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THE SOCIAL ECONOMY OF CONSTANTIN PECQUEUR (1801-1887). A LITTLE KNOWN CONTRIBUTION TO THE CRITIQUE OF LIBERAL POLITICAL ECONOMY IN 19TH CENTURY FRANCE

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This article explores the contribution of Constantin Pecqueur to the development of the idea of «social economy» during the first half of the 19th century in France. It examines how Pecqueur's ideas were elaborated in opposition to the methods and conclusions of liberal political economy, notably in light of his ideas about equality and solidarity; the conditions for liberty; the importance of social evolution and progress; and the role of technological and organizational innovations. It notes how Pecqueur proposed a new theory of social and political economy (1842) which was a social science of 'association' wherein the right to a social function replaced the right to private property in the means of production.

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1. INTRODUCTION

FOLLOWING the death of Henri de Saint-Simon in 1825, French socialism evolved when Saint-Simon's disciples Barthélémy Prosper Enfantin, Saint-Amand Bazard, Olinde Rodrigues, the Pereire brothers, Pierre Leroux and others, collaborated together in order to spread the ideas of their mentor. For the most part either bankers or former students of the *Ecole Polytechnique* in Paris, these men were generally convinced that the freedom of association would prove sufficient to solve the social question, provided that associations were organized properly.

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They were also persuaded that the salvation of the largest and poorest class could only happen through a new form of 'industrial' organisation. In the wake of the Saint-Simonians' sectarian evolution, however, and the rupture between Bazard and Enfantin in 1831, several members broke away from the original group. Among them figured the little-known Constantin Pecqueur whose work later was popularized in the pages of the *Revue Socialiste*, created by Benoît Malon in 1885 (Bellet 2017). Effectively, a handful of articles and columns written about Pecqueur appeared in this publication up until 1911, penned by Malon and Georges Renard, Albert Thomas, and Eugène Fournière. In addition, Pecqueur was twice referred to by Marx in *Das Kapital*, despite Marx's criticisms of early nineteenth-century French socialism. Marx wrote, and with good reason, that «Pecqueur is essentially a Saint-Simonian, though in a much more radical way». Although he figured among those striving to spread Saint-Simon's doctrine, adopting many Saint-Simonian ideas propagated in *Le Globe*, notably on the subjects of idleness, inheritance and the private ownership of the instruments of labour, Pecqueur quickly distanced himself *vis-à-vis* the group. He rejected the anti-democratic and hierarchical aspects advocated by the Saint-Simonians, joining forces with another dissident Phillipe Buchez (1796-1865). Pecqueur and Buchez shared the conviction that a political and economic republic inspired by Christian morals was possible. In truth, Pecqueur refused the Saint-Simonian adage of *replacing the government of people by the administration of things* and thus the vision associated with Saint-Simonism of a technocratic, capacity-driven social order.[1] After successively distancing himself, first from Saint-Simonism, then from Fourierism, Pecqueur subsequently chose to follow the path of republican socialism, within which he granted a central role to Christian values.The bulk of his work[2] can be summarized by his desire to devel-

[1] Ludovic Frobert (2017) writes that Pecqueur never stopping trying to «ascribe the political and economic institutions of the [French] Republic to a first-century Christian-inspired morality».

[2] *Economie sociale: des intérêts du commerce de l'industrie et de l'agriculture, et de la civilisation en general sous l'influence des applications de la vapeur* (1839) received honours from the Académie des sciences morales et politiques. An year later, *Des améliorations matérielles dans leurs rapports avec la liberté* (1840) appeared. In this same year, Pecqueur published *De la législation et du mode d'exécution des chemins de fer*, a two-volume study on the Belgian railway system, requested by the French Minister for Public Works. Subsequently, and all within the same year (1842), he published no less than three works, namely *De la paix et de son principe et de sa réalisation* honoured in a prize essay competition sponsored by the Society for Christian Morals, *Des armées dans leurs rapports avec l'individu, la morale et la liberté*, and *Théorie nouvelle d'économie sociale et politique*, which undoubtedly represents his most important work insofar as it provides a summary of his economic, moral and political ideas. Lastly, in 1844 he published his final text, *De la République de Dieu*. He then returned to his former career, journalism, and launched his own publication, entitled *Le Salut du Peuple*, released as six issues between 1849 and 1850.

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op a system of labour through the proclamation of an «economic code and the creation of a group of institutions that ensure for all the right to work [...] [and] the right to equal living conditions». In addition, this meant «organizing society both socially and administratively [...] and linking all individuals together by connecting them to the republic's central administration through a continual, inseparable bond» (IISH, 150). If the Saint-Simonian vision of society as a vast industrial workshop was present in Pecqueur's ideas, it was so with one important distinction: that it be conceived in concert with the notion of a republic. Accused by contemporary economists of being utopian, because of his use of history and morality to justify his conception of economic evolution and his criticisms of French and British liberalism and individualism, Pecqueur strived to facilitate the coming of an «Economic Republic» (AN 13) within the framework of social reform – notably alongside Louis Blanc and François Vidal during the ephemeral Luxemburg Commission of 1848.

Like many others at the time, Pecqueur contemplated the future of «industrial society». His conclusions were counter to the notion of a *stationary state*, an insurmountable horizon of economic development, subject to immutable natural laws and representative of «the operational standard for economic life» (Perroux 1935). Across the Channel, John Stuart Mill, in opposition to the pessimism of his contemporaries,[1] imagined the «stationary state» as a chance for humanity to at long last, «tear itself from a life of servitude dominated by material constraints, in order to reach a new phase in its fulfilment» (Passet 2010). Here, a sort of earthly paradise would exist, where an end would be found to the war pitting all against all. Thus, Stuart Mill and Pecqueur found common ground in the idea that the epoch in which they lived and of which they were observers did not represent the pinnacle of human evolution and that the arrival of an 'ideal' society – or at least a much improved one – was possible. The sympathy that Mill displayed regarding the revolutionary events of 1848 in France is evidence of this (Mill 1848; Passet 2010). In Mill's mind (Mill, 1848, book IV, chapter VI) industrial progress was a distasteful phase that must be overcome, prompting Michel Lutfalla (1964) to argue that «the optimum condition for Mill seems to be more easily achieved in the stationary state than in any other». Pecqueur was more optimistic about this phase of progression, bound towards an

[1] The 'classical' economists were not the only ones worrying about the future of industrial society. Hard to classify ideologically Sismondi was sceptical about the industrialism advocated by liberal political economists. At the same time, he was apprehensive about the reforms proposed by socialists, aiming to drive economic development in the direction of the greater common good. Sismondi was broadly accepted by contemporaries as «the ring leader of a group of authors concerned with the destiny of civilization» (EYGUESIER 2012).

