7 Reception and Influence of the *Philosophie Sociale*

It is now time to analyze how the *Philosophie sociale* has been received by contemporaries, and up to the present day, and what influence it has had, in particular, on social philosophers and sociologists.

Despite having aroused a certain amount of interest between the end of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century in the revolutionary circles and among the liberal Enlightenment thinkers, Dobruska’s *Philosophie sociale* was largely forgotten in the twentieth century. It must be said that the diffusion of the text had been hindered by several factors, first among them the fate of the author, imprisoned a few months after publication, with the infamous accusation of having conspired against the revolution. After Dobruska’s death at the guillotine in April 1794, even his book, published anonymously, found cautious readers only, not inclined to remember a thinker who had fallen into political disgrace.

However, the book was read with interest, as demonstrated by the fact that it was reprinted, in an edition that until now had escaped the attention of scholars, with the sole exception of the Italian historian Luciano Guerci. In 1797, the *Philosophie sociale* was printed by Moutardier in Paris, with a new frontispiece. It was no longer dedicated *au peuple françois* (French people), but with a new and more universalistic inspiration, *à tous les peuples, par un citoyen de tout pays.*

One wonders who promoted this publication, indeed if it could have been someone related to the family circle to which Dobruska had turned in his “will” on the eve of the execution. Or was the initiative to circulate the book due to some

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357 *Philosophie sociale, dédiée à tous les peuples, par un citoyen de tout pays*, Paris, imp. de Mutardier, 1797; copies at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and at the Aargauer Kantonsbibliothek (Aarau, Switzerland). The announcement of the publication of the volume appears in some bibliographic reviews of the time: *Verkündiger oder Wochenschrift zur Belehrung, Unterhaltung und Bekanntmachung fur alle Stände* 2 (1798); *Neue allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* 1799; *Intelligenzblatt der Allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung* 1798; *Journal général de la littérature de France* 1 (1798); *Magasin encyclopédique, ou Journal des sciences* 5 (1799).

Parisian political circle? In fact, in a letter written immediately before the execution, which was kept in a copy of the first edition of the *Philosophie sociale*, Dobruska invited his son Joseph (“Peppi”), the addressee of the message, to reprint the work, adding the name of the author. This latter wish was, however, not fulfilled in the reprint of 1797.

As I will show in the following, it is clear that social theorists of great importance, first among them Henri de Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte, read the *Philosophie sociale* and drew inspiration from it. However, they carefully avoided publicly expressing their debt to a “foreigner”, a subject of the Austrian empire suspected of espionage and, as if that were not enough, a converted Jew. Moses Dobruska and his extraordinary biographical adventure was brought to light in 1979/1981 by the great Gershom Scholem, scholar of Jewish mysticism, who was born in Berlin and subsequently emigrated to Israel. Scholem’s study, originally published in French, re-evaluated Dobruska’s esoteric interests, Masonic commitment, and adventurer’s attitudes, but almost completely overlooked the intellectual significance of *Philosophie sociale*. Even the few fleeting hints of *Philosophie* found in specialist literature in more recent years have not changed this situation of underestimation and substantial misunderstanding. Cited more for its title than for its contents, within attempts to reconstruct the history of the concept of

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*Moses Dobrushka*, by Gershom Scholem, ed., with an essay by Saverio Campanini, trans., by Elisabetta Zevi (Milano: Adelphi, 2014), 161–165 and plates. Here is the French text of the letter: [Dieu! Liberté! innocence! Peppi mon Enfans chérie, unique et tendre fils, que cette devise sacrée soit gravée dans ton cœur pour jamais! c’est le seul héritage que je te laisse après moi, c’est la bénéédiction d’un père mourant. Sois si heureux, que j’étois malheureux ! Sache que mourir n’est rien, mais qu’il est cruel d’être méconnu, et de ne pas pouvoir continuer à travailler pour la Liberté. Lorsque tu seras parvenue à un âge mûr et que tes connoissances[s] égaleront ton patriotisme, tu feras réimprimer cet ouvrage, dont j’étois empêché de remplir plusieurs lacunes essentielles, par la triste sorte que j’ai subi. Fais y mettre mon nom, et justifie ainsi mon mémoire, et par tes connaissances et par tes vertus, et par la promulgation d’un ouvrage dont l’auteur ne sera jamais soupçonné de la Postérité d’avoir pu conspirer contre la Liberté. Mon cher fils, tu as un penchant pour l’état militaire, les derniers paroles d’un père te défend de t’engager, si ce n’est pas la loi t’appelle, il est prudent pour toi de rester inactive jusque à la paix, car on pourrait te soupçonner jusque dans tes vertus, et il faut conserver ta vie pour conserver ta tante ma malheureuse et vertueuse soeur, que je te recommande à l’aider et à respecter, il faut qu’après la paix tu cherches[s]j ta mère ma pauvre femme (que j’adore jusque au tombeau) et tes deux soeurs mes pauvres Enfans. Il faut leur faire l’étonnant Recit de mon malheur et de mes vertus méconnues, il faut les engager malgré tous ce que j’ai souffert pour la Liberté de venir habiter avec toi la France Républicaine et de quitter le sol impur des tyrans d’Autriche, je n’ai qu’un seul Regret, de ne pas avoir eu la bonheur de voir consolidé la Liberté de ce peuple imortal pendant ma vie. Adieu mon tendre fils / fils chér à mon cœur / ton père mourant / junius frey / Paris le 29 Ventose l’an 2 de la Repl. ].

359 Cf. already Guerci, *Per una riflessione*, 320: [sarebbe anche interessante sapere da chi fu rimesso in circolazione [il libro di Dobruska]”.

social philosophy, Dobruska’s book was still waiting for an exhaustive examination. The present book is the first attempt to give the work of the learned, elusive, unfortunate Moses his rightful place in the history of social thought in modern Europe, including through a meticulous reconstruction of his traces that can be found in much better-known thinkers.

7.1 In the Eighteenth Century: From François Chabot to Immanuel Kant

7.1.1 François Chabot: Protector, Friend, Admirer

The Jacobin parliamentarian François Chabot, who was Moses Dobruska’s political patron, married his sister Léopoldine and shared his misfortune, ending up on the gallows on the same day, compared his friend in enthusiastic terms to “Europe’s greatest thinker”. Certainly, the doubt arises that this is a rhetorical exaggeration, due to personal closeness, even if Chabot, who had completed excellent studies and had been part, in his youth, of the Capuchin order, enjoyed a good intellectual reputation in his time.\(^360\) Chabot seems to have been among the first to read a draft of the *Philosophie sociale* while it was still in gestation, as he himself recalls, in a brilliant passage referring to January 1793:

> At the beginning of the Convention [established on September 21 1792], Junius Frey often came to the petitions desk alone or with his brother and nephew. He was closely linked to Richard, Bentabole, Gaston, Simon of Strasbourg, Proly, and other Montagnards. I used to say hello sometimes. Finally, Richard took me to dinner at his house in early January 1793. I was disturbed by food and smoke. Richard retired and the Frey brothers gave me a philosophical essay on freedom and equality to read. I left, accompanied by Emmanuel Frey, the younger brother. He thought I was drunk. The next day, they came to see me and marveled at the profit I had made from their dissertation, which they thought I wouldn’t even understand on an empty stomach, let alone the state of drunkenness in which they thought I was [. . .] From that moment on, I became involved with the Frey brothers, I dined very often at their house, while they came even more often to eat at my house. I urged them to have their essay on freedom and equality printed, and they told me that it was taken from a great philosophical work, that they were preparing for the French people and that it should give freedom to the universe. Later they read the work to me, and I appreciated it very much.\(^361\)

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\(^{360}\) Although not without defects, the broadest profile of Chabot is still that offered by the old study of Louis Gabriel A. de Bonald, *François Chabot, membre de la Convention (1756–1794)* (Paris: Émile-Paul Éditeur, 1908).

\(^{361}\) [François Chabot], “Histoire véritable du mariage de François Chabot avec Léopoldine Frey en réponse à toutes les calomnies que l’on a répandues à ce sujet,” ed. Albert Mathiez,
Interestingly, in this text, the *Philosophie sociale* is presented as the joint work of the two brothers Dobruska/Frey. It is possible that Emmanuel, who remained in the shadow of his older brother throughout his life, actually played an important role, at least in the first phase. It must be said, however, that Chabot himself, on other occasions, and also Robespierre, of whom I will say more below, indicate only Moses/Junius as the author. This is what happened at the meeting of the “Jacobin Society” on Sunday, August 4 1793, when Chabot took the floor to praise the *Père Nicaise* and the *Philosophie sociale* and propose its dissemination at the expense of the State:

The author of the *Père Nicaise* or the *Antifédéraliste* and the *Philosophie Sociale* offers these two works to the Society. Chabot asks that honorable mention be made of these two works, the first of which, in the style of the *Père Duchesne*, contains happy allusions to the reach of the people, to the present circumstances; it can and must be of great use to our lost brothers, but in good faith, who seek education; they will see what federalism is and whoever preaches it, they will know the mountain [i.e. the Jacobins] and what they have done for the people, they will learn all their duties. The second, made only for deep thinkers, comparable to the most valuable writings on politics – Montesquieu, Rousseau – needs to be spread among the enlightened men of all departments, as the other must be among the least educated people. Chabot wrote twice to the Minister of the Interior to urge him to spread this excellent work, but apparently, he adds, my letters have remained in Mr. Champagneux’s offices, I have not received a reply. The general meeting decides on the civic mention.\(^{362}\)

\(362\) François Chabot, *Journal des débats et de la correspondance de la Société des Jacobins*, 464, August 6, 1793, 2: L’auteur du *Père Nicaise* ou l’*Antifédéraliste* et de la *Philosophie sociale* fait hommage de ces deux productions à la société. Chabot demande qu’on fasse mention honorable de ces deux ouvrages, dont le premier, dans le genre du père Duchêne, contient des allusions heureuses et parfaitement à la portée du peuple, sur les circonstances présentes; il peut et doit être de la plus grande utilité à nos frères égarés, mais de bonne foi, qui cherchent à s’instruire; ils y verront ce que c’est que le fédéralisme et ceux qui le prêchent, ils y connaîtront la montagne.
The *Philosophie sociale* is placed here on a par with the great texts of Montesquieu and Rousseau, a high pedigree, which supports the fame of our Dobruska and gives him, I believe, a certain celebrity in the Republic of Letters, at least for a few months, during the summer of 1793. Still, in his defensive memoir written in prison, between the end of 1793 and the beginning of 1794, Chabot has only praise for the work of his brother-in-law:

I don’t have the madness to compare the second part of my memoir to the *Philosophie sociale* of Junius Frey, whom a virtuous philosopher calls Frey Locke, since he read this book that will survive the memory of all our persecutors. However, my pride is flattered by the conformity of his principles with those of the leading European thinker, and my vanity is even more flattered by being joined to him by the heart of a virtuous woman, worthy of being his sister. The principle of my dissertation on the expenses of the Republic, or rather on the constitution, which we had to adapt to this principle, so well developed in the *Philosophie sociale*, was finally established in the revolutionary government, decreed in Billaud’s Report. My brother-in-law and I had the glory of having established it first of all, raising against the idolatry of the moment, which made it impossible to think differently from the immortal Jean-Jacques [Rousseau]. But I don’t claim to advance government science. All I want is [government’s] stability, based on the laws of nature. I leave to my brother-in-law the glory of studying politics in books and fighting their mistakes through the efforts of his genius.

