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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Destutt de Tracy's thought in the realms of political economy, legislation, religion, morale, education and language, and the manner in which Tracy's ideas are deduced from the principles of idéologie. Idéologie, as the study of the human intellectual faculties, seeks to establish the manner in which the mind gains knowledge from the senses and conceives complex ideas; once these procedures are understood, the process of judgement may be perfected and error may be eliminated from human reasoning. In this way principles of absolute certainty may, in Tracy's view, be established in all aspects of social thought.

This thesis devotes one chapter to an examination of Tracy's concept of idéologie and his attitude to the work of other philosophers, in particular Condillac, whom he describes as the founder of the science. Another chapter is devoted to Tracy's concept of the will and the principles which may be deduced from it, and which lie at the basis of his thought in the fields mentioned above. Tracy's methodology is studied throughout the body of the thesis, where emphasis is laid upon the way in which he emphasises deduction rather than observation and where, although he conceives of a practical aim for his enquiries - the creation of a just society where men may enjoy freedom and happiness - he searches for philosophical truths to be applied in social, moral and political contexts.

The first chapter of this thesis contains a biographical study of Tracy, establishing, where it is possible to do so, the facts of his career as soldier, statesman and philosopher. An appendix contains thirty hitherto unpublished letters written by Tracy to Joseph Rey.

THE SOCIAL, MORAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT
OF DESTUTT DE TRACY

Thesis presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of Durham

by

B.G. GARNHAM, M.A.

May 1973

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INTRODUCTION

This study examines in detail the social, moral and political thought of Destutt de Tracy, and in so doing deals with the work of a philosopher who has received scant attention in recent years. In 1971 Shirley Gruner published an article entitled 'Destutt de Tracy, the forgotten idéologue'⁽¹⁾ and it must be admitted that the epithet is not without foundation. Publications in the last two years have suggested that there may be a certain revival of interest in Tracy, for apart from the article mentioned above, and one by Professor Colin Smith⁽²⁾ two other works of significance have appeared: firstly, the first two volumes of a reprint of Tracy's major work, the Elémens d'Idéologie, edited by Henri Gouhier, and secondly, a monograph by François Rastier, Idéologie et Théorie des signes, Analyse structurale des Eléments d'Idéologie de Destutt de Tracy. It must be pointed out that this latter work, forming as it does part of a series of studies in semiotics, examines Tracy's work from a very restricted point of view.

Such indications of recent concern in Tracy's ideas are modest enough and follow a protracted period in which his work has aroused little general interest. In the twentieth century it has been the subject of three major studies, two of which are doctoral dissertations: firstly, Vera Stepanowa, Destutt de Tracy, eine historisch-psychologische Untersuchung, published in 1908, and secondly, Oskar Kohler, Die Logik des Destutt de Tracy, published in 1931. The third of these studies is that by Jean Cruet, La Philosophie morale et sociale de Destutt de Tracy, published in 1909. In addition Tracy has been the subject of a small number of articles and has been accorded some attention in general

(1) Durham University Journal, Vol. LXIII, 3 (June 1971), pp. 186-195.

(2) 'Destutt de Tracy and the bankruptcy of sensationalism' in Balzac and the Nineteenth Century, Studies in French Literature presented to Herbert J. Hunt, (ed. D.G. Charlton, J. Gaudon and A.R. Pugh), Leicester U.P., 1972, pp. 195-207.

studies of idéologie and of French philosophy of the nineteenth century.

The causes of such neglect must ultimately remain a matter for speculation, but there is good reason to suggest that they can be summarised within two arguments. The first of these, put forward by many historians of philosophic thought, who have considered Tracy, however briefly, is that when he coined the term idéologie in 1796 he formally gave a name to a method of enquiry which not only occupied his own attention at that time, but which had in substance existed throughout the eighteenth century. The idéologues⁽¹⁾ are seen as presenting in particular circumstances further extended treatment of themes and attitudes not uncommon in the enlightenment, and this has led to a tendency towards an over-generalised and even hostile dismissal of their work.

For example:

Mais enfin la vraie queue de l'encyclopédie, et qui ne s'étale point en panache, c'est le morne troupeau des idéologues. Pusillus grex en vérité, mais dont on ne saurait attendre aucun renouvellement. (...) Ces idéologues administrent la philosophie comme une société en liquidation; dès 1803, l'Académie des Sciences morales et politiques était supprimée et un ange à l'épée de feu, ou plus simplement un argousin, posté à l'entrée de ce paradis pour penseurs professionnels. (2)

In one of the more sympathetic studies of the idéologues, Charles Hunter Van Duzer recognises the general disposition to regard idéologie as the 'tail of Condillacism'⁽³⁾ and he himself attests to the superficial similarity between much of the thought of philosophers writing during the Revolution and that of earlier writers which lies at the root of it. The idéologues are indeed consistently represented as the inheritors of the spirit

- (1) It is clearly not without significance that these philosophers have come to be known by a term used by Chateaubriand and Napoleon to express contempt. Tracy uses the term idéologue.
- (2) J. Vier, 'La Prose d'idées au XIXe siècle' in Histoire des Littératures, III, 'Encyclopédie de la Pléiade', Paris, Gallimard, 1958, p. 1139.
- (3) C.H. Van Duzer, The Contribution of the Idéologues to French Revolutionary Thought, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1935, p. 13.

of the enlightenment, and their adherence to the methods and ideas of the eighteenth century at a time when new attitudes and a new vigour were required is often taken to be their fatal weakness, accounting for the rapid decline of their influence in the early nineteenth century, faced with the religious mysticism of Chateaubriand and Ballanche and the spiritualism of Royer-Collard and Maine de Biran.

The second argument directed against the idéologues is that they failed in their fundamental task, the search for an accurate account of the phenomena of human consciousness. They placed the emphasis of their enquiries less upon the source of the data of that consciousness and more upon the mechanisms of the human mind receiving them, but, so this argument runs, their analysis of the mind remained incomplete and speculative and, in the phrase of C. Smith, idéologie 'expired largely through the bankruptcy of its own analysis of experience'. (1) Thus the idéologues seem to fall between two stools; they are caught between the sensationalism and philosophical liberalism of the eighteenth century and the spiritualist reaction of the nineteenth, and they belong to neither.

Clearly, whatever credence is given to these criticisms, there is a gap to be filled. Van Duzer acknowledges the importance of Picavet, whose study, published in 1891⁽²⁾, did lead to the creation of a more favourable view of the idéologues. Such a view, however, cannot be said to have prospered, and despite the work of such scholars as Boase, Cailliet, Ferraz and Moravia, and the attention of such thinkers as Comte and Sainte-Beuve, Tracy has shared in the general neglect of philosophers of the Revolutionary period.

This study seeks to fill the gap partially, not from a desire merely to rehabilitate a neglected thinker, but in order to look closely at the work of

(1) op. cit., p. 195

(2) F. Picavet, Les Idéologues, Paris, Alcan, 1891.

one man writing in a period in the development of ideas which is of fundamental importance, precisely because it is a period when philosophical thought was translated into action and when there was the opportunity for the creation of a new social order. The idéologues, heirs to the political, social and economic upheaval of the Revolution, saw their science as possessing such a goal; Maine de Biran ascribes a grandiose aim to Tracy and to Cabanis when he characterises their ambitions with the phrase 'l'idéologie doit changer la face du monde'. (1) It is essential to examine how Tracy applies himself to this task, just as it is essential to challenge the assumptions which underlie the neglect of Tracy and his contemporaries. Whatever judgement may be passed on these assumptions, whether, for example, Tracy's thought is seen to possess a vigorous originality of conception or to present a sterile restatement of accepted attitudes and ideas, it is fitting that his work should be subjected to a scrutiny it deserves but which previously it has only intermittently enjoyed.

There are other factors which have shaped the structure and development of this study. In the first place, it was considered profitable to concentrate upon the work of one man rather than upon that of a group. The idéologues, unlike their predecessors before the Revolution, bear witness to a remarkable unity of temperament; they enjoyed close ties of friendship, particularly in the salons of Auteuil, as well as common interests of research within the Institut. But it is important not to confuse Tracy with other idéologues or to fall into the trap of assuming that he always speaks in their name. Tracy declared that they formed a homogeneous group, but never claimed that he was

(1) Remark used by Biran, after his first meeting with Tracy and Cabanis, in a letter to L'Abbé de Feletz, dated 11 thermidor an X (30 July 1802), Oeuvres, (ed. Tisserand), Paris, Alcan 1920-49, VI, 140.

their 'leader' - indeed they had none - or that they spoke with one voice:

Aujourd'hui, nous autres Français, dans les sciences idéologiques, morales et politiques, où peu de choses sont rigoureusement prouvées, nous n'avons aucun chef de secte, nous ne suivons la bannière de qui que ce soit. Chacun de ceux qui s'en occupent a ses opinions personnelles très indépendantes, et s'ils s'accordent sur certains points, c'est toujours sans en avoir le projet, souvent sans le savoir et quelquefois même sans le croire autant que cela est. (1)

Whilst the idéologues had a common aim, there were differences of approach, of emphasis, of opinion. What distinguishes Tracy from his contemporaries is the rigour and clarity of his thought; the expression of his ideas is strikingly systematic, and the conjunction of these qualities and his vigour, humanity and compassion make him more than usually suited to a study of this kind. An examination of his works offers the possibility of approaching idéologie from the point of view of the particular rather than the general. Since Tracy maintains his individuality and yet at the same time is, in many respects, representative of his age, this study concentrates its attention upon his system which, with its attachment to analysis and its determination to proceed from the known to the unknown, provides the clearest example of the major preoccupations and attitudes of idéologie.

This study concentrates upon Tracy's thought in the social, moral and political fields for two reasons. Firstly, as we have seen, Tracy saw that philosophical enquiry should be directed towards practical ends.⁽²⁾ The analysis of the human mind provided by idéologie and designed above all to eliminate error in the formation of judgement, would provide the first step in the construction of a social science whose tenets would be demonstrable and verifiable. As will be seen from his plan, reproduced in chapter II of this

(1) De la Métaphysique de Kant, Mémoires de l'Institut, IV, 548.

(2) Sainte-Beuve cites Tracy, in a letter to Fauriel, as follows: 'Il n'y a moyen d'y exister (dans le monde) qu'en rêvant de le rendre meilleur'.

study, Tracy did not conceive idéologie as independent of this social science; indeed the truths of idéologie are to be applied to man's role within society.

Secondly, these aspects of the work of Tracy have received particularly scant attention. Those who have dealt with him have tended to concentrate upon his role as a sensationalist, as a disciple of Condillac, as an analyst of the mind. His works on religion, on morale, on political economy and education have not previously been studied in detail, and even the work which some critics have designated to be of particular significance, his Commentaire sur L'Esprit des Lois de Montesquieu has aroused surprisingly little interest. The one monograph which has expressly set out to cover this whole field, that by J. Cruet, referred to above, is very selective in its treatment, making no mention of Tracy's Analyse raisonnée of Dupuis' Origine de tous les cultes or of his De l'Amour, and dealing rather summarily with his Traité de la Volonté. Moreover, Cruet fails to establish the fundamental relationship between idéologie and the social thought of Tracy. Tracy is searching for philosophical truths; he does not observe, but deduce, and his concept of society and the role of the individual within it is derived from principles established initially without reference to society. This approach, which Cruet disregards, is of fundamental importance to a proper understanding of Tracy's work and has influenced the organisation of this study.

Two chapters have been devoted to the bases of Tracy's system. In the first of these (chapter II), his concept of idéologie is examined, with particular reference to his view of the nature and role of philosophy and his attitude to the method of Condillac, to whom he constantly refers as the true founder of the science. This chapter seeks to establish the forces which have shaped Tracy's thought. Chapter III concentrates upon one particular aspect of his analysis of the mind, the will, which directly influences his

social, moral and political thought, and from which the principles underlying it are deduced. Chapters are then devoted to Tracy's ideas on political economy, legislation, religion, morale and education, with a final chapter on his views on grammar (or, more specifically, on the use of signs) which, in Tracy's view, has a significant role to play not only in the development and communication of ideas but also in the organisation of society.

The arrangement of chapters IV to IX outlined above does not present Tracy's work chronologically, but rather follows a pattern which goes from the general to the particular. That is, the earlier chapters in this sequence refer to the organisation of society, in terms of such problems as the distribution of wealth and, consequent upon that, the distribution of power, and the role of political institutions, while those chapters which follow deal with problems of more restricted scope, that is, with particular elements within a society. This pattern is adopted in the interests of order and clarity, and the disregard of chronology is not considered to be of importance. Tracy's thought remained unified - which does not mean that he was always consistent - and, given its attachment to analysis, was not subject to significant shifts of emphasis. The one exception to this - his reassessment of the manner by which the individual gains knowledge of reality exterior to him - is examined in chapter II.

Within each chapter it is not only Tracy's conclusions which have been taken into account. For an understanding of Tracy's work is incomplete without an awareness of the method by which he arrives at those conclusions. Since Tracy is seeking to establish a social science which has the same degree of accuracy as the physical sciences, it is important for him first of all that his own judgement be, as far as possible, free from error, and then that his arguments should be expressed as demonstrations of truths rather

than as hypotheses. Therefore, he is always careful to begin at the beginning, to draw up the principles on which his analysis rests and to establish all the steps in the process of any argument. This study seeks to reflect this method, because it is fundamental to the elaboration of Tracy's thought, in the social, moral and political fields as elsewhere. It is, in point of fact, more than a method: it does not merely reveal truths to Tracy, but, on occasion, creates them, in that it influences his approach to and understanding of a given subject.

These chapters are preceded by one chapter which presents a biographical study of Tracy. This is considered to have a rightful place in this work, not simply for the more obvious reason that knowledge of the circumstances of a man's life can increase one's understanding of his work, but because hitherto little has been established on Tracy's life with any degree of certainty. There are still, for the present-day biographer of Tracy, many obstacles to be overcome, but it is possible to throw new light on many aspects of his life which previous biographers have failed to clarify. The biography here cannot claim to be exhaustive, but it does seek to put the record straight, as it were, on those facets of Tracy's career, public and private, susceptible to investigation.

At the end of this study there are two appendices. Appendix A consists of Tracy's plan d'études for the écoles centrales, for whose course of general grammar Tracy conceived the first volume of his Elémens d'Idéologie. This plan is reproduced here as a referent in the analysis of his ideas on education. Appendix B contains letters, previously unpublished, written by Tracy to Joseph Rey. This correspondence is referred to in a series of short articles, tracing the relationship between the two men, published in the Revue des Alpes of 1892 by C. Stryiński.

Attached though he was to analysis and deduction rather than observation, Tracy was primarily concerned, in the social, moral and political fields, with the practical organisation of society. He sought to translate the principles he had established into effective action, and he was anxious to achieve specific ends, be they the combating of particular injustices or the preservation of practices he considered to be of value. His ideas are expressed in general terms; the society he describes is an ideal one. But the areas which occupy his attention and the questions which he raises are born of the preoccupations of his time. Gouhier puts it as follows:

Dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle, sous la Révolution et surtout à l'époque du Directoire, certains thèmes se développent, deviennent familiers, et commencent déjà à se rejoindre, créant un état d'esprit auquel la synthèse de Comte permet de donner un nom: appelons-le prépositiviste. (1)

Gouhier cites Tracy as one of the many thinkers partaking of this 'état d'esprit' and suggests, by his use of the term 'prépositiviste', that in so doing he helped to lay the foundations of particular trends in nineteenth-century thought. Leroy agrees, and writes of Tracy:

Ce qui fut sa gloire, et reste aujourd'hui sa gloire durable, c'est sa contribution à la formation d'une philosophie nouvelle qui, allant plus avant dans l'observation que Condillac, dont il descend, prépare en même temps que Cabanis, dont on ne peut le séparer, les beaux travaux de l'école psycho-physiologique, le positivisme de Comte, le système de Taine. Il est aussi, côté Saint-Simon, un des initiateurs, avec le vicomte de Bonald, de la sociologie contemporaine, de la 'physique sociale ou physiologique de l'espèce humaine', pour reprendre la formule du saint-simonien Armand Bazard.' (2)

On the other hand C. Smith emphasises the break between Tracy and the main stream of nineteenth-century French philosophy (from which he excludes positivism), and the decline of Tracy's influence before the spiritualist reaction after the Revolution has already been noted. In attempting a final assessment of Tracy's social, moral and political thought, it is to such questions as these that the conclusion of this study is addressed.

(1) H. Gouhier, La Jeunesse d'Auguste Comte, Paris, Vrin, 1933-41

(2) M. Leroy, Histoire des idées sociales en France, Paris, Gallimard, 1946-54, II, 163.

I. BIOGRAPHY

Biographical studies of Destutt de Tracy are few and far between.

There are two notices written by contemporaries on which all subsequent studies, to greater or lesser degree, draw: the first of these is a Notice sur Destutt de Tracy, written by his daughter-in-law, Sarah Newton de Tracy, published privately in 1847 and reprinted in the first volume of her Essais divers, lettres et pensées which appeared in 1852. This notice, while giving certain details of Tracy's public career, seeks primarily to provide a portrait of the man, and subsequent biographers have drawn upon it for evidence of those qualities, such as integrity, perseverance and a certain garrulous charm, which they all discern in him. For example, one frequently repeated remark is that made by Mme de Tracy concerning her father-in-law's nickname:

On l'a nommé Têtu de Tracy, et il goûtait beaucoup cette plaisanterie; il disait que c'était un bon défaut que l'entêtement, et que les hommes étaient souvent méprisés parce qu'ils ne savaient pas dire non. (1)

The second notice, which is more widely known, is that written by Mignet and contained in his Notices et mémoires historiques, published in 1843. This gives a more complete account of Tracy's public career and some analysis of his philosophical works, but contains, in common with Sarah Newton de Tracy's work, several errors of fact and in addition no little romanticising, which has been accepted and repeated, seemingly without question, by later biographers. Indeed, in all biographies of Tracy there is a certain similarity about the anecdotes, and the examples of Tracy's honesty and conscientiousness are the same.

The most significant of these biographies are: M. Bardoux, Notice sur la famille de Tracy in the Bulletin de la Société d'Emulation du département de l'Allier of 1864; C. Chabot, Destutt de Tracy in the Revue bourbonnaise of

(1) Sarah Newton de Tracy, op.cit., p. 81.

1884; and G. Rougeron, Destutt de Tracy, Président du Département de l'Allier, published in 1966. Le Marquis de la Guère in his Généalogie de la maison de Stutt, published in 1885, traces the history of the family from the beginning of the fifteenth century, when four brothers of the clan Stutt left Scotland to defend the rights of Charles VII. A few pages are devoted to Destutt de Tracy. In addition, F. Picavet gives extensive biographical details in the chapters devoted to Tracy in Les Idéologues (1891). He acknowledges that he draws much of his material from Guizot's speech at his reception into the Académie française in 1836, where, in the nature of things, details of fact had to be accommodated within the demands of rhetoric. Tracy does command some attention in biographical dictionaries and encyclopedias, such as the Grande Encyclopédie (in which the article devoted to him is written by Picavet), but in all such works as is the case with those biographies mentioned above, while the outline of Tracy's life is presented accurately enough, there are numerous errors of fact and various omissions which militate against their usefulness and credibility.

Detailed study of Tracy's life is hampered by the shortage of original manuscript material. In 1967 a fire in the family home, the castle at Paray-le-Frésil, destroyed the family archives almost entirely, and none of Tracy's manuscripts have subsequently come to light. Mignet claims to have seen manuscripts of Tracy's work and quotes brief extracts from them, but he does not indicate what form they took. Similarly Sainte-Beuve mentions 'des pages retrouvées après lui' (1) but makes no further reference to them. Only a small amount of Tracy's correspondence has been discovered. Letters he wrote to Stendhal, Maine de Biran and Jefferson have been published, but those he exchanged with members of his family and with Cabanis have, it appears, been lost. (2) In the absence, then, of many of Tracy's private papers, the present-

(1) Sainte-Beuve, Portraits littéraires, Paris, Didier, 1852, II, 142.

(2) Hitherto unpublished letters from Tracy to Joseph Rey are printed as an appendix to this thesis.

day biographer is obliged to rely largely on secondary material.

A further difficulty in establishing biographical details of Tracy lies in the nature of the life he led. Although he lived to the age of eighty-one, he was at or near the centre of events for only some fifteen years, and his writings are compressed into an even shorter period. When the États-Généraux were convened, Tracy was thirty-five years old. Prior to 1789 he had led the life of a cavalry officer in a long period of peace. Although he was among the first members of the Sénat conservateur to be nominated by Napoleon in 1799, his role in that body was never a particularly active one, and a police bulletin dated 28 thermidor an XII (16 August 1804) noted that he is already living a withdrawn life:

On rapporte que le Sénateur de Tracy, demeurant à Auteuil, partage les opinions de son collègue Sieyès, qu'il dit qu'il ne veut plus se mêler de rien, qu'il voit avec peine tout ce qui se passe, et que les choses ne peuvent durer dans l'état où elles sont. Il vit très retiré, et ne voit que MM de la Fayette, Latour-Maubourg et Cabanis. (1)

Tracy's opposition to the rule of Napoleon is well established, and, as will be shown, he was to be implicated in the Malet conspiracy of 1808. Furthermore, he was among the signatories of the procès-verbal of the session of the Sénat of 1 April 1814 which established a provisional government to exercise power and present the Sénat with the project for a constitution. But such entrances into the corridors of power might be seen as brief disturbances in a life of contemplation, a life which Sainte-Beuve takes to be tinged with disillusionment:

M. de Tracy croyait toujours à l'excellence de certaines idées, mais il avait cessé de croire à leur réalisation et à leur triomphe; dans les premières années du siècle, et sous les ombrages d'Auteuil, il confiait tristement à des pages retrouvées après lui la démission profonde de son coeur. (2)

Tracy's withdrawal from active participation in politics is particularly noticeable after the fall of Napoleon. During the last twenty-two years of his life Tracy produced no work and attended only rarely the Chambre des Pairs to

(1) Archives nationales F⁷ 3832.

(2) Sainte-Beuve, op. cit., II, 142

which he had been appointed. This withdrawal is largely the consequence of ill-health; in a letter to François de Neufchâteau dated 23 October 1814 Tracy complains that he is losing his sight:

Je perds les yeux. Je ne peux déjà plus lire, à peine je puis vous tracer des lignes informes qui me coûtent des pleurs, et vous m'envoyez un ouvrage que je voudrais lire et relire et dans lequel je suis sûr que je trouverais de la grâce et de la raison, deux choses également rares dans le pays des obscuranti sur les limites duquel je suis bien fâché d'être. (1)

A constantly recurring anecdote concerns the fortitude which Tracy showed at this time after an unsuccessful visit to an oculist.

Thus, in attempting to examine Tracy's life in detail, one is faced with various difficulties: the absence of primary material, the existence of biographies which, while accurate in the general are unreliable in the particular, and the very nature of Tracy himself. He was a man of contrasts and this is reflected in his life. Up to the age of thirty-five his life followed a predictable and unexceptional course, that of the son of a noble house following the career for which he had been prepared since birth. From that point onwards the philosopher gradually overcame the soldier, and although Tracy was a close witness of those struggles which followed the Revolution of 1789, he viewed them with a detachment and objectivity which grew with the passage of time. One can agree with those biographers who see that the crucial moment came on the day in 1798 when Napoleon offered Tracy a command in the Egyptian expedition. After some two days' hesitation, according to Mignet, Tracy declined, and decided to devote himself to his philosophical studies.

Antoine-Louis-Claude Destutt de Tracy was born on 20 July 1754, and it is some measure of the unreliability of biographers that they cannot agree as to the place. Mignet does not commit himself, De la Guère and Picavet state that it was Paris, while Sarah Newton de Tracy, Bardoux and Chabot all assert that

(1) Archives nationales 27 AP 16.

it was Paray-le -Frésil. Indeed the last-named makes great play with the family motto, Bien bien acquis carved on the tower where Tracy allegedly saw the light of day. In point of fact he was born in Paris and baptised (on 21 July) in the parish of Saint-Sauveur. (1) He was descended from Walter, the second of the brothers of the clan Stutt, who served in the garde écossaise of Charles VII and Louis XI and who received French nationality in 1474 after having married, in 1433, Anne de Brissé-Formé, dame d'Assay. One branch of the family took the title d'Estutt d'Assay, another, through marriage, that of d'Estutt de Tracy. The home of this latter branch became Paray-le-Frésil in 1640, through the marriage of François d'Estutt and Edmée de la Platière, and it was there that Tracy spent his early days.

Tracy's father, Claude-Louis-Charles Destutt, marquis de Tracy, had had an illustrious military career. Born in 1723, he first entered the army, at the age of fourteen, as enseigne in the regiment of Oury. He saw service initially in Corsica and subsequently on many battlefields of Europe. He rose to the position of commander of the Gendarmerie du Roi at the battle of Minden in 1759, at which battle he was seriously wounded and left for dead. After having been taken prisoner by the English and subsequently exchanged, he returned to Paris, but the effects of his wounds ended, to all effect, his military and public career. He was, however, promoted brigadier in 1761 and, two years later maréchal de camp. An enduring anecdote concerns the fortitude with which he bore his sufferings in the last years of his life and the impression that this made upon his son. De la Guère retells it in the following manner:

Après avoir languì et souffert pendant deux ans, le marquis de Tracy succomba aux blessures dont il était couvert. Il vit approcher sa fin avec la fermeté d'un soldat et la résignation d'un chrétien, et s'adressant à son fils à peine âgé de

(1) A copy of the baptismal certificate is contained in the Archives de la Seine.

huit ans: - N'est-ce pas, Antoine, lui dit-il, que cela ne te fait pas peur et ne te dégoûtera pas du métier de ton père? Le jeune enfant, que ce spectacle remplissait d'émotion et qu'animaient déjà les instincts belliqueux de sa race, pleura et promit; son père mourut plus content en juillet 1766 (...) (1)

In 1753 the Marquis de Tracy had married Marie-Emilie de Verzure. (2)

Sarah Newton de Tracy comments on Tracy's childhood:

M. de Tracy a passé son enfance dans un salon rempli d'aristocratie, d'évêques et de cardinaux: c'était le salon de sa mère, Italienne dévote, très remarquable par son esprit et son caractère. (3)

The de Verzure family were originally from Genoa, and it was Tracy's mother who watched over his education following the death of his father. He went to the University of Strasbourg where he presumably undertook those classical studies to which, from time to time, he fleetingly refers, and to the town's military academy. It would seem, however, that the most decisive influence upon the young man was Voltaire, to whom Tracy paid a visit in 1770. As Sarah Newton de Tracy puts it:

M. de Tracy racontait avec émotion son voyage à Ferney quand il avait seize ans et la manière dont Voltaire lui avait mis la main sur la tête. Il se figurait la sentir encore, et on pouvait croire que Voltaire avait enfoncé dans ce magnifique front la ténacité de la volonté et ce culte pour le bon sens qui les animaient l'un et l'autre. (4)

According to his daughter-in-law Tracy's admiration for Voltaire remained constant throughout his life, although in his works there is no mention of him. In his declining years one of Tracy's greatest pleasures was to have pages of Voltaire read aloud to him.

- (1) Marquis de la Guère, Généalogie de la maison de Stutt, Bourges, Pigelet et Tardy, 1885, p. 122. For this account de la Guère leans heavily on Mignet, op cit., II, 247.
- (2) According to de la Guère (p.123), Tracy's mother was the daughter of Nicolas-Bonaventure de Verzure, 'écuyer, sieur de Vaudry, conseiller, secrétaire du Roi, Maison et Couronne de France, et de ses finances, et l'un des syndics de la Compagnie des Indes.'
- (3) op. cit., p.2
- (4) ibid., p. 3.

It was about the time of his visit to Ferney that Tracy entered into the military career which was to remain his until 1792. Here not only biographers appear unreliable, but official documents also: the records of different regiments in which Tracy served give conflicting accounts of his career and are at times at variance with the curriculum vitae as it appears in his dossier at the Archives du service historique de l'armée. One can, however, reconstitute Tracy's career until the Revolution as follows:

- 1770 Mousquetaire en la 2e Compagnie
- 1772 Capitaine au régiment de Bourgogne-Cavalerie
- 1773 Capitaine au régiment Dauphin-Cavalerie
- 1776 Capitaine en second
- 1779 Capitaine commandant au 5e régiment des chevaux-légers
- 1780 Mestre de camp en second du régiment Royal-Cavalerie
- 1788 Colonel du régiment Penthièvre-Infanterie.

Because of the absence of documentation, this is the period in which it is most difficult to establish details of Tracy's life with any certainty. It was a life divided between long days at Paray and garrison duty with his different regiments, duty which, although uneventful, he found agreeable and about which, according to Sarah Newton de Tracy, he told many amusing and even piquant anecdotes, none of which she repeats. The records of the Penthièvre regiment do contain the following comment on Tracy's capabilities as an officer:

(...) plein de volonté et de zèle, imbu des meilleurs principes de la subordination dont il donne l'exemple. (1)

This comment, slight as it is, is the only indication that the present-day biographer can give concerning Tracy's military career. It is a career to which he himself does not refer, although, as will be shown, there is every reason to believe that it afforded him much satisfaction and pleasure.

In April 1779 Tracy married Emilie-Louise de Dufort-Civrac, niece of the Duc de Penthièvre, and, as Bardoux points out, by this marriage Tracy became allied to the reigning royal family. The Duc de Penthièvre was the last

(1) Registre du régiment de Penthièvre, Archives du service historique de l'armée.

descendant of the legitimized sons of Louis XIV and through her mother, Marie-Francoise de Pardaillan-d'Antin, fille de Dufort-Civrac was a descendant of Mme de Montespan. Yet Tracy apparently eschewed the attractions of life at court, although some biographers describe him as a leading figure at the 'bals de la reine'. There is no evidence to substantiate this. From his marriage four children were born: Françoise-Emilie, born 3 October 1780, who eventually married George, marquis de Lafayette; Alexandre-César-Victor, born 9 September 1781, who was to have a notable political career under the Restoration and the July Monarchy; Ange-Marie, born 30 July 1784, who died 3 October 1785; and Augustine-Emilie-Victorine, born 29 October 1786, who eventually married the Comte de Laubespain.

It is fair to conclude that throughout the years preceding the Revolution Tracy appears to have had no ambitions to taste the fruits of political power and was indeed a stranger to political life. His introduction to this world came in 1788, when, at the time of the administrative reform throughout France he was chosen as one of the representatives of the nobility to the regional assembly at Moulins. In a letter dated 12 ventôse an II (2 March 1794)⁽¹⁾ Tracy writes of his role in this body on the occasion of the convocation of the Etats-Généraux:

L'automne de la même année(1788), étant de l'administration de Moulins, je disposai cette administration et toutes celles de la province à demander la double représentation du tiers et la délibération commune aux états-généraux et j'apportai leur pétition jusqu'à Versailles. Au mois de mars 1789, je soutins hautement les mêmes opinions dans l'assemblée électorale de Moulins.

The assembly of the Ordre de la Noblesse de la Sénéchaussée du Bourbonnais met from 16 to 28 March 1789,⁽²⁾ and at the third meeting Tracy was elected to the committee entrusted with the drawing up of the cahier. It has been pointed out

(1) Letter written by Tracy in the prison des Carmes to the Comité de Sûreté générale in response to their demand for an account of his life. Archives nationales F¹ 4775³³.

(2) The procès-verbal of the assembly is reprinted in Bulletin de la Société d'Emulation du département de l'Allier, Vol. III (1853-4), pp. 69-82.

frequently that this cahier is a relatively liberal document, and some further evidence of the liberality of Tracy and his colleagues may be found in the text of an announcement whereby the nobility of the Bourbonnais made it known to the Third Estate

(...) que l'ordre de la Noblesse lui offrait de partager également tous les impôts; qu'elle lui faisait, avec plaisir, le sacrifice de ses privilèges pécuniaires; mais que, ne pouvant céder ce qu'elle tient de ses pères, ce qu'elle doit à ses enfants, qui est sa propriété la plus chère et qui surtout est essentiel à la constitution monarchique, puisque c'est ce qui marque la distinction de son Ordre, elle se réservait le seul manoir habité par tout noble, sa cour, basse-cour, jardin, qui resteraient francs de toutes impositions réelles ou territoriales présentes et futures, sous quelques dénominations qu'elles puissent être établies par la suite, pourvu que le tout, néanmoins, n'excède pas deux arpents royaux, ce qui ne laissait aucun doute sur la véritable expression du voeu de la Noblesse, celui de ne réserver qu'une distinction purement honorifique. (1)

At the eleventh meeting of the assembly Tracy was elected as a representative to the Etats-Généraux, together with the Comte de Douzon and the Baron de Coiffier. Tracy was overruled concerning his demands for communal deliberation, for Article 8 of the third section of the cahier specifically obliged the representatives of the nobility of the Bourbonnais to retain the distinctions between the orders. Whatever his private feelings, Tracy showed himself to be very conscientious in respect of requests in the cahier, and was careful never to let them take precedence over the stated desires of those whom he represented.⁽²⁾ With the majority of his order he joined the Third Estate on 28 June, and was present at the meeting on 4 August when the nobility voted the suppression of rights and privileges injurious to civil equality.

(1) ibid., p. 74.

(2) On 25 June 1789 a motion, signed by the three representatives of the Bourbonnais nobility, was placed before their order at the Etats-Généraux, renewing a demand for the reduction of the three orders to two. This was a circumstance envisaged in their cahier. v. Procès-verbal des séances de la chambre de L'Ordre de la Noblesse aux Etats-Généraux, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1792, p. 281. After the King's call for the orders to unite and the nobility's decision to comply, Tracy and his colleagues restricted themselves to voix consultatives until those they represented gave them new sanction. (v. ibid., p. 342).

With regard to Tracy's role during the years 1789 to 1791 Bardoux has noted: 'Dans l'Assemblée constituante M. de Tracy ne rechercha pas les succès oratoires', and Chabot, on much the same theme, has written: 'Il remplit son rôle sinon avec éclat, du moins avec un zèle scrupuleux et une conscience irréprochable'. (1) It is indeed true that Tracy did not play a particularly striking rôle, and it is not difficult to conceive a picture of him as one not practised in the intricacies of political intrigue and temperamentally unsuited to them. Tracy's own account of his conduct is as follows:

A l'assemblée constituante j'ai été constamment ferme dans mes principes, et je puis dire que j'y ai mis de l'énergie dans toutes les questions à la portée de mes lumières; et notamment dans celles sur les droits des gens de couleur, sur les mines, sur les monopoles de commerce, et généralement partout où je croyais l'intérêt du plus grand nombre compromis. Je n'ai jamais été d'aucun parti. J'ai ignoré les intrigues et les factions; et j'ose dire que j'ai eu éminemment la qualité de n'appartenir à personne qu'à ma patrie et à ma conscience. Je n'ai signé ni pétitions ni protestations quelconques. Le bien de l'humanité, la liberté, l'égalité, voilà mon but. La volonté générale, voilà ma loi. (2)

In his search for the good of humanity, for liberty and for equality, Tracy was clearly a supporter of change and the abolition of privilege, but his enthusiasm was always tempered by reason and caution. He was opposed to any violence against the person of the King. This was not merely a sentiment written clearly in his cahier; it was shown by the fact that in February 1790 he was a member of a deputation from the Constituante who went to the King and reaffirmed their allegiance to him and 'le serment solennel prononcé par tous les représentants du peuple français d'être fidèles à la nation, à la loi, au Roi, à la Constitution'. (3) During these years Tracy had no influence upon the course of events, but sought conscientiously to play his part in

(1) Bardoux, op. cit., p. 163; Chabot, op. cit., p. 130.

(2) Archives nationales F⁷ 4775³³.

(3) Procès-verbal des assemblées constituantes, p. 2 (5 February 1790). After the King's flight in June 1791 Tracy was quick to declare his devotion to the Assembly.

establishing a just society. He held no office or appointment apart from brief membership of the Comité des Colonies and Comité des Rapports. He did not initiate any reforms and on those occasions when he did speak he restricted himself largely to practical matters of detail. He offers the perfect example of a member of the aristocracy espousing liberal causes out of an essential generosity reinforced by a sound realism. His reading of the philosophes had made him receptive to the ideas which were currently being expounded and he was sufficiently aware of the inevitability of change.

Tracy's one major intervention, in the sitting of 23 September 1791, concerned the affairs of Saint Domingo.⁽¹⁾ In the dispute between the white colonialists and the indigenous black population, Tracy adopts a position broadly in sympathy with the latter, although he hastens to declare that he has never been a member of the Société des Amis des Noirs. Characteristically taking note of realities, Tracy insists upon the legal situation and refers to the Assembly's two decrees of 28 March 1790 and 15 May 1791, which declared that citizenship of the French state should be decided without reference to colour. He takes exception to the subsequent proposal of commissioners sent to the island, namely that conditions of eligibility for citizenship should be determined by colonial assemblies. He recognises that, while there is not yet a law to this effect, the spirit of the proposal suggests that there is now a different climate of opinion in France, and reacts against it:

(...) je dis que les gens de couleur tirés par nous de l'oppression seront nos alliés naturels, et qu'il n'est ni juste ni politique de les abandonner. (2)

Given the rapid rise in the coloured population, there are sound practical reasons in favour of the adoption of a liberal position:

Je soutiens donc, que quand même l'honneur de l'Assemblée ne serait pas engagé à maintenir ses décrets, et à conserver à des hommes libres et propriétaires leurs droits civils et

(1) v. Opinion de M. Tracy sur les affaires de Saint-Domingue en 1791, Paris, Laillet, 1791.

(2) ibid., p. 17

politiques, il est de notre pressant intérêt de le faire. (1)

Tracy does not make any specific proposals. Since precipitate action will be seen as a victory for one of two rival factions, he sounds a note of restraint, and suggests further parliamentary deliberation. Indeed, he gives evidence of the rationality which is to characterise his later work:

Méfiez-vous de ces raisons de circonstance que dictent les passions, et qui se modifient à leur gré. (2)

When the Constituante came to an end, Tracy returned to his military career and, with the rank of maréchal de camp, was placed in command of the cavalry of the northern army, under the orders of Lafayette. The renewal of his association with Lafayette, to whom he had become greatly attached at the Constituante, was, however, short-lived. Sarah Newton de Tracy and Mignet, and all those biographers of Tracy who draw upon them, give the date of parting as the eve of 10 August 1792, and to greater or lesser degree paint a touching picture of the two comrades-in-arms going their separate ways - Lafayette to exile and prison, Tracy to Paris with a heavy heart, having refused to follow his commander and desert his country. There is another less touching - and inaccurate - picture in a biographical dictionary of 1800:

Après la session il (Tracy) se fit employer comme maréchal de camp à l'armée de la Fayette, et déserta ensuite avec ce général, lorsque la grande ambition et le petit caractère de ce dernier le contraignirent à quitter la France. Arrêté avec lui dans les Pays-Bas, M. de Tracy, regardé comme un personnage trop peu important, obtint bientôt sa liberté et retourna ensevelir sa nullité au fond de sa province. (3)

In point of fact Tracy had resigned his commission one month earlier.

Documents in the Archives de l'Armée show that he left the army on 2 July 1792, and this is confirmed by Tracy himself, who speaks of his resignation in the following terms:

L'assemblée finie on m'a fait malgré moi quitter ce Régiment (Penthièvre) pour être maréchal de camp à mon rang d'ancienneté.

(1) ibid., p. 17

(2) ibid., p. 23

(3) Dictionnaire biographique et historique des hommes marquans de la fin du XVIIIe siècle, et plus particulièrement de ceux qui ont figuré dans la Révolution française. Rédigé par une société de gens de lettres, London, 1800.

J'ai servi loyalement dans ce grade à l'armée jusqu'au 2 juillet 1792. A cette époque, ma mauvaise santé, le doute où j'étais des intentions de mes supérieurs, la méfiance contre tous les cy-devant qui ne m'atteignait pas, mais qui pouvait finir par m'envelopper, m'ont prouvé que, ce que je pouvais faire de mieux pour ma patrie était de ne la servir que comme simple citoyen. J'ai donné ma démission, et n'ai jamais eu tant de chagrin de ma vie que dans ce moment-là. (1)

Thus, at the age of thirty-eight, Tracy, with great regret, abandoned his military career. He was never to take up arms again. He installed himself and his family at Auteuil, and this was to be his home until 1809. With his arrival in Auteuil begins the most vigorous and creative phase of his philosophical career, for it was here that he was to meet those whose contact helped to orientate his enquiries along the path they finally followed. Before the Revolution those studies which Tracy had undertaken were partly scientific (he appears to have been particularly well acquainted with the work of Buffon and Lavoisier) and partly philosophical. Picavet quotes Tracy as follows:

J'étais dans cette période qui suit immédiatement la fin de l'éducation et où, n'ayant pas encore des devoirs bien importants à remplir dans l'état que j'avais embrassé, je pouvais me livrer sans scrupule à mes méditations et aux recherches vers lesquelles mon goût m'entraînait. Je me mis donc à considérer mes semblables de tous les temps et de tous les pays et à rechercher les causes des phénomènes les plus importants qu'ils offrent à l'oeil de l'observateur. (2)

In pursuit of these aims Tracy had paid particular attention to the physiocrates, the encyclopédistes, Montesquieu and Helvétius.

In Auteuil he became part of the salon which centered around Mme Helvétius, and which provided a post-Revolutionary sequel, as it were, to the salons of the eighteenth century. Mme Helvétius had moved to Auteuil in 1772, and before the Revolution had presided over gatherings whose habitués included d'Alembert, Diderot, Condillac, Malesherbes and d'Holbach. Tracy, on arriving, found not only echoes of a tradition of independent philosophical enquiry; he was to meet,

(1) Archives nationales, F⁷ 4775³³.

(2) Picavet, op. cit., p. 295.

to work with and to come into close social contact with, among others, Condorcet, Daunou, Volney, Garat, Chamfort, Ginguéné, Sieyès - and Cabanis, who had been presented to Mme Helvétius in 1778, and who was her adopted son. Amid this circle Tracy could savour, as Guillois puts it, 'tous les charmes de la retraite, du repos, de l'étude et de l'amitié'. (1) In the country village which Auteuil then was, Tracy, some distance removed from the turbulent activity of the capital, could associate with those of similar inclination to himself. Ideologie, in its diverse manifestations, could be conceived and nurtured in the meetings and conversations of those who gathered under the auspices of Mme Helvétius. Tracy grew particularly close to Cabanis, whose name he was always to speak with consideration or tenderness. The friendship of the two men lasted until Cabanis's death in 1808, a death which, according to all biographers of Tracy, left him inconsolable for the rest of his life.

Life at Auteuil, then, held many delights for Tracy. Guillois describes his situation as follows:

Il se logea dans une maison, entourée d'un parc, tout près des bords de la Seine et de l'église du village. Un mur, dans lequel était percée une porte de communication, le séparait seul de la propriété de son ami, M. de Choiseul-Praslin. C'était bien la maison discrète et ombragée de verdure qui convenait au caractère de ces rêveurs aimables dont la Révolution usait (...) les puissantes énergies. Pendant dix-huit mois il vécut tranquille et heureux dans cette retraite qu'animait les rires et les jeux de ses enfants et qu'embellissaient les charmes de sa voisine, Mme de Praslin. (2)

The peace of this situation was disturbed on 2 November 1793, when a detachment of the revolutionary army surrounded Tracy's house and he was taken to the prison of L'Abbaye.

Much has been made in the past of Tracy's arrest and imprisonment and particularly of the account, told by Mignet and repeated by all others, of how he avoided the guillotine by only two days. Mignet states that Tracy's name

(1) A. Guillois, Le Salon de Mme Helvétius, Paris, Levy, 1894, p. 237.

(2) ibid., p. 89. Stendhal makes a passing reference to Mme de Praslin as Tracy's mistress, but the accuracy of this cannot be confirmed.

was among those of prisoners due to be arraigned before the Revolutionary tribunal on 11 thermidor an II, there to be faced with a certain sentence of death, and that he was saved by the fall of Robespierre on 9 thermidor. Mignet goes on to paint a moving picture of Tracy seated unperturbed at his work-table in the prison of Les Carmes, as the gaolers called out the names of the unfortunates to be dragged away to their sombre fate, and seemingly unmoved by the knowledge that at any moment his own name may be called. Indeed Mignet goes so far as to assert that it was in these very days of Thermidor that Tracy finally perfected his philosophical system and laid the foundations of his Elémens d'Idéologie.

However engaging such a picture of firm resolve in the face of danger may be, there are good grounds for doubting its authenticity, and from evidence taken from sources in the Archives nationales the circumstances in Thermidor appear somewhat less dramatic. Carton W434 dossier 974 bis (in the series W which has many documents concerning the Paris Revolutionary tribunal) contains the names of fifteen prisoners who were due to be tried on 11 thermidor. Tracy's name is not among them. E. Campardon justifiably remarks:

Le 9 thermidor sauva beaucoup de malheureux détenus dans les prisons de Paris, qui, sans les changements survenus à la suite des événements de ce jour, auraient été traduits au tribunal. Longtemps après la Révolution, on entendait souvent répéter à plusieurs personnes que grâce à la chute de Robespierre elles avaient été sauvées; que leur acte d'accusation était dressé, et que le 11 thermidor elles devaient être jugées (le tribunal ne siégeait pas les 10, 20, et 30 du mois jours de décade).

(...) Quant à ceux qui y eussent été traduits les jours suivants, nul ne peut les connaître exactement, car souvent les actes d'accusation n'étaient pas prêts avant 9 heures du soir, la veille de la mise en jugement. (1)

It is impossible to determine whether Tracy would eventually have been brought to trial. What does seem certain is that upon Robespierre's fall he was not in

(1) E. Campardon, Le Tribunal révolutionnaire de Paris, Paris, Plon, 1866, I, 420.

immediate danger of his life.

The view that he was in such danger is put forward by his son, who mentions other hazardous moments for Tracy in prison:

Mon père se trouva dans la prison des Carmes, trop connue pour le massacre des prêtres les 2 et 3 septembre 1792, avec un grand nombre de ses connaissances hommes et femmes, lors du fatal appel qui eut lieu quelques semaines avant le 9 thermidor. Mon père entendit prononcer les noms de plusieurs de ses collègues et compagnons d'armes, qui, du tribunal révolutionnaire, marchèrent à l'échafaud le jour même. Dans ce nombre se trouvait M. de Broglie, père du duc actuel, Beauharnais, mari de Joséphine, Biron, Custine, et des femmes dont plusieurs étaient jeunes et belles. Mon père entendit lever les verrous qu'on avaient poussés, l'appel étant fini, et chacun paraissait étonné de voir qu'il avait été épargné ou plutôt oublié; mais il paraît certain que son dossier devait être produit le 11 thermidor et Robespierre fut abattu le 9. (1)

Tracy's arrest came less than two months after the passing of the loi des suspects, which sought to define the enemies of the Republic and which brought about a wave of arrests and imprisonments throughout France. This arrest would appear to be in large measure the result of the initiative of one man, François-Julien Marcellin, commissaire civil appointed by the Comité de Salut Public. Prior to his activities, however, Tracy had been harassed by the Comité de Surveillance at Moulins, who had finally been placated by financial sacrifices made by Tracy. A declaration issued by this committee runs as follows:

Destutt de Tracy, contre lequel le comité a arrêté qu'il y aurait mandat d'arrêt pour cause de suspicion, d'incivisme et d'aristocratie, et qui a été taxé révolutionnairement à une somme de 12,000 (sic) livres, fait présenter les motifs de justification et son impossibilité de satisfaire à la réquisition pécuniaire qui lui a été faite. Il résulte qu'il est demeurant à Auteuil, près Paris depuis dix-huit mois, qu'il y a donné des preuves de civisme et qu'il a toujours eu à combattre le parti des contre-révolutionnaires dont il n'a cessé d'être victime; qu'il lui est impossible de satisfaire

(1) Victor Destutt de Tracy, Fragment de Mémoires, published in La Nouvelle Revue, Vol. 91, Nov. - Dec. 1894, pp. 475-485, p. 479. The Fragment is dated 12 December 1851.

à la réquisition des 100,000 livres exigés par le Comité et que pour faire voir qu'il est prêt à faire à sa patrie tous les sacrifices qui dépendront de lui, il abandonne au Comité tous les revenus de ses propriétés dans le Département de l'Allier. Le Comité après une discussion sur cet exposé arrête qu'il suspend l'effet de son arrêté relatif au mandat d'arrêt et que provisoirement il accepte l'offre faite par ledit Destutt du versement de tout le produit de ses propriétés dans la caisse du Comité, qu'en conséquence il sera notifié à ses fermiers d'obtempérer sur le champ audit versement par acompte des 100,000 livres. (1)

Despite this Marcellin proceeded to arrest Tracy, together with other members of the Auteuil circle. On the day in question, the detachment of the army, led by General Ronsin and accompanied by Marcellin, visited the houses of many prominent citizens of Auteuil, including Mme Helvétius, Mme Condorcet, Cabanis and Tracy. Although nothing incriminating was found, arrests were made. Marcellin gives the following account:

Mais l'opinion publique nous ayant désigné comme ennemis de la république les citoyens Millet, Tracy, Chevrier, Longenoy et particulièrement Martin Lefèvre Delaroche, maire d'Auteuil, ancien Bénédictin (...), nous avons cru devoir les faire arrêter et les avons livrés entre les mains de l'armée révolutionnaire pour être conduits dans les prisons de Paris comme suspects, mais leurs papiers ne présentant rien de contraire à la révolution nous n'avons pas jugé convenable d'y apporter les scellés à l'exception du citoyen Laroche chez qui nous les avons fait apporter. (2)

Tracy was taken to the prison of L'Abbaye where he remained until 16 December 1793, when he was transferred to the prison of Les Carmes. From here he wrote a letter on the following day addressed to the Comité de Surveillance at Auteuil, pleading for his freedom. He insists that he is innocent of any crime and does not fall into any of the categories of enemies of the republic defined in the September law. This letter was accompanied by a list of all the dons patriotiques Tracy had made. Both documents were forwarded by the Auteuil committee to the Comité de Sûreté Générale with the

(1) Archives du département de l'Allier, La fol. 31. Quoted by Rougeron, op. cit., p. 7.

(2) Archives nationales, F⁷ 4775³³.

following recommendation:

Le Comité de Surveillance d'Auteuil qui a pris connaissance du mémoire ci-dessus à lui adressé par le citoyen Tracy a arrêté qu'il serait mis à la suite l'attestation de l'exposé vrai qu'il contient; et qu'à cet égard ledit Tracy était digne de la plus grande considération de la part du comité, qui reconnaît que ledit Tracy n'a montré dans tous les temps que des sentiments de patriotisme; et que depuis qu'il habite cette commune sa conduite a été irréprochable, en sorte que lors de l'examen et la discussion de la loi du 17 septembre (vieux style) le comité avait reconnu que ledit Tracy était à l'abri de ladite loi. (...)

En conséquence, le comité demande à titre de justice au comité de sûreté générale de la convention nationale que ledit Tracy soit mis en liberté et renvoyé dans son habitation à Auteuil pour y être à portée de rétablir sa santé. (1)

This recommendation is dated 11 nivôse an II (31 December 1793). Ten days earlier nine members of the Auteuil committee had issued a statement declaring that they had signed Marcellin's report of the arrests only to indicate their presence. They did not wish to support any charges made against the prisoners, and indeed the contents of the report had been read to them only after they had signed it.

Clearly these steps had no effect. Tracy wrote to the Comité de Sûreté Générale on 12 ventôse an II (2 March 1794), describing his services to the nation and affirming his revolutionary zeal. His impassioned appeals did not achieve their end, and the fall of Robespierre in July still brought no release for Tracy. A further statement from the Comité de Surveillance at Auteuil, dated 4 fructidor an II (21 August 1794) shows that they had not given up his cause, and finally the Comité de Sûreté Générale, concluding that there was no proof against Tracy of any unpatriotic or counter-revolutionary sentiments and that the army had abused its powers in arresting him and forcing the signatures of the witnesses, decided that Tracy should be freed. He left prison on 5 October 1794 and returned to Auteuil.

Tracy had been in prison for eleven months. The effect upon him appears to be largely physical: he speaks of a persistent fever and of a general

(1) Archives nationales F⁷ 4775³³.

deterioration in his health. His son makes the following comment:

Onze mois, jour pour jour, après son arrestation, il arriva à Auteuil à six heures du matin. Il n'avait alors que quarante ans; la prison l'avait peu changé, si ce n'est que ses cheveux avaient blanchi presque entièrement. (1)

Tracy himself seems to have considered the experience with a certain detachment. His published works contain no reference to this period in his life, either with regard to political principle or personal suffering, and one can only speculate as to his true feelings. It would be surprising if his imprisonment did not contribute in good measure to the disillusionment which, as we have seen, Sainte-Beuve detects in Tracy. It no doubt confirmed his reluctance to engage actively in politics and reinforced what he calls 'mon penchant pour la vie solitaire et contemplative',⁽²⁾ Whether or not Tracy did perfect his philosophical system in prison, it was there that he studied Condillac and Locke and came to see clearly the direction his studies were to follow. In the years immediately following his imprisonment he pursued these studies with determination and single-mindedness, benefitting not only from renewed association with those at Auteuil but also from the activities of the Institut, in which he played a significant part.

The constitution of l'an III made provision for a new higher seat of learning to replace the old academies which had been suppressed in 1793, and laid down that there should be 'un Institut national chargé de recueillir les découvertes, de perfectionner les arts et les sciences'. The new Institut, set up by virtue of the law of 3 brumaire an IV (25 October 1795), was composed of three classes: physical and mathematical sciences, which continued the work of the former Académie des Sciences; moral and political sciences, for which there was no precedent under the ancien régime; literature and the fine arts,

(1) Victor Destutt de Tracy, op.cit., p. 480.

(2) Quoted by Picavet, op.cit., p. 299.

replacing the Académie française, the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres and the Royal Societies of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture and Music. Each class was divided into sections of six members each, and the total number of members of the Institut was 144. There was to be an equal number of non-resident associate members and in 1796, in fact before he had published any work Tracy was elected as such, on the nomination of Cabanis, to the first section, that of Analyse des sensations et des idées, of the Classe des Sciences morales et politiques.

The analysis of sensations and ideas was not only the principal concern of the members of the first section; it was the theoretical basis of matters under discussion in the other sections (morale, social science and legislation, political economy, history and geography). Thus Tracy could see a practical demonstration of the interrelation of different fields of study and their common dependence upon what he himself was to call idéologie. Furthermore, he came into contact, on a formal level, with the work of such philosophers as Garat, Ginguéné and Volney, like Cabanis members of the first section, Degérando and Laromiguière, associate members of the same section, as well as that of Daunou, Gallois, Roederer and Sieyès who were members of other sections of the second class.

Such an association with an organised centre of research and information⁽¹⁾ gave Tracy any final impetus which he needed. He soon played an active part in the proceedings of his section, and on 2 floréal an IV (21 April 1796) he began reading his first mémoire on the faculty of thought. He continued the reading at two sessions later in the same year, and this, together with a second mémoire, read at two sessions in February 1798, when revised, was published as Mémoire sur la faculté de penser in the first volume of the Mémoires de l'Institut national des sciences et arts (Classe des Sciences

(1) H.C. Barnard quotes the saying, 'The Institute was born and the Encyclopédie became alive'. v. Education and the French Revolution, Cambridge U.P. 1969, p. 176.

morales et politiques) which appeared in thermidor an VI (August 1798). (1)

The elaboration of this mémoire marks the beginning of a twelve-year period in Tracy's life which saw the composition of all his major works.

It was not, however, the first of his works to reach a wider audience. Earlier in 1798 he published in three editions of the Mercure (and subsequently as a separate mémoire) Quels sont les moyens de fonder la morale d'un peuple? (2) In 1799 he published his Analyse raisonnée of Dupuis' Origine de tous les cultes, ou Religion universelle, an analysis which was also originally destined for the Mercure. (3) and which was reprinted in 1804 with a significant Discours préliminaire.

In 1800 Tracy read three mémoires at the Institut. (4) Firstly, on 27 floréal an VIII (17 May 1800) he read his Réflexions sur les projets de pasigraphie. His interest in such matters had been aroused by his study of the work of Degérando, whose essay had won the first prize in the competition, organised by the Institut, with the question: Déterminer l'influence des signes sur la formation des idées, and who during the course of l'an VIII published his Des signes et de l'art de penser, considérés dans leurs rapports mutuels. On 7 prairial an VIII (27 May 1800) Tracy read his Dissertation sur quelques questions d'idéologie, in which he presented further arguments in support of his view, originally expressed in the first Mémoire, that the individual's knowledge of objects outside himself depends upon the sensation of resistance to the human faculty of motilité and that without this knowledge the individual cannot exercise his judgement. This view was, however, contradicted by Tracy in his next mémoire, Dissertation sur l'existence, et

(1) Tracy's mémoire is published under the date of the first reading. In the same volume there is printed Laromiguière's Mémoire sur la détermination de ces mots, analyse des sensations, which he read on 27 germinal an IV (16 April 1796).

(2) See below, chapter VII.

(3) See below, chapter VI.

(4) All three mémoires are published in the third volume of the Mémoires de l'Institut, prairial an IX (May-June 1801).

sur les hypothèses de Malebranche et de Berkeley à ce sujet, read on 17 messidor an VIII (6 July 1800).⁽¹⁾

All the mémoires which Tracy read at the Institut may be seen as studies preparatory to the composition of his major work, his Elémens d'idéologie. The first volume of this was published in 1801 under the title, Projets d'Elémens d'idéologie à l'usage des Ecoles centrales de la République française. The fact that this was written for the course of general grammar at the Ecoles centrales, in which respect it gained no small success, reflects Tracy's interest in education, stimulated by the one public office he held under the Directory: in 1799 he was appointed to the Conseil d'instruction publique.⁽²⁾ In 1801 he published his Observations sur le système actuel d'instruction publique.

On 7 floréal an X (27 April 1802) Tracy read a further mémoire at the Institut: De la métaphysique de Kant.⁽³⁾ This is an analysis of a work by Kinker, translated from the Dutch and published in French in 1801, entitled Essai d'une exposition succincte de la Critique de la Raison pure. On 10 vendémiaire an X (2 October 1801) Tracy had published, anonymously, a short article in the Décade analysing another work on Kant, Philosophie de Kant, ou principes fondamentaux de la philosophie transcendantale, by Charles de Villers.

His attention was, however, principally directed to the elaboration of his major work. In 1803 he published, as the second part of his Elémens d'Idéologie, his Grammaire and two years later the third part, De la Logique, appeared. In 1804 he published a second edition of his Projet d'Elémens d'Idéologie under the title Elémens d'Idéologie, Première partie, Idéologie proprement dite. This edition, as well as including some additional notes by Tracy, shows two principal differences from the earlier edition: a section

- (1) For detailed discussion of this significant change of view, see below chapter II.
- (2) See below, chapter VIII.
- (3) Published in the fourth volume of the Mémoires de l'Institut, vendémiaire an XI, (September-October 1802).

of some thirty-five pages, entitled Récapitulation, is replaced by an Extrait raisonné de l'Idéologie, servant de Table analytique, and the last eight pages of Chapter VII, in which the question of the knowledge of objects other than the self is discussed, are rewritten. In the later edition Tracy amplifies the views expressed in the earlier edition, to the effect that such knowledge is derived from resistance to voluntary movement. (1)

The years 1805 to 1807 saw Tracy engaged upon the composition of three works which were not to form part of his major enterprise. On 1 June 1806 the Décade published his Lettre sur les Lettres de Descartes, written after the appearance of a new edition of Descartes' correspondence. (2) In 1806 Tracy submitted a mémoire to the Académie de Berlin in answer to the following questions:

Y a-t-il des aperceptions internes immédiates? En quoi l'aperception interne immédiate diffère-t-elle de l'intuition interne? Quelle différence y a-t-il entre l'intuition, la sensation et le sentiment? Enfin quels sont les rapports de ces états de l'âme avec les notions et les idées? (3)

And at the same time he began his Commentaire sur L'Esprit des Lois de Montesquieu, which was not to be published in France until 1819. (4)

This period of great activity on the part of Tracy, in the fields of philosophy and of social, moral and political thought, is prolonged by only some two or three years. By 1810 it would seem that he had completed all that he was to write of the fourth and fifth parts of his Elémens d'Idéologie. (5) These were published in 1815 under the title Traité de la Volonté et de ses

- (1) The most recent edition of Idéologie proprement dite, edited by H. Gouhier and published in 1970 by Vrin, which reprints the text of the third edition of 1817, itself a reprint of the edition of 1804, contains in appendices Tracy's additional notes and the original version of the last part of Chapter VII.
- (2) Tracy's views on Descartes are discussed below, Chapter II.
- (3) Reprinted by P. Tisserand in Revue philosophique de France et de l'Etranger, Sept.-Oct. 1933, pp. 161-187. A mémoire submitted by Maine de Biran gained second place; Tracy's work gained no honours.
- (4) See below, Chapter V. (5) It would appear that Tracy had begun work on these parts as early as 1805. H. Dumolard, in his Pages stendhaliennes, Grenoble, Arthaud, 1928, quotes a letter from Joseph Rey to Stendhal, dated 22 December 1805: 'Tracy travaille assez ferme au Traité des actions humaines, première partie de celui de la Morale. Il a eu la bonté de m'en lire quelques pages, et il n'est pas nécessaire de vous dire ce qu'on peut en augurer.' (p. 18).

effets. He had also completed his final work, Principes logiques ou Recueil de faits relatifs à l'intelligence humaine, which was eventually published in 1817. After 1810 Tracy wrote no other work of significance. As we have already seen, this silence may in large part be attributed to ill-health and in particular to the deterioration in Tracy's eye-sight. Disillusionment with the turn of political events clearly played its part, and certainly not without significance is the death of Cabanis in 1808. This cruel blow to Tracy, who in his correspondence with Maine de Biran and Joseph Rey had continually expressed his deep concern at the state of Cabanis' health, was not softened by his own election, in the place of Cabanis, to the Classe de Langue et Littérature françaises of the Institut, the class to which the royal ordonnance of March 1816 was to restore the name of Académie Française. The Institut had been reorganised in January 1803, and Napoleon's growing displeasure with the idéologues had led him to suppress the Classe des Sciences morales et politiques. Members of that class had been transferred to other classes, but Tracy, as a non-resident associate member, had been excluded. It is interesting to note that Tracy, judging from his letter of candidature in 1808, has lost no faith in the worth of his own studies:

La nouvelle organisation de cette savante compagnie faisant que la partie des connoissances humaines à laquelle je me suis appliqué n'est l'objet direct des travaux d'aucune des sections de ce grand corps, il seroit assez naturel que j'en restasse exclus, quand même il auroit vu précédemment mes essais et mes recherches avec quelque bienveillance. Cependant, comme il est impossible de traiter avec succès la grammaire et la littérature d'une langue quelconque sans s'élever jusques aux considérations générales qui constituent la science des signes de nos idées prise dans toute son étendue, et celle de nos idées elles-mêmes, je pense que la classe de la littérature française ne voit pas avec indifférence le sujet de mes études. (1)

It was during these years of great intellectual activity that Tracy returned to political life. In 1799 he was, on the nomination of Sieyès, among the first

(1) Collection Parent de Rosan, Bibliothèque municipale du XVIIe arrondissement, Paris.

thirty senators to be appointed to the newly created Sénat conservateur. This appointment, together with that of other idéologues to the new assemblies - for example, Cabanis, Garat and Volney to the Sénat, Andrieux, Marie-Joseph, Chénier, Ginguéné and Laromiguière to the Tribunat - reflects the excellent relationship which existed between them and Napoleon at the time of 18 brumaire, and indeed on his seizure of power Napoleon had no more enthusiastic supporters. Those who were members of the Institut sought to influence that body in favour of their colleague,⁽¹⁾ and those who were members of assemblies under the Directory (such as Cabanis, Chenier, Andrieux, Dannou and Volney) sought to increase support there for Napoleon.

Tracy himself was in no position to influence events directly, but like all those at Auteuil he welcomed the new order of things. He looked forward to a government which, whilst respecting liberty, would be strong and stable, which would operate a representative system without the inconveniences of a constitutional monarchy or the indecisiveness of the Directory. In effect, he hoped for a government in which the legislative assembly would be dominant. His support of Napoleon was reinforced at this time by a certain disenchantment felt with the constitution of l'An III, a disenchantment voiced by Cabanis:

Il est impossible que la Constitution de l'An III n'entraîne point très rapidement la ruine de la liberté, et notre Etat actuel la destruction de la France elle-même. (2)

This constitution had revealed many weaknesses, of which the most serious was the lack of communication between the legislative and the executive authorities; such was the isolation of the latter that it had no constitutional means of exercising restraint or influence upon the legislature, and it had been driven to attempt coups d'état on 18 fructidor an V (4 September 1797) and 22 floréal an VI (11 May 1798). Throughout the Directory the executive authority

(1) Napoleon had been elected to the Institut in 1798. Garat described him at the time of brumaire an VIII as 'un philosophe qui aurait paru un instant à la tête des armées'. Quoted in A. Gobert, L'Opposition des assemblées pendant le Consulat, Paris, Sagot, 1925, p. 17.

(2) Speech to the Conseil des Cinq Cents, 19 brumaire an VIII.

was reinforced by laws whose constitutionality was dubious. It is interesting to note that in his Commentaire sur l'Esprit des Lois Tracy argues forcefully that if the powers of the legislature and the executive are not carefully defined and safeguarded by a third body, it is in the nature of the executive to become dominant and progressive, and it was no doubt his desire to serve in such a body which made him decide to accept a post of responsibility in the Sénat.