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ideal community, and the possibilities for a regulated industrial order and an improved *art-de-vivre*. He defended his convictions by denouncing the supposedly immutable natural laws of classical political economy, namely the pursuit of one's own interests (*Smithian self-interest*), the priority given to private property and unlimited competition (the *laissez-faire* system), and geometric population growth (*Malthusian population theory*) as understood in combination with the irreversible decline in land yield (*Ricardian rent*).[1] Pecqueur considered, as noted by Michel Lutfalla (1964), that «these laws are endless and independent of human institutions». For Pecqueur, economy and society were not thought of in static terms. For him, there were no immutable natural laws of humanity. He believed the norm for civilized societies should be the «dynamic» state (Perroux 1935). By refuting these laws and proposing a theoretical alternative based upon history, morality, and economics, he was able to construct a new theory of social and political economics (Pecqueur 1842).

> By converting from isolation to association, centralisation and cooperation, we provide ourselves with the infallible means to resolve any problem posed by modern economic science, which will be the political economy of the future.
>
> (IISH 150)

The aim of this article is to highlight what we consider to be a fundamental point of contention between Pecqueur and classical political economy, specifically the dichotomy between determinism, or the immutability of social laws, and free-will, or the evolution of historical laws. Pecqueur was opposed to the liberal laissez-faire promotion of self-interest, private property, and unlimited competition, which in his opinion were principles of social disorganisation (2). He was particularly indebted to Saint-Simon's conception of economics as a historical science, a relatively common occurrence amongst those once considered

[1] By «political economy» Pecqueur meant all liberal French and Anglophone economic theory from the 18th and 19th centuries. In fact, in his manuscripts, Pecqueur refers just as often to Smith or Malthus as he did to Bastiat, Carey or Dollfus. He was not semantically opposed to the term *political economy*, though he considered himself to be its adversary and an adversary of *liberalism* more generally. His «criticism of political economy» was less brutal than that of Marx, although some (notably ANDLER 1901) have spoken of Pecqueur as a historical predecessor to Marx's scientific socialism. As Ludovic Frobert (FROBERT 2017) has demonstrated, at the time when Pecqueur was rediscovered (i.e. during the Third Republic), a clearly partisan ideological strategy was commonplace among left-leaning French intellectuals which consisted of glorifying French socialism during the era of the «German crisis of French thought» (DIGEON 1959). Consequently, Pecqueur was read selectively by Andler, who disregarded all the spiritualist aspects of his work which might be qualified as «utopian». Pecqueur differed fundamentally from Marx, in that he disagreed completely with the idea of radical change, and proposed instead the continuous and regular incremental «reform» of laws and institutions within the framework of a republican state (see CHAMBOST 2017 on this topic).

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his disciples.[1] Pecqueur's optimism was such that he believed that the capacities of mankind could be quasi-providentially paired with the possibilities of technical progress in order to counter *Malthusian-Ricardian* pessimism (3). For the following exposition of Pecqueur's thought, we draw upon Pecqueur's core published works (published from 1839 to 1844), his periodical publication, *Le Salut du Peuple* (which appeared between 1849 and 1850), and a number of unpublished manuscripts held at the archives of the French National Assembly (AN), where Pecqueur was a librarian, and at the International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam.

2. Economics as a Social and Historical Science

> Economists have turned a moral science into a mathematical one. Perceiving only wealth, political economy has elevated transient circumstances into laws and permanent principles.
>
> (Buret 1840, 20, cited by Pecqueur, IISH 144)

Pecqueur's manuscripts opposing the notion of «static naturalism», put forward by French and English liberals, are plentiful. In his view, these *laissez-faire* political economists made the mistake of assuming that the superiority of individual interests and absolute liberty consecrating the individual appropriation of both land and the instruments of labour corresponded to the immutable natural law of the «organisation» of the social body. Pecqueur took issue with the supposed natural, social harmony assumed to result from laws resembling those exerted in the physical world. Indeed, in his view, no more natural harmony can be found in the social world than what is present in the physical one, where everything is contrasted and opposed. In truth, he considered economics to be an entirely human-related matter, and as such, its laws can only be based upon morality, legal principles, and justice. Additionally, and quite clearly, as these laws rely upon their intellectual elaboration and development, they are also progressive and mutable. In a text criticising Frédéric Bastiat's system (IISH 88), Pecqueur explained that the structure of these laws has varied along with humanity's intellectual, scientific and judicial development, with each development leading to concomitant transformations. The economist's role was therefore redefined to involve the discovery of the best present or future structure suited to the ensemble of fundamental elements comprising the social order, and as a result identifying the most fitting physiological form for society (Pecqueur 1842). While Pecqueur claimed that the economist's (or socialist's) search for the best relative, progressive structure was nev-

[1] With perhaps the sole exception being Saint-Amand Bazard (Durkheim 1928).

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er-ending, he nonetheless proposed that reason, which reveals what is right and fair, always emphasises solidarity, association, and equal rights and conditions, while dismissing individualism as archaic. What must be understood then is that, for Pecqueur, the permanence and priority given to self-interest and private property is responsible for the disturbance of the social body (1) and that in his mind, it is what resides in history that casts the most significant doubt upon any supposed economic immutability (2).

2. 1. *Social Economy:* Conditional Liberty *and Solidarity*

The first economic law that Constantin Pecqueur opposed was the unconditional freedom to serve merely one's own self-interest in accordance with the regime of economic liberty epitomised in liberal *laissez-faire* doctrine.[1] Pecqueur believed social positions could be «distributed» in two ways; either through «intellectual necessity», certified or sanctioned by universal suffrage, or in an «undiscerning» fashion, in accordance with which competitiveness served as a regulatory force. He considered it regrettable that political economists had opted for the second alternative, recognising in this choice the peril of his century, one exacerbating the potential for the decline of modern societies:

> If decadence consumes, it is this cause that will hasten it.
>
> (IISH 115)

Thus, Pecqueur denounced the philosophies of Antonio Genovesi, Frédéric Bastiat, Charles Dollfus, Pellegrino Rossi, and other writers from the 18th and 19th centuries who defended the *laissez-faire* system. In Pecqueur's eyes, this system had only served, propagated, and legitimised this fundamental economic fact, according to which «the earth and her fertility are monopolized by a small few» (*ibidem*). If capital is perceived in Rossi's eyes, as being savings destined for reproduction, then, for liberal political economists, its appropriation is wholly legitimate and natural. Pecqueur on the other hand, viewed capital as being «*all* wealth destined for production or reproduction» (*ibidem*). He therefore considered that within the appropriation and

[1] This doctrine was largely criticised by the Saint-Simonians. See, in this regard, HALÉVY 1938. Halévy wrote that «the error [for the Saint-Simonians] is in believing that competition is or must be for evermore the law following which, in this vast market, the products of human industry are exchanged against one another». Halévy quoted Enfantin to illustrate this point (Enfantin's article, «Considerations concerning the feudal organisation and industrial organisation», *Le Producteur*, vol. III): «And who therefore will oversee? No one. Everyone well knows where humanity is going, towards which point it steers, such that we have no need for a general council, general rules of conduct. Order is born naturally from disorder, anarchic unions, the association of self-interest... *Voilà*, the system criticizes everything entirely».