Today it is said that he is a conspirator and that the sacrifices he made in Strasbourg and Paris, that his sister and his nephew, who led with his younger brother, that his demonstrations in favor of the Jacobins against the “Feuillants”, that his status as a federation of the Lower Rhine, that his courage under the walls of the Castle of the Tuileries, his apparent zeal against Austria and Prussia in August and September, the adoption of a son of the Republic, the maintenance of an old man, the war he declared to all the realists, “Feuillants” and other enemies of the people, were only means to better capture the trust of the patriots. Yes, of course, he is an extraordinary conspirator, because he conspires since childhood against every kind of error and tyranny, and there is not a page of his *Philosophie sociale* that is not a conspiracy against prejudices and despotism of all kinds. What I say: each page is a death sentence against him before the court of all oppressors of mankind. The foreign conspirators go in groups: he stays in his room and sees no one but at the table or at the Jacobins. Conspirators preach to people to deceive or seduce them, if possible: Junius Frey cannot be

et ce qu’elle a fait pour le peuple, ils apprendront tous leurs devoirs. Le second, fait seulement pour les penseurs profonds, comparable à ce qu’on écrit de plus précieux sur la politique, Montesquieu, Rousseau a besoin d’être répandu parmi les hommes éclairés de tous les départemens, comme l’autre doit l’être parmi le peuple moins instruit. Chabot écrivit deux fois au ministre de l’intérieur pour l’engager à répandre cet excellent ouvrage; mais apparemment, ajouta-t-il, que mes lettres sont restées dans les bureaux de Mr. Champagneux, je n’en ai point eu de réponse. L’assemblée arrête la mention civique (a slightly different version of the same text also in *Journal de la Montagne* 66, 424, Tuesday August 6, 1793 – meeting of 4 August).
heard, friends, he composes books: for whom? For the most profound wise, for the legislators able to refute his mistakes and to feel the depth of his principles.  

363 “François Chabot, représentant du peuple, à ses concitoyens qui sont les juges de sa vie politique. Mémoire apologétique publié pour la première fois”, ed. Albert Mathiez, in Annales révolutionnaires 6 (1913) 533–550, 681–706; 7 (1914), 224–247: [Je n’ai pas la folie de comparer la seconde partie de mon mémoire à la Philosophie sociale de Junius Frey, qu’un philosophe vertueux appelle Frey Locke depuis qu’il a lu cet ouvrage qui survivra à la mémoire de tous nos persécuteurs, mais mon orgueil est flatté de la conformité de ses principes avec ceux du premier penseur de l’Europe et ma vanité est plus flatté encore de lui être uni par le cœur d’une femme vertueuse digne d’être sa sœur. Le principe de mon mémoire sur les dépenses de la République ou plutôt sur la constitution qu’il nous convenait d’adapter à ce principe, si bien développé dans la Philosophie sociale, vient enfin d’être consacré dans le gouvernement révolutionnaires décrété sur le rapport de Billaud. Mon frère et moi avions la gloire de l’avoir établi les premiers en nous élevant contre l’idolâtrie du jour qui ne permettait pas de penser autrement que l’immortel Jean-Jacques. Mais je n’ai pas la prétention de faire faire un pas à la science du gouvernement. Je n’ai que celle d’en désirer la stabilité en la basant sur les lois de la nature. Je laisse à mon beau-frère la gloire d’étudier la politique dans les livres et d’en combattre les erreurs par les efforts de son génie. L’on dit toujours que c’est un conspirateur et que les sacrifices qu’il fait à Strasbourg et à Paris que sa œur et son neveu qu’il emmenés avec son cadet, que ses démonstrations en faveur des jacobins contre les feuillans, que sa qualité de fédéré du Bas-Rhin, que son courage sont les murs du château des Tuileries, son zèle apparent contre l’hérésie de Junius Frey, qu’un philosophe vertueux appelle Frey Locke depuis qu’il a lu cet ouvrage qui survivra à la mémoire de tous nos persécuteurs, mais mon orgueil est flatté de la conformité de ses principes avec ceux du premier penseur de l’Europe et ma vanité est plus flatté encore de lui être uni par le cœur d’une femme vertueuse digne d’être sa sœur. Le principe de mon mémoire sur les dépenses de la République ou plutôt sur la constitution qu’il nous convenait d’adapter à ce principe, si bien développé dans la Philosophie sociale, vient enfin d’être consacré dans le gouvernement révolutionnaires décrété sur le rapport de Billaud. 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I have included a long excerpt from this text because it confirms one of the aims of the *Philosophie sociale*, which is to provide a theoretical basis for the intellectual discourse of the time and, possibly, also for government action. The collaboration with Chabot made possible, albeit for a very short time, this transposition of the philosophical-social doctrines of Dobruska into parliamentary debate. Chabot presented his own *Memoir* on finances to the National Convention of February 27, 1793. He says that he was inspired by the ideas being elaborated, and then printed, in the *Philosophie sociale*, or at least that he took them into account. It must be said that the subject of public expenditure, which the *Memoir* discusses in a technical way, is not expressly dealt with in the *Philosophie sociale*, and that therefore the contacts between the two texts are necessarily limited to some theoretical affinity. It should be noted, in particular, the insistence that Chabot places on the derivation of laws from principles, the only ones that guarantee legal legitimacy:

Moreover, I have never judged the goodness of a law for the reasons of those who propose it [. . .] I judge the laws only on the immutable rule of principles: and our opponents are
forced to agree that the suppression of ecclesiastical treatment is in accordance with the principles.  

The closeness to Dobruska’s convictions is evident here, as it is similar in the Memoir of Chabot and in the Philosophie sociale: the call, indeed very optimistic, to the advent of a new and progressive religion in the future. If Dobruska defines this new creed as the religion de la verité des principes, Chabot spoke of a religion de la loi, to which Catholic priests, enrolled for the occasion among the defenders of the Revolution, should also contribute:

If I count less on the progress of philosophy, if I did not hope that the citizen priests will help us establish the religion of the law on the ruins of all idols and superstitions, especially when the awareness of their personal interest preaches to them in favor of this new cult; if I were not sure that the people, taking part in the legislation, will in a short time bind exclusively to the altar of the country, and will bind to it with the strongest bonds, with the bonds of its happiness and its own love.

If I did not know that this religion of law is naturally the religion of those who contribute to its formation, because men have always venerated the god they have built themselves; if I were not certain that this religion would become universal, I would have feared that the principles of justice would be in conflict with those of freedom.

7.1.2 Jacques-Nicolas Billaud-Varenne and the Provisional Constitution of December 4, 1793

But it is not only Chabot’s thought, in that frenetic and fatal 1793, that is influenced by Dobruska’s reflections. Echoes of the Philosophie sociale can also be

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365 Chabot, in Archives parlementaires, vol. 69, 305: [Mais encore je n’ai jamais jugé de la bonté d’une loi par les motifs de ceux qui la proposent [. . .] Je n’évalue des lois que sur la règle immuable des principes: et nos adversaires sont forcés de convenir que la suppression des traitements ecclésiastiques est conforme aux principes].

366 Dobruska, Philosophie sociale, 50. See above 3. 11.

367 Chabot, in Archives parlementaires, vol. 69, 306: [Si je comptais moins sur les progrès de la philosophie, si je n’espérais que les prêtres citoyens nous aideront à établir la religion de la loi sur les débris de toutes les idoles et de toutes les superstitions, surtout lorsque la renaissance et leur intérêt personnel leur prêchent ce nouveau culte; si je n’étais as- suré que la part que le peuple va prendre à la législation, l’attachera exclusivement dans peu à l’autel de la patrie, et l’y attachera par les liens les plus forts, par les liens de son bonheur et de son amour-propre. Si je ne savais que cette religion de la loi est naturellement la religion de ceux qui con- courent à sa formation, parce que les hommes ont toujours adoré le dieu qu’ils se font eux- mêmes; si je n’étais assuré que cette religion va, devenir universelle, j’aurais craint que les principes de la justice ne fussent en opposition avec ceux de la liberté].
found in the Billaud[-Varenne] Report (Rapport de Billaud[-Varenne]), as Chabot himself defines it. Chabot claims a continuity of principles between his own reflections, the theories of Dobruska and the document edited by Jacques-Nicolas Billaud-Varenne (1756–1819), on which the based law of the 14 Frimaire of the year II (December 4, 1793) was based, a sort of provisional Constitution, promulgated by the National Convention to organize the government, which had the task of managing the Jacobin dictatorship. A decree of October 10, 1793 de facto suspended the application of the Constitution of June 24 of the same year and established that “the government will be revolutionary until peace”. Given this situation, a provisional power structure was necessary, which Billaud-Varenne outlines in his text, in which clear assonances with concepts formulated by Moses Dobruska are evident. This link between the Philosophie sociale and revolutionary legislation has so far been completely ignored by specialist research, in part because of the convulsive nature of the political events that frame it. Billaud-Varenne presents his Report to the National Convention on November 18 (28 Brumaire), 1793. Moses Dobruska and his brother Emmanuel are still at large, but for a short time: they will be imprisoned on November 23. Obviously, their political misfortune, and that of Chabot, have not yet obscured the theoretical novelties of the Philosophie sociale.