For his part, Napoleon, in the early days of the Consulate, showed by his prudence that his authority was not sufficient for him to disregard the different parties, and, unwilling to ally himself with the Jacobins or the royalists, he was prepared to take notice of moderate opinion. This conciliatory attitude was not long-lasting, and the enmity between him and the idéologues, which was constantly to grow throughout the Consulate and Empire soon declared itself. As late as 1812 the Emperor was unrelenting in his scorn:

C'est à l'idéologie, à cette ténébreuse métaphysique qui, en recherchant avec subtilité les causes premières, veut sur ces bases fonder la législation des peuples, au lieu d'appropriier les lois à la connaissance du coeur humain et aux leçons de l'histoire, qu'il faut attribuer tous les malheurs qu'a éprouvés notre belle France. (1)

Lacretelle comments as follows:

Si l'on en jugeait d'après la haine que l'empereur afficha pour les philosophes nommes idéologues, on croirait qu'il voulut intervenir dans ces débats (philosophiques); mais il était loin de cette pensée; son humeur et ses emportemens contre les idéologues tenaient à ce qu'il voyait dans plusieurs d'entre eux, et particulièrement dans MM Cabanis, Volney et Traci (sic), des adversaires assez déclarés de son autorité absolue. (2)

Faced with the growing affront of absolute personal rule, Tracy and those of similar persuasion were forced into an opposition which, sincere though it might

- (1) Address to the Conseil d'Etat; printed in the Moniteur, 21 Dec. 1812. Another of Napoleon's references is better known: 'Ils sont là douze ou quinze métaphysiciens bons à jeter à l'eau'.
- (2) Ch. Lacretelle, Histoire de France depuis la Restauration, Paris, Delaunay, 1829-35, I, 83. Napoleon's indifference to the philosophy of the idéologues is confirmed by Simon: 'Cette fidélité à la liberté, et cette revendication constante et calme du droit contre la force étaient ce qui déplaisait à Bonaparte, dans les idéologues, car, pour le système, il le connaissait mal, et s'en souciait peu.' (Une Académie sous le Directoire, Paris, Calmann Lévy, 1855, p. 205).

be, was never able to command any real and widespread support. Through the constitutions of 1'an X and 1'an XII the Sénat fell more and more under the direct control of the Emperor. Although it was the guardian of the constitution, it did not take its authority from the nation, nor was it responsible to the nation. It depended upon, and was obedient to, the Emperor. And as Thiry points out, ⁽¹⁾ although the rôle of the Sénat was to exercise influence, express opinion, act as a safeguard and form the first link in the chain binding nation and government, it could not carry out this rôle, for it did not number among its ranks enough representatives of the different forces within the nation - commerce and industry, arts and sciences, wealth and property. Confronted with an assembly which did not govern or administer but which, as le Comte de Cornet puts it, 'était tenu en réserve pour colorer, enluminer les grandes mesures de législation', ⁽²⁾ and whose subservience was completed with the creation of the sénatoreries, lands providing a substantial income, the opposition of Tracy and the other idéologues, who were temperamentally not suited to energetic intervention in public affairs, remained ill-organised and disunited. This opposition was founded on principles of justice and liberty, with little awareness of the practicalities of power. Villemain comments:

Cabanis, Volney, M. de Tracy, ceux que l'empereur désignait spécialement par le nom d'idéologues, avaient gardé sous l'Empire le sentiment de l'humanité, l'instinct du droit et de la règle, le blâme de l'arbitraire et des abus de la force; et ils en consignaient, à propos, l'expression dans les muets scrutins du sénat. (...) M. de Tracy et ses amis avaient formé sous l'Empire un bien petit troupeau, une anomalie, une singularité plutôt qu'une résistance. (3)

Such 'resistance' as there was lay more in the direction of non-cooperation than in that of outright defiance. For example, le Comte de Remacle notes the

- (1) v. J. Thiry, Le Sénat de Napoléon (1800-1814), Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1932, pp. 385 sqq.
- (2) Le Comte de Cornet, Souvenirs sénatoriaux, Paris, Baudouin, 1824, p. 63.
- (3) M. Villemain, Choix d'études sur la littérature contemporaine, Paris, Didier, 1858, p. 308.

absence of Tracy and his colleagues during the voting of the constitution of l'an X:

Le Sénat n'a pas reçu sans opposition la nouvelle constitution. Trois membres ont eu le courage de la combattre, savoir: Garat, Lanjuinais et Garan de Coulon. (...) Le parti Sieyès n'a point paru; on ne vit à cette séance ni lui, ni Volney, ni Cabanis, ni Tracy, ni le duc de Praslin. (1)

Tracy, in effect, withdrew from the public stage and returned to his studies. He continued to form part of a group which met regularly - on the third day of each décade - to discuss questions of philosophy, politics and literature. The meetings, dinners in the rue du Bac, to which came such men as Garat, Cabanis, Andrieux, Ginguéné, Daunou, Thurot, Gallois, Laromiguière, Lebreton, Jacquemont and Constant, had begun under the Directory. Clearly they brought together men now opposed to Napoleon's rule and constituted a threat to which the authorities paid some attention, particularly when in 1802 the group apparently became involved, in perhaps tenuous fashion, in the conspiracy against Napoleon in which Pichegru, Cadoudal and Moreau were central figures.

Taillandier gives the following account:

Sans qu'il y eût de complot bien arrêté, les idéologues qui se réunissaient aux dîners du tridi (...) nourrissaient des projets qui étaient de nature à inquiéter le premier consul. Ils continuèrent cependant à se réunir jusqu'à la conspiration de Moreau. La plupart d'entre eux désiraient anéantir la tyrannie de Bonaparte. Cabanis, surtout, était l'un des plus animés. Jacquemont, chef de bureau des sciences du ministère de l'intérieur, servait de lien entre ces personnages et Moreau. Leur but était d'arriver à la chute du premier consul, sauf à s'entendre ensuite comme ils pourraient avec Pichegru et le parti royaliste. (2)

Fouché, informed of the activities of the group, was content to issue a warning; the dinners were no longer held, and were replaced by less regular meetings at Tracy's house in Auteuil.

(1) Le Comte de Remacle, Relations secrètes des agents de Louis XVIII à Paris sous le Consulat (1802-3), Paris, Plon, 1899, p. 100

(2) A.-H. Taillandier, Documents biographiques sur Daunou, Paris, Didot, 1841, p. 125

This episode is demonstrative of the position of the idéologues. Sincere opposition to the emperor was not translated into effective action. Desirous as they were of change, these philosophers and men of letters, who in the calm of their studies could defend principles and fashion systems, were in effect out of place in the tumult of assemblies and in the activities of political intrigue. They would support moves to end tyranny, but they themselves found it difficult to supply the initiative.

Their silent hostility was, however, transformed, albeit briefly, into one example of initiative, which was demonstrated on the occasion of the Malet conspiracy of 1808.

Tracy's name is constantly mentioned in documents relating to this conspiracy, but it is far from certain whether he played a rôle which could properly be described as active. Masson, in his studies on the affair, remarks upon the idéologues' caution, stemming no doubt from their reluctance to connive at illegality:

C'était une opinion répandue que les Idéologues (...) étaient opposés à Napoléon, mais ils fuyaient toutes les occasions d'être compromis. (1)

The authorities concluded that there were in effect three conspiracies in 1808⁽²⁾ one having its origin in the Sénat, one organised by a group of disaffected military men, under the leadership of Malet, and one of 'démocrates non-militaires', led by one Demaillot who appears to have been the first to project a general insurrection and indicated to Malet those names which should figure in the subsequent dictatorship.⁽³⁾ Tracy is named, together with Garat

(1) F. Masson, 'Les Conspirations du général Malet', Revue des Deux Mondes, t.LIII, pp. 24-58, 358-389, 870-905 (1 Sept., 15 Sept., 15 Oct. 1919). p. 362.

(2) v. Police reports, Archives nationales AF^{IV} 1503; also A. Aulard, Paris sous le premier empire, Paris, Noblet, 1923, t.III, pp. 653 sqq.

(3) The authorities concluded, perhaps incorrectly, that neither Malet nor Demaillot had any dealings with any member of the Sénat.

and Cabanis, as one of the senators who conceived the plan to declare Napoleon outlawed, to re-establish the constitution of l'an VIII, with three consuls and vice-consuls, and to reduce the number of senators to that fixed by that constitution. A commission of twelve senators, among whom Tracy is named, had been formed to pursue this objective and, anxious to discover generals prepared to support them, had charged Jacquemont with the task of conferring with Malet.

The measure of real support for this plan within the Sénat is not easy to establish. Gaulmier quotes a police report in which it is stated that twenty-two senators, among them Tracy, Volney, Cabanis, Sieyès, Garat, Latour-Maubourg, Lambrechts and Boissy d'Anglas, have formally committed themselves.⁽¹⁾ In a letter to the Prefect of Police, dated 28 June 1808, Liébaud, a juriconsulte and member of the electoral college of Paris, puts the number at 40.⁽²⁾ In this letter Tracy is again mentioned as one of the principal architects of the plan.

~~He is also named as a member of the planned dictatorship which would follow~~ the coup and precede the return of true representative government. In police reports Guillaume, an ex-général de brigade, is quoted as follows:

Malet me déclara qu'il était question d'une dictature composée de neuf membres pris savoir: trois parmi les militaires, trois parmi le peuple et trois parmi les sénateurs; qu'il existait un comité duquel lui Malet faisait partie qui avait fait le travail préparatoire et avait nommé les membres de la dictature; que les trois membres pris parmi les militaires étaient les généraux Loreau, Truguet et Malet; que les trois membres pris parmi le peuple étaient MM Florent-Guiot, lequel devait être président de la dictature, Lemare, Directeur de l'Athénée de la jeunesse, et Bazin, auteur des Lettres philosophiques et maintenant rédacteur des Lettres françaises, et que les trois membres pris parmi le Sénat étaient MM Garat, Lambrechts et Tracy. (3)

This is confirmed by Masson, who quotes the sénatus-consulte prepared by the conspirators.⁽⁴⁾

(1) v. J. Gaulmier, L'Ideologue Volney, Beyrouth, Impr. catholique, 1951, p. 452.

(2) Archives de la Préfecture de Pôlice, AA 314, I 32-37.

(3) ibid., AA 316, I.

(4) Masson, op. cit., p. 362.

If such documents as these are to be believed, Tracy, ironically, did come momentarily into contact with the prospect of power. Little became of this conspiracy, however, for it soon collapsed with the denunciation and arrest of Malet and Demaillot. No official action was taken against members of the Sénat, and it would appear that Fouché convinced Napoleon that it would serve his interests better to hush up the affair. Madelin is justified in pointing out the debt which numerous people, including Tracy, owed to Fouché, who saved them from the unfortunate effects of imperial anger.⁽¹⁾ Napoleon, of course, was not entirely uninterested in the affair and did enquire, for example, as to the friends of Jacquemont, who had been arrested. Masson quotes the reply of Dubois, the Prefect of Police:

Je puis citer en première ligne le sénateur Destutt-Tracy qui a été jusqu'à me dire à moi-même lorsqu'il s'est présenté pour parler à Jacquemont - ce que je lui ai refusé - que si l'on arrêtaït des hommes tels que Jacquemont pour leur opinion, on pourrait l'arrêter lui-même. (2)

This apparent show of defiance brought no unfortunate consequences, and Tracy withdrew again from the political arena. The absence of official reprisals may indicate that the authorities were not sufficiently disturbed by the enterprise to react violently, and it is noticeable that historians tend to accord more attention, perhaps because of its more dramatic nature, to the second conspiracy of Malet in 1812. On this occasion Malet drew up a document based on the false sénatus-consulte of 1808, naming a provisional government of fifteen members; Tracy is named as one of the fifteen (who also include Garat, Volney and Lambrechts), but there is no evidence that he, or indeed any senator, was actively concerned in the affair, or that Malet was doing other than drawing upon his contacts of four years previously.

(1) L. Madelin, Fouché, Paris, Plon, 1901, II, 58.

(2) Masson, op. cit., p. 378.

There were, then, occasions when Tracy contemplated a direct involvement in the political affairs of his day, but these were brief and isolated moments of action, disturbing only momentarily his life of study. The only other such moments came at the Empire's decline. Tracy was among the signatories of the procès-verbal of the session of the Sénat on 1 April 1814 which established a provisional government; he was present at the session the following day which declared the deposition of Napoleon.⁽¹⁾ He was among those in the Sénat who on 6 April approved the new constitution establishing the Bourbon Restoration, and on 11 April he was elected one of the five members of a commission to decide upon the form in which the constitution should be presented to the nation for its approval.

The events of April 1814 could be taken to represent for Tracy a triumph over his enemy, and he was no doubt anxious to play his part in the final destruction of tyranny. In his works, his references to the period of the Consulate and Empire are rare, and when he considers his career under Napoleon that same detachment with which he viewed his imprisonment during the Revolution is to be found again. Despite his awareness of the Sénat's sycophancy (not to mention the jaundiced view he takes of all assemblies), he is prepared to give his approval to such a body, at least in theory: in his Commentaire sur l'Esprit des Lois he sees the existence of a corps conservateur, whose rôle is similar to that of the Sénat, as the necessary cornerstone of a sane constitution.⁽²⁾ In Tracy the politician cannot overcome the theoretician, and his experience of the Sénat does not, in any perceptible manner, influence his thinking on matters of legislation.

(1) A story popular among biographers of Tracy is that he was the senator who actually proposed the motion that Napoleon be declared deposed. It is not possible to confirm the accuracy of this.

(2) See below, chapter V.

With the downfall of Napoleon, Tracy's political career was, to all intents and purposes, at an end. Although he was nominated to the *Chambre des Pairs* in 1814 (formally recovering his title of count by letters-patent dated 31 August 1817), he took virtually no part in the proceedings of the upper house. In August 1814 he defended both the new constitution and the principle of the liberty of the press, but, after a discreet withdrawal during the Hundred Days and a refusal to take his seat in 1815 during the period of political trials which culminated in the terreur blanche, Tracy, at the age of sixty-one and in poor health (as we have seen, he was afflicted by severely defective eyesight), retired definitively from public life. He was, it appears, prepared to accept the monarchy and even saw in its restoration some hope for the future not only of France, but also of Europe.

The Restoration saw the publication of several of Tracy's works which were already completed. His Traité de la Volonté et ses effets appeared in 1815 and in a second edition in 1818, together with the other parts of the Elémens d'Idéologie. There were further editions of this work in 1824-25 and 1825-27. Tracy's Principes logiques appeared in 1817 and there were editions of his Commentaire sur l'Esprit des Lois de Montesquieu in 1817, 1819 and 1822. But he produced no new work. The grand design of his Idéologie remained uncompleted, all hope of ever finishing it having been abandoned, probably as early as 1810.

Tracy lived the last part of his life, until his death in 1836, in Paris, apparently without further ambition, either to gain political power or to pursue his philosophical researches. It is a period of which he has left no record which survives, and to recreate a picture of Tracy at this time one is obliged to rely on the testimony of others. The best known testimony is that of Stendhal, who became a familiar visitor to the Tracy salon from 1817 onwards,

although it is probable that the two men had met earlier. In his Souvenirs d'égotisme and Marginalia (1) Stendhal refers to the unexpected visit Tracy paid him after Stendhal had sent him a copy of his Histoire de la Peinture en Italie. Dumolard, (2) arguing that an eminent philosopher would be unlikely to visit an insignificant writer if they were not already acquainted, concludes that they had almost certainly met some years before, probably in 1805. He refers to a letter from Tracy to Joseph Rey, dated 8 January 1805, in which Tracy says that he would be delighted to receive Rey the following Sunday 'avec ses deux compagnons de voyage'. (3) Stendhal and Rey, both from Grenoble, were firm friends and Stendhal's Journal contains the following entry, dated 18 November 1804:

Je vais a 10h avec Mante chez Rey qui nous conte la manière dont Destutt l'a présenté à Cabanis. "Votre maître et le mien". (4)

According to his Journal Stendhal wrote to Tracy early in 1808 (5), and, bearing these points in mind, it does seem likely that the two men were not strangers in 1817. It is certainly not until that date, however, that the relationship between them became firmly established.

Stendhal frequented the Tracy salon for some ten years. It was a gathering in which he was never entirely at his ease: he was received politely and even accorded some attention, but he was, as he says, 'tous les jours moins lié'. (6) He describes the salon in his Souvenirs d'égotisme, and paints a picture of elegance, civility and liberalism, all curiously combined with a closed family atmosphere which is not without charm. Tracy was to be seen surrounded by his children and grandchildren, together with those of Lafayette, and Stendhal

- (1) Souvenirs d'égotisme, Paris, Le Divan, 1927, p. 37; Marginalia, Paris, Le Divan, 1936, I, 381.
- (2) v. Dumolard, Pages stendhaliennes, op.cit.
- (3) v. below, Appendix to this thesis.
- (4) Journal (Paris, Le Divan, 1937), I, 242.
- (5) ibid., III, 167.
- (6) Souvenirs d'égotisme, p. 63.

might be forgiven this wry comment:

La quantité de personnes auxquelles il fallait demander de leurs nouvelles en entrant dans ce salon me décourageait tout à fait. (1)

The impression he gives of the salon is confirmed by an English visitor, Lady Morgan, who describes her brief encounter with the Tracy circle as follows:

The room was almost impassable. Its centre was occupied by a circle of young persons of both sexes (the grandchildren of the Count de Tracy and of Lafayette) with their friends, among whom were some juvenile Americans. In the midst of this group stood Lafayette, legislating for some complex case in the law of forfeits, for which purpose he had been called away from another group in a distant part of the room, composed of Benjamin de Constant, the Ternaux, Perriers, M. Victor de Tracy and other notables of the côté gauche of both chambers, whose conversation was not in the least disturbed by the joyous party (...). The assemblies of M. de Tracy, which occur weekly during the season, are among the most select and remarkable in Paris. Inaccessible to common-place mediocrity and pushing pretension, their visitor must be ticketed in some way or other to obtain a presentation. We found our celebrated host much declined in health and strength. His fine intellect, however, was unaltered, and his conversation full of interest and information. Still there hangs over his spirits a consciousness of impaired powers which none but himself perceives and which, I believe, is peculiar to persons of genius and of strong character in old age. (2)

Lady Morgan's reference to the quality of Tracy's conversation is echoed by Stendhal who, justifiably enough, sees in Tracy's wit and elegant turn of phrase the antithesis of his prose style. (3)

Stendhal describes Tracy's character as follows:

Ses manières sont parfaites, quand il n'est pas dominé par une abominable humeur noire. (...) Il prend de l'humeur de tout. (4)

Stendhal sees as one cause of these 'dark moods' the greater reputation of

(1) ibid., p. 65.

(2) Lady Morgan, France in 1829-30, London, Saunders & Otley, 1831, I, 138

(3) v. Souvenirs d'égotisme, p. 49. Stendhal's views are shared by Maine de Biran: '(Tracy) parle bien, a le don de la persuasion, et ses discours familiers sont aussi onctueux que ses écrits sont secs'. (Oeuvres, ed. Tisserand, VI, 140).

(4) Souvenirs d'égotisme, p. 38.

Lafayette and the resultant consideration he was shown in Tracy's own salon. Other commentators, when referring to them, interpret them differently. For example:

Tracy, dit-on, avait le désir de déplaire à ceux dont il faisait peu de cas, et comme il ne faisait cas de personne, il en résulte qu'il déplaisait à tout le monde. Il était cependant fort poli, mais sec et têtù. (1)

Whatever the truth of these assertions, they do contribute towards a picture of Tracy which is valid not only for his declining years but also for the major part of his adult life. From his writings and his attitudes, public and private, one discerns qualities of character which remain constant. He has, certainly, a fine intellect: his mind is above all lucid and well-ordered. His work shows all too clearly his inclination towards analysis and systemisation. He is self-assured, confident that such an approach will lead inevitably to the truth and that the truth, once established, will be recognised by others. The rigid, formal structures and lack of expansiveness of Tracy's work, together with his mistrust of literary forms and devices as corruptors of reason, are reflected in his character. He is, furthermore, honest, thorough and conscientious. His fundamental common-sense prevents him from indulging to excess any whim or fancy. His life, like his works, preaches moderation in all things.

Tracy's common-sense also prevents him from becoming the dupe of any passing fashion. He watches the affairs of men with an eye not easily deceived by outward show. He is detached, at times even aloof, and on more than one occasion his attitude comes close to cynicism. These qualities do not go to

(1) R. Peter, La Vie secrète de l'Académie française. 4^e période. Paris, Librairie des Champs-Élysées, 1938, p. 67.

make the man of action, and certainly he is temperamentally unsuited to political intrigue or to any sustained intervention in public affairs. He is, in point of fact, not a commentator on social phenomena in the strict sense of the word, for, as will be seen, he turns his attention not to contemporary events but upon the fundamental principles, in his view ultimately demonstrable, which he sees underlying them.

Such a picture of Tracy as the philosopher withdrawing from the heat of political battle to the sanctuary of his study may not accord well with the picture of him in his youth, which many biographers draw, as a cavalry officer endowed with all the physical graces as well as many qualities of character. For the present-day biographer, that earlier period of his life must remain, relatively speaking, unexplored, but it is intriguing to speculate that, however complete the transformation in Tracy from soldier to philosopher, some vestige of the former self remains to the end. Peter describes him at the time of the 1830 revolution, when Tracy was seventy-six, as follows:

(...) il porta, quand l'âge lui vint, un vaste garde-vue de taffetas vert, une longue canne à la main, le tout formant, avec ses fidèles bas de soie, un assemblage assez singulier. C'est dans cet état qu'à 73 ans (sic) il s'engagea au milieu des barricades de 1830, non point pour voir, puisqu'il n'y voyait plus, ni pour combattre, il en était désabusé: par un simple besoin sportif de risquer ses jours. Ce n'est assurément point sans beauté. (1)

Such a picture, whilst acknowledging Sainte-Beuves's opinion, already noted, that Tracy had sunk some years before into profound disillusionment, throws some doubt upon the validity of the view, put forward by Stendhal, among others, of Tracy as a man virtually devoid of spirit or passion. Stendhal, apart from ascribing 'dark moods' to Tracy, finds in him only one passion. Writing of Victor Jacquemont he says:

(1) R. Peter, op. cit., p.67.

Son coeur n'avait qu'un défaut, une envie basse et subalterne pour Napoléon. Cette envie était du reste l'unique passion que j'ai jamais vue chez M. le comte de Tracy. (1)

Stendhal may have hit upon a characteristic fundamental to human nature - the envy felt by the contemplator in the face of the man of action - and applied it to Tracy, whose hatred and condemnation of Napoleon may in his eyes have amounted to an obsession. In any event, it is fair to conclude that any 'passion' on the part of Tracy, be it as restricted as Stendhal would suggest or to any degree more comprehensive, is tempered and controlled by reason. If Tracy defends certain values with a determination and enthusiasm which border on the passionate, it is because he is rationally persuaded of their worth. Such a rational approach, whilst it diminishes the influence of passion, does not, of course, exclude prejudice and private inclination, which, as we shall see, have their part to play in the formation of Tracy's ideas.

By the royal ordonnance of March 1816, which restored the title of Académie to the four classes of the Institut, Tracy formally became a member of the Académie française. By the ordonnance of October 1832, which re-established the second class of the Institut, which had been suppressed in 1803, he was named a member of it, under its new title of Académie des Sciences morales et politiques. Tracy wrote two letters to Roederer, dated 23 October and 29 October 1832,⁽²⁾ declining the invitation to take a place in the Académie, on the grounds of ill health, and pointing out, with his powers of logic clearly undimmed, that he could not be re-instated as he had never been dismissed, for the original class had merely been disbanded and he had not been excluded from the Institut. These were the only occasions in the last twenty years of Tracy's life on which

(1) Souvenirs d'égotisme, p. 60

(2) Archives nationales, 29 AP III.

he emerged from his withdrawal into private life. He died, after a stroke, on 9 March 1836, at the age of eighty-one,⁽¹⁾ and was buried in the cemetery of Père Lachaise.

Tracy's life, like his character and his works, is one of contrasts and paradoxes. It spans a momentous period in French history, from monarchy to monarchy, by way of republic, consulate and empire, and represents, in terms of the private individual, a tranquil progression. When external events intrude upon the peace, as with Tracy's arrest and imprisonment, or with imperial disfavour, they leave no appreciable mark upon him and no reference is made to them in his work. When Tracy intervenes of his own accord in public affairs, as in the Constituante or the Sénat, he does so despite an apparent mistrust of politics and politicians, and his commitment is not complemented by any aptitude for positive action. As a cavalry officer he must have been attuned to the need for such positive action, but, unlike many before and after him, he does not bring military theories and attitudes to bear upon his duties as a statesman. In this domain he is the man of ideas, looking beyond the immediate in search of the fundamental, and this search leads him to conceive of society in somewhat static and abstract terms. He is convinced of the inevitability of change and seeks to determine how that change should be brought about by analysis and deduction; his approach to the problems of his time is born of the attitudes of the eighteenth century in which he himself was born. His detachment from the immediate political and social scene, reflected, on a mundane level, by his attachment to the dress of an earlier period,⁽²⁾ does not detract from the sincerity of his views, and indeed contributes to the unity and orderliness

(1) A copy of Tracy's death certificate is to be found in the Archives de la Seine.

(2) v. Sarah Newton de Tracy, *op. cit.*, p. 78: 'Il essaya un jour d'hiver très-rigoureux de mettre un de ces pantalons qu'il dénigrait. (...) Il reprit le lendemain son costume habituel et on peut dire qu'il est mort en bas de soie.'

of their presentation, qualities admired by Victor Cousin:

Le dix-huitième siècle avait établi et comme consacré la célèbre maxime: Il n'y a rien dans l'entendement qui n'y soit entré par les sens. Ne pouvant donc inventer cette maxime après Condillac, il n'est resté à M. de Tracy que d'en tirer le système le plus régulier et le plus complet qu'elle eût encore produit entre les mains d'aucun philosophe; et c'est aussi ce qu'il a fait, Messieurs, avec une sévérité de méthode qui n'a été ni surpassée ni égalée. De là ce corps de doctrines où la netteté et la précision des détails le disputent à l'étroit enchaînement des parties, et dont l'unité fait la grandeur. (1)

In keeping with the methodology of Tracy himself, it is to the bases of this system that this study now turns.

(1) Discours prononcé aux funérailles de M. Laromiguière, (14 August 1837), Paris, Didot, n.d.

II. THE CONCEPT OF IDEOLOGIE

The philosophy of Destutt de Tracy, both as regards those aspects which may properly be termed theoretical and those which may be termed practical, derives from one motivating force which makes of it a singularly unified system. This motivating force is his desire to arrive at an understanding of man through an analysis of his intellectual faculties. As C. Smith points out, Tracy is in search of a complete account of human consciousness and experience, and he turns his attention to the individual as the recipient of the data of this experience, and takes as his starting point what to him is a self-evident certainty, sensation. Following in the tradition of Locke and Condillac, Tracy is assured that all the individual's knowledge comes to him through evidence provided by the senses, and it is to this evidence that idéologie must apply itself. Although he coined the term in 1796,⁽¹⁾ Tracy did not claim in any way to be the inventor of the science. He saw it as the natural and inevitable culmination of methods and attitudes current in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Bréhier characterises it as follows:

L'idéologie, au sens large, a pour fonction de retrouver l'unité; elle est identique, dans l'intention de Tracy, à la philosophie première, qui s'applique au réel en général et non à un objet particulier; à la vraie logique, qui est non pas l'art pratique de raisonner mais l'étude spéculative des moyens de connaître, à l'analyse condillacienne, identique à la partie scientifique de la logique; elle est au contraire très distincte de la métaphysique, 'cet art d'imagination destiné à nous satisfaire, non à nous instruire'; car si elle cherche l'unité, c'est l'unité du point de vue humain, ce sont les sources communes des trois opérations de juger, de parler, de vouloir, dont les arts de la logique, de la grammaire, de la morale donnent déjà les règles pratiques, et qui ne laissent hors d'eux aucune activité humaine. (2)

For Tracy, the analysis of man's intellectual faculties is the necessary first step on the path to greater human happiness and the betterment of the human species. It is not merely an investigation into human psychology, but the means of discovering new principles relevant to education, legislation and

(1) v. Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, p. 324.

(2) E. Bréhier, Histoire de la philosophie, Paris, Alcan, 1932, II, 601.

the proper organisation of society:

(...) personne ne niera sans doute que la connaissance de la génération de nos idées est le fondement de l'art de communiquer ces idées, la grammaire; de celui de combiner ces mêmes idées et d'en faire jaillir des vérités nouvelles, la logique; de celui d'enseigner et de répandre les vérités acquises, l'instruction; de celui de former les habitudes des hommes, l'éducation; de l'art plus important encore d'apprécier et de régler nos désirs, la morale; et enfin du plus grand des arts, au succès duquel doivent coopérer tous les autres, celui de régler la société de façon que l'homme y trouve le plus de secours et le moins de gêne possible de la part de ses semblables. (1)

In Tracy's mind there is a clearly established procedure, a chain of enquiry by which he seeks to arrive

... par une suite de conséquences rigoureuses et non interrompues depuis l'examen de notre premier acte intellectuel jusqu'à la dernière de nos dispositions législatives. (2)

By the proper analysis of man's intellectual faculties and by a prudent progression from one established fact to the next, Tracy seeks to avoid error, to form sound judgement and to develop reason, which is the foundation of justice and happiness. He sets out his design in the following manner:

ELEMENTS D'IDEOLOGIE

PREMIERE SECTION

Histoire de nos moyens de connaître

EN TROIS PARTIES

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| Ire PARTIE - De la formation de nos idées, ou | IDEOLOGIE |
| | proprement dite |
| IIe PARTIE - De l'expression de nos idées, ou | GRAMMAIRE |
| IIIe PARTIE - De la combinaison de nos idées, ou | LOGIQUE |

DEUXIEME SECTION

Application de nos moyens de connaître
à l'étude de notre volonté et de ses effets

EN TROIS PARTIES

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| Ire PARTIE - De nos actions, ou | ECONOMIE |
| IIe PARTIE - De nos sentimens, ou | MORALE |
| IIIe PARTIE - De la direction des unes et des autres, ou | LEGISLATION |

(1) Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, p. 287.

(2) Letter to Thomas Jefferson, dated 21 October, 1811. Reprinted in G. Chinard, Jefferson et les Idéologues, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press; Paris, PUF, 1925, p.88.

TROISIÈME SECTION

Application de nos moyens de connaître
à l'étude des êtres qui ne sont pas nous

EN TROIS PARTIES

I ^{re} PARTIE - Des corps et de leurs propriétés, ou	PHYSIQUE
II ^e PARTIE - Des propriétés de l'étendue, ou	GEOMETRIE
III ^e PARTIE - Des propriétés de la quantité, ou	CALCUL

APPENDICE

Des fausses sciences qu'anéantit la connaissance de nos
moyens de connaître, à la tête desquelles il faut placer
toute métaphysique non révélée. (1)

Only the first section and the first part of the second section are complete, but this work and other works not included in the Elémens d'Idéologie bear ample witness to the breadth of Tracy's design and to its unified character. All of Tracy's work illustrates an attempt to construct a system which would rest on the solid foundation of a sure knowledge of man's intellectual faculties. It is essential to progress empirically from the known to the unknown; each fact discovered and proved is to be part of the chain leading from the individual in the first moment of consciousness to the socially and politically organised collectivity. The problem to be resolved is:

(...) les facultés d'une espèce d'êtres animés étant
connues, trouver tous les moyens de bonheur dont ces
êtres sont susceptibles. (2)

It is to idéologie that Tracy looks for the solution. His own approach to the science is expressed most clearly in the Discours préliminaire to the volume De la Logique. Tracy envisages logic as a purely speculative science, consisting solely in the examination of the formation of ideas and the manner in which they are combined, deduced and expressed. Logic, as Tracy understands it, is therefore a preliminary to the art of reasoning, and its object is to

- (1) Table contained in De la Logique, p. 378.
Throughout this study references to Tracy's Elémens d'Idéologie are to the edition of 1825-7 published by Wahlen in Brussels.
- (2) Mémoire, p. 288.

establish the nature of truth and certainty, and the causes of uncertainty and error. He identifies it with idéologie itself:

(...) la grammaire, l'idéologie et la logique ne sont qu'une seule et même chose. (1)

He devotes the Discours préliminaire to a commentary on the philosophic methods of Aristotle, Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Condillac and Buffier. The purpose of the commentary is not only to determine the extent to which these philosophers might be designated the precursors of the idéologues, but also to establish the limits and deficiencies of their methods of enquiry. In this latter aspect of the commentary Tracy can define more precisely the paths which idéologie must take to arrive at truth and certainty and avoid those errors to which earlier philosophers succumbed. Here again it is a question of first things first:

Je me borne à une vérité qu'on ne saurait nier, c'est qu'un art dépend toujours d'une science. Or, tous les logiciens jusqu'à présent, sans en excepter ceux que l'on regarde avec raison comme des hommes supérieurs, ont confondu l'art avec la science. Ils se sont même plus occupés de nous donner les règles de l'un que de poser les principes de l'autre. Ils se sont donc trop pressés d'arriver à un résultat; ils ont inversé l'ordre des idées. C'est donc la science que nous avons à créer avec méthode; ensuite on en tirera facilement des conséquences utiles pour la pratique. (2)

The complaint that earlier philosophers failed to lay a proper foundation for their systems is a constant one, and this, together with Tracy's criticisms of detail, does much to clarify his own purpose and manner of procedure.

Tracy firmly establishes the idéologues in the tradition of Aristotle:

(...) les idéologues français, bien loin d'être des novateurs effrénés, des déserteurs de l'école d'Aristote, de tenter contre son intention des choses que ce grand maître a décidé être inutiles ou impossibles, sont ses continuateurs, ses disciples, et je pourrais dire ses exécuteurs testamentaires. (3)

(1) Idéologie proprement dite, chap. XVII, p. 272.

(2) De la logique, Discours préliminaire, p. 3.

(3) ibid., p. 7.

But although Aristotle recognised that the senses were the source of all knowledge, he failed to explain the way in which simple ideas are formed or the way in which complex ideas are constituted. He neglected the process by which various simple notions may be correlated to establish complex notions. His method thus lacked the fundamental enquiry which is the cornerstone of Tracy's enterprise. The ten classes of ideas which Aristotle evolved,⁽¹⁾ despite the multiplicity of distinctions and observations, appear to Tracy as nothing more than random choices, dependent upon the imagination of one man. They were, moreover, injurious to clear thinking since they invited speculation based upon an imprecise vocabulary. Aristotle failed above all to decompose the processes of human thought; he was in too great haste to pass on to a practical demonstration of the art of reasoning which, based upon syllogisms, failed to elucidate elementary information on the science of logic. Tracy recognises the greatness of Aristotle in inaugurating this science, however imperfectly, but is severe in his criticism of Aristotle's insubstantial preliminary enquiry and its long-lasting effect:

(...) la doctrine d'Aristote a empêché le genre humain de faire un seul pas pendant plus de dix-huit cents ans. (2)

Aristotle had inverted the process of human reasoning by insisting that general ideas embrace particular ideas; he made general ideas the principles of knowledge and declared that they should be the starting point of all logical enquiry. Thus he made them the major terms of his syllogisms. Tracy insists that the reverse is true, and that one must begin with the particular, which is the

(1) Substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, condition, action, affection.

(2) De la Logique, Discours préliminaire, p. 19.

source of the truth of the general. In defence of this view Tracy gives the following illustration:

Ce n'est pas parce que tous les hommes sont des êtres parlans que Jacques est un être parlant; ou parce que tous les êtres parlans, tous les hommes, sont des animaux, que un tel être parlant, un tel homme, est un animal. C'est tout le contraire, Jacques est un être parlant parce qu'on le voit, on l'entend parler; en un mot parce qu'il est prouvé par le fait que l'idée d'être un être parlant est une des idées qui lui conviennent, qui composent l'idée totale de son individu: et cet être est un animal parce que dans l'idée d'être un être parlant est comprise l'idée d'être un être animé, un animal. (1)

This is further demonstration of Tracy's belief in the immediate observation of phenomena as the necessary first step in his search for the truth, and a further reason why he finds Aristotle's system deficient: it was based upon axioms (or general ideas) which, although Aristotle held them to be self-evident, were unproved and indeed impossible to prove.

Tracy's acceptance of the inductive method in logical enquiry accounts for the enthusiasm with which he describes the Instauratio magna of Bacon. Tracy shows himself to be a great admirer of Bacon's project to renovate the sciences and re-examine the sum of human knowledge (indeed he affirms an identity of purpose between Bacon and himself), and cites with particular approval that part of the Plan of the Work in which Bacon expressly rejects Aristotle, syllogisms and the deductive method. Tracy applauds Bacon when he insists that the truth of general principles must be reconsidered, and that they must be based upon the close observation of particular phenomena, but when he comes to consider the manner in which these concepts are put into practice in the Instauratio magna he finds little to satisfy him. He pours scorn on Bacon's division of knowledge into the categories of history, poetry

(1) ibid., p. 86

and philosophy (deriving from memory, imagination and reason respectively),⁽¹⁾ and upon Bacon's attempts to discover the laws of nature by the use of tables, a method which, in Tracy's view, whilst being an advance upon induction by simple enumeration, is over-complex and fallible, since to be effective it requires a degree of knowledge to which few can aspire. Bacon's failure to comprehend the operations of the human mind obscured his own thought, and the design which Tracy describes at one point as 'une idée admirable et sublime',⁽²⁾ degenerates into

(une méthode qui) consiste presque uniquement dans des formalités vaines, illusoire, et on peut dire impraticables, au point que lui-même ne l'a jamais complétée, et ne l'a jamais suivie. (3)

Nonetheless Tracy includes later in his Logique a detailed summary of the Instauratio magna, thereby indicating the importance which he attaches to Bacon's design. The appearance of Bacon's work epitomised an age in which philosophers were turning to the study of demonstrable fact as the starting-point for their systems, and gave further impulsion to this development, with rewarding results:

En effet, cela seul a suffi pour changer la face des sciences, tant est grande l'influence d'une seule idée capitale. Toutes les branches de nos connaissances sont sorties de la stagnation, et ont fait des progrès réels, rapides et sûrs; et l'on peut dire que chacun de ceux qui ont cultivé avec succès quelque-une de leurs nombreuses divisions, a réellement travaillé à la grande rénovation que Bacon n'avait fait qu'indiquer et esquisser. (4)

In the Discours préliminaire Tracy does not undertake a detailed examination

- (1) In Tracy's view, imagination and reason are not primary faculties; the terms describe results, not causes. Furthermore, there is not one branch of human knowledge to which sensibility, memory, judgement and the will have not all contributed.
- (2) De la Logique, Discours préliminaire, p. 43.
- (3) ibid., p. 90.
- (4) ibid., p. 91.

of the philosophical method of Descartes, but limits himself to a few superficial, and essentially laudatory remarks. For example:

Je pense, donc je suis est le mot le plus profond qui ait jamais été dit, et le seul vrai début de toute saine philosophie. (1)

He particularly applauds the four principles on which Descartes' method is based, and which are expounded in the second part of the Discours de la méthode; he finds that in the field of logic Bacon and Descartes have identical theories, but that there is a far clearer exposition in the work of the latter.

Tracy returns to Descartes in two other works, his Lettre sur les Lettres de Descartes, published in La Décade,⁽²⁾ and his Principes logiques. Here, whilst again acknowledging the debt which science owes to Descartes, he reproaches him with having failed to study the effects of thought. Instead of examining the modifications in his thinking self, in order to see how ideas were formed and how they acquainted him with the other circumstances of his life and with beings other than himself, Descartes was over-anxious to determine the cause of thought. Having determined that the ideas of thought and existence in space were mutually exclusive, he was led from error to error: since these two concepts could not be united in the same being, he affirmed the existence of two substances, one, the soul, whose essence is to think, the other, matter, whose essence is to exist in space. This led him to declare that the soul could not exist without thinking, that it must think without reference to the body, and must therefore have innate ideas; similarly space could not exist without matter. Tracy's judgement is severe:

(1) ibid., p. 94.

(2) La Décade, 1 June 1806, pp. 392-401.

Or, de ces deux assertions, l'Une a gâté toute sa méta-physique, et l'autre toute sa physique; et pour porter une lumière pure dans ces deux sciences, il a fallu que Locke prouvât que nous n'avons pas d'idées qui n'aient leur origine dans nos sensations; et que Newton démontrât que la supposition du vide ne répugne pas à la raison, ou du moins qu'il raisonnât comme si le vide était possible et même existant. (1)

It is not, however, to Locke that Tracy next turns in the Discours préliminaire, but to Hobbes. He sees in Hobbes the disciple of Bacon, but acknowledges that in his discussion of the formation of human ideas, even though he does not investigate their first elements, sensations, nor the formation of the most complex ideas, Hobbes contributes more to the science of logic than Bacon. Indeed Tracy goes so far as to describe Hobbes as the founder of idéologie and the renovator of the moral sciences, giving as justification Hobbes' statement that political principles are derived from the science of sensations and ideas.⁽²⁾ Hobbes too, like those before him, reasoned upon an inadequate knowledge of the operations of the human mind, and thus fell into error, but this cannot detract from the great importance of his work:

Mais l'ouvrage en masse mérite d'être regardé comme un produit précieux des méditations de Bacon et de Descartes, sur le système d'Aristote, et comme le germe des progrès ultérieurs de la science, parce qu'il éclaircit déjà l'histoire des signes et remonte même jusqu'à celle des idées, et que s'il ne présente pas la solution de toutes les questions, du moins il fournit l'indication de presque toutes celles qui sont nécessaires, et qui ont été examinées depuis. (3)

The importance for Tracy of Hobbes' work is such that he includes as a pièce justificative later in De la Logique a translation of the Computatio sive Logica. (4)

(1) ibid., p. 396

(2) Hobbes wrote in his Computatio sive Logica: '(...) the principles of the politics consist in the knowledge of the motions of the mind, and the knowledge of these motions from the knowledge of sense and imagination.' (Chap. 6, p. 74 of the first volume of his works, London, Bohn, 1839)

(3) De la Logique, Discours préliminaire, p. 100.

(4) The translation is Tracy's own.

Tracy mentions Locke only briefly, describing his Essay Concerning Human Understanding as the foundation of the science of logic, being the first treatise to be written on that subject. Without further delay he turns to Condillac, whose contribution to the study of the procedures of the human mind he readily acknowledges. Tracy is enthusiastic concerning the spirit and aims of Condillac's philosophy; both men reject the old metaphysics, which had sought absolutes beyond the bounds of verifiable human knowledge, and both men seek accuracy and order based upon the observation and analysis of fact. Both men have the same priorities, in which the primary need is one to establish the way in which the mind gains knowledge and makes judgements, and Tracy values Condillac above all as the first philosopher to have undertaken a study of the human mind in which its diverse operations, its limits and its capabilities are examined in detail, and in which causes and effects are carefully investigated, so that the chain leading from simple perception to complex thought can be established. Condillac is the first to pay attention to the multitude of different impressions which are made upon the human mind by the perception of any object, and in his analysis of these impressions, and in his differentiation between them, he has raised the fundamental questions on which all further enquiry must be based. Condillac may not have produced solutions to all the problems, but in his very treatment of them he has opened up new avenues of investigation, and provided the first example of the way in which a social and moral philosophy can be built upon the basis of Idéologie. Tracy insists that he is merely continuing the work of Condillac, seeking to provide a complete and systematic account of truths scattered throughout the earlier philosopher's works. Tracy affirms that Condillac created idéologie⁽¹⁾ and depicts himself as presenting only a variation of Condillac's thought:

(1) Idéologie proprement dite, préface, p. xiv.

Quoi qu'il en soit, je persiste à soutenir qu'à lui seul appartient l'honneur d'avoir découvert que penser n'est rien que sentir, et que toutes nos idées ne sont que des sensations diverses dont il ne s'agit que de démêler les différences et les combinaisons. J'ai débarrassé cette grande vérité de quelques nuages qui l'obscurcissaient encore un peu; j'en ai tiré quelques conséquences, et voilà tout. (1)

Thus it can be seen that the commentary in the Discours préliminaire⁽²⁾ offers less a detailed and objective analysis of the works of other philosophers than the presentation of evidence to support Tracy's view that certainty in all judgements can be achieved only if the means by which the human mind gains knowledge and makes judgements is properly understood. Tracy describes the Discours préliminaire as a survey of the stages by which the science of logic has been perfected, and in it his comments on other philosophers are written from a limited point of view. What is of importance, however, is the underlying belief, demonstrated fully throughout Tracy's work, that moral and social principles with absolute degrees of scientific accuracy can be deduced. Tracy insists upon the interrelation of different branches of science and knowledge, and the dependence of them all upon the science of idéologie; in this way he is led to affirm the identity of moral, social and political principles, since all can be deduced once the true nature of man is known. The laws governing these principles are as rigorous as the laws governing the physical sciences.⁽³⁾ Thus, with his insistence upon idéologie as fundamental to all enquiry, Tracy erects a social science which not only begins with the study of the human mind, but which is a direct and inevitable consequence of that study.

Tracy casts further light upon his conception of idéologie by dividing

- (1) ibid., chap. XI, p. 168.
- (2) Tracy devotes six pages to Buffier; he finds him to be a follower of Bacon and Locke, but considers that his Métaphysique and Logique, whilst making a real contribution to the science of ideas, lack the clarity and rigour of Condillac's work.
- (3) Tracy takes up this point in Quel sont les moyens: 'la morale est une science que nous composons, comme tous les autres, des résultats de nos expériences et de nos réflexions'. (p. 18).

the science into two branches:

(...) l'idéologie me paraît se partager en physiologique et rationnelle: la première, très-curieuse, exigeant de vastes connoissances, mais ne pouvant guère, dans l'état actuel des lumières, se promettre d'autres résultats de ses plus grands efforts que la destruction de beaucoup d'erreurs, et l'établissement de quelques vérités précieuses, mais encore éparses et peu liées entre elles; la seconde, l'idéologie rationnelle, exigeant moins de science, ayant peut-être moins de difficultés; mais possédant des faits suffisamment liés, et ne songeant qu'à leurs conséquences, à l'avantage d'être susceptible d'applications plus directes, et de former déjà un système complet. (1)

Tracy himself is engaged upon enquiry into the latter branch, together with such philosophers as Volney, Laromiguière, Garat, Jacquemont, Thurot, Lancelin and Gérando, whilst the ~~latter~~ ^{former} branch was more properly the province of such thinkers as Cabanis, Pinel, Bichat, Roussel, Richerand, Alibert and Moreau. (2) These two groups of philosophers were drawn together not only by personal contact at Auteuil and the Institut, but also by their desire that their work should be a contribution towards the perfection of a science de l'homme. (3) They all acknowledged their dependence upon the researches of Bacon, Descartes, Locke and, above all, Condillac, and in this respect Tracy's Discours préliminaire is characteristic of the whole movement. For example, Laromiguière in his Discours sur la langue du raisonnement, echoes Tracy's view of the influence of Aristotle:

Depuis Aristote le nombre des logiques est incalculable, mais presque toutes s'arrêtent avec celle du philosophe grec. Comme on ne doutait pas qu'il n'eût atteint la perfection, on ne pouvait que répéter ce qu'il avait enseigné. Il est vrai que dans tous les temps il s'est rencontré de ces esprits qui portent impatiemment le joug de l'autorité, et qui, pleins de confiance en leurs propres forces, ne veulent recevoir la loi que d'eux-mêmes. Tels furent principalement Bacon et Descartes. (4)

(1) Mémoire, p. 344.

(2) v. J. Kitchin, La Décade, Paris, Minard, 1965, p. 118.

(3) A phrase used by Cabanis; v. Oeuvres philosophiques, I, 126.

(4) Laromiguière, Discours sur la langue du raisonnement, nouvelle édition, Paris, Brunot-Labbé, 1825, p. 193.

In addition to Bacon and Descartes, Laromiguière cites as examples of worthy, but fallible, contributors to the science of raisonnement Hobbes, Malebranche, Leibniz and Locke, and concludes:

Il était réservé à un Français du XVIII^e siècle, à Condillac, de nous apprendre ce que nous faisons quand nous pensons et quand nous raisonnons, comme un siècle auparavant il avait été réservé à un autre Français, Descartes, d'apprendre à toute l'Europe à penser et à raisonner. (1)

Garat, in his Cours de l'analyse de l'entendement, given at the Ecole Normale in 1795, closely followed the ideas of Condillac and mentioned with particular approval the works of Bacon and Locke. This course, in its turn, drew favourable comments from Ginguéné, Thurot and from Cabanis, who in the preface to his Rapports du Physique et du Moral de l'homme traces the evolution of that philosophy which has established 'la source première de toutes les merveilles que présente le monde intellectuel et moral, dans les mêmes lois ou dans les mêmes propriétés qui déterminent les mouvements vitaux.'⁽²⁾ In his study of this evolution he mentions Aristotle, Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Helvétius and Condillac.

For all the idéologues, then, Condillac represents the culmination of a tradition which, whilst having its origins in the philosophy of Aristotle, was given new vigour in English thought and science in the seventeenth century and which in the eighteenth century in France found eloquent and ever more persuasive expression. Condillac had attempted to carry over into the field of philosophy and moral science the Baconian methods which had been applied to the physical sciences. He affirmed the primacy of experience in the organisation of knowledge, in which categories and abstract notions could be derived only after exhaustive examination of observed facts. Such was the basis of

(1) ibid., p. 198.

(2) Cabanis, Oeuvres philosophiques, I, 111.

Condillac's métaphysique, as he termed it, developed in his Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines and in his Traité des Sensations, and which was, in effect, a method of research. He sought to understand the operations of the human mind in order that ultimately the sources of mental error and the correct procedures for the discovery of truth could be elucidated. Condillac restated the proposition of Aristotle - that all knowledge is derived from the senses - and complemented the work of Locke, whom he recognized to be the first philosopher to restrict himself to the study of the human mind. Condillac rejected Locke's conception of an internal sense, or faculty of reflection which, by perceiving and combining sensed experiences, acts as the ultimate source of knowledge; he reduced this faculty to sensations, which he insisted must be the starting-point of all enquiry.

Condillac's philosophy shows a continuing search for those qualities which Tracy prizes most highly: precision, clarity and certainty. Tracy conceives his own work in Condillac's terms, and in his studies of the principles of idéologie and their sources mentions no other eighteenth-century French thinker. Mignet cites the following account by Tracy of the origins of his enquiries:

Je n'avais jamais lu de lui que son Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines (...) et je l'avais quitté sans savoir si j'en devais être content ou mécontent. Je lus dans les prisons des Carmes tous ses ouvrages qui me firent remonter à celui de Locke. Leur ensemble m'ouvrit les yeux, leur rapprochement me montra en quoi consiste ce que je cherchais. Je vis clairement que c'était la science de la pensée. Le Traité des systèmes surtout fut pour moi un coup de lumière et ne trouvant celui des Sensations ni complet ni exempt d'erreur, je fis des lors pour moi un exposé succinct des vérités principales qui résultent de l'analyse de la pensée. (1)

(1) Mignet, op. cit., p. 262.

The Traité des Systèmes was no doubt striking to Tracy for the way in which Condillac discredited the works of several major philosophers because of their failure to achieve clarity and precision and because of their attachment to ill-defined concepts and ill-considered principles which they erected into systems; these systems were not based on, and indeed had very little to do with any clear idea of the organisation of knowledge. Condillac dismisses in this way Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza and Malebranche. Since they did not accept that knowledge is gained through the senses, they failed to grasp the proper procedure for gaining further knowledge. In his Essai Condillac had pointed out the attachment of philosophers to principles.⁽¹⁾ Those philosophers whose works he discusses in his Traité des systèmes conceived metaphysics as the science of first principles, and although they saw their task as the explanation of all phenomena, their systems could explain little, since they consisted of propositions which, where they were not vague, contained only knowledge already gained, and which could thus yield nothing new. These systems, in Condillac's view, lead irrevocably to error:

Pour peu qu'on ait réfléchi sur les exemples que j'ai rapportés, on sera convaincu que nous ne tombons dans l'erreur, que parce que nous raisonnons sur des principes dont nous n'avons pas démêlé toutes les idées: dès-lors nous ne les saisissons point d'une vue assez nette et assez précise, pour en comprendre la vérité dans toute son étendue, ni pour être en garde contre ce qu'ils ont de vague et d'équivoque. Voilà la véritable cause des erreurs des philosophes et des préjugés du peuple. (2)

Tracy himself never tires of rejecting the approach characterised by these systems. He is always severe on those who, to his mind, indulge their liking for supposition and hypothesis to the detriment of observation and experiment:

(1) v. Condillac, Essai, Iere Partie, IIe Section, Chap. 7, Oeuvres philosophiques, I, 25.

(2) Traité des systèmes, chap. XI, Oeuvres philosophiques, I, 194.

Il n'en est pas de même de ceux qui, sans étudier ni la génération de nos idées, ni nos opérations intellectuelles, ont dogmatisé témérairement sur les abstractions les plus complexes, et sur la nature de l'être pensant qu'ils ne connaissent pas. Ceux-là n'ont jamais été bons à rien, ils n'ont fait qu'égarer les esprits; et s'ils ont employé la violence et l'appui des puissances temporelles et spirituelles, pour soutenir leurs imprudentes décisions, ils ont été, non-seulement les séducteurs, mais les oppresseurs et les ennemis du genre humain. Ils méritent notre animadversion et notre mépris; ce sont les métaphysiciens. (1)

Condillac does make the point, in the Traité des systèmes, that hypotheses are not merely useful but even necessary, as a means of enquiry, when one is in a position both to exhaust all the possible suppositions with regard to a particular question and to establish with certainty the accuracy of any choice made between different hypotheses. This is borne out particularly clearly in the study of mathematics and, to a lesser degree, in such sciences as astronomy and physics. He goes on to castigate Descartes, again, for his use of arbitrary hypotheses by which he sought to arrive at an intellectual reconstruction of the universe, whereas he praises Newton for his extreme prudence in the use of hypotheses. Newton restricted himself to a simple description of phenomena, and did not go beyond the bounds of experience. Tracy, whilst not acknowledging himself to be a disciple of Newton, is of similar persuasion, but he parts company with Condillac in one important respect, the role of mathematics as a language suitable for the expression and expansion of knowledge. Isabel Knight points out the existence in Condillac's thought of the opposing tendencies of empiricism and mathematics, tendencies which, in her view, Condillac does not always successfully reconcile.⁽²⁾ Condillac clearly valued the simplicity and uniformity of mathematics, and extended the algebraic equation, so as to apply it to all knowledge. Tracy, in the first chapter of his Logique, explicitly

(1) De la Logique, chap. VII, p. 256.

(2) Isabel F. Knight, The Geometric Spirit, The Abbé de Condillac and the French Enlightenment, New Haven and London, Yale U.P., 1968, p. 26.

rejects this approach:

Parce que les vérités de la science des nombres et de celle de l'étendue sont d'une certitude complète, on croyait, et les gens peu instruits croient encore, que c'est aux sciences mathématiques à guider la Logique et à nous apprendre à raisonner. Cependant c'est tout le contraire. On peut bien chercher dans l'Algèbre et dans la Géométrie des exemples de bons raisonnemens, parce que, par toutes les raisons que nous avons dites souvent, c'est dans ces matières qu'il est le plus aisé de faire des applications heureuses des principes logiques. Mais il ne faut pas vouloir tirer de ces sciences les principes eux-mêmes, car ils n'y sont pas. (1)

In Tracy's eyes a judgement is not a form of equation. On the contrary, the reverse is true: an equation is a form of judgement, and is possible only because the human mind is capable of making judgements. Condillac had been led into error by his reluctance to challenge the basis of the syllogism, wherein the two propositions, considered as equal to the third term, were themselves considered to be equal.⁽²⁾ In his Logique Condillac goes so far as to state that

(...) équations, propositions, jugemens, sont au fond la même chose, et (que) par conséquent on raisonne de la même manière dans toutes les sciences. (3)

Tracy does not comment, but would appear to be in agreement with Condillac, at least with regard to the latter part of this statement, although the view that all sciences are susceptible of demonstration and the implication that all sciences are 'abstract' sciences, insofar as they all have a common methodology, go against the empirical approach which he, like Condillac, is endeavouring to establish. Tracy has little faith in the infallibility of mathematical reasoning as such; it is as susceptible to error as any other science, and its accuracy can be guaranteed only if it has a firm basis of idéologie.

(1) De la Logique, chap. I, p. 135.

(2) Hobbes had expressed the same view. See his Computatio sive Logica, chap. IV, para. 8. In Tracy's eyes the two terms of any judgement, even those of an equation, can never be deemed equal, for, although they may be presumed equivalent, they must be different in respect of all their other properties.

(3) Logique. IIe Partie, chap. VIII, Oeuvres philosophiques, II, 410. The same idea underlies his Langue des calculs.

The whole question of the nature and function of the human faculty of judgement, as envisaged by Condillac and Tracy, is of great significance, particularly with reference to the formulation of complex ideas and the gaining of knowledge of objects outside the individual consciousness. Tracy's dissatisfaction with Condillac's treatment of this latter question has a particular bearing on his own view of the will which, for him, lies at the root of man's social behaviour.

Initially the position of the two men is the same. Knowledge would be impossible without the decomposition and rearrangement of the information presented to the senses. This data is transformed into knowledge only when the parts that have been distinguished from one another are recomposed so as to be apprehended in the relations which they do actually have. Condillac describes this process by the term analyse⁽¹⁾. Tracy follows him by examining the two operations involved, namely abstraire, the operation by which ideas, applicable in the first instance to one particular object, become applicable to several, and concraine, by which several distinct ideas are united to form one single idea. Tracy concludes:

Cette opération d'abstraire, ainsi que celle de concraine, est d'un très-fréquent usage; nous leur devons toutes nos idées composées. (2)

Thus it becomes clear that complex ideas are formed by uniting elementary ideas, or perceptions, and that these complex ideas may be generalised by uniting them further in terms of the relations they have with one another. Tracy, on this point, is an enthusiastic follower of Condillac, but his dissatisfaction with the Traité des sensations, which has already been noted, is to be explained, at least in part, by his disagreement with Condillac, when the latter turns to the question of the knowledge of external reality.

(1) v. Condillac's Logique, especially the first part. The ideas of Condillac and Tracy on language as the necessary tool of analysis are discussed in chapter IX.

(2) Idéologie proprement dite, chap. VI, p. 64.

Condillac, accepting that sensations originate from a reality independent of the mind, sought to demonstrate definitively the way in which the mind exteriorises its own states of consciousness and deduces the existence of objects. He undertook this task in the Traité des sensations in order to clarify ambiguities in earlier discussions by him of the same question, where operations of the intellectual faculties were described both as images representing real objects and as simple forms of thought, or indeed as pure states of being. Condillac saw the source of the knowledge of external reality in the human sense of touch:

Tant que la statue ne porte les mains que sur elle-même, elle est à son égard comme si elle étoit tout ce qui existe. Mais si elle touche un corps étranger, le moi, qui se sent modifié dans la main, ne se sent pas modifié dans ce corps. Si la main dit moi, elle ne reçoit pas la même réponse. La statue juge par là ses manières d'être tout à fait hors d'elle. Comme elle en a formé son corps, elle en forme tous les autres objets. (1)

This primitive knowledge gained by the statue is increased through movement:

Mais je conjecture qu'elle sera longtemps avant d'imaginer quelque chose au-delà des corps que sa main rencontre. Il me semble que, lorsqu'elle commence à toucher, elle doit croire toucher tout; et que ce ne sera qu'après avoir passé d'un lieu dans un autre, et avoir manié bien des objets, qu'elle pourra soupçonner qu'il y a des corps au-delà de ceux qu'elle saisit. (2)

Initially Tracy accepts the importance of movement, but his ideas undergo a radical reassessment, which was criticised with some sharpness by Maine de Biran, (3) who considered that Tracy had turned his back upon the truth and fallen into the same error as Condillac.

In his Mémoire sur la faculté de penser Tracy asserts that the only link

- (1) Traité des sensations, IIe Partie, chap. V. Oeuvres phil. I, 257.
- (2) ibid. IIe Partie, chap. V. Oeuvres phil. I, 257.
- (3) 'Si je me suis en partie séparé de vos idées, n'est-ce pas pour avoir trop intimement uni les miennes à celles que vous eûtes autrefois. C'est vous qui nous avez abandonnés'. Maine de Biran in a letter, undated, to Tracy, Oeuvres, VII, 245.

between the individual moi and external reality is provided by what he calls motilité: the perceptions of our five senses are nothing more than internal modifications of our being, and give us no knowledge of what causes them. Movement is also a sensation for us, but of a different kind, one which provides us with knowledge of the causes of our other sensations. The faculty of movement, and the awareness of it, is a kind of sixth sense, and the only one which can make us aware of the link between us and objects external to us through the resistance which these objects present to our movements. Thus, for Tracy, movement and consciousness of movement lead to objective knowledge, and only when that knowledge is gained can judgement and the will be exercised. Judgement is the faculty of feeling relationships, and to feel a relationship between two perceptions they must be compared; to compare them, they must be perceived at the same time and distinctly one from the other, and to distinguish them, they must be related to their causes. If they cannot be thus related (that is, if no knowledge of external reality is available), there can be no judgement. Thus, without the faculty of motilité the individual would have no knowledge of bodies exterior to his own, no signs, and without signs he would have very few ideas.⁽¹⁾ As far as the will is concerned, this is conceived as reflective of nature, dependent upon judgement:

Nous ne percevons des désirs qu'après avoir perçu des rapports entre les choses et nous; et nous ne pouvons percevoir ces rapports qu'après avoir perçu des sensations et des souvenirs rendus distincts, débrouillés, pour ainsi dire, par la comparaison de la sensation de résistance avec celle de mouvement libre. (2)

Tracy maintains the same view in his Dissertation sur quelques questions d'idéologie. Here he asserts:

Pour persister dans l'avis contraire, il faudrait établir que sentir, c'est percevoir en même temps un jugement; et

(1) For further detailed discussion of this point, see below, Chap. IX.

(2) Mémoire, p. 393.

ce serait, ce me semble, démentir tous les phénomènes, et tout confondre. (1)

In this work his main preoccupation is to analyse the new edition of Condillac's Oeuvres,⁽²⁾ and he sees his ideas as a continuation of those of Condillac:

Je crois fermement ne faire que continuer Condillac, et non le contredire; pour vous en convaincre, voyez surtout, dans l'extrait raisonné du Traité des Sensations, le précis de la seconde partie, qui est totalement refait dans cette dernière édition. Vous y trouverez presque exactement ce que je viens de dire, quoiqu'un peu moins développé. C'est effectivement là la vraie solution de la question. (3)

Tracy does point out that Condillac confuses the impression of resistance with that of solidity, and is unable to prove satisfactorily that the impression of solidity is other than a simple sensation. Nonetheless Tracy is more than ever convinced of the correctness of his attitude - that objective knowledge is derived from resistance to movement consciously appreciated and that judgement and the will depend upon the gaining of this knowledge - by virtue of the closeness of his ideas to those of Condillac.

However, in another mémoire, Dissertation sur l'existence et sur les hypothèses de Malebranche et de Berkeley à ce sujet, delivered on 17 messidor an VIII (6 July 1800), Tracy affirms a contrary idea:

Quand je sens un goût, une odeur, un son, une couleur même, qu'est-ce que j'apprends? Mon sentiment, ma propre existence, mais aucune autre, parce que dans ce pur acte de ma sensibilité, il n'y a rien qu'elle-même. Mais quand je sens que je fais des mouvements, et que je les fais dès que j'éprouve une particulière manière d'être que nous appelons vouloir, laquelle est partie de mon moi, si ces mouvements sont arrêtés malgré cette manière d'être, je conclus qu'ils le sont par quelque chose qui n'est pas de mon moi. (4)

The point is not developed, since Tracy's main object here is to refute the ideas of Malebranche and Berkeley (and particularly the concept of in Deo

(1) Dissertation, p. 509.

(2) the edition of 1798.

(3) Dissertation sur quelques questions d'idéologie, p. 499.

(4) Dissertation sur l'existence, p. 530.

vivimus, movemur et sumus); nonetheless it is the first statement by Tracy where he acknowledges the need for voluntary movement in order to arrive at knowledge of external reality. The incompatibility of this new attitude with the ideas expressed in his earlier mémoires is clear, and in the Elémens d'Idéologie Tracy resolves this by refuting those earlier ideas.

Tracy comes to accept that movement is not enough to prove the existence of other objects: when the individual's limbs move, the individual is aware of it, and when that movement is interrupted by an obstacle, the sensation of movement stops, but nothing proves that an external object is responsible. But if the movement is not merely felt, but desired - that is, if the will is exercised before the movement - and is then stopped by an obstacle, the desire persists and the individual concludes that the interruption comes not from his own will, but from an external source. This is the concept put forward by Tracy in his Elémens d'Idéologie, and he conceives the order of processes in a different way. For him now the will precedes movement; voluntary movement, when met by resistance, leads to objective knowledge. In his acceptance of his earlier error and its consequences Tracy is characteristically forthright:

Autrefois j'ai été plus loin; j'ai soutenu que si nous ne connaissions d'existence que celle de notre vertu sentante, si nous ne connaissions pas les autres êtres, nous ne ferions éternellement que sentir des impressions, et que nous ne parviendrions jamais à sentir des rapports et des désirs; qu'ainsi, dans cette supposition, nous n'aurions ni jugement ni volonté. Je suis très-convaincu que j'avais tort. (1)

This difference of views between Condillac and Tracy does more than merely throw into sharp relief one of Tracy's theories and his concept of the will.⁽²⁾ It shows the measure of Tracy's independence. It is clear that Tracy does not greet Condillac's theories uncritically and that it is Condillac's

(1) Idéologie proprement dite, chap. VII, p. 104

(2) Tracy's concept of the will, which lies at the root of his social, moral and political thought, is examined in the following chapter. It should, however, be pointed out here that Tracy's emphasis upon the will as a basic faculty enables him more easily to conceive of it as passive; this concept, as will be shown, is of some significance.

method of procedure that he values particularly highly. By embracing that method of procedure Tracy can find a framework for the rigorous logic which characterises his approach to the problems he is discussing. Like Condillac he does not turn his attention to the metaphysical aspects of the science of knowledge. Both men presuppose the reality of the external world and its accessibility; both limit themselves to descriptive analyses of the observable behaviour of phenomena. They describe how phenomena behave, and do not attempt to explain why they behave in any particular way.