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usurpation of the earth's fertility and other instruments of labour lay the source of poverty and predetermined economic and social collapse. Indeed, in his *Théorie nouvelle d'économie sociale et politique* (1842) he concluded that disturbances to the social body could be explained by an imbalance in its *principal spheres*, which gave form to society as the collective representation of individual sentiments and actions, the perfect correlation between humankind's ways of being and social institutions. The principal cause of this imbalance was the *laissez-faire* system, in which everyone seeks to take part in material production by appropriating the means of production in a way that ensures they profit significantly from the division of wealth. Consequently, the spheres of science and the fine arts, for example, are abandoned. According to Pecqueur, there is reason enough to question the importance of this fundamental economic right, which to him represented a source of waste and chaos born of liberal political economy and that, during the very same era, plunged Ireland into an abyss. He stated precisely that any country that risked gambling with *laissez-faire* would come to know the same tragic destiny. The distance separating developed countries from Ireland was only relative to the expanse of uncultivated land available.[1] Indeed, according to Pecqueur, «the savants of social science» have already mapped out the social, moral, economic, and political consequences stemming from the monopolization of the instruments of labour. Decline, however, was not inevitable and primarily what was needed to prevent it was to demonstrate that if, in reality, the existence of monopoly rights over the instruments of labour represented an inevitable human fact, then humanity could at any moment undo that which it had done.

Accordingly, Pecqueur argued that the monopoly over the instruments of labour had nothing to do with primordial instinct, but rather was a sporadic creation. To support this claim, he drew from Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, notably the chapter 'Of the Wages of Labour'. From his reading of Smith, he concluded that «the founder of liberalism» intuited paradoxically, the legitimacy of social credit and, *a contrario*, the anti-social nature of capital monopoly:

> By the admission of Smith, there are only involuntary poor people because there is individual appropriation of land and individual accumulation of capital.
>
> (IISH 115)

Consequently, Pecqueur perceived Smith's remarks about a "primitive state", in which all products of labour belonged to the worker, as being an unwitting appeal to the socialization of land and the instruments of

[1] It is in this way that Pecqueur explained the «survival» of the United States (IISH 115).

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labour – a plea in favour of dispensing with all those intermediaries which arbitrarily come between the individual and the tools of labour. Nevertheless, Smith's «social radicalism» disappeared before Pecqueur's very eyes when he declared that this "primitive state" could never have lasted. Henceforth, according to Smith, the irreversible surpassing of the "primitive state" left the gate wide open to the commodification of work via the laws of supply and demand. Liberal economists, with Genovesi amongst them, defended this as the natural character of markets:

> The value of things represents a relation in which the terms are fixed by nature and not by the caprices of man.
>
> (Genovesi cited by PECQUEUR, IISH 115)

Work was considered by liberal economists to be the same as any other merchandise. As such, its value was subject to the same depreciations as all other goods for which there was consistently more supply than demand.[1] Pecqueur deplored the idea of a natural price, which in reality corresponded to no more than the minimum amount necessary to keep labourers alive, and thereby 'reproduce' the workforce sufficient for the private accumulation of capital. In this relationship, labour remained forever under the yoke of capital. Political economists claimed that while it contributed to inequality and working-class poverty, the *laissez-faire* system needed only to restore some balance to the relationship between labour and capital in order to endure. Pecqueur, by contrast, believed it was impossible to have a fair relationship between capital and labour because the former could, at any moment, «bunker down in its vault and starve out labour» (IISH 115). He further believed that capital would quickly find itself under the domination of labour if workers were given the right to form coalitions. If some balance was unable ever to prevail upon capital and labour, it was because the regime of economic liberty claimed it required no constraints. In his mind, the *laissez-faire* system could only give birth to a prosperous society through the development of a superhuman morality capable of transforming «the arena of competition» into an «unstoppable mutual exchange ... in which all depreciative rivalry would be banned» (IISH 115).[2] Pecqueur was therefore extremely pessimistic about the salutary capacity of fiscal measures put forward by liberal political economists: Pecqueur saw in

[1] See further down, part 3, section 1, on the abundance of labour supply linked to geometric population growth.

[2] Pecqueur alluded to Proudhon in this regard, estimating that «under the pretence of radicalism and socialism», his theory «renders impossible any society and only produces absolute nothingness» (IISH 115). For Proudhon's actual program for the organisational transformation of market relations, see Castleton in this issue.

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them only temporary policies incapable of sustainably balancing the relationship between labour and capital while allowing capital to play the role of the phoenix perpetually reborn from its own ashes (Pecqueur [1849-1850] no. 3). In his mind the only way to bring labour into a just relationship with capital was to merge them together, rather than allowing them to coexist unhealthily in two incompatible worlds (*ibidem*).

Pecqueur also reprimanded those believers in the idea of a harmony of interests – he singled out Smith, Bastiat, and Henry Charles Carey in particular (IISH 125) – for promoting the idea that the antagonism between interests was irrelevant since they all eventually came to represent one and the same interest. In Pecqueur's mind, such antagonisms were incapable of spontaneously providing for equal conditions in markets. To him, it was impossible that increased land production or industrial labour output alone could spontaneously correlate with an increase in the farmer's or worker's shares of wealth and create a veritable harmony of interests between the interests of capitalists and property owners on the one hand and those of labourers on the other. In Pecqueur's eyes, the idea of socialising capital stood out as the only way to restore the product of labour to the worker and move closer to the "primitive state" Smith had described. In Smith's mind, this state might have been long gone, but Pecqueur claimed that while it may have only lasted *temporarily*, that did not imply that it could not endure *eternally*.[1] Denial of the right to work and the right to that which was produced by labour was at best a sporadic reaction and in no case expressed humanity's inevitable destiny.

In this regard, Pecqueur's concept of history was equally revealing. Convinced of humanity's associationist destiny – he wrote that «humanity was born and will die communist» – Pecqueur nevertheless simultaneously developed a philosophy of history «open to bifurcation» (Frobert 2017) yet subject to regression. He opposed Smithian fatalism, discounting the idea that the primitive state had to be inevitably surpassed by a social state wherein labour was dominated by capital. Pecqueur reproached liberal economists for not realising that the glorified economic state they seemed to consider a successful endpoint of humanity's social development was but an accidental step backwards, a tribulation to which they conferred the value of an economic law they believed to be the fundamental principle of social organisation. He therefore considered that since the 18th century, thanks to various ad-

[1] This distinction brings us back to Pecqueur's concept of a non-linear history sustained by laws. He explained that evolution follows a pre-determined path, but that humanity nevertheless has complete control over itself. As such, any branching off, or «errors», made on this path could be understood as representing so many possible routes for development. (cf. 1. 2).