The parallels between the Billaud-Varenne Report and Dobruska’s work are lexical and theoretical.

At the lexical level, Billaud-Varenne uses the lexeme désorganis-er, which we have seen to be characteristic of the Philosophie sociale. Disorganization is invoked, with a negative connotation, to describe the state of anarchy which the reorganization of the revolutionary government must remedy:

In all respects, this order of things is therefore disorganizing social harmony, because it tends to break both the unity of action and the indivisibility of the Republic. Do not delude yourselves: it belongs to any central authority to which the territory, the population, and the accumulation of powers give a sufficiently strong consistency to exist on its own,

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370 See above 3. 11.
tending relentlessly to independence, by virtue of the pure gravitational force of its civil preponderance.  

In the face of the disorganization of social harmony, the Report opposes a centralization of power, which goes in the direction of Jacobin anti-federalism, reiterated by Dobruska in his Père Nicaise. Furthermore, the Report applies the principle, expressed in the Philosophie sociale, which sees the executive power as a purely passive continuation of the action of the legislative. As I have mentioned above, Dobruska departs in this respect from what Rousseau recommends in the Social Contract. Rousseau sees in the legislator “the mechanic who invents the machine”, while “the prince”, that is, the executive power, is “the worker who assembles it and makes it go”. The Philosophie sociale, on the other hand, pronounces itself in total submission to the executive, which simply becomes a “machine” without autonomy, if not one which carries out what is ordered passively:

Every deliberation and direction, however small it may appear, is a moral function, which belongs to the moral function, and cannot be separated from it without being followed by the harmful effects, which derive from all our actions, when they depart from the ways of nature, and therefore sin against the institutions of this regulating mother. The deliberative power, which guides a government based on the unshakable foundations of nature, can only be one. It is the moral legislative power, and, according to the comparison of Rousseau, the physical executive power can only be the act resulting from all decrees, resolutions, and directives, even the most insignificant of the legislative body, the only governing body. The executive officers are only the machine it directs. Soldiers fighting for the holy cause of the people, copyists working in their offices, couriers flying from one end of the Republic to the other for the public interest; individuals, artists, shopkeepers, workers, these are the real executive officials, the body, the machine.

371 Billaud-Varenne, Rapport, in Décret du 14 frimaire, 11: [Cet ordre de choses est donc, sous tous les rapports, désorganisateur de l’harmonie sociale, car il tend également à rompre et l’unité d’action et l’indivisibilité de la République. Ne vous trompez pas: il est de l’existence de toute autorité centrale, à qui le territoire, la population et la cumulation des pouvoirs donnent une consistance assez forte pour exister par elle-même, de tendre sans celle à l’indépendance par la seule gravitation de fa prépondérance civile].

372 See above 3. 11.

373 Rousseau, Du contrat social, II. 7. 83 (Idem, Il contratto sociale, 51): [Mais s’il est vrai qu’un grand Prince est un homme rare, que sera-ce d’un grand Législateur? Le premier n’a qu’à suivre le modèle que l’autre doit proposer. Celui-ci est le mécanicien qui invente la machine, celui-là n’est quel l’ouvrier qui la monte et la fait marcher].

374 Dobruska, Philosophie sociale, 8: [Chaque délibération et direction, quelque petite qu’elle soit en apparence, est une fonction morale, qui appartient à la fonction morale, et n’en peut être séparée sans qu’elle ne soit suivie des funestes effets, qui résultent de toutes nos actions, alors qu’elles s’écartent des voies de la nature, et qu’elles pèchent ainsi contre les institutions de cette mère régulatrice. Le pouvoir délibérant, dirigeant dans un gouvernement fondé sur
This, which, at the time of the composition of the *Philosophie sociale*, is a theoretical statement, acquires, in the autumn of 1793, assertory value, and becomes a program of management of the State:

In government, as in mechanics, everything that is not precisely assembled, both in number and size, achieves only an inaccurate movement, and causes endless interruptions. The obstructive resistances and the frictions that act as obstacles decrease by simplifying the gear. The best civil constitution is the one closest to the processes of nature. It admits in its movements only three principles: the pulsing will, the being that enlivens it, the action of such an individual on the surrounding objects: therefore, every good government must have a center to its will, levers that are immediately united to it, and the secondary organs on which these levers act, to extend the movement to the last extremities. With this precision, the action loses none of its strength or direction in a faster and better regulated communication. Everything that goes beyond [this] becomes exuberant, parasitic, without vigor and without unity. 375

From the *Philosophie sociale*, Billaud-Varenne takes the metaphor of the executive machine, which does not allow waste in the methodical precision of its gears. His reference to the model of nature is likewise borrowed from Dobruska’s text. Let us remember how proud Chabot was, in the passage quoted above, of the fact that the criticism of Rousseau had been received at the institutional level: “My brother-in-law [i.e. Moses Dobruska] and I had the glory of having established it [this principle of the passivity of executive power] first of all, raising us against the idolatry of the moment, which made it impossible to think differently from the immortal
Jean-Jacques [Rousseau]”. It is a sad irony of fate that both Chabot himself and Dobruska fell victim to that machine of power that they had helped to create.

7.1.3 The Anonymous Review in the *Journal Encyclopédique*

Already in July 1793, a few weeks after the publication of the *Philosophie sociale*, the *Journal encyclopédique* (1756–1794) announced the novelty with a short anonymous statement – the collaborators of the newspaper did not sign their articles:376

*Philosophie sociale, dédié au Peuple Français*, par un citoyen de la section de la République Française, ci-devant du Roule, vol. in-8, de 240 pages, with this epigraph: *The proper study of Mankind is man.* POPE. A Paris. Chez Froullé, imprimeur-libraire, quai des Augustins, N. 39 – This work breathes a sweet philosophy worthy of a philanthropist: the principles would never spread sufficiently.377

In December of the same year, the same *Journal encyclopédique*, No 218, published a review of the *Philosophie sociale*, which was very articulate and extensive.

The anonymous author omits the first part of the work (that is, the revolutionary part, as Dobruska calls it, or *Research on some of the main subjects of social philosophy*), to concentrate on the second part, and then move on to some of the concepts and fundamental rights of the Universal Constitution, contained in the third part.

This thematic choice is also significant for us, because it allows us to grasp the impact of the *Philosophie sociale* on the readers of the time. The reviewer is interested in understanding the essence of Dobruska’s constitutional proposal and the philosophical principles that inspire it. In the intellectual and revolutionary circles of the time this was a subject of great importance. Then he goes into the Universal Constitution underlining some salient concepts such as that

376 Pierre Rousseau (1716–1785) and his brother-in-law Karl August Wilhelm Weissenbruch (1744–1826), born in Saarbrücken, were the editors of the *Journal encyclopédique*, founded on January 1, 1756. For more information on Karl August Wilhelm Weissenbruch and Pierre Rousseau see Carl Helmut Steckner, “Karl August Wilhelm Weissenbruch (1744–1826), *Saarländische Lebensbilder*, ed. Peter Neumann (Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Dr. u. Verl. 1989), 39–58.

of man, of law as a duty, and of freedom. The result is a rather precise picture of the philosophical and social conception of Dobruska, of which we can read this summary paraphrase:

All legislators, except Jesus Christ, have sunk into the inextricable labyrinth of metaphysics to adapt their legislation to the faculties of the human soul, and have generated only systems where the imagination has played a preponderant role over reason. They brought nothing but unhappiness on to humanity, for not having understood that their speculations should have been based on precise notions about the fate of man. For what I have said and what I will report, we will see how our philosopher brings them back to their true purpose.\textsuperscript{378}

The author of the review then quotes several passages from the second part of Dobruska’s work, that relating to the form and essence of the Constitution. He highlights, among other things, how the foundations of the Constitution are truth and rationality, but also the “heart”, or rather emotions. Rationality and emotionality cannot be completely separated and must interact with each other.

After discussing the third part of the \textit{Philosophie sociale}, the reviewer concludes with a substantially positive judgment on the contents, although he is very critical about the style. The theory developed in the work is legitimate:

There are good things in the work. The theory is true: there is no good legislation that is not based on the eternal principles of nature. [Nature] has done everything for the happiness of man, and he is unhappy only because he does not want to hear its voice or observe its precepts. We can see, therefore, that the author makes us think; what he lacks is the art of expressing his thoughts with the necessary clarity, especially when writing to instruct the people.\textsuperscript{379}

After having presented the work in depth, the \textit{Journal encyclopédique} strongly invites the author of the \textit{Philosophie sociale} to review his text from a stylistic point of view. He also suggests that he should develop and articulate his ideas

\textsuperscript{378} \textit{Journal encyclopédique}, December 1793, 220: [Tous les législateurs, excepté J. C., se sont enfoncés dans le labyrinthe inextricable de la métaphysique pour calquer leur législation sur les facultés de l’âme humaine, et ils n’ont enfanté que des systèmes où l’imagination a eu plus de part que la raison, et ils n’ont fait que le malheur de l’humanité pour n’avoir pas senti que leurs spéculations devoient reposer sur les notions précises de la destination de l’homme. Par ce que je viens de dire et ce que je vais rapporter, on verra que notre philosophe les ramène au véritable but].

\textsuperscript{379} \textit{Journal encyclopédique}, December 1793, 234: [Il y a de bonnes choses dans son ouvrage. Sa théorie est vraie; point de bonne législation qui ne soit basée sur les principes éternels de la nature. Elle a tout fait pour le bonheur de l’homme. Il n’est malheureux, que parce qu’il ne veut, écouter sa voix, ni observer ses loix. On voit donc que l’auteur fait penser; il ne lui manque que l’art d’exprimer ses pensées avec cette clarté qui est nécessaire, surtout lorsqu’on écrit pour l’instruction du peuple].
more, that he should not be so tight in the elaboration of his concepts and theories.\textsuperscript{380} \textit{Brevis esse laboro, obscurus fio.} This precept of Horace, so well known, urges the reviewer, is certainly overlooked by the anonymous author. Even if he had wanted to take account of the criticism, in December 1793 Dobruska had concerns of a completely different and much more serious kind.