What distinguishes Tracy's approach from that of Condillac is the closeness of the relationship he draws between man's intellectual faculties and a social science. Tracy derives concepts applicable in social terms from the four basic faculties which he finds in man. These are: sensibility (la faculté de sentir des sensations), memory (la faculté de sentir des souvenirs), judgement (la faculté de sentir des rapports) and will (la faculté de sentir des désirs). Here again Tracy immediately differs from Condillac, whose analysis he examines in the eleventh chapter of Idéologie proprement dite.⁽¹⁾ Tracy himself gives the following account of Condillac's ideas:

(...) ce philosophe justement célèbre (...) a jugé à propos, d'après Locke, de partager l'intelligence de l'homme ou sa faculté de sentir, en entendement et en volonté; puis il reconnaît comme parties intégrantes de l'entendement l'attention, la comparaison, le jugement, la réflexion, l'imagination et le raisonnement, auquel il joint ensuite la mémoire, qu'il partage même quelquefois en reminiscence, mémoire proprement dite et imagination (dans ce cas le mot imagination n'a pas le même sens que ci-dessus); enfin, il distingue dans la volonté le besoin, le malaise, l'inquiétude, le désir, les passions, l'espérance et la volonté proprement dite. (2)

Tracy is struck above all by the arbitrary nature of the numerous divisions, particularly since Condillac does not always reproduce them in the same form on the different occasions on which he lists them. The main subject of Tracy's

- (1) Tracy gives as his sources Condillac's Logique, Part I, chap. VII, article 2 of his Leçons préliminaires of his Cours d'études, and his Traité des sensations, Part I, chap. II and III.
- (2) Idéologie proprement dite, chap. XI, p. 159.

dissatisfaction is Condillac's grouping of sensibility, memory and judgement under the title of understanding, leaving them distinct from the will. It would be just as reasonable to group together sensibility, memory and the will as immediate and necessary effects of an impression received, leaving them in opposition to judgement, which alone adds further to knowledge; or again, it would be equally reasonable to take together sensibility and the will, which are spontaneous, and place them in opposition to memory and judgement, which are reflective; or yet again, one might take together sensibility and memory, which provide subjects upon which judgement and the will can be exercised. When he examines in detail Condillac's subdivisions Tracy finds them over-complex and arbitrary, and reaffirms his own classification of the four faculties:

Je persiste donc à penser que la manière dont Condillac a décomposé notre intelligence est vicieuse, et que plus qu'on y réfléchira, plus on se convaincra que la pensée de l'homme ne consiste jamais qu'à sentir des sensations, des souvenirs, des jugemens et des désirs. (1)

Beyond questions of detail, however, lies a more significant difference between the two men, a difference of approach and intent. Condillac, as has been noted, was primarily concerned with the reduction of the science of human thought to a single principle; his work was devoted to the desire, as G. Le Roy puts it, to 'construire une logique d'identité'. Le Roy continues:

Condillac n'avait cherché qu'à ramener toutes les opérations de l'âme à la seule sensation, comme si toute la vie mentale était d'avance incluse en une donnée première; il avait enfin conçu cette donnée comme un principe unique, auquel tout doit se rattacher et à partir duquel tout peut se déduire. (2)

Isabel Knight refers to Condillac's unbounded admiration for Newton, and suggests that he harboured the desire to be the 'Newton of philosophy'.⁽³⁾

Whatever the validity of such a description, it does recognise this one important

(1) ibid., chap. XI, p. 166.

(2) G. Le Roy, Introduction to Condillac, Oeuvres philosophiques, p. xxxii.

(3) Isabel F. Knight, op. cit., p. 26.

element in Condillac's approach which Tracy, like the other idéologues, does not accept. Just as Newton's theory of gravitation explained all the phenomena of motion, so Condillac hoped to find the fundamental principle of human understanding, and the laws governing its development and assimilation of ideas, in a single principle:

On voit que mon dessein est de rappeler à un seul principe tout ce qui concerne l'entendement humain, et que ce principe ne sera ni une proposition vague, ni une maxime abstraite, ni une supposition gratuite; mais une expérience constante, dont toutes les conséquences seront confirmées par de nouvelles expériences. (1)

Condillac, together with many eighteenth-century philosophers, felt that the explanation of any phenomenon lay in its origins, and consequently his work is dominated by his search for first principles. While Tracy shows a comparable zeal in his search for the ultimate basis of man's intellectual functions and his acquisition of knowledge, he is not prepared to accept all Condillac's analysis. As Bréhier puts it:

L'idéologie proprement dite est une analyse des facultés humaines de même contenu mais d'une inspiration bien différente de celle de Condillac, avec qui il ne faut pas confondre les idéologues, si souvent qu'ils s'en réclament. Tracy n'est pas un 'généalogiste' qui cherche la genèse des facultés et l'on ne trouve rien chez lui de l'analyse réductrice du Traité des Sensations. (2)

Bréhier goes on to emphasise the differences in approach between the two men:

Enfin et surtout, Condillac voit une série de facultés s'engendrant l'une l'autre, là où il convient de parler de facultés primitives et indépendantes; pour lui, par exemple, la sensation vient avant le jugement, et le jugement conditionne le désir; c'est qu'il croyait que le seul point de départ était la sensation pure et simple qui ne nous apprend rien que notre propre état et ne contient aucun rapport; d'où la nécessité de construire ces rapports que sont les jugements. Or, il s'en faut de beaucoup qu'il en soit ainsi; d'abord des sensations peuvent être simultanées sans se confondre, et la

(1) Condillac, Essai...., Oeuvres philosophiques, I, 4.

(2) E. Bréhier, op. cit., II, 602.

simultanéité est un rapport immédiatement perçu; de plus, le sentiment immédiat de l'agréable ou du désagréable contient le sentiment d'un rapport entre la sensation et notre faculté sentante, et il peut provoquer un désir antérieur au jugement; sensation, jugement et désir sont donc également primitifs. (1)

Tracy remains constant in defending the notion of four basic and independent faculties in man, and firmly states that it is impossible to go beyond this classification to determine one single principle. Bréhier justifiably concludes that in this approach he shows a marked preference for observation of tangible reality to an analysis which is fundamentally arbitrary. Le Roy characterises the approach of Tracy, and indeed of all the idéologues as follows:

Au lieu de poursuivre un idéal d'unité et d'identité logiques, on voulut apprécier la variété et l'hétérogénéité des faits, tels que l'observation les montre. On songea moins à une systématisation rigoureuse qu'à des descriptions exactes serrant le réel d'aussi près que possible. (2)

This difference of approach is emphasised by the fact that, although his thought is unified and rigorously systematised, Tracy takes greater note than Condillac of those different-areas in which the human-consciousness can manifest itself. With Condillac, the building of a social, moral and political science on the basis of his researches is implied, but not fully exploited; his later works are complementary to the elaboration of his thought in his Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines, his Traité des sensations and his Traité des systèmes. As Isabel Knight puts it:

Condillac saw himself essentially as an educator, and his area of competence as the theory of thinking. His mission to mankind was to clear away the metaphysical obscurities and the ill-founded prejudices that get in the way of intellectual lucidity, and to point out, by giving a theoretical explanation of the workings of the mind, the way to think and accumulate knowledge without being sidetracked or misled. He rarely ventured, before his experience in Parma, into political, social or moral problems, except as they touched on psychology or might serve as concrete examples of his theory of thinking. Thus the major works of his early years refer only occasionally and by indirection to the issues that seemed so burning to Condillac's fellow philosophers. (3)

(1) Bréhier, op. cit., II, 602.

(2) Le Roy, op. cit., p. xxxii.

(3) Isabel F. Knight, op. cit., p. 266.

Although Tracy also saw himself as an educator,⁽¹⁾ the building of such a social, moral and political science was his aim from the beginning; it gives his work a specific direction and an impressive single-mindedness. Ultimately it is the uniting of a methodology similar to that of Condillac and a developed social awareness which gives the work its character.

The social awareness, it must immediately be said, has its limits. Tracy certainly had a practical interest in the uses to which philosophy might be put. He was persuaded that the age of the old 'metaphysics' had passed, and that it was the task of idéologie to create the future. But although this view would appear to involve a close awareness of contemporary events, with constant account taken of the realities of Revolutionary life, especially since Tracy was directly concerned, albeit for a brief period, with the problems of social administration and organisation, such is not the case. His work takes little account of the contemporary political situation, and indeed remains remarkably detached from it. With the exception of his study of the education system, which is of the strictest social relevance, Tracy's work is conceived in a kind of vacuum. The object of his enquiries is couched in social terms - the ensuring of the greatest possible happiness for men within society - but he is engaged upon a search for philosophic truths with no reference to political events. He does not examine the coincidence of philosophic enlightenment and political power - the fact that idéologie is an integral part of all plans for national education between 1791 and 1802 and occupies a fundamental place in the studies of the Institut - and concentrates upon what he considers to be an inevitable and irreversible process: the quality of life within a society will improve with the spreading of knowledge and the appreciation of truth. The political system operative within a society may have a significant effect upon the

(1) Tracy wrote the first volume of his Elémens d'Idéologie for the general grammar course of the écoles centrales.

happiness or misery of the people, but since, for Tracy, political principles are derived from those of idéologie, the details of the political situation are simply the demonstration of truths previously established, and in themselves are of little interest.

Tracy was not entirely insensitive to the realities of political life, however. He stated, in a speech in the Assemblée nationale, his firm belief that 'la Nation française est déjà pénétrée des principes d'une saine politique',⁽¹⁾ and in his Commentaire sur l'Esprit des Lois de Montesquieu, his arguments in favour of representative government are cogent and consistent. He is, albeit infrequently, loud in his denunciation of the shortcomings, moral and political, of the ancien régime:

En effet, sans remonter au XIV^e siècle, où l'ignorance nous a fait perdre les Assemblées de la Nation et les germes d'une vraie constitution que nous avons, c'est l'orgueil et la gloire même de Louis XIV qui ont jeté les fondemens de notre ruine, qui nous ont fait prendre l'éclat pour la gloire, qui nous ont éloignés du beau, seule source du bon. Ce sont les revers de ce Prince, suite nécessaire de ses succès mêmes, qui ont préparé les désordres de la Régence, dont le long despotisme de Louis XV a guéri en partie les plaies, mais en préparant d'autres, mais en nous disposant à éprouver tous les malheurs qui naissent de l'incapacité et de la dépravation des Ministres et des favoris. Et c'est quand tous ces maux ont été à leur comble que nous avons commencé à y porter remède. (2)

But essentially he remains detached. Although he sees utility as a prime virtue in his work, he is in no way a political or social observer, and he remains predisposed to analysis rather than to documentation and detailed observation. Indeed, Damiron judges him somewhat harshly for this apparent imbalance:

Le caractère qui nous paraît dominer dans son esprit est le désir et le talent de la simplicité logique. Il se complaît et excelle à abstraire, à généraliser, à réduire une idée à sa plus simple expression. Analyste plus qu'observateur, il raisonne avec rigueur sur les données

(1) M. Tracy à M. Burke, p. 2.

(2) ibid., p. 3.

dont il part; mais pour avoir ces données, pour les avoir complètes, il n'a pas assez recours au procédé qui les fournit. Il ne prend point assez garde aux faits, et en vient trop vite à l'analyse. (1)

Whatever the justice of this view, it is not too extreme to say that, for Tracy, the changing circumstances of political power are, in the final analysis, irrelevant. The realities of the Revolution do not occupy his attention, and neither do the sources. He does not enter the debate as to whether these are to be found in the economic and political domain, or in the works of the eighteenth-century philosophes (2) and in general he affords the latter scarcely a mention. He was undoubtedly familiar with their works and was aware of the contributions they had made to the spreading of enlightenment and to the bettering of man's social lot. He was, however, not moved to comment upon or explain their works. Significantly, the only two exercises of exegesis he undertook were upon works by contemporaries, Dupuis and Cabanis. His commentary on the Esprit des Lois of Montesquieu, whilst respecting the structure and intent of the original, manifestly becomes an exposition of Tracy's own ideas. Tracy, was, then, no historian of philosophy, and showed little concern in the past development of philosophic thought, except insofar as there was need to justify, by reference to earlier works, the principles of idéologie. In this respect, as J. Kitchin points out, Tracy is representative of his age:

Donc, les 'philosophes' sont honorés pour leur action et pour les espérances qu'ils ont insufflées à leurs disciples. On les défend par un sentiment de solidarité et parce que les conquêtes - tant menacées - de la Révolution sont parties de leurs idées. Mais de façon générale ils sont peu étudiés. Leurs disciples sentent que la 'philosophie' n'est pas enfermée dans leurs livres, qu'elle vit et évolue, et que depuis la Révolution elle est entrée en action. (3)

There was nothing to be gained from an analysis of the divergences and antagonisms within the eighteenth-century philosophic movement, and there was a general tendency, in which Tracy shared, to accept eighteenth-century thought

(1) Damiron, Essai sur l'histoire de la philosophie au XIXe siècle, Paris, Ponthieu, 1828, p. 14.

(2) J. Kitchin (op.cit. pp. 112 sqq) points out that both views had their supporters in the last decade of the eighteenth century.

(3) J. Kitchin, op.cit., p. 115.

en bloc, that is, to accept some values as self-evident and to seek to apply them to the new contemporary situation.

In this way there are in Tracy's work underlying attitudes and principles which were current in the work of the philosophes, and here Van Duzer makes an enlightening comment:

A philosophy of common sense, a philosophy imbued with the practical aim of rectifying immediate social and political abuses might have little need at the outset to validate its position other than by simple reference to social experience and enlightened self-interest. But the philosophy of common sense is a half-way house; for common sense, when submitted to analysis, can be shown to rest on assumptions which are themselves susceptible to philosophic enquiry proper. The philosophy of human and social conduct is essentially normative in character; it is related to practical ends, to urgent needs for reform which themselves determine the form and content of that philosophy. As time goes on, however, there arises the intellectual need of demonstrating the validity of normative judgements. It was this need to determine the grounds of ultimate reference, it seems to me, which led to the development of Ideology in the closing years of the ~~nineteenth~~ century. (1)

eighteenth /

Certainly Tracy does not seek to validate his position by reference to social experience or enlightened self-interest. Since his objective is to demonstrate that social, moral and political principles with absolute degrees of certainty can be discovered, he is searching rather, in Van Duzer's phrase, the grounds of ultimate reference. These, as we have seen, lie in the methodology of Condillac. But Tracy, unlike Condillac, did venture into the realms of social, moral and political thought, and his work cannot escape the influence of ideas outside the realm of philosophical enquiry proper. In this way, Tracy comes to accept not only those currents in eighteenth-century French thought which derive from its attachment to scientific methodology, but also those which derive from its liberalism. He is imbued with the same love of liberty and the same hatred of theocratic and feudal institutions, together with the doctrines which were their foundations. He respects the concepts of tolerance and democracy, and

(1) C.H. Van Duzer, op. cit., p. 14.

accepts, at least tacitly, the principle of the inevitable progress and perfectibility of the human species and the ethical utilitarianism which, in the eighteenth century, was destined to give new impulsion to it. His social, moral and political thought is concerned with such questions as liberty, equality before the law, representative government, freedom of worship, the punishment of crime and the organisation of education, questions not only discussed by eighteenth-century philosophers, but treated in the various constitutions of the Revolution and in its legislative measures.

Thus one sees reflected in Tracy's work the preoccupations of his age, for his major creative period coincides with the years when philosophical thought was translated into action, and he could hardly remain indifferent to the social upheaval which this entailed. But if the contemporary situation had any influence on his thought, it was in the general and not in the particular. It helped to define the areas to which idéologie must apply itself in order to ensure human happiness; in itself it provided for Tracy no lessons, no proof. These were to be found by following the paths of reason, by constructing a social system from which error had been removed.

Tracy does however, at different times, reveal himself to be temperamentally, rather than logically, inclined to favour certain social values. Logic is on occasion tempered by certain basic assumptions which he does not challenge, assumptions which predispose him to make judgements of a particular sort and which propel his mind in a particular direction. What is often most diverting in Tracy's work, as we shall see in the following chapters, comes at those moments when detached reasoning has to accommodate prejudice, when common-sense gives way to private inclination. For Tracy is not immune to the danger of introducing into his reasoning, in order to facilitate the reduction of

ideas to their simplest expression, a particular personal bias. His work reveals the interplay between two constant characteristics: a consistently logical approach, with its tendency to generalise and abstract, and a personal prejudice, which reveals itself in the emphasis it places on particular values and ideas within that process.

These characteristics expose Tracy to much hostile criticism, not only of the type referred to in the introduction to this study but also of the following variety, in which all the idéologues are implicated:

Two elements go to the mental composition of an Ideologue: an intellectual temper common among his countrymen then and now and a philosophic prejudice peculiar to his own time. Temperamentally an Ideologue is a man who arrives at, or accepts, generalisations without a study of particulars, builds his pyramid, as it were, from the apex downward and so applies a priori principles to politics. This is a student's, an academic blindness. (1)

In the following chapters of this study, the way in which Tracy does build his pyramid will be examined in detail, with reference to particular fields of social study. Since all his ideas are ultimately dependent upon his concept of the will, it is with this that the examination must begin.

(1) G. Elton, The Revolutionary Idea in France, 1789-1871, 2nd edition, London, Arnold, 1931, p. 28.

III. THE WILL AND SOCIETY

Tracy consistently regarded the will as one of the four basic faculties in man, but his ideas as to its nature and function underwent an important reassessment during the period between the elaboration of his Mémoire sur la faculté de penser and his Elémens d'Idéologie. As we have seen, in the earlier work Tracy saw the will as reflective of nature and dependent upon an anterior judgement. In support of this view Tracy gives the following illustration:

Je me suppose privé de toute connoissance. J'éprouve un froid pénible; cette sensation de froid est vraiment le besoin d'avoir plus chaud: mais je suis bien loin de le savoir; je ne puis former absolument aucun désir. J'éprouve ensuite une manière d'être plus douce, et je me rappelle la première. (...) Je suppose que je les perçois ainsi et que je les compare; de leur rapport de différence naîtra le désir d'éprouver l'une plutôt que l'autre, de ne plus éprouver le froid. Mon désir se bornera là, parce que je n'en sais pas davantage. Lorsque j'aurai appris que le mouvement est capable de bannir la sensation de froid, mon désir deviendra le désir de me remuer; lorsque j'aurai découvert l'usage du feu, je formerai le désir de m'en approcher; lorsque j'aurai reconnu l'effet des vêtemens, j'aurai le désir de m'en couvrir; lorsqu'enfin, de connoissance en connoissance, je serai venu jusqu'à apprendre l'emploi de l'argent dans la société, du besoin de n'avoir pas froid naîtra le désir d'avoir de l'argent pour me procurer combustibles et vêtemens. (1)

Here Tracy echoes Condillac, who in his Traité des sensations⁽²⁾ had determined that need is the realisation by the statue of the good the enjoyment of which it judges to be necessary, and that the statue knows need only when it compares present suffering with past pleasure.

In his Elémens d'Idéologie, where he has come to recognise that judgement and the will are not dependent upon the faculty of motilité, Tracy shows the exercising of the will to be simultaneous to the act of sensation itself:

(1) Mémoire, p. 355.

(2) Ière Partie, chap. II, para. 25. Oeuvres philosophiques, I, 228.

Or, qu'est-ce que trouver une sensation agréable ou désagréable, si ce n'est pas en porter un jugement, sentir un rapport entre elle et notre faculté sentante? Et sentir ce rapport entre une sensation et nous, n'est-ce pas sentir en même temps le désir d'éprouver cette sensation ou celui de l'éviter? Toutes ces opérations peuvent donc se trouver et se trouvent réellement réunies dans un seul fait, dans la perception d'une seule sensation quelconque. (1)

He recognises that the individual does not receive impressions indifferently, but immediately seeks some and avoids others. From the need to experience pleasure and avoid pain spring desires:

On donne le nom de volonté à cette admirable faculté que nous avons de sentir ce qu'on appelle des désirs. Elle est une conséquence immédiate et nécessaire de la singulière propriété qu'ont certaines sensations de nous faire peine ou plaisir, et des jugemens que nous en portons. (2)

The order of mental processes is thus clear: desires are felt spontaneously, but contain within themselves a judgement.⁽³⁾ In respect of this Tracy does not conceive of any reflective quality in the will. Although desire is the rationalisation of need, on the level of simple needs the individual's will is not free, since, in Tracy's view, it must necessarily desire objects deemed pleasurable:

(...) nos premiers désirs, comme nos premiers jugemens, sont forcés et nécessaires, et dérivent inévitablement de la nature des êtres et de leurs rapports avec notre organisation. En cela notre volonté n'est qu'une conséquence rigoureuse de notre sensibilité: elle n'est pas libre. (4)

Thus, the most important quality of the will for Tracy is the immediate and inescapable manner of its working, whereas the definition of the will offered by Condillac, which earlier had clearly influenced Tracy, stresses its reflective quality:

Si, lorsque nous désirons une chose, nous jugeons que nous l'obtiendrons, alors ce jugement, joint au désir, produit l'espérance. Un autre jugement produira la volonté: c'est celui que nous portons lorsque l'expérience nous a fait

(1) Ideologie proprement dite, chap. VIII, p. 111.

(2) ibid., chap. V, p. 50.

(3) cf. Principes logiques, p. 15: '(...) je ne puis concevoir en moi ni même dans aucun être animé un désir sans un jugement préalable, implicite ou explicite, qui prononce qu'une telle affection est bonne à rechercher ou à éviter.'

(4) Mémoire, p. 364.

une habitude de juger que nous ne devons trouver aucun obstacle à nos désirs. Je veux signifie je désire, et rien ne peut s'opposer à mon désir: tout y doit concourir. Telle est au propre l'acceptation du mot volonté. (1)

In this way Tracy emphasises the will as a fundamental human faculty. The 'pleasure-pain reflex', as Van Duzer calls it, the reflex which the individual cannot avoid and which is a spontaneous manifestation of the faculty of sensation, is the common foundation of all desires, be they conscious or instinctive. The point is underlined in Tracy's Mémoire de Berlin:

J'avoue que dans l'exercice de la faculté de vouloir on distingue en nous des déterminations instinctives et des déterminations réfléchies, des volontés plus obscures ou plus précises, plus fortes ou plus faibles, des désirs, des vœux, des souhaits, des penchants, des inclinations qui ne sont pas des volitions, ou actes de la faculté de vouloir aussi fermes et aussi décidés que des volontés positives. (...) Je conviens que tous ces divers actes intellectuels diffèrent entre eux par des nuances, mais tous n'ont lieu que parce que nous sommes faits de manière que certaines affections, certaines modifications de notre être nous plaisent, et que d'autres nous déplaisent, (...) qu'enfin nous sommes capables du sentiment de préférence. Ce sentiment est la base de tous ces actes intellectuels. (2)

This argument, it must be said, does not serve to clarify Tracy's ideas, since he returns, a little too readily, to the generalisation that the individual can immediately and spontaneously feel pleasure and pain and react to them. The view that there are merely different nuances of intensity in the various acts of the will, and that they are all based upon the pleasure-pain reflex does not, of course, help to explain why certain perceptions are agreeable or distasteful to the individual, or why all men do not react in the same way to the same perceptions. Indeed, Tracy goes no further than any of his predecessors in examining the effective source of the pleasure and pain and the reasons for the individual's reaction. The principal effect of this argument is that, although

(1) Logique, Ière Partie, chap. VIII, Oeuvres philosophiques, II, 386.

(2) Mémoire de Berlin, p. 173.

Tracy sees the exercise of the will as a necessary preliminary to the gaining of objective knowledge and not as a result of it, he virtually excludes the notion of the will as a conscious desire to act. As Madinier puts it:

Il n'y a pas chez Tracy de volonté véritable, de pouvoir d'initiative réel; ne soyons pas dupe des mots qu'il emploie, la volonté pour lui n'est que l'ensemble de nos appétits. (1)

This approach does lead to some uncertainty on the part of Tracy with regard to the freedom of the will and the formation of conscious and complex desires. He goes some way towards affirming the freedom of the will by allowing that the will is able to intervene and influence the choice of a perception or memory, thereby creating new sources of impressions and new areas of knowledge. But he suggests, albeit tentatively, that this freedom is itself limited. He dismisses as 'une question purement curieuse' the difficulty of determining how far the will, in making its apparently free choices, is dependent upon the simple needs to which it is unavoidably susceptible. The chain of perceptions and judgements contained in the formulation of complex desires is so involved that it defies analysis. Tracy does not deny that each act of will in this chain cannot be formed without a cause, and that since each is the necessary effect of a perception, the final act in the chain, the formulation of the most complex desire, is apparently as necessary and as inevitable as the first and most basic.

But Tracy is not predisposed to attempt to determine the extent of the freedom of the will, and he consistently argues that the effective source of desires is irrelevant:

Il n'est pas du tout nécessaire (...) que nous puissions expliquer d'une part ce que c'est que ce sentiment de vouloir et comment il se fait que nous en soyons capables; et de l'autre pourquoi tous les êtres qui tombent sous nos sens sont doués plus ou moins du pouvoir de résister au mouvement,

(1) G. Madinier, Conscience et mouvement, Paris, Alcan, 1938, p. 60.

et en quoi consiste cette puissance. Ce sont deux faits incompréhensibles, et dont les causes nous sont complètement inconnues, mais deux faits bien constants. (1)

Here Tracy would appear to be influenced by the thought of Hobbes (and following Hobbes, Hume and Locke), who asserted the primacy of the will over reason and the intellect, and depicted all voluntary human behaviour as response to desire or aversion. In Hobbes' view the term 'free' can properly be applied not to an individual's will but to the individual himself: freedom consists in finding no obstacle to his chosen course of action. Tracy, as we shall see, defines freedom in the same way, with reference to the will, and his definition is the same as that of Hobbes. Both men in this context concentrate upon the absence of external impediment to action and do not apply themselves to the question of the existence of determining factors inherent in the formation of desires. Neither finds any contradiction in the view that an individual acts freely and that at the same time his actions are determined: all actions are determined in the sense that they have causes, but the work of both men goes further and implies that human behaviour is not only inexplicable in terms of these causes, but also in some way unavoidable.

Although this remains with Tracy little more than an implication, since, as we shall see, he refrains from exploring in depth the consequences of any physiological enquiries, it helps to underline a lack of clarity in the treatment of the manner in which conscious and complex desires are formulated, and the extent to which men may be persuaded to prefer one course of action to another and model their own conduct upon precepts communicated to them. Throughout his work Tracy proceeds on the assumption that men may be so persuaded: the moral values to which he subscribes are validated, to his satisfaction, by reason, and in his Commentaire sur L'Esprit des Lois de Montesquieu, he declared, as we

(1) Ideologie proprement dite, chap. VII, p. 96.

shall see, that certain governments, by the wise application of just laws, can induce in men noble and laudable sentiments, propitious to their own happiness and the well-being of others. His concern with education makes sense only if he believes that men's actions and sentiments are, at least on occasion, subject to conscious acts of will.

But if the will is to be identified with the act of sensation itself, the question can be raised as to how the individual can come to desire, consciously, such abstract concepts as justice and honesty. Tracy's answer lies on the role of the judgement:

(...) la seule façon d'empêcher la volonté de s'égarer, est de rectifier le jugement qui la détermine. (1)

Men must be led to judge such virtues as justice and honesty to be pleasurable, and they will make them the object of their desires. This is not a complete solution, since, although it may well be that these virtues may at times represent a pleasurable modification of the individual's being, particularly when he is aware of his interests and can identify them with the rewards of justice and honesty, this hardly amounts to a defence of the principles behind them, particularly when one bears in mind that Tracy, as will be shown later, speaks of personal interests as being fundamentally in opposition to the interests of other members of society.

Tracy is, however, content with the elaboration of the general principle (as shown above in the Mémoire de Berlin), and passes to qualities of the will which for him are more significant. The first of these is that the individual is happy when his will is not frustrated and unhappy when it is. He therefore insists not upon causes but upon effects, and declared the need to study desires in two distinct respects:

(1) Idéologie proprement dite, chap. V, p. 50.

(...) pour connaître réellement notre faculté de vouloir et ses résultats, nous devons étudier séparément, d'un côté nos désirs en eux-mêmes, leurs propriétés, leurs conséquences, et de l'autre les effets directs ou éloignés des actions qui s'ensuivent, et qui toutes ont pour but de satisfaire quelques-uns de ces désirs. Ces deux connoissances réunies, suivant moi, la partie de l'idéologie qui a rapport à la volonté. (1)

These two studies are to be called, respectively, morale and économie, and Tracy acknowledges that these terms are used here with connotations wider than is usual. The studies are to be empirical; from the examination of the effects of actions will emerge the only basis for the judgement of their merit or otherwise.

An understanding of the sources of desires is made even less urgent for Tracy since he is uncertain of the relationship between the will and the actions it apparently engenders. However closely an action may follow the experience of a desire, there is no proof that the latter is the effective cause of the former, and indeed to Tracy such a connection is implausible:

Je persiste donc à croire que notre sentiment de vouloir n'est pas plus cause en nous que dans les animaux des mouvemens voulus, parce qu'il me paraît impossible, je le répète, que le sentiment vague de désirer un résultat soit la cause effective d'une infinité de moyens d'arriver à ce résultat, qui sont tous inconnus à l'être qui le désire. (2)

Tracy is at pains to exclude the notion of the will as a conscious desire to act, and this is emphasised by his indecisiveness as to what the effective causes of actions are; he describes them as 'une infinité de mouvemens à nous inconnus'. (3) He sustains the division between man's sentiment de vouloir and actions by insisting upon the former as a purely mental process:

(...) tous les phénomènes intellectuels qui se passent en lui (l'être animé) sont de simples circonstances et dépendances des mouvemens qui s'exécutent aussi en lui, mais n'influent point sur ces mouvemens, et ces phénomènes intellectuels ne sont qu'une série de faits ou d'apparences, correspondante et pour ainsi dire parallèle à la série des actes mécaniques, chimiques, physiologiques qui ont lieu réellement. (4)

(1) De la Logique, chap. IX, p. 319.

(2) Traité de la Volonté, IIe Partie, Idées préliminaires, p. 367.

(3) ibid., p. 367.

(4) ibid., p. 355.

In Tracy's view, when the individual experiences a sensation, certain movements operate in his limbs and nerves; these movements, in their turn, arouse further perceptions which, once combined, produce judgements and desires which engender further movements to act upon the individual's limbs, whilst remaining susceptible to influence from other perceptions. In other words, the will provides a series of perceptions complementary to the mechanical and physiological actions which are produced necessarily. Tracy is the first to recognise that a desire to act precedes the act itself, but by his separation of the two and by his intention to investigate the will through the studies of morale and économie he clearly demonstrates his purpose: to concentrate upon the will as consciousness of personality and to derive from that premisses upon which his sociology will be based, and to counterbalance these with observations of what society actually is, how it operates and what its virtues and injustices are. The first of these intentions, with its essentially theoretical foundations, will seek to establish the social organisation which is best fitted to secure human happiness on the evidence of man's intellectual faculties, and will seek to provide an answer to the question posed in the Mémoire.⁽¹⁾ The second of these intentions will provide the means of establishing a scale of moral values based upon observation and experience.

In defence of his view of the will, Tracy enters into a discussion of matters which are more properly physiological, and he expresses the will in physiological terms. He determines two modes of existence in man: organic, or internal life, and animal, or external life. The former of these two modes of existence comprises man's vie de conservation, that is, such matters as respiration, circulation, digestion and so on. The latter comprises man's vie de relation, that is, those functions, such as movement, speech and reprod-

(1) Cited above, chap. II.

action, which bring him into contact with his fellows. Tracy then seeks to establish the organs of the body in which these two modes of existence are located:

L'inspection des parties et de nombreuses expériences paraissent prouver que, dans l'homme et les animaux qui lui ressemblent, le nerf grand sympathique qui s'étend le long de la colonne vertébrale, et qui est moins un nerf qu'une espèce de cerveau particulier, est le foyer principal de la vie de conservation; et que le cerveau proprement dit est le centre commun de la vie de relation et en même temps l'organe spécial dans lequel s'opère ce que nous appelons la pensée, c'est-à-dire l'élaboration et la combinaison de nos diverses sensations. (1)

Tracy sees the functions of the body relative to man's vie de conservation as independent of the will, whereas those relative to man's vie de relation to be dependent upon it, and he finds it natural that the will should be engendered in that organ, the brain, where the combination of man's various sensations is effected. This phenomenon is itself subject to qualification, since many movements are manifestly involuntary. Involuntary movements are to be explained by the fact that many organs receive nerves from the two main centres of activity and that these nerves cross and join at various points. Tracy can thus, to his satisfaction, resolve an apparent conflict between reflective and instinctive will:

Cette dernière observation est importante en ce qu'elle pourrait nous aider à comprendre comment il nous arrive souvent d'être portés vers certaines déterminations par une volonté réfléchie, tandis que nous sommes en même temps entraînés en sens contraire par un penchant instinctif. C'est peut-être là à quoi se réduisent les deux âmes différentes que quelques philosophes nous ont libéralement accordées pour expliquer ce phénomène. (2)

In his discussion of these matters Tracy shows clearly the influence of those whom he calls the physiologistes, those engaged in the study of the other branch of idéologie to which he referred in his Mémoire.⁽³⁾ Tracy asserts that

(1) Traité de la Volonté, IIe Partie, Idées préliminaires, p. 377.

(2) ibid., p. 379.

(3) See above, chap. II.

any philosophy having as its object the knowledge of man must base itself upon facts verified by physiology, and in his Traité de la Volonté he refers to physiology as 'notre plus sûr, notre seul bon guide.'⁽¹⁾ He is, for example, enthusiastic concerning the work of Pinel:

En expliquant comment les fous raisonnent, il apprend aux sages comment ils pensent. Il prouve que l'art de guérir les hommes en démence n'est autre chose que celui de manier les passions et de diriger les opinions des hommes ordinaires, et consiste à former leurs habitudes. Ce sont les physiologistes philosophes, comme le citoyen Pinel, qui avanceront l'idéologie. (2)

But the clearest influence on Tracy in this field is that exerted by Cabanis, an influence attributable not only to close friendship but also to Tracy's knowledge of and admiration for Cabanis' researches. The second edition of the Rapports du Physique et du Moral, published in 1805, contains an Extrait raisonné written by Tracy, but it is clear that he was familiar with the work at an earlier date: Cabanis read the first six mémoires before the Classe des sciences morales et politiques of the Institut in 1796 and 1797, and the first edition of the complete work was published in 1802.

In the Rapports Cabanis abandons the psychological method of Condillac, limited as it is to external sensations, and prefers the physiological method, emphasising as more important in determining an individual's behaviour such factors as hereditary disposition, dreams, automatic and unconscious impulses, and so on. He clearly states that the moral sciences must be placed on a physical basis. He finds philosophy reduced to a question of psychology, and finds psychology itself, due to imperfections of method, unable to give sufficiently reliable evidence. He seeks to discover the nature, conditions

(1) op. cit., IIe Partie, Idées préliminaires, p. 380n.

(2) Cited by Picavet, op. cit., p. 174. The work to which Tracy is referring is Pinel's Traité médical et philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale ou la manie. (1800).

and limitations of experience, for here, to his mind, lies the key to the problem of whether the individual has any ideas independent of experience, a problem inevitably raised in its turn by that of the origin of knowledge. Cabanis concerns himself with the relationship between the mind and the body, for if it can be demonstrated that the phenomena of the mind are nothing more than phenomena of the body, then a positive science of psychology becomes possible, with results as valid as those of the physical sciences. Cabanis therefore investigates the whole question of the independence of the mind, for he clearly sees that if the intellect is admitted as an independent existence, having powers not gathered from organic conditions, there can be no scientific exposition of the phenomena of human knowledge; rather, one would have to assume the existence of innate ideas and truths transcending those gained through sensations.

Cabanis affirms the fundamental union of body and mind. He accepts that sensation is the necessary cause of our ideas, and deduces from this that the mental is only the physical considered from another point of view. Like D'Holbach, he discusses sensation in terms of certain arrangements of matter, and treats personal characteristics and temperament in terms of man's internal structure. He interprets so-called 'free' action as action springing from an ultimately involuntary modification of the brain. Cabanis, again like D'Holbach, gives cogent expression to that materialism which is inherent in any sensation-
alist doctrine. Sensation can appreciate only matter and physical reality: objects and their characteristics, the world and its physical laws. Outside this sphere it can grasp nothing, and thus the human mind, which takes sensation as its only source of knowledge, knows only matter. It does not conceive of itself as mind, but only in its organic existence.

In this way Cabanis contributes to the process whereby the mind is stripped of the awe with which it had been surrounded, and presents psychology as a branch of biology. This attitude is echoed by Tracy in his definition of idéologie as a branch of zoology,⁽¹⁾ and the physiological details which he presents in his examination of the will are nothing more than the concise expression of views put forward by Cabanis in his Rapports. In particular his descriptions of the brain as 'l'organe spécial dans lequel s'opère (...) l'élaboration et la combinaison de nos diverses sensations' reiterates a concept of Cabanis (and of D'Holbach and Diderot before him). This reference to the action of the brain, fleeting though it is, throws a particular light on Tracy's own thought and confirms that he is aware of one of the deficiencies of Condillac's method. Condillac ignored the act of consciousness implied in any perception. He insisted that sensation was the starting-point of his investigation of the human faculties, but took no account of the fact that, in order for any individual to feel any sensation, that individual must first be aware of his own existence. He cannot appreciate that he is being affected by a sensation if he cannot distinguish himself from it. Maine de Biran made the comment that while Condillac's statue is the smell of a rose and nothing else, it does not exist for itself⁽²⁾ and observes further on Condillac's method:

(...) il ne s'agit plus d'une décomposition d'idées ou de modes, fondée sur une observation réelle quelconque, mais bien d'une analyse logique ou artificielle, qui part uniquement des classifications hypothétiques du langage. (3)

- (1) Idéologie proprement dite, preface (to 1801 ed.), p. xii.
- (2) Essai sur les fondements de la psychologie, Introduction, para. 2, Oeuvres, VIII, 16. He is referring to Condillac's Traité des Sensations, Ière Partie, Chap. I, para 2: 'Si nous lui présentons une rose, elle (la statue) sera par rapport à nous une statue qui sent une rose; mais par rapport à elle, elle ne sera que l'odeur même de cette fleur'.
- (3) Mémoire sur la décomposition de la pensée, Ière Partie, para. 5, Oeuvres, III, 90.

Tracy himself is intent upon pursuing the analytical method, and seeks to fill the void in Condillac's thought by establishing the consciousness of self which he recognises to be logically necessary. This he finds in the act of sensation itself, and more particularly in the will:

(...) sentir quoi que ce soit, c'est sentir son moi sentant, c'est se connaître soi-même sentant; c'est avoir la possibilité de distinguer soi de ce que soi sent, des modifications de soi. Mais en même temps il est hors de doute que l'être qui connaîtrait ainsi son moi ne le connaîtrait pas par opposition avec d'autres êtres dont il pût le distinguer et le séparer, puisqu'il ne connaîtrait que lui et ses modes. (...) Il ne se connaîtrait donc pas proprement, dans le sens que nous attachons à ce mot connaître (...) et par conséquent il n'aurait pas l'idée d'individualité et de personnalité, par opposition et distinction avec d'autres êtres. On peut donc déjà assurer que cette idée (...) est une création et un effet de notre faculté de vouloir; et cela explique très bien pourquoi, encore que la seule faculté de sentir simplement constitue et établisse notre existence, cependant nous confondons et identifions de préférence notre moi avec notre volonté. (1)

Thus Tracy draws upon two sources for his ideas, both of which help him to reinforce the link between his study of man's intellectual faculties and his own social thought. On the one hand he accepts the role of the physiologistes in providing a foundation for rational idéologie, a foundation which emphasises man as a being with characteristics wholly definable in physical terms. (2) It is easier for Tracy to erect a social science if he can not only transpose physical qualities into social factors (as we shall see), but if he can also eliminate from his conception of man any quality which suggests the immaterial or the intangible. On the other hand, he remains faithful to the analytical method of Condillac, and, discussing man above all in terms of intelligence, identifies his personality with a faculty which is essentially passive:

Si, par être actif on n'entend pas seulement agir, mais agir librement, c'est-à-dire d'après sa volonté; et si par être passif on entend agir forcément ou contre sa volonté, il n'y

(1) Traité de la Volonté, Ière Partie, Introduction, p. 14.

(2) At the end of the Extrait raisonné of his Idéologie proprement dite Tracy expresses regret at not having bound his work more closely to physiology.

à peut-être pas une action dont nous soyons moins les maîtres que de sentir ou de ne pas sentir un désir: ainsi à ce compte, il n'y aurait pas en nous une faculté plus passive que celle de vouloir. (1)

Tracy can all the more easily found his moral and social theories on a scientific basis, since he will discuss man in society not as a moral force in himself, but rather as a being who receives impressions and is modified by them. In the final analysis Tracy's social science will be established around a human type, an être sensible, whose characteristics can be reduced to four faculties.

Tracy's approach, combining as it does physiological detail and logical rigour, thus imposes a conformity, a model upon the human species. Physical sensibility, in his view, is equally well organised in all men. Helvétius, arguing from the same premiss, declares that differences in ability, aptitude or intelligence are to be explained by differences in intelligence. For him, intelligence is an acquisition rather than a gift, and he dismisses biological predispositions to thought and action. Tracy implies that some predispositions do exist, but by the clear and sustained distinction he draws between physical actions and mental perceptions, he shows that he does not wish to examine deeply the role played by the organs of the body. The fact, which he derives from Cabanis, that these have a function which expresses in precise physical terms the phenomena of the mind is sufficient to his purpose, since any doctrine of innate ideas or a priori moral values is discredited. For example, the question of the possible existence of the soul, a question which Condillac had never satisfactorily resolved, is dismissed by Tracy as irrelevant and harmful to clear reasoning:

(...) l'existence en nous d'un être appelé âme étant une chose qu'on ne peut pas prouver, elle n'est et ne saurait jamais être qu'une supposition plus ou moins gratuite

(1) Idéologie proprement dite, chap. V., p. 53.

destinée à expliquer ce que nous ne connaissons pas. Or, en bonne philosophie, c'est-à-dire en bonne logique, il faut savoir convenir de son ignorance et ne jamais user de suppositions pour la déguiser. De plus, cette supposition-ci n'explique rien. (1)

Rather than examine such questions Tracy affirms the will as a primary faculty in man, and goes on to examine it in its social context. He fails to investigate any cause of inability in men or any differences in their physiological composition. He identifies will and personality, and expresses the view that the individual, once aware of the nature of his will, realises that others have the same faculty, and indeed sees them only in this light:

Du moment que nous avons reconnu à un être cette propriété si importante à notre bonheur, la capacité de vouloir, nous ne l'envisageons plus que sous ce rapport: il est pour nous un être voulant, comme un aliment est un être nourrissant; et ce n'est que par cette qualité qu'il nous devient précieux, indifférent ou odieux, quoiqu'il puisse à d'autres égards, servir à notre satisfaction comme instrument. (2)

In his social relationships the individual is moved by the desire to 'possess' the wills of others, that is, to find them in harmony with his own. This desire enters into all moral sentiments, and is at the root of all ambition for honour, power and riches, since the individual deems that such possessions will place him in harmony with other wills and gain their esteem. Such esteem is the most tangible evidence of their bienveillance, and is a spur towards philanthropy and moral excellence, since such excellence will engender esteem all the more surely in others.

The pleasure which the individual feels in finding the wills of others in harmony with his own accounts for the delights to be found in friendship and love, the value to be attached to frankness and honesty (because they reveal immediately the true will of the other), the timidity of the individual when

(1) Traité de la Volonté, IIe Partie, Idées préliminaires, p. 369.

(2) Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, p. 360.

faced with a stranger (since his will is unknown), and the destructive passions of hatred, envy and jealousy (which are born when two wills are not in harmony). These destructive passions can be overcome: the desire that others should show him goodwill arouses in the individual a feeling of contentment when he is animated by a similar disposition and guilt when he is not, and since the individual's motives cannot remain for ever unrecognised by others, Tracy is led to a plausible, if over-generalised conclusion:

(...) nous entrevoyons confusément qu'il est impossible qu'un jour ou l'autre nos dispositions ne soient pas aperçues, ou du moins soupçonnées. Aussi tous les hommes bons ont l'habitude et les manières de la sérénité, et les méchants celles de la dissimulation et de la défiance; mais cela même les fait reconnaître. (1)

It is obvious that in this picture of society consisting of wills seeking to 'possess' each other, Tracy is extending the meaning of the term beyond that of a basic human faculty. It has become synonymous with personality, and Tracy continues to use it in this way in his Traité de la Volonté, the introduction of which he devotes to an enumeration of the principles which can be derived from the will. The first of these is precisely that of personality, which is partly communicated by the sensibility, in that the individual's sensibility establishes his existence, and confirmed by the will. The individual, seeing the relationship between his self in terms of pure sensibility and his self in terms of physical essence, thereby establishes the principle of property:

(...) il voit nettement aussi que ce moi est propriétaire exclusif du corps qu'il anime, des organes qu'il meut, de toutes leurs facultés, de toutes leurs forces, de tous les effets qu'ils produisent, de toutes leurs passions et leurs actions; car tout cela finit et commence avec ce moi, n'existe que par lui, n'est mu que par ces actes; et nulle autre personne morale ne peut employer ces mêmes instrumens, ni

(1) Ideologie proprement dite, chap. V, p. 54.

être affectée de même de leurs effets. L'idée de propriété et de propriété exclusive naît donc nécessairement, dans l'être sensible, par cela seul qu'il est susceptible de passion et d'action, et elle y naît parce que la nature l'a doué d'une propriété inévitable et inaliénable, celle de son individu. (1)

The existence of this 'natural' property, as Tracy terms it, thus accounts for and justifies 'conventional' property. This is a primary example of the way in which Tracy draws up social principles on a basis of idéologie: the existence of 'conventional' property is seen as a necessary consequence of the individual's consciousness of his own personality, which is derived directly from the will:

Nous n'aurions la propriété d'aucun de nos biens quelconques, si nous n'avions pas celle de nos besoins, laquelle n'est autre chose que celle de nos sentimens; et toutes ces propriétés dérivent inévitablement du sentiment de personnalité, de la conscience de notre moi. (2)

Similarly, the principle of the liberty of the individual in society is derived from the will. Liberty is initially defined as the power to exercise the will; the individual is content if he has the capacity to satisfy his desires, and all his misfortunes consist in restraint, that is, an inability to do so. Each desire is a form of suffering, since it represents a need unsatisfied. Liberty thus becomes synonymous with happiness, and therefore it follows that, since the object of society is to ensure the happiness of its members, the principle of individual liberty must be established.

The other principles which Tracy derives from the will are those of needs (the term besoins used here in a somewhat different sense from that used earlier, signifying here not simple perceptions, but any unfulfilled desires) and means, the capacity to satisfy those needs (here signifying the actions which follow the act of will), riches (the possession of means) and poverty (the absence of means). From the principles of needs and means are derived those of rights (the rights to satisfy needs) and duties (the duties to employ means in the best

(1) Traité de la Volonté, Introduction, para. II, p. 16.

(2) ibid., p. 22.

possible way to achieve that end). It is in the balance between the rights and duties of individuals when they live in a society that the notions of justice and injustice are to be found:

Les droits de l'un ne font rien aux droits de l'autre. Tous ont chacun autant de droits que de besoins, et le devoir général de satisfaire ces besoins sans aucune considération étrangère. Il ne commence à y avoir de restriction à ces droits et à ce devoir, ou plutôt à la manière de remplir ce devoir, qu'au moment où il s'établit des moyens de s'entendre, et par suite, des conventions tacites ou formelles. Là seulement est la naissance de la justice et de l'injustice, c'est-à-dire, de la balance entre les droits de l'un et les droits de l'autre, qui nécessairement étaient égaux jusqu'à cet instant. (1)

Hence Tracy is led to speak of the aim and motive of society as always being to

(...) augmenter la puissance de chacun en faisant concourir celle des autres avec elle, et en les empêchant de se nuire réciproquement. (2)

In order that this may be achieved, account must be taken of those inclinations and sentiments which bind men together in society. Tracy analyses these in the second part of his Traité de la Volonté, where, using the collective terms besoin de sympathiser and sympathie he describes them as follows:

J'appelle besoin de sympathiser ou sympathie ce penchant qui nous porte à nous associer aux sentiments de nos semblables, et même à ceux de toute la nature animée, qui fait que le spectacle de la douleur est une peine pour nous et celui de la joie un plaisir, qui fait que lorsque nous sommes malheureux nous avons besoin d'être plaints, et que quand nous sommes heureux notre satisfaction n'est complète que lorsqu'elle est partagée, qui fait enfin que le sentiment d'aimer nous est agréable à éprouver et à inspirer, et que le sentiment de haïr et d'être haï est pénible et triste. (3)

These sentiments are derived necessarily from man's vie de relation, that is, those functions which bring him into contact with his fellows. Man, in Tracy's

(1) ibid., para. VI, p. 58.

(2) ibid., para. VII, p. 63.

(3) Traité de la Volonté, IIe Partie, Idées préliminaires, p. 382.

view, is led irresistibly to found societies primarily because he cannot survive alone. When individuals join together, the resultant wealth and power are immeasurably greater than those of individuals acting separately. But men are also drawn together by their besoin de sympathiser, which is fundamental to their nature and which Tracy equates with innate goodness, a quality Tracy emphasises:

L'homme, quoi qu'on en dise, n'est point un animal essentiellement malfaisant. Le désir du mal, quoique assurément très-commun, n'est en lui qu'une exception, un trouble passager. Le fond de son être, son état habituel, est la bonté, car la nature lui a donné le besoin de sympathiser. (1)

Tracy is clearly conversant with Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, which was translated by Mme Condorcet and published in France in 1798,⁽²⁾ and which examines in detail the nature of sympathy which binds men together. While Tracy acknowledges, as indeed Cabanis does, that men are instinctively drawn together, he differs from Smith over the importance to be given to the principle of sympathy as a source of social or moral values. Smith sees the basis of moral judgment in what he calls universal harmony:

La nature et les hommes suivent chacun les règles qui leur conviennent; mais toutes ces règles diverses tendent à la même fin générale, à l'ordre de l'univers, à la perfection et au bonheur de la nature humaine. (3)

He is convinced that one can base notions of good and evil upon general approval or disapproval:

Nous n'approuvons originellement ni ne désapprouvons aucune action, parce qu'en l'examinant elle paraît conforme ou opposée à certaines règles générales: mais les règles générales, au contraire, se sont établies en reconnaissant, par l'expérience, que les actions d'une certaine nature et

(1) ibid., p. 382.

(2) Adam Smith, Théorie des sentiments moraux ..., traduite de l'anglais, sur la 7e édition par S. Grouchy, Ve Condorcet, suivie de huit lettres à Cabanis sur la Sympathie, Paris, Buisson, an VI-1798.

(3) Smith, op.cit., in Mme Condorcet's translation, IIIe Partie, chap. V, p. 360.

composées de certaines circonstances sont généralement approuvées ou désapprouvées. (1)

Smith is further convinced that in the formation of moral ideas the individual reasons upon the actions of others and applies the conclusions to himself, and that if he has not judged the actions of others, he cannot judge his own. In other words, Smith asserts that the individual must seek to evaluate his own actions from a distance, as it were, as if through the eyes of an impartial observer, who will convey approval or otherwise.

Tracy does not accept this approach in which sympathy not only precedes moral judgement, but indeed creates it, by rendering general approval desirable, thus placing moral judgement on the changeable basis of passing fashion. For Tracy, the starting-point is always the individual, whose primary duty is to satisfy his own desires: sympathy for others provides a check, by ensuring that the individual does not go to excessive lengths in the pursuit of his own happiness. The individual does value the esteem of others, but Tracy does not conceive that any external criterion, such as approval, can be applied to the individual's conduct. Esteem will naturally follow, and cannot be used to define, examples of moral excellence, which are to be judged by the following yardstick:

(...) tout ce qui tend au bien de l'humanité est louable et vertueux, tout ce qui tend au mal est vicieux et répréhensible. Voilà la vraie et la seule pierre de touche de toute moralité. (2)

Clearly Tracy and Smith come close together in their common recognition of what sympathy is, but they differ in their view of its function. Also Tracy, unlike Smith, emphasises certain counterbalancing elements in man's nature. These are his intérêts personnels, the sense of his own personality. It is inevitable that the individual will be motivated by personal interests which are often

(1) ibid., IIIe Partie, chap. IV, p. 337.

(2) Traité de la Volonté, IIe Partie, Idées préliminaires, p. 373.

in opposition to those of his fellows, and thus a state of hostility can arise. It is man's condition to live in a state of tension between two conflicting tendencies in his nature:

C'est cet attrait puissant (le sentiment de sympathie) qui nous rapproche encore de nos semblables dans les momens où la personnalité nous en éloigne. (1)

In his use of the phrase bien de l'humanité (noted above) Tracy makes one of his noticeably infrequent references to a possible general interest which could act as some kind of value by which individual actions could be morally judged. He recognises that men have personal interests and that their primary duty is to satisfy their needs. In his view, each individual generalises on the basis of his own experience, since that is the only experience he knows. All values concerning the proper organisation of society are deduced in terms of the individual's satisfaction of his needs. In this way he appears to agree with Helvétius, who declares the pleasure-pain motive to be central to ethics, and who deduces from this that man is guided, in action and judgement, by self-interest. But Helvétius goes further: for him, utility, that is, service to self-interest is, to use Tracy's phrase, the touchstone of morality, and this is true both of individuals and society:

Chaque particulier juge des choses et des personnes par l'impression agréable ou désagréable qu'il en reçoit; le public n'est que l'assemblage de tous les particuliers: il ne peut donc jamais prendre que son utilité pour règle de ses jugements. (2)

While Helvétius thus declares that man must strive not to substitute duty for interest (since duty for him is an unintelligible abstraction) but to identify private interest and general interest, Tracy appears reluctant to consider a general interest. He accepts, as we have seen, that the individual must respect others in their person and property, and bases his ideas of justice and injustice on this precept, but he does not develop his argument, as Helvétius does, to

(1) ibid., p. 383.

(2) De L'Esprit, II, 8.

postulate utility as a motivating force in society. He does refer to the general interest in Quels sont les moyens ... but again it is a passing mention. He is clearly unwilling to accept one of the consequences of Helvétius' argument, namely that there is a value over and above the interest of the individual, for although Helvétius sees the general interest as the extension of personal interest, its existence implies that society has its own natural force. For Helvétius, as for Adam Smith, the social order derives from the independent activity of a multitude of individuals who have no need to know each other to accomplish the aims of society itself; they suggest that the individual, in pursuing his own well-being, involuntarily realises those aims. Tracy implies as much when in his Traité de la Volonté, he stresses the close relationship between political economy and individual psychology:

(...) ce qui est vrai de chaque individu ne peut être faux des nations, qui ne sont que des collections d'individus. (1)

But for Tracy the general interest of Helvétius is uncomfortably close to the sympathy of Smith, both subject to passing fashion. If the needs of the individual can change according to circumstances, then the same is true of the general interest. Tracy strives always to keep the individual in view. He is concerned with deriving truths from a study of basic human faculties, and the general interest is a concept too far removed from his own preoccupations. He defines the aims of society in terms of the prevention of any infringement of individual liberty and the reconciliation of conflicting interests, never in terms of general interest. Teilhac notes Tracy's particular bias:

De l'idée de besoin découlent naturellement les idées de bien, de richesse, de valeur, de liberté. La société n'a d'autre fin que d'accroître cette liberté. L'épanouissement de la personnalité individuelle est en raison directe du

(1) Traité de la Volonté, chap. IV, p. 126.

reserrement du lien social. À l'encontre de Smith et de Say, qui reconnaissent à la société une certaine force naturelle, elle n'est pour Tracy qu'une abstraction. La seule réalité, c'est l'individu. (1)

In effect Tracy derives no values and deduces no principles from any notion of society, or general interest. In all fields - social, moral and political - the values and principles he elaborates are philosophical, and construed from these different elements: firstly, his faith in the study of man's intellectual faculties, which will ensure that judgements are sound and which will reveal how men are constituted, so that positive laws may take this into account; and secondly, his concept of the will as a primary faculty in man, operating necessarily and inevitably, and fundamentally not free. Tracy concentrates upon a particular conception of the will - personality - and derives from it certain basic principles, such as property and liberty, which have applications in the social sphere. Social organisation thus becomes an inevitable consequence of an earlier science. Mignet cites Tracy's own reduction of this process to the following formula:

Le produit de la faculté de penser, ou percevoir = connoissance = vérité = vertu = bonheur = sentiment d'aimer = liberté = égalité = philanthropie. (2)

This series of identified notions reveals succinctly the unity and cohesion of Tracy's plan.

Tracy's concept of the will and his deduction of social values from it is, then, of particular importance. Above all, it imposes a method upon his investigations, predisposing him not to describe or analyse contemporary society, in order to deduce principles from that, but to attempt to erect an ideal society around a human type. It may be that, in this respect, Tracy's own character, and the scant regard he affords man's achievements to date have

- (1) E. Teilhac, L'oeuvre économique de Jean-Baptiste Say, Paris, Alcan, 1927, p. 222. Teilhac is, of course, primarily concerned with Tracy's approach insofar as it affects his ideas on political economy.
- (2) F.A.A. Mignet, Notices et mémoires historiques, Paris, Paulin, 1843, p.226. Tracy adds: 'C'est faute d'une analyse assez exacte qu'on n'est pas encore parvenu à trouver les déductions ou propositions moyennes propres à rendre palpable l'identité de ces idées'.

their part to play:

L'étude de la nature attire tous mes regards, et elle a pour moi le mérite éminent d'apprendre à oublier l'histoire des hommes. (1)

The 'study of nature' takes precedence over the study of history. Tracy will continue to concern himself with the human type and to emphasise the parallel between the organisation of that type and the organisation of society. His arguments in the field of political economy, religion, morality, legislation and education derive from his concept of man as a creature who, in the social context, possesses needs, necessary and inescapable, and who has the primary duty to satisfy them:

Tout devoir suppose une peine qu'entraîne son infraction, une loi qui prononce cette peine, un tribunal qui applique cette loi. La punition de mal employer ses moyens est de leur voir produire des effets moins favorables à sa satisfaction, ou même de leur en voir produire qui soient tout à fait destructifs. Les lois qui prononcent cette peine, ce sont celles de l'organisation de l'être voulant et agissant, ce sont les conditions de son existence. Le tribunal qui applique ces lois, c'est celui de la nécessité elle-même, contre lequel il ne peut se pourvoir. (2)

In using terms such as nécessité, Tracy suggests - but does no more than suggest - a materialistic approach, but, as we have seen, his reliance on the researches of the physiologistes is limited, and his references to the two branches of idéologie indicate that he regards rational idéologie as the science more likely to yield positive results. This is where Tracy's objective lies: in analysis, in rational philosophical enquiry. The social comments he makes, the reforms he advocates are consequent upon this philosophical enquiry, because the principles on which they depend are not espoused by Tracy irrationally, but because they are, to his satisfaction, true and irrefutable. This approach gives his work a persuasive vigour and assurance, and renders his defence of such values as liberty and equality no less sincere and enduring.

(1) ibid., p. 255.

(2) ibid., p. 265.

IV. POLITICAL ECONOMY

It was natural that Tracy should turn his attention to political economy, in that it is the science of those acts which, dependent upon the will, seek to satisfy, on the material plane, human needs and desires. In Tracy's eyes, there will inevitably be at the basis of such a science a psychological theory, implicit or explicit, since in political economy man is studied in his relations with his fellow creatures. Once the coming together of men into a social group is established, there arise questions to be resolved which concern the organisation of that group in material terms: the way in which wealth is to be measured and distributed, the way in which each class may benefit from the accrued wealth of the group, the way in which such wealth may be preserved and increased. Underlying such considerations there must however be a conception of the forces and pressures which constitute the order of the society, and so that these may be properly appreciated, there must be an understanding of the forces and pressures within the individual members of that society.

Tracy underlines strongly the relationship between the psychological composition of the individual and the economic composition of the society in which he lives: he takes pains to point out that he is not seeking to write a complete treatise on political economy, but merely to provide a natural extension to a traité de l'entendement. It must be borne in mind that in his plan of study⁽¹⁾ he described economy as part of the 'application de nos moyens de connaître à l'étude de notre volonté et de ses effets', and that his Logique gives the term the following definition:

les effets directs ou éloignés des actions qui s'ensuivent
(c'est-à-dire qui viennent après nos désirs) et qui toutes
ont pour but de satisfaire quelques-uns de ces désirs. (2)

(1) See above, Chapter II.

(2) De la Logique, chap. IX, p. 319.

It is not therefore without significance that the Traité de la Volonté, in which the most formal exposition of Tracy's ideas on political economy is to be found, contains an examination of those principles which can be deduced from the faculté de vouloir. After the principle of property (as discussed above, Chapter III) Tracy deduces those of needs and means: a need is always the need to satisfy a desire, or, more properly to end a desire, since all desire is a form of suffering.⁽¹⁾ In this way, whether it is consciously appreciated or not, desire is the source of needs. Desire is also the source of actions (since it can exercise an effect upon the muscular system) and hence of means, which are the capacity to satisfy needs, and are indeed the only instruments available to do so. The action of the will is thus a primary possession of man, the source of all riches; within the social context this means that man's labour is the key to happiness and prosperity.

Tracy examines the whole field of political economy in terms of needs and means: seeing that man is happy when his means are equal or superior to his needs, he applies the same criterion to the social organisation. He seeks to determine what the needs of the members of that organisation are and by what means they may be satisfied. The primary needs are clearly those of avoiding poverty, of acquiring sufficient collective wealth to ensure that the society will prosper, and of ensuring that the wealth is distributed equitably among individuals. The means by which these ends may be achieved are those of production, investment and distribution. The concepts of needs and means give Tracy a method, a line of approach which takes him, as always, from basic principles to general consequences; they concentrate his attention particularly

(1) '... il est toujours le désir de sortir de l'état quelconque où l'on est actuellement, lequel, par conséquent, paraît actuellement un état de malaise plus ou moins déplaisant.' (Traité de la Volonté, Intro. p. 25.) Tracy develops the same point in his Mémoire sur la faculté de penser.

upon the amount of means: whilst needs, although variable according to circumstances, are constant in nature, means will assume different forms and different proportions according to the state and the organisation of society. It is of prime importance that needs must not exceed means, and in his examination of the ways in which this might be avoided, Tracy is conscious of the relationship between the population of a society and its resources, and of the distribution of the resources throughout the different social classes. The concepts of needs and means also give Tracy an attitude which might properly be called moral: if the object of society is to provide for the happiness of its members, and if happiness comes when needs are satisfied, then it is essential that wealth is justly distributed. Questions involving humanity and justice are inevitably raised and debated by Tracy with accustomed forthrightness.

The basic principle, then, from which Tracy begins is that political economy has its roots in psychology; indeed all social phenomena have their prototype in nature. There can be no concept, no institution which does not reproduce a model provided by nature.⁽¹⁾ In this approach the work of Tracy shows the continuation of the trend whereby, from the middle of the eighteenth century, political economists in France had sought to give their science a psychological foundation: they had attempted to find the justification for their basic principles within the nature of man and within a natural order of which man was part.⁽²⁾ Allix sees Tracy's doctrine as 'la conclusion d'un mouvement d'idées

(1) '... l'homme ne crée rien, il ne fait rien d'absolument nouveau et d'extra-naturel, si l'on peut s'exprimer ainsi; il ne fait jamais que tirer des conséquences et faire des combinaisons de ce qui est; il lui est aussi impossible de créer une idée ou une relation qui n'ait pas sa source dans la nature, que de se donner un sens qui n'ait aucun rapport avec ses sens naturels'. (Traité de la Volonté, Intro. p. 17).

(2) Condorcet, for example, in his Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain, attributes the development of the science of political economy to progress made by philosophy in general and by the method of Locke and Condillac in particular.

dont on peut retrouver l'origine dans la physiocratie⁽¹⁾ and also writes:

Il y a chez eux (les physiocrates) un singulier mélange d'abstraction et d'esprit concret et c'est ce qu'il y a de concret en eux qui donnera à la pensée économique française un pli qui se trouvera encore à la période suivante. À cet égard ils sont les précurseurs directs de l'idéologie sensualiste. (2)

The physiocrates might be considered the precursors of the idéologues in that, having recognised that knowledge is communicated by the senses, they attempt to derive social morality from nature and from the physical characteristics of man. Dupont de Nemours, writing of Quesnay in 1768, outlines clearly the aims of the physiocrates:

Il y a environ treize ans qu'un homme de génie le plus vigoureux (...) devina qu'elle (la nature) ne borne pas ses lois physiques à celles qu'on a jusqu'à présent étudiées dans nos collèges et dans nos académies, et que, lorsqu'elle donne aux fourmis, aux abeilles, aux castors, la faculté de se soumettre d'un commun accord et par leur propre intérêt à un gouvernement bon, stable et uniforme, elle ne refuse pas à l'homme le pouvoir de s'élever à la jouissance du même avantage. Animé par l'importance de cette vue et par l'aspect des grandes conséquences qu'il en pouvait tirer, il appliqua toute la pénétration de son esprit à la recherche des lois physiques relatives à la société. (3)

Dupont himself explores how principles of political economy can be derived from sensations; in a Table raisonnée, published in 1775,⁽⁴⁾ he sets out the stages by which these may be formulated. The first three are as follows:

Les sensations de l'homme, ses facultés, sa volonté lui appartiennent exclusivement, par le décret de la Providence qui le fait être lui; posséder quelque chose exclusivement et justement, c'est avoir une propriété; tout homme est donc, de droit naturel, propriétaire de sa personne. (5)

By establishing the principle of personal property, based on man's possession of

- (1) ..E. Allix, 'Destutt de Tracy économiste', Revue d'économie politique, juillet-août 1912, p. 430.
- (2) E. Allix, 'Le Physicisme des Physiocrates', Revue d'économie politique, sept.-oct. 1911, p. 569.
- (3) Dupont de Nemours, Origine et progrès d'une science nouvelle (ed. Dubois) p. 78.
- (4) Bibliothèque nationale. The Table measures 98cm by 85 cm.
- (5) From the principle of personal property Dupont deduces three types of needs, which he calls très imperieux, fort essentiels and moins pressans, and resultant rights, occasioning in their turn four types of duty.

his own self, as one of the foundations of political economy, Dupont precedes the work of Tracy, (1) and in this, and other details, the physiocrates can be seen as foreshadowing him. For example, both Quesnay and Mercier de la Rivière recognise that the two great forces in man are his predilection for pleasure and his aversion to pain, forces which are in themselves nothing more than his instinct for self-preservation. This instinct, together with man's sensibility, give rise to needs, which are in themselves a form of suffering, and which in their turn arouse desires. The satisfaction of these desires brings man pleasure and is necessary to ensure his preservation. Man is destined by his very constitution to live in society: it is here that his individual weakness can be compensated, his capabilities can be fully realised, and his natural sociability can bear fruit. As Mercier de la Rivière puts it:

Il est évident que l'homme, susceptible de compassion, de pitié, d'amitié, de bienfaisance, de gloire, d'émulation, d'une multitude d'affections qu'il ne peut éprouver qu'en société, est destiné par la nature à vivre en société. (2)

The object of society is to give each individual happiness by satisfying his needs; there are inevitably conflicting personal interests which must be reconciled, but the physiocrates seek to achieve this by a counterbalancing system of duties and rights similar to that of Tracy: man has the instinct to preserve himself, and must have the liberty to do so. To ensure his subsistence he needs to be free and assured of his personal property. And since each man has the same needs (and therefore rights), society would be impossible if the rights of each were not respected by all others.