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vances in reason, customary practices, the moral sciences, political economy, and economic institutions, humanity's diversion from a path of progressive development could be recognised and rectified, whereupon humanity could continue its rise towards further equality and justice within an improved economic and social order.

2.2. *Against Ahistorical Invariables in Economics: Evolution and Society*

> Universal history is precisely none other than the tale of all the perpetual movement that constitutes social life and the economic and political organism.
>
> (PECQUEUR, IISH 125)

Together with the transformation of human society evolved the organisational laws that would regulate it.[1] Whereas Smith considered private property and absolute liberty to be logical organisational principals from the perspective of social evolution, and Bastiat implied that denying this fact would be akin to desiring to return to humanity's infancy (IISH 88), Pecqueur, on the contrary, thought human history reflected the overcoming of all types of domination since the dissemination of the Christian Gospels. Furthermore he believed that the Gospels delivered an essential message to humanity: namely that the possession of all things must be experienced by those who are less fortunate.[2] Consequently, he regretted that humanity had not understood this message brought by Christianity, and that a small minority had instead amassed property and wealth at the expense of the assets of the poor. The persistence of contrasting organisational principles, especially in the evangelical message, did not serve as an untruth in the eyes of Pecqueur, but rather further illustrated the concept of a history open to error and fluctuation. While reason has not understood how to create total acceptance of this 'truth', that does not therefore confer upon self-interest or absolute liberty the value of imperative and compelling

[1] Elie Halévy (HALÉVY 1938) citing Saint-Simonian articles from the *Producteur* (vol. IV,) wrote: «The political economic method should additionally be historical. Do not read history here as a collection of facts with no succession founded on a concept of humanity, that is to say facts classified following a chronological order or following the geographic position of populations, but rather the series of developments of the human species, the theory of general social progress».

[2] Similar to Phillipe Buchez's thought, Pecqueur's philosophy of history, even if he did not cite it directly, was highly influenced by Pierre-Simon Ballanche's *La Palingénésie sociale* (1827-1829). In this text, Ballanche developed a theory of human evolution, whose development was regulated by the principles of Christianity. Similarly, Pecqueur was convinced that genuine association could be achieved through an increasingly precise understanding of Christian principles. Indeed, the historical evolution of humanity could be described as a voyage whose pace was set by the spread of Christian morality and its move toward an ideal of association which Pecqueur called «sublime communism».

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principles. The new socialist system caused distress among contemporaries because it was misunderstood and still immature: the necessary revolution of the mind had not yet taken place due to the entrenched material interests, prejudices, and belief systems with which it clashed (AN 1, *Science Sociale*, Chapter 7).

The principles of self-interest and absolute liberty were considered by Pecqueur to be archaic, while the more promising principles of the future were those of generosity, devotion, movement, development and progress. Within the present could be found a humanity whose duty it was, being more driven towards the future than the past, to ensure this transition and «to embody the possible» (*ibidem*). Pecqueur established three major phases through which humanity passed. The first phase was characterized by the absence of all organisation – it was one of anarchy and egotistical abandon, found to be legitimate by those political economists who celebrated the individual appropriation of the instruments of labour and the *laissez-faire* system. The moral dispositions justifying such a system were considered outdated by Pecqueur, as they were identical with those that justified feudalism and slave societies. The second phase was *an eternal transitory phase* in which, through the development of ideas and morality, individual appropriation was recognized as not representing an absolute right. Consequently all development of opinion that resulted in bringing society closer to the «normal state» was legitimate and desirable. Finally, the last phase would be this «normal state», a «sublime communism» described in an 1844 work by Pecqueur. This «communism» envisioned that ownership and private lending, costly for both land and capital, be substituted with collective ownership and free credit, with "the people" controlling the instruments of labour and each citizen owning no more than the revenue of his own labour. The workers would become associated civil servants of the community, with everyone working in line with their abilities and strengths and receiving according to their needs. If this *ideal* represented a kind of imaginary horizon engraved in historical law that acted as a compass for the present, Pecqueur invited his readers to differentiate between this immutable ideal corresponding to eternity, and its actual possibility situated in time and subject to progress. It was therefore within the second eternal transitory phase where all reform must occur. In transitioning towards this ideal, the ownership of the instruments of labour would have to be altered so that its course followed the dictates of history. Thus, all social, economic, and political transformations observed in the past and present were 'useful'. Each one was involved in the ideal's founding stages, so that for a temporary period ownership could be considered an eminently necessary institution, though also one subject to transformation. These former institutions corresponded

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to certain belief systems, which were henceforth considered outdated.[1] Pecqueur developed an evolutionist neo-Lamarckian theoretical framework by considering that nothing is innate, but rather that humanity has the possibility to act upon what is real and reorient any institutions that are no longer in line with reality.

For Pecqueur, the abolition of slavery was a decisive first step in the inevitable transformation of the ownership rights of the labour *force*, with a reform of ownership rights related to the *instruments* of labour being its logical conclusion. Following the collapse of slavery and the entire system of legal and ideological measures which justified it, the truth of ownership rights would succumb to the same fate. A new truth would temporarily assert itself concerning the ownership of the *instruments* of labour, though not, in the Foucaldian sense, as an anthropological universal or invariant. Thus, ownership over, first, the labour *force*, and, then, the *instruments* of production, accounted for only singular historical events. By modifying the circumstances of its surroundings, humanity represented the long-standing actor of progress for Pecqueur, although at the same time he admitted that progress's slow and gradual nature needed protection from haste, for risk of being compromised. With regards to the abolition of slavery, Pecqueur therefore believed that it would have been preferable, in order to avoid war and ensure the success of this idea, to consider the sacrifice that abolitionist reform implied for slave «owners» and to render it more tolerable for them by redefining the expropriation of their property as stemming from a «crime against humanity with compensation» (IISH 98): this would have been the best way to open the way to a progressive and complete reform of the right to ownership. It was therefore for reasons of social utility, entailing compensation for property owners, that ownership of the instruments of labour should likewise be transformed:

> Is not expropriation by means of remuneration the compensation for sacrifice; or rather is it not the art of preventing sacrifice, of avoiding suffering, of instilling progress in human and social things without injustice, ruin, or the violation of any one person's interests?
>
> (IISH 150)

[1] One of Pecqueur's unpublished manuscripts was entirely devoted to the question of the evolution of systems of thought. According to his interpretation, for every theory that corresponds to dominant and established ideas, there emerges an opposing antithesis, a contrary system. Unable to entice the more «timid» minds, the antithesis, representing rational perfection and progress, remained for some time ineffectual. This new alternative counter-system was at this stage only hypothetical. However, the opposition between these two opposing systems eventually gives birth to a synthesis, which allows «the conciliatory mind» to prevail and banishes the ancient system to the rank of conservative or reactionary thought. Through this dialectical process, the pre-existing antithesis was driven toward relinquishing its ideals in order to enter into the realm of the real.

