

1. Portrait of a Man (1862-1934)

His correspondents and contacts



Eugene Baudoux

The events of 1886 (the workers' uprising) were at the start of the birth of Henri Lambert's talent as an original thinker. They had shown very acutely the problem of universal suffrage, and the role of unions (The Glassworkers Union). Precisely these are the first two subjects of reflection from a long list, and this only a few years after leaving university and just as he took over the family business. These years were doubly decisive. On to his paternal influence was grafted that of Eugene Baudoux (an important Belgian glass master) from whose friendship and transgenerational affection he benefited, and with whom he reflected on various social problems and published various studies,

particularly regarding the law of association, a cornerstone of his future work, *The New Social Contract*.



Colonel Edward M. House

It is through American pacifist circles at a very high level, in the person of D. S. Jordan, President of Stanford University, that Henri Lambert came into contact with Colonel House, about which he wrote on November 30, 1916. This was to be the beginning of a correspondence between the two men and a relationship marked by frank cordiality, and indeed friendship. Henri Lambert was thus aiming at the apex of the American state, the decipher level. We already know how great was the role of Colonel House as the top rank informal adviser to President Woodrow Wilson.



Edmund Dene Morel

"...for Henri Lambert – and I very largely agree with him – one of the fundamental "causes" of this war is the protectionist and monopolistic policy adopted in economic matters by many governments; above all, in a certain measure, by Britain herself, despite Bright and Cobden's great achievement. For Henri Lambert, freedom of trade is the true road to permanent peace among nations. He does not discount other approaches, but he says, in effect, "Neglect this one, and your efforts are vain." And here I am in complete accord with

him." (Morel, E. D., *Truth and the War*, London, 1916, pp. 191-194.)



Emile Zola

On January 8, 1898, five days before the famous *J'accuse*, Henri Lambert wrote to Emile Zola the following letter. *"Dear Sir, I cannot refrain any longer from expressing my admiration for your beautiful, your noble, your wonderful attitude in the Dreyfus affair. Once again you have proven yourself to be what is called: a man. And, with some other men, you have shown the world that there are still people in France who have preserved their precious heritage intact: the feeling of generosity, jealous concern for the good reputation of their country, the cultivation of justice and truth. You comfort those of us who follow with sadness what happens to a people one cherishes and who, despite the atrocious crime that the French prepare, cannot withdraw their esteem for the French nation. Thank you! But what a monstrous soul that of some of your country!"*

Henri Lambert.

PS: I read the indictment. But all that is but a tendentious trial!



Charles de Broqueville

In late May 1913 the Belgian government led by de Broqueville set up a commission known as the XXXI, a grouping of personalities from various backgrounds, to reflect on the question of municipal and provincial elections. From the outset, the intention was only to find a system for elections of smaller constituencies. The Commission consisted of 12 deputies or former deputies, 10 university professors, 3 senators, 2 provincial governors, 2 ministers, and 2 industrialists (Paul Trasenster of Liege and Henri Lambert of Charleroi). The presence of the latter did not go unnoticed. He spoke at the third meeting, Wednesday, October 22, 1913, to propose a municipal and provincial electoral system based on three lists of candidates. The first category would be composed of the highest taxed and correspond to the interests of property and capital. The second would include the average taxpayer and represent intermediate and complex social interests. The third would consist of small taxpayers and non-taxpayers and would be representative of the interests of labour.



Yves Guyot

On October 12, 1895, Henri Lambert contacted, for the first time it appears, the former minister and eminent French economist Yves Guyot (1843-1928) who expressed his agreement with Lambert's theories. Guyot published two articles in *Le Siècle*, a Paris newspaper extolling the merits of his theory, and going so far as to say, that their authors "are right not only for Belgium but also for France."



Hector Denis

Though Janson and Lorand had supported him, it was especially so of Hector Denis (1842-1913), an eminent Belgian sociologist and former rector of the Free University of Brussels (1892-1894), who in 1894 was elected as a deputy head of a cartel involving Liège socialist-liberal progressives, a position he held until his death. The latter proposed a bill of this persuasion in parliament and at a meeting on May 2, 1908, three weeks after the publication of his article, stated that an **"enlightened industrialist, who is concerned about internationalisation, M. Lambert, has remarkably highlighted certain beneficial effects resulting directly from such a solution."** His ideas were thus benefiting from a link to the level of power. Although his

theories on the representation of interests and associations could find application outside Belgium, this is the first time that he tried to influence international politics directly. It would not be the last.



Sir Edward Grey

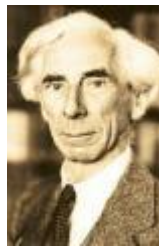
From 1913 to 1920 Henri Lambert launched into the writing of fifty articles published in Europe and the United States. He began in April 1913 by alerting Sir Edward Grey, British Foreign Secretary, through a long open letter outlining his basic moral considerations and highlighting their economic origin, that the root cause of a great menacing conflict was generalised nationalist economic protectionism. He therefore proposed that Grey launch an economic conference to begin the disarmament of such protectionism. In 1918, Henri Lambert wrote that: **"I proposed this solution to Sir Edward Grey in an open letter, published by the League of Free Trade in Paris, which was read, I think, by most governments and leaders in Europe."** No

doubt it was read, but it was unfortunately misunderstood or underestimated by them, starting with Sir Edward Grey, and of no known effect or reaction among major European leaders.