\textbf{7.1.4 The Appreciation of Immanuel Kant}

\textit{Habent sua fata libelli}, says the old, wise Latin motto. And authors, too, \textit{habent sua fata}. The fate of Dobruska, we know, was tragic. And by a very spiteful fate, on the same day as Dobruska’s arrest in Paris, November 24, 1793, Immanuel Kant, the philosopher who our author venerated more than anyone else, spoke indirectly of him, praising his work. Since Johann Friedrich Hartnock, who had published the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} in 1781 and the \textit{Critique of Practical Reason} in 1788, had passed away, Kant had contacted François Théodore de Lagarde (1756–1824). Lagarde published the \textit{Critique of Judgment} in 1790, while a second version, corrected by Kant himself, was published in 1792 (with a print date of 1793).

In the following years, Lagarde and Kant continued to keep in touch through correspondence. In a letter dated 20 September 1793, Kant asked the publisher to send him, in place of some free copies of his \textit{Critique of Judgement}, the book \textit{Reisen des jüngeren Anarcharsis}\textsuperscript{381} (Journey of the young Anacarsi) or, if not too much, the \textit{Gedanken und Meinungen}, or the \textit{Essays} of Michel de Montaigne, printed in German by his publishing house. In a letter of the following 24 November, Kant thanked the publisher for having sent him the \textit{Anacarsi and Montaigne}, as well as for having given him the \textit{Philosophie sociale}:

\begin{center}
den 8ten Nov. an mich abgellassenes, den 22ten ejsud. eingegengenes Schreiben, zusammen einem Theile des Anacharsis und einem des Montaigne, nebst dem beygefügten Geschenk der Philosophie Sociale, deren Äußerung mir viel Vergnügen gemacht hat, verdienen meinen herzlichen Danck.\textsuperscript{382}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{380} \textit{Ibidem}, 569–570: [En général, on peut l’inviter à résoudre son ouvrage, à donner plus de développement à ses idées, et surtout à l’écrire avec clarté et correction, s’il veut que le public en profite].

\textsuperscript{381} Almost certainly it is the book \textit{Les Voyages du jeune Anarcharsis en Grèce} by Jean-Jacques Barthélemy, published in 1788 by De Bure and then reprinted many times thanks to the wide success obtained also by the publishing house of Lagarde.

\textsuperscript{382} Immanuel Kant, in \textit{Das Bonner Kant-Korpus, Briefwechsel}, Brief 643 (An François Théodore de la Garde, Koenigsberg, Nov. 24, 1794); korpora.zim.uni-duisburg-essen.de; cf. Königlich-
It’s a short record, which would have been worth more to Dobruska than a long review if he had known about it. This appreciation of Kant – “I liked its observations very much” – buried in a letter published for the first time, from the manuscript legacy, only a century later, testifies, even to our eyes, that for attentive readers the book of Dobruska was, at its appearance, new and important. And what readers!

7.1.5 The Opinion of Maximilien de Robespierre

The *Philosophie sociale* was mentioned not only by scholars and sympathizers of the French Revolution but also by an illustrious lawyer and ruthless politician, none other than Maximilien de Robespierre (1758–1794). After having dominated, with his action as incorruptible guardian of the Revolution, the terrible months of Terror, Robespierre was in turn guillotined on July 28, 1794. Among the papers found in his home, there are some drafts of speeches, never made in public, and but published by the National Convention, a few months after his death.\footnote{Pièces trouvées dans les papiers de Robespierre et complices, Paris 1794.}

In an oration on the Chabot case, and on the supposed foreign conspiracy that saw the latter involved, Robespierre also mentions the Freys, who are branded as “monsters” and “hypocrites”. The result is a surprising portrait, sarcastic and flattering at the same time, albeit in a sinister way, of Dobruska/Frey with a “red cap”, always hunched over his papers and surrounded by the esteem of the other revolutionaries:

Since the early days of the Revolution, there have been two monsters in Paris worthy of serving the cause of tyrants, because of the profound hypocrisy that characterizes them. They had lost, in Paris, their titles and the names they had at the Court of Vienna. One of the two had associated the name of the founder of Roman freedom with the one he had adopted; he was surrounded by patriotic titles, had composed eloquent works in defense of human rights and the French Revolution, had even got attestations of persecution, having been banned from Germany by Emperor Joseph II. None of the patriots he attracted to himself entered without spotting him, pen in his hand, dreaming of the rights of humanity, bent on the works of Plutarch or Jean-Jacques [Rousseau]. The austere appearance and revolutionary costume of Junius responded perfectly to the idea of a person with great character; the philosophical cut of his hair, the red cap that adorned his philosophical head, guaranteed the purity of his patriotism to the whole earth. Junius Frey had acquired the

\footnote{Preussische Akademie der Künste, eds. *Kant’s gesammelte Schriften. Kant’s Briefwechsel*, Band 2. (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1900), 511; Paul Guyer, Editor’s Introduction to *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, by Immanuel Kant, transl., Eric Matthews, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), XLVI.}

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esteem of the whole section; he was linked with the patriots, who were honored by the friendship of this righteous friend of humanity.  

“Pen in hand, dreaming of the rights of humanity, bent on the works of Plutarch or Jean-Jacques” – a Dobruska en philosophe, honored and revered, at least for a few months, in Jacobin Paris. If Robespierre, the incorruptible, says so, we must believe him.

7.1.6 The Influence on Johann August Eberhard

A very particular influence, which we could define as “negative”, was that exerted by Dobruska on the German philosopher Johann August Eberhard (1739–1809). Only a few months after the publication of the Philosophie sociale, in the third issue of the second volume of the Philosophisches Archiv of 1793, which was distributed in early 1794, appears the essay Dreyerley Desorganisationen gegen das Ende unsern Jahrhunderte. Eberhard picks up Dobruska’s evaluation of Kant as a great “disorganizer” of previous thought, but transforms the enthusiasm of our author into a sharp indictment. Born in Halberstadt, with Enlightenment sympathies and linked to the Berlin circle of Friedrich Nicolai and Moses Mendelssohn, Eberhard held strongly critical positions towards Kant. According to Eberhard, Kant is the protagonist of one of the three “disorganizations” running through culture and society at the end of the eighteenth century. The parallel with the words of Dobruska, who is never mentioned directly, immediately catches the eye. In Eberhard’s vision, which I have already briefly mentioned in the first chapter,

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384 Robespierre, Pièces trouvées, 67: [Il existe à Paris, depuis les premiers temps de la révolution, deux monstres dignes de servir la cause des tyrans, par la profonde hypocrisie qui les caractérise. Ils avaient perdu, à Paris, les titres et le nom qu’ils portaient à la cour de Vienne; l’un d’eux avait associé à celui l’un, d’eux avait associé à celui qu’il a adopté, le nom du fondateur de la liberté romaine; il était entouré de titres patriotiques; il avait composé des ouvrages éloquents pour la défense des droits de l’homme et de la révolution française; il avait même des brevets de persécution; il avait été banni de l’Allemagne par l’empereur Joseph II. Aucun des patriotes qu’il attirait chez lui, n’y entrait sans le surprendre, la plume à la main, rêvant sur les droits de l’humanité, on courbé sur les œuvres de Plutarque ou de Jean-Jacques. L’extérieur austère et le costume révolutionnaire de Junius répondoient parfaitement à l’idée d’un si grand caractère; la coupe philosophique de sa chevelure, le bonnet rouge qui ornait sa tête philosophique, garantissoient à toute la terre la pureté de son patriotisme. Junius Frey avait acquis l’estime de toute sa section; il s’était lié avec des patriotes qui s’honoroiennent de l’amitié de ce vertueux ami de l’humanité].

Kant disorganized philosophy, ruining the rational construction of Christian Wolff’s thought, which had long dominated the German intellectual scene;

[Kant] disorganized philosophy in a way of which no example had been seen before [. . .] With such a manifold disorganization of philosophy, it is no wonder that Mr. Kant [. . .] could no longer come to any systems, and that the results of his philosophy contradict his premises.386

It is very interesting to note how Eberhard also draws a parallel between the revolutionary scope of Kantian thought, which he assessed negatively, and the political “disorganization” brought about by the French Revolution. “France”, he wrote, “is the homeland of all disorganization”, or rather the land where it has found welcome and development. It is in France that the physical “disorganization”, introduced by Mesmer, German by birth but so much admired in Paris,387 has taken root to describe the manipulation of the patient”.388

And France is naturally, for Eberhard, as for Dobruska, the place of the third, epoch-making disorganization, the political one, brought about by the Revolution of 1789.

387 This is what Despina also affirms in the first act of Cosi fan tutte by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: “This is that piece / of magnet: / mesmeric stone, / which had its origin / in Germany, / which was then so famous / there in France”.
388 Eberhard, Dreyerley Desorganisationen, 17–18: [Das Vaterland dieser dreyerley Desorganisationen ist eigentlich Frankreich, aus welchem sie erst zu uns gekommen sind. Denn was ert- tlich die körperliche Desorganisation betrifft, so hat zwar der berüchtigte Mesmer, ein Deutscher, durch einen thierischen Magnetismus dazu Anlaß gegeben; allein dieser thierische Magnetismus wurde anfangs in Deutschland wenig geachtet, und erst in Frankreich machte er sein Glück, wo er, nachdem man seiner unter dieser Benennung überdrüßig geworden war, unter dem Namen der Desorganisation triumphierte. In Paris, in Straßburg und andern Städten Frankreichs ließ man sich nunmehr desorganisieren, wie man sich vorher hatte magnetisieren lassen. Durch diese Operation, die in einer besondern Manipulation des Kranken mit den Fingerspitzen besteht, wird nach der Theorie der neueren Mesmerianer, das natürliche Gleichgewicht zwischen den sinnlichen Organen aufgehoben, und der auf solche Art desorganisirte Mensch in den Stand gesetzt, Wunder zu thun (The fatherland of these threefold disorganizations is actually France, from which they first came to us. For as far as physical disorganization is concerned, the infamous Mesmer, a German, gave rise to it through an animal magnetism; only this animal magnetism was little respected at first in Germany, and only in France did it make its fortune, where it triumphed under the name of disorganization, after its original designation [of magnetism] had been abandoned. In Paris, Strasbourg, and other cities in France, it was now possible to disorganize oneself as one had been magnetized before. By this operation, which consists in a special manipulation of the patient with the fingertips, according to the theory of the newer Mesmerisms, the natural balance between the organs of the senses is removed so that the disorganized person can work miracles)].
7.2 In the Nineteenth Century: Henry de Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte

The polemical reception of disorganization, theorized in the *Philosophie sociale*, by the anti-Kantian philosopher Johann Albert Eberhard, shows us that the originality of the concept, extended by Dobruska to the philosophical, political and social world, was immediately understood, even though it was used in a negative sense.