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While Pecqueur thought the abolition of the wage system was necessary, much like the abolition of slavery in the United States, he feared the lack of anticipation for new reform and the ignorance surrounding its consequences could steer France toward a new revolution and the failure of reform, much like how debate about the abolition of slavery in the United States had lead to the American Civil War.

Pecqueur was convinced that individuals were not guided exclusively by their own interests, nor would they be in the future. If self-interest had been able to become a structural principle of the existing social order, Pecqueur claimed that it was only in a temporary and accidental way. In addition, as a principle of economic organisation springing logically from self-interest, *laissez-faire* held no genuine value as a compelling maxim. Pecqueur persisted in his belief that British political economy perverted the "primitive state" described by Smith, and gave birth to chaos by running against the teachings contained in the laws of history. This proved that humanity would not progress through self-interest and that the right to exclusive ownership and the *laissez-faire* system needed to be reformed in line with the recognition of the rights for all. In his *Théorie Nouvelle d'Economie Sociale et Politique* (1842), Pecqueur wrote that the right to property was doomed to be altered and transformed into the right to play a function within society. Particularly in chapter XXVII of this work and the second issue of *Le Salut du Peuple*, Pecqueur attempted to construct a science based on «social function».

The second duo of fundamental Anglophone economic laws contradicted by Pecqueur – the Malthusian and Ricardian combination of geometric population growth and the decline of land yield – in his view only represented a source of poverty because the liberal political economists who devised its components neglected the impact that individuals and institutions had on the circumstances of their natural surroundings and mistook patterns for necessity.

3. Individuals, Labour, and Technological Progress: Pecqueur's Realistic Optimism

3. 1. *Population and Subsistence: Finding Equilibrium through Labour*

Pecqueur's critique of Malthus' major claim about population further supported his teleological beliefs in human perfectibility:

> This disproportion between population growth and subsistence in no way constitutes an immutable law of nature. It is the possible result of generational ignorance, more or less passing and finally declining; an ignorance that will necessarily decline without stopping with the growth of all science and all industry.
>
> (AN 45, *Population*)

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Indeed, Pecqueur reproached Malthus and his followers – whom he associated with all those thinkers he thought to be «positivists» – for adhering only to present or past facts and giving up on human perfectibility when confronted with seemingly insurmountable social difficulties. Such pessimistic thinkers, who considered increases in population inevitably damaging (since subsistence, subject to scarcity, could not increase at the same rate), failed to foresee any positive evolution in science or customs with regards to the allocation of resources in light of demographic changes. Referring to Malthus, Pecqueur remarked: «His horizon is limited by that which *is*: outside of this, the impossible!» (*ibidem*). Denouncing the fatalistic resignation at work in «positivist» minds, Pecqueur lamented the attitude of «utopians» who disregard the effect of time and space and «cling to the contemplation of principles regarding the possible, [and] the indefinitely distant future» (*ibidem*). Between the two, Pecqueur proposed a 'synthesis': a kind of *realistic optimism* that contrasted sharply with the pessimistic vision of an overabundant and apathetic population unable to feed itself.

In order to counter the pessimistic vision of Malthusian thought, Pecqueur cited Malthus's opponent William Godwin, noting that:

> The history of all peoples, whether ancient or modern, attests to what extent progressive and sustained population growth, over a period of one or two centuries, is a rare phenomenon.
>
> (*Ibidem*)

Consequently, Pecqueur's first argument, without a doubt debatable, concerned the unlikely probability, in his judgment, that economic growth sustained through population growth could persist indefinitely. He pointed out that the study of the demographic growth of countries he defined as «civilized», even if prolonged over time, did not offer a single example of a population's inability to take control of the situation:

> In not one place in the world have we seen a single example of a civilised country of a certain size that was likely to be unable to feed a population double that of its own.
>
> (*Ibidem*)

Profoundly anti-Malthusian, Pecqueur believed that a growing population always comprises a greater predisposition towards encouraging the development of science, reason, and industry. Thus, any cause for potential famine or poverty was less likely to be found on the side of inevitable population growth, and more likely had to do with «the great irregularities of the terrestrial environment»[1] (*ibidem*) alongside the unjust principles that govern the non-organisation of labour. Responsi-

[1] To be understood as flooding, earthquakes, epidemics, etc.

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bility for this destitution therefore lay with large landowners and their greed around which all liberal systems of labour were devised. Malthus implied that population must be limited by its means of subsistence. In fact, in order for a population to increase, its production must be able to fulfil its increasing needs. Pecqueur's fundamental objection was that liberal political economy ultimately had nothing to say about the concrete ways in which to ensure this production. David Ricardo, who viewed society as composed of three distinct classes of property owners, capitalists, and workers, believed that it was imperative that capitalists take control of the largest share of wealth so that it could be reinvested to generate growth. He explained, yet also regretted, that a drop in land yield, accompanied by an increase in land price due to its scarcity, progressively creates a distortion in the share of revenue, benefiting landed property owners and damaging the very capitalists upon whom rests the future of economic growth. Jean-Baptiste Say pursued the same line of reasoning, arguing that private savings encouraged the development of remunerative activities. Even while admitting that a portion of society cannot save, political economists did nothing to explain by what means it was possible to develop private savings, without appealing to liberalism and, like Say, the role of education and the middle class in the transmission of instruction about political economy (Fréry 2014). Constantin Pecqueur regretted that all the Malthuses, Ricardos, and Says clung to such inevitable maxims without ever proposing serious alternatives or solutions.

In Pecqueur's mind, Malthus in no way proved that «for always and forever, the production of subsistence in reality follows a simple arithmetic ad growth pattern» (AN 45, *Population*) – in contrast to population which follows a geometric one. Besides this, he also believed it would be more accurate to blame the phenomena described by Malthus on an inherent defect in labour, than to attribute such a phenomenon to «the force of things» (*ibidem*). The lack of balance between population and subsistence no longer was inevitable once an error in labour organisation was recognaized as breeding pauperism and condemning production. Pecqueur was thus convinced that the organisation of labour enabled the development of economic forces and «mass production» in such a way as always to place production ahead of consumption. In opposition to liberal economic theory as popularized in French by Jean-Baptiste Say and Frédéric Bastiat and according to which the existing world is self-evident, Constantin Pecqueur proposed «the increasingly conscious, organised, and powerful intervention of the proletariat» (IISH 144), who demanded the right to work. The system of labour that Pecqueur sought to describe and which he attempted to put into place alongside Louis Blanc and

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François Vidal on the Commission de Luxembourg was in the end nothing less than the quest for the universal right of producers to work and obtain the products of their labour. The universal nature of this right, in his view, could best be enforced through the socialisation of capital, that is, through collective and joint ownership of the land and the instruments of labour. In these terms, the unchecked rise in population could not be the fundamental cause of forecasted economic decline. Such decline bore the mark of the undeniable economic fact that «the labour of man is dependent upon the whims of man» (IISH 150) and was not yet recognised as a fundamental right.