Thus in the work of the physiocrates there is a close relationship between

- (1) In point of fact both Dupont and Tracy take the idea from Locke: 'Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person. This nobody has a right to but himself'. (Second Treatise of Government, Chapter V, para. 27).
- (2) Mercier de la Rivière, L'Ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques, chap. 1.

man's physical constitution and the social laws under which he lives. In this, in the general principle as well as in particular detail, Tracy follows in their footsteps, but nonetheless his work consistently shows hostility towards them. The reasons for this are not difficult to find and are instructive in the study of Tracy's own ideas.

The work of the physiocrates is dominated by the idea of a natural, immutable order. Positive laws are the reflection of natural laws, and society is the reflection of the physical order of the universe. The physiocrates develop the idea of order taken from Malebranche;⁽¹⁾ they conceive it to be the divine plan with all its harmony and beauty, or, in other words, the providential law which governs the world. Principles of morality and the social sciences are to be deduced from a knowledge of the natural law. Dupont de Nemours is thus led to define political economy in the following terms:

L'économie politique est la science du droit naturel, appliqué comme il doit l'être aux sociétés civilisées. Elle a toujours été, elle sera toujours, tout entière dans le droit. (2)

The system of the physiocrates appears therefore as one where deduction is preferred to observation, historical research and psychological analysis, and it is, moreover, a system ultimately dependent upon a religious principle. Indeed Quesnay deduces the idea of God from evidence provided by sensations:

(...) les corps ou les objets qui occasionnent nos sensations par le mouvement n'étant eux-mêmes ni le mouvement ni la cause du mouvement, ils ne sont pas la cause primitive de nos sensations. (...) La cause primitive des formes actives sensibles intellectuelles est elle-même une cause puissante, intelligente et directrice. (3)

For the agnostic Tracy this is an unwarranted intrusion of supposition (and

- (1) For Malebranche, submission to divine law and obedience to order constitute virtue: 'Nous sommes raisonnables; notre perfection, c'est d'aimer la raison, ou plutôt d'aimer l'ordre'. (Traité de morale, Part I, chap. I, para. 19).
- (2) Letter to J.-B. Say, in Oeuvres diverses de Say (coll. Guillaumin), p. 369.
- (3) Article Evidence in L'Encyclopédie. Reprinted in Quesnay, Oeuvres économiques et philosophiques, ed. A. Oncken, 1888.

superstition) into the realm of observed fact.

On another level, the emphasis laid by the physiocrats on deduction from the principle of natural order leads them to theories of government which are equally alien to Tracy. Since the duty of the sovereign authority of the state is not to create laws but to interpret the essential laws of the universe, for Mercier de la Rivière positive laws are only actes déclaratoires, and the government's task is to

(....) manifester par des signes sensibles aux autres hommes les résultats des loix naturelles et essentielles de la société après qu'ils lui sont devenus évidents et de les sceller du sceau de leur autorité, pour leur imprimer un caractère qui soit pour tous les esprits et toutes les volontés le point fixe de leur réunion. (1)

And since the right to promulgate laws cannot be separated from that of bringing them into effect, the only practical form of government is despotism:

(...) il est physiquement impossible qu'il puisse subsister un autre gouvernement que celui d'un seul. (2)

As will be seen, Tracy combats these ideas most forcibly in his Commentaire sur Montesquieu.

With regard to the concept of property, the physiocrates, having deduced the principle from the natural order, see, when they apply it to the field of political economy, value in only one form of property - propriété foncière: land is the most important agent in production, since labour, when applied to it, can produce a surplus, or net product. No other industry, such as manufacturing or transport, can do so: manufacturers only give a new form to materials extracted from the earth, and transporters only transfer existing wealth from one place to another. (3) Agriculture is the chief concern of the physiocrates and, in their eyes it should be the chief concern of the whole

(1) Mercier de la Rivière, L'Ordre naturel, chap. XV.

(2) ibid., chap. XVI.

(3) Tracy expresses the same ideas (Traité de la Volonté chap. II).

state; their economic system is designed to facilitate its growth. They divide society into three classes: landowners, those who are productive (that is, those who engage in agriculture) and those whose labour is sterile (since their incomes are drawn from the surplus earned by agriculture and not from any surplus they themselves create). This insistence on agriculture as the only productive industry arouses Tracy's scorn:

C'est donc à tort que l'on a fait de l'industrie agricole une chose essentiellement différente de toutes les autres branches de l'industrie humaine, et dans laquelle l'action de la nature intervenait d'une manière particulière. Aussi a-t-on toujours été bien embarrassé pour savoir précisément ce que l'on devait entendre par l'industrie agricole, prise dans ce sens. On y a compris la pêche et la chasse; mais pourquoi n'y pas comprendre aussi l'industrie des pâtres nomades? Y a-t-il une si grande différence entre élever des animaux pour s'en nourrir, et les tuer ou les prendre tout élevés pour s'en nourrir de même? (...)
Je m'arrête, parce que l'on pourrait faire aux partisans de l'opinion que je combats mille questions tout aussi insolubles que celles-ci dans leur système. (1)

Allix's assertion that the work of Tracy in this field has its origins in the physiocratic movement is thus seen to be justified only with severe reservations. Gide and Rist⁽²⁾ point out that no modern science has a clearer starting-point than that of political economy. The physiocrats are the first to separate it from politics and to conceive of it as a distinct social science; they are the first to affirm that social phenomena are governed by basic relationships: societies and individuals have only to understand these to direct their behaviour properly. In this way they constantly seek to realise an ideal society: they have no concept of history as a process of gradual evolution, but consider it instead as a catalogue of the different approaches made by societies to the ideal.⁽³⁾ Tracy shares their belief that the social

(1) Traité de la Volonté, chap. II, p. 83.

(2) C. Gide & C. Rist, Histoire des doctrines économiques, Vol I (Des Physiocrates à J.S. Mill), 7e ed., Paris, Sirey, 1947, p. 2.

(3) It is worth noting that a similar approach by Tracy is castigated as a weakness by Taine, in respect of Tracy's commentary on Montesquieu: 'Destutt de Tracy, voulant commenter Montesquieu, découvre que le grand historien s'est tenu trop servilement attaché à l'histoire et il refait l'ouvrage en construisant la société qui doit être au lieu de regarder la société qui est'. (L'Ancien Régime, Paris, Hachette, 1876, p. 264). Taine attacks all the idéologues on the same score: 'Jamais avec eux on n'est sur le terrain palpable et solide de l'observation personnelle et racontée, mais toujours en l'air, dans la région vide des généralités pures'. (ibid. p. 263).

sciences consist of truths to be deduced from other, pre-existing truths, and does talk of society in generalised terms, without reference to an historical evolution. However, far from modelling his society on a natural order which precedes it, he derives his principles from the psychology of the individual, from the physical qualities of man considered not as part of a greater whole, but purely in human terms.

Within the field of political economy Tracy is directly influenced by the work of Jean-Baptiste Say, and expresses his admiration for Say and acknowledges the debt he owes him.⁽¹⁾ Tracy is recognised by his contemporaries as a follower of Say,⁽²⁾ and more recently Teilhac⁽³⁾ and Allix⁽⁴⁾ have emphasised the many points of similarity between the two writers. Tracy follows Say in his approach to the problems of production, distribution and consumption, in his definition of production as the creation of utility, in his conception of the productivity of commerce, and in the preponderance he gives to the role of the entrepreneur. There are divergences of view between them, for Tracy shows himself susceptible to the influence of Adam Smith. Nevertheless Allix sees the work of Tracy and Say as essentially complementary:

On peut dire que Destutt de Tracy a écrit la préface psychologique de l'économie politique libérale. J.-B. Say fait saisir dans son oeuvre le lien qui existe entre elle et la morale utilitaire. Le Traité de la Volonté de Destutt de Tracy en opère le rattachement à la science de l'esprit telle que la conçoivent les idéologues. Les efforts des deux auteurs se complètent pour donner à l'économie politique cette forte assise psychologique sur laquelle l'école française depuis le milieu du dix-huitième siècle a cherché à l'édifier. (5)

- (1) Tracy refers to Say as 'l'auteur du meilleur livre que je connaisse sur ces matières'. (Traité de la Volonté, chap. II, p. 81).
- (2) Ricardo in a letter to Malthus dated 16 Dec. 1822 writes: 'I was very much pleased with M. Gallois who made me acquainted with M. Destutt Tracy, a very agreeable old gentleman, whose works I had read with pleasure. I do not entirely agree with him in his political economy - he is one of Say's school; there are nevertheless some points of difference between them'. Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo, ed. P. Sraffa & M.H. Dobb, Cambridge U.P., 1952, IX, 248.
- (3) v. E. Teilhac, L'Oeuvre économique de Jean-Baptiste Say, Paris, Alcan, 1927.
- (4) v. E. Allix, 'Destutt de Tracy économiste', op.cit.
- (5) op.cit., p. 425.

Teilhac is of the same opinion:

Il (Tracy) se rapproche de Say par l'ensemble divers de sa doctrine et encore plus par la base idéologique qu'il lui donne. Sous des divergences relatives c'est une communauté profonde. (1)

Nowhere does Tracy reveal the two influences upon him, those of Say and Smith, more clearly than in his definition of the fundamental principle of value, that is, the ultimate source of wealth. He echoes Smith in finding the basis of value in labour:

(...) puisqu'il est certain que nos facultés physiques et morales sont notre seule richesse originaire, que l'emploi de ces facultés, le travail quelconque, est notre seul trésor primitif, et que c'est toujours de cet emploi que naissent toutes les choses que nous appelons des biens, depuis la plus nécessaire jusqu'à la plus purement agréable, il est certain de même que tous ces biens ne font que représenter le travail qui leur a donné naissance, et que s'ils ont une valeur, ou même deux distinctes, ils ne peuvent tenir ces valeurs que de celle du travail dont ils émanent. (2)

Tracy discerns the basis of value in labour, since this is the practical means by which the individual may satisfy his needs. In fact he distinguishes two uses of the term value, one natural and necessary - what labour costs - (3) the other conventional, what labour provides. Neither is fixed: the needs of the individual at any given time vary according to the exercising of the will, habit, or even fluctuations in climate or the conditions of work itself. Similarly many circumstances, social and economic, can influence the conventional value of labour. Tracy echoes Smith in stating that the prosperity of a nation depends firstly upon the degree of productivity of labour, that is, the amount of useful labour (labour productive of wealth) which is employed. Like Smith, Tracy

(1) op. cit. p. 220.

(2) Traité de la Volonté. Intro. p. 35.

(3) Tracy describes this in the following terms: 'Cette valeur nécessaire est la somme des besoins indispensables dont la satisfaction est nécessaire à l'existence de celui qui exécute ce travail pendant le temps qu'il l'exécute'. Traité de la Volonté, chap. III, p. 92.

regards labour embodied in each commodity as the measure of that value. Smith, enquiring into the social rather than the technical appearance of wealth, concentrates on two differences in the term value when applied specifically to objects: firstly, value in use (or the object's utility) and secondly, value in exchange (or the power possessed by an object to purchase other goods).⁽¹⁾ Tracy accepts this distinction, and in his own elaboration of it he adopts certain ideas of Say. Say sees the basis of value in utility, that is, 'cette faculté qu'ont de certaines choses de pouvoir satisfaire aux divers besoins des hommes',⁽²⁾ and Tracy, whilst finding the basis of value elsewhere, uses this principle of utility to define production: he accords this principle of utility to anything which is capable of procuring an advantage to man, even a frivolous pleasure. Since man cannot create or destroy, but merely effect changes in form or location, production becomes the giving to objects of a utility they did not previously possess, and utility thus becomes the measure of productivity:

Quel que soit notre travail, s'il n'en résulte point d'utilité, il est infructueux; s'il en résulte, il est productif. (3)

This in its turn means that the term classe laborieuse has an equally wide connotation; Tracy follows Say in dividing this class into two categories: the manufacturers (including agriculturalists), who effect changes of form, and the merchants, who effect changes of location. Here Tracy is not merely defending the idea of the productivity of commerce and industry: he is seeking to combat

- (1) Smith illustrates the differences in the term value as follows: 'The things which have the greatest value in use have frequently little or no value in exchange; and, on the contrary, those which have the greatest value in exchange have frequently little or no value in use. Nothing is more useful than water; but it will purchase scarce anything; scarce anything can be had in exchange for it. A diamond, on the contrary, has scarce any value in use, but a very great quantity of goods may frequently be had in exchange for it'. Wealth of Nations, Bk. 1, chap. IV.
- (2) Traité d'économie politique, Livre I, chap. I.
- (3) Traité de la Volonté, chap. II, p. 82.

further the political influence of the landowning class and the 'magic power' attributed to the land, which fosters the view that landowners are privileged citizens and which engenders an admiration for a feudal society.

Tracy combines the ideas of Smith and Say by stating that the measure of utility is to be found in the degree to which an object is desired; this, in venal terms, is the price paid for its purchase. Tracy, like Say, accepts that whatever the variations in tastes and other circumstances, a general agreement is made between men as to what the conventional value of any object is; its basis lies in the quantity of objects which men are prepared to exchange for it, and here Tracy echoes Smith in seeing at the basis of society a series of exchanges:

(...) la société est purement et uniquement une série continue d'échanges; elle n'est jamais autre chose dans aucune époque de sa durée, depuis son commencement le plus informe jusqu'à sa plus grande perfection. (1)

Tracy credits Smith with the realisation that bartering and exchanging one thing for another is common to all men, but is found in no other species of animals. (2) Tracy explains this by man's ability to abstract thoughts by the use of signs; (3) just as society is formed by man's capacity to conceive conventions and agreements, so the economic development of society is furthered by his capacity to conceive such principles as mutual advantage. Tracy sees an exchange as a transaction in which the two participants always gain: they must prize what they want more than that which they possess, and in this way Tracy describes society in highly favourable terms:

(...) l'échange est une transaction admirable dans laquelle les deux contractans gagnent toujours tous deux: par conséquent la société est une suite non interrompue d'avantages sans cesse renaissans pour tous ses membres. (4)

(1) ibid., chap. I, p. 68.

(2) v. Smith, op.cit., Book I, chap. II.

(3) v. L'idéologie proprement dite, chap. XVI, and above, chap. III.

(4) Traité de la Volonté, chap. I, p. 68.

Say is much less enthusiastic. Whilst admitting that exchanges play an important part in a nation's economy, they do not add to the wealth of that nation, since the goods exchanged already exist.⁽¹⁾ Tracy is clearly interested in exchanges in that, initially, any society is based on an exchange: each individual agrees to sacrifice some part of his liberty in return for a similar sacrifice on the part of others. Furthermore, exchanges offer an obvious example of the way in which needs, and their satisfaction, determine economic actions, and Tracy is so enthusiastic for this principle that he affirms that all commercial relationships may be considered from this point of view, and notes three major categories: the provision of a service for which a salary is paid, and the bartering of one object for another (in these two cases the exchange is obvious), and the execution of work in common with others: here the individual sacrifices what he would have done for himself in exchange for a share in the communal good which results. Tracy even extends the sense of exchange to acts of charity: in return for one's altruism one receives moral pleasure and the increased sympathy of the beneficiary.⁽²⁾

There is one further reason why Tracy considers exchanges with such enthusiasms: he sees in them an instrument which will favour the redistribution

(1) Say adds the following remark: 'Genovesi, qui occupait à Naples une chaire d'économie politique, définit le commerce l'échange du superflu contre le nécessaire. Il se fonde sur ce que, dans un échange, la marchandise qu'on veut avoir est, pour l'un et l'autre contractant, plus nécessaire que celle qu'on veut donner. C'est une subtilité, et je la signale, parce qu'elle est souvent reproduite. Il serait difficile de prouver qu'un pauvre ouvrier qui va le dimanche au cabaret y donne son superflu en échange de son nécessaire'. Traité d'économie politique, Livre I, chap. II.

(2) In his Commentaire sur Montesquieu, Tracy goes even further: '(...) il est aisé de voir que le commerce, l'échange, étant la société elle-même, il est l'unique lien entre les hommes, la source de tous les sentimens moraux, et la première et la plus puissante cause du développement de leur sensibilité mutuelle et de leur bienveillance réciproque. Nous lui devons tout ce que nous avons de bon et d'aimant'. (Livre XX, p. 357).

of wealth. Collectively, man is rich and powerful, with a steady growth in his resources, but on the individual level the picture is much bleaker:

(...) nous retrouvons partout la supériorité des besoins sur les moyens, la faiblesse de l'individu et ses souffrances inévitables. (1)

Wealth is distributed unevenly throughout society, occasioning a more dangerous evil, inequality of power. Tracy sees inequality, like property, to be inherent in nature; it is impossible for all men to be equal in strength, intelligence, or even happiness, and since this is a fact of human existence, it must be accommodated and brought within reasonable limits. It cannot be destroyed; it must be counterbalanced by laws which favour the weak.

It is on this basis that Tracy begins what Allix calls

(...) un plaidoyer en faveur des classes inférieures de la société et un large courant d'idées "démocratiques". (2)

It is a plaidoyer which appears above all to seek to buttress the lower classes of society against inevitable misfortune, misfortune brought about by the invariable workings of nature, the necessary development of society and the imprudence of the lower classes themselves. Nature sows the seeds of misfortune by sanctioning inequality itself, and in analysing the next factor, the manner in which any society develops, Tracy turns to history for evidence: he sees society's first stage as necessarily prosperous, when it has sufficient land to accommodate all its citizens. Even those with no skills can own land and can live from the proceeds of cultivation. When all the land is taken, those without capital must seek employment from those who have; in such circumstances the value of labour will tend to go down (since the population will be steadily

(1) Traité de la Volonté, chap. X, p. 196.

(2) 'Destutt de Tracy économiste', op.cit. p. 432.

increasing and many will seek the work available for only a few), and only the skilful or the cunning will survive. Later in the historical process, when the agricultural society becomes an industrial society, the pattern is repeated: industry expands to the limit of its capacity and the standard of living of the lowest classes is correspondingly high. Once the limit is reached, industry becomes either stationary or retrograde;⁽¹⁾ a rising population is faced with a labour market which remains constant or which retracts, and thus misery and deprivation again become widespread. Say, whilst admitting that many die through poverty even in the most advanced countries, does not consider the decline of industry to be inevitable; for Tracy it is, and the reason for the misery of the poor lies in that decline and in one other factor, the fertility of the human species.

Tracy begins, characteristically, with the statement of a basic principle: population is always proportionate to a nation's moyens d'existence (or total resources, as opposed to moyens de subsistance, the nation's foodstuffs).⁽²⁾ Uncivilised nations have invariably small and static populations which are kept in check by ignorance; irrespective of any lack of food, the population is constantly attacked by disease and wars. Civilised nations, on the other hand, (and Tracy uses Russia and the United States of America as striking examples) with greater knowledge and skills, have rapidly growing populations, which will become static when a sufficiently large number of men cannot provide adequately for themselves and their children. If a part of industry ceases to function properly, then the population will fall; after epidemics or wars which have seriously affected the population, it will grow rapidly, because work will be more easily obtainable and better paid.

(1) It is Smith who first establishes the concepts of progressive, stationary and retrograde states of industry.

(2) The same view is held by Say: '(...) on peut dire en thèse générale que la population des états se proportionne toujours à la somme de leurs produits'. op. cit. Livre II, chap. II.

More significantly, however, Tracy takes up points raised by Malthus in his Essay on the principle of population as it affects the future improvement of society.⁽¹⁾ Here Malthus expresses the theory that a population tends to outrun its means; it increases as they do, but the increase of population overtakes that of food, and this process will continue unless prevented by powerful and obvious checks, such as wars and famine, or others less obvious, which Malthus describes as moral restraint, vice and misery. Convinced of the need to discourage the people from increasing the population, Malthus is a strong opponent of Poor Relief. The state, in his view, should not recognise the right of the poor to receive any support. Charity is not a remedy for the improvidence which has caused the misery of the poor, who have, in the last analysis, brought about their own distress, but provides an incentive which only aggravates the problem.

Tracy, whilst accepting this diagnosis, sees the key to the problem of population in the very structure of society. Rejecting all classifications based on the ownership of property (since every man is a property owner, in that he is the possessor of his own self), Tracy finds two major classes in society: those who, without capital, work for payment, and those who employ them. The former live on what the latter can afford to distribute among them. The employers can be further divided into two categories; firstly, there are those who live on their income without working: these are what Tracy calls rentiers (moneylenders, those who lease land, property and so on). This group can distribute among those whom they employ only what constitutes their income; otherwise they will make inroads into their capital. If some do go to their ruin in this way, they are replaced by others whose fortune is better assured.

(1) Originally published in 1798, revised in 1803.

At all events, the sum total of the means of this group is constant. Secondly, there are the entrepreneurs, those who combine the product of their capital with their own personal activity. Unlike the other group of employers, the entrepreneurs can make profits; many do not, and through inefficient management of their affairs, fall into ruin. Those who do make profits eventually cease working and become members of the group of rentiers, replacing those who are ruined. Furthermore, the group of entrepreneurs is kept within its own limits by the fact that its enterprises can expand only to a given point: the time must come when all the possibilities of commerce are exploited and new ventures can be created only at the expense of old ones. Thus this second source of income for the employed is constant.

Given the constant factor of the means of the employers (and this view is not shared by other economists, such as Say,⁽¹⁾ it is obvious that there is a limit to the number of salariés which those means can adequately support; if the number exceeds the limit, then misery and deprivation are inevitable. Moreover, the number of the salariés is swollen by those among the employers who are unable to sustain their status, and who are consequently forced to depend on others for their livelihood. Thus, inevitably, the population of any advanced society will tend to be too great for its resources; Tracy approves the views of Malthus, and his conclusion is the same:

L'intérêt des hommes, sous tous les rapports, est donc de diminuer les effets de leur fécondité. (2)

The interests of the lower classes must be protected, and their conditions improved, not only because humanity and justice demand it, but also because there are persuasive economic reasons for doing so. Tracy shows a true sympathy for those who are underprivileged, constantly faced as they are by threats to

(1) Say writes in his Traité: '(...) il est impossible d'assigner une borne à la puissance qui résulte pour l'homme de la faculté de former des capitaux'. (Livre I, chap. XI).

(2) Traité de la Volonté, chap. IX, p. 195.

their very existence, and his sympathy is reinforced by a straightforward view of justice:

(...) elle (la justice) nous oblige à prendre en considération le nombre des intéressés. Or, comme la dernière classe de la société est partout la plus nombreuse de beaucoup, il s'ensuit que toutes les fois qu'elle se trouve en opposition avec les autres, c'est toujours ce qui lui est utile qui doit être préféré. (1)

Tracy also, however, entertains considerations altogether more practical: wherever the interests of the lower classes are neglected (he insists that this is proved 'par l'expérience de tous les temps et de tous les pays') there results a lack of industrial growth, a lack of enlightenment, a depreciation in national energy and strength, together with internal instability. It is not only those directly oppressed who suffer:

(...) je crois que tout le monde conviendra que quand une portion considérable de la société est trop souffrante, et par suite trop abruti, il n'y a ni repos, ni sûreté, ni liberté possibles, même pour les puissans et riches, et qu'au contraire ces premiers citoyens d'un État sont bien plus véritablement grands et heureux quand ils sont à la tête d'un peuple qui jouit d'une honnête aisance, laquelle développe en lui toutes les facultés morales et intellectuelles. (2)

The interests of the poor are thus identified with those of the nation as a whole, and in order to safeguard those interests, Tracy makes certain proposals. First of all, the principle of property must be respected: what little the poor do possess is their only defence against total deprivation, and the property of those who employ them is the source of their income, a source seriously endangered in times of uncertainty. Secondly, the payment for labour must be high; Tracy, following upon his identification of the interests of the poor and the nation as a whole, attacks those who see the development of industry as dependent on low wages. Production, in Tracy's eyes, will not flourish if wages are kept down, and he quotes the example of slavery among

(1) *ibid.*, chap. X, p. 202.

(2) *ibid.*, chap. X, p. 207.

ancient peoples as a source of economic error and failure. This is not to say that the salariés have the right to determine the price of their labour by any violent means, just as the employers do not have the right to determine it arbitrarily. Above all the price must be constant: the lower classes, in Tracy's eyes, are given to imprudence and if wages rise and fall, there will be many who will consume any temporary excess of income and who will be unable subsequently to economise and accommodate themselves to less favourable circumstances. Tracy does not fail to establish the general principle:

Ainsi on peut dire en thèse générale que rien de ce qui est passager n'est réellement utile au pauvre. (1)

Even more important is the need for constancy in the price of the basic necessities of life, for it is on the basis of these that the lowest wages will be established. Tracy seems to believe that these wages will find their own level, but is not precise regarding the manner in which this will be done:

D'ailleurs il est indispensable qu'elles (les choses nécessaires) ne soient pas chères; car la presque totalité de leur consommation est toujours faite par des gens qui ont peu de moyens, attendu que les pauvres sont partout le très-grand nombre, et que partout ils sont aussi les plus grands consommateurs des choses nécessaires, lesquelles composent même presque toute leur dépense. Si donc elles n'étaient pas à bas prix, elles cesseraient d'être consommées, et le plus pauvre ne pourrait subsister. C'est sur le plus bas prix auquel elles peuvent parvenir que se règle le plus bas prix des salaires. (2)

Indeed the lack of clarity in Tracy's thought is obvious: if wages are fixed in relation to the price of basic necessities, and if that price is low, then wages will themselves be low; yet, as has been shown, Tracy has determined that wages must be high.

The price of basic necessities will be kept low by complete commercial

(1) ibid., chap. X, p. 210.

(2) ibid., chap. IV, p. 105.

freedom, with its beneficial principle of competition.⁽¹⁾ This competition, together with the growing efficiency of industry, due to increased mechanisation, holds the key to the future prosperity of the lower social classes. Tracy is anxious to see that their interests are safeguarded, not merely out of humanity, but because on their fortune that of the whole nation depends. Tracy does not espouse the cause of the poor from any sort of class-consciousness; he does not conceive, as for example Cabanis did,⁽²⁾ of a class war. Individuals may have conflicting personal interests, but all are united in their roles as possessors of property and as consumers.

Where conflicting interests exist, they are to be found in the different commercial divisions of society rather than in the social classes. Tracy follows Say in distinguishing in every branch of commerce and industry three distinct functions: theory, that is the knowledge of the laws of nature and of the property of objects which can be put to man's advantage (this being the function of the scientist); application, or the putting to good purpose of this knowledge in order to produce utility (the function of the entrepreneur); execution, or the carrying out of the work necessary to achieve this aim (the function of the worker). It is the entrepreneur who employs the scientist and

(1) ibid., chap. X, p. 211: 'Il serait donc à désirer que le prix des denrées, et surtout celui des plus importantes, pût être invariable. (...) le moyen que ce prix varie le moins possible est de laisser la liberté la plus entière au commerce, parce que l'activité des spéculateurs et leur concurrence font qu'ils s'empressent de profiter de la moindre baisse pour acheter et de la moindre hausse pour revendre, et que par là ils empêchent l'une et l'autre de durer et de devenir excessives. Ce moyen est aussi le plus conforme et le seul conforme au respect dû à la propriété, car le juste et l'utile se trouvent toujours réunis'.

(2) In La Décade philosophique, 10 frimaire an XII (p. 398), Cabanis predicts a class war unless measures are taken to effect a more just distribution of wealth.

the worker, and who is in fact the hub of the whole system, since it is he who organises and finances industrial enterprises. The scientist and the worker depend upon the entrepreneur for their livelihood (their employment is assured only if his efforts are successful) and the entrepreneur will succeed if the amount of utility he produces is great enough, if there is a need among consumers for it and if they possess sufficient means to procure it. This being so, there will inevitably arise conflicts of interests - for example between entrepreneurs of the same type, or even of different types, or between entrepreneurs and workers - since all have to share the sum total of the means of the consumers. Thus, while society is a series of exchanges in which each individual continually benefits, it is also, in Tracy's view, a lutte universelle, where different interests bear the seeds of conflict:

Si vous suivez plus loin la complication de ces intérêts divers dans les progrès de la société, et le jeu des passions qu'ils font naître, vous verrez bientôt tous ces hommes implorer l'appui de la force en faveur de l'idée dont ils sont préoccupés; ou du moins, sous différents prétextes, provoquer des réglemens prohibitifs, pour gêner ceux qui leur nuisent dans cette lutte universelle. (1)

In the midst of this conflict there is one group, the consumers, who, since all men are consumers, have no representatives to speak on their behalf. Their interests tend to be sacrificed to those of smaller groups who are more powerful and articulate, and here Tracy is clearly conscious of the interests of the lower classes, since, as they have no property but their own selves, they are particularly vulnerable in adverse circumstances.

Consumers are an important group for Tracy for another reason: consumption, whilst being the object of production (since it is by consumption that needs are

(1) Traité de la Volonté, chap. IV, p. 103.

satisfied) may also be seen to be its opposite (since production is the creation of utility, and consumption is the using of utility). Tracy is thus led to examine the effect of consumption, having accepted the general principle that consumption diminishes wealth, whilst production increases it. The consumption of the salariés is in this sense totally destructive, since it is the use of wages to satisfy needs. (In point of fact this may be placed on the account of the employers, for it is they who provide the means of the salariés). Equally sterile is the consumption of the rentiers (or capitalistes oisifs) who direct no productive labour and whose income is used merely to provide personal pleasure. It is the entrepreneurs who are productive. They live not on income, but on profits; they employ the salariés and act as agents for the rentiers, and as a class hold the major part of the nation's wealth. Leaving aside that part of their consumption which is destined for the satisfaction of personal needs (according to Tracy this will be a modest amount, since such industrious men are moderate in their habits and tastes), the remainder is productive, insofar as it takes the form of reinvestment for the development of their enterprises, which, as they flourish, can provide more employment to salariés and more profits for yet more progress.

This demonstrates again the way in which Tracy sees the whole economic system as dependent upon the entrepreneur:

Les entrepreneurs d'industrie sont réellement le coeur du corps politique, et leurs capitaux en sont le sang. Avec ces capitaux ils donnent des salaires à la plus grande partie des salariés; ils donnent leurs rentes à tous les capitalistes, oisifs possesseurs soit de terres, soit d'argent, et par eux des salaires au reste des salariés; et tout cela leur revient par les dépenses de tous ces gens-là, qui leur paient ce qu'ils ont fait produire par leurs salariés immédiats, plus cher qu'il ne leur en a coûté pour ces salaires et pour la rente des terres et de l'argent empruntés. (1)

(1) ibid., chap. XI, p. 237.

In this way Tracy accepts the principle of the circulation of wealth, whereby wealth continually progresses through different sectors of society to return to its source, the point of production, where it will be increased; this process demonstrates to his satisfaction the truth of one of his own basic principles:

(...) ceux qui vivent de salaires, ceux qui vivent de rentes et ceux qui vivent de profits forment trois classes d'hommes essentiellement différentes; et ce sont les derniers qui alimentent tous les autres, et qui seuls augmentent la fortune publique et créent tous nos moyens de jouissance. Cela doit être, puisque le travail est la source de toute richesse, et puisque eux seuls donnent une direction utile au travail actuel, en faisant un usage utile du travail accumulé. (1)

Tracy's concern with consumption gains its full significance when he turns his attention to luxury (which he defines as 'la consommation exagérée et superflue'). He finds that luxury cannot accelerate the circulation of wealth, nor can it increase the sum total of wealth. While it may be said that luxury can support a certain number of salariés who create it, their labour is immediately consumed, with no residue that might be put to a constructive end; furthermore these salariés are paid not out of the profits of industry, but out of the income, or accrued wealth, of the capitalistes oisifs, which is not inexhaustible, and which is drawn from income derived from the efforts of entrepreneurs. Thus luxury favours useless and fruitless expenditure, and has a detrimental effect upon the sum total of wealth. Wealth can be preserved and increased only if the amount produced remains in excess of the amount consumed and if the excess is employed to create new commercial enterprises; in the case of luxury, consumption is equal to production.

Tracy raises further objections to luxury of a specifically moral nature:

(...) si le luxe est un grand mal sous le rapport économique, il en est un bien plus encore sous le rapport moral, qui est toujours le plus important de beaucoup, quand il s'agit

(1) ibid., chap. XI, p. 239.

des intérêts des hommes. Le goût des dépenses superflues, dont la principale source est la vanité, la nourrit et l'exaspère; il rend l'esprit frivole et nuit à sa justesse; il produit le dérèglement dans la conduite, qui engendre beaucoup de vices, de désordres, de troubles dans les familles; il conduit aisément les femmes à la dépravation, les hommes à l'avidité, les unes et les autres au manque de délicatesse et de probité, et à l'oubli de tous les sentimens généreux et tendres. (1)

It is because the taste for luxury, with its debilitating effect, had disappeared and had been replaced by a desire to act in a useful and responsible manner that France had withstood all the disorders of the Revolution and had made immense economic progress. There were, Tracy readily admits, reasons other than purely economic ones, not least a desire for liberty and justice; the redirection of labour towards a useful end gave the citizens of France the opportunity to realise their hopes: labour was able to translate moral aspirations into reality, thereby illustrating the truth of Tracy's basic principle:

Tout le bien des sociétés humaines est dans la bonne application du travail; tout le mal dans sa déperdition. (2)

Thus it can be seen that for Tracy consumption, when used to stimulate the circulation of wealth, can be a real advantage, but is in other circumstances sterile and, if taken to excess, harmful. The greatest consumer in the state is the government, and Tracy turns his attention to the effect which the government's income and expenditure have upon national prosperity. He is quick to exclude the government from the ranks of the consommateurs de la classe industrielle, since the government does not create profits, nor are the sums it spends recovered, in increased amounts, thanks to its own efforts. There are two sources of the government's income: the lands it owns and the taxes it levies. With regard to the former, Tracy sees the government as being in the same position as the capitalistes oisifs, in that it owns land, but does not exploit it, drawing a distinction, perhaps over-subtle, between the government's

(1) ibid., chap. XI, p. 261.

(2) ibid., chap. XI, p. 258.

ownership of land and the exploitation of it (by some sort of entrepreneur), which is the true source of profit. Although the government is not responsible for making profits from its lands, there are advantages in its ownership: it can, in Tracy's eyes, acquaint itself with the resources and interests of different regions and can, out of this knowledge, help to spread enlightenment. Furthermore, the more income it draws from this source, the less it is required to draw from taxation, which, since governments possess in fact relatively little land, is the major source of its income.

Tracy, proceeding characteristically by orderly enquiry, divides all taxes into six categories⁽¹⁾ and examines each to seek to determine the particular form of hardship it imposes. For he conceives taxation as a form of sacrifice inflicted on the individual by the government:

Par le moyen des impôts, le gouvernement enlève aux particuliers des richesses qui étaient à leur disposition, pour les dépenser lui-même: ainsi ce sont toujours des sacrifices qu'il leur impose. (2)

This general principle colours his whole thinking on the subject, for he judges the efficacy and the justice of particular forms of taxation not by the benefits which might accrue to the nation as a whole, but rather by what hardships they may cause to individuals or particular classes.

In general, if taxes are levied from men who live off their income and who employ it purely for their own pleasure, this, because of their limited number, has little effect on the sum total of production and consumption, but if taxation is imposed upon entrepreneurs, who live off their profits, then clearly these profits will be diminished. If they are diminished to the extent that, in order to pay the taxes, the entrepreneur's capital is affected, then

(1) ibid., chap. XII, p. 270. The six categories are as follows: (1) l'impôt sur le revenu des terres; (2) celui sur les loyers des maisons; (3) celui sur les rentes dues par l'Etat; (4) celui sur les personnes, comme capitation, taille personnelle etc.; (5) celui sur les actes civils et sur certaines transactions sociales; (6) celui sur les marchandises, soit par monopole et vente exclusive, soit au moment de la première production.

(2) Traité de la Volonté, chap. XII, p. 268.

his enterprises will be endangered and with them production, and the amount available for general consumption. In this way hardship will be more general. It will be particularly severe if taxes are levied from the salariés, since their consumption will be directly affected.

When he turns his attention to specific taxes, Tracy shows considerable ability to master complex detail; although his remarks are designed to illustrate principles he has previously established, he has a proper understanding of the intricacies of taxation effects and a willingness to examine them on a basic level. The taxes he finds most acceptable are those levied on personal wealth derived from revenue from land or from property, and he is prepared to countenance these on social grounds: he has a clear distaste for the capitalistes oisifs and sees it as just that taxes which they pay should compensate for taxes levied on goods, which will harm particularly the poorer classes of society. Taxes on goods at the moment of production are a necessary evil⁽¹⁾: they are necessary in that they are the greatest source of income for the government, since they can be levied on the most basic necessities which are consumed by all. They are particularly cruel, in that the purchase of these basic necessities accounts for almost all the expenditure of the lower social classes, and thus needs are seen to be taxed rather than means.

Tracy himself admits that his views on taxation are not trenchant enough to be brilliant. His final assessment is moderate and unexceptionable:

Les impôts les meilleurs, suivant moi, sont 1^o les plus modérés, parce qu'ils obligent à moins de sacrifices, et nécessitent moins de violences; 2^o les plus variés, parce qu'ils se font équilibre les uns aux autres; 3^o les plus anciens, parce qu'ils ont pénétré dans tous les prix, et que tout s'est arrangé en conséquence. (2)

- (1) In Tracy's view, taxes on luxuries are a positive good, since they will make such delights more expensive, and thus gradually diminish the inequality of fortunes.
- (2) Traité de la Volonté, chap. XII, p. 302.

Tracy grudgingly accepts the need for taxation in order to provide the government with sufficient funds to conduct its affairs, but since the government does not contribute to the wealth of the country in direct form, the balance between the needs and the means of the nation is constantly endangered by governmental expenditure. Whereas in commerce and industry the amount produced tends to remain in excess of the amount consumed, the government produces nothing, and so its consumption is sterile. Thus, what the government consumes (taxation) must be kept to a minimum, as must its expenditure. While some of this expenditure is useful and necessary (expenditure for the construction of roads, canals, bridges, and so on, the payment of soldiers, judges, administrators and the financing of their work), it is, according to Tracy not productive:

(...) je conclus que la totalité des dépenses publiques doit être rangée dans la classe des dépenses justement nommées stériles et improductives; et que, par conséquent, tout ce qu'on paie à l'Etat soit à titre d'impôt, soit même à titre d'emprunt, est un resultat de travaux productifs antérieurement faits, qui doit être regardé comme entièrement consommé et anéanti le jour où il entre dans le trésor national. (1)

A contradiction in Tracy's thought immediately becomes obvious, and springs from his different uses of the word productive. He describes governmental expenditure as non-productive because it does not contribute to the circulation of wealth, yet he had earlier defined production as the creation of utility (see above p. 116). The government certainly creates utility by organising society and developing its resources. Such a contradiction illustrates clearly the fact that there are different patterns of thought in Tracy's ideas on political economy: the basic concept of needs and means, derived from the faculté de vouloir, provides him with an initial working basis, and enables him to evaluate, with some incisiveness, the demands of different classes of society,

(1) ibid., chap. XII, p. 305.

their roles and their capabilities. Needs and means give him, then, a basic kind of balance-sheet. When this balance-sheet comes to be filled in, other considerations are brought to bear, considerations which might properly be called moral: for Tracy it is axiomatic that inequality of wealth, since it is unjust, must be diminished and the interests of the weakest must be safeguarded. If this is to be done, the general level of prosperity throughout the whole society must be assured, and this is to be achieved by the proper development of industry and commerce. Hence the need for consumption which is productive, in the sense that it creates material wealth, which can be used for future development, and hence Tracy's insistence upon this specific aspect of production.

The reservations Tracy expresses concerning governmental expenditure are naturally extended to any loans which the government might raise. The use of credit can only increase this sterile expenditure, providing the nation with debts which will diminish its future resources. Furthermore, besides any economic arguments there are moral objections: no generation, in Tracy's view, has the right to compromise future generations by engaging in binding arrangements, monetary or legislative. Each generation must have the right to review its laws and control its own organisation, and it must not be burdened with debts contracted by its predecessors. In fact Tracy sees the existence of governmental credit as a source of unlimited harm:

Or l'histoire nous apprend que c'est effectivement depuis que les gouvernements ont eu ce que l'on appelle du crédit, c'est-à-dire la possibilité d'employer en un instant les fonds de plusieurs années, qu'ils n'ont plus mis de bornes ni à leurs prodigalités, ni à leur ambition, ni à leurs projets qui ont augmenté leurs armées, qu'ils ont multiplié leurs intrigues,

et qu'ils ont adopté cette politique tracassière avec laquelle on ne peut éviter la guerre, ni jouir de la paix. (1)

For Tracy, use and abuse in public credit are inseparable:

Il y a à peine deux cents ans que les progrès de la civilisation, de l'industrie, du commerce, ceux de l'ordre social, et peut-être aussi l'accroissement du numéraire, ont donné aux gouvernements la facilité de faire des emprunts; et, dans ce court espace de temps, ces dangereux expédients les ont tous conduits à des banqueroutes totales ou partielles, quelquefois répétées, ou à la ressource aussi honteuse et plus funeste du papier-monnaie, ou à rester accablés sous le poids d'un fardeau qui devient chaque jour plus insupportable. (2)

The reference to paper-money is instructive, and the sustained attack which Tracy delivers upon it (3) illustrates his attachment to realities. The reason for money's existence is that it facilitates the exchange on which all transactions are based, by providing a common measure for all commodities, and precious metals are particularly suited to this role, since they are of constant quality. Of all metals, silver is the most appropriate, for gold is too rare, and other metals too common. The basic principle from which Tracy works is that money is not a symbol, but a merchandise in its own right: it has its own value, and is the true equivalent of what it buys. Paper-money, whilst accepted generally as a substitute for silver, is in one important aspect different: it only promises payment and is in itself of no value:

Le papier, comme toute autre chose, n'a de valeur nécessaire que ce qu'il en coûte pour le fabriquer, et n'a de valeur vénale que son prix dans la boutique comme papier. Quand je tiens un billet, une obligation quelconque d'un homme solvable,

- (1) ibid., chap. XII, p. 317. In his Commentaire sur Montesquieu Tracy puts forward the view that public credit is harmful to production: '... un gouvernement qui emprunte ne peut pas forcer à ce qu'on lui prête. Il faut qu'il donne un intérêt capable de déterminer le prêteur, et par conséquent au moins égal à celui qu'offrent ordinairement les particuliers solvables. Mais toutes les sommes qu'on lui prête, on les aurait prêtées à d'autres. Par conséquent, la concurrence augmente pour emprunter, et par suite l'intérêt se tient plus haut qu'il n'aurait été: d'où il arrive que bien des spéculations d'agriculture, de manufacture ou de commerce, qui auraient été fructueuses en empruntant des fonds moins chers, deviennent impossibles. (Livre XXII, p. 376).
- (2) Traité de la Volonté, chap. XII, p. 315.
- (3) ibid., chap. VI. In Quels sont les moyens de fonder la morale d'un peuple? Tracy includes in his catalogue of bad laws 'toute loi qui veut renverser par la violence la nature éternelle des choses, comme celle qui veut faire que du papier soit de l'or, ouvrant une source abondante de nouveaux délits'.

de me payer à vue cent onces d'argent, ce papier n'a que la valeur réelle d'une feuille de papier. Il n'a point celle de cent onces d'argent qu'il me promet. (1)

Transactions are based not upon actual values but upon represented values, which can exercise little restraint upon excessive expenditure, by governments and individuals alike, with the result that there arises a progressive disparity between the values of paper-money and silver. Since paper-money has no basic value of its own, its worth can fluctuate in proportion to its availability: the more issues of paper-money there are, the less each is worth. Depreciation is, in Tracy's view, an inevitable consequence of its introduction, and his condemnation of the system is severe:

(...) le papier-monnaie est la plus coupable et la plus funeste de toutes les banqueroutes frauduleuses. (2)

Tracy may well have in mind the ill-fated assignats which were first issued in April 1790 and which effectively became paper-money in September of the same year. During the six years of their existence (they were replaced by mandats territoriaux in 1796), the value of paper-money continually dropped,⁽³⁾ bringing about much hardship.

Paper-money has the added disadvantage of facilitating the extension of public credit, and inevitably brings with it the danger of national bankruptcy. Tracy was convinced that it was of paramount importance for there to be an exact balance between the income and the expenditure of the state, for both economic and moral reasons,⁽⁴⁾ and it is in areas such as this, he states with

(1) Traité de la Volonté, chap. VI, p. 150.

(2) ibid., chap. VI, p. 158.

(3) 'En août 1796, l'assignat de 100 livres valait un sou. Après la dévaluation du mandat (tombé de 100 livres à une livre), la loi du 10 février 1797 confirma l'assimilation de l'assignat au mandat, à raison de 30 assignats pour un mandat. Ainsi, 3000 livres d'assignats de 1790 ne représentaient plus en 1797 qu'une livre numéraire'. B. Melchior-Bonnet, Dictionnaire de la Révolution et de l'Empire, Paris, Larousse, 1965, art Assignat, p. 30.

(4) The point is made with some insistence in Quels sont les moyens ... See below, chap. VII.

some satisfaction, that proof is given of his basic precept that political economy and morale are branches of the same subject.

For it is this view which, in the final analysis, gives Tracy's ideas on political economy their distinctive quality. However technical he may become (and it is apparent that the principles which he derives from other sources and seeks to apply to the realities of economic organisation become less imperious the more concerned he becomes with justice and humanity), he never loses sight of his primary objectives, to pursue his traité de l'entendement and in so doing to provide an answer to the fundamental problem of assuring the happiness of individual members of society. Personal interest lies at the basis of all economic phenomena: the individual has one primary duty, to satisfy his needs, and he must seek to accomplish this duty, within the limits which society imposes.⁽¹⁾ He will therefore readily contribute to the exchange of goods and services which, as Tracy has shown, is a system of mutual advantage.

Tracy does not, however, discuss further the individual's role within the economic system. Rather he is eager to elaborate the general principle, to establish the category, to define the class. Individual psychology lies, nonetheless, at the foundation of his system, and with it comes a genuine concern for the well-being of the individual. As Allix puts it:

Nulle oeuvre ne démontre mieux que la sienne que la doctrine libérale a été en France, jusqu'à la monarchie de Juillet, une doctrine vraiment généreuse et démocratique dans la plus large acceptation du mot. (2)

Modern historians of economic thought, placing less emphasis upon such foundations and more upon the technicalities of the science, tend to dismiss Tracy's work as a reflection of the work of Say, and in their studies Tracy

(1) For a more detailed exposition of the point, see above, Chap. III.

(2) Allix, 'Destutt de Tracy économiste', op. cit., p. 439.

commands no more than the occasional reference or footnote. This must not lead one to overlook the reputation which Tracy enjoyed down to the middle of the nineteenth century. Blanqui referred to the Traité de la Volonté as 'le meilleur manuel d'économie politique que je connaisse',⁽¹⁾ and in Great Britain MacCullough wrote of it:

With the exception perhaps of the Traité d'Economie politique of Say, this was at the date of its publication the best work that had appeared on that science in France. (2)

Tracy, like Say, sees political economy as consisting of a small number of fundamental principles and a large number of corollaries and consequences of these principles. He postulates them with vigour and his customary rigorous logic, and these qualities may on occasion lead him to develop facets of a system seemingly too rigid and abstract. This weakness is, however, counter-balanced by his passion for social justice and by his honesty. The result is a treatise on political economy which is characteristic of the man and a worthy contribution to the science.

- (1) M. Blanqui, Histoire de l'économie politique en Europe. 2e. ed. Paris, Guillaumin, 1842, Vol. II, p. 419.
- (2) J.R. MacCullough, The Literature of Political Economy, London, Longmans, 1845, p. 22. It should also be noted that Karl Marx devoted some pages of Das Kapital to an analysis of Tracy's ideas and concluded: 'Voilà le crétinisme bourgeois dans toute sa béatitude!' (Book II, chap. XX, para. 13).

- V. - LEGISLATION -

Tracy, it will be recalled, defines legislation as 'la direction de nos actions et de nos sentimens', and in ~~the~~^{the} preceding chapter we have seen how he expresses the view that legislators can inculcate virtue and honesty in the citizens under their authority; moral instruction is to be found in acts of legislation and administration. Helvétius had declared that man is the product of the institutions which surround him, and that these institutions, if perfected by legislation and education, can ensure man's happiness. Since all values, he argues, are derived from human experience, and since human experience is derived from environment, it is essential for man to be in a position to control that environment through just and reasonable laws. Tracy, whilst not seeing man as solely the product of his environment, accords great importance to the legislator, because of his power to influence the judgement of individuals.

Tracy is thus drawn to study the types and categories of laws which might best influence the individual for good and to examine which political system is best suited for the achievement of his liberty and self-fulfilment. It is this latter aspect of legislation which concerns him in his Commentaire sur l'Esprit des Lois de Montesquieu. He began by examining the various questions raised by Montesquieu, using the Esprit des Lois, it would appear, as a starting-point from which he could clarify his own points of view. Realising that these points of view, if properly discussed and presented, would form a coherent political treatise, he was at one stage inclined to the composition of a didactic work with no reference to that of Montesquieu. This, however, would have the disadvantage that discussion (and where necessary refutation) of Montesquieu's ideas would have been more difficult and would have necessitated considerable repetition and cross-reference. Tracy considers himself obliged to undertake

this discussion in consideration of Montesquieu's valuable contribution to the science of legislation, and Tracy suggests that his own ideas might well gain in prestige and force if their relationship to those of Montesquieu were clearly seen. He therefore decided to present a commentary on the earlier work.

This commentary respects the structure of the original, although, as will become clear, this does not prevent Tracy from pursuing his own lines of enquiry. It is evident that Tracy becomes progressively less concerned with the interpretation and discussion of Montesquieu's ideas than with the presentation of his own. The Commentaire appears less and less as a commentary. Tracy is not moved to enter the debate which, as J. Kitchin points out, was carried on during the Revolution, as to whether Montesquieu was to be seen as a conservative and monarchist or as a reformer and republican.⁽¹⁾ Tracy is concerned above all with the principles which underlie Montesquieu's arguments; it is on these that he reasons, with increasingly less reference to their author. This detachment does have its disadvantages, for it jars with the structure imposed on the Commentaire by Tracy's decision to follow, in their order and development, the stages of Montesquieu's arguments. Tracy's commentary thus becomes subject to some clumsiness; it is, for example, bound by Montesquieu's division of governments, a division Tracy expressly rejects in his second chapter.

Tracy's approach to the problems under discussion is inevitably different from that of his predecessor. Since Tracy sees legislation as a branch of idéologie, it is not surprising that he is quick to point out that the earlier work has one particular shortcoming:

Il est impossible de bien parler des intérêts des hommes, sans premièrement se bien rendre compte de la nature de leurs facultés. Si quelque chose a manqué aux lumières du

(1) v. J. Kitchin, op.cit., pp. 102-4.

grand homme que je commente, c'est surtout cette étude préliminaire. (1)

Furthermore he views with great misgivings Montesquieu's reliance on historical material, the validity of which, it appears to Tracy, is, at best, dubious:

(...) qu'il me soit permis de dire que l'on ne peut assez s'étonner de la quantité de faits, ou minutieux, ou problématiques, ou mal circonstanciés, que Montesquieu va chercher dans les auteurs les plus suspects, ou dans les pays les moins connus, pour les faire servir de preuves à ses principes ou à ses raisonnemens. Il me semble que la plupart du temps ils éloignent de la question, au lieu de l'éclairir: j'avoue que cela m'a toujours fait une vraie peine. (2)

Tracy avoids and mistrusts the display of erudition which Montesquieu makes. He will deduce, not observe or recount. For Tracy, history provides no reliable guide, and he indulges in no anecdote or example to add weight to the point he is making. He is altogether less expansive than Montesquieu, limiting himself as he does to the rigorous deduction and examination of principles. Even his references to recent events are remarkably infrequent. All in all, the limited vision of the idéologue stands in striking contrast to the breadth of perspective of his predecessor.

Tracy began the composition of his Commentaire in 1806 or 1807. Cabanis, in a letter to Maine de Biran in 1807, mentions the fact that Tracy is working 'à des remarques sur un de nos plus grands écrivains qu'on regarde avec raison comme un homme de génie, mais qui, dans l'ouvrage jugé son chef-d'oeuvre a peut-être avancé autant d'erreurs dangereuses que de vérités importantes'. Cabanis adds: 'Ce sera un très bel et bon ouvrage'.⁽³⁾ In 1809 Tracy sent the finished manuscript to Jefferson, the President of the United States, with whom he had been in correspondence since 1804, expressing the earnest wish that, should Jefferson see fit to translate and publish the work in America, the author's name should not be divulged. Tracy's request was respected, and when the Commentaire

(1) Commentaire, Livre XI, chap. I, p. 143.

(2) ibid., Livre IX, p. 123.

(3) v. Picavet, op.cit., p. 377.

appeared in translation in America in 1811, it did so anonymously.

It is obvious why Tracy had not entertained the hope of publishing the work in France in 1807, for it presents in strong terms a defence of representative government. It is equally understandable why he should send the manuscript to Jefferson: Tracy allied to his respect for the President an admiration for the American system of government⁽¹⁾ and he may well have cherished hopes that through the good offices of Jefferson the Commentaire might have a role to play in France as a political document. In 1810 Lafayette wrote to Jefferson referring to these hopes as follows:

My friend M. de Tracy has not been more fortunate in his expectations respecting a letter of his, one from me and his notes on Montesquieu which he took the liberty to entrust to you, thinking that in another language and under some American name they might come back to France to some general advantage. (2)

The phrase 'under some American name' is susceptible to two interpretations. It suggests either that Tracy was seeking the patronage of an illustrious American statesman, such as Jefferson, to add authority to his work, or, more probably, that Tracy had intended that the author should appear as an American. In point of fact, in the edition published in the United States the author is presented, in a prefatory letter, as a Frenchman who, having fled from the monster Robespierre, still enjoys safety, freedom and hospitality among another people. This letter is the work of Jefferson himself, who had undertaken the translation.

It was not until 1819 that Tracy published the work in France. At its head was the following Avertissement:

Cet ouvrage existe depuis plus de douze ans. Je l'avais écrit pour M. Jefferson, l'homme des deux mondes que je

- (1) Tracy is of the opinion that the problem of the equitable distribution of powers has not been solved in England, and concludes: 'Je réclamerais plutôt cet honneur pour nos Etats-Unis d'Amérique'.
- (2) G. Chinard, The Letters of Lafayette and Jefferson, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press; Paris, 'Les Belles Lettres', 1929, p. 321.

respecte le plus, et, s'il le jugeait à propos, pour les États-Unis de l'Amérique du nord, où en effet il a été imprimé en 1811. Je ne comptais pas le publier en Europe. Mais, puisqu'une copie inexacte en a couru, puisqu'elle a été imprimée à Liège et réimprimée à Paris, puisque, enfin, tout le monde imprime mon ouvrage sans mon aveu, j'aime mieux qu'il paraisse tel que je l'ai composé.

The Commentaire was indeed published in Belgium in 1817 and in Paris two years later. Neither edition carries the name of the author. In a letter to Jefferson dated 10 December 1817, Lafayette writes:

The Commentary on Montesquieu has been printed in Belgium and introduced here in small quantities for sale. Some changes have been made to present the author as an American, he persisting, against my opinion, to keep his incognito. (1)

The circumstances surrounding the publication of the Commentaire in 1817 are not entirely clear, for the source of the manuscript used has not been finally established. Tracy's avertissement would suggest that the edition is one published entirely without his authority, and if this were the case one would have to assume that it is either a retranslation of the American translation of the original or an edition drawn from the original manuscript which Tracy sent to Jefferson. But Tracy is more closely concerned with this edition than he admits publicly. In a letter to Jefferson dated 10 March 1819 he writes:

(...) vous aurez vu qu'il (the Commentaire) est imprimé à Liège, et que je n'y ai pas mis mon nom; car je n'aime point à m'exposer en public. Cette édition s'est pourtant faite avec ma permission tacite, mais non pas sous ma surveillance, en sorte que les éditeurs ont pris assez de libertés avec le texte, en ont changé le style dans beaucoup d'endroits et y ont même fait un petit retranchement. (2)

While the full extent and nature of Tracy's involvement in the publication of this edition cannot be finally established, it is likely that his 'tacit permission' extended to the supplying of a manuscript. Whatever his complaints, the text, apart from small changes of detail, is identical to that published in

(1) ibid., p. 394.

(2) G. Chinard, Jefferson et les Idéologues, p. 192.

1819 by Desoer with Tracy's blessing and under his name. The 'unauthorised' version does contain a few notes attributed to the editor, but does not include some notes added by Tracy in the later edition. The identity of the two texts is emphasised by the fact that, while Lafayette mentions efforts made in the 1817 edition to present the author as an American, the official 1819 text retains references to, for example, 'notre convention de 1787 qui a mis la dernière main à la constitution fédérative des États-Unis de l'Amérique' and 'nous autres Américains'.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Tracy was anxious to see his work published in France, but initially reluctant to acknowledge authorship. The Commentaire contains a rejection of the principle of the placing of executive power in the hands of one individual and criticisms of the principles of monarchy. A note is inserted in the 1817 edition, ostensibly from the editor, emphasising that the work is an abstract theory of government, without reference to a particular age or a particular country. When the Commentaire was openly sold in France without any reaction from the authorities, Tracy, perhaps surprised by the reimpression undertaken without his knowledge by Delaunay, decided to publish the work under his own name, taking care to insert a note in the form of a vigorous defence of constitutional monarchy. This decision to publish reflects Tracy's view that his work can still be of value. The inclusion of the note, doubtless due in part to caution and political awareness, characteristics never dulled in Tracy by his detachment from the contemporary political scene, reflects a reassessment on his part of the manner by which political liberty is achieved, and the full significance of the note will emerge during the analysis of Tracy's ideas as they are expressed in the Commentaire.

Tracy begins his analysis by refuting Montesquieu's definition of the word loi and substituting one more elementary:

Les lois ne sont pas, comme le dit Montesquieu, les rapports nécessaires qui dérivent de la nature des choses. Une loi n'est pas un rapport, et un rapport n'est pas une loi.(...) Nous entendons par une loi une règle prescrite à nos actions par une autorité que nous regardons comme ayant le droit de faire cette loi. (1)

He is careful to distinguish between natural laws, those beyond human control which govern the physical organisation of the universe, and artificial, or positive laws, which govern the organisation of society. The latter must be consequent upon the former, and the body of natural laws, which are immutable, provides the basis for the judgement of just and unjust positive laws:

Reste donc que les lois de la nature existent antérieurement et supérieurement aux nôtres; que le juste fondamental est ce qui leur est conforme; et que l'injuste radical est ce qui leur résiste; et que par conséquent, nos lois postérieures doivent, pour être réellement bonnes, être conséquentes à ces lois plus anciennes et plus puissantes. (2)

It is this basis which will guide Tracy throughout his commentary. He holds before him the need to ensure happiness and avoid misery, and he is always conscious that there will be various ways of achieving happiness in the different social organisations which are possible. He is not then at the outset arguing a case from a parti pris; he does not overtly set out to attack monarchy and despotism or defend representative government from previously held conviction. He recognises that each of these forms of government may contribute to the public good. What he seeks to do is to examine the advantages and drawbacks of each and the extent to which each bases its organisation on the natural law.

Tracy also rejects Montesquieu's division of governments. In his view, the term republic covers a multitude of different types of government, including those which have one chief of state (such as the United States), thereby

(1) Commentaire, Livre I, p.1. References are to the 1819 edition published by Desoer.

(2) ibid., Livre I, p.6.

invalidating the differentiation, as Montesquieu establishes it, between republic and monarchy. Monarchy, as Tracy understands it, is the government in which the executive power is given to one individual (which corresponds to Montesquieu's definition of despotism). If this power should be limited, it is limited only by privileged factions whose interests are distinct from the interests of the people, and Tracy concludes that Montesquieu's monarchy should be termed an aristocracy with a single head of state. The word despotism describes an abuse of power which may be found in any government, since all human institutions are liable to imperfection, but cannot be the name describing any particular form of government.⁽¹⁾ Since no government is formed with oppression as a principle, there is none which by its nature can be called despotic. Thus, since the terms Montesquieu uses are of dubious validity and the divisions between them difficult to establish, Tracy is led to an outright rejection of his terminology:

Je conclus que la division des gouvernements en républicains, monarchiques et despotiques est vicieuse de tous points, et que chacune de ces classes renfermant des genres très-divers et même très-opposés, on ne saurait dire sur chacune d'elles que des choses très-vagues, ou qui ne peuvent convenir à tous les états qui y sont compris. (2)

Tracy divides governments into two classes: gouvernements nationaux ou de droit commun, and gouvernements spéciaux ou de droit particulier et d'exception.

In drawing up this distinction, Tracy, it will be seen, does not appear primarily concerned with the external form of government, but rather with the principle underlying it. For example, he defines the principle at the basis of the government de droit commun as follows:

De quelque manière qu'ils soient organisés, je rangerai dans la première classe tous ceux où l'on tient pour principe que tous les droits et tous les pouvoirs appartiennent au corps entier de la nation, résident en lui, sont émanés de lui, et

(1) This idea is particularly reminiscent of d'Holbach, V. Système social, II, xiii.

(2) Commentaire, Livre II, p. 10.

n'existent que par lui et pour lui. (1)

Thus, since the people may exercise their rights themselves, delegate them to representatives or to one man, such a government may assume any form. The principle of droit commun, as Tracy describes it, presupposes that any abuse of power may be corrected by the expression of the general will of the people.

The second category of governments is referred to as follows:

(...) ceux, quels qu'ils soient, où l'on reconnoît d'autres sources légitimes de droits et de pouvoirs que la volonté générale, comme l'autorité divine, la conquête, la naissance dans tel lieu ou dans telle caste, des capitulations respectives, un pacte social exprès ou tacite, où les parties stipulent, comme puissances étrangères l'une à l'autre, etc. etc. (2)

As before, such a government may assume any form. Tracy is careful not to pass any premature judgement upon the respective merits of these two classes of government, anxious as he is to proceed along the path of observation and deduction. He establishes his own division of governments on the basis that they already exist or are possible, but the scant treatment he affords the second category, the gouvernements spéciaux, and the lack of precision with which he deals with them, already give some indication that he cannot accept a system where the rights of the people count for nothing. These governments, by their nature, can have no principle other than the maintenance of privileged interests, and will inevitably come to assume a despotic face, however indirect or sophisticated it might be. For example:

Dans le gouvernement spécial sous forme monarchique, le prince a donc besoin d'appuyer son droit privé, de beaucoup d'autres droits privés qui y soient subordonnés, mais qui y soient liés. Il a besoin de s'entourer de nobles puissans, mais soumis, hautains et souples, qu'il tienne en sujétion et qui y tiennent la nation. (3)

(1) ibid., Livre II, p. 12.

(2) ibid., Livre II, p. 14.

(3) ibid., Livre VII, p. 53.

As will become apparent in his observations on the third book of the Esprit des Lois, Tracy identifies too closely representative government with enlightened reason for him to remain impartial.

Consequent upon Tracy's rejection of Montesquieu's division of governments is his rejection of the principles underlying them. Just as he found the terms republic, monarchy and despotism too imprecise and generalised, so he finds the application of such terms as honour, virtue or fear of little value. He argues, justifiably enough, that Montesquieu confuses two principles: the principe conservateur, that sentiment which must animate the members of a society for its régime to continue, and the principe moteur, that which provides the active principle by which the government governs. Moreover, despotism, for Tracy, is not a form of government, but an abuse of power, and if a government sought to persuade its people to grant it greater authority, it would do so by reason rather than by fear. It is the nature of despotic governments, however, not to seek the consent of its people, and thus, while fear may be one of the causes of despotism, it can in no way serve as a principle. Tracy also pours scorn on the principles underlying Montesquieu's monarchy and republic, finding the terms Montesquieu uses altogether too vague, and in his characteristically logical fashion he is quick to point out deficiencies of argument. Honour and ambition can be either generous and noble or base and selfish; moderation, according to circumstance, is either wise or weak, magnanimous or dissimulating. And to pose 'virtue' as a principle exclusively for a republic is to imply that it is out of place elsewhere, less useful and laudable, for example, in a monarchy, than vice, a view which, while it apparently corresponds to Montesquieu's picture of court life under a monarchy, is hardly creditable in Tracy's eyes.

Tracy wastes no time in reverting to his own division of governments and examining the forms which they might assume, and the principles which underlie

them. Pure democracy is virtually impossible, feasible only for a short time among uncivilised nations in remote regions. Elsewhere it leads inexorably to anarchy and tyranny. Tracy brings forward in support of this view one of his rare pieces of historical evidence, citing the history of Greece, where the survival of democracies was due to federal ties which bound them. (1)

If democracy is 'l'état de la nature brute', representative government, in Tracy's eyes, is that of 'la nature perfectionnée, qui n'est ni déviée ni sophistiquée, et qui ne procède ni par système ni par expédients'. (2) In this description, and in the subsequent elaboration of the principles governing representative government, Tracy shows all too clearly where his sympathies lie, and the extent to which the rigorous logic and empiricism which he proclaims to be necessary to any examination may be tempered by personal bias. In subsequent chapters Tracy is even more affirmative: he refers to representative government as 'la démocratie de la raison éclairée'; (3) he finds it 'essentiellement lié à l'égalité, à la justice, à la saine morale' (4) and adds significantly: 'Il est conforme à la nature'. (5)

Tracy is here apparently advancing evidence of a psychological nature in support of a political regime. Under the guise of an objective examination, he comes to identify the principle (principe ^{motour} conservateur) which animates one particular form of government with virtues which are not only praiseworthy in themselves, but which are in his eyes fundamental to human nature. This principle is the people's love of equality and liberty, peace and justice, and

(1) Tracy's views on the principle of federation, which are of some importance, are discussed later in the chapter.