7.2 In the Nineteenth Century: Henry de Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte

The history of the nineteenth-century fortune of the *Philosophie sociale* touches two of the greatest French thinkers of the century, Claude-Henri de Rouvroy de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), first, great exponent of French socialism, and Auguste Comte (1798–1857), universally considered the founder of sociology. But it is a story that must be indirectly reconstructed, following textual traces and theoretical paths. As far as I was able to find, neither the one nor the other author mentions the *Philosophie sociale* by name, nor expressly remembers its author.

7.2.1 The Influence on Henri de Saint-Simon

Beyond work, life. Through researching sources, which had not yet been carried out, and which I had the opportunity to accomplish for this study, it appears that the biographical path of Henri de Saint-Simon and that of Dobruska have crossed, albeit in rather unusual circumstances. The background to their meeting was not in fact the silence of a library, or the worldly atmosphere of a living room, but the most unpleasant experience of the Parisian prison of Sainte-Pélagie.

Saint-Simon and the Frey brothers were arrested and imprisoned at the same time, a few days apart from each other. In the tense atmosphere of 1793, Saint-Simon, a nobleman by birth, had chosen to prudentely change his aristocratic name, and called himself Bonhomme. But it was a useless expedient: poor Bonhomme was arrested on November 19, 1793 (29 Brumaire), on the basis of an order issued by the *Comités réunis de Salut public et de Sûreté Générale* (General Public Health and Safety Committees) and executed by the *Comité de police de la Ville* (Police Committee of the City of Paris). Albert Mathiez’s 389

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research shows that Saint-Simon was actually imprisoned by mistake in place of Belgian banker Henry Simon, who was in Basel, Switzerland\(^{390}\) for his business at the time. From the prison, Saint-Simon wrote, dismayed:

I think I was arrested instead of another, because the name Simon in the order of arrest of the Committees was not exactly what I had before calling me Bonhomme, and the quality of “Simon who lives on his goods”, written in the order, no longer belongs to me.\(^{391}\)

After his arrest, he was taken to the Sainte-Pélagie prison\(^{392}\) and then, at the beginning of May 1794, transferred to the Luxembourg prison.\(^{393}\) He was only released on August 28, 1794.\(^{394}\)

The Frey brothers were arrested four days later, on November 23,\(^{395}\) on charges of espionage on behalf of foreign powers. They were detained in several prisons: Port-Libre, De-la-Force and, finally, in the Sainte-Pélagie prison, where they certainly had a chance to meet Saint-Simon. On March 19, 1794 (29 Brumaire), wine merchant Pierre Gellibert told Judge Antoine-Mairie Maire that he had learned that Charles-Philippe Ronsin (1751–1794), general of the Revolutionary Army, had promised several prisoners, including Pereyra, Desfleux, Cazerou, Dubuisson, Bonhomme, and the Frey brothers, “relatives of Chabot on his wife’s side” that he would set them free.\(^{396}\) The previous day, March 18 (28 Ventôse), Emmanuel Frey, brother of Moses/Junius had reported to the police administrator François Dangé “the names of several people who could give information about Ronsin, both in favor and against him, indicating as alleged partisans Desfieux, Pereyra, and Debuisson, and as his opponents Mollin, Deelonne, and Bonhomme“.\(^{397}\) Charles-Philippe Ronsin, accused of conspiring

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\(^{391}\) *Loc. cit.*: [Je crois que j’ai arrêté pour un autre, car le nom de Simon porté dans l’ordre d’arrestation des Comités n’était pas exactement celui que je portais avant de m’appeler Bonhomme, et la qualité de “Simon vinant de son bien” qu’on trouve dans l’ordre de la police ne me convient davantage. On this “mistake”, actually voluntary], see also Gouhier, *La jeunesse d’Auguste Comte*, vol. 2, 84–85.


\(^{393}\) Gouhier, *La jeunesse de Comte*, vol. 2, 85.


\(^{395}\) See above, 2. 7.


with the Hérbertists, was guillotined on March 24, 1794,\textsuperscript{398} two weeks before the Frey brothers.

The latter were evidently perfectly informed about the opinions of Saint-Simon/Bonhomme, and it is very likely that they had known him directly, from personal meetings that wouldn’t have been infrequent during the common detention in Sainte-Pélagie.

Probably already in this period of imprisonment, tormented but far from intellectually inert as it was, Saint-Simon had knowledge of the political and social ideas expressed in the \textit{Philosophie sociale}. In later years, when anxieties of Terror were no more than a memory, Saint-Simon would return to a key concept of Dobruska’s thought, that of social disorganization.

In the work \textit{De la réorganisation de la société européenne}, published by Saint-Simon, with the help of Augustin Thierry, in 1814, the process of disorganization and reorganization is placed at the center of the investigation:

\begin{quote}
The philosophy of the last century was revolutionary: that of the nineteenth century must have an organizational character \[. . .\] the social order was disturbed because it no longer conformed to the dictates of the Age of Enlightenment. It’s up to you to build a better one. The political body has been disintegrated: your intention must be to reconstitute it \[. . .\] Every institution, founded on an opinion, should not last longer than this one. Luther, shaking in people’s minds that original respect that constituted the power of the clergy, disorganized Europe. Half of the Europeans freed themselves from the chains of papism, and broke the only political link that united them to the great society.\textsuperscript{399}
\end{quote}

The affinity with the \textit{Philosophie sociale} concerns first of all the phase of destruction of a constituted social order (social disorganization) which must be followed by the reconstruction (social organization) and the rethinking of the major institutions. But that’s not the only point of contact. The distinctive sign of Dobruska’s thought is the “transversal” use of the concept of disorganization, as a meta-category that encompasses society, philosophical thought, and religion. This plurality also plays a significant role for Saint-Simon: the disorganization of society is

\begin{footnotes}
\item[399] Henri de Saint-Simon and Augustin Thierry, \textit{De la réorganisation de la société européenne, ou De la nécessité et des moyens de rassembler les peuples de l’Europe en un seul corps politique} (Paris A. Égron 1814), VIII, XII: [La philosophie du siècle dernier a été révolutionnaire celle du dix-neuvième doit être organisatrice \[. . .\] L’ordre social a été bouleversé parce qu’il ne convenait plus aux lumières c’est à vous d’en créer un meilleur le corps politique a été dissous, c’est à vous de le reconstituer \[. . .\] Toute institution fondée sur une opinion ne doit pas durer plus longtemps qu’elle. Luther, en ébranlant dans les esprits ce vieux respect qui faisait la force du clergé, désorganisa l’Europe. La moitié des Européens s’affranchit des chaînes du papisme, c’est-à-dire brisa le seul lien politique qui l’attachât à la grande société].
\end{footnotes}
matched by that of philosophy and theology. The attentive reader will have noticed that Luther, mentioned here by Saint-Simon as the main disorganizer of sixteenth-century Europe, also appears in the genealogy of disorganizers identified by *Philosophie sociale*, where he is in the company of other protagonists of the Protestant Reformation (“les diverses révolutions philosophiques et sacerdotales de Luther, Zuingle, Melanchton, Calvin”\(^{400}\)).

The similarities with Dobruska’s work are not limited to this fundamental theoretical debt concerning disorganization/reorganization. It is the same constitutional proposal, and the method by which it is to be achieved, that recalls the words of the old fellow prisoner of Saint-Simon. In the chapter entitled *The best possible constitution*, Saint-Simon writes:

> I propose to investigate whether there is a good form of government for itself, based on certain, absolute, universal principles, independent of time and place [. . .] Until now, the method of the observational sciences has not been used in political matters. Each one has brought you his own way of seeing, reasoning, and judging. And from this follows the lack of precision in the solutions, and the uncertainty of the results achieved. The time has come for this infancy of science to come to an end.\(^{401}\)

The reader of the *Philosophie sociale* here breathes a familiar air: the constitution and the government must be based on absolute principles, political issues must be addressed with the methods of the natural sciences, and it is time for the study of society and the way of governing it to come out of its infancy. If not exact sentences (Dobruska speaks of a “cradle” instead of “infancy”\(^{402}\), the concepts are the same as those that open the *Philosophie sociale*. Exactly twenty years have passed since Dobruska’s death on the gallows, and his book seems to be consigned to the past. All the more reason to use it freely, without too many ceremonies.

\(^{400}\) Dobruska, *Philosophie sociale*, 48.

\(^{401}\) Saint-Simon, Thierry, *De la réorganisation*, 33: [Je veux chercher, s’il n’y a pas une forme de gouvernement bonne par sa seule nature, fondée sur des principes sûrs, absolus, universels, indépendants des temps et des lieux [. . .] Jusqu’ici la méthode des sciences d’observation n’a point été introduite dans les questions politiques] chacun y a porté sa façon de voir, de raisonner, de juger, et de là vient qu’il n’y a eu encore ni précision dans les solutions, ni généralité dans les résultats. Le temps est venu où il doit cesser cette enfance de la science].

\(^{402}\) Dobruska, *Philosophie sociale*, ii: [La philosophie sociale est la science la moins avancée et la plus incertaine de toutes. Elle est encore dans son berceau].
7.2.2 The Influence on the Thought of Auguste Comte

From Dobruska to Saint-Simon, and from there to Comte. A biographical thread links the three characters in a continuous way. If the first two met, in the narrow space of the Parisian prison of Sainte-Pélagie, the personal ties between Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte are well known, and are documented since August 1817, when the young Comte becomes secretary of the older and already famous Saint-Simon. It is an intellectual bond with important consequences. Comte will write: “From this relationship I have received a great number of things that I would have searched in vain for in books.”

Disorganization and Social Organization

Comte had sympathized at a very young age with the ideas of the French Revolution and the construction of a Republic, thus opposing the Catholic and counter-revolutionary culture in which he had been socialized in Montpellier, a city with ancient university traditions but which was small and provincial.