Pecqueur's response to the pessimists therefore was that increases in population no longer remained responsible for poverty once what was before considered immutable was accepted as being, in reality, subject to the law of progress. The solution to Malthus's problem was to be found in social organisation. To those overcome with excessive panic regarding the unlimited growth of population, Pecqueur countered that the necessary condition attenuating the potential dangers of such growth resided in the right to work:

> As for the law of balance between population and the globe, men of progress have demonstrated that this law is none other than the actual organisation of economic forces, and that labour possesses within itself enough virtue to solve the equation between society and nature and to cease all antagonism.
>
> (AN 45, *Population*)

Pecqueur suggested that work be considered not only a remedy for idleness, but also a defence against «wrongful desires» and an antidote to «imperious needs», and he wrote: «Labour is the most favourable setting for temperance and chastity» (*ibidem*). In response to Malthus's observation that the poverty-stricken cannot foresee the consequences of reproduction,[1] Pecqueur noted that «half of all good moral standards» can be found within labour itself, and that it was labour, after all, that simultaneously generated increases in the scope of production and possessed within itself an unlimited capacity to reproduce the means of subsistence. Pecqueur contradicted not so much the Malthusian intuition that population increases indefinitely as the certitude that subsistence is incapable of increasing in proportion to mankind's demographic growth. This false conviction was, in his view, born from the idea that the appropriation of capital was a fundamental right, which

[1] Malthus's explanation was that «moral restraint» did not work within poor populations because the effort needed to foresee the material consequences of reproduction – notably, childbirth's effect on the ability of household units to absorb variations of price and revenue as well as the costs associated with childrearing – were far too significant for the poor to apprehend them rationally. (FRÉRY 2014, 80)

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could be exercised by a minority. He noted the Scottish-American economist John Rae's observation that if value, which represented the extent of humanity's control over nature, could be exchanged, then it must also be true that utility, if it was «contained in value», must – as the measure of nature's power over humanity – be «free» (IISH 125). Quoting Benoît Malon, Pecqueur suggested that there was no better way of rendering utility free than by turning it into a common asset. Thus, if the only way of responding to infinite population growth was by ensuring the right to work for all, then socialism was scientifically legitimised:

> The organisation of economic agents is spoken of as a superior means of forever maintaining the balance between subsistence and population, but this organisation, this socialisation of productive forces will be precisely the application of the recognition of principles and the realisation of the economic ways and means born of true socialism, that is to say solidarity, centralisation, association, mass production, understanding, unity, in a word variety within the national economic unit!
>
> (AN 45, *Population*)

For Pecqueur, the economic model offered by socialism counteracted the gloomy assertions of political economists regarding population growth. Their saturnine vision of decline neglected to take into account the «civilising» virtues of mechanisation. Indeed, the general materiel improvements wrought by technological progress were completely indisputable in Pecqueur's mind. Not only did technological progress help drive back the limits of the impossible in a strictly productive sense, it also brought with it the ability «to channel the exclusive appetites of the senses, and among others, those of reproduction» (Pecqueur 1840b). The challenge for «social economy» in the future then was to ensure that the «inferior» classes could have those technological tools requisite for them to gain access to the material well-being characterising the lives of the upper classes, who, as Pecqueur remarked, were not concerned by «declining» population growth within their own social strata.[1]

The years during which Pecqueur published his major works (from 1830 to 1840) were evidently those of the rise of railways. He welcomed this development with enthusiasm, recognising within it the missing link between the rational organisation of production, the substantial justification for socialism, and the sort of reproductive restraint needed for social progress. On this last point he wrote:

[1] Pecqueur remarked that in light of empirical facts, the reproduction of the species stood in inverse ratio to the means of raising a larger number of children. In this regard, he shared Jean-Baptiste Say's analysis, which implied that because reproductive foresight was more considerable in the upper classes, they reproduced less insofar as they directly benefited from «preventative obstacles» (SAY 2010 [1828-1840]. See FRÉRY 2014, 77 on Say's demographic views.

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Chastity consequently becomes common under the regime of the railway and surplus production.

(AN 45, *Population*)

Pecqueur acknowledged that in order for the issue of disequilibrium between rising populations and subsistence needs ever to be solved, morality and «the voluntary chastity of new generations» (*ibidem*) would play the most significant roles of all. Their salutary role was testimony to the fact that the soul disciplines the body and that humanity progressively elevates itself spiritually, in the end triumphing over the material constraints of the natural world. Nevertheless, Pecqueur also noted how «foresight is itself the natural-born daughter of science» (*ibidem*). The essential virtue of the railway – «the greatest materiel improvement of this century» – was that it allowed for the spread of foresight by making the positive outcomes of science available to all.[1] Thus, while it facilitated improved economic organisation, inspired new strategies for increasing productivity, and diminished waste in transactions, the railway also participated indirectly in spiritual development, in the construction of favourable ideas about social progress, and the final victory of mind over matter.

3. 2. *Railways and Association: Ideas backed by Technological Progress*

Constantin Pecqueur is the first in France to have built a complete system of historical materialism.[2]

(ANDLER 1901, 73)

In the final and favourable phase of economic evolution, the railways – a sector which preoccupied much of Saint-Simonian thought – were called upon by Pecqueur to disrupt the existing social and economic order in the interest of association.[3] Paraphrasing Michel Foucault (1994),

[1] In this regard, it is worth mentioning François Perroux's observation (PERROUX 1964) that «science leads to technological progress; it is lead by it», and that machinery represents objectified science and technological progress.

[2] While the work of Constantin Pecqueur has been described as utopian since ideas maintain a primary role in the development of his socialism, Charles Andler evoked the materialism of Pecqueur in the preface to his translation of the *Communist Manifesto*. While this assertion should be qualified somewhat (ZOUAOUI 1964), it does bear witness to the profound interest that Pecqueur had for machinery and their impact on social organisation. This aspect of his thought was appreciated by contemporaries. The French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences awarded a prize to Pecqueur for is *Economie sociale* (1839), because of this work's attempt to answer the Academy prize essay question of «What could be the influence of locomotive force and the means of transportation, which are currently developing in the two worlds [Europe and North America] on the material economy, civil life, social situation, and power of nations?».