(2) Commentaire, Livre III, p. 22.

(3) ibid., Livre V, p. 57.

(4) ibid., Livre IV, p. 45.

(5) ibid., Livre V, p. 57.

it is most easily realised by such qualities as simplicity, the habit of work, contempt for vanity and love of independence. This collective virtue (which Tracy opposes to Montesquieu's vertu républicaine, which he rejects because of its essence of self-renunciation) is inherent in man's nature and experience will easily turn it to good effect:

Pour celle (la vertu) que je viens de décrire, elle est si bien dans notre nature qu'un peu d'habitude, de bon sens, quelques lois sages, et surtout l'expérience que la violence et l'intrigue sont rarement suivies de succès (et quelques années suffiraient pour le prouver), la feraient naître infailliblement et nécessairement. (1)

Thus once again Tracy expresses confidence in man's natural tendency towards sobriety and good sense. He reaffirms man's natural goodness and his inclination towards sympathy, which gives him not only a feeling for his fellows but a keen social awareness. These qualities, when transcribed into a social context, become the foundations of a political system and its justification.

Helvétius had stated that if differences of experience account for differences of ability and character, and if by nature one man has as much merit as another, then social distinctions appear arbitrary. He appears to favour representative government because the rejection of the idea of inherited differences as a cause of varied ability among men presents an unanswerable case for political equality. In similar fashion Tracy echoes the egalitarianism inherent in the sensationalist doctrine, and indeed without discussing the causes of inequality in men, and with more limited discussion, he goes further than Helvétius by declaring that representative government conforms to man's nature. In Tracy's view the human qualities which justify representative government will in their turn be nurtured and developed by it, since this is the only form of government which espouses the principle of universal liberty. Tracy has identified liberty with happiness and defined liberty as the satisfaction of the will. He finds that only representative government 'n'a nul

(1) ibid., Livre III, p. 24.

besoin de contraindre les sentimens et de forcer les volontés'.⁽¹⁾

Theoretically, Tracy admits, any form of government can assure the happiness of the individual:

Si le prince qui exerce le pouvoir le plus despotique administrerait parfaitement, on serait, sous son empire, au comble du bonheur, qui est une seule et même chose avec la liberté. (2)

Yet throughout his Commentaire Tracy insists upon the tendency of representative government to foster individual liberty and the tendency of other governments to reduce it. He delivers a formidable indictment of monarchy, both hereditary or elective (using the term monarchy to describe a government where power is concentrated in the hands of one man), and aristocracy. For him there is a fundamental opposition between the concept of liberty and a government which, even if it falls into Tracy's category of gouvernement de droit commun, maintains privilege to any degree, be it the privilege of one individual or that of a class. He is particularly severe on monarchy's tendency, as he sees it, to foster luxury, vanity, war, disorder in the state's finances, the depravity of courtiers, the degradation of the lower classes, not to mention what he calls 'l'esprit de légèreté, d'irréflexion, d'insouciance et d'égoïsme'.⁽³⁾

In contrast, representative government will inculcate a true moral sense in its citizens and will bring into effect those measures which Tracy advocates in Quels sont les moyens In fact Tracy uses virtually the same vocabulary as in the earlier work:

Il établira l'égalité des partages, restreindra la faculté de tester, permettra le divorce avec les précautions convenables, empêchera ainsi que les testaments et les mariages soient un objet continuel de spéculations sans honnête industrie. (4)

In this way representative government is clearly identified by Tracy with the

(1) ibid., Livre V, p. 57.

(2) ibid., Livre XI, chap. I, p. 148.

(3) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 197.

(4) ibid., Livre V, p. 58. See below, chapter VII.

dawn of a new era of justice and reason. He distinguishes three stages of civilisation which are, in terms of the governments which characterise them: firstly, democracy or despotism, which are the only systems which could be conceived by uncivilised man; secondly, aristocracy, with one head of state or several heads, which is the system which has characterised all nations since the beginning of civilisation; and thirdly, representative government, again with one head of state or several heads, which Tracy regards as a new invention, unknown to Montesquieu. (1)

In these three stages of civilisation the dominant forces are respectively ignorance and force, religion and reason. Whilst the aristocratic (or monarchic) government will seek to stifle the dissemination of learning and the independence of men's minds, in order to maintain a system of privilege, representative government will foster them:

Il se bornera à diminuer, autant que possible, la plus funeste de toutes les inégalités, celle des lumières; à développer tous les talents; à leur donner à tous une égale liberté de s'exercer, et à ouvrir à chacun des citoyens également tous les chemins vers la fortune et la gloire. (2)

Representative government is thus advocated with Tracy's accustomed vigour and assurance, but it is clear that his arguments, while benefiting from these qualities, offer serious weaknesses when considered from a strictly logical viewpoint. His dependence upon a classification no less rigid than that of Montesquieu has its drawbacks, in that he is led to postulate the possible existence of a monarchy or aristocracy de droit commun, an eventuality he renders unlikely, to say the least, by insisting upon the maintenance and indeed abuse of privilege which is at the basis of these governments. Although he declares

(1) Tracy adds that representative government was impossible before the invention of printing, which made the communication of ideas and the publication of parliamentary debates possible.

(2) Commentaire, Livre V, p. 57.

that he is considering only those governments which exist or might exist, such speculation as this shows only too clearly that Tracy is progressing along lines of abstract reasoning rather than observation.

Furthermore, it could well be argued that Tracy has been selective in the qualities fundamental to human nature with which he identifies the principles of representative government. He chooses to emphasise the people's attachment to justice and equality, thereby striking a note altogether more optimistic than that of Quels sont les moyens ... or the Traité de la Volonté, where he sees men as only too ready to commit crimes and secure their own advantage. In the Traité, it will be remembered, he declares inequality of means to be a fundamental fact of life. There is little evidence that men, in fact, are imbued with such qualities *as* those of simplicity, the habit of work, contempt for vanity and so on, and indeed Tracy, in Quels sont les moyens..., seeks ways of instilling them in his fellow-citizens. In other words, the 'nature' with which representative government is in accord (to use Tracy's phrase) is in itself not satisfactorily defined. Tracy suggests some doubt in his mind in a curious sentence which appears to represent a withdrawal on his part:

Ce n'est donc pas la forme du gouvernement qui en elle-même est une chose importante. Ce serait même une raison assez faible à alléguer en sa faveur, que de dire qu'elle est plus conforme qu'une autre aux vrais principes de la raison. (1)

It is certainly debatable whether representative government will necessarily stimulate virtue or 'la saine morale' more effectively than any other form of government.

Certainly Tracy postulates a basic kind of egalitarianism, suggested to him by the abstractions of idéologie, which impose on his thought a model or type of human being. His concern is to discover which form of government is

(1) ibid., Livre XI, chap. I, p. 148.

most likely to realise this in practical terms, and his support for representative government is based upon the simple assumption that if the people are given a voice and, more specifically, the power to modify the authority above them, or bring it to an end, then their good sense and love of liberty will assure a just and reasonable administration. Such a view may be more optimistic than realistic, and takes no account of the deficiencies particular to representative governments (and especially legislative assemblies) which Tracy deals with later in respect of other questions. For the present he sees the question of government in terms of a simple opposition between representation and oppression.

It is noticeable that in speaking of representative government Tracy does not specify what precise form it should take. At no time does he argue, for example, the cause of a republic (as we have seen he objects to the term as such) and although critics have seen Tracy as a 'republican',⁽¹⁾ there is nothing specific in the central arguments of the Commentaire to support this. Tracy makes noticeably few references to the First Republic or to the different constitutions operative after 1789, but it is possible to deduce certain of his preferences. The remarks he makes concerning the separation of powers, the proper exercise of executive power, the position of the English people in relation to their monarch and the role of that monarch himself, in fact the whole tone and tenor of his arguments do suggest a sympathy for the principle of a republic, or more precisely a government in which the executive power is not in the hands of one man.⁽²⁾ It is this which renders his note inserted into the Desoer edition of 1819 (and referred to above) so remarkable. In this note

(1) For example Cruet writes: 'La philosophie morale et sociale de Destutt de Tracy est la philosophie républicaine par excellence'. (op.cit.) p.170).

(2) Tracy defines republic as 'la destruction du pouvoir exécutif héréditaire' (Commentaire, Livre XI, chap. II, p. 167).

Tracy states:

(...) je suis très-persuadé que la monarchie constitutionnelle, ou le gouvernement représentatif avec un seul chef héréditaire est et sera encore extrêmement longtemps, malgré ses imperfections, le meilleur de tous les gouvernements possibles pour tous les peuples de l'Europe, et surtout pour la France. (...) Toutes les nations qui ont reçu de leur monarque une charte constitutionnelle déclarant et consacrant les principaux droits des hommes en société, et qui comme les Français l'ont acceptée avec joie et reconnaissance, ne sont plus dans le cas des peuples qui ont à se faire une constitution, qu'ils en ont véritablement une et qu'ils ne doivent plus songer qu'à l'exécuter ponctuellement, et à s'y attacher tous les jours plus fortement. (1)

This stands in apparent contrast not only to the general direction of his arguments, but also to the specific view he holds of a constitutional monarchy, for he refers to the English system of government in the following terms:

Le roi n'est qu'un être parasite, un rouage superflu au mouvement de la machine, dont il ne fait qu'augmenter les frottemens et les frais. Il ne sert à rien du tout qu'à remplir, avec à peu près le moins d'inconvéniens possible, une place funeste à la tranquillité publique (...) (2)

Tracy's defence of constitutional monarchy is made yet more remarkable by the fact that its introduction into France in 1814 represents the denial of a principle underlying all French constitutions after 1789, that of national sovereignty. This is a principle Tracy supports wholeheartedly. He accepts that no body or individual may exercise any authority which does not issue directly from the nation; those who occupy public office are the representatives of the nation and translate its will into action. Napoleon had presented himself as the instrument of national sovereignty, with authority guaranteed by popular consent, whereas Louis XVIII, whilst respecting many of the principles which the provisional government of 1814 sought to impose, did not seek the

(1) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 211.

(2) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 186.

assent of the people on his assumption of power. He was, moreover, careful to insist that the charter, which took the place of a constitution, was granted by the monarch to the people, and not imposed by them on him. This recognition of a hereditary monarchy, anterior and superior to any constitution, and independent of the will of the people, cuts across many of Tracy's established principles and indeed in matters of detail the organisation of the Restoration government does not meet Tracy's requirements for what he considers necessary in a just and reasonable administration.

In his note Tracy stresses his sincerity in presenting this viewpoint, rejects the thought of a possible self-contradiction and declares that he is merely establishing the difference between theoretical abstraction and practical reality. This is in itself a curious remark from one as predisposed to analysis as he is, and to place the whole question in its proper perspective, it is necessary to examine further Tracy's own principles.

He presents the hypothetical case of a nation which seeks a new constitution, and begins by examining the ways in which this might be achieved. There are in his view, three methods: through the existing authorities, through the offices of one individual elected for that purpose, or through the efforts of an assembly equally elected for that purpose. The first method is the simplest and presents fewest practical difficulties, but offers serious drawbacks. There is the danger of bargaining between the authorities to maintain themselves in power, change and reform are unlikely to be provided for, and the rights of the people may not be properly established.

The second method allows for more complete renovation and a more complete system of legislation in that, issuing from one mind, it is likely to be more unified in conception. Obvious difficulties present themselves: the greatest is that of finding one man equal to the task and, even if this were possible,

there would be the further difficulty of safeguarding the nation from too ambitious and unscrupulous a legislator. Furthermore, a system which is the creation of one man is less likely to coincide with national feeling and consequently is less likely to find general favour.

The third method - that of creating a constitution through an elected assembly - clearly has Tracy's sympathy, although again he recognises certain inherent weaknesses. The first of these gives him the opportunity to cast a jaundiced eye upon the workings of assemblies:

(...) quand on songe combien les hommes réunis sont souvent moins raisonnables que chacun d'eux pris séparément, combien les lumières d'une assemblée sont, en général, inférieures à celles des plus éclairés de ses membres, combien ses résolutions sont exposées à être vacillantes et incohérentes, on doit bien penser que son ouvrage ne sera pas le plus parfait possible. (1)

He is concerned with the dangers of corporate despotism, but is reassured by the evidence of experience in the recent past, (both in France and the United States), and by the presence of a provisional authority to which the elected assembly must be responsible. This does not prevent him from severely castigating the Convention in France:

La trop fameuse convention nationale française, qui a fait tant de mal à l'humanité en rendant la raison odieuse; qui, malgré la haute capacité et les grandes vertus de plusieurs de ses membres, s'est laissé dominer par des fanatiques et des hypocrites, des scélérats et des fourbes; et qui, par cela même, a rendu d'avance inutiles ses plus belles conceptions, n'a éprouvé ces malheurs que parce que la législature précédente lui a remis à la fois tous les pouvoirs. (2)

Such preliminaries as these are characteristic of Tracy in that they satisfy his concern to begin in all things at the beginning and his need for order and methodical procedure in his enquiries. They serve also to reaffirm his defence of the notion of national sovereignty for he takes it for granted

(1) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 165.

(2) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 167.

that a nation must express its views on how a new constitution is to be drawn up. He devotes several pages to this question, and concludes in favour of assemblies in different regions of the country in which all citizens (that is, all adult males, not women) should have equal voting rights. He assumes with typical faith in his own reasoning that the nation will favour the election of a constitutional assembly and here he envisages an intermediary stage: the mass of the people, unable to identify those qualified to sit in such an assembly, will delegate others to choose in their name.

Tracy is apparently in favour of such a system of electoral colleges when it comes to the election of a legislative assembly; here he speaks of 'des corps électoraux assemblés dans différentes communes, lesquels sont très-propres à choisir les deux ou trois sujets les plus capables, les mieux famés, et les plus accredités dans une certaine étendue de pays'.⁽¹⁾ All men will thus have some part to play in legislation, however indirect. Tracy never advocates a restricted electorate, based upon property qualification, and thus remains firm in his attachment to the principle of national sovereignty, and consistent in his opposition to inequality of power based upon inequality of wealth. On the other hand, he does not entertain the idea, at least in the pages of the Commentaire, of direct universal suffrage, convinced as he is that there must be realistic limits:

Les membres de la société ont intérêt à ce que tout se fasse bien; mais cet intérêt ne doit pas les porter à prendre une part directe à tout ce que qui se fait, mais au contraire à n'accepter que les fonctions auxquelles ils sont propres. (2)

It appears that Tracy arrives at this view with some reluctance, but he consoles himself with the thought that the privileges of the electors, chosen by the

(1) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 200.

(2) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 179.

mass of the people, will not be guaranteed by birth or fortune, but by qualities closer to his heart:

Il arrivera nécessairement que ces hommes choisis seront déjà d'une classe au-dessus de la dernière, d'une éducation plus soignée, auront des vues plus étendues, des relations plus nombreuses, seront moins asservis aux considérations locales. (...). C'est là la bonne aristocratie. (1)

Tracy is perfectly clear on how the powers within any society should be distributed and by what principles they should exercise their functions. Governments are made for those they govern and can exist only by virtue of the will of the majority of the people. They must change when that will changes. Consequently there can be no hereditary power, nor can there exist any class of men either favoured or oppressed at the expense of or to the profit of another. There can be no power which cannot be modified without violence.

When he turns to the systems of governments which might be formed under a constitution Tracy inevitably accepts the principle of the separation of powers and discusses how tyranny can be avoided. His approach to the question is different to that of Montesquieu: he does not concentrate upon the legislative executive and judiciary as independent and rival powers, but upon two forces which he discerns within the state:

(...) les fonctions législatives, exécutives et judiciaires ne sont que des fonctions déléguées, qui peuvent bien donner du pouvoir ou du crédit à ceux à qui elles sont confiées, mais qui ne sont pas des puissances existantes par elles-mêmes. Il n'y a en droit qu'une puissance, la volonté nationale; et en fait il n'y en a pas d'autre, que l'homme ou le corps chargé des fonctions exécutives (...). (2)

Tracy's thought is dominated by fear of excessive executive power, and he would favour any constitutional means which would establish the dependence of the executive upon the legislative:

Il ne faut point prétendre les mettre en parallèle, et, pour ainsi dire, en pendant. L'un est incontestablement le premier,

(1) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 180.

(2) ibid., Livre XI, chap. I, p. 152.

et l'autre le second, par la seule raison qu'il faut vouloir avant d'agir. Il ne faut pas les considérer comme rivaux et les placer en opposition l'un vis-à-vis de l'autre. Le second dépend nécessairement du premier, en ce sens que l'action doit suivre la volonté. (1)

In the first place Tracy cannot accept the placing of executive authority in the hands of one man. Such a common practice has arisen, according to Tracy, because of the desire of nations (in the ill-defined past) to have not unity of execution but unity of legislation. This power was granted to one man, and in order to make it effective, executive power was also granted, with the result that nations were ruled by absolute monarchs. When these nations came to claim their right to impose their will, they sought to do so by controlling the legislative processes, the very processes they had originally agreed to yield to one man. Tracy concludes with a critical reference to the resultant constitutional monarchy:

C'est ainsi à peu près que les choses se sont passées chez tous les peuples soumis à une autorité monarchique, qui par la suite des temps et des événemens ont obtenu une représentation nationale un peu régulière, et qui par conséquent vivent sous un gouvernement modéré; et c'est ce qui fait qu'ils ne sont libres qu'à moitié, et qu'ils sont à tout instant en danger de ne l'être plus du tout. (2)

For Tracy, then, the practice whereby legislative power is exercised by many and executive power by one man is the result of historical pressures, and may indeed be considered the inversion of common-sense. He is prepared to countenance the granting of legislative power to one man, a practice he readily agrees is not usual. It would however have various points to recommend it: such a legislator, providing he had no executive power, would have no chance of becoming a despot, and would thus work without personal ambition. Since he could be divested of his authority at any time, it would be in his interests

(1) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 199.

(2) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 188.

to work for the happiness of all. In point of fact Tracy grows very enthusiastic:

(...) on ne lui obéirait jamais que comme à un ami sage dont on suit les conseils tant qu'on s'en trouve bien, et non comme à un maître dont on est forcé d'exécuter les ordres les plus funestes. Ainsi la liberté serait à son comble. (1)

Tracy inclines to the view that such legislation would in all probability be wiser and more unified than that achieved by an assembly, but admits that an assembly elected from different parts of the country would be more likely to enjoy public confidence and would be better able to impose its views. Furthermore, an assembly, partially re-elected at different times, would ensure greater continuity than one man, whose departure from office would entail a serious interruption in legislative procedures. Tracy is, as we have seen, well aware that assemblies tend towards the mediocre and to fail to attain consistently the heights of virtue, intelligence and efficiency embodied in their most eminent members. He is furthermore alive to the fact that bodies can be swayed by emotion, and provoked by skilful oratory, so that they may be precipitated into actions which would not be contemplated if the representatives were in the solitude and silence of their studies. Nonetheless he concludes, with an air of reluctance, in favour of a plurality in the legislative power. Above all he places emphasis upon the need for unity in legislation, and at no time considers a second parliamentary chamber.

He combats most strongly, however, unity of executive power, and examines in detail the effects of such a principle in respect both of an elected and a hereditary head of state. In the case of the former he is less condemnatory; he finds comfort in the very prudence which limits the functions of the executor in time, and if such prudence extends to the limiting of his functions within

(1) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 182.

clearly defined areas, Tracy concludes that the executor is unlikely to be of sufficient importance to be of danger. Here, and in his reference to the executor in these circumstances as 'le premier magistrat d'un peuple libre et qui peut continuer à l'être',⁽¹⁾ Tracy clearly has in mind the example of the United States.

The further one moves from this type of limitation of executive power, the more disadvantageous the system grows, for more scope is given to personal ambition, and this is particularly evident when the hereditary principle is introduced. The authority of one man is essentially progressive; it cannot be continuously and peacefully contained within reasonable limits without the most stringent safeguards, and when it is hereditary this single authority reaches the last stage in its development, a stage which represents the antithesis of national sovereignty:

En effet, nul pouvoir héréditaire ne peut être assuré, si l'on reconnaît la suprématie de la volonté générale; car il est de l'essence de l'hérédité d'être perpétuelle, et de celle de la volonté d'être temporaire et révocable. Il faut donc de toute nécessité que la monarchie héréditaire, pour être affermie, étouffe le principe de la souveraineté nationale. (2)

A hereditary power has interests distinct from those of the rest of the nation, and thus inevitably conducts itself as one faction within the state. It is led to weaken the power of the nation in order to overcome it; it must divide the nation in order to set different classes against each other.

Tracy concludes in favour of an executive authority entrusted to a council, composed of a small number of men elected for a limited time and subject to constant partial renewal. He apparently thinks in terms of a group of eight or ten men. Such a council in Tracy's eyes would obviate the dangers of tyranny but would still provide those qualities commonly associated with the

(1) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 191.

(2) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 196.

rule of one man: unity of perspective and speed of execution.

Tracy thus favours plurality in both legislative and executive power, but these bodies, in his view, are not sufficient to the organisation of a state. As we have seen, the executive must be subordinate to the legislature; it must exercise its functions in accord with the laws, in both letter and spirit, but it must not do so passively, since it must put into effect only those wishes of the legislature which are legitimate. There is an obvious possibility of dispute. This consideration, allied to the need to ensure that executive authority is not excessive, leads Tracy to recommend the creation of a third body within the constitution, a corps conservateur designed to oversee the actions of the other two bodies. Such an assembly would have certain well-defined functions. It would verify the validity of elections to the legislature, and it would organise elections to the executive, either by choosing itself from among candidates selected by regional electoral assemblies, or by sending them lists of candidates. It would nominate judges and act as a form of supreme court to try offences against the state committed by members of the executive. It would decide upon the legality or otherwise of actions of the legislative and executive authorities, and it would determine the occasions when the constitution should be revised and the manner in which this should be done.

This corps conservateur, composed of elder statesmen, elected for life and 'ayant passé l'âge des passions et celui des grands projets' is, in Tracy's terms, 'la clef de la voûte', and without it the whole structure would be in danger of collapse. His primary concern is to refute any possible objection that such a body would be too weak to oppose an ambitious and unscrupulous head of state, and he feels called upon to defend the Sénat of which he has been a member and which he recognises to be the model for his own corps

conservateur:

(...) la liberté est toujours impossible à défendre dans une nation tellement fatiguée de ses efforts et de ses malheurs, qu'elle préfère même l'esclavage à la plus légère agitation qui pourrait résulter de la moindre résistance: et telle était la disposition des Français lors de l'établissement de leur sénat; aussi ils se sont vu enlever, sans le moindre murmure et presque avec plaisir, jusqu'à la liberté de la presse et la liberté individuelle. (1)

Indeed he sees this example drawn from recent history as conclusive proof of the validity of his own proposals:

D'ailleurs, ainsi que je l'ai souvent dit, il n'y a aucune mesure qui puisse empêcher les usurpations, quand une fois toute la force active est remise dans une seule main, comme elle l'était par la constitution de 1799 (an VIII), (car les deux seconds consuls n'étaient rien); et j'ajoute que si les Français se fussent avisés de placer ce même corps conservateur dans leur constitution de 1795 (fructidor an III), dans laquelle le pouvoir exécutif était réellement partagé, il se serait maintenu avec succès entre le directoire et le corps législatif; il aurait empêché la lutte violente qui a eu lieu entre eux en 1797 (18 fructidor an V); et cette nation jouirait actuellement de la liberté qui lui a toujours échappé au moment de l'atteindre. (2)

This essentially laudatory appraisal of the constitution of 1795 is of particular interest, not only because it conflicts with Tracy's disenchantment with the constitution, already noted in chapter I, but also because it is one of the few references Tracy makes to the political realities of the Republic. This particular constitution does not, of course, correspond in detail to Tracy's proposals; although it establishes a corporate executive, it provides for a legislature of two chambers. If Tracy expresses sympathy with its aims and spirit, this is to be accounted for primarily by his rejection of subsequent constitutions and his support for the principle of plurality in the executive.

The constitution itself contains principles not in keeping with Tracy's ideas. It makes severe inroads upon the notion of national sovereignty, by

(1) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 207.

(2) ibid., Livre XI, chap. II, p. 208.

placing sovereignty not in the nation but in the 'universalité des citoyens', and by defining 'citizens' in terms of age and property. The Declaration of Rights which precedes it, whilst reproducing the essential points of the Declaration of 1789,⁽¹⁾ makes some notable omissions. It makes no mention of the rights of the people to education, work or assistance. It omits the phrase 'Les hommes naissent et demeurent libres et égaux en droits', replacing it with a summary definition of liberty and equality. Altogether this constitution represents a reactionary measure, designed to arrest the progress of democracy. As Godechot puts it:

Ses rédacteurs ont obéi surtout au souci de prévenir l'avènement de toute dictature, qu'elle fût d'un homme ou d'un groupe d'hommes, et d'assurer à la bourgeoisie la paisible jouissance des avantages que la Révolution lui avait procurés. Pour cette raison, elle répudie tout ce qui, dans les constitutions précédentes, avait été établi sous l'influence de Rousseau ou de ses disciples, et s'efforce de suivre le théoricien des "corps intermédiaires", Montesquieu. Aussi, la constitution de l'an III marque-t-elle un recul, non seulement sur celle de 1793, mais même sur celle de 1791. (2)

The constitution of l'An III stands in particularly sharp contrast to that voted in 1793, but never put into effect. This earlier constitution is striking because of its democratic quality. It provides for universal suffrage (except for women) and the direct election of deputies to the legislative assembly. The executive, composed of twenty-four members, would be chosen by the legislative assembly, and would be strictly subordinate to it. The constitution, establishing as a principle that 'le bonheur commun' is the aim of the state, provides for constant state intervention to bring about such happiness by means of social reform. The spirit and provisions of this constitution (with the exception of direct universal suffrage) appear to correspond more closely with Tracy's own views, and thus his acceptance of the constitution of

(1) Tracy writes of this Declaration: 'Elle est, je crois, la meilleure qui ait été faite, car elle se réduit à l'énoncé d'un petit nombre de principes, qui sont tous sains. (...) C'était une déclaration de guerre aux oppresseurs'. (Commentaire, Résumé des XII premiers livres, p. 233).

(2) J. Godechot, Les Institutions de la France sous la Révolution et l'Empire, Paris, PUF, 1951, p. 396.

l'An III is not to be seen as unconditional.

If he is confident that it would have guaranteed liberty, it may well be that it represents in his eyes an instrument of liberty when contrasted with the restrictive constitutions of the Consulate and Empire, a view no doubt confirmed in Tracy's mind by the bitterness and disappointment he felt when faced with the realities of Napoleon's rule. But if Tracy's laudatory reference to the Constitution of l'An III cannot be taken as a necessarily accurate statement of his true feelings, it is undeniable that all his arguments in his search for a just social organisation rest upon the principles of national sovereignty and corporate executive power, and that these are incompatible with the notion of constitutional monarchy as he describes it. Tracy's support for such a monarchy might thus appear inexplicable except in terms of a crude sense of political expediency, but for other factors which must be taken into account.

We have noted in Tracy's remarks concerning such questions as types of government and the separation of powers an attachment to principles rather than to practical details,⁽¹⁾ and we see here the effect of a characteristic of Tracy already discussed: his lack of interest in the practicalities of politics. This lack of interest, the result of his attachment to the abstractions of idéologie, is accentuated, in the field of legislation, by his concern for the individual and the individual's liberty. Tracy conceives this liberty not in terms of any participation in power (as we have seen, he determined that there must be reasonable limits), but in terms of the satisfaction of the will, the realisation of personal desires. Public and political liberty depend upon individual liberty, which is the fundamental right to be defended. The individual is the centre of Tracy's system because, unlike the nation, which, in the last

(1) For example, Tracy does not discuss, with reference to representative government, whether it is to be a parliamentary rather than a simply representative system; the whole question of ministerial responsibility is ignored.

analysis, is an abstraction, he has a concrete and tangible existence. There are basic values which derive from this existence and which are anterior and superior to the establishment of any government: individual liberty, religious liberty, inviolability of property and freedom of the press.⁽¹⁾ These are values which are recognised by the charter of 1814 (in the rubric Droit public des Français) and Tracy may have been reassured by the guarantees contained in the document.

This would not be sufficient, however, for him to support the new régime without the influence exercised upon him by Thomas Jefferson, an influence crystallized in the correspondence between the two men, published by Chinard.⁽²⁾ Jefferson, appreciative as he is of much of Tracy's political thought, is opposed to him over the question of the plurality of the executive, and writes at length of the advantages of a single executive authority. He goes on to point out that the true basis of American liberty lies in the country's federative constitution:

Seventeen distinct States, amalgamated into one as to their foreign concerns, but single and independent as to their internal administration, regularly organized with a legislature and governor resting on the choice of the people, and enlightened by a free press, can never be so fascinated by the arts of one man as to submit voluntarily to his usurpation. Nor can they be constrained to it by any force he can possess. (3)

Tracy, whilst admiring much of the American system, does not see it to be applicable to France, because France has long been surrounded by hostile nations, who, during the Revolution, were defeated only because France remained one and indivisible:

Nous nous trouvons bien en Amérique du système fédératif, parce que nous n'avons pas de voisins redoutables; mais si la république française avait adopté ce mode comme on le lui a proposé, il est douteux qu'elle eût pu résister à toute l'Europe, comme elle l'a fait, en demeurant une et indivisible. (4)

- (1) v. Commentaire, Livre XII, p. 217: '(...) la liberté politique ne saurait subsister sans la liberté individuelle et la liberté de la presse, et pour le maintien de celles-ci, il faut absolument la proscription de toute détention arbitraire, et l'usage de la procédure par jurés, au moins au criminel'. The significance of the different aspects of this view of liberty are discussed in later chapters.
- (2) G. Chinard, Jefferson et les Idéologues. See particularly pp. 69-96.
- (3) Chinard, op.cit., p. 78. (4) Commentaire, Livre XX, p. 121.

Tracy is, however, sufficiently impressed by Jefferson's demonstration of the beneficial effect of federation in the United States to apply the concept to Europe as a whole, taking up once again an issue he raises, albeit tentatively, in the Commentaire:

(...) on doit toujours tendre à rapprocher, le plus possible, les relations des nations indépendantes entre elles, de l'état d'une fédération régulière. C'est là le point de perfection du droit des gens, ou, si l'on veut, celui où la violence cède tout-à-fait à la justice, et où ce qu'on appelle communément le droit des gens commence seulement à mériter de s'appeler droit. (1)

Here he conceives the development of relations between separate independent countries as a complement to the development of social ties between individuals. In his letter to Jefferson (dated 21 October 1811) he is particularly definite in his belief that federation in Europe is not only desirable but necessary:

(...) je crois encore que quand un peuple s'est donné un gouvernement représentatif fondé sur le principe de l'unité et l'indivisibilité, il n'est bien sûr de le conserver que quand il s'est formé autour de lui des gouvernements semblables avec lesquels il puisse former une confédération plus ou moins étroite. Car je suis convaincu qu'une réunion de cette espèce est nécessaire pour donner de la solidité à chacune des parties qui la composent, lesquelles demeurant isolées resteront toujours bien plus exposées à des révolutions fréquentes, ne fût-ce que par ce qu'elles seroient plus exposées à des guerres étrangères; car la guerre est la source de la tyrannie, comme la paix est le plus ferme appui de la liberté. (2)

If, then, Tracy, following the composition of the Commentaire and his correspondence with Jefferson, becomes increasingly persuaded that peace and happiness for the peoples of Europe lies in federation, his defence of the constitutional monarchy of 1814 may be interpreted as a recognition that this government in France is the most likely to facilitate the establishment of such a federation. The phrase he uses in his note, 'encore extrêmement longtemps' may be a wry admission that the road to such a goal is a long one.

(1) ibid., Résumé des XII premiers livres, p. 232.

(2) Chinard, op.cit., p. 90.

He cannot, however, sustain his view that he is dealing with practical realities, for he is in fact moving from one system of logically deduced principles to another. Once he sees that liberty can be assured not by dividing the executive but by confronting it with a plurality of interest and strength among the governed, then he is prepared to seek to implement the system in Europe.

Tracy's admiration for the American system of government is increased by his mistrust of the English system, a mistrust which is a striking characteristic of his work. He shows himself to be severely critical of England in his days in the *Constituante*; in his reply to Burke he writes as follows:

(...) cette inégale répartition des représentans de la nation anglaise qui facilite tellement l'influence ministérielle, que cette corruption publique et avouée est devenue une partie intégrante de la Constitution, une espèce de seconde chambre dans celle des Communes, si adaptée à tous les ressorts politiques qu'elle est un des plus forts de ces fameux contrepoids tant vantés, et qu'il y aurait peut-être moins de danger à enlever aux Anglais beaucoup de bonnes institutions qu'à détruire ce vice. (1)

In the *Commentaire* Tracy is similarly forthright. He finds the English system of government to be a 'fragile échafaudage' which functions not because of any supposed balance between three powers but because in reality the monarch controls parliament, by fear or corruption. In Tracy's view there are only two powers, (the judiciary being an appendage of the executive), which exist in an uneasy union:

(...) ces deux puissances ne subsistent en présence l'une de l'autre que parce que l'une jouit de toute la force réelle et n'a presque aucune faveur publique, tandis que l'autre n'a aucune force et jouit de toute la faveur, jusqu'au moment où elle voudrait renverser sa rivale, et quelquefois y compris ce moment; (...) de plus, ces deux puissances, en se réunissant, sont également maîtresses de changer toutes les lois établies, même celles qui déterminent leur existence et leurs relations (...) (2)

(1) *M. Tracy à M. Burke*, p. 7.

(2) *Commentaire*, Livre XI, chap. I, p. 158.

This state of affairs persists only as long as it is the will of the nation that it should persist. Tracy has faith in the English people's attachment to liberty and their willingness to act in its defence.⁽¹⁾ In this way, liberty is not, as Montesquieu would have it, established by the laws of the constitution, but by the will of the people.

In Tracy's eyes, then, the evidence of one constitutional monarchy is not encouraging, and this reinforces the impression that, despite his attachment to the faint hope of a federation of states in Europe and despite his pronouncements in 1819, he remains in sympathy with the idea of a republic. Certainly these pronouncements, whatever their origin, do not invalidate his earlier arguments concerning the virtues of representation and the dangers inherent in any potential abuse of power.

It is clear that although Tracy chooses to express his ideas on legislation through the medium of a commentary on the work of Montesquieu, he has little sympathy for the ideas or the personality of his predecessor. He differs from him in temperament, in approach (pouring scorn, as we have seen, on Montesquieu's liberal use of historical data in particular), and in matters of detail. Besides his rejection of Montesquieu's division of governments he gives scant regard to his principle of corps intermédiaires, or to his view of the inertia produced by counterbalancing and separate powers.

Despite his careful praise of Montesquieu and his apparent awareness of the prestige which a commentary on the Esprit des Lois would give to his own ideas, Tracy is in no way his disciple. Tracy is closer in spirit to Rousseau and Condorcet, although he does not accord either of them a single mention in the

(1) Tracy takes the opportunity to pass a wry comment: 'Le grand point de la constitution de l'Angleterre est que la nation a déposé six ou sept fois son roi'. (p. 157).

Commentaire. It is Condorcet who, as the principal author of a project for a constitution, placed before the Convention in 1793, but not adopted,⁽¹⁾ translates the democratic principles of Rousseau into political reality. Rousseau had elaborated the principles of human rights, national sovereignty, representative government and the social pact which safeguards the liberty of individual members of society. Condorcet defends these same ideas. He seeks to determine the exact nature of human rights; he defends the notion of popular sovereignty, by concluding in favour of election to the legislative by direct universal suffrage; he declares the necessity of a periodic revision of the constitution. Like Rousseau, Condorcet is a severe critic of the English constitution, and is furthermore a profound admirer of the American system of government. For him, as for many Frenchmen at the close of the eighteenth century, the American Revolution had given precise form to the vague aspirations they held for a new and transformed society. In creating a just and stable society, based upon human rights and the liberty of the individual, that revolution had created something tangible and real. It is significant that Condorcet declares that political powers can properly exist only by virtue of the wish of a constituent assembly elected by a nation in order to establish a constitution, and this is the framework within which Tracy elaborates his own ideas. Clearly the need to limit the authority of the monarch and to guarantee the full enjoyment of the rights of the individual are themes common in eighteenth-century political thought, but Tracy shares more particularly with men such as Rousseau and Condorcet the constant concern with national sovereignty and representative government. These he accepts unquestioningly, confident that these are the means to ensure the individual's own liberty, that is, the satisfaction of his will.

(1) v. Godechot, op.cit., pp. 241 sqq.

Tracy writes not in anticipation of democracy, as Rousseau does, nor as the democratic experiment is realised, as Condorcet does. He writes after the failure of that experiment, and yet his work betrays little awareness of it. Indeed the fact that representative government did not demonstrate the value of the people's love of justice and equality is in itself a pertinent criticism of Tracy's ideas. And so, although there is underlying the work a rejection of the government of Napoleon, the Commentaire draws no lessons from recent history. It shows rather the continuing search for the grounds of ultimate reference, and Tracy's attachment to this fundamental preoccupation does much to explain his detachment and his reluctance to enter the political arena. It is, properly speaking, a preoccupation which lies outside the political sphere: in matters of legislation, as elsewhere, the man of action is overcome by the man of ideas.

VI. RELIGION

Tracy devotes relatively little time to religious matters. Preoccupied as he is with the proper understanding of man's intellectual faculties and with the search for truth as revealed by reason and logic, he has little interest in those areas of human experience which are not susceptible of demonstration and proof. Questions of faith, of the nature of God, of the divinity of Christ or of the existence of the soul are not the province of philosophers; they belong to metaphysical study, which Tracy expressly seeks to exclude from his own work. When he does express views on religion, it is not, then, to discuss dogma. Tracy restricts himself to the social aspect of religion: he is interested not in the private faith, but in the public manifestation. He is concerned with the rôle of priests within society: the processes by which they arrive at their pre-eminent position and the manner in which they exercise their influence. He is further concerned with the effect of religious belief on men: he seeks to understand the manner in which such belief affects their attitude to life in general, to their fellow-men and to their social institutions. Such an approach is entirely in keeping with the whole direction of Tracy's work: since all intellectual phenomena are to be subject to reason (and religion is to be placed in the context of a struggle between superstition and reason), they must be examined in their external manifestation, where reason can evaluate the effects, rather than in the realm of private belief, where causes are too obscure and individual to yield valid and fruitful truths.

There are occasional references to religious matters throughout Tracy's work, but the most coherent exposition of his ideas is to be found in the Discours préliminaire to the Analyse raisonnée, which Tracy published in 1804, of Dupuis' Origine de tous les cultes, ou Religion universelle. This work had

appeared in l'an III; in fact there were two editions, one of four volumes in-4^o, the other of twelve volumes in-8^o. The size of the work militated against its accessibility, and in l'an VI Dupuis published an Abrégé (one volume in-8^o) which was more successful.⁽¹⁾ In the following year Tracy published an Analyse of Dupuis' complete work, without the Discours préliminaire and without a post-scriptum which appeared in the second edition, but bearing the following

Avertissement:

Cette analyse était destinée au Mercure Français. Elle n'y a pas été insérée en entier, parce que ce journal a cessé de paraître. (2)

This is confirmed by Gouhier.⁽³⁾ It is important to establish these facts as Tracy's work was published anonymously, and Tracy never publicly acknowledged himself as its author. Lafayette, in a letter to Jefferson, gives a possible reason:

Tracy has given a new edition of his ideology which he is happy to see through me presented to you. Besides this offering of the author, I enclose a short extract of a long dissertation by Dupuis. This abridgement has been made by Tracy. But he drew only a few copies and from motives of deference to his mother did not put his name to it. (4)

Tracy himself adopts a position of modesty to explain the anonymity of the work:

Mais aujourd'hui que, renfermé absolument depuis plusieurs années dans les devoirs de mon état, je suis devenu étranger

- (1) There were seven further editions of the Abrégé between 1820 and 1836 and another four between 1878 and 1897.
- (2) Avertissement to Tracy's Analyse, Paris, Agasse, an VII.
- (3) H. Gouhier, La Jeunesse d'Auguste Comte, Paris, Vrin, 1933-41, I, 333: 'Au Mercure français l'article fut confié à Destutt de Tracy; mais ce périodique cessa de paraître: l'étude devint une forte brochure éditée, anonyme, sous le titre...(etc).
- (4) Letter from Lafayette to Jefferson, dated 20 April 1805, printed in G. Chinard, Letters of Lafayette and Jefferson, p. 236. Tracy would take exception to the term 'abridgement'. He refers to Dupuis' Abrégé and continues: 'Cet abrégé ne paraît pas rendre inutile mon travail. Il n'est pas destiné à remplir le même objet. Il présente le sommaire de l'ouvrage; telle était l'intention de l'auteur. Mais moi, je me suis attaché principalement à indiquer sa marche, l'enchaînement de ses idées, la série de ses preuves et la liaison des matières. En un mot, il y a précisément entre ces deux écrits la différence qu'il doit y avoir entre un abrégé et une analyse raisonnée; car personne n'ignore que ce n'est pas la même chose.' (Discours préliminaire, p. xlix).

à toutes recherches philosophiques, et qu'aucun de ceux qui s'en occupent ne songe plus à moi, je crois pouvoir offrir au public ce petit écrit, sans que l'on cherche même à lever le voile qui couvre l'auteur; car il ne s'agit ni d'un jeune homme qui donne des espérances, ni d'un homme fait qui annonce des prétentions. Toutes les miennes se bornent à donner une idée des précieux travaux du citoyen Dupuis, et à lui payer publiquement mon tribut de reconnaissance. Si je peux contribuer à augmenter encore le nombre de ses lecteurs, je crois avoir fait une chose utile, et mon but sera complètement rempli. (1)

Tracy turned originally to the work of Dupuis because it answered a deeply-felt need of his: he is struck by the multiplicity of religious sects, each one warring with the others and each offering a means of doing homage to an invisible but all-powerful being, who is apparently ever-mindful of the desires of his followers and ever-attentive to their prayers. Furthermore he notes that these religious sects have always been a source of harm and misery to mankind, stifling the spread of knowledge and imposing upon men duties contrary to their nature and their happiness. Thus:

(...) j'eus la curiosité d'examiner ce que pouvaient avoir de commun toutes ces religions en apparence si opposées. Je voyais bien qu'elles portaient toutes sur la même supposition, celle d'un être suprême sentant et raisonnant à notre manière, et sur une multitude d'autres suppositions différentes entr'elles, mais du même genre. Je voulus savoir comment ces systèmes différents dans leurs détails avaient pu naître les uns des autres, ou du moins se remplacer, s'il y avait beaucoup de variétés entr'eux, ou si les mêmes idées ne s'y retrouvaient pas fréquemment sous des formes diverses. (2)

In order to discover the answer to these problems Tracy had turned to established authors on the subject; he mentions two whose work he consulted - le président de Brosses⁽³⁾ and Court-de-Gébelin⁽⁴⁾ - but despite the qualities

(1) Discours préliminaire, p. xlviiii.

(2) ibid., p. xliv.

(3) Le Président Charles de Brosses (1709-1777), author of Traité de la formation mécanique des langues et des principes physiques de l'étymologie, Paris, Saillant, 1765.

(4) Antoine Court-de-Gébelin (1725-1784), author of Monde primitif analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne, Paris, chez l'auteur, 1773-1782.

of these and other authors he found no satisfaction. It was at this moment - during l'an III - that the work of Dupuis appeared, answering all of Tracy's hopes:

J'espérais y trouver ce que je cherchais, et mon attente fut remplie au-delà de mes espérances. Je n'imaginai pas qu'on pût jeter autant de lumières sur des antiquités aussi obscures, et produire une conviction aussi vive dans des matières où jusqu'alors on n'avait guère été au-delà de la simple probabilité. (1)

Tracy had in mind not only the historical development of different religions since the time of antiquity, but also the contemporary situation in France. Having decreed the separation of church and state, the Convention had, by the law of 3 ventôse an III (21 February 1795), established freedom of worship, provided that no cult held any external ceremony or meeting, or exhibited any inscription or sign. This law followed a report by Boissy d'Anglas which held out the hope that in the place of religion men would put their trust in reason and would bind themselves together

... par les seuls liens de l'intérêt commun, par les seuls principes de l'organisation sociale, par ce sentiment impérieux qui les porte à se rapprocher et à se chérir. (2)

Notwithstanding, the Convention decreed the right of men to practise their chosen religion, and on 11 prairial an III (30 May 1795) sanctioned the re-opening of churches for this purpose. There was, naturally enough, a resurgence of religious and intellectual life, which manifested itself not only in the renewed vigour of the Catholic Church, but in the appearance of many cults whose foundations were religious, mystic or rationalist. The policy of the government was to act as arbiter, and to prevent any cult from becoming too strong and thus compromising the independence of the state. There were many

(1) Discours préliminaire, p. xliv.

(2) v. F.A. Aulard, Histoire politique de la Révolution française, Paris, Colin, 1905, p. 537.

elements, within the Convention and outside it, which sought to dechristianise France completely, and the years before the advent of Napoleon saw the Catholic Church harrassed on all sides, in the hope that it would gradually decline as enlightenment spread. There was no official persecution, however, for fear that any violent discord within France would weaken national defence. But there arose many movements which had as their moral foundations the principles of the Revolution: for example the culte de l'Être suprême, launched by Robespierre during the course of l'an II, and the culte de la Raison, which knew some limited success slightly earlier. The culte décadaire (in which the Christian festivals were replaced by revolutionary festivals⁽¹⁾ and the décadi, the tenth day of the week, replaced the Christian sabbath) were supported by the Directory, who also looked favourably upon the movement known as théophilanthropie, which was an attempt to establish a rationalist church. This cult, which drew its inspiration from Voltaire, who had imported the idea from England, first met on 26 nivôse an V (15 January 1797); it fostered a kind of rationalist deism, but admitted no revelation and no dogma. It founded its moral teaching on the premiss that anything which preserves and perfects man is good; its practice consisted in holding meetings in which its adherents exhorted each other to follow this teaching.⁽²⁾

Tracy could hardly have remained indifferent to the controversies which raged in the years following the Revolution; the Institut brought together the most influential freethinkers, who saw in their attempts to formalise the physical and social sciences a new morale, a new religion. Amongst the adherents to théophilanthropie were philosophers he knew well, such as Dupont de Nemours,

(1) In addition to fêtes nationales already in existence (to celebrate the night of 10 August 1792, the fall of the Bastille and the execution of Louis XVI - 21 January-) the Convention had decreed a further seven fêtes nationales, to celebrate the foundation of the Republic, youth, the married couple, gratitude, agriculture, liberty and the aged.

(2) This cult was effectively suppressed by Napoleon in vendémiaire an X.

Chénier and Andrieux. Tracy did not subscribe to any particular cult, but was in sympathy with the movement to rid France of Catholic influence. The report of Boissy d'Anglas had looked forward to 'le seul règne de la philosophie, le seul empire de la morale' and had added:

Bientôt on ne connaîtra plus que pour les mépriser ces dogmes absurdes. (...) Bientôt la religion de Socrate, de Marc-Aurèle, de Cicéron sera la religion du monde. (1)

These were the sentiments of Tracy. In his eyes, the merit of Dupuis' work was that it presented further proof that religious dogmas were absurdities; in helping the work to reach a wider public, he would hasten their total discredit.

When the second edition of Tracy's Analyse appeared, in 1804, the picture was different. Napoleon had, by the Concordat of 1801, restored the fortunes of the Catholic Church. As Aulard puts it:

Après avoir appliqué lui-même le régime de la séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Etat, il (Napoleon) désorganisa ce régime par le Concordat, par une foule de mesures et rendit peu à peu à la religion catholique, apostolique et romaine, non pas en titre, mais en fait, sa situation de religion d'état. (2)

The Catholic Church had survived attack and its own internal divisions, and was now in a stronger position than at any time since the ancien régime. Its destruction at the hands of enlightenment no longer seemed imminent, and it is reasonable to assume that in the face of the newly resurgent enemy Tracy decided to complement the truths which Dupuis had expounded with an attack of his own. So he published the Discours préliminaire, which is an exercise in controlled invective against a spiritual power which not only perverts men's reason, but exercises considerable political influence at the same time. The document of scholarship has become a political tract.

(1) v. Aulard, op.cit., p. 537.

(2) op.cit., p. 747.

The fundamental theme of Dupuis' work is that all religious beliefs have their bases in astronomic science. The idea of God, he notes, is originally the idea of Nature: when the name of God is given to the power which organises and controls all finite beings, that power in primitive religions is Nature to which men spontaneously attribute the ability to produce all phenomena. In other words, all primitive theological systems are to be explained by reference to physical causes, transformed by the use of allegory:

Les Dieux étant la nature elle-même, l'histoire des Dieux est donc celle de la Nature; et comme elle n'a point d'autres aventures que ses phénomènes, les aventures des Dieux seront donc les phénomènes de la Nature mis en allégories. (1)

All religions have a common source: they have no origins in revelation or in the deification of mortals, but in physical phenomena: they create as their gods either physical forces, which are deified, or invisible forces, which are the fruit of pure imagination.

Those physical phenomena which first recommended themselves to men as having a controlling effect upon their lives were the sun and the moon: the sun brought light, warmth and the fruitfulness of summer, and the moon became associated with darkness and the barrenness of winter. Once such rôles were established, it was natural that the stars and the planets should be honoured as gods, and thus Dupuis reduces all religions to pure sabaism. His astronomical studies lead him to realise the importance of the names and emblems which men give to the constellations. He is struck by their incongruity; since they do not correspond to the actual appearance of the physical phenomena, they were not decreed by Nature, and since it is impossible that they should

(1) Dupuis, L'Origine de tous les cultes, Paris, Agasse, an III (edition of 12 vol.), Préface, p. xvii.

have come into being by chance, Dupuis deduces that their nature is symbolic, that they are true hieroglyphs. He determines that they are symbolic of the states of nature during the course of a year, and that the only climate to which they are appropriate is that of Egypt. Dupuis therefore credits the Egyptians with the invention of the signs of the Zodiac; all religions are different ways of representing astronomical processes, and their development is due to the error of men in taking abstractions to be real beings. The legend of Christ is readily explained:

Pour expliquer la légende des Chrétiens sur le Christ, nous avons rassemblé les légendes des différentes religions qui ont paru en occident en même temps que celle du Christ. Nous avons fait voir qu'elles avaient des caractères communs, et qu'elles pouvaient se réduire toutes à une idée principale: savoir, au Soleil supposé naissant au Solstice d'hiver, et triomphant des ténèbres à l'Equinoxe du printemps, après avoir été pleuré d'abord comme mort, et célébré ensuite comme vainqueur des ombres du tombeau. (1)

Dupuis concludes that Christ is no more a real historical figure than Hercules, and that the Christian faith is merely a particular manifestation of the cult of the sun.

Dupuis surrounds these basic lines of argument with an impressive display of erudition, which his contemporaries found not altogether to their taste. (2) Tracy, in his Analyse, is at pains to bring out clearly the essential lines of

(1) Vol IX, p. 269.

(2) La Décade philosophique published a compte-rendu of Dupuis' work in four long articles in the following numbers: 20 nivôse an IV, 20 pluviôse an IV, 20 germinal an IV and 20 floréal an IV. The articles were by Ginguéné who wrote in the last (p. 286): 'En général cette production volumineuse, qui a le défaut d'être surchargée d'une érudition fatigante, de manquer d'ordre et de méthode, et de n'être pas écrite comme le devrait être un ouvrage de cette importance, est le recueil le plus précieux de préservatifs contre toutes les superstitions, la mine la plus riche d'explications de toutes les fables, et la collection la plus complète des emblèmes ingénieux dont furent originellement couverte tous les secrets de la philosophie et tous les grands phénomènes de la nature.'

Dupuis' thought, and, thanks to his method which, although selective, is rigorous, and clear, Dupuis' arguments gain much force. Tracy, excluding much peripheral matter, emphasises above all the point which for him is central: namely, religions can be reduced to a common source, a source which is one of imagination and not of observed fact, and it is in this respect that he finds Dupuis' work most satisfying:

C'est le principe fondamental de tout le système des idées religieuses qui est mis entièrement à nu, et la liaison intime, ou on peut le dire, l'identité de toutes ses branches qui est complètement manifestée. (1)

Tracy takes up this point and develops it forcibly in his own Discours préliminaire; he sees that beneath the inharmonious diversity of different cults lies a common factor, and he wastes no time in declaring it for himself:

(...) ils sont tous fondés sur la même idée, la crainte des puissances invisibles. Saint-Lambert dit avec raison: 'La superstition est la crainte des puissances invisibles'. C'est ainsi qu'il la définit; il aurait pu ajouter: 'et elle est la source de toutes les religions'. (2)

Tracy's basic theme, then, is quickly established: religion is to be identified with superstition, and this thesis is to be demonstrated not by an examination of Christian dogma, but by a historical approach. Tracy's method is to examine the steps of reasoning made by ill-defined 'hommes grossiers' upon seeing certain natural phenomena, the explanation of which was not immediately apparent. Religion is presented as the natural development of crude sentiments fashioned in ignorance and subsequently sanctioned by ambition and cunning.

The hommes grossiers, unable to explain movement in natural phenomena, such as seas, rivers or winds, imagined invisible beings who imparted this movement; men created these beings in their own image, in both physical and

(1) Analyse, p. 156.

(2) ibid., Discours préliminaire, p. xi.

intellectual terms:

(...) ils leur ont donné non-seulement des bras, des jambes, une tête, une bouche, des yeux etc., mais encore ils leur ont donné aussi la sensibilité, la mémoire, le jugement, la volonté et en conséquence une foule de désirs, de goûts, d'habitudes; en un mot, ils les ont doués de toutes les facultés intellectuelles et par suite de toutes les passions des hommes. (1)

From this simple beginning, the establishment of cults was inevitable: since there were spirits who, although invisible, were so powerful and on whom men must depend, it was natural that men should address to them both prayers and homage. Such practices gained credence through the intervention of those who claimed to be in contact with the invisible spirits and who knew the best way in which to honour them; ritual and ceremony were thus born, together with the class of priests who established themselves as the interpreters of truth. To this age, ill-defined as it is, Tracy shows his greatest amount of tolerance, since nothing in it was organised or categorised. Only later (again at unspecified moments of time) did dogmas and a hierarchy of spirits arise. Once this had happened, and systems of belief had become firmly established within each state, then the dangers became apparent:

(...) les interprètes des dieux ont augmenté le nombre de leurs préceptes et de leurs dogmes. Ils ont cessé d'être étrangers les uns aux autres; ils ont établi une hiérarchie entre les objets de leur culte; les prêtres de Diane ont reconnu qu'elle était inférieure à Jupiter; ils ont créé des corps de doctrine; et eux-mêmes ont fait corporation. Un système théologique et un collège sacerdotal sont devenus nationaux dans chaque pays sous diverses formes. (...) Alors les prêtres sont devenus aussi une partie intégrante et importante de la Constitution de L'Etat, dont ils ont toujours embarrassé la marche ainsi que celle des esprits, quand ils ne sont pas parvenus à subjuguier entièrement l'une et l'autre. (2)

For priests have always sought to make a science of religion, and have erected systems based on nothing more substantial than imagination. They have always

(1) ibid., p. xvi.

(2) ibid., p. xxiv.

ignored the study of man's intellectual faculties and the origins of human knowledge; in so doing they have taken no cognizance of the formation of simple ideas and the composition of abstract ideas.

Priests came to spiritualise their gods completely - in other words to preach a doctrine of immateriality - and thus it was easy for them to assert anything they wished concerning them. This increased their own empire, since laymen found it difficult to contradict assertions regarding a superior being when that being had no recognisable existence; the only solution was total rejection, and this was made more difficult by the attachment of disfavour and reprobation to it. Tracy summarises the arguments of the priests as follows:

(...) sans immatérialité, point d'immortalité et de vie à venir; et s'il n'y a pas d'autre vie que celle-ci, il n'y a aucun motif pour suivre les principes de la saine morale. Donc c'est être destructeur que de nier l'immaterialité. (1)

Tracy himself points out that immateriality is not necessary for immortality, and that indeed it is easier for men to examine the endless existence of beings who have some recognisable form than of those whose material existence is inconceivable. His objection to the second assertion of the priests is however more telling:

(...) il est aisé de prouver que la morale est bien plus saine et plus pure et plus solidement fondée en lui donnant pour base le besoin d'être heureux dans ce monde-ci que nous connaissons qu'en lui donnant pour but le bonheur dans un autre monde que nous ne connaissons pas. (2)

The passion for abstraction which Tracy identifies as characteristic of priests has led them to proclaim what he calls 'une foule d'absurdités révoltantes', and he delights in pointing out what he considers to be some of the more obviously irrational beliefs of the Christian faith.⁽³⁾ For it is to the Christian

(1) ibid., p. xxix.

(2) ibid., p. xxx.

(3) For example, the birth and death of an eternal being, the trinity of three distinct entities which form one whole, transsubstantiation, the omnipresence of an immaterial being, etc. etc.

religion that this 'excès de délire théologique' belongs, ⁽¹⁾ and it belongs in particular to the second age of Christianity, for it is then that dogmas, mysteries and sacraments came to replace practice and precept. Under the unfortunate influence of the works of Aristotle, Christianity became déna~~t~~urée, religious ideas became the object of a science, and the influence of priests became most harmful:

Aussi trouvons-nous ailleurs des exemples d'une ignorance plus absolue que dans les siècles que nous appelons avec raison la barbarie du moyen âge de l'Europe; mais nous ne voyons nulle part un égarement de l'esprit qui soit aussi complet, et un abrutissement du bon sens qui soit aussi général, et par suite nous y trouvons les moeurs les plus abominables, les institutions les plus détestables, et la misère la plus horrible et la plus décourageante. (2)

The developments to which Tracy refers - the progression from the musings of the hommes grossiers to the perfection of what he calls 'ce monstrueux édifice' - take him, in his historical survey, to the fourteenth century, at which point he sees the beginnings of Christianity's decline; this decline is, at the time he is writing, gathering ever-greater impetus, heralding, he asserts, the faith's definitive ruin. This rise and fall is to be explained by the historical progress of the development of the human mind. The seeds of disaster were sown by the fact that a liking for supposition and hypothesis were anterior in man, historically speaking, to his spirit of observation and experiment. Credulity preceded doubt. Bad philosophical methods came before sound ones, and, unopposed by logic and reason, reigned supreme, inculcating error and truths in the name of a supposed divinity. The tide rushing onwards towards

(1) Discours préliminaire, p. xxxviii. Other religions do not escape Tracy's censure, although they do not, in his view, share the specific vices of Christianity: 'Les autres religions en général exigent que l'on affirme des faits plus ou moins absurdes, que l'on soutienne la nécessité de certaines pratiques plus ou moins ridicules; mais elles ont peu de ces dogmes recherchés, qui sont de véritables non-sens, dont l'existence tient à un langage sophistiqué et dépravé dont leurs sectateurs n'ont même pas l'idée.'

(2) Discours préliminaire, p. xxxix.

ever greater absurdities was, however, stemmed by the spirit of doubt and observation; once the good philosophic method of proceeding from the known to the unknown was adopted, faulty hypotheses were destroyed and the empire of truth increased. What remains to be done, in order to assure the total ruin of superstition, is to elucidate the nature of truth and certainty from a proper understanding of man's intellectual faculties. From this Tracy derives the, for him, consoling thought:

Je regardai donc, et je regarde la théologie comme la philosophie de l'enfance du genre humain, prête à faire place à celle de son âge de raison. (1)

Such are the basic arguments of the Discours préliminaire; Tracy's anti-clericalism may on the surface seem crude, since his justification for likening religion to superstition is greatly over-simplified. The historical survey, imprecise and generalised as it is, rapidly becomes an indictment. Beneath the surface there are, however, two principles which are more far-reaching: firstly religion has historically always provided the foundation for morality, which has thus been at the mercy of suspect reasoning and faulty principles, and which must now throw off its yoke and re-establish itself on a sounder basis; and secondly, there is a moral superiority in the love of mankind, on which that morality may be based, over a love of God.

Tracy concedes that the first theological legislators were able to lay down for men rules of conduct conducive to their happiness, and that in order to excite in their followers the desire to follow these rules, they introduced supernatural agents. However wise these rules of conduct might be, there is in Tracy's eyes a vice inherent in this procedure: it is to place credulity above reason in the hierarchy of values. All those who speak in the name of a divinity are bound to demand faith rather than judgement from those who listen, for if

(1) ibid., p. xliv.

they are shown to be in error, their privileged position as interpreters of the divine will is compromised. It is in the priests' interests therefore that error should not be proclaimed, and in order to safeguard their interests, they erect as a virtue what Tracy calls 'une servilité stupide'. In this way the ambition and cunning of the priests are unchecked, and the way is open for the proclamation as truth of any whim or caprice on their part. Ritual and ceremony evolve, at one and the same time protecting the position of the priests (by emphasising their roles as focal points and prime movers of the rites) and further obscuring the true meaning of what they are professing behind the public performance of sacred duties. The greater the distance between this public performance and the true meaning of the faith, the greater the possibilities of invention and suppression, and these are what Tracy calls suspect reasoning and faulty principles which must now be rejected and replaced:

Qu'on ne nous demande donc pas d'un air de triomphe, si vous détruisez la religion, que mettez-vous à sa place? car la réponse est facile. A la place d'un mauvais système de morale, basé sur des raisonnements défectueux qui gâtent l'esprit et des suppositions qui l'égarent, nous en mettrons un bon dicté par la raison qu'il perfectionnera en l'exerçant, et fondé sur l'observation des facultés intellectuelles de l'homme, dont il apprendra à se mieux servir en apprenant à les mieux connaître. (1)

The second principle is yet more significant. Tracy sees it as particularly abhorrent that men should be enjoined to seek rules for their conduct in the will of an unknown being rather than in their own interest and that of their fellows. To do this is to ignore the bond between happiness and virtue and indeed to erect obstacles to their realisation:

Quand je vois les hommes religieux proclamer presque unanimement cette détestable maxime que sans l'idée de la vie à venir l'homme n'a aucun motif pour être bon, je me demande avec terreur s'ils ont le projet de dégoûter de la vertu, s'ils ont fait serment de pervertir toute idée

(1) Analyse, p. 147.

moralc et si leur diable lui-même pourrait inventer un principe plus capable de couvrir la terre de malheurs et de crimes. Ce sont cependant des hommes zélés pour le bien qui souvent professent de si funestes erreurs que l'on juge jusqu'à quel point les idées religieuses peuvent égarer la raison humaine. (1)

In Tracy's work the scale of values is thus clear. As Gouhier puts it:

(...) l'utilitarisme philanthropique affirme sa supériorité sur l'immoralisme mystique. (2)

Tracy sees religious practices as irreconcilable with social order and public morality, for the principles of conduct which they prescribe were evolved in times of ignorance, and moral laws can be perfected only in times of enlightenment. Within the state no religious system should be favoured or taught; the state should teach 'la meilleure doctrine morale, reconnue telle par les esprits les plus éclairés'⁽³⁾, and should seek to limit as much as possible the influence of the priests who, since religious systems give great power to those who postulate them, are inevitably dangerous to the civil authority. Priests and philosophers are not two distinct species; since religions all consist of opinions which are speculative, they are nothing more than philosophic systems, all, to a greater or lesser degree, contrary to logic. Therefore, in matters of moral education, priests have no special rights:

(...) c'est à tort qu'on a toujours fait des premiers (les théologiens) une classe tout-à-fait à part, (...) ce sont des philosophes ou du moins des raisonneurs tout comme les autres (...) ils n'ont nul droit plus que les autres à faire un corps, à exercer une autorité publique, à être des précepteurs exclusifs des nations; (...) quand ils énoncent des vérités c'est comme les autres hommes, en qualité de penseurs et non de magistrats. (4)

Underlying this attack lies the belief that the influence of priests has been detrimental to human happiness in that it has failed to unite men in concern

(1) ibid., p. 145.

(2) Gouhier, op.cit., II, 26.

(3) Commentaire sur L'Esprit des Lois de Montesquieu, chap. xxi, p. 425.

(4) Analyse, p. 158.

for their fellows. The preoccupation with personal salvation - a preoccupation fostered by priests, who hold out the promise of salvation as a reward for obedience - has always been an essentially divisive factor: men's sense of priorities has become perverted by the demand for allegiance to a god above all else. Since the primary element in any religion is the paying of tribute to a supposedly divine being, religious practice is not compatible with a true love of man. It must be said that Tracy never discusses the validity of Christianity, or of any other religion, as a social ethic; it is enough for him that the basic principles from which they are evolved are not accessible to human reason.

Indeed, in social as well as in philosophical terms, religious matters are to Tracy irrelevant. He does not pursue his argument beyond the view that religions are speculative and harmful, to examine whether man has any basic religious feelings, that is an innate desire to undergo experiences beyond the immediate and the rational. He is ready to endorse the views of Dupuis that religions are nothing more than allegories, but he does not concern himself with the reasons for men's tenacious adherence to them. He does not consider the possibility that it might express a deeply-felt need in man which must still be accommodated even though religions as they have been known are discredited by logic. It is enough that they are in conflict with reason: in his attempts to establish 'la bonne logique et la saine morale',⁽¹⁾ Tracy ignores the existence of any religious feelings in man, from whatever source they might originate.

This overall rejection of religion is the necessary preliminary to the formulation of Tracy's ideas on morale; it indicates that when he comes to examine how society should be organised in this field, it will be without

(1) ibid., p. 148: 'Concluons donc que tout système religieux à l'envisager du côté de la théorie, est une supposition sans preuves, un véritable égarement de la raison; et qu'à le considérer sous le rapport de la pratique, c'est un motif puissant sur les hommes pour leur faire suivre certaines règles de conduite, mais un moyen sûr de leur en donner d'erronnées et émanant d'une autorité illégitime, qu'ainsi toute religion peut être définie un obstacle à la bonne logique et à la saine morale privée et publique.'

reference to any precept or law taken from religious sources. The condemnation of such sources is total, and Tracy's trust in reason is made all the firmer because he is able, to his satisfaction, to discredit religion and its adherents: the foundation on which his social science rests will be all the more solid.