Meeting Saint-Simon broadened his cultural horizons, and gave him the opportunity to showcase his talents as a writer and publicist, with a fluent pen and a philosophical vein. Already in 1817, from the collaboration between the two was born Industrie, a work in four parts, which outlines the idea of a culture that, after dismantling the mistakes of the past, must be able to rebuild a new method of knowledge and a society that reflects it. If this work’s general conception was that of Saint-Simon, the formulations came largely out of Comte’s eloquence:

After working separately, eighteenth century writers came together in a single philosophical laboratory and created a general work, an encyclopedia that could have been called a general anti-theology. This, broadly speaking, is the way in which the first task was carried out, the task of disorganizing the theological system. Let us now consider how to proceed with the execution of the second, which will have as its purpose the organization of an earthly moral system.

Note, once again, the *désorganisation du système théologique*. It is enough to leaf through the *Philosophie sociale* to understand where these anti-theological intellectuals, about to found the culture of the new age, come from:

> For you, O wise! may your first care be to overthrow (disorganize) the artificial regime, and to bring us back to the simple regime of nature, developed by a healthy culture. Let us first go back to it, examine it; and let us draw from its processes a new art, a new culture.

Dobruska’s approach passed to Comte, through the influence that Saint-Simon had on him. For Saint-Simon the “reorganization” of society increasingly assumed a programmatic role, became the mission of all his work and the engine of public commitment. To Comte, Saint-Simon entrusts the role of main extensor of the documents aimed at founding this reorganization and, therefore, passes to him the conceptual scheme of disorganization/reorganization, which we first found in the *Philosophie sociale*. We don’t know if the two of them discussed the figure of that unusual converted Jew who died during the Revolution. It is very possible, just as it is also possible that Saint-Simon passed on some personal memories to his young secretary. But we can’t be sure. Of course, Comte also seems to have had a first-hand knowledge of the *Philosophie sociale*, so evident are the similarities between his early writings and the prose, although much less elegant, of Dobruska’s work.

At the beginning of 1822, Comte began to compose a text that would prove to be fundamental, not only for his personal theoretical path but for the entire development of the social sciences. The work appeared in print in April of the same year, in a few copies, in the collection *Suite des travaux ayant pour objet de fonder le système industriel. Du Contrat social*. The main title page of the volume bears the name of Saint-Simon, who is actually only the author of the 14-page introduction. In this introduction there is a clear continuity with *La réorganisation de la société européenne* of 1814, which I have dealt with above, and with the *Industrie* of 1817. The basic concept is the same, aiming at the link between the disorganization of a society and its reorganization, and therefore

(continued with footnotes)

406 Dobruska, *Philosophie sociale*, 47: “Pour vous, ô sages! que votre premier soin soit de renverser, (désorganiser) le régime artificiel, et de nous ramener au régime simple de la nature, développé par une saine culture. Retournons d’abord à elle, examinons-la; et puisons dans ses procédés un art nouveau, une culture nouvelle”.

indebted – and this is what interests us most here – to the *Philosophie sociale*. A brief quotation will be enough to understand the tone of Saint-Simon’s text:

Take the time to examine what happened in the eighteenth century, and you will recognize that the destruction of privileges was mainly determined by the *Encyclopédie*, a work in which the most illustrious scholars and artists of the time participated. However, it would be too extraordinary if their efforts had been necessary to disorganize society, and if society could be reorganized without them contributing to this undertaking.

In a word, gentlemen, it is the scientists who must begin the work necessary for social reorganization.

In order to encourage them to use their strengths and talents in this direction, it was necessary for my system to be presented to them in scientific form.

One of my collaborators and friends was in charge of this important operation. Here is his work, which corresponds to the *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie*, by d’Alembert.

In the last sentence, Saint-Simon himself stated the link between his own approach and that of Comte, defined here as *un de mes collaborateurs et amis*. The internal frontispiece correctly attributes everything else in the book to Comte, under the title *Prospectus des travaux scientifiques nécessaires pour la réorganiser la société*. The combination of disorganization and reorganization, which we have seen passed from Dobruska to Saint-Simon, and already to the Comte of 1817, is also the distinctive sign under which the treatment of the memorable Comtian Prospectus of 1822 opens:

A social system that is dying out, a new system that has reached its full maturity and tends to be established, this is the fundamental character assigned to the present era by the general path of civilization. In accordance with this state of affairs, two movements of a different nature are agitating society today: one of disorganization, the other of reorganization. Through the first, considered in isolation, it is pushed towards a deep moral and political anarchy, which seems to threaten it [i.e. society] with an imminent and inevitable dissolution. Through the second, it is led to the definitive social state of the human species, the most suited to its nature, where all means of prosperity must receive their broadest

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408 Saint-Simon, *Suite des travaux*, 11–12: [Prenez la peine d’examiner ce qui s’est passé dans le dix-huitième siècle, et vous reconnaîtrez que la destruction des priviléges (sic) a été principalement déterminée par l’Encyclopédie, travail auquel les savants et les artistes les plus distingués de cette époque ont concouru. Or il serait par trop extraordinaire que leurs efforts eussent été nécessaires pour désorganiser la société, et que la société pût être réorganisée sans qu’ils deviennent auxiliaires dans cette entreprise. En un mot, Messieurs, ce sont les savants qui doivent commencer les travaux qu’exige la réorganisation sociale. Pour les déterminer à employer leurs forces et leurs talens dans cette direction, il était nécessaire que mon système leur fût présenté sous la forme scientifique. Un de mes collaborateurs et amis s’est chargé de cette importante opération Voici son travail, qui correspond au discours préliminaire de l’Encyclopédie, par d’Alembert].
development and their most direct application. It is in the coexistence of these opposing tendencies that the great crisis experienced by the most civilized nations consists. It is under these two aspects that it must be considered in order to be understood.  

It will be remembered that the lack of a reorganization, both political and intellectual, was the basis of the criticism made by Dobruska of Rousseau. If he had shown the need to break up the pre-revolutionary society, in which all men were in chains, and had thus become the great inspirer of the Revolution, he had not been able to indicate the path towards the construction (organization) of a new social order. We have seen how Dobruska’s project was divided into two phases: 1) analysis of the “pathological causes” that had brought about the collapse of the Ancien Régime, and 2) formulation of a Universal Constitution, based on the most “scientific study” possible of society. The first part of the Constitution, which contains the conceptual elaborations and principles, as we know, must be the foundation on which to build a new democratic society. The program of the young Comte is very similar, oriented as it is to the renewal of the society under the impulse of Saint-Simon:

The only way to put an end to this stormy situation, to stop the anarchy that invades society day by day, in a word, to reduce the crisis to a simple moral movement, is to push the civilized nations to leave the critical direction and to take the organic direction, to focus all their efforts on the formation of the new social system, the final object of the crisis, and for which all that has been done so far is only preparatory. This is the first necessity of the present. This is also, in summary, the general purpose of my work, and the specific purpose of this paper, which aims to bring into play the forces that must lead society on the road to the new system. 

409 Comte, “Prospectus des travaux scientifiques” Suite des travaux, 15 (cf. Idem, Écrits de jeunesse, 241): [Un système social qui s’éteint, un nouveau système parvenu à son entière maturité et qui tend à se constituer, tel est le caractère fondamental assigné à l’époque actuelle par la marche générale de la civilisation. Conformément à cet état de choses, deux mouvements de nature différente agitent aujourd’hui la société: l’un de désorganisation, l’autre de réorganisation. Par le premier, considéré isolément, elle est entraînée vers une profonde anarchie morale et politique qui semble la menacer d’une prochaine et inévitable dissolution. Par le second, elle est conduite vers l’état social définitif de l’espèce humaine, le plus convenable à sa nature, celui où tous ses moyens de prospérité doivent recevoir leur plus entier développement et leur application la plus directe. C’est dans la co-existence de ces deux tendances opposées que consiste la grande crise éprouvée par les nations les plus civilisées. C’est sous ce double aspect qu’elle doit être envisagée pour être comprise].  

410 Ibidem, 17 (Idem, Écrits de jeunesse, 242): [La seule manière de mettre un terme à cette orageuse situation, d’arrêter l’anarchie qui envahit de jour en jour la société, en un mot de réduire la crise à un simple mouvement moral, c’est de déterminer les nations civilisées à quitter la
Let us therefore see how Comte, like Dobruska, intends first and foremost to identify the causes that prevent society from progressing. After this analysis, one can think of building a new direction, which Comte calls “organic”.

The Need of a Scientific Reflection on Society

How to move towards the reorganization of society? Comte is convinced that a new science must be founded, one that focuses on the analysis of “social phenomena”. In the 1822 Prospectus, he defined this discipline as “social physics”:

In this sense, social physics, that is to say, the study of the collective development of the human species, is really a branch of physiology, that is, the study of man, conceived in all its extension. In other words, the history of civilization is nothing more than the indispensable continuation and complement of man’s natural history.411

The objective of this new science is the collective development of the human species, which must be studied with the tools of mathematics. In short, social physics must be considered a specific branch of physiology.

In the 1825 Considérations philosophiques sur les sciences et les savants, we find an expanded and partly revised formulation of social physics:

I shall limit myself here to saying, in order to prevent any confusion, that by social physics I mean the science which has as its specific object the study of social phenomena, considered with the same spirit as astronomical, physical, chemical, and physiological phenomena, that is to say subject to invariable natural laws, the discovery of which is the particular purpose of his research. In this way, it aims directly to explain, with the utmost precision, the great phenomenon of the development of the human species, considered in all its essential parts; that is to say, to discover the necessary concatenation of the successive transformations, through which the human race, starting from a state just above that of the great apes, has been gradually led to the point where it is now in civilized Europe.412
There is a focus on this “physics”, which becomes, in a more specific way, a treatment of “social phenomena”. The preoccupation with scientificity and the link with the natural sciences remains alive, so much so that social physics is taken to descend from individual physiology and is inserted in a mutual relationship with the disciplinary field of physiology.

In short, social physics must consider social phenomena in the same way as astronomical, physical, chemical, and physiological phenomena, and must go so far as to find natural laws that cannot be altered. This analogy between the treatment of social and other scientific disciplines, which today we would call “hard sciences”, is exactly what Dobruska has in mind for social philosophy, which he wants to advance to the level of physics and chemistry. More precisely, social philosophy must base its thought on rationality, it must leave behind metaphysics, and find in the study of physis (nature) its own definitions and its own laws or principles. 