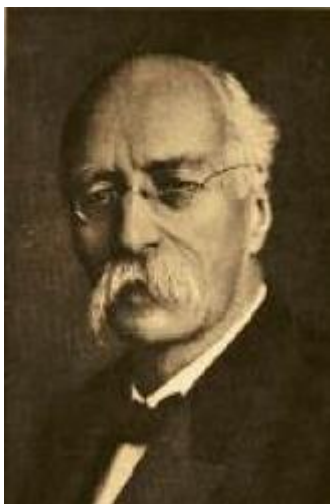
Lujo Brentano

Persuaded that to win you have to convince, Henri Lambert disseminated his research wherever he could in milieu likely to influence public opinion and its leaders on both sides. Thus, he had sent his 1914 open letter to President Wilson to Lujo Brentano (1844-1931), a prominent liberal economist and pacifist professor at the University of Munich. This well-known thinker replied with an open letter in whose preamble he pointed out that the open letter of Henri Lambert, a citizen of a country that had suffered a bloody invasion, had “no harsh words for his enemy” and so was deserving of “the greatest admiration.”



Norman Angell – E D Morel – Romain Rolland – Bertrand Russell

Henri Lambert participated in the action of the Union of Democratic Control (December 1915). This lobby was founded in England in August 1914 by leftist intellectuals and pacifists in order to call for negotiations to end the war and to conduct foreign policy without secret diplomacy. Among the leaders were Norman Angell and especially E. D. Morel, who was the secretary-treasurer with whom Henri Lambert had corresponded in the matter of the Congo a few years earlier. Also orbiting this committee was the French writer Romain Rolland, who received the Nobel Prize for Literature the following year in 1916, and the philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell, who later won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950.



Henri La Fontaine

In the USA, Henri Lambert did not content himself only with making contact with Colonel House. He also came into relationship with another renowned Belgian exile, whom he had known for many years, Henri La Fontaine, a champion of pacifism like himself (and Nobel Prize winner), who in Boston in 1916 published *The Great Solution. Magnissima Charta. Essay on Evolutionary and Constructive Pacifism*. On February 27, 1917, Henri Lambert wrote: **"My dear Senator and friend, I am glad to see you give free trade its due importance. This principle is not the whole of pacifism, but it is the necessary basis. The democratic organisation of states, the independence or true political autonomy of natural nationalities cannot be based other than on the principle of economic security, progress and peace."**



Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi – Paul van Zeeland

A letter to Coudenhove-Kalergi June 30, 1932 tells us that in the company of Paul van Zeeland, of Evence Coppée, Leo Greiner and Andre Peltzer, four important leaders of Belgian economic and political life, Henri Lambert attended the Pan European Committee meeting which took place on July 4 and 5. Although not sharing its view, and preceded by that reputation, he was nevertheless invited to participate in the European Congress in Basel (October 1932) where, on October 3, he gave a paper entitled ***About the "Pan-Europa" and "the United States of Europe"*** of Messrs. Briand, Herriot, Coudenhove-Kalergi and others. After having systematically taken the counter position to Edouard Herriot (1872-1957), he proclaimed that, ***"I believe that European political federation is not only impossible, but also undesirable. That it is impossible is clear to me and I feel no need to show it. But I want to show it is not even desirable. If there is an incompressible need, if there is a legitimate aspiration, which is irresistible in the history of Europe and the world, it is the need and the will of nationalities to govern themselves, to live in freedom and independence. In this regard, the "self-determination of nationalities" was a true and fair principle. But President Wilson made the grave mistake of not seriously insisting on providing its essential precondition: the economic and political security of peoples in the liberty of their relationships. The disposition toward freedom could not precede international economic freedom: it had to be its gradual and natural outcome. The truth, the future, and progress are also not to be found in political centralisation, in the creation of vast units, or in the formation of customs unions, even if European; they do not lie in "Pan-Europa" or the "United States of Europe": the truth, the future, and progress lie in political decentralisation, together with the gradual disappearance of all customs borders."***



Guillaume De Greef

De Greef, the "father" of Belgian sociology, wrote that ***"Under this modest title (Pax Economica) one of our great industrialists – breaking with the practice of major international business as well as the ideas of sociological and philosophical theorists – has just published a volume of paramount importance, but unfortunately too deeply thought to procure the attention of a general public that feeds on lighter, more digestible literature. This is one more reason and a duty for us to draw attention to his work on the part not only of competent specialists, but also statesmen and legislators. This publication from an industrial philosopher is more interesting than similar publications that have appeared in major European countries and the United States of America, all having roughly the same view in terms of both philosophy and practice and whose source is wide experience in industrial and commercial affairs. These works are essentially and generally scientific and, for that very reason, disinterested and lacking any concern for petty or party politics, but are at the same time inspired by deep patriotic feelings, dominated by a higher view of the needs of our new humanity..."***



Jules Destrée

Jules Destrée, a brilliant Belgian intellectual and Charleroi attorney and a former Socialist minister, wrote in the *Tribune Libre du Soir* (March 26, 1932): "***He's right, Mr. Lambert; he is absolutely right. He is so right that in these crazy times, probably no-one will listen to him. That's why, without illusion that it will be of much effect, I intend to give him my support "***