THEORY

• IIA

It must be borne in mind that when Tracy turns to matters which can conveniently be grouped under the heading morale, it is not his intention to write a moral treatise; he does not set out to establish rules of conduct for the individual, and, in the field of personal behaviour, he does not wish to prescribe or proscribe. As we have seen, he describes morale as the study of 'nos désirs en eux-mêmes, leurs propriétés, leurs conséquences'⁽¹⁾, and considers it as a natural extension of his examination of man's intellectual faculties. Morale, like logic, must be a rigorous science, a science not of precept but of observation and deduction; its object is to determine, in the light of what effect actions have, the nature of desires which precede actions. Once these desires are fully understood, then it will be possible to direct them into channels conducive to the spread of human happiness.

There is, then, on Tracy's part an initial reluctance to enter the field of moral prescription, and he adopts, as is his habit on certain occasions, a position of diffidence before such a possibility:

Je ne prétends point donner des règles de conduite. Je n'aspire point à poser des principes, à établir des maximes. Tant d'honneur ne m'appartient pas. Je veux tout simplement faire l'histoire de nos affections, sentimens ou passions, et montrer des conséquences. Que chacun ensuite fasse des lois pour lui-même, et même en fasse pour les autres, s'il s'en croit capable. (2)

He has always hoped to lead his readers to a proper awareness of the truth, confident in the belief that from this will flow further, self-evident, truths in all spheres, including the moral: in point of fact, there is in Tracy's view no need to propound a moral treatise, since moral truths, susceptible as they are to demonstration, will in due time enunciate themselves:

(1) De la Logique, chap. IX, p. 319.

(2) Traité de la Volonté, IIe Partie, chap. I, p. 351.

J'espère prouver par le fait ce que Locke et Condillac ont fait voir par le raisonnement, que la morale et la politique sont susceptibles de démonstration. (1)

This is not to say, of course, that Tracy does not enter into the discussion of moral questions, or that he does not reveal a moral attitude to problems of a social or political nature. It must be remembered, for example, that among his objections to luxury were objections to the effect that it fostered depravity, greed and a general inclination towards vice; he found religion, as was shown in the previous chapter, an obstacle to 'la saine morale publique et privée'. Thus certain moral values clearly underlie Tracy's views on society; he is not afraid to use terms such as vice and virtue, honesty and corruption. He shows an instinctive preference for particular forms of conduct and contempt for those who overstep the limits of what he considers to be a correct and laudable behaviour. But he cannot be taken to be a moralist in the sense that he preaches what that behaviour should be; rather he is a moralist in that he analyses that behaviour at its point of inspiration, human desire. Nothing of these moral attitudes, however, is explicit. That part of his major design which he designated by the term morale⁽²⁾ was never completed: all that exists of the second part of the Traité de la Volonté is an introduction, followed by one chapter on love, and this, like the other work to be discussed in this chapter, Quels sont les moyens de fonder la morale d'un peuple?, is concerned not with the examination of moral values, but with social organisation.

In the realm of personal conduct, the moral values which Tracy applauds are predictably those which are fashioned by reason. Since the discovery and discernment of truth is a matter of judgement, this must be allowed to operate in untroubled calm; passion, which clouds the judgement and leads to precipitate

(1) v. Mignet, op.cit., p. 226. The remark is also quoted by Picavet, op.cit., p. 303.

(2) v. Table contained at the end of the first volume of De la Logique, and above, chap. II.

action, is to be mistrusted. Excess in all its forms is to be avoided: Tracy, preaching moderation in all things, refers favourably throughout his work to those virtues which eschew the extremes of passion, virtues such as industry, sobriety and honesty. These are, furthermore, virtues which carry with them a sense of social responsibility: the individual, in subduing passion, curbs the demands of personal satisfaction, and thus, contributes to the general wellbeing of all. Tracy, having determined that the two basic elements of man's social existence are le besoin de sympathiser and l'intérêt personnel,⁽¹⁾ sees that every effort must be made to restrict the pernicious effects of the latter. It is by reason that this can be done:

(...) s'il est manifeste que nous ne pouvons pas détruire en nous le sentiment de l'intérêt personnel, puisqu'il est une condition nécessaire de notre existence, et qu'au contraire nous devons le satisfaire le plus possible, il est évident aussi que par intérêt même nous devons éviter qu'il ne nous entraîne à des conséquences fâcheuses et ne nous livre à des affections douloureuses. Or le seul moyen que nous en ayons est de le soumettre à la voix de la justice et de la raison quand elles exigent de lui des sacrifices. C'est là, selon moi, tout l'art d'être heureux. (2)

This attitude is to be expected from a philosopher such as Tracy who is in accord with the consciousness of his society, which is resolutely turning its back upon an old order, and seeking to abolish privilege and the extremes of social inequality. Reason is the only weapon with which injustices can be defeated, for injustices breed upon unenlightened self-interest which, if it yields to anything, will yield only to reason.

Tracy is thus aware of the social responsibility of the individual and shares, albeit tacitly, the view expressed by other idéologues, and in particular Cabanis and Volney, that within any concept of morale lies an obligation to

(1) See above, chap.III.

(2) Traité de la Volonté, IIe Partie, chap. I, p. 384.

mankind in general. In the case of Tracy it is an obligation which plays a noticeably minor role in his considerations. When he speaks of 'la saine morale privée', he means those virtues which, in the realm of personal behaviour, are compatible with reason and good sense; by 'la saine morale publique' he means those actions which contribute to the general well-being of society.

But these concepts exist only by virtue of previously established truths: idéologie has shown, to Tracy's satisfaction, that certain values in the moral field are ultimately demonstrable, and so there is, in his view, no need to seek to justify them further through philanthropic or humanitarian argument. This is why, in the works immediately under discussion, he concentrates upon the social organisation of morality. For him, personal virtues are self-evident; individuals within the state must be led to practise them, and they are more likely to do so if they have the example of wisely considered laws and institutions. The question to be resolved is not one of the composition of morality, but of its practical realisation, and it is in this respect that Quels sont les moyens... and De l'Amour are of particular interest: given that idéologie is to rescue man from servility to prejudice and superstition, these works offer examples of the ways in which this is to be achieved.

Quels sont les moyens de fonder la morale d'un peuple? was written in answer to a question posed by the Institut.⁽¹⁾ It was composed in January 1798 and was first published in the Mercure on 10, 20, and 30 ventôse an VI (28 Feb.,

(1) In his Avertissement Tracy notes: 'L'institut national avait d'abord proposé la solution de cette grande question pour le sujet d'un prix; mais par des explications subséquentes, il a réduit les concurrents à ne s'occuper que de cérémonies publiques. J'ignore quels motifs ont pu déterminer cette savante compagnie à raperçtisser à ce point un si beau sujet. Pour moi, (...) je l'embrasserai dans toute son étendue.'

10 and 20 March 1798), and subsequently by Agasse in the same year. In the avertissement Tracy declares that the aim of the work is to examine the ways in which laws can give men 'de saines idées morales' and underlines the close relationship between laws and moral sentiments:

(...) le but de toutes les lois ne saurait être autre que de bien diriger les actions et les sentimens des hommes qui leur sont soumis. (1)

Tracy emphasises the need for a practical support for morality, and the importance of making punishment for crimes inevitable: if all crimes were punished fittingly, the greatest evils which beset mankind would vanish:

Le plus utile principe de la morale que l'on puisse graver dans la tête des êtres sensibles, c'est que tout crime est une cause certaine de souffrance pour celui qui le commet. (2)

Tracy adds:

Les vrais soutiens de la société, les solides appuis de la morale sont donc les suppôts et les exécuteurs des lois. (3)

Tracy consequently turns his attention first of all to three servants of the law, the gendarme, the keeper of a house of detention and the judge. He recognises that the occupation of the first is hazardous and often painful, since it exposes him to immediate dangers and the ill-will of the criminal classes; his profession must therefore be made secure and the gendarme must benefit directly from the proper execution of his duties: he should be rewarded in proportion to the number of his captures. Ignoring the more obvious dangers which such a practice would entail, such as injustice and the corruption of the gendarme, Tracy concentrates upon the possible harm done to the gendarme's personality, upon the possible blunting of his sensibility and compassion, which might result from the gaining of material advantage from the misfortune of others. Such a danger must be offset by organisational

(1) Quels sont les moyens..... Avertissement.

(2) ibid., p. 3.

(3) ibid., p. 4.

considerations: the gendarme must be dependent upon his superiors; he must be forced, in his search for advancement, to seek their esteem by his proficiency and good character. The gendarmerie nationale should therefore have a constant personnel, especially in positions of seniority, an invariable system of promotion, and it should remain under the direction of one permanent head, who stakes his reputation upon its proper and efficient running.⁽¹⁾ The keepers of houses of detention should be brought under the control of the gendarmerie and should be made to suffer if their charges escape. This latter recommendation is an inevitable consequence of Tracy's basic principle:

(...) le plus grand intérêt de la société est que nul mal-facteur ne puisse ni échapper, ni s'évader. (2)

Tracy accepts, and even admires, the jury system in that, in theory at least, an accused is judged by independent and impartial men, who cannot be forced by authority into committing injustices. The system is, nevertheless, open to dangers: the jurors may, in times of trouble or disorder, allow their judgement to be swayed by political pressures, or in times of calm, their wish to be just may incline them towards leniency. In either case they may lose the impartiality of cold reason which is the first requisite for the proper fulfilment of their duties. Under a jury system the judge plays a less important role, and Tracy contents himself with the recommendation that he should be independent of the government, well paid, appointed for a long period (in order to maintain the stability which is dear to Tracy) and peripatetic.

(1) ibid., p. 5: 'Il restera toujours vrai qu'un service public ne sera jamais aussi bien fait lorsqu'il sera dirigé par une collection d'hommes nommés pour un terme court, que quand il dépendra d'un chef unique et permanent qui en fera son affaire personnelle; et il est encore plus certain que dans tout établissement public le passage d'une manière d'être à une autre, même meilleure, est toujours un moment de crise où on éprouve tous les maux de deux régimes, et que si l'incertitude des individus sur leur sort se prolonge, il en résulte des désordres qui deviennent irrémédiables, si ce n'est par le temps.'

(2) ibid., p. 5.

For Tracy, it is of prime importance that a proper balance is kept between justice and injustice. While it is true that it is better to let a hundred guilty men go free rather than condemn one innocent man, one must not weight the scales too heavily in favour of the accused, since the hope of escaping the penalty of the law, if too real, will engender many crimes. Tracy attaches considerable importance to the good effects of example and precedent: if punishment is seen to follow inexorably upon a crime, then others, likely to commit a similar offence, will be dissuaded. Thus punishments should be graded and should fit not only the crime, but also the temptation to commit it.

If crimes must be punished, then also all forms of what Tracy calls friponnerie (or mauvais déportement) must also be suppressed. This can be achieved by ensuring that such practices (an example of which Tracy gives as fraudulent bankruptcy) result in material disadvantage and public censure, and that they are dealt with by civil courts inclined towards severity. It is while dealing with the question of friponnerie that Tracy makes two recommendations which lack the liberal tolerance one might normally expect. Firstly he advocates:

(...) le soin d'exclure de toute place utile à la nomination du gouvernement les hommes jouissant d'une mauvaise réputation. (1)

And secondly he notes:

L'attention de n'employer, autant que cela se peut, les hommes que dans la province qui les a vus naître et dans la carrière à laquelle ils se sont d'abord destinés, est encore un moyen énergique pour que, étant toujours sous les yeux de ceux qui les connaissent, ils ne puissent manquer de recueillir le fruit de leur conduite passée. On ne peut assez penser combien sont dangereux les hommes dépaysés. Nous en avons sous les yeux de bien nombreux et de bien funestés exemples. (2)

Some dangerous assumptions seem to underlie these views - for example, that public opinion, which gives the individual the bad reputation, is an accurate

(1) ibid., p. 9.

(2) ibid., p. 9.

guide and can be relied upon to exercise a proper influence on behaviour, or that men are immediately less likely to remain good citizens once they have left their place of birth. Tracy is led to extremes of this kind because he does not define his terms: he does not indicate what constitutes a bad reputation, or why hommes dépayés provide such abundant evidence of (undefined) reprehensible behaviour. It is not surprising that he should fail to explore all the consequences of his repressive outlook, when his prime interest is in the maintenance of order, but views such as these raise problems which Tracy does not seek to resolve, and moreover seem to have little practical validity: it is, for example, difficult to see how enlightenment can spread effectively if men are to be restricted in their lawful movements.

However efficient the legal authorities may prove themselves to be, not every blameworthy act can be punished, since laws reflect the imperfections of their inventors. All one can aspire to is a series of laws which can reconcile opposing interests, for it is impossible for men to join together in society without preserving their own interests, which are frequently hostile to those of others:

Enfin, quand l'homme pourrait fouler aux pieds toutes les lois de la nature, jusqu'à renoncer ainsi à toutes leurs conséquences immédiates, il n'en serait pas plus en paix avec ses semblables; car tous les intérêts individuels renaîtraient, lorsqu'il s'agirait de prendre chacun sa part de la masse commune des peines et des jouissances, et ils ne seraient pas moins opposés dans ce partage qu'ils le sont dans la possession directe et particulière des biens que nous connaissons. (1)

These interests cannot be denied - as Tracy points out when he discusses the principle of 'natural' property which is derived from the faculté de vouloir - and any attempt to found a society on the communal possession of all property flouts the laws of nature just as Rousseau's advocacy of a state of isolation

(1) ibid., p. 11.

flouts them. Laws must take into account the fact that society is a collection of wills and must remove as far as possible the opportunities of individuals to cause each other harm. They must seek to awaken a sense of the general interest and bring reason to bear on all matters of dispute:

(...) toute disposition tendant à fondre tous les intérêts dans l'intérêt général, à rapprocher toutes les opinions de la raison, leur centre commun, à rendre leur cours naturel à toutes les choses indifférentes en elles-mêmes, à remettre tous les citoyens sous la direction de la nature tant qu'elle est innocente, à leur restituer l'exercice entier de la liberté individuelle, qui n'est pas nuisible; et d'un autre côté, toutes celles qui portent dans l'action du gouvernement la simplicité, la clarté, la régularité, la constance, toutes, dis-je, sont les moyens efficaces de diminuer le nombre des occasions de nuire. (1)

Such definitions enable Tracy to arrive at a catalogue of bad laws: those which are obscure, impractical or which fulfil no useful function (since they will bring the law into disrepute); those which exacerbate the differences of interest between various classes; those which prohibit acts which are in themselves innocent; and those which disturb what Tracy calls the eternal nature of things (he gives as an example the introduction of paper money). The institutions of government must not be negligent or oppressive, nor must they propagate prejudice or superstition, since all these shortcomings would give men arms to injure their fellows. Tracy constantly insists upon the need to stem the opportunities to commit crimes, for he seems convinced that men are only too ready to do so: he speaks of

ces malheureuses occasions de délits qui sont inhérentes à leur nature, et par cela même indestructibles. (2)

Men's natures are such that there is a constant need for repressive measures:

(...) les plus puissans de tous les moyens moraux et auprès desquels les autres sont presque nuls, sont les lois répressives et leur parfaite et entière exécution. (3)

(1) ibid., p. 14.

(2) ibid., p. 15. Tracy appears to contradict here the view he expresses in the Traité de la Volonté to the effect that men are fundamentally good and that wrongdoing is a temporary aberration on their part. See above, Chapter III.

(3) ibid., p. 15.

Repressive measures are, however, not enough: actions are dependent upon the will, whose processes consist in judging one thing preferable to another, and therefore, if virtue and honesty are to be encouraged, they must be made to seem preferable to vice and dishonesty. Man can be, and must be, morally educated, for morality is not divinely inspired, but a science established by man. Direct education offers no solution to this problem, since Tracy readily admits that few men have the inclination or the capacity to follow a course of instruction. Moreover, those lessons which are best remembered are not those learned from direct teaching, but those deduced from observation and experience. It is to governments and legislators that Tracy looks:

Les législateurs et les gouvernans, voilà les vrais précepteurs de la masse du genre humain, les seuls dont les leçons aient de l'efficacité. L'instruction morale, surtout, on ne saurait trop le répéter, est toute entière dans les actes de législation et d'administration. (1)

In Tracy's view, governments and legislators can, by the just and reasonable application of their powers, inculcate virtue and honesty in the citizens under their authority, and he gives various examples of the way in which this might be done: for instance, a law establishing equality of inheritances and prohibiting the right to testate would destroy all rivalry between members of a family, and remove all chance that acts of friendship would be motivated by interest. A law facilitating divorce would obviate the majority of marriages for gain, and preserve and strengthen those happy marriages by holding over them the possibility that they might be broken.⁽²⁾ In a third example Tracy cannot resist the opportunity to attach the Church:

Un pauvre professeur répètera tous les jours qu'il ne faut se décider que d'après sa raison; qu'elle est le seul guide de l'homme; qu'elle seule suffit à lui faire connaître qu'il a un véritable intérêt à être juste: il profitera peu. Le législateur cessera de payer aucuns prêtres et de leur permettre de se mêler en rien des actes civils et de l'enseignement: au bout de dix ans, tout le monde pensera comme le professeur, sans qu'il ait dit un mot. (3)

(1) ibid., p. 22.

(2) This point is taken up in De l'Amour. See below, p. 207.

(3) Quels sont les moyens..., p. 23.

And so Tracy, on the principle that morality can be fashioned by proper legislation, sets down what he considers to be the pre-requisites for the creation of a society in which virtue and honesty can prevail, and in which the conflicting interests of its members can best be reconciled. First must come the efficient execution of repressive laws, and second an exact balance between the receipts and expenditure of the state:

Tant qu'elle (une balance exacte) n'existe pas, nul ordre n'est possible dans la société. Mille chemins honteux conduisent rapidement à la fortune. Les professions honnêtes ne peuvent soutenir cette lutte inégale. Tout le monde est mécontent de sa position. Tous les hommes sont déplacés. Tous les rapports sont confondus. La masse de la nation est appauvrie et vexée, par conséquent abrutie et avilie. (1)

In his Traité de la Volonté, as we have seen, Tracy brings forward other arguments, both economic and moral, in support of this recommendation. In Quels sont les moyens... he is content merely to express it, and follows it with a series of demands which would appear to have far greater consequences:

Après ces deux point capitaux (...) je demanderais 1^o la proclamation de l'égalité, la destruction de tout corps privilégié, de tout pouvoir héréditaire, et l'exclusion des prêtres de tout salaire et de toute fonction publique, y compris celle d'enseigner la morale. (...) 2^o Tout de suite après viennent le divorce, l'égalité des partages, la prohibition presque entière de tester. (2)

The demands for the proclamation of equality before the law and for the abolition of any privileged class, together with its hereditary principle, are the fruits of the social upheaval of the Revolution, but also of Tracy's own examination of man's intellectual faculties. The reduction of all experience to that gained through the senses leads inevitably to a consciousness of the fundamental equality of men, particularly in physiological terms. Furthermore, the continued existence of privileged classes will serve only to exacerbate divisions within society,

(1) ibid., p. 26.

(2) ibid., p. 26.

and provide endless opportunities for oppression and exploitation. But if the principle of equality is an inescapable consequence of idéologie, so too is that of property; indeed the unequal distribution of property is a major cause of inequality of social status. It is in order to counteract this injustice that Tracy demands with the principle of égalité des partages the abolition of the right to testate: these measures would facilitate a more just division of wealth and make it impossible to gain a large fortune without honourably earning it. Tracy remarks:

Ce sont les bases éternelles des vertus domestiques, de la paix des familles et de la bonne éducation des enfans; et de plus, elles favorisent la dispersion des richesses accumulées, et anéantissent plusieurs moyens d'en acquérir promptement sans industrie louable. (1)

These terms are not without significance, for they emphasise the fact that in Quels sont les moyens... Tracy is examining this particular problem from the point of view of the individual in his private situation: he does not consider here the difficulties involved in the abolition of privileged classes and the redistribution of personal wealth, or indeed of their consequences. He is merely pursuing the egalitarian principle inherent in idéologie and seeking those methods best fitted to enable each individual to exercise his rights; he pursues this principle not to its logical extreme, but as far as he can without infringing the principle of property. When he returns to the same point in his Traité de la Volonté he examines the evidence of a fundamental inequality in men, (2) and declares that since such inequality is inherent in nature it must be accommodated, and any attempt to redress the balance, in terms of a redistribution of personal wealth, would, from the point of view of society, lead only to disaster:

(1) ibid., p. 26.

(2) Traité de la Volonté, chap. VIII, p. 175 & sqq. See also above, chap. III.

Si, pour bannir de la société cette inégalité naturelle, nous entreprenions de méconnaître la propriété naturelle et de nous opposer à ses conséquences, ce seroit en vain; car rien de ce qui est dans la nature ne peut être détruit par l'art. De pareilles conventions, si elles étaient faisables, seraient un esclavage trop contre nature, par conséquent trop insupportable pour être durable, et elles ne rempliraient pas leur but. Pendant qu'elles subsisteraient, on verrait naître autant de querelles pour avoir une part plus forte dans les biens communs, ou une plus petite dans la peine commune, qu'il peut en exister parmi nous pour la défense des propriétés particulières; et le seul effet d'un tel ordre de choses serait d'établir l'égalité de misère et de dénûment, en éteignant l'industrie personnelle. (1)

There is, then, on this point a conflict in Tracy's thought. He is only too well aware of the dangers and injustices of an unequal distribution of wealth: indeed he sees that not only personal liberty is at stake, but the structure of society itself. (2) On the other hand the vigour with which he advocates reforms is tempered by his defence of the principle of property, and by his awareness of the fact that men are not equal in attainment or capability. Whereas Helvétius insists that the cause of this inequality lies in differences in education, (3) Tracy merely accepts the fact of its existence and warns the reader not to hope for the impossible. It is this 'realism' that prevents him from being more radical; the theory of idéologie persuades him that men are equal and that the organisation of society must reflect this, whereas the experience of the practicalities of life persuades him that some degree of inequality is inevitable. It is interesting to reflect that in the years between the composition of Quels sont les moyens... and the Traité de la Volonté, the

(1) ibid., p. 176.

(2) ibid., chap. X, p. 227: 'La société, procurant à chacun la sûreté de sa personne et de ses propriétés, cause le développement de nos facultés; ce développement produit l'accroissement de nos richesses; leur accroissement amène plus ou moins vite leur très-inégale répartition; et cette inégale répartition, ramenant l'inégalité de pouvoir, que la société avait commencée par contenir et était destinée à détruire, produit son affaiblissement et quelquefois sa dissolution totale.'

(3) De l'Esprit, Sect. II, chap. I.

two works which express these conflicting attitudes, Tracy was appointed to the Sénat conservateur, a body which, while it carried with it no hereditary principle and exercised little real power, held a prominent position in the hierarchy of society and did secure privileges for its members. The experience of government which Tracy gained, however tenuous, may well have helped to weaken his radicalism, and in no other work does he advocate legal reforms as far-reaching as those put forward in Quels sont les moyens..., a work in which he is, above all, optimistic with regard to the future of society. Having made two further recommendations - the safeguarding of the freedom to undertake all types of industry and the organisation of a proper system of loans - he is able to conclude:

Ce petit nombre de souhaits accompli, le crime est puni, la raison en vigueur, le bonheur domestique assuré, l'égalité maintenue autant qu'il est possible et utile, l'économie rendue nécessaire, et le travail honorable, J'ai peine à imaginer ce qu'on peut désirer de plus pour conduire les hommes à la vertu. (1)

Tracy is confident, then, that men will be led to embrace virtue by appropriate laws, which will limit their opportunities to injure and oppress their fellows, and by their reason, which will temper the selfish demands of interest and passion and persuade them that in their abandonment lies true happiness. When Tracy turns to a more limited aspect of morality in De L'Amour and investigates 'la plus délicieuse de toutes les passions', the same confidence is apparent.

De L'Amour is the second chapter of the second part of Tracy's Traité de la Volonté, in which he declares his intention of examining in succession the human passions and their consequences. In all editions printed in France this chapter runs to some three pages and then stops in mid-sentence, with a final

(1) Quels sont les moyens..., p. 27.

note stating that the author is unable to complete his task and that it must end at this point. Suspicions that this was not the case, which would not have been unreasonable, since Tracy lived for another twenty years after the publication of the Traité de la Volonté, were no doubt dulled by the author's definitive statement, and although mention is made of an Italian translation of the work by both Stendhal and Picavet⁽¹⁾ it was not until 1926 that a complete version in French of the text came to light, thanks to the efforts of Professor Gilbert Chinard. The Italian translation of the Elémens d'Ideologie, published by Compagnoni in Milan in 1819, contains the chapter De l'Amour in full, and Chinard, helped by a résumé of the original manuscript contained in Sarah Newton de Tracy's Notice, retranslated the Italian translation into French.⁽²⁾

The avowed reasons for this subterfuge employed by Tracy in his misleading final note are contained in a letter he wrote to Thomas Jefferson. Heartened by the success in America of the translation of his Commentaire sur l'Esprit des Lois de Montesquieu,⁽³⁾ he sent Jefferson the first part of the Traité de la Volonté, which was translated and published in 1817, and subsequently the incomplete second part, with the following remarks:

Je serais bien aise que l'on joignît à ces premiers chapitres le second qui traite de l'Amour. Je n'en ai imprimé dans l'édition française que les premières lignes, mais il est fait tout entier depuis longtemps, et si je ne l'ai pas publié, c'est par une sorte de timidité de faire confidence à tout ce qui m'entoure de mes sentiments les plus secrets sur certains objets. N'éprouvant pas le même embarras dans l'éloignement, je l'ai laissé imprimer dans la traduction italienne, et j'avoue que j'y attache quelque importance, d'abord parce qu'il est un échantillon de la manière dont je voulais parler de toutes nos passions, l'une après l'autre, et ensuite parce qu'il me paraît qu'on en peut tirer des conséquences importantes pour la législation. (4)

(1) Stendhal, De l'Amour, chap. LVIII: 'L'auteur avait lu un chapitre intitulé dell 'Amore dans la traduction italienne de l'idéologie de M. de Tracy. Le lecteur trouvera dans ce chapitre des idées d'une bien autre portée que tout ce qu'il peut rencontrer ici.' See also Picavet, op.cit., p. 491.

(2) Chinard gives details of the circumstances surrounding the publication of De l'Amour in his introduction to his edition of the text (Paris, Société d'édition "Les Belles-Lettres").

(3) See ^{above} ~~below~~, chap. VZ.

(4) Letter dated 22 February 1821, reprinted in G. Chinard, Jefferson et les Idéologues, p. 209.

Chinard concludes, reasonably enough, that the explanation is not wholly convincing, since the work contains no overt personal reminiscences, nor are there allusions to any of Tracy's contemporaries. One senses more a caution, an albeit misplaced wariness on the part of the author, a reluctance to bring forward a sharp attack on the society of his time.

It is here that the interest of Tracy's De l'Amour lies. Love is not studied as passion or sentiment; since it is in man's nature to live in society, Tracy immediately sets love in its social context. He sees love as the result of the combination of the besoin de reproduction and the besoin de sympathie, and offers only one other analysis or definition, which places love not in the tradition of amour-passion or amour-volupté, but amour-amitié:

L'amour n'est pas un besoin physique. C'est une passion, un sentiment, un attachement d'individu à individu. C'est l'amitié embellie par le plaisir; c'est la perfection de l'amitié. (1)

Tracy finds that the real charms of love lie in the sentiments with which the physical act is surrounded:

(...) le plaisir d'aimer et d'être aimé y a autant ou plus de part que celui de jouir. La preuve en est que la jouissance forcée est très imparfaite; elle est même physiquement pénible; et la jouissance trop partagée ou trop facile est sans saveur parce qu'elle ne prouve pas le sentiment. Le consentement est donc un de ses charmes; la sympathie un de ses plus grands plaisirs. (2)

Courtly love and platonic love can be roundly dismissed as monstrosities, not only because they lack reciprocal affection and tenderness, but also because they lack a condition essential to happiness - l'intérêt de famille. Tracy sees the family as the basic social unit;⁽³⁾ it is in the family that love will

(1) De l'amour, p. 2.

(2) ibid., p. 2.

(3) ibid., p. 59: 'La famille est la véritable unité sociale, à peu près comme nous avons vu dans la Grammaire que les propositions sont les véritables éléments du discours et que les mots pris isolément n'ont aucune valeur par eux-mêmes. Donc de la condition de la famille dépend essentiellement le sort de la race humaine.'

be transformed from empty passion into tenderness and mutual regard; each partner will draw strength from the other and in the care of each other and of children will find the true satisfaction of the besoin de reproduction. Indeed, Tracy is moved to conclude:

Ce n'est donc que dans un bon ménage que se trouvent réunis tous les biens de l'amour. (1)

Such a conclusion is hardly surprising: love is not only the most pleasurable of inclinations, but also the one on which the future of society ultimately depends. As such it must be controlled and subjected to reason. Marriage is the institution by which this may be done: if men and women can be prevailed upon to resist the temptations of whims and caprices outside marriage, then society will prosper in order and harmony. The appeal of marriage to Tracy is twofold: firstly it can provide fulfilment for individuals, and secondly it can provide stability for society.

Tracy is, however, the first to acknowledge that marriages are rarely based on love alone, and that indeed love often does not enter into consideration:

En fait, le mariage est lié à tous nos intérêts; de là vient que, quand on en traite, il est nécessaire de faire entrer en ligne de compte la fortune, les plans d'établissement et d'avancement, la façon dont peuvent s'accorder la position sociale des personnes intéressées et l'époque où l'on vit. De là vient que c'est la chose la plus difficile du monde que d'obéir aux impulsions du coeur. (2)

Tracy, realising that marriage is not necessarily the sequel to love, devotes several pages to illicit liaisons which he refuses to condemn on traditional moral grounds, but which he finds alien to his own temperament and unlikely to lead to lasting happiness, due to adverse legal and social pressures and the absence of the intérêt de famille. Certain liaisons, however, if they cannot provide perfect happiness, can lead at least to a measure of contentment:

(1) ibid., p. 11.

(2) ibid., p. 15.

Certaines de ces liaisons, grâce à un concours favorable de circonstances et grâce à une grande perfection de conduite, échappent cependant à tant de tourments et ont un cours paisible. Elles sont alors d'autant plus agréables et plus douces que l'on a eu plus d'obstacles à surmonter et que l'on a eu plus d'occasions de s'assurer réciproquement une affection inébranlable. Ce sont peut-être les plus tendres attachements de tous. S'il est permis d'employer une comparaison fort commune, je dirai qu'ils peuvent être considérés comme le billet gagnant de la plus risquée des loteries. (1)

The implication of these remarks seems to be that love in its pure state finds its true expression in extra-marital relationships, but Tracy draws back from the full consequences of any such view. Instead, he seeks the means to make marriage more attractive and to give love every chance of developing before marriage. The question becomes one of social organisation: given that it is desirable that the institution of marriage should be retained, but not in any oppressive or restrictive form, Tracy seeks those ways in which it might be established on a more reasonable basis. What needs to be done is to avoid marriages based on material considerations, marriages which cannot be expected to provide a happy union. This can be achieved by giving those of marriageable age freedom of choice and an education which will develop their reason sufficiently to enable them to put that freedom to good use. Tracy urges an end to parental domination, which not only restricts the rational development of the young but which bears witness to essential vanity and stupidity on the part of their elders. The young woman must be given every freedom. Conscious that she is no longer to be married off, or sought for her dowry, but appreciated for what she is, she will cultivate her reason and good sense. The young man, once freed from his hitherto profound and stupid respect for women in general, will succeed or fail according to his merit, and the presence of enlightened young women will have a salutary effect upon his conduct. Not only will love have every opportunity of flowering before marriage, but society will be

(1) ibid., p. 17.

radically changed, and changed for the better. Enthusiastically pursuing this line of argument, Tracy makes a recommendation which is tinged with no small amount of bitterness:

Ce sont elles (les jeunes filles), et elles uniquement, qui, avec les jeunes gens, devraient composer la société générale et ce qui s'appelle le monde. Les hommes mariés ont leurs épouses, leur famille, leurs affaires, leurs études (s'ils en sont capables), leurs devoirs (s'ils ont un état), et ces choses les occupent de façon suffisante. Les femmes, d'autre part, avec leurs soins domestiques, leurs enfants, leur société intime, leur mari (si elles l'aiment et si elles en sont aimées), ont de quoi passer leur temps sans penser à courir hors de la maison. Partout où vous voyez les hommes et les femmes se presser en foule, soyez sûrs qu'ils sont conduits à cet endroit par l'esprit d'intrigue et par le libertinage et qu'ils sont chassés de leur propre maison par l'ennui et le dégoût. (1)

Tracy is confident that these views follow nature and reason, and that they have innumerable advantages. Youth is the time when passions are at their most demanding, and the need to meet members of the opposite sex at its most urgent. Furthermore, such a rejuvenation of society would bring about an improvement in its morals: the cult of luxury would greatly diminish, since parents would make no display or expenditure in launching their young, and vanity would disappear, since the young are not given to this particular vice. Indeed, a new national character would emerge:

(...) on y (dans le monde) emploierait moins d'art et d'artifice, et la sincérité s'y rencontrerait plus souvent; les sentiments affectueux et les passions bienfaisantes y établiraient leur empire, et l'on verrait naître un caractère national entièrement nouveau. (2)

Not only this: there would be an inevitable and progressive amelioration in all future generations as nature and reason fully established their empire. Marriage, duly rationalised, would be the foundation-stone on which this new order would be built, but it must not resemble a trap: Tracy strongly advocates divorce by mutual consent or on the demand of one of the partners with its three attendant advantages: the impossibility of marriages for gain, the end

(1) ibid., p. 32.

(2) ibid., p. 36.

of domestic tyranny and the freshness imparted by the feeling of possible freedom, and, in the unfortunate event of an unhappy marriage, a practical means of relieving anguish and suffering. (1)

In this way Tracy is led to discuss subjects far removed from that with which he began: his views on love become part of a survey of the moral climate of his society and the possibilities of changing it for the better. Tracy comes dangerously close to drawing an idealised picture of a perfectly virtuous society where reason has vanquished passion - and indeed all life. He seems to feel, however, that his views are not extravagant and that he is merely anticipating the climax of a movement which has already begun:

Ce que je dis aurait paru ridicule à Paris quand j'étais jeune, c'est-à-dire il y a quarante ans; mais on aurait pu l'imprimer, sauf que l'auteur aurait été sifflé par ceux qui s'appellent le beau monde. Aujourd'hui (1813) beaucoup de motifs auraient empêché de le laisser imprimer; mais une fois imprimé, personne ne le regarderait comme une chose extravagante. De là je conclus que chez nous le public a gagné, tandis que le gouvernement a perdu. La société s'est rapprochée de ses institutions, et l'autorité s'en est éloignée. L'une est plus durable que l'autre. (2)

If it is true that the public can win and the government can lose, such a state of affairs significantly weakens the force of Tracy's previous arguments, and in fact the shortcomings of his approach become manifest. If, as Tracy says, 'l'instruction morale (...) est toute entière dans les actes de législation et d'administration', then not only will men be led to virtue by proper legal and administrative measures, but they will also be corrupted by improper ones; they

(1) Divorce had been established under the law of 20 September 1792 and was granted under various circumstances, including the expressed wish of one partner alleging incompatibility. These grounds were rejected by the Code civil which, while maintaining divorce, made it more difficult to obtain. The Code civil restored the principle of legal separation, which had been abandoned under the Revolution. Divorce was abolished in 1816, but legal separation was maintained.

(2) De l'Amour, p. 33.

will fashion their behaviour according to whatever pressures are exerted by the authorities. Tracy's remark quoted above, however, would appear to imply that individuals are not entirely subject to legislators for their moral instruction and that some form of public opinion, or mood, can evolve. The same implication is contained in his remarks on how le beau monde should be constituted. This apparent contradiction is to be explained by Tracy's growing disenchantment with legislators which is reflected in De l'Amour: when he wrote Quels sont les moyens... the experiences of the Revolution were still fresh in his mind and it was still likely that the government would introduce measures of social reform with which he would be in sympathy. As he writes De l'Amour this is not the case. Tracy asserts that his views are in accord with the progress of society and implies that the legislators of the Empire are out of step: his is the radical voice raised against reactionary authorities, a voice defending former gains which are in danger of being lost.

Whatever the shortcomings of legislators may be, Tracy's faith in reason is constant, and because of it he fails to examine the sources of any public opinion, or indeed its true nature. His approach constantly leads him to abstract and generalise: although he is dealing with a human passion, there is little awareness on his part of the realities of that passion and too great a confidence that it can be contained. He reveals a disarming trust in people's ability or willingness to act according to the light of reason. The young men and women he describes are too lucid, and habits and customs are too ready to be swept away in the face of a new social order. Although he shows great sympathy for women in the injustices they have to suffer, he shows little understanding of their nature. He attacks certain prejudices of his contemporaries, particularly the exaggerated price put upon virginity, and the maltreatment of women who are compromised; he repeats with some insistence that

the greatest need is for education and experience to provide the best defences against possible suffering. He recognises that equality between men and women must be recognised: woman must be - and shall be - the associate, the colleague of man, not the slave or the unattainable goddess. And yet he is content to assert that women do not have a nature different to that of men.⁽¹⁾ His psychological knowledge, insofar as it concerns the difference between the sexes, is limited, and he is not anxious to extend it; this is so despite his apparent liking for female company, and even his success with women, as attested by Sarah Newton de Tracy.⁽²⁾

Tracy takes the view, in common with all the idéologues, that love is a phenomenon to be controlled and to be accommodated within the framework of man's intellectual and social life. It is instructive to consider the view of Cabanis, as it is one with which Tracy is in sympathy:

Sous le régime bienfaisant de l'égalité, sous l'influence toute-puissante de la raison publique, libre enfin de toutes les chaînes dont l'avaient chargé les absurdités politiques, civiles ou religieuses, étranger à tout enthousiasme ridicule, l'amour sera le consolateur, mais non l'arbitre de la vie; il l'embellira, mais ne la remplira point, car lorsqu'il la remplit, il la dégrade, et bientôt il s'éteint lui-même dans les dégoûts. (3)

The rigour of such a view is brought out nowhere more clearly than in the contrast between the works of Tracy and Stendhal which both bear the title De l'Amour, where it is apparent that the influence of Tracy upon his disciple is limited. In the general, there is more than sufficient evidence that Tracy gave Stendhal a manner of procedure, an analytical method; in the particular, there is agreement on points of detail - approval of marriage and desirability

- (1) Tracy does credit women with certain qualities peculiar to their sex, including precocious wisdom, a talent for observation, tact and 'une pénétration plus vive que les hommes (ce qui paraît incroyable, bien que ce soit vrai).' De l'Amour, p. 51.
- (2) Sarah Newton de Tracy, op.cit., p. 77: 'M. de Tracy aimait la société des femmes et savait s'en faire aimer. (...) Il s'intéressait même à leur toilette, et prétendait qu'on les voyait à l'envers, à cause de la mode qui cachait la poitrine et montrait le dos.'
- (3) Cabanis, Rapports du physique et du moral, V, (Oeuvres philosophiques, I, 313).

of divorce, the need for the young to meet socially (Stendhal seeing this in terms of soirées dansantes three times a week) and so on. But Tracy never imposes his ideas on Stendhal: his rigour and abstraction is replaced by the other's exuberant expansiveness and greater delicacy. Stendhal, in the manner of an idéologue, evolves 144 different varieties of love, based on four major categories;⁽¹⁾ beside this, Tracy's description of love as 'l'amitié rendue plus vive par la différence des sexes',⁽²⁾ at best lacks a certain sensitivity. The difference in attitude between the two men is manifest: with Stendhal there is a delight in love and a cultivation of it, and this approach does not meet with Tracy's approval. Sarah Newton de Tracy writes:

Il (M. de Tracy) reçut un jour une lettre très spirituelle datée de Rome et signée de Stendahl (sic). (...) M. de Tracy se lia avec M. de Stendahl; mais ils se brouillèrent bientôt à cause du livre de cet écrivain sur la théorie de l'amour démontrée par la cristallisation, qui était l'idéologie de M. de Stendahl. M. de Tracy essaya de lire cet ouvrage, n'y comprit rien et déclara à l'auteur que c'était absurde. (3)

In his approach to love Tracy is certainly not original, and can be seen as the continuator of certain eighteenth-century thinkers; one is reminded, for example, of D'Holbach, who in his Système social sings the praises of marriage and the family in similar terms; one is reminded of Helvétius, who in De l'Esprit insisted that reform of morals must begin with reform of the laws; one is reminded of Diderot's vigorous denunciations of prevailing attitudes to love and morality, and it might be said that Tracy has realised Voltaire's desire to reconcile passion with reason and to be free from enthusiasm, or perverted reason. In one direction, however, Tracy does strike a new note: in his emphasis on amour-amitié, he eschews the dual tendencies which characterise the eighteenth century's attitude to love, the tendency towards its idealisation

(1) Amour-passion, amour-goût, amour physique and amour de vanité. v. De l'Amour, chap. I.

(2) De l'Amour, p. 19.

(3) Sarah Newton de Tracy, op.cit., p. 79.

and mystification on the one hand, and its realistic treatment, and especially its reduction to physical passion on the other. Tracy's analysis involves a process of simplification. With the application of reason reaching its height, love is no longer la grande affaire de la vie; it is a social phenomenon out of control, which must be properly channelled by just legislation. In this respect, no less than in other fields, Tracy heralds the nineteenth-century sociologists and social reformers who shared his belief that morals, politics and philosophy can become wholly scientific and that social life can be organised in a scientific way.

Thus it can be seen that in the two works in which Tracy deals directly with moral questions, his attention is fixed on practical matters to the exclusion of moral sentiments. These works offer an insight into his views on problems of social organisation, convinced as he is that if these are efficiently dealt with, a climate of virtue will inevitably be created. He does not deal with the question of the moral perfectibility of man, a question which Condorcet raises in his Esquisse,⁽¹⁾ which Cabanis deals with at some length⁽²⁾ and which, as Dr. Kitchin points out, is of fundamental interest to many of the idéologues.⁽³⁾ Tracy implies that such perfectibility is realisable, when he declares moral truths to be demonstrable, and his optimism and his faith in man's eventual conversion to reason are left largely intact, despite the growing gulf between his own ideas and those of governmental legislators. Tracy's primary interest remains that of philosophical enquiry; the judgements he makes on moral matters arise out of that enquiry, and are based not so much on close observation as on philosophical deduction. Because of this he fails to explore in its own

(1) Condorcet, Esquisse ..., ^{10^e époque} p. 226.

(2) v. Cabanis' Lettre sur la perfectibilité de l'esprit humain, published in La Décade on 30 germinal an VII (19 April, 1799).

(3) v. Kitchin, op.cit., pp. 147-154.

terms the source of man's moral sentiments; Tracy, as was shown in Chapter III, wishes to examine the effects of actions rather than their causes. Thus, although in his introduction to his Traité de la Volonté he places the basis of man's actions in society in his duty to satisfy his own needs, and although in his Mémoire sur la faculté de penser he shows society as a collection of wills, each seeking to 'possess' the others, and declares this to be the source of morality,⁽¹⁾ nowhere does he explicitly postulate enlightened self-interest as a basis for moral judgements. The individual's progress towards a complete knowledge of his intellectual faculties is seen as a journey towards truth, but it is a philosophical truth from which moral laws are deduced.

Thus, when moral questions are raised, they are approached essentially theoretically. In Quels sont les moyens... and De l'Amour which might be said to show idéologie in action, effect follows cause and prejudice yields to instruction with an inevitability uncommon in everyday reality, and it is certainly not without significance that references to contemporary situations and events are so infrequent. In the curiously rarified atmosphere within these works, Tracy reveals the contradictions which have been apparent elsewhere. He can be both repressive and libertarian, reactionary and progressive, perceptive and insensitive. And despite these paradoxes one thing is certain: Tracy sees the need for social reform. Whether or not he has found the proper way to engender a love of virtue among men, he is conscious of injustices, and shows a genuine desire to end them.

(1) Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, p. 404. See also above, chap. III.

VIII. EDUCATION

Tracy's direct interest in education was stimulated by his appointment, in February 1799, to the Conseil d'Instruction publique. This had been instituted on 11 brumaire an VII (1 Nov. 1798) by François de Neufchâteau with the following terms of reference:

Le ministre de l'Intérieur (...) établit auprès de lui un Conseil d'Instruction publique composé de neuf membres, chargé d'examiner les livres élémentaires imprimés ou manuscrits, les cahiers et les vues des professeurs, et sans cesse occupé des moyens de perfectionner l'éducation républicaine. Tous les ans dans le courant de Prairial le Conseil d'Instruction publique présentera au Ministre de l'Intérieur la liste générale des livres élémentaires dans laquelle choisiront les instituteurs et institutrices d'écoles primaires, les professeurs d'écoles centrales, les chefs d'institutions particulières, soit d'externes soit de pensionnaires de l'un comme de l'autre sexe. (1)

Initially only eight members were named, and all were taken from the ranks of the Institut: Daunou, Garat, Jacquemont and Lebreton representing the moral and political sciences, Domergue and Palissot representing literature and the fine arts, and Darcet and Lagrange representing the mathematical and physical sciences. Ginguéné joined the Conseil after his return from Turin in November 1798. On 3 ventôse an VII (21 February 1799) Neufchâteau wrote to the members of the Conseil informing them of Tracy's appointment:

Citoyens, pour accélérer l'examen des cahiers que les professeurs d'écoles centrales des départements m'ont envoyés en assez grand nombre, et ne pas vous détourner du travail qu'exige la formation de la liste des livres que je déclarerai propres à l'enseignement, d'après le jugement que vous en aurez porté, j'ai cru devoir vous adjoindre le Citoyen Tracy, membre de l'Institut national. Il serait à désirer qu'avant l'ouverture de la prochaine année classique on pût donner, surtout aux professeurs de législation et de grammaire générale, dont les méthodes seraient reconnues essentiellement vicieuses, les conseils nécessaires pour qu'ils prissent une meilleure direction. Le Citoyen Tracy, dont le zèle et les lumières vous sont

(1) Archives nationales, F¹⁷ 1011.

census m'a paru très propre à concourir avec vous à ce travail et à l'accélérer. En conséquence, je l'ai adjoint au Conseil d'Instruction publique, pour vous seconder, spécialement dans l'examen des cahiers que je vous désigne. (1)

Tracy's name first appears in the minutes of a meeting of the Conseil on 18 ventôse an VII (8 March 1799) and subsequently he appears to have fulfilled his obligations with his customary thoroughness.

The task of the Conseil was in part specific and in part general: besides examining possible text-books for different educational establishments, the members were invited to act as watchdogs over the educational system and review the effects of its reorganisation under the law of 3 brumaire an IV (25 October 1795). This law, which had been presented to the Convention by Daunou (as one of the members of the Comité des Onze) incorporated in modified form projects which had been presented some time before, notably a plan concerning primary education drawn up by Lakanal and put before the Convention in November 1794, and a decree on écoles centrales sponsored by him and agreed by the Convention in February 1795. In order to hasten the establishment of primary schools and the écoles centrales, five commissioners had been appointed in February 1795, and following upon their recommendations, Daunou drew up his projet de loi the day before the Convention was dissolved.

Daunou's law, in the words of A. Duruy, is:

(...) l'oeuvre capitale de la Convention en matière d'instruction, la synthèse de tous ses travaux et projets antérieurs, son testament scolaire, pourrait-on dire, comme la constitution de l'an III est son testament politique. (2)

It provided for the creation of schools at all levels and stages of education.

(1) ibid. F¹⁷ 1338.

(2) A. Duruy, L'Instruction publique et la Révolution, Paris: Hachette 1882. p. 137. Elsewhere in the same work (p. 142) Duruy refers to 'cette loi du 3 brumaire an IV, la moins imparfaite et la plus réfléchie des oeuvres de la Convention, son suprême effort, sa pensée définitive, le dernier mot de sa pédagogie'. H.C. Barnard in Education and the French Revolution, Cambridge U.P., 1969, refers (on p. 174) to Daunou's law as 'a kind of summary of educational projects and experiments since the Revolution broke out'.

It stated that one primary school was to be set up in every canton, whereas Lakanal's project had specified one primary school for every one thousand inhabitants. The effect of the change was that primary schools were created in town centres of population, leaving villages and areas of scattered population unprovided. Daunou's law did not change the basic organisation of each school (two divisions, one for boys and one for girls, thereby necessitating both a schoolmistress and a schoolmaster), nor the age of admission (six years), nor the curriculum, which H.C. Barnard summarises as follows:

(...) reading and writing; the French language both written and spoken; elementary arithmetic and land-measurement; some notions of geography and of the history of 'free peoples'; information about natural phenomena and products; stories of heroic deeds and 'chants de triomphe'. The reading material must inculcate republican principles, the Rights of Man and the French constitution. (1)

However, the most significant provision of the law of 3 brumaire was that for the establishment of the écoles centrales. There was to be one such school in every department (Lakanal's decree had proposed one school for every 300,000 inhabitants) with nine chairs⁽²⁾ and a curriculum divided into three sections: drawing, natural history and ancient and modern languages, to be studied from the age of twelve; mathematics, physics and chemistry, from the age of fourteen; general grammar, literature, history and legislation, from the age of sixteen. Students who were sufficiently able could, at the age of eighteen, proceed to one of the newly-created écoles spéciales, which were concerned with the study of the following subjects: astronomy; geometry and mechanics; natural history; medicine; veterinary art; rural economics; antiquities; political science;

(1) op.cit. p. 167.

(2) In the following subjects: drawing, natural history, ancient languages, mathematics, physics and chemistry, general grammar, belles-lettres, history and legislation.

painting, sculpture and architecture; music.

The establishment of the écoles centrales and the écoles spéciales was greatly facilitated by the widespread criticism of the organisation and curricula of the collèges under the ancien régime. In this respect Trady's remarks are typical of his time:

On n'a pas assez remarqué qu'il n'y avait aucune combinaison dans l'arrangement des études des anciens collèges; elles n'en avaient nul besoin. (...) Il ne fallait pas de bien profondes méditations pour arranger que l'on étudierait le latin pendant six ou sept ans, et ensuite la rhétorique pendant un ou deux; à la vérité on plaçait à la fin de tout cela un prétendu cours de philosophie que l'on faisait consister dans quelques notions faibles ou fausses sur la physique et la métaphysique. Mais cette philosophie était si généralement reconnue pour complètement défectueuse et inutile, qu'aucun élève ne faisait même semblant de l'étudier, à moins qu'il n'y fût forcé par des circonstances impérieuses, et que personne ne s'en embarrassait. C'est même cet abandon général qui empêchait de s'apercevoir qu'elle tenait la place de plusieurs connoissances utiles qui auraient dû être enseignés à différentes époques, et que si son étude avait été suivie elle aurait donné une longueur démesurée à la durée de l'éducation. (1)

All the discussions and plans concerned with education aired during the Revolution are based on two principles. Firstly, there should be a national system of education organised by the state which would recognise that education was one of its obligations and a right of all its citizens. Thus all education was secularised and theology was excluded from the syllabus of the écoles centrales. The second principle was one of practical utility, already clearly expressed by some educational theorists before the Revolution and echoed by Daunou, in respect of the écoles spéciales, with great enthusiasm:

Ce système des écoles spéciales (...) dirigé plus immédiatement, plus activement les efforts de l'esprit vers des objets déterminés; il ranime sans cesse l'émulation par le spectacle toujours utile d'un but tout prochain; il écarte les séductions de la paresse, en retenant sous les yeux des élèves l'image du succès, de la réputation et de la fortune; il concentre des forces qu'on se plaît trop à disséminer; il diminue le nombre des hommes médiocres en tous genres et il augmente, au profit de la gloire

(1) Observations sur le système actuel d'instruction publique, (Logique II)
p. 334.

nationale et de l'utilité publique, le nombre des hommes supérieurs en un seul. (1)

Indeed Liard sees Daunou's law as the putting into practice of these two principles. As such it is an important instrument of innovation:

C'est bien un état nouveau qu'elle (la loi du 3 brumaire) institue; c'est bien de l'esprit nouveau qu'elle s'inspire; c'est bien l'homme nouveau qu'elle veut former. Aux centaines de collèges éparpillés sur tout le territoire, aux Facultés supérieures presque partout inertes et misérables elle substitue des Ecoles centrales, une par département, quelques écoles de hautes études consacrées chacune à l'enseignement approfondi d'une science particulière; elle les rattache toutes à l'état seul, en vertu de ce principe désormais acquis, que l'enseignement public à tous les degrés est un devoir et une fonction de l'Etat; elle leur marque à toutes un but nouveau et par là leur imprime une direction nouvelle; elle ne leur demande pas de former des gens d'église, des gens de robe ou des gens d'école, mais bien des citoyens et des hommes armés de toutes les connaissances nécessaires à l'individu et à la société. (2)

It is the second principle of utility which accounts for the fact that the humanities are no longer the hub of the whole system and that their teaching has been restricted, to make room for a development in the teaching of all sciences, moral and political as well as physical.

Tracy's work in the field of education is therefore to be examined in relation to specific circumstances. He himself makes no reference to previous educational projects, such as those devised during 1791 and 1792 by Mirabeau, Talleyrand and Condorcet⁽³⁾ and restricts himself entirely to the reality of education under the law of 3 brumaire. His Observations sur le système actuel

- (1) Quoted in J. Guillaume (ed.), Procès-verbaux du Comité d'instruction publique de la Convention nationale, Paris, Impr. nat. 1890-1907, VI, 333.
- (2) L. Liard, L'Enseignement supérieur en France, 1789-1889, Paris, Colin, 1888-1894, I, 252.
- (3) Mirabeau's Travail sur l'éducation publique was published, in 1791, by Cabanis, after Mirabeau's death; Talleyrand presented his plan to the Constituent Assembly in September 1791; Condorcet presented his plan to the Legislative Assembly in April 1792. All three texts are reprinted in C. Hippeau, L'Instruction publique en France pendant la Révolution, Paris, Didier, 1881-1883, I, 1-288, and are analysed in Liard, op.cit., I, 128-163 and Duruy, op.cit., 67-87.

d'instruction publique echoes in large part the findings of the Conseil which were published in a report, dated 16 pluviôse an VIII (5 February 1800) on the working of the écoles centrales. The existence of this report, in the composition of which Tracy was closely involved, is of interest because it offers not only a reasoned examination of how the system was functioning but also a means of establishing to what extent Tracy's private views on education were shared by his associates, and to what extent they offer original judgements.⁽¹⁾

The report⁽²⁾ issued out of correspondence between the Conseil and members of the teaching profession. The Conseil had asked for general information concerning the organisation of schools from administrators and particular information concerning the organisation of courses from teachers. In the case of the latter they asked for the cahiers pertaining to different courses. The members of the Conseil had already discerned considerable variations in the organisation, conduct and length of courses throughout the country, and indeed some lack of understanding on the part of teachers as to the object of their courses. They therefore made their request for information as a preliminary step to imposing some uniformity and to ensure that education was pursued along good republican lines. They took care to give detailed directives in those areas where this seemed most necessary, and issued circulars to teachers of history, legislation, general grammar and ancient languages.⁽³⁾ The history course seems to cause the Conseil particular misgivings:

Ces sciences (métaphysique, morale, art social, économie politique) les plus nécessaires de toutes à qui veut observer et juger les actions des hommes en société, n'ont point encore d'éléments bien fixes: la métaphysique, qui leur sert de base, ne fait que sortir du chaos; et à peine est-il généralement reconnu qu'elle ne doit consister que dans l'examen de nos facultés intellectuelles.

- (1) The editor of the 1825 edition of Tracy's Elémens d'Idéologie credits Tracy with the authorship of the report. There appears to be no evidence available to prove or disprove this, but it must be emphasised that the contents of the report represent the findings of the Conseil as a whole, and do not represent the views of one man.
- (2) Reprinted in Logique Vol. II (1825 ed.) pp. 268-318.
- (3) Reprinted in Logique Vol II pp. 262-283.

L'histoire sous ce rapport, pourrait donc servir plutôt à perpétuer d'anciens préjugés qu'à faire découvrir les vrais principes. (1)

In order to obviate these dangers, it is proposed that history, which the Conseil envisages as 'un tableau sommaire de l'histoire universelle', should be preceded by the courses of general grammar and legislation, so that pupils should come properly prepared to the study of a subject which, however necessary, is particularly prone to the perpetuation of error and prejudice. It is important therefore that the courses of legislation and general grammar should themselves be kept free of these. The object of the course of legislation is to give the pupils the correct principles of public and private morality and should thus include:

- 1° les éléments de la morale puisés dans l'examen de la nature de l'homme et de ses facultés intellectuelles, et fondés sur son intérêt bien entendu et sur le desir invincible qu'il a d'être heureux; c'est ce qu'on appelle le droit naturel;
- 2° l'application de ses principes à l'organisation du corps politique, au code de ses lois criminelles, civiles et économiques, et à ses relations avec les nations étrangères, c'est-à-dire le droit public, le droit criminel et civil, l'économie politique et le droit des gens, montrant toujours ce qui doit être en même temps que ce qui est, afin d'accoutumer à juger de l'un d'après l'autre. (2)

Since general principles of morale are to be established in the first place and since, in the view of the Conseil, these can be deduced only from knowledge of our intellectual faculties, it becomes apparent that the course of legislation must begin with a study of idéologie. Such a study is necessary also to the proper organisation of the course of general grammar, which is conceived as 'le couronnement des cours de langues anciennes et l'introduction aux cours de belles-lettres, d'histoire et de législation'. (3) The principles of general grammar, once established, are to be applied to French grammar in particular,

(1) Logique, II, 277.

(2) ibid., p. 264.

(3) ibid., p. 272.

since this is the first step in the study of belles-lettres, and are to provide the basis for the deduction of the rules of the art of reasoning. Equally, students of ancient languages cannot understand rules of language if they do not understand the workings of their minds when they conceive and express thoughts; thus teachers of ancient languages are directed to give their charges an introductory course of idéologie, and the Conseil recommend as authors to be studied 'Condillac, Dumarsais ou tel autre grammairien métaphysicien'.⁽¹⁾

It is clear that the Conseil consider the subjects under discussion as interdependent: principles and truths in different disciplines are to be derived from a common source. The comments of the Conseil show their determination to introduce into the teaching system a logical order of progression: the proposals noted ~~run~~ counter to the arrangement of classes already in operation, whereby classes may be followed in any order (subject to the imposed age limitations). The Conseil is seeking to impose a more rigid curriculum in which the pupil progresses from the known to the unknown under the strictest supervision. It is a path moreover which leads from general principle to practical application, and it is idéologie which is to provide the proof of the general principles. This attachment to idéologie as the necessary basis for different subjects goes a long way to explaining Tracy's concern that the directives, both general and particular, to the teachers concerned, should be dispatched and that proper liaison between them and the Conseil should be maintained.⁽²⁾

(1) Tracy himself refers to Dumarsais in similar fashion in his Observations.

(2) Archives nationales, F¹⁷ 1011 dr 1580 contains a letter written by Tracy to Lebreton, dated 27 vendémiaire an VIII (19 October 1799). Tracy's concern over the letters is well illustrated by the following passage: 'Actuellement que voilà enfin nos quatre lettres imprimées vous me ferez un extrême plaisir de vous assurer si elles ont bien été expédiées à tous les professeurs qu'elles regardent. Celle de législation ayant été imprimée d'abord doit, je crois, avoir été envoyée. Mais celles de langues anciennes et de grammaire générale ayant dû être expédiées en manuscrit, elles ont beaucoup traîné, cependant la première des deux étant fort ancienne, elle a, je crois, fini par être envoyée à tous. Mais pour celle de grammaire générale, je vois par le calcul du temps et par le petit nombre de réponses qu'elle n'est sûrement pas épuisée, et par suite les réponses particulières résolues par le conseil le 18 thermidor à 14 professeurs de grammaire générale et auxquelles devait être jointe la lettre générale n'ont pas été expédiées non plus. Il a pu en être de même des 9 réponses particulières à des professeurs de langues anciennes résolues le 28 messidor. Tout cela est important à vérifier...'

The report itself contains no further detailed proposals as to how courses in the écoles centrales should be organised, but reference is made to a tableau, to be joined to the report, in which a suggested arrangement is set out, complete with a preliminary statement of principles and explanatory notes. As Duruy points out, no tableau was found with the manuscript of the report, but one was, however, printed with Tracy's Observations sur le système actuel d'instruction publique, and whilst it cannot be categorically stated that these two plans are one and the same, (and Tracy himself gives the impression that he alone is responsible for the one which appears with his work), it can be thought likely, considering the wide area of agreement between that work and the Conseil's report, that there is, at least, a considerable area of agreement between the two. (1)

The report does however review all the subjects taught in the écoles centrales. It finds the course of drawing the most popular and, with mathematics, apparently the most efficiently taught. It is non-committal with regard to natural history, physics and chemistry, and, as would be expected, finds confusion and inefficiency in the teaching of ancient languages, general grammar, history and legislation - and also in belles-lettres, the teaching of which is badly organised, since it has no relationship with what follows or precedes it. The report is particularly severe in its criticism of the course of ancient languages: it is here that teachers notice the need for and lack of primary schools, since children, needing only to meet the age qualification to enter the écoles centrales, cannot always read or write. In addition to this the teachers in general seem less well educated than in other subjects: a third of them can barely teach Greek and many spell badly. Throughout the country the length of the course varies between one and four years, and the number of lessons

(1) Tracy's tableau is reproduced as an appendix to this study.

in each décade varies between five and sixteen.

Despite these criticisms, the report concludes with enthusiastic approval of the progress made in the écoles centrales and declares that only detailed improvements are needed:

(...) il est cependant prouvé par la correspondance que l'état actuel de l'instruction publique doit faire concevoir des espérances fondées, que chaque jour son utilité est mieux sentie par la généralité des citoyens et qu'avec un très petit nombre de mesures faciles à prendre le ministre aurait la gloire de lui donner l'essor le plus brillant. (1)

Recommendations are made concerning administration: the Conseil propose that the division of courses into three sections should be abandoned and that the Minister should determine the organisation of courses (presumably upon advice from the Conseil). The age qualifications both to enter the écoles centrales and to begin any course should be abolished; the staff of any school should be empowered to admit or refuse entry to candidates on the basis of ability and experience. Teachers should continue to be accountable to the Conseil; they should submit their plan d'études at the beginning of the year and a compte-rendu at the end. Encouragement should be given to teachers to draw up complete cahiers of their courses; the authors of the best cahiers should be financially rewarded and their work used as course text-books. A second chair of ancient languages should be created in each school; such a proposal reflects concern that literary studies, and particularly the study of ancient languages, have been too severely restricted in favour of other subjects. Such a concern was current at the time; for example Thurot wrote in the Décade philosophique:

Il faut convenir que si l'instruction publique s'est singulièrement perfectionnée en France, dans ces derniers temps, sous plusieurs rapports très essentiels, tels que l'enseignement des sciences physiques, morales et politiques, elle semble d'un autre côté avoir perdu quelque chose sous le rapport de la littérature, et principalement sous celui de

(1) Logique, II, 305.

l'étude des langues anciennes. Autrefois, on forçait la jeunesse à consacrer tout son temps à cet objet-là seul, et c'était sans doute un très grand inconvénient; mais aujourd'hui on paraît le négliger entièrement, et c'est un mal réel. (1)

Apart from these recommendations the report restricts itself to the discussion of proposals made by teachers which, if implemented, would tend to remove the dangers of arbitrary interference by departmental administrations and establish uniformity of practice in respect of school management and holidays.

These then are the circumstances in which Tracy's Observations came to be written. The work was originally intended for publication only after his Grammaire, and indeed Tracy clearly considered elementary works, for use in écoles centrales, on morale and legislation (in other words further volumes of his Elémens d'Idéologie) necessary forerunners to the Observations: he felt it to be essential to put down on paper detailed proposals on the manner in which subjects should be taught before seeking to convince others of the merit of his views on education in general.⁽²⁾ However, since the question of the very nature of educational establishments was once more under discussion⁽³⁾ Tracy came to the conclusion that if his study was to be of any use, it should be placed before the public before all relevant questions had been decided. It was therefore published in 1801, a year after the Conseil's report.

Tracy begins from the premiss that in any civilised society there are two classes of men: the classe ouvrière, who earn their living from manual labour, and the classe savante, who live off the revenue of their property, or who work primarily with their minds. This division is defended with Tracy's customary self-assurance:

(1) Décade philosophique, 30 floréal, an VII (19 May 1799).

(2) In his Avertissement to his Observations Tracy states the principle that 'on ne saurait faire un bon plan d'écoles, sans commencer par faire un bon plan d'études'. (Logique, II, 322).

(3) The écoles centrales were formally suppressed in May 1802.

Voilà des choses qui ne dépendent d'aucune volonté humaine; elles dérivent nécessairement de la nature même des hommes et des sociétés: il n'est au pouvoir de personne de les changer. Ce sont donc des données invariables dont il faut partir. (1)

Indeed, he goes far in emphasising the differences between the two classes:

Moeurs, besoins, moyens, tout est différent entre ces deux espèces d'hommes. (2)

Whatever the ultimate value of such a division might be, Tracy uses it as evidence that in the country there must be two distinct and separate types of education. Thus one premiss underlying his approach to education is immediately apparent: a child's education is to be governed not by any assessment of its intellectual capacity and no attempt is to be made to provide a unified system. This is another example of that particular dichotomy in Tracy whereby, whilst admitting the need for the development of social organisation, he can seek to base innovation on a static, and somewhat outmoded, concept of society. He may well admit that it is difficult to assess the intellectual capabilities of any child at the age of twelve, but this is not the yardstick he will use to determine what form of education that child receives: it is enough for him that there are, in his view, two classes within the state. His division is clearly arbitrary, and the line of demarcation between the classes would not always be clear. Tracy's adherence to it may be seen as the result of two influences. Firstly, there was the prevalent supposition, already noted, that education should be directed by a spirit of utility: it is important for Tracy not merely that education should seek to inculcate useful knowledge or good 'republican' sentiments, but that it should also accommodate itself to the social situation. In the sweeping away of the privileges of the past and in the creation of the new order, there was need for professionally trained men

(1) Logique, II, 327.