The development of Comte’s thought is very similar, and is further specified in the Cours de philosophie positive, one of his mature works, published from 1830:

Now we have a celestial physics, a terrestrial physics, both mechanical and chemical, a plant physics, and an animal physics; to complete the system of our knowledge of nature, we still need one, the last one, the social physics.

In the Cours, social physics is no longer to be understood as a branch of physiology but as a constitutive part of positive philosophy. In the preface, Comte writes that he understands “philosophy” in the Aristotelian meaning of “general system of human conceptions”. The term “positive” here indicates the set of theories, according to a certain order of ideas, which have as their object “the coordination of the observed facts”. In other words, theories should not be elaborated in an a priori way according to a metaphysics, but should arise from the analysis of real facts that découvrite est le but spécial de ses recherches. Ainsi, elle se propose directement d’expliquer, avec le plus de précision possible, le grand phénomène du développement de l’espèce humaine, envisagé dans toutes ses parties essentielles; c’est-à-dire de découvrir par quel enchaînement nécessaire de transformations successives le genre humain, en partant d’un état à peine supérieur à celui des sociétés de grands singes, a été conduit graduellement au point où il se trouve aujourd’hui dans l’Europe civilisée].

Dobruska, Philosophie sociale, viii.

Auguste Comte, Cours de philosophie positive, vol. 1 (Paris: Rouen Frères, 1830), 22: [Maintenant que l’esprit humain a fondé la physique céleste, la physique terrestre, soit mécanique, soit chimique; la physique organique, soit végétale, soit animale, il lui reste à terminer le système des sciences d’observation en fondant la physique sociale].

Ibidem, viii.
have been observed. In particular, positive philosophy includes, in the Comtian sense, the study of any phenomenon, even if not social, provided that the positive or scientific method of the natural sciences is used.\footnote{Compare Philosophie sociale, iv.}

**Connection between Forms of Thought and Social Organization**

The 1822 *Prospectus* has gone down in history above all because in it, for the first time, Comte formulated his famous *Law of Human Progress* or *Law of the Three Stages*:

> By the very nature of the human mind, each branch of our knowledge is necessarily subject in its course to three different consecutive theoretical states: the theological or fictitious state; the metaphysical or abstract state; and, finally, the scientific or positive state.\footnote{Comte, *Prospectus des travaux scientifiques*, in Suite des travaux, 71 (Idem, Écrits de jeunesse, 268): [Par la nature même de l’esprit humain, chaque branche de nos connaissances est nécessairement assujettie dans sa marche à passer successivement par trois états théoriques différents: l’état théologique ou fictif; l’état métaphysique ou abstrait; enfin l’état scientifique ou positif].}

Schematic, simple to the point of appearing simplistic, and precisely for this reason so fortunate, the law of the three stages of Comte has the ambition to embrace in a single formulation cultural models and social organization:

> If we consider politics as a science, and apply the previous observations to it, we find that it has already passed through the first two stages, and that it is now ready to reach the third stage. The doctrine of kings represents the theological stage of politics [...] The doctrine of peoples expresses the metaphysical stage of politics. It is entirely based on the abstract and metaphysical assumption of a primitive social contract, before any development of human faculties by civilization [...] Finally, the scientific doctrine of politics considers the social stage under which the human species has always been found by observers as the necessary consequence of its organization.\footnote{Ibidem, 74–75 (Idem, Écrits de jeunesse, 269): [En considérant la politique comme une science, et lui appliquant les observations précédentes, on trouve qu’elle a déjà passé par les deux premiers états, et qu’elle est prête aujourd’hui à atteindre au troisième. La doctrine des rois représente l’état théologique de la politique [...] La doctrine des peuples exprime l’état métaphysique de la politique. Elle est fondée en totalité sur la supposition abstraite et métaphysique d’un contrat social primitif, antérieur à tout développement des facultés humaines par la civilisation [...] Enfin, la doctrine scientifique de la politique considère l’état social sous lequel l’espèce humaine a toujours été trouvée par les observateurs comme la conséquence nécessaire de son organisation].}

Where does this scanning of the history of thought come from in three distinct, successive, necessary degrees? The most attentive readers have noticed the
similarities with the theories of the three ages of man, formulated by Giambattista Vico in his *Scienza nuova* of 1725, a work that aimed to read, in a new way, the history of mankind. According to Vico, all nations would pass through three ages: gods, heroes and men. The first is characterized by the senses and imagination and dominated by religion. The second sees the attribution of divine attributes to heroes, and the establishment of the law of the strongest, while the last age, that of men, is marked by reason. For Vico, however, it is not a matter of a substantially linear progress, as in Comte, but of a cyclical alternation, through which each people pass, and then fall back, from the third, to the first age. It is likely that Dobruska, who knew Italian well, had read Vico and had made the most of it. It is certain that in the *Philosophie sociale* we find a very similar scheme, although less concise than that offered by Comte. And it is a scheme that, unlike the Vichian “corsi” and “ricorsi”, of circular trend, is pervaded by undeniable enlightenment optimism. The three phases of thought and society on which Dobruska is based are the same as those immortalized by the law of the three stages of Comte:

In ancient times, the entire earth was subject to the sovereignty of the gods. The kings were their representatives. All forms of government were theocratic [. . .]

Where legislation has found a solid foundation in nature and applies physics perfectly, metaphysics will no longer be needed. That is to say, when we know nature, we will no longer have anything to look for beyond it.\(^{419}\)

Dobruska states even more clearly, a little further on, that the time has come to overcome the metaphysics that is no longer needed. Dobruska writes:

It is true that when the legislation will have found the solid foundations of nature, and will apply in a perfect way the physics, we will no longer need the metaphysics, in this sense we can say with Bacon *post veram inventam phisicam nulla metaphysica erit*. That is to say, once we have known nature, we must no longer look beyond it.\(^{420}\)

Readers will forgive me if I have put together passages that, in the *Philosophie sociale*, are further apart. What is important is to show that even the starting point for this succession of stages of civilization and thought – theology, metaphysics, nature – may well have come to Comte from a reading of Dobruska, perhaps through the usual mediation of Saint-Simon, who already in the *Réorganisation of

\(^{419}\) *Philosophie sociale*, 40 (see above, 3. 9) and 55 (see above, 3. 10).
\(^{420}\) *Loc. cit.*: [Il est vrai que lorsque la législation aura trouvé les bases solides de la nature, en fait l’application parfaite de la physique, nous n’aurons plus besoin de la métaphysique, dans ce sens, nous pourrions dire avec Bacon, *post veram inventam phisicam nulla métaphysica erit*. C’est-à-dire, quand nous connoîtrons une fois la nature, nous n’aurons plus à chercher au-delà d’elle].
1814 distinguished between theological and metaphysical ages. With one caveat. Among the many gifts of our social philosopher from Brno was not the gift of conciseness. If not complete originality, Comte’s Law of the three states has the merit of having used a prose of Cartesian compactness.

**Division of Labor for the Reorganization of Society between Theory and Practice**

Another surprising analogy between the thinking of Moses Dobruska and that of Auguste Comte concerns the division of labor necessary to reorganize society. As already mentioned above, the *Philosophie sociale* provides that the Constitution is divided into two parts.

The first part, which is binding, contains the principles governing the life of individuals in society, while the second part, which is subordinate to the first, represents the application of the principles set out in the first part. If the theoretical part requires, in order to be formulated, abstract competence and rational rigor, the realization of the second part of the Constitution is instead the task of the general assemblies. It is no coincidence that the *Philosophie sociale* only deepens the first part of its Constitution and does not deal with the second. For Dobruska, in short, a strict division of labor is necessary in order to be able to rebuild the social order in France, after the fall of the absolute monarchy: on the one hand a work of theoretical reflection, on the other hand legislative practice and the activity of government.

We find such a division of labor, between theory and practice, almost replicated in Comte’s thought. The 1822 *Prospectus* reads:

> It follows from the above that the major mistakes made by peoples in their conception of the reorganization of society are mainly due to the fallacious procedure on the basis of which they carried out this very reorganization; the flaw of this procedure consists in the fact that the social reorganization has been considered as a purely practical operation, whereas it is essentially theoretical; that the nature of things and the most convincing historical experiences demonstrate the absolute necessity of dividing the overall work of reorganization into two series, one theoretical and the other practical, the first of which must be carried out in advance, and must serve as a basis for the second; that the preliminary execution of the theoretical work requires the activation of a new social force, distinct from those who have occupied the scene so far and who are absolutely incompetent; finally, that, for several very stringent reasons, this new force must be that of the scientists [savants], who devote themselves to the study of observational sciences. 

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421 *Ibidem*, 53.
And again, a few pages later:

The very nature of the work to be carried out indicates, as clearly as possible, the class to which it is to be assigned. Since these works are theoretical, it is clear that the men who by profession elaborate theoretical combinations followed methodically, that is, the scientists [savants] who deal with the study of the sciences of observation, are the only ones whose type of intellectual capacity and culture meets the necessary conditions.\footnote{Ibidem, 59 (Idem, Écrits de jeunesse, 262): [La nature des travaux à exécuter indique d’elle-même, le plus clairement possible, à quelle classe il appartient de les entreprendre. Ces travaux étant théoriques, il est clair que les hommes qui font profession de former des combinaisons théoriques suivies méthodiquement, c’est-à-dire les savants occupés de l’étude des sciences d’observation, sont les seuls dont le genre de capacité et de culture intellectuelle remplit les conditions nécessaires].}

The theoretical part of the reorganization of society will have to be elaborated by the savants. Moreover, the idea of attributing the reconstruction of society to intellectuals, artists, and artisans is one of the cornerstones of Saint-Simon’s program, also reaffirmed in the introduction to the Comtian Prospectus. Dobruska could not have agreed more, he who had called the wise to celebrate their new cult: “Religion of the truth of the princes! I already see the nameless wise prepare all their hearts to receive your worship”.\footnote{Philosophie sociale, 50: [Religion de la vérité des principes! Je vois déjà des savants sans nombre préparer tous les cœurs à recevoir ton culte. Viens, ô viens, et qu’après tant d’idolâtries et d’idoles, qui t’ont occupée, l’humanité jouisse une fois de ta divinité!].}

