere for the physiology al the teachings that it is able to furnish for the explanation of the psychical facts?

It is in this way that the French, omitting perhaps, or at least only studying incompletely more than a beautiful part of the Scottish philosophy, like the doctrine of Reid on the foundation of the skepticism of Hume, or the enquiries of Dugald Stewart on the limits of the domain of demonstrative evidence, or the theory of Hamilton on the conditions of thought, have developed in their manner and adapted to the needs of their intellectual and moral life the method and principles of this philosophy.

The relationships of the French philosophy with the Scottish philosophy are thus an important chapter of the history of thought in France. It is in this way a chapter of the general history of human thought. For, if art and literature are jointly and without doubt ought to remain national things, is it not therefore likewise for the truth, which, from its nature, is universal; and these men have given an example worthy of memorial, who, in order to find it, have loyally united their intelligence to that of a noble nation, equally falling in love with clear science and moral honesty.