(2) ibid., p. 328.

in all fields; education was not merely desirable for the sake of enlightenment, but economically necessary, and the intellectual meritocracy could best be supplied by a system which separated the artisan from the scientist and legislator. Secondly, Tracy was writing in a situation where the écoles centrales already existed; they had been created by law and offered a type of education with which he was broadly in sympathy. He was clearly reluctant to tamper to any great extent with the system, and seeing that it was inescapably true that the écoles centrales, as created, were beyond the grasp of many of the nation's children, it was better to accommodate them elsewhere. He thus erects as principles for future discussion phenomena which he sees to be characteristics of his society, and once convinced of these principles, he will not forsake them:

Les principes sont le modèle dont il faut toujours rapprocher les événements; c'est le seul moyen de n'être pas entraîné par ceux-ci, soit qu'on les étudie, soit qu'on y prenne part. (1)

There are also other, economic, reasons which, in Tracy's eyes justify the existence of two distinct types of education: the classe ouvrière, having need of their children to work and earn, cannot allow them to spend many years receiving formal education, and what education is available should be designed to prepare children for a particular trade. Since parents of this class cannot afford to support their children as boarders in any school, there must be a large number of schools (écoles primaires) so that there may always be one nearby, where children may receive a short and essentially practical form of instruction. The children of the classe savante, on the other hand, can afford to spend more time on their education, and indeed they must, for their rôle in life demands wide knowledge and experience. Since they are in a position to leave the paternal roof, Tracy envisages schools (écoles centrales and écoles spéciales) whose number is limited, to preserve their quality, where pupils

(1) ibid., p. 247.

may be closely supervised in their studies. The division between the two types of education is complete: Tracy does not conceive that the écoles primaires may lead a pupil to the écoles centrales, and insists that the division is justified 'de par l'autorité invincible de la nécessité'.⁽¹⁾

Tracy begins his detailed study of the education system by considering the education of the classe savante, since it is upon this that everything depends: in order to propagate sound ideas and good methods one must begin with those in a position to appreciate them, with the hope that the ideas and methods will reach an ever-increasing audience and then filter down to the lower classes of society. To reinforce this point Tracy uses a metaphor culled from his early career:

Quand on veut enseigner un nouvel exercice à un régiment, il faut d'abord que les chefs l'apprennent: puis ils l'enseignent aux officiers particuliers, ceux-ci à leurs sous-officiers, et ceux-là aux soldats. Il en est de même de toute instruction. (2)

In determining what education is best fitted to the classe savante Tracy starts from another premiss which he considers inexorably consecrated by the workings of nature, namely that a man's life is divided into certain fixed periods. Education must accommodate itself to those periods which are relevant: at the age of twenty a man has reached maturity; his passions and energy are at their peak, and he must begin to play an active role in life, rather than dedicate more of his time to the mere amassing of knowledge. Thus formal education should be completed by the age of twenty. Of these years, the first eight should be spent under the care of parents, learning basic skills, such as reading and writing, and other attributes harder to define:

(...) les bonnes habitudes et (...) ces heureuses dispositions de l'esprit que ne manque point de donner plus ou moins la

(1) ibid., p. 328.

(2) ibid., p. 329.

société habituelle d'hommes qui ont une bonne éducation et des mœurs libérales. (1)

Of the remaining twelve years, eight should be spent at the écoles centrales, where the child will learn 'toutes les connaissances générales' and four at an école spéciale which will teach him the knowledge and skill particular to his chosen profession.

Tracy thus clearly conceives the rôles of these schools as they were envisaged by Daunou: a broadly based general syllabus is to be complemented by one of the strictest practicality. Tracy differs however on the question of timing: he finds admittance to the écoles centrales at the age of twelve renders the system unworkable, and indeed contradicts the principles underlying it. Tracy does also seem to consider even the syllabus of the écoles centrales in terms of its utility: although he looks to them for the provision of a general education, he divides the knowledge they must impart under three headings, and justifies his divisions by stating that they are at the very basis of all sections of the classe savante. Thus the three headings are: languages and belles-lettres, which are the concern of those who will devote their lives to literature and erudition, physical and mathematical sciences, which are the necessary bases for careers in medicine and in civil and military engineering, and moral and political sciences, the province of those exercising civil or political functions. In this way Tracy presents the education offered at the écoles centrales as preparatory to that of the écoles spéciales:

Il faut donc que chacun trouve dans les écoles centrales les ressources nécessaires pour arriver bien préparé aux écoles spéciales de ces différens états. (2)

However he also admits that all branches of knowledge are necessary to all men, and therefore all subjects should be taught in the écoles centrales; in Tracy's

(1) ibid., p. 330.

(2) ibid., p. 333.

eyes a man cannot be truly erudite or lettered without some knowledge of the physical sciences, nor can he properly cultivate these sciences without knowing a language other than his own. And furthermore:

(...) tout homme a besoin, comme homme, de connaître ses facultés intellectuelles; et comme homme social, les principes de la morale privée et publique. Ainsi toutes ses connaissances sont également nécessaires à tous jusqu'à un certain degré, et c'est jusqu'à ce degré qu'elles doivent être enseignées dans les écoles centrales; au-delà elles deviennent le domaine particulier de leurs écoles spéciales. (1)

What is important is that each of the three branches of teaching should be carried forward together; they should be skilfully combined so that each helps to enlighten the pupil in his study of the others.

Tracy sets out his plan for the curriculum of the écoles centrales under the three headings mentioned above. Under the first, languages and belles-lettres, a course dealing with the elementary notions of French and Latin, lasting two years, is followed by a course of Latin and Greek, lasting four years. In the seventh year the pupil undertakes his first course of literature, in which emphasis is placed on oratory and poetry, and in the eighth his second course of literature in which he studies the faculties of human intelligence and the art of reasoning, together with the nature of eloquence and its proper use in creative writing.

Under the second heading, physical and mathematical sciences, a preliminary course dealing with the principles of numeration and the elements of arithmetic is followed by an elementary course of physical geography, containing general notions of the organisation of the world and the creatures inhabiting it. These introductory courses, each lasting one year, are followed by a two-year course of pure mathematics and a two-year course of natural history, physics and

(1) ibid., p. 333.

chemistry. The final two years are occupied by a course of applied mathematics, in which the theory of algebraic analysis is applied to all branches of physics.

Under the third heading, moral and political sciences, studies begin a year later than in the other two fields. The pupil begins with a course dealing with elementary notions of political and historical geography, to be followed by a two-year course of general grammar, which after examining the fundamentals of human understanding, deals with the functioning of the mind with respect to language and with the theory in particular of French and Latin, which up to this point has been dealt with only practically. In his fifth year the pupil begins a two-year course of morale and legislation, which imparts the principles of public and private morality, derived from a true understanding of the sources of our ideas and of our best interests. Finally comes the two-year course of history, the study of which is greatly facilitated by the application of principles learnt in previous courses. In practical terms this means that, as the Conseil recommended, the history course is conceived as the application of moral, political and economic principles established beforehand in the courses of general grammar and morale and legislation. There is comparable progression in the other two divisions of the syllabus, and between all three divisions there is interdependence and interaction. For example Tracy points out:

(...) les observations du professeur de grammaire générale sur l'intelligence humaine, jettent bien du jour sur la théorie de la langue latine et de la langue mathématique, et les rendent bien plus faciles à saisir. (1)

Indeed the course of general grammar, taking place in the years which Tracy considers particularly important - the third and fourth years of the course - is of great use to the study of all subjects, since its basis is a study of the art of judgement and reasoning.

(1) ibid., p. 341.

This plan does not seek to change the subjects taught at that time in the écoles centrales, nor the balance between them; it recognises the claims of the sciences, pure, applied and social, and nonetheless upholds the teaching of ancient languages. What it does seek to do is to bring order to the courses already offered which, apart from being optional were all independent of the others. In many instances the result was one of disorder, and a consequent lack of achievement. Tracy proposes a system which is much more rigorous and coherent, and in which pupils and teachers are to be closely supervised. In order to derive maximum benefit from the écoles centrales, Tracy sees the need for detailed instructions to be given to teachers to indicate what should be the content of their courses, the length of time they should operate, and the spirit in which they should be taught. This would be done by a 'société d'hommes instruits', to whom teachers should send a written copy of their course at the end of the year; the best should be published and their authors rewarded. Tracy acknowledges that these recommendations coincide with those made in the report of the Conseil; he feels bound not to refer to its work, but cannot refrain from an enthusiastic appraisal:

Il ne m'appartient pas d'en parler puisque j'en étais membre; cependant je puis et je dois dire que pendant quelques mois de l'an VII qu'il a eu une véritable activité, la correspondance fait foi qu'il avait ranimé le zèle et l'espérance dans les écoles et produit plusieurs bons effets dont on était prêt à recueillir le fruit. (1)

Tracy is thoroughly optimistic with regard to the potential of the écoles centrales, and firmly convinced that in education a new age has begun. Any disadvantages lie not in the system or the principles underlying it, but in the fact that these are in advance of their time.

(1) ibid., p. 350.

With regard to the écoles spéciales, which he regards as forming, with the écoles centrales, the essential core of the education of the classe savante, Tracy has little specific and detailed comment to make, and admits that he wishes to do little more than make a few observations on the law of 3 brumaire. He does note a division between those establishments which offer a generalised instruction within a limited field (Tracy calls these écoles spéciales) and those which offer a more limited instruction strictly designed to train students for a particular profession (écoles particulières), but beyond this Tracy makes no comment as to how curricula should be organised. He appears to favour a supervision as strict as that which he advocated for the écoles centrales, and he envisages control resting in the hands of the Minister of the Interior, acting in conjunction with an advisory committee and in constant correspondance with teachers and administrators. He finds that the nation is particularly well provided with écoles spéciales teaching mathematics and the natural and physical sciences, and that there is a need to balance these by improving the instruction offered at this level in the moral and political sciences and in belles-lettres.⁽¹⁾ He echoes recommendations made in the Conseil's report and advocates the creation of additional chairs at the Collège de France and the Bibliothèque Nationale in order to transform them into écoles spéciales. In point of fact Tracy wishes both establishments to be, in his terminology, écoles spéciales and écoles particulières; that is, the Bibliothèque Nationale should have courses on general grammar, oratory and poetry to train littérateurs in general, and more specific courses in grammar and in ancient and modern literature to train interpreters and scholars in specialised fields of erudition. Similarly the Collège de France should offer

(1) The call for an école speciale in moral and political sciences echoes many that were made at the time. See, for example, two articles by Boisjolin in the Décade philosophique, 30 pluviôse and 10 ventôse an VII (18 and 28 February 1799).

general courses on political economy and social organisation, and in addition certain courses (on the monetary system, taxation, exchange and various branches of commerce) to train diplomats, administrators and merchants. Furthermore, it should provide courses on the different branches of positive law in order to fulfil the function of an école spéciale in law. Tracy judges it essential that students of law should undergo courses in moral and political sciences: once again it is a question of establishing principles before entering into practical details:

Le droit positif est une conséquence, une application des principes de la morale et de la science sociale. Nulle étude, si ce n'est celle de l'histoire, n'est plus propre à gâter l'esprit et à vicier profondément le jugement sur les points les plus essentiels, si l'on s'y habitue à confondre ce qui est avec ce qui doit être: et cela ne peut manquer d'arriver, si l'on s'occupe du positif avant d'avoir une connaissance suffisante des principes. (1)

The education of the classe savante, then, is to be carried out within the framework of existing facilities. Tracy remains convinced that the instruction provided by the écoles centrales and the écoles spéciales, with their solid foundation of idéologie and their closely co-ordinated programmes, is, if not already perfect, well within reach of perfection. The education of the classe ouvrière is dealt with in much less detail. Tracy recognises that individuals, from whatever class they may come, receive much of their instruction, and many of their ideas and principles, not from formal education, but from their everyday lives: they are educated, without realising it, by social intercourse with their fellows, and by their environment and the circumstances which govern their lives. Since the classe ouvrière receive formal education to a very limited extent, they are particularly susceptible to these fortuitous influences. Whilst social institutions will therefore always provide the most significant element in the education of individuals, since they can influence directly the way in

(1) Logique, II, 361.

which those individuals live and can foster the growth of particular attitudes, principles and habits, there is still a need to provide formal means by which prejudice and error may be replaced by truth. The classe ouvrière lack particularly the knowledge and experience necessary to suspend judgement until it can be exercised with certainty, and thus they will be more likely to succumb, if untouched by the truth, to their natural proclivity for prejudice and error: Tracy speaks of the 'erreurs funestes' to which they seem inexorably committed. He sees this, in part, as a historical process: in ideas as well as in material possessions, the classe ouvrière are, as it were, out of step, behind the times. They inherit only what those more fortunate have discarded. Truth will take longer to establish itself among them than among the classe savante, and their formal education will be a process of replacing their errors with the certainties which have gained credence with the classe savante. This formal education should be carried out under the same three headings, but since the classe ouvrière has less time to devote to study and, in Tracy's eyes, less ability to formulate sound judgements, discussions and subtlety of approach are inappropriate. It is results, facts and truths which should be imparted.

In practical terms the education of the classe ouvrière is provided by the écoles primaires and the workshops in which they learn their various trades. Tracy draws an ingenious parallel between these and the écoles centrales and écoles spéciales, but appears to be far less concerned with the organisation of the establishments proper to the classe ouvrière. This is partly to be explained by practical reasons: the workshops lie outside the scope of direct governmental influence, and all that can be done is to encourage the correct technical training and the rapid implementation of new discoveries. The écoles primaires do not exist in sufficient number, nor are they of sufficient quality, to make more

than a token contribution to education. Tracy, characteristically bowing to circumstance, accepts the fact that the establishment of more of these schools throughout the Republic is a long-term undertaking, and offers no more than the hope that écoles primaires will be encouraged where they are desired by a particular commune, provided that a suitable director can be found (for schools can be positively harmful if they are badly organised) and provided that the commune will pay one-half or three-quarters of the expense (for this would not only lighten the burden on the public purse, but also show true proof of zeal). Tracy does not discuss in detail the economic problems associated with the écoles primaires, of which the most widely discussed was that of the principle of free education. This principle had been written into the constitution of 1791, and had been defended by, amongst others Talleyrand and Condorcet. The law of 3 brumaire an IV had however introduced, for purely economic reasons, enrolment fees to the écoles primaires, thereby excluding many poor children, and these were the only source of income for the teachers. This system, with its attendant uncertainty, had greatly contributed to the relative failure of these schools, for too few teachers could be attracted. Nevertheless such fees were defended by Daunou, despite the discouraging situation.⁽¹⁾ The principle that pupils at the écoles primaires should pay for their education was supported by J.-B. Say, who declared that the working class would always despise education if they did not pay for it.⁽²⁾ Many theorists, including Say, Adam Smith, Mirabeau and Andrieux,⁽³⁾ had put forward the idea that the development of écoles primaires could be left in the hands of private enterprise, which could provide the invigorating element of competition. On such points as these Tracy remains, perhaps strangely, silent.

(1) v. Liard, op.cit., I 445.

(2) Olbie, ou Essai sur les moyens de réformer les moeurs d'une nation, Paris, Deterville, an VIII, p. 10.

(3) v. Say, Traité d'Economie politique, II, 273; Smith, Wealth of Nations, t. IV ch. 1; Mirabeau, Travail sur l'éducation publique; Andrieux, article in Décade philosophique, 10 pluviôse an VII (29 January 1799).

Tracy's treatment of the whole question of the education of the lower classes of society does show a lack of enthusiasm which was, indeed, characteristic of all the idéologues. All expressed in eloquent terms the value of universal education, both to the individual and to society, but all seemed to lose a certain interest in face of the practical difficulties which hindered the realisation of this ideal. In Tracy's case this does not reflect a lessening of his concern for the well-being of the classe ouvrière, a concern which is shown in his arguments in the field of political economy. It shows rather the disadvantages of his rigorous method of enquiry: firm in his belief in the existence of two classes of society which have little in common, Tracy proceeds by means of what he sees to be a logical progression and a rigid application of priorities. In matters of education, the classe ouvrière depends upon the classe savante for knowledge and for teachers. Thus the instruction of the latter must be perfected first, and the classe ouvrière, with less need of formal education and less ability to follow it, must be content with modest ambitions:

(...) il n'est pas douteux que beaucoup de communes manqueront d'abord d'écoles primaires, ici faute de zèle, là faute d'hommes, ailleurs faute de moyens pécuniaires; et il ne me paraît pas moins sûr que là où il s'en établira elles ne seront pas en général excellentes dans les premiers momens; cela est inévitable. Mais, enfin, on y apprendra toujours à lire et à écrire; on y recevra quelques notions utiles; et il ne s'y donnera aucun enseignement pernicieux, puisque les instituteurs auront été choisis avec scrupule. Il s'opérera donc beaucoup de bien et point de mal; c'est tout ce que l'on peut espérer actuellement. (1)

The ultimate purpose of education is still to spread knowledge and truth amongst the largest possible number of people, and it is characteristic of Tracy that he should tend to lose sight of the individuals in favour of the principles which, in the last analysis, serve only to support the system of education

(1) Logique, II, 374.

operative at the time. Tracy's final note is thoroughly optimistic:

(...) les principes fondamentaux de nos institutions actuelles sont excellents et (...) pour produire les meilleurs effets elles n'ont besoin que d'être achevées. (1)

It would be tempting to find Tracy's optimism naive: the Conseil d'Instruction publique had already been disbanded⁽²⁾ and the écoles centrales were to be abolished only a year after the publication of the Observations. During the six years of their existence their achievements were very uneven; whilst some worked efficiently and with some success, others were constantly beset with hardships: there was difficulty in finding adequately trained teachers, and some courses (and even schools) had no pupils at all.⁽³⁾ In addition, the educational system showed other weaknesses: despite the common principles on which they were founded, the different types of schools created by the law of 3 brumaire did not represent a cohesive whole. There was no liaison between them: the écoles primaires did not lead pupils on to the écoles centrales (Tracy admits the inconvenience of the term école primaire, which suggests that the school is to be followed by a secondary school), and the écoles spéciales were without proper communication with the écoles centrales. The divisions within the curriculum of the latter were arbitrary and did not themselves provide a truly organic unity, whilst each école spéciale was, by definition, a fragment of science: each one was separate from the others and, in studying in depth one limited subject offered no idea of the interdependence of the different branches of science. The verdict of Liard is particularly severe:

(1) ibid., p. 375.

(2) In October 1800. v. Logique, II, 286.

(3) Duruy, op.cit. p. 185 refers to statistics issued by the Ministry of the Interior in 1798 indicating that 97 écoles centrales were functioning throughout the country. Barnard, op.cit., p. 186, lists as among the most efficient those in Paris, Nantes, Bourges, Metz, Nancy, Besançon, Toulouse and Montpellier. Barnard suggests that among other chief difficulties were the lack of internats for the accommodation of boarders, the continued existence of private establishments, and the organisation and curriculum of the écoles centrales themselves.

Ce que la Révolution avait rêvé, annoncé et voulu, c'était un système d'enseignement supérieur aussi large que les sciences et coordonné comme elles; elle se trouvait aboutir à une oeuvre sans cohésion interne, faite de compromis, inférieure et certainement contraire à son idéal. (1)

Despite his love of unity and order, Tracy was prepared to accept this lack of cohesion, and his optimism is shared by many of his contemporaries: besides the members of the Conseil, Cabanis⁽²⁾ and Garat,⁽³⁾ for example, declared themselves to be in agreement with Tracy. If unity had been lost (and it must be remembered that Tracy conceived of the necessity of two distinct types of education within the state), then rationalism had been gained. All was now logical, ordered, practical; ultimate success, therefore, in the eyes of Tracy and those who reasoned like him, was inevitable.

There is no evidence of any comment that Tracy made when the écoles centrales were abolished, and in subsequent years he appears to have made no further reference to matters of education; it would be reasonable to deduce that disappointment led him to withdraw from public discussion on the subject. His contribution to the theory of education may well be considered small, limited as it is both in time and in terms of reference. He played his part, however, in these limited circumstances, in furthering the use of good text-books and a methodical system of instruction. The fact that the écoles centrales were destroyed by an external force⁽⁴⁾ and not by their own inefficiency makes that contribution no less worthy.

(1) Liard, op.cit., I, 253.

(2) Article in Décade philosophique, 30 thermidor, an IX (18 August 1801).

(3) Review of Tracy's Observations in Décade philosophique 10 messidor an IX (29 June 1801).

(4) F. Vial wrote: 'Si elles (les écoles centrales) ont disparu, c'est parce qu'elles avaient le tort d'être révolutionnaires dans une société qui ne l'était plus'. Trois siècles de l'histoire de l'enseignement secondaire, Paris, 1936.

IX. LANGUAGE

In earlier chapters of this study, facets of Tracy's concept of idéologie which form the bases of his social, moral and political thought have been examined. As has been seen, an understanding of the concept is necessary to an understanding of that thought because of the way in which Tracy deduces from it principles applicable in particular fields. Idéologie is the preliminary to subsequent enquiry. Further attention must now be given to an aspect of Tracy's ideas only briefly mentioned in earlier chapters, that is his understanding of and his attitude to the role played by language in that chain of enquiry which, as was shown in chapter II, he wished to follow from the individual's first sensation to a society's final legislative measures.

Tracy is well aware of the importance of language in the conception of his ideas and in their implementation, and he deals with it in three different respects: as an instrument of understanding, as an instrument of communication and as an instrument of education. He sees that language is essential not only to the formation of ideas; it is essential to communication between individuals and to the spread of knowledge and experience throughout any society.

In his treatment of language as an instrument of understanding, Tracy closely follows Condillac (and before him, Locke). He sees signs⁽¹⁾ as being of fundamental importance to the whole thinking process, and in order to understand that process, and to examine whether the very existence of language does not suggest that man has some form of mental capacity anterior to the experience provided by the senses, he is led to consider the question of the origins of

(1) In common with Condillac, and indeed many later writers on the subject, Tracy refers to 'signs', by which he means 'representations'. Signs can be addressed to the senses of sight, touch or hearing. Written language is a collection of one particular form of sign; spoken language is a collection of another form.

language. Here he is heir to the great amount of activity in this area in the second half of the eighteenth century. As Isobel Knight points out, Condillac was the first philosopher to examine in any depth the origins of language, but after the publication of his Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines in 1746, this subject aroused much interest, and Knight refers to works by, among others, Diderot (his Lettre sur les sourds et muets), Maupertuis, Bergier, de Brosses, Court de Gébelin, Copineau, as well as articles in the Encyclopédie and in Voltaire's Dictionnaire philosophique.⁽¹⁾

Whilst much of this interest was typical of what Knight calls a 'quasi-anthropology', Tracy's interest, like that of Condillac, was somewhat different, for he is concerned with the problem of how man, whom, as we have seen, he pictures as the passive recipient of sensations, can develop his understanding and control his reason. Complex ideas can be understood and manipulated (that is, recalled, combined and developed) once the individual has at his disposal signs which can represent them. Tracy stresses the transient quality of sensations and the need to fix them in the mind if they are to be retained and built upon:

Nous sommes faits de manière (et peut-être en est-il de même des autres êtres sensibles) que quand nous avons une idée, si nous ne la revêtons pas promptement d'un signe sensible, elle nous échappe bientôt et nous ne pouvons ni nous la rappeler à volonté, ni la fixer dans notre pensée de façon à la développer, à la décomposer, à en faire le sujet d'une réflexion approfondie; ainsi les signes, dont toutes nos idées sont revêtues, nous sont-ils très nécessaires pour les élaborer, pour les combiner, pour en former différents groupes qui sont autant d'idées nouvelles: par conséquent ils influent beaucoup sur les opérations de notre intelligence. (2)

Tracy's interest in this aspect of language was no doubt further stimulated by the prize essay subject set in l'an V by the Institut: Déterminer l'influence

(1) v. Knight, op.cit., p. 149 et sqq.

(2) Principes logiques, reprinted in the second volume of De la Logique, chap. VII, p. 219.

des signes sur la formation des idées. In the essay the candidates were required to deal with specific questions. They had to discuss whether sensations could be transformed into ideas only with the help of signs and whether the 'art of thinking' would be perfected if the 'art of signs' were perfected. They were further required to discuss whether in those sciences in which truths were contested, the cause of dispute was necessarily the inexactitude of signs, and whether there was a way in which the use of signs could be improved so as to render all sciences susceptible of demonstration. Tracy did not submit an essay, but, as his work shows, these topics are of enduring interest to him, and their elaboration as part of the essay subject may well have influenced his approach to the subject of language.

The prize was won by Degérando, who three years later published his work Des Signes et de l'art de penser considérés dans leurs rapports mutuels. His attitude to the relationship between signs and thought is different to Tracy, and a comparison of the two is instructive. Tracy follows Condillac (and Cabanis) in stating that the individual can recall sensations and distinguish them one from another only by attaching to them signs which characterise them; indeed, in the realm of complex ideas, the mind operates on words:

La preuve générale que sans les signes nous ne pouvons presque pas nous rappeler nos idées ni les combiner, c'est que chacun de nous éprouve que, lorsqu'il réfléchit sur un sujet quelconque, ce n'est pas directement sur les idées qu'il médite, mais sur les mots. (1)

Without signs the individual would have very few ideas at all, since signs are necessary to stabilise them in the mind. It is not possible, in Tracy's view, to stabilise them by some sort of act of attention, for this would be to admit some agency of the self distinct from passive sensation. Degérando takes the opposite view, namely that the mind can stabilise sensations and ideas and needs

(1) Ideologie proprement dite, chap. XVI, p. 240.

no signs to do so; as Acton points out, signs, far from being the analysis of what mental activity is, presuppose for Degérando that activity in an irreducible sense. (1)

Tracy follows closely Condillac's view that complex knowledge is possible only when the information supplied by the senses is distinguished, analysed and recomposed, and that these operations can be achieved only with the use of signs. Ideas are not innate, but signs, in a sense, are, for the individual has a natural and spontaneous ability to express himself with gestures and cries. This 'natural' language lies at the root of all other 'artificial' ones:

(...) on peut dire avec vérité que tous les langages artificiels dont nous nous servons ne sont jamais que le langage naturel prodigieusement étendu et perfectionné; et même que l'on retrouve toujours dans ceux-ci, quelque polis qu'ils soient, toutes les espèces de signes qui composent le premier. (2)

It is this ability which all men have to express themselves immediately which lies at the root of all languages in which signs are used intentionally to communicate specific meanings, but Tracy differs from Condillac in his treatment of how this development takes place. In his Grammaire, Condillac considers the sign as the artificial reproduction of the object, and as the first signs were determined by the nature of the objects they reproduced, they must have been adopted by all men in the same way. He thus postulates a kind of primitive language, of which all subsequent languages are a development. (3) Tracy rejects the ideas that signs are determined by the nature of objects, and sees their origin in the relationship between the individual's actions and his thought:

(...) nos actions sont les signes naturels et nécessaires de nos sentiments et de nos pensées; si elles n'en restent pas les signes uniques, elles en seront toujours les plus irrécusables et les plus sûrs. (4)

(1) H.B. Acton, 'The Philosophy of Language in Revolutionary France', Proceedings of the British Academy, vol, XLV (1959), p. 209.

(2) Idéologie proprement dite, chap. XVI, p. 237.

(3) v. Condillac, Grammaire, chap. II.

(4) Idéologie proprement dite, chap. XVI, p. 235.

It is thus clear from the beginning that Tracy is concerned above all with the relationship between language and thought. In the introduction to his Grammaire he complains, on more than one occasion, that all previous grammars (and he names those of Port-Royal, Dumarsais and Condillac, as well as those dating from the time of antiquity) have sought to determine the rules governing the composition of signs before explaining the nature of the ideas they represent and the workings of the intellectual faculties which form those ideas. In point of fact Tracy rejects Condillac's view of a primitive language without according it any great attention, for his interest lies elsewhere:

Il ne s'agit point ici d'étymologie. La question n'est pas de retrouver comment tous nos mots sont formés les uns des autres, et comment tous dérivent de quelques sons ou syllabes primitives. Ce genre de recherches est utile sous certains rapports, mais c'est là la généalogie des sons et non pas celle des idées. Or, ce que nous voulons voir actuellement, c'est comment nos cris naturels deviennent une langue, c'est-à-dire, par quelles opérations intellectuelles il se fait qu'ils sont remplacés par des phrases composées de mots, dont aucun ne fait un sens complet à lui seul, et dont même la plupart n'ont absolument aucune signification pris séparément. (1)

In answer to this question he turns to the structure of a developed language and sees that it is composed of propositions which are all expressions of judgement, and is in fact at pains to emphasise the rôle of the judgement in language:

(...) tout discours n'exprime jamais que l'une de ces deux choses, sentir ou juger, et (...) il n'est d'aucun intérêt qu'autant qu'il exprime un jugement. (2)

Tracy emphasises again that a perception is a form of feeling and that judgement consists in distinguishing a particular circumstance in that perception. In the realm of language, whereas each sensation, memory and desire is different from all others, and therefore requires a different sign, the act of judgement

(1) Principes logiques, chap. VIII, p. 224.

(2) Grammaire, chap. II, p. 37.

is always constant, and requires only one sign. However, while it is sufficient, in order to express a sensation, memory or desire, simply to express it by use of its sign, this is not the case with a judgement, for the constant repetition of the sign representing judgement would show merely that the individual was judging, but not what judgement he was making. Thus, to express judgement, the two ideas, one contained within the other, must be represented, together with the action of the human faculty perceiving the relationship: these are the subject, the attribute and the sign which unites them, and together they form the proposition. Tracy is quickly led to the general principle:

Nous pouvons donc établir comme principe général et même universel, que tout discours est composé d'énoncés de jugements, de propositions, ou de noms d'idées, composés d'un ou plusieurs signes, mais détachés les uns des autres et sans liaisons d'entre eux. (1)

At the time of the origin of language, in Tracy's view, propositions, at the basis of all attempts at communication, were expressed by cries and gestures: indeed, what Tracy calls 'le premier état du discours' was composed of what in modern terms would be known as interjections, each one expressing in itself a proposition. The development of language is then conceived by Tracy as a series of refinements brought to bear upon this basic form of utterance. For example, modifications or other cries are added to indicate more specifically certain objects, and these eventually become the substantives; when this is achieved - when a separate class of words is created - the original cries are used to express only actions, and thus the original 'interjections' become verbs. Further cries are used to express other modifications of being and the relationship between objects. In this way, by elaboration and accumulation, all the elements of language - those which go by the name of adjectives, conjunctions, prepositions, adverbs and so on, together with tenses and moods - are built upon the

(1) ibid., chap. I, p. 19.

basis of a 'natural' language. Tracy declares that this is achieved by a series of successive judgements

(...) par lesquels nous démêlons les différentes parties d'une idée, c'est-à-dire les différentes parties qui la composent, et au moyen de cette faculté que nous avons de séparer ces différentes parties pour les considérer isolément, ou les réunir de différentes manières et en former des idées nouvelles. C'est là ce qu'on appelle abstraire, et c'est cette faculté d'abstraire qui, je crois, manque aux autres animaux, qui nous distingue essentiellement d'eux, et qui fait que, seul entre tous les êtres, l'homme a un langage développé et détaillé. (1)

Proceeding upon the principle that language has no meaning if it does not express a judgement, Tracy undertakes in his Grammaire an examination of the proposition with particular reference to spoken language and to French; he studies the different parts of speech in respect of their function within the proposition, and in this way, like Condillac, he brings his study of signs into the realm of psychology rather than into that of linguistics.

Tracy's terminology is obviously significant: He applies to the mental activity governing the development of language the same term - abstraire - which, as was shown above, p. 67, he applies to the conception of complex ideas. He is deliberately emphasising the parallel between the two activities: the manner in which the human mind comes to master the use of language and the manner in which it controls its reason have a common factor, the rôle of the judgement. This approach is significant for two reasons. Firstly, Tracy approves Condillac's description of language as an analytic method. By the application of the faculty of judgement upon the confusion of original impressions, the mind establishes likenesses and differences; on the basis of these, phenomena may be classified, and signs attached to the classifications (that is, signs may be attached to phenomena which are not the objects of immediate perception, and such notions as red or large may be stabilised). The more the mind is applied

(1) Principes logiques, chap. VIII, p. 228.

in this way the more new classifications it will discover, and language becomes an indispensable tool of learning:

(...) nous pouvons regarder comme prouvé que l'effet général des signes, en constatant des analyses antérieures, est de rendre plus faciles les analyses subséquentes; que cet effet est exactement celui des caractères et des formules algébriques; et que par conséquent, les langues sont de vrais instruments d'analyse. (...) Les règles grammaticales font juste le même effet que les règles du calcul; dans les deux cas, ce ne sont que des signes que nous combinons, et sans nous en apercevoir, nous sommes conduits par les mots comme par les caractères algébriques. (1)

Indeed, language is not merely necessary for complex thought; it is an instrument, for since the mind operates upon words rather than on ideas, the whole art of reasoning becomes the art of speaking or writing clearly and precisely. Every science is ultimately reducible to a well-made language, and in order to make progress in any science man must improve its language, either by changing words or rendering meanings precise:

Toute science se réduit à une langue bien faite; et avancer une science n'est autre chose qu'en perfectionner la langue, soit en changeant les mots, soit en précisant leur signification. (...) c'est avec raison que l'on a dit que faire une science, c'est en faire la langue, et qu'apprendre la langue d'une science, c'est apprendre la science elle-même. (2)

This approach, in which Tracy emphasises that the common basis of all scientific enquiry is the control of language, naturally confirms him in his view that it is possible to achieve certainty in all fields: if such certainty is possible in the physical sciences, then, given a similar methodology, it must be possible in the social, moral and political sciences. Herein lies the second reason why Tracy's insistence upon the rôle of the judgement in both the mastering of language and the conception of complex ideas is significant: his study

(1) Idéologie proprement dite, chap. XVI, p. 251. In the same chapter (p. 239), Tracy writes: '(...) tout signe est l'expression du résultat d'un calcul exécuté, ou, si l'on veut, d'une analyse faite, et il fixe et constate ce résultat; en sorte qu'une langue est réellement une collection de formules trouvées, qui ensuite facilitent et simplifient merveilleusement les calculs ou analyses qu'on veut faire ultérieurement.'

(2) Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, p. 326; p. 416.

of language demonstrates, to his satisfaction, the validity of his whole system, and convinces him that he is right to search for philosophic truths which may be applied to particular circumstances. It provides him with a form of check, or proof. His whole approach and system would not of course be possible without language, and it is obvious that, to use his own terminology, he is led in his arguments by words: as we have seen, in the introduction to his Traité de la Volonté he translates into the social, moral and political fields principles deduced from his study of basic human faculties, and then builds further principles without recourse to observation of the contemporary scene. But over and above this, man's use of language is a demonstration, in an area susceptible of detailed investigation, of the way in which the mind gains knowledge; Tracy's Grammaire is, as it were, a vindication of the method elaborated in his Idéologie proprement dite, and provides an added impetus towards the establishment of the principles which are developed in later volumes.

Thus, in the elaboration of the principles of idéologie proper as well as of those under discussion in this study, language both expresses thought and directs it, and it is in respect of these functions that Tracy is primarily concerned with it. As he puts it:

C'est ainsi que le langage satisfait d'abord les besoins de la pensée, puis lui en fait contracter de nouveaux en favorisant son action, et qu'alternativement l'idée fait naître le signe, et le signe fait naître l'idée. (1)

Unlike Condillac, he is little interested in the origins of language once he has become convinced that cries and gestures in primitive language were spontaneous expressions of feeling (rather than, for example, the imitation of animal cries, or the reflection of some basic harmony between sound and sense), and as such demonstrated that man, since he is moved to cry out by needs, fears, desires and

(1) Idéologie proprement dite, chap. XVII, p. 271.

so on, is governed, in this area as in any other, by the pleasure-pain reflex. He is more concerned with the study of grammar, which for him, as for Condillac, traces the stages in the development of the analytic method.⁽¹⁾ Isobel Knight describes Condillac's approach as follows:

Man's acquisition of language precisely paralleled his acquisition of reason. (...) Experience provides the content of language, the names of objects and actions, and the circumstances in which growth occurs; but reason - that is, analysis, analogy, and the association of ideas - provides the form. (2)

Tracy echoes this, seeing grammar (what Knight means by the 'form' of language) as a reflection of the individual's thought processes and a further means to understand them.

When he turns to language as an instrument of communication, Tracy draws the obvious conclusion that it is indispensable to the progress of any society:

Il est aisé de voir que cette propriété qu'ont les signes d'être un moyen de communication avec nos semblables est à l'origine de toutes nos relations sociales, et, par conséquent, a donné naissance à tous nos sentiments et à toutes nos jouissances morales. (3)

Language is the means by which the individual satisfies certain needs which he feels: as soon as he sees other men, he feels the need to communicate his feelings and ideas to them, in order either to give expression to his feelings of sympathy, or to assure himself that their wills are in his favour.⁽⁴⁾ Indeed the basis of any society lies in the ability of the individuals who constitute it to make agreements, to understand and accept their rights and duties in relation to other men and to their government, and the limitations on their own

- (1) An exhaustive analysis of Tracy's ideas on grammar is to be found in the work of François Rastier, referred to above, in the Introduction.
- (2) Knight, *op.cit.*, p. 163.
- (3) Ideologie proprement dite, chap. XVII, p. 279.
- (4) The terminology, significantly enough, is the same as that used by Tracy when analysing the will. See above, chapter III.

liberty which any society demands. Language is essential to the making of these agreements, just as it is to the spread of knowledge and experience. It is obvious that the exchanges which, as was shown in chapter IV, constitute the economic foundation of society, could not be effected without language, just as without it there would be no acts of legislation to contain, as Tracy puts it, the moral education of citizens. Tracy feels the need to establish these points, but, justifiably enough, does not spend a great deal of time on them; instead, he proceeds to examine aspects of this function of language which present problems less easy to resolve.

If language is to be considered an effective means of communication between men, it must be assumed that each man understands what others mean, whether they speak or write. But this is not always the case, for two reasons: firstly, there are insufficient signs to express adequately the whole range of human experience and intention, and thus some degree of approximation must be tolerated; and secondly, since a sign may be used to express not only a simple notion, but also an extremely complex one, the individual, in the normal course of his life, will use some signs without experiencing or comprehending the ideas to which they refer, and without any certainty that other individuals attach the same meanings to the same signs. As Tracy is quick to point out, a sign is immune from misunderstanding or misuse only at the moment when it is first invented, and then only for the individual who invents it. From that moment onwards even he cannot be sure that when he uses the sign again he is expressing the same idea, and he who 'receives' a sign cannot be sure that he fully comprehends the meaning of the individual who utters it. Thus signs will take on different meanings on different occasions, whether they are used by the same individual or by many. Given the fact that men think with words rather than ideas, and that signs take

in their minds the place of the ideas they are designed to express, there will be ever present a constant threat to proper communication and to sound reasoning.

This inexactitude, which is inherent in all signs, is responsible, in Tracy's eyes, for the perpetual variations of thought in the different ages in the life of one man, and for the diversity of points of view among different individuals when considering the same phenomena. It is this inexactitude which he combats in his constant recourse to definitions in the elaboration of his principles. If men are to be led to virtue and truth by reason, then reason must not be perverted by the faults of language; every effort must be made to give it adequate expression. When considering the possibility of a language without its characteristic instability, Tracy refers to it in the following terms:

(...) la perfection du raisonnement, (qui) amènerait celle de la vertu et du savoir. (1)

In this way he is led, inevitably, to consider the question of the creation of a 'perfect' language, whose characteristics he describes as follows:

Pour nous, une langue serait parfaite, de quelques signes qu'elle fût composée, si elle représentait nos idées d'une manière commode, précise, exacte, et de façon qu'il fût tellement impossible de s'y méprendre, qu'elle portât dans la déduction des idées de tout genre, la même certitude qui existe dans celle des idées de quantité. Voilà ce qu'est pour nous la perfection en fait de langues; voilà celle qui serait pour nous d'un prix inestimable. (2)

But he immediately recognises the impossibility of achieving such a goal; because signs are subject to changes of meaning, no element of constant precision is possible:

Il est donc impossible qu'aucun de ces signes ait une signification complètement déterminée et fixe, et qu'aucune collection de signes, aucun langage, nous conduise avec pleine assurance dans tous nos raisonnements. Dans ce genre, et par suite dans tous les autres, nous devons donc renoncer à la perfection. (3)

(1) Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, p. 415.

(2) Grammaire, chap. VI, p. 279.

(3) ibid., chap. VI, p. 280.

The creation of a 'perfect' language was nonetheless an idea current in the eighteenth century and under active discussion within the Institut; in 1800 Tracy was a member of a committee, together with Fleurieu, Roederer and Lebreton, to consider projects submitted by members, ⁽¹⁾ and in the same year he read his mémoire on pasigraphie. Tracy cannot accept the basic premiss underlying such projects, namely that, were a state of perfection in language even possible, once such a state had been achieved language need not and would not change. He acknowledges that for its development language owes much to chance and he readily conceives it as 'living', and thus subject to further change. If a perfect language were conceived and adopted, it would not remain perfect for any length of time. Furthermore, when he turns to the question of how it could come to be universally accepted, he concludes that no such language could be adopted unless it had been that commonly used by a nation: the tasks of creating it expressly would be beyond the capabilities of one man and unlikely to command the consent of other men, who would not only fail to agree as to the true meaning of the ideas to be expressed, but also be too bound by their former habits to adopt a system totally different from their own. No existing language has approached a state of perfection, nor has it enjoyed universal acceptance, despite the undoubted dominance in the past of Latin, and to a lesser degree French, achieved through the multiplicity of their works of scholarship. Tracy is thus obliged to conclude:

Je conclus que le projet d'une pasigraphie est une conception vicieuse dans son principe, qui ne produira jamais un résultat utile, et à laquelle on ne se serait attaché, si on s'était fait une idée bien nette. (2)

He adds:

Je crois une langue universelle dans le même cas que le mouvement perpétuel. (3)

- (1) The committee considered projects by Maimieux, Zadkins-Hourwitz, Fournaux and Montmignon. Tracy was also a member of another committee which considered a system of lexicology presented by Buttet.
- (2) Réflexions sur les projets de pasigraphie, Mémoires de l'Institut, III, 548.
- (3) ibid., p. 551.

This does not deter him from setting out, in the sixth chapter of his Grammaire, what the constituent elements of a 'perfect' language should be, were one to be expressly created. His hope is not that such a project will be realised, but that his views will throw greater light upon the causes of inexactitude in existing languages and inspire the wish among men to draw them closer to his model. This model is characterised by its simplicity, both in terms of syntax and in terms of declensions and conjugations, with, for example, invariable adjectives, nouns without gender and a single verb, être, to which adjectives could be added. Predictably, the vocabulary of this language would be analogous to the ideas expressed, and would represent, as far as possible, their derivation. Everything would be at the service of clarity and precision, and Tracy anticipates, with some cause, that this language would be decried by many as 'traînante, monotone, sans grâce, et peu propre aux mouvements de l'éloquence'.⁽¹⁾

Since Tracy himself does not wish to present these ideas in terms of a practical proposition, it is more fitting to consider practical suggestions he does make in his Mémoire sur la faculté de penser. Here again he emphasises the shortcomings of existing languages:

Quant à nos langues modernes, composées des débris de cinq ou six idiomes différents, et formées, pour ainsi dire, de toutes pièces, elles sont de vrais tas de décombres, où il ne commence à régner un peu d'ordre que depuis qu'ils ont été maniés et arrangés par des hommes subtils ou ingénieux et savants dans tous les genres. (2)

Faced with the impossibility of reshaping them completely, Tracy proposes certain measures which, if undertaken by 'des compagnies savantes' (and principally in his mind, no doubt, was the Institut), would greatly improve the functioning of human reason. One should model the construction and syntax of these languages upon the natural progression of ideas in deductions; remove from all speech

(1) Grammaire, chap. VI, p. 288.

(2) Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, p. 416.

timidity and what Tracy calls 'la fausse finesse', which prevent the speaker from expressing himself fully and which thus change the meanings of words; encourage the adoption and creation of new words and form accurate and methodical nomenclatures in those sciences where this would be appropriate; 'rectify ideas by the acquisition of new truths' (and here idéologie is at hand to enable this to be achieved); and perfect pronunciation and spelling and relate the two more closely.

Tracy is particularly concerned with this last proposal. He devotes a significant part of the fifth chapter of his Grammaire to the question of pronunciation and spelling and the sounds they represent, and he is clearly conversant with the work of such writers on the subject as Volney, Beauzée, l'abbé Girard, Duclou, l'abbé d'Olivet and Domergue. Tracy methodically analyses the four qualities discernible in vocal sounds (tone, duration, voice and articulation), which together are susceptible of forty-five modifications and which can produce 5100 different sounds. Tracy is concerned with the inability of any existing orthography to reproduce these sounds accurately (because of their failure to take into account all these modifications and their failure to base themselves upon an accurate analysis of speech), with the consequential disorder in spelling which is in itself an obstacle to true understanding. Since a logical and ordered orthography is a necessary corollary to clear reasoning and the proper use of language, Tracy makes a specific proposal:

Je voudrais donc qu'un corps savant, composé d'hommes éclairés et accrédités, (...) examinât de nouveau, avec scrupule, toutes les qualités des sons de notre langue; qu'il déterminât, après mûre délibération, le nombre des articulations, des voix, des tons et des durées que l'on peut y distinguer et que l'on doit représenter; que, sans avoir égard à l'écriture vulgaire, il destinât à chaque articulation et à chaque voix un caractère dont il réglerait la forme de la manière jugée la plus avantageuse, sous tous les rapports relatifs à la lecture, à l'écriture et à l'impression, et qu'il fixât de même les moyens par lesquels on marquerait les tons et les durées de chaque son. (1)

(1) Grammaire, chap. V., p. 267.

If this task were carried out, not only would reading be made easier for all men; the resultant alphabet would be truly universal, applicable to all languages, thus enabling each individual to gain greater access to languages other than his own, as well as a greater understanding of his own. Orthography should be rationalised, because the present system is harmful:

(...) il faut à tout moment faire le sacrifice de son bon sens, renoncer à toute analogie, à toute déduction, pour suivre aveuglément l'usage établi, qui vous surprend continuellement par son inconséquence, si, malheureusement pour vous, vous avez la puissance et l'habitude de réfléchir.
 (...) Et peut-on calculer le nombre prodigieux d'esprits faux que peut produire une si pernicieuse habitude, qui devance toutes les autres? (1)

Furthermore, a more rational orthography, by facilitating reading, would facilitate the spread of knowledge and experience; language would become a more powerful instrument of education. Men would be more receptive, Tracy clearly feels, to the truths revealed to them by idéologie if these truths were revealed in a form designed to give accurate representation to the content.

In all his work on language, therefore, Tracy shows interest in, and indeed mastery of, practical detail, but he never loses sight of general principles. His ideas in this field are a demonstration and a vindication of his whole method; they illustrate the way in which he seeks to solve philosophical problems and arrive at philosophical truths through linguistic precision. They show furthermore a close attachment to the approach and method of Condillac, and as such are among the last defences of the principles of general grammar and the integration into a system of linguistics of assumptions regarding the human mind and its acquisition of knowledge. Rastier, quoting with approval Bachelard's description of a 'coupure épistémologique' which took place between 1800 and 1820, and which marked the end of the concept of general grammar and the appearance

(1) ibid., chap. V. p. 270.

of historical linguistics as a science, chose Tracy's text as his subject because it was published at this decisive moment. Rastier expresses the view that Tracy should take his place among eighteenth-century grammarians, and, because of Tracy's allegiance to their approach and method, throws doubt on his scientific accuracy:

La récurrence, dans les Elémens d'Idéologie, des contenus de la philosophie morale, comme ceux de perfection ou d'imperfection, et leur rôle de critère pour juger de la vérité et de l'erreur, suffirait à mettre en doute sa scientificité. (1)

Rastier views Tracy with the eyes of the modern researcher into semiotics, and from his vantage point Tracy's ideas on language are necessarily suspect. But that which is unscientific to Rastier is that which contributes to the force and vigour of Tracy's enquiries and helps to make his Elémens d'Idéologie the unified system it is.

(1) F. Rastier, op.cit., p. 165.

CONCLUSION

In the previous pages we have examined the way in which Tracy elaborates his thought in the social, moral and political fields, and it has been stressed that this thought is rigorously unified, with its principles deduced from the evidence of man's intellectual faculties. As we have seen, with Tracy we are dealing with a philosopher who, while reflecting the preoccupations of his age, is noticeably detached from the contemporary scene, and who, while concerned with the practical organisation of society, seeks to organise it without observing it. This 'duality', if it may be so termed, is characteristic of Tracy; he is aware that there is a great difference between what man should be and what he in fact is, and yet he ignores the latter 'reality' in favour of the former 'ideal', and putting his faith in reason, and in human willingness to follow its teachings, he constructs his society around a type.

This type, for the purpose of Tracy's social, moral and political thought, has one basic faculty which is of particular importance, the will, and from it all Tracy's principles in these areas are derived. For him, the will is passive, and he builds his system undeterred by the paradox, which Maine de Biran was not slow to point out,⁽¹⁾ that if desire is the same thing as the will, and if the individual is never less free than when he desires, it follows that he never acts less freely than when he wills. Moore justifiably points out that, in Tracy's system,

(...) there is no place for the will as a sort of transcendent force controlling the affections: there is only the play of desires, some of which are fulfilled. Thus 'will' will be a word simply for cases in which some desire is fulfilled. To use it as though it designated a special psychological situation is misleading. It should be realised that in this sense, will is desire. According to this position, then, we are just mistaken in using the notion of will that we do use.⁽²⁾

(1) v. Maine de Biran, Oeuvres (ed. Tisserand), XI, 260.

(2) F.C.T. Moore, The Psychology of Maine de Biran, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970, p. 82.

Such a concept of the will illustrates Tracy's desire to emphasise man as a creature governed by mechanical laws, which is, as Isobel Knight points out, Condillac's aim also. Condillac, however, as Knight goes on, 'will sacrifice his intellectual integrity to preserve man's spirituality and uniqueness in a supernatural order'.⁽¹⁾ Tracy has no such purpose; in his eyes, man has no 'spirituality', nor is he placed in any supernatural order. Idéologie is part of zoology; man's behaviour, like the organisation of society, is predictable and manageable. Man can be understood in purely physical terms, yet Tracy does not examine or exploit this important principle. His thought, however, implies it at every turn. In this respect it is fitting to regard Tracy as the follower not only of Condillac, whom, as we have seen, he acknowledges as the founder of idéologie, but also of Helvétius, d'Holbach and Diderot - although he never affords them a mention throughout his Elémens d'Idéologie - who stress not only the determinism of the human situation, but also the incomprehensible nature of a spiritual order opposed to a material one.

Tracy, then, is restating attitudes expressed in the eighteenth century, and, as was established above, Chapter II, he accepts those currents deriving from its liberalism. He is restating them in a new and particular context, and with a new rigour, in answer to the pressing need for stabilisation and social reorganisation. This may not be sufficient to grant Tracy the accolade of originality, but it means that he is not a simple camp-follower of the eighteenth-century philosophes. He extends and develops the theories of an earlier age, applies them over a wide yet unified spectrum, and sets out, with great conviction, upon the road to the foundation of the social sciences upon bases of absolute certainty.

(1) I.F. Knight, op.cit., p. 297.

In this way Tracy may be seen as a kind of bridge between the philosophes of the eighteenth century and the social thinkers of the nineteenth. Saint-Simon and Comte both seek to discover, in the words of Bury, 'a social law as valid as the physical law of gravitation',⁽¹⁾ and while Tracy's influence on such thinkers as these is limited, it is not without interest to note that he raises many points which they subsequently deal with more comprehensively. For example, Tracy, as we have seen above, Chapter IV, anticipates Saint-Simon's view that since the working classes form the majority of society, the betterment of their lot must be the first necessary step taken towards the creation of a just society. To achieve this Saint-Simon develops a theory which may more properly be called socialist, while Tracy remained faithful to the more traditional principles of liberalism.⁽²⁾ Similarly, Saint-Simon, like Tracy, favours the creation of a European federation, constituted in the manner of the United States of America, and placed great faith in the parliamentary government of the Restoration as a guarantee of order and peace. Comte has no liking for a federation of this sort, just as he had little time for the political principles of equality and popular sovereignty.⁽³⁾

Comte does, however, refer to Tracy as 'de tous les métaphysiciens (...)
néanmoins incontestablement le plus rapproché jusqu'ici de l'état positif';⁽⁴⁾ Tracy's concept of a social science, born of all other sciences and based on principles of absolute certainty, prefigures Comte's sociologie, and in Comte's earlier works there are several appreciative references to Tracy - as, for

- (1) J.B. Bury, The Idea of Progress, New York, Dover Publications Inc, 1955, p. 284.
- (2) The point is discussed by Bury, op.cit., pp. 284-5.
- (3) Comte rejects Helvétius' view of the equality of human intellects, a view Tracy implicitly accepts.
- (4). Cours de philosophie positive, Paris, Bachelier, 1830-42, 45^e leçon, III, 776.

example, in the fifty-fifth lesson of the Cours de philosophie positive, where he praises 'la sagacité habituelle de son instinct antithéologique'. He does, however, judge the method and discoveries of idéologie deficient:

Après avoir proclamé, en commençant son ouvrage, et probablement sous l'influence du milieu intellectuel où il vivait, que l'idéologie est une partie de la zoologie, sa nature métaphysique reprend bientôt le dessus, et le conduit à annuler immédiatement ce lumineux principe, qu'il n'aurait pu suivre, en se hâtant d'établir aussitôt, comme maxime fondamentale, que cette idéologie constitue une science primitive, indépendante de tous les autres, et destinée même à les diriger, ce qui la fait nécessairement rentrer dans les voies ordinaires de l'aberration métaphysique. (1)

The main burden of Comte's criticism of Tracy and the other idéologues is that by concentrating almost exclusively upon the mind, and by presenting the affections as subordinate to the intelligence, they were distorting reality; for, in his view, it is affections, desires and passions which constitute the principal motivating forces in human behaviour. Far from resulting from the intelligence, they are spontaneous and independent, and indispensable to the first awakening and continued development of the intellectual faculties, to which they communicate a permanent goal.

Moreover, if Tracy in some respects points the way towards the elaboration of positivism, he lacks a real sense of the movement of humanity, a sense of the progression and development of society, and indeed an understanding of the forces which constitute it. Although, as we have seen (above, Chapter V), Tracy divides the development of mankind into three ages, anticipating Comte's famous law of the three 'states' of civilisation, he does not, unlike Comte, see the value of history in offering evidence for the prediction and shaping of the future. While Comte's social science is dynamic, Tracy's is static, and when

(1) ibid., III, 776.

he speaks, as on occasion he does, of the beginning of a new era, it is not because he sees society taking a new direction, but because he sees reason coming into its own:

Le moment où les hommes réunissent enfin un grand fonds de connaissances acquises, une excellente méthode et une liberté entière, est donc le commencement d'une ère absolument nouvelle dans leur histoire. Cette ère est vraiment l'ÈRE FRANÇAISE; et elle doit nous faire prévoir un développement de raison, et un accroissement de bonheur, dont on chercherait en vain à juger par l'exemple des siècles passés: car aucun ne ressemble à celui qui commence. (1)

Tracy has little sense of social forces because of his attachment to the individual, (2) and herein lies the paradox of his position in relation to currents of thought in the nineteenth century. This attachment to the individual separates him from the positivistes to come, and yet he is separated from other thinkers because of the nature of his idea of the individual, because of his tendency, an inevitable legacy of sensationalism, to, in C. Smith's phrase, 'play down the notion of an autonomous self'. (3)

Bréhier notes the different conception of the nature of the individual which runs through much early nineteenth-century thought and sees the influence of Maine de Biran as being of particular importance:

La doctrine de Maine de Biran est un des exemples les plus nets de cette sorte d'inversion que la pensée du XVIII^e siècle a subie au XIX^e: l'idéologie condillacienne ne saisissait la pensée humaine que complètement extériorisée dans les sensations et dans leurs signes: Maine de Biran retourne au foyer intérieur unique; les idéologues pratiques ont une seule méthode, l'analyse, pour résoudre des problèmes très multiples: Maine de Biran utilise de multiples méthodes, observation intérieure, physiologie, pathologie, pour résoudre un problème unique, celui de la nature de la conscience. (4)

- (1) Grammaire, Introduction, p. 8.
- (2) See above, chapter III.
- (3) C. Smith, op.cit., p. 195.
- (4) E. Bréhier, op.cit., II, 614.

In his analysis of human consciousness Maine de Biran makes an important distinction between activity and passivity, between reflective thought and spontaneity. Combatting Condillac's ideas on transformed sensation, he postulates an active faculty in all operations of the mind, a faculty whereby the moi takes consciousness of itself. He discerns this in the exercise of voluntary effort which meets with resistance, and concentrates his attention upon the internal experience of effort, demonstrative, in his eyes, of an active force, while Tracy, like Condillac, substitutes for that internal experience the mind as a substance capable ^{of} receiving impressions. This leads Maine de Biran to differ radically from Tracy in respect of the will, which for him is not passive, but a highly active force. Lenoir expresses his position as follows:

Dans l'effort nous prenons simultanément conscience de la force active que nous sommes et de l'obstacle intérieur ou extérieur qui s'oppose ~~de~~ notre action. Nous nous éprouvons comme force, comme volonté, comme conscience. C'est là une donnée immédiate qui ne saurait prêter à aucun développement discursif, une sorte d'illumination, de 'lumière intérieure'. (...) Elle seule et non le simple esprit de vie ou bien le cogito cartésien fonde l'existence individuelle. Ni 'je pense, donc je suis'; ni 'je sens, donc je suis'; mais bien 'je veux, j'agis, donc j'existe'. (1)

This is the first step along the path to a restoration, by Maine de Biran, of a duality to the notion of man. He is above all concerned with the extent to which his physiological condition can be affected and controlled. As Bréhier puts it:

Le moi actif dans son effort contre le corps qui lui résiste, tel est, chez Maine de Biran, le germe de toute la vie intellectuelle. (2)

- (1) R. Lenoir, 'Maine de Biran', in La Tradition philosophique et la pensée française, (leçons professées à l'École des hautes études sociales), Paris, Alcan, 1922, p. 81.
- (2) E. Bréhier, op.cit., II, 633.

This duality rests upon the conviction that the individual mind and the will exist independently of the information communicated to them by the senses, and upon the view that the individual is essentially a force. While it cannot in itself explain the eclipse of idéologie,⁽¹⁾ it helps to put the limitations of that science into perspective. As expressed in the work of Tracy, idéologie by reducing man to a passive receiver of impressions, and by laying great stress upon physiological investigations, which do little more than establish the laws of the human organism, seem to many philosophers in the early nineteenth century in France to remove the essentially human aspect from its analyses of the individual's behaviour. Moreover, it is certainly doubtful whether Tracy adequately demonstrates the truth of one of his basic principles, namely that once one has understood the workings of the intellectual faculties of the individual, one is in a position to direct and influence his mental processes, and make him choose to follow the path of the true and the good. The duality referred to above calls sharply into question the validity of some of idéologie's reductions, and emphasises all the more forcibly that they are arrived at by logical procedures, and that they are the products not of observation, but of reasoning.

Such qualifications do not in themselves invalidate the social, moral and political thought of Tracy. In these fields he shows himself to be genuine in his concern to change the world and to create a more just, tolerant and liberal society, in which the inequalities of wealth, and the resultant inequalities of power were eradicated, and in which the individual could enjoy the greatest amount of freedom and happiness. Although constantly attached to the general principle and too easily persuaded that men are willing and able to follow the

(1) For a discussion of the forces opposing idéologie, both during the Consulate and Empire and later in the nineteenth century, see: G. Boas, French Philosophies of the Romantic Period, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1925, and R. Fargher, 'The Retreat from Voltairianism', 1800-1815' in The French Mind, Studies in Honour of Gustave Rudler, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1952, pp. 220-237.

teachings of reason, Tracy is well able to master practical and at times intricate detail in his attempts to organise society; this is particularly noticeable when he deals with political economy and legislation, areas in which his work was particularly appreciated by his contemporaries and by later writers. His influence is limited by his ignorance of social forces and by the changing circumstances of society which bring forth new problems to be solved. It is also limited by the age to which he belongs, for, however detached he may be from the contemporary scene, his attitudes are moulded by that age. He is clearly part of that generation educated in the eighteenth century and called upon to create the Revolution. Tracy answers that challenge by remaining faithful to the logical analysis of sensationalism, and whatever the validity of the method, it enables him to produce a body of social, moral and political thought which is a worthy contribution to the work of reconstruction that the Revolution represents.

APPENDIX A

Tracy's plan d'études for the Ecoles centralesBASES DU PLAN D'ETUDES

1. Il a été convenu que l'éducation doit pouvoir être finie à vingt ans.
 2. Que de ces vingt années, les trois ou quatre dernières doivent être réservées pour les écoles spéciales.
 3. Que par conséquent le cours des études des écoles centrales ne doit pas occuper plus de huit ans, même pour les élèves qui arriveraient sans aucune connaissance préliminaire.
 4. Que ce cours doit renfermer les connaissances nécessaires à la généralité des citoyens, et préparer seulement les élèves aux études spécialement nécessaires à l'état auquel ils se destinent.
 5. Qu'il ne suffit pas de donner aux élèves diverses connaissances; mais qu'il faut les entretenir dans chacune jusqu'à la fin de leur cours d'études et à leur entrée aux écoles spéciales.
 6. Que la création d'une seconde chaire de langues anciennes est nécessaire.
 7. Que le Professeur d'histoire naturelle doit prendre le nom de Professeur d'histoire naturelle et de chimie, et enseigner toutes les parties de la physique, qui ne sont pas de nature à être soumises au calcul, ou qui ne sont pas assez avancées pour cela.
 8. Que le professeur de physique doit être nommé Professeur de mathématiques appliquées et de physique générale, et enseigner toutes les parties de la physique que l'on traite par le moyen des mathématiques.
 9. Enfin, il faut que ni les professeurs ni les élèves ne soient surchargés de travail.
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 TABLEAU DU PLAN D'ETUDES DES ECOLES CENTRALES

LANGUES ET BELLES-LETTRES	SCIENCE PHYSIQUES ET MATHÉMATIQUES	SCIENCE IDEOLOGIQUES, MORALES ET POLITIQUES	ANNEES
Notions élémentaires de Latin et de Français. (a)	Notions élémentaires de Calcul. (b)		1 ^{re} Année.
Suite des mêmes.	Notions élémentaires de Géographie physique (c) et d'Histoire naturelle.	Notions élémentaires de Géographie politique et historique. (d)	2 ^e Année.
Cours de Latin et de Grec.	Cours de Mathématiques pures. (f)	Cours de Grammaire générale. (g)	3 ^e Année.
Suite du même (e)	Suite du même.	Suite du même.	4 ^e Année.
Suite du même.	Cours d'Histoire naturelle et de Chimie. (h)	Cours de Morale et de Législation. (i)	5 ^e Année.
Suite du même.	Suite du même.	Suite du même.	6 ^e Année.
Cours de Belles- Lettres. (Rhétorique.) (k)	Cours de Mathématiques appliquées et de Physique générale. (m)	Cours d'Histoire. (n)	7 ^e Année.
Cours de Belles- Lettres. (Idéologie.) (l)	Suite du même.	Suite du même.	8 ^e Année.

 LE DESSIN.

Est cultivé continuellement pendant ces huit années, dans tous les temps que laissent libres les autres occupations, auxquelles il sert de délassement.

Nota. Il en est de même des autres Arts agréables, des exercices du corps, et des Langues vivantes, dont les jeunes gens peuvent prendre des leçons particulières.

NOTES.

- (a) Ce cours est fait tout entier par le premier Professeur de Langues anciennes. Exigeant une leçon tous les jours, ce Professeur en donnera deux par jour, ou seize par décade.
- (b) Ce cours est fait par le Professeur de Mathématiques pures. On estime qu'il exige tout au plus soixante leçons. Ainsi c'est deux leçons par décade pendant les dix mois de l'année scolaire.
- (c). Ce cours est fait par le professeur d'Histoire naturelle et de Chimie. Même durée que le précédent.
- (d) Ce cours est fait par le Professeur d'Histoire. Même durée.
- (e) Ce cours de quatre ans est fait tout entier par le second Professeur de Langues anciennes; mais n'exigeant qu'une leçon tous les deux jours, cela n'oblige encore ce Professeur qu'à deux leçons par jour, comme son collègue.
- (f) Ce cours de deux ans n'exige qu'une leçon tous les deux jours pour les élèves. C'est pour le Professeur une leçon tous les jours. Avec son cours élémentaire cela fait dix leçons par décade.
- (g) Ce cours vient après les notions élémentaires du Latin, en même temps que le vrai cours de cette langue et que le cours de Mathématiques pures, et avant l'étude des Sciences morales et politiques dont il est le préambule indispensable.

Il paraît donc que c'est là sa vraie place obligée et nécessaire.

On ne doit pas craindre qu'il soit au-dessus de la portée d'élèves, à qui l'on parle de Grammaire depuis deux ans, et que l'on croit en état d'apprendre les Mathématiques.

Il contribuera merveilleusement au succès du cours de Latin et de Grec: il sera un excellent cours de Français dans les départemens où il en faut un; et il aidera même beaucoup à bien comprendre les leçons de Mathématiques. Enfin, c'est le cours élémentaire de Logique, qui est seulement placé plus tard que les cours élémentaires de Latin, de Mathématiques, de Physique et d'Histoire.

Ce cours de deux ans ne nécessitant qu'une leçon tous les deux jours, il n'obligera le Professeur qu'à une classe par jour.

- (h) Ce cours doit comprendre toutes les parties des Sciences physiques et naturelles qui ne sont pas de nature à être soumises au Calcul, ou ne sont pas assez avancées pour cela. Il exige une leçon tous les deux jours. Donc c'est une classe par jour pour le Professeur.
- (i,
m,
n) Ces trois cours ont le même nombre de leçons que le précédent.
- Ainsi les Professeurs de Législation et de Mathématiques appliquées n'auront jamais qu'une classe par jour, et les Professeurs d'Histoire naturelle et d'Histoire n'en auront deux que les jours de leurs cours élémentaire, c'est-à-dire soixante jours dans l'année. Voyez les notes c et d.
- (k) Ce cours ne dure qu'un an; mais le Professeur de Belles-Lettres n'ayant que ce cours, peut donner leçon tous les jours, ce qui produira le nombre de deux cent quarante leçons, comme si ce cours, ainsi que plusieurs autres, durait deux ans, à une leçon tous les deux jours.