7.3 In the Twentieth Century: The Study of Gershom Scholem

The rediscovery of Moses Dobruska, and of the fascinating tangle of his biography, is due to Gershom Scholem. Scholem, father of the modern study of the kabbalah, is interested above all in the intellectual parable of Dobruska, from the heretical Jewish environment of his birth, to his conversion to Catholicism and
adhesion to Freemasonry, up to his political commitments between the Jacobins of Strasbourg and Paris, and at his end at the gallows. Scholem’s essay, published in 1981, shortly before his death in 1982,\footnote{Gershom Scholem, Du Frankisme au jacobinisme. La vie de Moses Dobruska, alias Thomas von Schönfeld alias Junius Frey, which was presented at the conference of May 23, 1979, as part of a cycle dedicated to Marc Bloch, at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. This essay was translated into French by Naftali Deutsch and published two years after the conference. It contains the most important results of Gershom Scholem’s studies on Moses Dobruska. Some of these results had already been published first in German and in Hebrew. Scholem’s essay was translated into Italian by Elisabetta Zevi and published in Gershom Scholem, Le tre vite di Mosess Dobrushka, (Milano: Adelphi, 2014), edited by Saverio Campanini.} has its strength in its evaluation of the esoteric Dobruska, the adventurer who knows how to play cunning with the courts and governments, and who subjugates at will the noble and powerful. Given this orientation, it is not surprising that Scholem dedicates only a few pages to the Philosophie sociale. It is a sketchy outline, offered more for duty of completeness than for real interest. However, it is still a description from the pen of a great scholar, and it is worth remembering its salient elements. Scholem believes in the sincerity of Dobruska/Frey’s commitment to the ideals of the French Revolution and breaks a lance in favor of the good faith of the multifaceted man of letters and action, who, he thinks, was truly convinced “of the moral, political, and social principles that he sets out”\footnote{Scholem, Du Frankisme au jacobinisme, 73.} in his work. For those who know the caustic vein of the master of Jewish studies, who over time had maintained much of his polemical Berlin attitude, already this admission of sincerity, in a biographically ambiguous characters such as Dobruska, is surprising. The Philosophie sociale is presented by Scholem as a philosophical reflection, “a synthesis of the ideas of Locke, Rousseau and Kant”,\footnote{Loc. cit.} which arose from the discussion of a new constitution for the French people. Although he is convinced that “the work deserves a detailed analysis”,\footnote{Loc. cit.} Scholem sees it above all in the framework that is closest to his heart, that is, as a document of the links between the Jewish sectarian movements – in particular Sabbatianism and its later variant, Frankism – that criticized the religious orthodoxy of the Rabbis of the time, and the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Among the many topics dealt with in Dobruska’s book, the passages dedicated to religion are thus highlighted, which, according to Scholem, are “animated by an enlightened radicalism that, in the eyes of the Frankists, does not contradict the esoteric mysticism, on the contrary, completes it”.\footnote{Loc. cit.}
According to Scholem, Dobruska’s thesis is that “every political regime is like a religion, endowed with its own theology” and therefore it is also possible to search for the theological foundations of the democratic regime. For this reason, Dobruska “initiates a critical analysis of the systems and constitutions of Moses, Solon, and Jesus. And here – writes Scholem – is revealed the last Jewish avatar” of Dobruska. Scholem correctly emphasizes the harsh criticism that the _Philosophie sociale_ addresses to the “Constitution” of Moses, “as a system [. . .] founded on superstition, the work of a man who knew the truth, but concealed it”. Moses thus becomes “the most reprehensible of all the legislators, since he was the one who had the greatest chance: that of giving form to an entire people entrusted to his authority during forty years in the desert, in total isolation; he could have guided this formless body to the Enlightenment, but he preferred to direct it in the name of a imposture presented as of divine origin”.\(^{430}\) Scholem sees in this criticism by Dobruska of Moses a certain closeness to Frankist thinking. Jakob Frank, shortly before his death, had stated in his book _Words of the Lord_ that the laws of Moses “weigh on the people [of Israel] and harm them, but the law of the Lord is whole (temimah) because it has never been spoken”.\(^{431}\) Despite these Frankist assonances, Scholem believes that Dobruska’s reflections owe more to Voltaire than to Frank. The Scholemian analysis of the _Philosophie sociale_ concludes in laudatory terms. In Scholem’s assessment, the principles of a Universal Constitution (the third part of the work) are “permeated by the thought of Rousseau and Locke”. They defend a radical democracy, which identifies in the “equality of rights [. . .] the authentic freedom of each individual”. In short, the Constitution proposed by Dobruska reflects “the liberal and patriotic spirit of Jacobinism that precedes Terror”.\(^{432}\)

Although brilliant, this brief profile of the _Philosophie sociale_ shows some forcing. First of all, it does not seem correct to say, as Scholem does, that Dobruska wanted to seek theological foundations for the nascent democratic regime and for its Universal Constitution. On the contrary, the first part of the work, the most revolutionary, makes it clear that a condition for the birth of a democracy is good legislation and the contribution of good lawmakers. And good legislation, based on the principles of truth, must be completely separated from a system of religious beliefs.\(^{433}\)

\(^{430}\) Ibidem, 74.
\(^{431}\) Loc. cit.
\(^{432}\) Ibidem, 75.
\(^{433}\) Dobruska, _Philosophie sociale_, 30–31: [L’éclat emprunté de la religion, ajouté à la vérité d’un système de législation, sous couleur de le rendre ainsi plus intelligible et plus sacré pour
If Dobruska praises the message of Christ, which for him has nothing to do with the institutionalization of Christian doctrine (the “Church”, as he calls it) – he does so only in consideration of moral precepts (love your neighbor as yourself), certainly not for the search for a divine foundation of the new Constitution. The foundation of Dobruska’s constitutional project is secular, based on truth, reason, and nature.

Likewise, the Scholemian definition of the Philosophie sociale as a “synthesis of the ideas of Rousseau, Locke and Kant” does not seem to be acceptable. Although Dobruska dialogues with the works of these authors and quotes some of their theories and concepts, he often criticizes them and distances himself from them. According to Dobruska, the influence of “the immortal Kant”, as he is praised in the Philosophie sociale, is hindered by the philosophical language he has chosen to use: a metaphysical lexicon, incomprehensible to ordinary readers. Moreover, Dobruska has elaborated his own theoretical vision above all in reference to the social, something that Scholem either does not grasp or ignores.

Thanks to Scholem’s studies, other authors in the twentieth century have dealt with the biography of Moses Dobruska and his involvement in the French Revolution. Rare, on the other hand, are the mentions of the Philosophie sociale. Diego Scarca has pointed out how Dobruska in his work theorizes a great distance between primitive man in the state of nature compared to the man of culture. Carol Blum in her book on Rousseau recalls how Junius Frey recognized the decisive role of Rousseau in “provoking and determining the French Revolution”.

7.4 In the Twenty-First Century: Little Attention, and Not Very Flattering

In the last decade, Dobruska/Frey has received some attention, not only from scholars of Jewish culture but also from philosophers and, in particular, from
social philosophers. Among others, a brief entry about our author appeared in the *Bloomsbury Dictionary of the Eighteenth-century German philosophers*. In the *Manifeste pour une philosophie sociale*, published in 2009, the French-Swiss philosopher Franck Fischbach reflects on the role of social philosophy, and highlights the marginalization of the discipline in the French academic world. Fischbach focuses on the main characteristics that social philosophy must have in order to be able to be called such. Among the five characteristics elaborated by Fischbach, the most important one, as already for Axel Honneth, is the ability to be critical of the existing social reality. In the first chapter, entitled *La philosophie sociale: une inconnue française, ou presque*, he erroneously states that for the first time the term *philosophie sociale* was coined in the anonymous *Philosophie sociale*, attributed, in the note, to Junius Frey.

As mentioned above, and already anticipated in an essay of mine in 2016, the expression *philosophie sociale* was first used by Jean-Baptiste Durossoy in 1783.

Thomas Bedorf and Kurt Röttgers propose a somehow sketchy evaluation of the *Philosophie sociale* in their edition of the German translation of the *Manifeste* by Fischbach:

The text is nothing more than a draft Constitution inspired by Kant and the Sabbatian sect for an ideal Constitution for France, in keeping with freedom, i.e. a political philosophy and not a social philosophy as a separate discipline.

Kurt Röttgers had already dealt very briefly with the *Philosophie sociale* on two previous occasions. In *Die Entstehung der Sozialphilosophie im Spannungsfeld*...
von Neukantianismus, Soziologie und Kulturphilosophie, published in 1995, he denied that Dobruska’s text could be considered true “social philosophy”. Rather, it should be seen as “Jacobin philosophy of happy life in society, written for the people and against a philosophy of the State, designed by the rulers to deceive the people”. Röttgers also criticizes the enthusiasm of Dobruska/Frey for Kant, saying that it does not correspond to a positive knowledge of Kantian philosophy: according to Röttgers, Jacobinism would stand in contrast to the foundations of Kantian practical philosophy.

In 2009, in Kritik der kulinarischen Vernunft. Ein Menü der Sinne nach Kant, Röttgers seems to have changed his mind about this. He mentions some authors who have distanced themselves from Kant because of the latter’s lack of reflection on social issues. One of the first who undertook such a path would have been Rudolf Stammler with the work Wirtschaft und Recht nach der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung of 1896, where one finds:

The scientific task of Kant’s life was to re-establish philosophy as a systematic science, but without extending it to the social sphere. He has not created [ . . . ] a comprehensive social philosophy [ . . . ].

According to Röttgers, Rudolf Stammler has a precursor: Moses Dobruska, alias “Franz Thomas Edler von Schönefeldt (sic), alias Lucius-Junius Frey”. This mention is followed, a few pages later, by exactly the same criticism of the Philosophie sociale already offered in 1995.

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443 Kurt Röttgers, Kritik der kulinarischen Vernunft. Ein Menü der Sinne nach Kant (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009), 18: “Kant hat seine wissenschaftliche Lebensaufgabe, die Neubegründung der Philosophie als systematischer Wissenschaft, auf das soziale Gebiet nicht ausgedehnt. Er hat [ . . . ] keine zusammenhängende Sozialphilosophie geschaffen”.