[3] At the end of the 1830s, during the early stages of the development of the French railway network, the Minister for Public Works, Jules Dufaure (1839-1840) charged Pecqueur with

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one might say that for Pecqueur, the steam engine – and more generally the railway sector – represented a «concrete determination of social existence». Indeed, Pecqueur was convinced that the railway would modify perceptions of productive relations – whether cast in terms of human understanding, social cooperation, or equitable commerce – and generate abundant levels of production facilitating the arrival of a new state – one which was not «stationary» (in the sense of John Stuart Mill), but rather moral, peaceful, and balanced. The railways therefore represented for him both a technological and an organisational innovation.[1]

Jean-Baptiste Say (2010 [1828-1840], II, 835) implied that «it is the high cost of foodstuffs that most efficiently limits the population», adding that shortages in subsistence goods would become increasingly rare thanks to the development of communication routes. Pecqueur agreed with this intuition and delighted in the impact that the railways might have in this regard. He imagined that the railways' principal virtue would be in enabling a decrease in the price of goods thanks to savings in transportation costs in conjunction with the decrease in price variations between different locations the development of railways would bring. According to Pecqueur, commonly purchased goods become subject to an overall «standardisation» in the drop of their prices. Moreover, the railway would enable the diversification and abundance of the total goods available for consumption:

> Every town, every individual will therefore be called upon to partake of all of the earth's gifts; from each latitude, of all the special fruits of every other latitude.
>
> (PECQUEUR 1839, 22)

In short, for Pecqueur, the railway, and a broader application of science to technological development more generally, could contribute to the emancipation of humanity from food shortages. He was in this regard an even greater visionary than either Malthus or Ricardo. In Pecqueur's eyes, the railway participated in bringing all those involved in economic life closer together. Consequently, he thought the very idea of geographic distance would be re-evaluated since, thanks to the railway, now all of Europe could suddenly be found within France just as France, itself, would now be present in every country in the world. It was an extraordinary godsend that through such a process each produc-

studying the Belgium railway system. Pecqueur produced a two-volume work as a result (1840a) in which he revealed himself to be an outspoken partisan of government monopoly over public transportation, hostile to more competitive free enterprise models of transportation.

[1] In what he termed «ill-equipped economic thought», the twentieth-century French economist FRANÇOIS PERROUX (1964, 157) noted that «the economist [in general] is rather late in discovering that innovations in production are immersed in organisational innovations that incorporate social equilibrium into their development».

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er was henceforth at the centre of an immense sprawl of consumers, who demanded «all the inventions of his genius, all the fertility of this land, all the power from his arms, all the products of his activity and industry!» (*ibidem*). Pecqueur also was convinced that as a means of communication, the railway was a formidable tool that guaranteed the interconnectedness of individuals, much the same way as cells were physiologically connected with one another within a single organism:

> Thanks to the locomotive, any news, even just announced in one part of the nation, and later in Europe, or the entire globe, finds an immense and prompt echo in all other parts [of the world].
>
> (Pecqueur 1839, 35)

Optimistic, he asserted that any sudden market adjustments could from now on be made known relatively quickly to all market actors, provoking corresponding reactions. Indeed, the railway would initiate reactions to the disruptions and disorder inherent to economic activity:

> If there is a sudden urgency, unforeseen scarcity, or unusual crowding of consumers, then the next day, or the day after that, the notified producer would arrive with additional provisions.
>
> (*Ibidem*)

Consequently, so long as railways allowed for greater production and consumption by facilitating price decreases, they ensured the balance of production and consumption. Say thought overproduction crises to be impossible and therefore encouraged the accumulation of capital. Malthus countered that if too much revenue was transformed into capital at the cost of demand, then crises of overproduction would become irreversible. Pecqueur proposed a sort of synthesis between these two opposing viewpoints. He suggested that when supply outpaced demand, food prices were too high, and that when demand exceeded supply, there was necessarily information disequilibria affecting producers unable to target their production to really existing consumer needs. For this very reason, Pecqueur attributed to the railway a regulatory power in equilibrating supply and demand.

Another virtue of the railway appreciated by Pecqueur was that it promoted fairer commerce, truth, and solidarity, announcing a new state of civilisation to come. As a «means of universal advertising», the railway could effectively prevent the fraud and mercantilism once considered to be the driving force of economic activity.

> We have so greatly abused distance in commercial scandals, that so many captains of industry owe their success to it.
>
> (*Ibidem*, 43)

Thanks to the railway, Pecqueur wrote, it was as though each individual lived in a «glass cage». He asserted that as nothing incites good

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behaviour more than knowing the world is watching you, the rapid communication enabled by mobile steam engines should result in improved social relations, increased commercial reliability, and, *in fine*, help avoid the sort of dreadful commercial deceitfulness which regularly undermined the social virtues brought by economic activity.[1] The railway also favoured industrial understanding. Before its arrival, producers in each town could only depend upon their own, often precarious, means to expedite the goods they made. Pecqueur was therefore optimistic about the possibilities the railways offered for establishing a unique and communal exportation system. By merging the means at the disposal of different producers, it acted as a true public shipping service, which avoided «the shortages, delays, net losses, that discourage and wither activity…» (*ibidem*). From Pecqueur's perspective, the railways seemed to abolish all those obstacles to the transformation of markets through their promotion of knowledge between producers. The goal of railway development should therefore be to facilitate the delivery of all individually produced goods to public vendors, who would then sell producers' collective output for the continual profit of those associated with the railway networks connecting goods to vendors. Pecqueur stated that the principle was already at work in cooperative dairies[2] and, on the basis of this example, he sketched out an image of what future producer cooperatives might look like. Those members involved would partake in voting for the collective organisation's chief officer, who, in turn, would organise full transportation of the collective produce of associates to a public administrator assigned with the sale of products. This administrator would then return all profits to the association's members. Pecqueur's optimism lead him to believe that on the heels of the commercial success of such rational reorganization of market networks, every farmer would be incentivized to take part in this favourable association, much as physiologically, in organisms, no molecules remained separated from their kind. In Pecqueur's eyes, it was one of the railways' inherent characteristics to lead all individuals along the same route to union, foresight, and solidarity.

Pecqueur noted that in conjunction with the proliferation of locomotives as a form of transportation, a multitude of new joint-stock companies and limited sleeping partnerships whose capital was divided had

[1] «Through this new conquest over time, through the impetuous and short flight of the locomotive, no one can speak of daft business ideas and bankrupteres avoided! Only of speculation, fraud, thwarted ruses! What a simplification of the commercial process!» (Pecqueur 1839, 43).

[2] The isolated and dispersed dairies in Pontoise France delivered their daily production of milk collectively, so that it could be sold collectively.

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emerged in both the industrial sector and the agricultural sector. This was already the case, for example, in the beetroot industry, but it could equally be applied to those banks that established themselves through shares in order to finance agriculture and industry in whose profits and losses they were intertwined. Pecqueur believed that the era of association was inseparable from the destiny of the steam engine. Thanks to this blossoming associationalism, even within the largest enterprises, the very least amount of capital could be put to proportional use, profit, and employment, in such a way that the masses could at last be reconnected to the total social order. Indeed, their social integration would promote economic stability. By means of this effective socialisation of property, workers would become associated and active participants in company life, henceforth invested in the future of enterprises in which previously they had been mere instruments of production. Due to their involvement in this collectivised corporate property, each individual would become concerned with the larger productive group's activity; and isolated individual producers, through their collective transformation, would no longer be confronted «by market cruelties, or relations between strangers».