- (1) Ce second cours de Belles-Lettres doit être fait par le Professeur de Grammaire générale. C'est en même temps le cours supérieur de cette science et la Philosophie de la littérature.

Quand il exigerait une leçon tous les jours, cela ne ferait encore, avec le cours élémentaire de cette science (note g), que deux classes par jour pour le Professeur.

On peut, si on le préfère, placer ce second cours de Belles-Lettres avant le premier; mais je le crois mieux après, parce que l'on doit y apprendre à se rendre compte en philosophe des effets que le Professeur de Belles-Lettres aura exposés en littérateur, et qu'il faut connaître les choses avant d'en raisonner.

NOTE DERNIERE.

Je prie que l'on observe qu'aucun Professeur n'a plus de deux leçons par jour, et que plusieurs n'en ont qu'une. Ainsi aucuns ne sont surchargés.

On voit de plus que les élèves ne suivent jamais plus de trois cours à la fois; et n'ont tout au plus que deux leçons par jour, et souvent qu'une. Ainsi ils ont bien le temps de travailler chez eux, de se reposer, et même de redoubler tout ou partie d'un cours qu'ils auraient manqué ou négligé: ce qui est nécessaire.

Enfin, je demande une grâce, c'est que l'on veuille bien se donner la peine d'étudier, avec quelque attention, le jeu de toutes les parties de ce plan d'études, et leurs correspondances mutuelles; et je me persuade que l'on trouvera qu'il remplit assez bien toutes les conditions du problème d'une éducation complète et méthodique, où rien n'est oublié ni abandonné au hasard.

APPENDIX B

This Appendix contains hitherto unpublished letters written by Tracy to Joseph Rey. The manuscript originals are to be found in the municip^{al} library at Grenoble, among the papers of Rey, under the mark T3956. They are referred to in a series of short articles by C. Stryienski, published under the title 'Un protecteur d'autrefois: le comte Destutt de Tracy', in the Revue des Alpes of 1892.⁽¹⁾

The correspondance between Tracy and Rey began in vendemiaire an XIII (October 1804) and continued at least until 1814. The letters written by Rey to Tracy have been lost; this Appendix reproduces thirty of those written by Tracy.

In view of the fact, already noted, that little of Tracy's correspondance has come to light, these letters to Rey take on more than usual interest. They not only help to trace the progress of Tracy's patronage of a young student and lawyer; they give some insight into Tracy's private life which is so noticeably lacking in documentation. It is Tracy the man who reveals himself, rather than Tracy the philosopher; there is little concern in these letters for matters of speculation and philosophical enquiry, but rather a concern for practical affairs and every-day preoccupations. Tracy is not an exuberant letter-writer: he does not pour out his innermost thoughts, but holds himself in check. He nonetheless expresses himself vividly and at times movingly; there are echoes in these letters of his grief at the deaths of Mme de Lafayette, le duc de Praslin, Mme de Praslin and Cabanis, and the general mood of melancholy which hung over him. There are moments when Tracy cannot refrain from a sad comment on human nature or the state of affairs around him, and, significantly enough, a constant theme in the advice he gives to Rey, is that of health: on more than one occasion Tracy urges Rey not to endanger his health, which is the most precious

(1) Revue des Alpes, 21 mai, 4 juin, 9 juillet, 16 juillet 1892.

of possessions. Tracy evokes briefly circumstances of his own life, but the main concern of these letters is the advancement of Rey's career, in which Tracy gives him encouragement, advice and indeed practical help.

A real bond of friendship seems to unite Tracy and Rey; the tone of Tracy's letters, once the opening formalities are past, is consistently warm, and he repeatedly expresses his affection for the younger man. He takes pleasure in Rey's successes, intervenes on his behalf not only to further his career, but to help him in more mundane matters (as, for example, the education of his nephew - Letters 18-20), and offers a rare view of himself as a literary critic, by commenting upon a legal work Rey wished to publish (Letter 25). Any letters written by Tracy after 1814 have been lost; one may assume that the two men did remain in correspondence after that date, and it is not unlikely that Tracy continued to take interest in Rey's career.

Joseph Rey was born in Grenoble in 1779 and came to Paris in 1802 to finish his studies. He had begun to investigate the natural and physiological sciences, but changed to law. Dumolard quotes him as follows:

J'éprouvais alors une si vive passion pour l'étude que j'étais décidé à mourir plutôt que de m'arrêter un seul moment tant que je n'aurais pas jeté un coup d'oeil sur toutes les sciences. (...) Enfin, n'oubliant jamais qu'il n'y a point de science vraiment profitable à l'humanité, si elle n'est éclairée du flambeau d'une saine philosophie, je continuai les lectures que j'avais commencées dans cette branche depuis l'âge de 15 ans et c'est alors que, pour rendre plus fructueuses mes études en ce genre, je me présentai à M. Destutt de Tracy, cet illustre continuateur de Locke et de Condillac, qui m'accueillit avec une extrême bonté sans autre recommandation que le vif désir d'instruction qu'il remarqua en moi. Dès ce moment il devint pour moi un second père, non seulement sur le rapport intellectuel, mais encore pour tout ce qui put, dans la suite, former un des intérêts quelconques de ma vie. (1)

(1) v. Dumolard, op.cit, pp. 11-12.

Rey went to see Tracy at Auteuil in October 1804; finding him not at home, he wrote to request an interview, and received an encouraging reply (Letter 1, below). Little of the early correspondence is extant; in 1806, when Rey was still studying law Tracy, with the help of Lanjuinais, sought to find him employment, and for a time it appeared that Rey was to be secretary to Volney. When this project came to nothing, Tracy made overtures to Chabroud, a lawyer in the cour de cassation and the conseil d'état, and to the Minister of Justice, who promised Rey a post when he had finished his studies. In 1807, when Rey had graduated, he was appointed substitut du procureur impérial at Piacenza (Plaisance); in 1810 he went to Mainz to fulfill the same function. The following year, anxious for promotion and perhaps impatient with his slow progress, Rey returned to Paris and was appointed Président du tribunal des douanes at Lunébourg.

The last letter of this Appendix shows Tracy trying to place Rey either as procureur du Roi at Gex, near Geneva, or as président du tribunal civil at Rumilly (Haute-Savoie). It is not clear whether Rey was appointed to either post. In 1819 he returned to Grenoble to practise law; the following year he was condemned to death for his (ill-defined) participation in a military conspiracy. He fled to England, where he remained until the July monarchy. He subsequently became an appeal judge in Grenoble, from which post he resigned in 1844 to become once again a practising lawyer. He died in 1855. He was the author of various works on legal and social matters, of which the most significant are his Des Institutions judiciaires de l'Angleterre (2 vol, published in 1826), Traité des principes généraux du droit et de la législation (1828), and Théorie et pratique de la science sociale (3 vol, 1842).

1.

A Auteuil ce 24 vendémiaire an 13

Je vous fais mille excuses, Monsieur, de n'avoir pas répondu plus tôt à votre lettre. J'ai beaucoup de regrets de ne m'être pas trouvé chez moi quand vous avez pris la peine d'y venir et plus encore de ne vous pas épargner celle de recommencer ce petit voyage, mais je serai toujours fort aise de vous voir quand vous voudrez bien me donner quelques moments. L'incertitude de mes marches m'empêche de vous indiquer un jour plutôt qu'un autre, mais tous les jours vous êtes également sûr de me trouver en venant un peu de bonne heure.

Certainement je serai heureux si je puis vous être de quelque utilité pour la suite de vos recherches et le succès de vos études. Mon espoir le plus doux a été de seconder le zèle des bons jeunes gens qui veulent former et rectifier leur esprit. Je suis très persuadé que vous n'avez nul besoin de secours, mais ce sont ces personnes-là même qui en demandent. Vous me trouverez toujours disposé à vous dire le peu qui je suis et tout ce que je pense.

J'ai l'honneur de vous saluer,

Destutt-Tracy.

2.(1)

ce mercredi

M. de Tracy souhaite le bon jour à M. Rey. Il sera charmé de le recevoir dimanche avec ses deux compagnons de voyage. Il sera chez lui toute la matinée jusqu'à 3h. Ils lui feront surtout plaisir s'ils peuvent venir de bonne heure. Ty.

3.

ce 2 vendemiaire an 14

J'ai parle hier même, Monsieur, à mon collègue Lanjuinais de votre désir de le voir, d'être connu de lui, de recevoir ses avis et d'en profiter. C'est le meilleur des hommes, le plus accessible et le plus aise de contribuer aux succès de la jeunesse studieuse. Il m'a dit tout de suite qu'il se ferait le plus grand plaisir de vous recevoir et de vous être utile tout autant qu'il le pourrait, que vous le trouveriez toujours chez lui, tous les jours et à toute heure. Il

(1) As mentioned in Chapter I (see above, p. 43), one of Rey's travelling companions, in the view of Dumolard, may well have been Stendhal.

m'a même ajouté que pour causer longuement et à fond il vaudrait peut-être encore mieux que vous veniez le voir sur les sept heures parce qu'on est moins disposé à être interrompu. Cependant je crois que vous ferez bien de commencer par l'aller voir un matin. Du reste, soyez sûr que vous êtes suffisamment annoncé, que vous n'avez besoin de personne pour vous présenter, et que vous serez bien reçu.

J'ai l'honneur de vous saluer,

Destutt-Tracy

4.

ce mardi soir à Auteuil

Mon cher jeune homme, j'ai débuté hier par une sottise. Je suis arrivé trop tard au Sénat, et Volney et Lanjuinais venaient de partir. Pour y remédier j'ai été ce matin chez Volney et je l'ai trouvé parti pour sa campagne pour jusqu'à vendredi. Mais je lui ai laissé sur son bureau une petite lettre fort détaillée. De là j'ai été chez Lanjuinais. Nous avons causé à fond. Il s'intéresse à vous comme moi-même: il est persuadé aussi que moi que l'arrangement projeté conviendra également à vous et à Volney. Il lui reparlera dès qu'il sera de retour. Il croit que ce n'est guère pour commencer que dans une couple de mois, quand le plus beau temps de la campagne sera passé. Il n'y a pas grand mal à cela puisque cela vous donnera le temps de faire vos petites courses de vacances. Cependant, comme vous serez bien aise de savoir auparavant sur quoi compter, et que je vais être une douzaine de jours absent, revoyez Lanjuinais la semaine prochaine. Je pense qu'il vous donnera de bonnes nouvelles. Si vous n'êtes pas parti quand je serai de retour, je serai charmé de vous voir. Sinon je vous souhaite bonne santé et vous exhorte à la ménager.

Salut et attachement

Destutt-Tracy

5.

ce jeudi 28^{bre}

Mon cher jeune homme, j'ai vu hier Volney, mais je n'ai pas à m'en féliciter, quoique je sache assez bien comment il faut le prendre et que d'ailleurs il ne fût pas mal monté. Il ne m'a parlé que de délais et d'incertitudes; il a multiplié les difficultés à mesure que je les levais. En un mot il

est clair qu'il a changé d'idée: et je crois que la vraie raison est qu'il espère que son drogman va revenir parce qu'il ne va plus à sa destination. Quoi qu'il en soit, il n'y faut plus compter: j'en suis fâché, mais en vérité il est si inconstant et si difficile que je le regrette moins, car cela n'aurait jamais été durable. Seulement il faut songer à autre chose. Quand vous voudrez j'écrirai à Chabroud ou même je le verrai si vous croyez que cela soit utile. Soyez assuré toujours de ma très bonne volonté. Je vous salue. Ty.

6.

ce samedi 27 9^{bre} 1806

Mon cher jeune homme, mon collègue et moi nous avons fait hier la fameuse visite qui vous intéresse. Nous n'avons pas réussi pour le moment comme nous l'aurions désiré puisque le ministre ne peut vous prendre. Mais nous avons obtenu pour l'avenir plus que nous n'aurions osé espérer. Car il nous a assuré et de manière que nous devons y compter que dès que vous serez reçu avocat, il vous ouvrirait l'entrée d'une carrière utile et brillante. C'est donc là le point où il faut arriver et faire des efforts jusque là, après quoi, j'espère, tous les temps pénibles seront passés. Mon compagnon qui s'intéresse à vous comme moi, et qui connaît mieux que moi l'homme et la chose est très content, ainsi je pense que vous et moi devons l'être. Allez le voir et le remercier. Il vous expliquera le tout mieux que je ne pourrais faire. Il m'a dit ces propres mots: je ne désirerais pas mieux pour mon fils. Comptez, je vous prie, sur mon très sincère intérêt qui ne se démentira point. Salut. Ty.

7.

ce 28 juillet 1807

Mon cher jeune homme, j'ai vu ce matin le Sénateur Lanjuinais: il m'a dit n'avoir pas reçu votre thèse, et veut la voir. Je vous conseille de la lui porter sans retard. Vous ne le retrouverez vraisemblablement plus, car il doit repartir dès demain pour sa campagne, mais vous la laisserez chez lui sous enveloppe. Elle lui sera envoyée avec ses lettres. Alors il écrira au grand

juge une lettre que je signerai aussi, et puis dans une quinzaine de jours quand il reviendra nous prendrons un jour pour vous présenter au grand juge. J'avise que cela ira au 3^e vendredi du mois d'août, qui est jour d'audience. Cela se trouve le 21. Portez-vous bien. Je vous embrasse. Ty.

8.

ce vendredi soir 21 août

Mon cher jeune homme, j'ai vu Lanjuinais à peu près bien portant. Il va à la campagne achever de se rétablir. Il n'a pas fixé son retour. Dès qu'il arrivera il m'en fera part et nous ferons la visite. Votre costume est en noir de la tête au pied, sans épée, des souliers à boucles, l'habit à la française. S'il se peut et par conséquent un chapeau à trois cornes. Au reste cela n'est pas de rigueur. Je vous embrasse. Ty.

9.

A Meulan ce 23 7^{bre} 1807,
Dépt de Seine et Oise, chez Mme de Condorcet

Mon cher et bon jeune homme, je suis venu et retenu ici à cause du mauvais état de mon pauvre ami Cabanis qui a eu un ressentiment de ses maux. J'y ai reçu votre lettre hier au soir. En voici une pour M. Bordas.⁽¹⁾ Lisez-la, achevez de la cacheter avec un pain à cacheter rouge sans autre chose. Portez-la Place Vendôme où nous avons été pour qu'elle lui soit remise sûrement en disant qu'elle est de moi. Tâchez même de la lui remettre en mains propres, et d'en profiter pour le voir et vous expliquer. Il n'est pas besoin d'être paré comme l'autre jour: il suffit d'être en forme décente et propre. Prenez de l'assurance. Ayez beaucoup de politesse et de déférence mais pas jusqu'à l'excès. Ne vous servez des mots respect et protection que pour le grand juge. Voilà tout ce que je puis faire. Je serais inconsolable que mon absence vous fût nuisible. Au reste je ne crois pas qu'elle dure plus de 4 ou cinq jours. Néanmoins répondez-moi ici. Les lettres arrivent dans la journée, c'est-à-dire plus vite qu'à Auteuil. Je vous embrasse. Ty.

(1) Pardoux Bordas, a député at the Legislative Assembly and the Convention, a member of the Comité de Sécurité Générale in 1795 and of the Conseil des Anciens in 1798 (from which he was excluded in 1799, following his opposition to the coup d'état of 18 brumaire) was chef de la division du personnel in the Ministry of Justice from 1799 to 1808.

10.

ce mercredi soir 30

Mon cher et bon jeune homme, je reçois ce soir la seconde lettre que vous m'avez adressée à Meulan. Après la lettre que j'ai écrite à M. Bordas, je crois que je n'ai plus rien à faire pour le moment, mais vous ferez très bien, c'est même un devoir, de tout mander à Lanjuinais jusque et compris ma maladie, en lui disant que vous ne lui demandez rien, mais que vous lui devez et que je vous ai conseillé de le tenir au fait de tout et que vous vous remettez à des bontés de ce qu'il croira devoir faire dans ce moment décisif pour vous. Je suis fâché de n'avoir pas eu l'idée de vous le dire plutôt. Écrivez-lui directement à Fervol par Brie. Je suis bien fâché de ne pouvoir sortir, mais je le pourrai bientôt. Voilà deux accès qui m'ont manqué. Ne craignez jamais de m'importuner. Je vous aime trop pour que cela se puisse. Ty.

En réflexion j'écris dans le moment au grand juge, mais ne le mandez pas à Lanjuinais, et écrivez-lui tout le reste. Ma lettre sera demain matin place Vendôme.

11.

ce jeudi 8 à Auteuil

Mon cher jeune homme, vous devez être impatient d'avoir des nouvelles. Je n'ai reçu réponse ni de Bordas ni de son principal. Heureusement je commence à pouvoir aller, et à la seconde fois j'ai trouvé M. (le C.....)⁽¹⁾. Il ne paraissait pas d'abord trop bien disposé. Il disait qu'il fallait que vous fussiez demandé par une cour d'appel; et enfin il semblait réduire à de vaines paroles la promesse du ministre. Je lui ai pourtant tout compté en détail et que positivement la première place vous était promise surtout si nous voulions réduire nos prétentions à une ville au-delà des Alpes. Enfin il m'a formellement assuré qu'il vous proposait pour Plaisance; mais il prétend que vous aurez des concurrents. C'est une phrase, car il ne s'agit là que de savoir si le ministre tient parole ou non. J'écris tout cela à Lanjuinais pour qu'il voie s'il peut parler.

Je suis encor faible, mais je vous recevrai avec plaisir et vous donnerai à déjeuner volontiers quoique je ne mange encore guère. Venez me voir quand vous pourrez et quand vous voudrez. Je vous embrasse. Ty.

(1) The name of this official is illegible in the manuscript.

12.

ce vendredi 16

Mon cher jeune homme, il ne faut rien dire parce qu'il ne faut jamais parler d'une affaire que le lendemain du jour qu'elle est tout à fait finie. Mais je regarde la vôtre comme faite. Une lettre de Lanjuinais a fait merveille, vous êtes proposé pour Plaisance. Le ministre me l'a dit lui-même ce matin. J'ai été sur le champ en remercier Bordas comme si nous lui avions grande obligation. Il me l'a confirmé. Vous êtes à cette heure entre les mains de l'empereur, il ne faut que sa signature. Il ne change jamais ces sortes de propositions - ainsi il faudrait cent mille diables au lieu d'un pour que vous ne teniez pas votre affaire. Je vous embrasse de meilleur coeur encor qu'à l'ordinaire. Ty.

Le retour du travail peut traîner, que cela ne vous inquiète pas.

13.

A Auteuil ce 3 mars 1808

Est-il possible, mon jeune ami, que je l'aie pas encor répondu à votre lettre du 25 7^{bre}? C'est que j'ai été bien malheureux depuis ce temps-là. Précisément ce même jour j'ai perdu l'admirable Mme de la Fayette que rien ne remplacera jamais ni pour moi ni pour les siens. Un mois après a eu le même mon ancien camarade Praslin, bien regrettable aussi à sa famille et à ses amis. Entouré de deuil et vaincu par le chagrin j'ai été très souffrant, car cela ne peut être autrement et l'ai été au point de n'être pas capable de la moindre chose, pas même d'écrire un seul mot. Ma fille, mon gendre et toute leur chère famille ont passé ces deux mois dans mon hermitage. Ils nous ont quittés hier pour retourner dans le leur où un sentiment bien pénible les attend et où il faut cependant qu'ils se confinent plus rigoureusement que jamais. Ainsi le veut leur position.⁽¹⁾ Les malheurs de fortune ne sont cruels quand ils ne sont pas extrêmes que parce qu'ils ajoutent aux autres dans l'occasion. Mais c'est ce qu'ils ne manquent pas de faire. Je n'ai eu depuis longtemps que ces tristes pensées devant les yeux. Je n'en ai pas moins éprouvé une joie très sensible en recevant votre cher lettre de Plaisance. Je l'attendais impatiemment et je vous ai suivi avec bien de l'intérêt dans votre long voyage. Ne me parlez jamais, mon ami, de vous [.....] ; j'y ai bien peu de droits et je n'aime pas

(1) In 1802 Tracy's elder daughter, Françoise-Émilie, had married George de Lafayette.

ce sentiment qui suit le devoir. Mais accordez-moi l'amitié qui est si douce et que j'aime tant en vous capable de la sentir. Le peu que vous me dites de la superbe Gênes est conforme au peu que j'en ai vu bien anciennement. Ce qui regarde Plaisance passe mes connaissances et m'intéresse bien autrement parce qu'il s'agit de vous. Cela n'est pas mauvais puisqu'il y a réputation d'intégrité - c'est le principal. Pour le public méfiance est mère de sûreté. Cela est vrai partout.

J'en étais là, mon ami, quand arrive tout à point votre lettre du 23 février que je vais lire. J'allais me plaindre à vous de ne pas en avoir malgré mon silence. Je suis enchanté de ce que vous me mandez, mon ami; j'étais au moment de vous dire que j'avais vu M. de Bron et l'^{ai}avis charge de vous parler de moi. Je lui sais gré de l'avoir fait. Vous travaillez, vous faites le bien, vous ramenez l'ordre qu'il faut toujours rappeler pourtant, parce que le désordre veille toujours à toutes les portes, prêt à se glisser par la moindre ouverture. C'est un beau, bon et honorable emploi de ses talents et de ses moyens qui les accroît nécessairement. Encore vous avez le bonheur d'avoir des coopérateurs plus ou moins bons mais en gros bien intentionnés. C'est tout ce qu'on peut espérer raisonnablement. Il y a là de quoi endurer l'exil et amortir du moins pour un temps l'esprit de retour qui ne quitte jamais un Français, et ils ont raison. Car, tout considéré, malgré tout ce qui lui manque et qu'il serait si aisé de lui donner, notre chère patrie est encor le premier pays de l'univers dans l'étendue et dans le temps. Une autre fois entrez dans plus de détails. Je saisirai l'occasion de faire votre cour au grand juge, c'est-à-dire de lui expliquer tout ce que vous valez.

Pour ma satisfaction personnelle, mandez-moi ce que vous pourrez sur les racines que conserve encor la race des privilégiés à inégalité entre les enfants et celle des privilégiés à idées surnaturelles, c'est-à-dire toute la classe qui se sépare de l'humanité pour la brider et la conduire à son profit comme bêtes de somme. Il me semble que le code napoléon doit rogner les griffes des uns et que le seul mélange des nations doit engluer la langue des autres, en ouvrant les oreilles et les yeux des simples. Le bien sort du mal et le mal du bien. Je crois que les parleurs sont et seront encor longtemps les plus dangereux. Il faut plus d'intelligence pour ouvrir les oreilles que les yeux. Si on voulait, sans doute on pourrait rapidement ouvrir les unes et les autres, mais on ne l'a jamais voulu, et pourtant cela s'est toujours fait, et certainement il n'est plus possible de les fermer.

Je viens à ce qui est plus près de moi. Ma femme et ma jeune fille sont sensibles à votre souvenir quoique vous connaissant encor peu ou point directement. Elles prennent un vif intérêt à vous sur ma parole. Elles ne sont pas mal. Mon fils est toujours à Constantinople. Il travaille comme vous à Plaisance sur le pays et sur la langue en vue d'accroître ses moyens et de les employer à l'amélioration. Mais il est bien impatient de retour, et moi aussi après trois ans d'absence, dans mon âge on change tous les six mois quand on les emploie bien. Je ne sais encor quand nous aurons satisfaction. Il est aide de camp du général ambassadeur. Il suivra son sort.⁽¹⁾ S'il vous parvient des nouvelles de Dalmatie, d'Istrie et Serbie, dites-les-moi. Elles lui importent. Mon genre a tout quitté. Après avoir fait preuve de zèle et de talent il est voué à la vie de famille, la seule que les circonstances lui permettent de mener. C'est un digne jeune homme et que quelque jour je veux vous faire connaître intimement. Lanjuinais sera très sensible à votre souvenir. Il l'a été à votre lettre que vous avez très bien fait de lui écrire. C'est un brave homme qui ne vous oubliera jamais. Il se porte bien. Volney n'est point mal, et fait toujours le bien à son aise, sans se gêner. Le cher et excellent Cabanis n'est pas si bien. Il existe, mais il végète et est toujours incapable de tout. Il est toujours à douze lieues d'ici. Je vais enfin l'aller voir incessamment. Son état est un de mes vifs chagrins. Je vous embrasse, mon jeune ami. Appelez-moi comme vous voudrez, mais aimez-moi. Je vous le rends bien. Je fais plus s'il est possible. J'ai de grandes espérances sur vous. Salut. Ty.

14.

A Auteuil ce 24 avril 1808

Mon bon et jeune ami, je dois depuis longtemps une réponse à votre lettre du 29 mars. J'ai reçu celle du 3 avril par M. Harpin passant pour aller à Arras. J'ai été charmé de ses manières et il m'a donné occasion de croire que c'est un homme sage et sensé qui mérite l'attrait qu'il vous a inspiré. Il ne m'a parlé de rien et je ne vois trop que j'aie moyen de lui être utile. Mais si je le pouvais, ce serait avec un vrai plaisir.

(1) Victor Destutt de Tracy, an artillery officer, was at this time aide de camp to General Sebastiani; he went to Constantinople in 1807. He subsequently served with some distinction in Spain in 1808-10, and was wounded at the battle of Albuera (see Letter 26, below).

Pour vous, mon ami, je vois avec plaisir que vous continuez comme vous avez commencé, partagé entre vos devoirs et des études propres à devenir tous les jours plus capable - c'est bien. Continuez sans cependant altérer votre santé, le premier des biens. Et puissiez-vous prospérer autant que je le souhaite.

Pour moi, le malheur me poursuit et ses coups sont irréparables. M. de Praslin est mort, sa femme est dans un état déplorable et prête à le suivre. Cabanis a eu une rechute le mois dernier et deux nouveaux assauts depuis. Tout croule autour de moi. Tout ce que m'est cher languit et s'éteint. Vous sentez que si je demeure, ce n'est que pour souffrir. Je ne vis que par la génération qui vient: la mienne est finie, du moins pour moi. Voilà ce qui m'a empêché de vous écrire. Votre lettre m'a pourtant bien intéressé. J'en ai fait part à Lanjuinais, au moins de ce que était à son usage. Il vous conserve intérêt bien sincère. Nous avons raisonné ensemble de ce qui vous touche. Nous avons bien vu que ces nouvelles places, ces vacances vous tentent. Mais tout calculé, nous n'avons pas cru même pour votre bien devoir faire encor de démarches. Vous êtes trop nouveau. Il faut patienter un peu, hormis dans le cas où votre principal qui est hors de combat viendrait à manquer, la circonstance d'être sur place militerait puissamment. A moins de cela pour être un chef il faut un peu plus de temps; et pour rester en second nous croyons qu'il vaut mieux ne pas changer. Voilà, mon ami, le résultat de notre conseil, et ni la paresse ni l'indifférence n'y ont eu part. Continuez à nous tenir au fait.

Tout ce que vous dites est fort curieux, et la manière dont vous l'observez et le présentez me prouverait votre bon esprit quand je ne le connaîtrais pas d'avance. Je ne vous en dirai pourtant pas davantage aujourd'hui. Je n'en ai pas la force. On dit effectivement l'archi-trésorier duc de Plaisance, et l'archi-chancelier duc de Parme, mais je ne crois pas que cela change rien à la manière d'être de ces deux pays, et je ne vois pas encor qu'on les mette pleinement à la française comme le Piémont. J'ignore à quoi cela tient. Je pense qu'il faut que tout vienne petit à petit. Il faut surtout user les prêtres et leur crédit. Je crois bien qu'on vendra leurs biens petit à petit et j'imagine que dès ce moment les moines ne reçoivent plus de novices. Dites-moi cela.

Adieu, mon ami, toute ma famille vous fait mille compliments. Le bon Bailly⁽¹⁾ est très touché de votre souvenir. Moi, je vous suis tendrement attaché. Ty.

15.

ce 25 mai 1808 à Auteuil

Mon cher enfant, votre lettre du 10 mars m'a touché, mais vous êtes bien loin de savoir tous les malheurs qui m'écrasent. Le 4 et 5 de ce mois j'ai perdu Mme de Praslin et M. Cabanis, la plus adorable des amies et le plus admirable des amis. Je reste au milieu de leurs familles désolées, entre leurs tombeaux. Jugez de mon état. Vous êtes bon, vous ne le sentirez que trop. Je n'entreprendrai pas de vous le peindre n'y d'en gémir. J'ai voulu seulement vous l'apprendre.

Je n'ai point revu M. Harpin, et ne suis actuellement capable de rien. Cependant si j'étais en mesure d'écrire quelques lettres qui lui pussent être utiles, je le ferais puisque vous l'estimez. Pour voir qui que ce soit, j'en suis incapable.

Quant à vous, mon cher magistrat, ne soyez jamais en peine que je ne trouve pas votre délicatesse et votre modération assez grandes. J'en suis si loin que je vous recommande même avec insistance de ne pas les exagérer. C'est ce que je crains pour vous. Quand on est dans une carrière, il est juste, il est louable de chercher sans cesse à s'y pousser par tous les moyens honnêtes. Il le faut, on le doit même. Il n'y a pas du tout là lieu à la discrétion, et si je n'ai fait mille tentatives pour vous déjà, c'est que je n'ai pas vu jour au succès. J'espère que votre complète réunion à la France vous sera avantageuse et donnera plus de facilités par la suite et peut-être de développement au succès de votre zèle pour ce qui est bon.

Tous les miens et le bon Bailly sont très sensibles à votre souvenir. Moi, je vous embrasse de tout mon coeur. Ty.

J'ai de nouvelles de mon fils du 14 avril, mais je suis toujours en peine de sa position. Il me manque bien et j'ignore quand je le reverrai. Ce qui n'est que trop certain, c'est qu'il ne reverra plus un seul des plus chers appuis de son enfance qui le couvraient de leurs ailes avec tant de tendresse - et quels amis!

(1) This Bailly, unfailingly given throughout these letters the epithet bon is almost certainly the jurist Jean-Baptiste Bailly-Briet, born in 1729, the author of Le Comté de Montbéliard agrandi et enrichi au préjudice de la Franche-Comté. He died in 1808 (see Letter 18, below).

16.

ce 17 7^{bre} 1808

Mon cher magistrat, il y a bien longtemps que vous n'avez eu de mes nouvelles. C'est vous dire suffisamment que je suis toujours dans le même état de langueur, d'abattement, d'incapacité totale qui rend la vie insupportable et qui engagerait à la terminer sans retard si on n'avait toujours l'espérance trompeuse qu'elle ira mieux, tandis qu'il est clair à la raison qu'elle ira de mal au pis quand on a tout perdu, même la santé. J'ai des douleurs d'estomac cruelles. On m'a tourmenté de drogues. Elles m'ont fait plus de mal encor. Il aurait fallu traiter ma tristesse, et elle est inguérissable. Mon fils est revenu, il est vrai, mais on n'a rien fait pour lui comme il l'espérait et avait sujet de l'espérer, et il va repartir pour l'Espagne. J'aimerais bien mieux qu'il fût à portée de vous voir. J'ai eu un bonheur pourtant. J'ai marié ma fille cadette a M. de Laubespín; j'ai tout lieu de m'en louer et elle m'en paraît très contente. Il a une place dans les relations extérieures qui lui donnera peu de perspective d'avancement, mais il a une fortune suffisante et un caractère tranquille et doux, et il a l'esprit cultivé, et je crois qu'il prendra fort bien son parti si on ne fait rien de lui. Pour moi, je ne prends pas le mien des amis que j'ai perdus et de ceux qui me restent qui sont malheureux, et j'ai plusieurs chagrins de ce genre. Je suis surtout mécontent de moi, car je me suis accablé.

Pour vous qui êtes jeune et plein de courage, je vois que vous faites vos fonctions avec nerf et que vous guerroyez contre l'intrigue et l'injustice. C'est un beau rôle, honorable et utile aux hommes, mais dangereuse pour soi. Remplissez-le tant que vous y serez obligé, mais avec tous les ménagements que vous pourrez, car Hercule lui-même n'a pas coupé toutes les têtes de l'hydre, quoi qu'on en dise. La preuve en est qu'elles repoussent tous les jours de tous côtés.

J'ai lu avec bien de l'intérêt tout ce que vous m'avez envoyé avec votre bonne et grande lettre du 29 aout. que je n'ai reçue que depuis très peu de jours. Je crois comme vous que vous avez bien vu où est la friponnerie. Ce Mazzvolni me paraît manifestement un vrai Figaro. J'espère que la cour d'appel en jugera de même, et je le souhaite fort. Mais quand même cela serait, si ces drôles-là ont de puissants correspondants comme vous le croyez, vous pouvez compter que vous les retrouverez toujours et partout: c'est bien triste à penser, mais cela

est certain. Je vous rendrai assurément toute justice avec bien de la candeur et du zèle quand l'occasion s'en présentera, mais mon malheureux état et ma vie plus retirée que jamais n'en fournit guère, et les gens en place n'écoutent que leurs faiseurs, à moins qu'ils ne conservent une prodigieuse activité, ce qui est très rare, car il y a bien peu de forces que le torrent des affaires ne surpasse. Si je croyais tout cela capable de vous décourager, mon ami, je ne vous le dirais pas, car puisque la guerre est partout il faut bien la faire et vivre sur la brèche. Tout ce que je souhaite est que vous puissiez vous y distinguer sans être blessé. Tous les miens, y compris le bon Bailly, font les mêmes vœux pour vous. Ils sont très sensibles à votre souvenir. J'en ferai part à Lanjuinais quand je le verrai, ainsi que de tout ce qui vous intéresse, mais il est toujours à sa campagne. Je l'ai à peine aperçu une ou deux fois au Sénat depuis tous mes malheurs. Adieu, mon jeune ami; je vous embrasse de tout mon cœur. Ty.

Je finis, car ma tête est si faible que je suis incapable même d'écrire une longue lettre. Ho les intrigues italiennes!! Tâchez de vous compromettre avec elles le moins que vous pourrez. Dites-moi tout de suite le jugement d'appel. Avez-vous déjà été souvent dans le cas que vos conclusions n'aient pas été suivies? Je crains l'effet de ces variations de témoins. Un homme qui tient un billet de communion, c'est bien imposant! Aussi cela en impose.

17.

A Auteuil ce 8 janvier 1809

Mon cher magistrat, j'ai bien des torts, mais si mon attachement pour vous est inaltérable ma santé est toujours bien ^{chétive} et ma paresse incurable. Voilà mon excuse tant bonne que mauvaise. Je n'en pense pas moins bien souvent à vous, et je suis même bien occupé de ce qui peut vous intéresser dans la nouvelle organisation de la procédure criminelle. Je ne sais si elle sera mise bientôt en activité, mais mandez-moi ce qu'il y aurait à faire. dans ce cas. Je m'en entendrai avec Lanjuinais qui s'intéresse toujours bien à vous, et nous ferons ce qui sera en notre pouvoir.

Je voudrais aussi savoir de vous ce qu'est devenue cette affaire qui vous a tant occupé cet été. Je n'en ai plus entendu parler. J'espère que soit que votre avis ait été confirmé ou informé il ne vous est rien arrivé de désagréable pour avoir obéi à votre conscience et fait votre devoir.

Nous sommes tous ici tant bien que mal, vous aimant toujours bien, et notamment le bon M. Bailly, qui me prie de vous le dire. Notre jeune ménage va bien. Il n'est pas encor question de grossesse. L'ancien se repose aussi. Ils sont chez leurs parents. Mon fils est en Espagne. Il se porte bien, mais il n'a toujours pas d'avancement, quoique son général soit très content de lui.

Pour moi, mon ami, je suis toujours comme je puis être, bien malheureux de pertes irréparables et d'une dont je suis encor menacé et qui me serait encor très pénible, et du sort d'un ami très cher qui est bien malheureux. Tout cela est amer. Je n'en suis pas moins tout ce que vous me dites de bon et de vrai dans votre très aimable lettre du mois de 8^{bre} dont je suis très touché; et ces sentiments-là de votre part me sont bien doux. Mais croyez-moi, mon cher jeune homme, le soir de la vie est une vilaine chose, quand tout croule autour de vous.

Vous savez que j'ai eu le malheur de figurer à l'Institut à la place de mon ami. J'ai été content du public qui a bien montré que mon prédécesseur lui était cher et respectable. On m'a bien traité, et les aboyeurs m'ont dit des injures. Ainsi je dois être satisfait. Mais j'ai bien souffert. Vous avez vu mon discours dans le Moniteur, je ne vous l'ai point envoyé, car ces sortes de pièces ne signifient jamais rien. Il est impossible d'y laisser parler son coeur de manière à se satisfaire, et tout aussi impossible d'être réellement instructif. Voilà ce que c'est que tout cérémonial, froid et bete.

Adieu mon cher et bon ami. Aimez-moi toujours un peu. Je vous le rends de tout mon coeur. Ty.

18.

A Auteuil ce 10 juin 1809

Mon bon et jeune ami, je me suis bien douté que ma trop tardive lettre du 21 avril vous serait arrivée pourtant très peu après le départ de la vôtre du 30 du même mois. C'est pourquoi je l'ai laissée sans réponse quoiqu'elle m'ait fait grand plaisir et que je vous en sois très obligé. Je verrai avec un très grand plaisir les travaux que vous m'annoncez, comme début de plus grands encor. J'en ai très bonne opinion d'avance. Je vous en dirai mon avis avec franchise et avec toute la sollicitude du véritable intérêt. Cet automne quand on en sera à la nouvelle organisation nous verrons à seconder votre louable desir de voir des objets nouveaux. J'espère qu'il reussira. Lanjuinais, Volney, Maine-Biran se portent bien: ils s'occupent mais je ne puis trop vous dire à quoi. Je vis

absolument seul. J'ai pourtant vu le bon de Schonen,⁽¹⁾ il a dû vous le dire. Je suis charmé de son aimable cordialité. Je l'ai fort engagé à nous venir voir de temps en temps. Mon fils est toujours en Espagne; ma fille aînée prête d'accoucher. Le bon Quaeffer et tous les siens ne sont pas mal. Tout le monde ici fait des vœux pour votre satisfaction; moi je vois avec plaisir votre belle et bonne constance à bien faire et à acquérir des moyens de faire encor mieux. Je viens à votre lettre du 30 mai arrivée avant hier.

Je vous dirai que toutes réflexions faites à part - moi je n'ai point fait usage de celle que vous m'envoyez. Elle est bien, très bien, mais il y règne un ton trop modeste. Avec certaines gens dont ce n'est pas le défaut, il est toujours à craindre qu'ils ne vous prennent juste sur le pied où on se met soi-même. D'ailleurs le mot quart de pension est surchargé et j'ai craint que quelque bel esprit du bureau n'en conclût qu'on avait hésité entre quart et demi, et qu'on serait content à moins; et puis j'ai pensé qu'il n'était pas encor temps de présenter les pièces qu'elle annonce et qui y sont jointes. Enfin j'ai pris mon parti d'écrire d'abord tout seul, sauf à vous faire paraître ensuite. Il m'a semblé que j'étais plus à l'aise que vous-même pour dire ce que vous méritez, et pour faire sentir que vos bons services donnent des droits au pétitionnaire. J'espère que tous mes beaux calculs soient justes et que le résultat en soit heureux. Je vous ferai part de la réponse dès que je l'aurai. Suivant ce qu'elle sera nous verrons ce qu'il y a à faire. En attendant je garde les pièces. Il y a dans le certificat une petite restriction pédantesque bien inutile, mais au fond il n'est pas mauvais, car que peut-on demander à onze ans que des espérances? J'observe que vous me parlez de votre ancien professeur qui l'est encor, mais je ne vois point au lycée de Grenoble le nom de M. La Sausse. Apparemment M. La Sausse est le chef d'une école, et le professeur est une autre personne. Il aurait peut-être mieux valu avoir une attestation d'un professeur comme ayant examiné l'enfant et le jugeant capable de suivre les cours du lycée. Au reste, encor une fois quand j'aurai réponse nous verrons ce qu'il

(1) This is the first of several references in this correspondance to Auguste-Jean-Marie de Schonen (1782-1849). A lawyer, he became in 1808 juge auditeur à la cour impériale and in 1811 substitut du procureur général. His successful career continued under the Restoration. He turned to politics and, as a liberal, became a deputy for the Seine departement in 1827, and was made a baron under the July monarchy, He was the author of several political pamphlets. He died in 1849.

y a à faire. Je vous embrasse. Ty.

Oui, mon ami, la perte du bon Bailly m'est bien sensible, et ce n'est pas la seule que je ne réparerai jamais et dont je ne me consolerais jamais. Oui, l'homme est né pour travailler et qui pis est pour souffrir, et moins il fait plus il souffre. C'est là son sort à la fin. Mais je me reproche de vous quitter sur ces idées noires auxquelles il n'y a pas de réponse. N'y en faites pas et tâchez de n'y pas songer.

19.

ce 27 juin 1809

Mon cher grave magistrat, je ne vous le nie pas, vous êtes un franc jeune homme. Vous croyez ce que vous désirez: moi, je suis vieux, je suis triste, je suis fâché de vous affliger, mais je crois les deux affaires que vous désirez plus manquées que jamais, et d'autant plus manquées que tout est dit et rien n'est fait, et que je crois que notre ami s'est mis dans un vrai guêpier. Je souhaite que ses protecteurs puissent l'en tirer, mais je crains que ses ennemis ne soient encor plus forts. Il n'a assez ménagé ni les uns ni les autres. Si vous lui écrivez, tâchez de lui prêcher modération et circonspection. Il en a besoin grandement pour se soutenir.

Je viens à vos projets de nouvelle destination. Aller essayer les plâtres dans des pays nouveaux est une pénible commission, et la désirer est toujours une marque de zèle qui, ce me semble, ne peut être que bien vue. Mais votre ancien projet de voir d'autres mœurs et une autre langue a son bon aussi: je ne sais si je ne l'aimerais pas mieux. Je ne sais d'ailleurs si le nouveau est possible: je verrai. Je consulterai pour vous comme je ferais pour moi, et s'il dépend de nous de choisir, je choisirai en ne perdant point de vue ce que vous me dites des partis où vous vous sentez le plus fort, et des moyens de vous procurer l'aide que vous désirez. Je ne puis rien vous dire de plus aujourd'hui.

Aussi n'est-ce pas là ce qui me fait répondre tout de suite à votre lettre du 18 que je viens de recevoir. Mais j'ai à vous dire que j'ai trouvé un ami

fort obligeant qui connaît beaucoup M. Fourcroy⁽¹⁾ et ses bureaux, il sait comme cela se passe, et quoiqu'à mon assez grand étonnement je n'aie pas encor reçu de réponse à ma lettre, il me répond qu'il fera mettre votre neveu sur la liste des élèves à recevoir l'automne prochain au lycée de Grenoble si vous le voulez, mais il me prévient d'abord qu'il ne pourra pas avoir pension entière ni vraisemblablement trois quarts. Dans un lycée qu'on établirait cela se pourrait, mais dans un déjà établi on ne donnera d'abord que demi-pension sauf à accorder l'année d'après. Cependant il fera son possible pour les trois quarts. Si donc vous voulez courir la chance de demi-pension il suffit que vous m'envoyez une simple demande en votre nom.

"M. Rey, substitut, a l'honneur de représenter à M. le Cte Fourcroy qu'il a un nouveu qui est totalement à sa charge, à qui il voudrait donner une bonne éducation et que la modicité de sa fortune ne lui permettant pas d'y pourvoir, il lui aurait une grande obligation de lui accorder une place au lycée de Grenoble ou gratis ou aux moindres frais possibles." Vous direz cela ou à peu près en ajoutant le nom de l'enfant et que vous envoyez son extrait baptismaire (que j'ai). Vous ajouterez que s'il faut absolument payer quelque chose vous vous engagez à payer ce qu'il fixera et vous signerez. (Cette clause est nécessaire et elle ne vous engage à rien, parce que si on ne vous accordait que demi-pension et que vous trouviez la charge trop lourde, vous remerciez de la place). Envoyez-moi cette pièce, je me charge du reste. Ne parlez ni de père ni de mère, parce que pour vous obliger nous en ferons un orphelin. Voilà les instructions que j'ai reçues et que je vous transmets.

Je recevrai avec bien du plaisir, mon jeune ami, l'ouvrage que vous m'annoncez. Je le lirai avec tout l'intérêt que m'inspire l'auteur, et je vous en dirai franchement mon avis. Mais j'en ai d'avance fort bonne opinion. Vous connaissez mon tendre attachement pour vous. Ty.

Ce 28

Mon cher, j'ai été ce matin aux bureaux de la justice. Il n'est pas encor du tout question d'organiser l'ordre judiciaire de l'état romain. Quand on s'en

(1) Antoine-François, Comte de Fourcroy (1755-1809), called by Napoleon⁶⁰ the conseil d'état in 1799 and from 1801 director-general of public instruction.

occupera, il me paraît possible que vous y soyez placé avec avantage, si le goût vous en dure. Ce ne sera pas de si tôt; vous aurez tout le temps d'y penser et de m'en écrire. Ma fille aînée vient d'accoucher à La Grange d'une troisième fille. La mère et l'enfant se portent bien. Je pars à l'instant pour aller les embrasser.

20.

ce 30 août 1809

Hé mon Dieu, mon cher ami, qu'est-ce donc qu'il vous est arrivé? Votre lettre du 17 m'a fait de la peine et elle n'explique rien. Est-il bien vrai au moins que vous soyez en pleine convalescence? J'ai passé tout de suite aux bureaux de la justice. M. Collanel (?) n'avait pas vu encor votre demande de congé. Il l'a cherchée. Il ne l'a pas trouvée. Apparemment elle était encore au secrétariat. Mais on m'a assuré qu'elle ne traînerait pas, qu'elle ne souffrirait pas de difficultés et qu'elle serait répondue de suite. Seulement on m'a prévenu qu'aux termes de je ne sais quel décret elle devait être accompagnée d'une attestation de votre tribunal que le service ne souffrirait pas de votre absence. C'est pure forme mais nécessaire. Sans doute vous savez cela et vous vous y êtes conformé. Si vous l'aviez oublié, réparez l'omission.

Je n'ai point à cette occasion parlé des places de Florence, d'abord parce que cela me paraît en opposition avec une demande de congé, et puis je n'en crois pas bien l'avantage, et il ne me semble pas que vous en soyez plus frappé que moi. Nous causerons de tout cela quand vous serez ici; ce petit voyage que vous me faites espérer me fait bien plaisir. J'ai bien envie de vous voir et de vous embrasser, comme je vous aime. Mais portez-vous bien, c'est le grand point. Ty.

P.S. Je vois que je suis un vilain homme. Je n'avais pas encor répondu à votre lettre du 26 juillet, mais le mémoire avait été remis tout de suite à Fourcroy. Il est bien et très bien. J'espère qu'il aura succès au moins à moitié, peut-être aux trois-quarts. S'il en était ainsi de tout ce qu'on désire, il n'y aurait pas à se plaindre, et vous seriez bien heureux par nos vœux pour vous.

21.

Ce lundi 23 8^{bre} 1809

Mon cher ami, voici les deux vies de Turgot. Mais vous avez le temps de lire, peut-être vous vous ennuyez. Je vous confie sous le plus grand secret un manuscrit⁽¹⁾ qu'on m'a confié de main. Il n'est point de moi. Je n'en suis que le copiste, vous vous en apercevrez bien. Vous n'en parlerez jamais. Vous en sentirez les raisons en le lisant. Je vous en dirai d'autres quand nous nous verrons. Laissez, si vous voulez, tout ce qui a trait à l'organisation politique, mais voyez les articles qui concernent l'économie politique, j'ai trouvé à peu près tout ce que je connais de plus raisonnable sur ce sujet. Si c'était développé suffisamment dans un ordre méthodique, il me paraît que cela ferait un traité complet, et nous n'avons pas d'autre dont je suis pleinement satisfait. J'y joins l'ouvrage auquel il se rapporte en cas que vous ne l'avez pas et que vous vouliez le consulter. Guérissez-vous. Donnez-moi de vos nouvelles. Je vous embrasse. Ty.

22.

Ce 27 8^{bre} 1809

Mon cher ami, je ne suis guère content de vos esculapes. J'espère cependant que vous aurez eu propres recours à leur chef et qu'avec du ménagement tout ira bien. Je suis charmé de vos bonnes résolutions de travail. Oui, le vôtre surmontera tout. Je serai charmé de vous voir et d'en causer avec vous. Cependant je ne vous exhorte pas à venir dîner avec nous de quelque temps parce que mes gens sont fort occupés de notre déménagement; et quoique je prévoie qu'il traînera encor, cependant ma femme en est si ébouriffée qu'elle a déclaré qu'elle ne voulait plus recevoir personne. J'en ai regret pour l'occasion. Je vous embrasse. Ty.

23.

A Paris ce 25 août 1810

Mon cher magistrat, je suis un paresseux, un vilain, un cancre, tout ce que vous voudrez, mais voyez, je ne me corrigerai jamais ni de vous aimer, ni de manquer à vous le dire. Que voulez-vous tirer d'un homme qui se lève à onze

(1) It is reasonable to conclude that Tracy is referring here to his own Commentaire sur L'Esprit des Loix de Montesquieu.

heures et qui dort encor dans le jour? Et cela parce qu'il a souffert toute la nuit. Je ne suis pourtant pas malade, mais je suis comme cela. C'est comme l'élan qui gémit toujours, c'est qu'apparemment sa constitution est de souffrir toujours en vivant. La bonne nature ou providence a fait des êtres sensibles sur ce modèle. Tâchez de n'en point augmenter le nombre, ou du moins que quand vous serez vieux, car alors bien peu échappent à cette destinée.

Quant à moi, toutes ces misères ne m'ont point empêché de bien songer à vous. J'en ai beaucoup parlé avec de Schonen qui a bien lui toute l'activité et les autres bonnes qualités de la jeunesse. Le résultat de nos colloques est qu'il vous faut la place de procureur impérial de Mayence si elle vaque ou celle d'avocat général à Trêves préférablement ou dans telle autre cour d'appel de vos pays. Je vois que cela cadre à merveille avec ce que vous me dites dans votre lettre du 19. J'avais déjà écrit dans ce sens au grand juge parce qu'une lettre fait mieux qu'une visite. De plus, ayant appris par de Schonen que M. Beitz, président de Bruxelles, serait très consulté sur tous vos pays belges, germaniques et hollandais, je vous ai fait très vivement recommander à lui par le conseiller d'état Jollivet qui regrette beaucoup de ne vous avoir pas vu davantage, mais qui vous connaît par votre réputation et par moi, c'est-à-dire très bien. Voilà, mon ami, où nous en sommes. Dès que j'en saurai plus, je vous le dirai. Je vous embrasse. Ty.

Tous les miens, Lanjuinais, s'intéressent vivement à vous et sont sensibles à votre souvenir. Personne ne vous oublie. Je n'ai pu employer Lanjuinais, il est à sa campagne. Mon fils se porte bien, mais ses nouvelles ne sont que du 28 juin - patience.

24. (Fragment)

A Paris ce 28 7^{bre} 1810 le soir

Mon cher Magistrat, je réponds sans perdre un moment à votre lettre du 24. Je ne doute pas que ce que vous aurez fait ne soit bon, mais je vous avoue que je tremble à la seule idée de se faire imprimer. Je sais ce qu'il en coûte quoique je n'aie jamais attaqué personne et que j'aie écrit sur un sujet qui ne semblait devoir éveiller aucune passion et ne provoquer que l'ennui. C'est bien pis pour un homme en place et ayant une carrière à parcourir. En parlant de ses

devoirs il a l'air de tracer ceux des autres et de leur faire la leçon. Ceux qui ne veulent pas la suivre le déchirent. Enfin, quand cela n'aurait que l'inconvénient de donner son portrait, on est sûr qu'il ne plaît pas à tout le monde. On déplaît certainement plus aux uns, et le plus souvent on plaît moins aux autres qu'auparavant. En un mot, je ne crois pas qu'il y ait un seul homme même et surtout de ceux destinés à être admirés après leur mort, qui se soit jamais bien trouvé pendant sa vie d'avoir écrit. Ajouter que dans ces temps-ci on n'aime point du tout que les hommes d'état soient auteurs. On veut que ce soit là deux métiers, et deux métiers très distincts.

Malgré tout cela, mon ami, envoyez-moi votre ouvrage. Je vous dirai ce que je pense et je ferai ce que vous voudrez. Je ne m'en rapporterai pas à moi. J'en causerai avec M. de Schonen et aussi des moyens d'exécution dans le cas d'impression. La dédicace au grand juge me paraît très convenable et être un hommage sans inconvénient. Seulement ce que je prévois, c'est que votre sort sera décidé avant cela, et ce n'est peut-être pas un mal.

Vous avez dû voir par ma lettre du 25 août que la veille j'avais écrit au grand juge et fait écrire M. Jollivet à M. Beitz. Nous n'avons reçu réponse ni

25.

ce 21 8^{bre} 1810

Mon cher magistrat, j'ai reçu votre lettre du 10 et j'y ai vu avec une grande satisfaction que vous goûtez mes raisons et que vous vous décidez en conséquence. Ensuite j'ai lu avec un extrême plaisir le morceau qui y était joint. C'est plein d'excellents sentiments. On voit partout que vous êtes pénétré des devoirs de votre état et que vous les connaissez bien. Il y a des morceaux très bien faits et je remarque que vous gagnez tous les jours sous le rapport de la composition et sous celui du style. Enfin c'est très bon.

Après cela, si cela était destiné à paraître, je vous dirais d'abord qu'il faut abréger l'avant-propos et en changer le titre. Un discours n'est point un traité, il ne doit point être précédé d'un avant-propos mais tout au plus d'un simple avis au lecteur, ou avertissement, si cela est indispensable, et cela doit être très court. Ce préambule d'ailleurs n'est pas ce qu'il y a de mieux écrit.

Là et ailleurs il faudrait encore faire un peu la chasse aux mots. J'ai rencontré par-ci par-là des termes impropres, un emploi très répété du mot sein et dans des acceptations qui ne lui conviennent pas, des mots qui ont successivement deux régimes différents, comme par exemple son amour de la justice et pour ses semblables (cela ne se dit pas), quelques phrases incorrectes, d'autres mal coupées et où il y a successivement des qui et des que dépendants les uns des autres, qui font un mauvais effet, peut-être aussi une petite inconvenance quand vous entrez dans les détails des séductions auxquelles un magistrat est exposé. Il y en a qu'on ne doit pas supposer, il y en a de plus délicates à propos desquelles il faut éviter le ton sentimental quand on parle au public qui en général n'est pas tendre. Cette dernière observation est de M. de Schonen et je l'adopte. Au reste nous pensons absolument de même sur tous les points, et surtout sur le mérite de cette étude, et pourtant sur la nécessité de ne la regarder que comme une étude.

Il doit vous écrire de son côté et en même temps vous dire s'il a appris quelque chose relativement aux nominations. Nous ne savions rien ni l'un ni l'autre quand nous nous sommes vus, et je n'ai rien découvert depuis. Jollivet revient demain d'une mission qu'on lui a donnée. Je verrai s'il a eu des nouvelles de Beitz. Pour moi, dans ce moment, je ne puis vous en donner que de ma famille qui est bien sensible à votre intérêt. Notre accouchée va bien. Mon fils m'a écrit du 6 7^{bre} de retour d'une expédition. Il se porte bien, mais je ne sais guère quand je le reverrai.

Je joins ici votre manuscrit pour être plus sûr qu'il ne s'égaré pas. Je vous embrasse. Ty. M. de Schonen est un excellent ami et un excellent jeune homme. Il a le cachet que j'aime à rencontrer. Plus on le connaît, plus on a bonne opinion.

26.

A Paris ce 8 8^{bre} 1811

Mon cher ami, c'est vrai que je suis bien maussade et bien paresseux. Mais ce qui est bien vrai aussi, c'est que je ne vous aime pas moins, et que je prends une part bien vive à vos succès. Celui dont vous me parlez me paraît très important et me fait un grand plaisir. Je serai charmé de voir votre discours et vous dirai bien sincèrement ce que j'en pense sous les rapports dont je puis

juger et qui ne sont pas nombreux ni les plus importants. Mais enfin vous aurez une opinion telle quelle. Je prendrai l'opinion de notre ami de Schonen et puis nous verrons Lanjuinais s'il y a lieu. Il ne faut arriver là que bien paré.

Je ne sais rien de nouveau de votre avancement. Je ne crois pas qu'il y ait rien de fait ni à faire actuellement pour M. Ganeau. Rambouillet, comme vous savez, a été donné; je ne vois rien qui se présente pour le moment. Mais avec les dispositions de M. le Gourt et l'amitié active de son second pour en profiter, je ne doute pas qu'un jour ou l'autre vous ne trouviez une occasion de vous rapprocher d'ici par un avancement, et si j'y peux contribuer vous savez bien que je suis tout prêt et que j'y trouve mon intérêt personnel, car je suis bien mécontent d'avoir si mal profité de votre dernier séjour ici, et j'espère bien une autre fois n'être pas si couvant, car cela ne m'arrive guère, et il faut un grand guignon pour que cela se soit trouvé ainsi.

Mon pauvre fils qui est le pigeon voyageur nous est enfin arrivé assez bien quoique traînant l'aile. On voit qu'il a beaucoup souffert quoiqu'il n'en convienne pas. Cependant sa santé est bonne, mais je crains qu'il ne soit bien longtemps sans recouvrir l'usage des trois derniers doigts de sa main droite. On me fait espérer qu'on va lui donner un régiment, mais je ne crois qu'aux choses faites et celle-là ne l'est pas encore. Il serait bien charmé de vous revoir ainsi que toute la famille. Mme S. Tracy est toujours bien souffrante, mais elle n'en pense pas moins à vous et me charge de le dire. Pour moi, vous connaissez, mon cher magistrat, mon sincère et véritable attachement. Ce ne sont point là de ces choses qui changent. Je vous embrasse. Ty.

27.

A Paris ce dimanche 18

Mon cher magistrat, je m'empresse de vous répondre pour vous tranquilliser parce que j'ai vu ce matin aux Tuileries Jollivet et le grand juge. Le premier n'a jamais reçu de réponse de Beitz; ainsi il n'y a rien à faire de ce côté, et il n'y a pas grand mal, car il paraît que c'est par disgrâce qu'il a été envoyé en Hollande et qu'il n'est plus consulté ni écouté.

Le ministre m'a marqué pour vous toute sa même bonne volonté: il m'a dit qu'effectivement tout était différé mais pour peu et seulement parce que S.M. avait voulu de nouveaux renseignements sur les individus et surtout sur leur fortune. Je lui ai dit: nous n'avons pas la garantie de la richesse - ho, c'est égal, il en a bien d'autres, et d'ailleurs il est déjà dans le ministère public, c'est surtout pour ceux à y faire entrer. Alors je lui ai parlé de votre zèle et que vous vous offrez pour la Hollande. Il n'a pas pris à cette idée. Je la lui ai fait valoir comme dévouement et puis aussi comme chose plus prête à faire. Il m'a dit, ho non, l'un n'ira pas avant l'autre et ne sera pas plus facile; et soyez sûr que je n'oublierai pas. Je ne vois, mon ami, rien de plus à faire pour le moment qu'à attendre. Je n'ai que le temps de vous embrasser. Ty.

M. de Schonen ne voit plus qu'un nuage à tout cela, tant cela est embrouillé. Je le prierai de me tenir au fait dès qu'il y sera.

28.

A Paris ce 10 novembre 1812

Mon cher ami, n'ayez je vous prie jamais aucun embarras avec moi ni pour les tournures ni pour les épithètes. Ce mot d'ami est le seul qui n'ait de corrélatif que lui-même. On est mari et femme, père et fils, amant et maîtresse, mais on n'est ami que d'un ami. C'est donc là le mot propre. Ainsi je vous prie de n'en point aller chercher d'autre que j'aimerais pas autant. Votre vieil ami ne se porte point mal, il est même fort bien pour lui dans ce moment. Mais il est bien paresseux et il est faible, et il est faible parce qu'il est vieux et plus vieux que son âge parce qu'il a eu de grands chagrins. Il en est de tous côtés aux enfants des gens qu'il a aimés et qui ne sont plus. Il vient de passer quelques jours à Praslin. Cette douceur mélancolique m'a fait du bien. Je l'ai goûtée beaucoup.

Pour vous, mon ami, qui êtes dans l'âge de l'activité et qui avez des talents, je suis charmé qu'on les exerce. Je ne voudrais pourtant pas qu'on vous excède, car je vois que souvent cela passe les bornes. C'est au reste l'effet inévitable de tout nouvel établissement, et peut-être aussi de la négligence antérieure. Mais par l'effet même de vos soins les désordres et par suite les affaires diminueront. Puissiez-vous arriver à avoir peu de personnes à punir, car c'est là la perfection des mesures répressives. Je voudrais bien surtout et avant tout que vous n'alliez pas jusqu'au point d'altérer votre santé.

Il faut absolument vous arrêter auparavant. Nul n'est tenu à plus qu'il ne peut, surtout quand il peut beaucoup avant d'être las. Ce n'est pas là du découragement, c'est de la prudence.

Je voudrais bien que mon fils pût mettre en pratique ces sages préceptes, mais il est d'un métier ou tout est forcé. Je n'ai pas de ses nouvelles depuis le 24 7^{bre}. Il était le 14 8^{bre} a Smolensk à ce qu'on m'a dit; depuis je n'en sais rien. Sa main est guérie, mais toujours estropiée. Je vous remercie de votre bon souvenir pour lui. Tout le reste de la famille est ici. Enfants et petits-enfants vont bien. Tous ont été charmés d'apprendre de vos nouvelles et vous disent mille et mille choses. De Schonon est excessivement occupé et a besoin aussi de ménagements. Il est dans ce moment allé passer deux ou trois semaines en Lorraine. C'est un être excellent. Pour Lanjuinais, il est toujours dans sa Brie. Il y a des siècles que je ne l'ai vu. Je leur parlerai de vous à tous deux à leur retour. Je ne puis vous parler d'autres personnes. Je vis plus retiré que jamais; et d'ailleurs tout le monde est à la campagne. Notre été n'a pas été plus beau que le vôtre et notre automne ne nous en a dédommagés que faiblement. Mais où je vous plains, c'est en hiver, car on dit qu'il est bien dur. Je le trouve déjà assez severe ici. Je penserai bien à vous pendant les gelées. -Je n'ai pourtant pas besoin de cela. Je vous prie de le croire. Je vous embrasse de tout mon coeur. Ty.

Dolzer se porte bien, mais il n'a que sa petite place aux archives. Il a manqué celle à l'imprimerie impériale. J'en ai été bien fâché. Il n'y a pas eu moyen, car nous avons été bien servis.

29.

A Paris ce 1^{er} aout 1813

Mon cher président, je suis charmé de savoir de vos nouvelles. M. de Schonon venait déjà de m'en donner. Mais votre aimable lettre me fait un nouveau plaisir. Tout ce que vous me dites est bien satisfaisant. Je souhaite que l'admirable conduite de vos bonnes gens leur porte bonheur: ils en sont dignes. Quant à vous, je crois bien effectivement que grâce à nos succès et à nos immenses forces vous êtes en pleine sûreté de vos côtés. D'ailleurs le voyage de l'Empereur à Mayence, la prolongation de l'armistice et toutes les négociations dont on parle me font espérer comme vous que si la paix ne se conclue pas, du moins on est loin de recommencer à se battre, la saison

commençant à s'avancer. Du reste je ne sais point de nouvelles. J'en ai pourtant de bonnes de mon pauvre prisonnier du 8 juin.⁽¹⁾ Il est toujours à Tamboff: il se porte bien et il paraît qu'il a d'assez bonnes recommandations pour que sa situation soit aussi adoucie qu'il est possible. J'entre dans les détails parce que je chéris l'intérêt que vous y prenez. J'ai laissé ma femme à la campagne avec ma fille. Je suis ici avec la cadette dont le mari a eu un accident qui paraissait d'abord assez grave, mais qui tourne beaucoup mieux que je ne l'aurais espéré. Il s'est cassé la clavicule en tombant, mais il est très bien; il a même peu souffert. Il en sera quitte pour être un mois sans se servir de son bras. Tous les miens vous aiment bien. Moi, je vous embrasse de tout mon cœur. Ty.

30.

Mon cher ami, en voici bien d'une autre. Richerand sort de chez moi. Il a vu M. Tiron et M. Picard qui, à ce qu'il paraît, l'aiment beaucoup. Ils lui ont dit que tout peut s'arranger, qu'on peut nommer M. Rey président à Rumilly parce qu'il a l'âge et les services suffisants pour cela; ou que s'il tient absolument à être procureur du Roi on peut lui offrir la place de Gex qui paraît à peu près autant à sa convenance; mais que sur le tout il fallait s'en entendre avec moi; et il vient de me presser avec les plus vives instances d'accepter un des deux partis, parce qu'il tient singulièrement à Rumilly, car, comme vous voyez, il pourrait avoir Gex s'il voulait.

Je vous avoue qu'à moi ignorant la place de président me paraît plus belle et plus tranquille, et que pour mon compte je l'aurais prise tout de suite. Quant à Gex j'ignore s'il vaut plus ou moins que Rumilly, ainsi je pouvais encore moins décider. Aussi ai-je répondu à Richerand que tout ce que je pouvais là-dedans était de savoir vos intentions le plus tôt possible et de les lui transmettre ce soir ou demain matin, et il m'a demandé que ce soit par une lettre

(1) Victor Destutt de Tracy, serving in the Grande Armée under Marshal Augereau, was taken prisoner by the Russians in 1813. He was freed on the signing of the general peace in 1814.

qu'il puisse montrer à M. Tiron parce que cela fera decision.

Ce qui me plaît de tout cela c'est que je vois votre affaire sûre et que vous n'avez qu'à choisir. Je serais pourtant bien aise et je crois convenable en même temps que nous tâchions d'arranger Richerand. Ainsi répondez-moi sans retard. Je vous embrasse. Ty.

Paris le 31 8^{bre} 1814

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