Pecqueur believed that the agricultural sector should adapt to this new system of productive organisation and familiarise itself with the highly parcellised division of rural property titles in order to counter this fragmentary division in the name of rationalising agricultural output with the concentration and integration of landed properties. He regretted that the countryside had been deserted in favour of cities and demanded that the advantages of civilisation be better distributed. He wanted an industrialisation of the countryside through its improved organisation, hoping that large segments of urban populations could be drawn back to the countryside, but this time reintegrated with all the benefits of modern city life. He argued that through the effects of technological progress wrought by railways and machinery, the number of small capitalists had considerably increased. This increase would not affect the landowners, whose numbers were limited by the fixed and invariable outlay of land. While capital might be unlimited, territory was not. Insofar as it was Pecqueur's goal to provide a maximum number of individuals with capital, once capital was no longer an inconvenience (i.e. once there was enough for everyone), the role played by farmers and agricultural workers could have as much freedom as other professions. To achieve this, a shared portfolio of property would need to be established such that any capital produced could be returned to the agricultural sector. Therefore, much like for railway organization, Pecqueur recommended the creation of agricultural companies whose capital would be divided into numerous, small shares.

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From now on open to free transmission, the virtually socialised landed property belongs to all, in possibility and in right.

(PECQUEUR 1842)

Once socialised, landed property would finally become a new measure of liberty for the majority of the population. From this point on, agricultural exploitations envisioned as small share companies were, in Pecqueur's mind, an organizational solution to providing families with more. Such companies would divide agricultural wealth between a large number of citizens at the same time they securitized productive operations. They also would allow those individuals deprived of land ownership to participate in a kind of collective ownership, in addition to enabling those who might own parcels of land but who could not efficiently cultivate them to benefit from both the labour and capital necessary for agricultural practice (Pecqueur 1839). The ability of limited sleeping partnerships to offer the economic advantages of association would set agricultural development (and all of society by extension) on the road to greater growth in the future. Facilitating the most efficient exploitation of land possible, they would make possible the common and consensual success of all future agricultural progress.

4. CONCLUSION

Constantin Pecqueur defended a social economy built in opposition to classical liberal political economy, disputing the validity of classical political economy's major ruling principles and arguing for the conscious action of individuals over the fatalism of abstract markets. In his mind there were no immutable natural laws, only trends or tendencies.[1] He therefore opposed the existence of insurmountable economic laws, instead favouring the conscious and deliberate action of individual actors capable of affecting progress. He specified that such action should be guided by morality and its success should be defined in accordance with an *ideal equilibrium*. Indeed, he believed a new balance could be instilled through the advent of a Republic and its different institutions – namely morality, but also religion, education and industry. For Pecqueur, morality was the only force capable of guiding social organisation. According to him, it was an outgrowth of religion and it can be relayed through education. As for industry, it served as a fertile ground

[1] Pecqueur evoked the presence of Providence over which individuals have an influence and which they therefore can bend through their own free will: «providence uses us to help advance history [...] fatality [...] can in no way prevent the relative liberty of individuals, nor progress, nor stagnation, nor crime [...] but distributes them in more or less unequal doses throughout time and space» (IISH 125).

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for testing the viability of associations. Pecqueur (1839) considered that, as a means of mass emancipation, education must also contribute towards lessening the attachment of small farmers to their lands while increasing their eagerness for progress. Moreover, according to Pecqueur, the material forces that interacted with ideas and helped develop them were proof enough of the 'communal' destiny immanent to human history.

If community, or association, reflected the ideal of civilisation, and if this state signified the end of social evolution (Lutfalla 1964), then mankind – as the progressive source of both morality, and social, technological, and organisational innovation – necessarily had some control over this evolution. Such innovation also occurred through the establishment of micro-experiments in association (for example, those small share, limited sleeping partnerships already mentioned which Pecqueur thought would help move humanity closer to its social ideal). The social economy described by Pecqueur had yet to be verified in practice through «the balance of production and consumption; the fixed average for the annual quantity of production; the balance of the population and the means for existence or subsistence» (IISH 150). For the time being, it could be located both in an immutable utopian ideal – as a utopia – and in material reality, which was subject to progress and which should reflect an imaginary horizon of social development. The presence of Pecqueur, in the spring of 1848, along with Louis Blanc and François Vidal at the *Commission de gouvernement pour les travailleurs* or *Commission du Luxembourg* (Frobert 2014), bore witness to Pecqueur's determination to fulfil his ideas in practice. By abandoning the fatality brought to light by liberal political economy, in favour of the reasoned initiatives of progressive individuals and actors for social reform, Pecqueur was able to substitute the idea of a «stationary state» (shared by a number of classical economists) with that of a balanced state, as the logical conclusion to an evolution ruled by morality.[1] This balanced state did not exclude the idea of progress. For instance, population could continue to grow; it would be able to do so thanks to the intelligence of mankind, which was capable not only of producing necessary subsistences when labour was properly organised but also of performing miracles when, for example, it was a question of building housing for an ever expanding population over and beyond the limits seemingly

[1] If morality guided evolution, then the latter could not occur at the cost of the advantages it achieved. This was why Pecqueur asserted that rival commercial interests, in addition to needing to be compensated through indemnities, also needed to be taken into account with each reform dictated by moral progress. In order for progress genuinely to take place, it had to be accepted by all.

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imposed by scarce resources (AN 45, *Population*).[1] Indeed, political and social economy, as a «moral science», had not yet finished developing through the discoveries of reason. It was up to humankind to move towards more and more unified forms of social organisation. The conclusion that François Perroux (Perroux 1964, 37) drew from his reading of Saint-Simon and his disciples can be reiterated here:

> The advances of association are linked to the intelligence and implementation of three families of dialectic relations. These relations are: between science and industry; between economic powers and political powers; and between the production of things and the production of men.

Constantin Pecqueur's thought was original and abundant, albeit patchy in parts, particularly due to its universalist pretentions. Despite the relevance of his reflections on the nature of political economy and his attempt to found a social economy contesting the most basic postulates of economic liberals, Pecqueur was unable to escape a number of theoretical imprecisions and logical inconsistencies. For one thing, in his philosophy of history, the distinction between the role of providence (or some form of historical determinism) and that of free will was insufficiently explained. But judging from the intellectual posterity of historical materialism of which Pecqueur was retrospectively thought to have been a precursor, he was not alone in this regard.

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[1] He wrote in this particular manuscript: «Population tends naturally towards indefinite growth; one must anticipate the day, in centuries to come, when it will be necessary to find a new surface, more or less solid, beyond the firm and well-known earth, that is capable of welcoming the generations that will be born when the firm earth is swathed by mankind to its limit. A resource that is perhaps nothing more that fanciful, would be to populate the surface or edges of the Ocean, of the entire sea, with houses more or less mobile and all hygienically liveable, convenient even, and offering as much security to mankind as the houses built on solid ground. Thus metamorphosed into new cities for humanity, the sea could hold a population almost twice as numerous as that which lives on the dry surface of the globe».

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