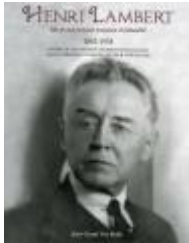


8. Philosophical and metaphysical vision

Hypothesis concerning the physical and metaphysical evolution of energy



"In the long stage of thinking that led to this writing, a glimmer of synthetic truth has guided our reason; she has kept our hopes; she continues to illumine our minds. Why do not we propose it, why do not signal it, other than only in passing, to other pilgrims?"

– Henri Lambert (*Hypothesis concerning the physical and metaphysical evolution of energy*)



Henri Lambert waxes somewhat paradoxical. Immersed in concrete affairs by his activities, he has a mind that by nature is attracted to positivism, to the analysis of phenomena; but his intellectual approach leads him to transcend the particular case to reach the principles of causation leading to the gates of metaphysics. Initially, his thoughts are always anchored in a precise reality in that he tries, engineer that he is, to understand internal structures in order to find solutions.

This willingness to embrace a certain totality of problems and therefore to develop a holistic philosophical system is most clearly expressed in his publications when he writes, *"A contribution to finding solutions to some important questions of my time and of all time."*

"To build a new morality – that in effect, and inevitably, is our goal," he proclaims.

While as free agent he denies having tried to "offer to spiritualism, not more than to materialism, a new field of argument, but to open a wider, and perhaps fruitful path to the investigations of free examination without further worrying us about the contingent nature of their results." He leaves his system of thought as an engineer and moves towards "the character of general philosophy", and with originality, leaves the path made secure by the rigours of mathematics, to make a journey to his great "Hypothesis". This organised whole, whose functioning he wants to perceive, Henri Lambert cannot conceive of as a coincidence. According to him it answers to a logic coming from a Supreme Being:

"Where there is a law, there is a will," he writes. *"Where there are found the laws of progress and harmony, there is a will to progress and harmony. Universal and eternal laws demonstrate the existence of a Will and a Being, supreme, universal, eternal."*

But this Being, this God is not that of Christians. In his book on the *Hypothesis concerning the physical and metaphysical evolution of energy*, Henri Lambert sees it, with great daring and originality, "sitting in the atomic centres of hydrogen"; *it "is attractive immaterial energy and the "Pure Mind" operating from the nucleus of all atoms, of all molecules, in all cells,*

and therefore also of all living and "cerebralised" beings that make up the universe. It is not and cannot be otherwise, or elsewhere."

"Why, then, does attractive immaterial energy, the builder of Nature – organiser, coordinator, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, imperturbable, infinite and eternal – not substitute itself in our eyes for the abstract entity we call God? Why would it not be God? On what rational or even theological basis do believers in God refuse to admit that it is so? Is it not for them to show or even to define a different God than the one proposed to them here: that we "show" them?

He concludes, his hypothesis eventually becoming an affirmation of daring boldness:

"Truly, this is certain: the assertion of immateriality at the atomic centre of hydrogen or, rather, the immateriality of the source of attraction which it exercises, is the last, but perhaps also the sure haven of deism, of spiritualism and of finalism. God is the power that manifests in the centres of atoms."

Thus, the existence of God cannot remain a matter of indifference to man, because *"If there is a supreme will and a supreme purpose, if the universe responds to a final cause, there must be a preordained plan of universal phenomena – physical, chemical, biological, economic, sociological and moral – all of which necessarily contribute to the accomplishment of this will, of this design and of this End. That is to say, if there is a God, there must be a natural order of the world, including and affecting of course all human activities and enterprises."*

With this God – the great organiser and designer, casting and overshadowing everything like the watchmaker God of 18th century thinkers – Henri Lambert justified the existence of the soul. The soul is not given to man by the work of an Almighty, but by economic logic. Thus he says, *"we believe we can say [that] man is the being who, trading, became just and moral, acquired the knowledge of good and evil, developed a responsible and immortal consciousness: a "soul".*" He added: *"The first genesis of the human soul and the emergence of trade were concomitant. "The final cause of natural phenomena, as material passing into the spiritual state, began on our planet, when there occurred the first exchange of goods or services. This gave birth, in both traders, to a striving for equivalence, equity and justice. A natural but superior strength, evolved from energy, this striving created on Earth, the first "moral force". The first exchange was the first "moral phenomenon"."*

In this conception of a "natural finalist morality", this soul was accountable "as to its ultimate sanctions, they are needed and are regulated by the need for justice, which requires compensation of benefits and the "purging" of harm. But it is certain that absolute good and evil cannot be conceived on the part of human beings, since that would assume full responsibility on their part and this can only be the attribute of a perfect science. Human beings, as terrestrial beings, are and will ever remain capable only of relative good and evil. Consequently, therefore, their souls can only earn rewards and punishments limited in scope and time. (Even so, this extended time and scope may have no limit other than infinity.)

For Henri Lambert "what we call the "soul" can and does exist in human beings. It is the result of the action of moral forces on the nuclear substance of the cells of certain brain structures that have attained the state of life, of consciousness, of thought – a substance found in all living beings, but which in the human being is brought, under the influence of these

natural, but superior forces, to a state of subtlety, sublimeness and 'spirituality' that enables it to escape beyond the physical and natural environment and its forces, no longer to belong only to a qualified metaphysical and supernatural world (because we do not yet know the nature of the physical world). The soul, being no longer modifiable or even influenced by physical forces, is indestructible: it cannot perish, it is "immortal".

"It is therefore not only possible and legitimate, but imperative to seek to introduce into atomism a new hypothesis or hypotheses. And we consider ourselves at least as well entitled to make ours. We know it is as yet rudimentary, poorly specified; it remains uncalculated, perhaps incalculable, but we believe it could lead to a simplification of theories – even of calculations. Moreover – we are not afraid to admit – it responds to the initial desiderata and the basic needs of our new system of general philosophy taken as a whole. This – rational and scientific, as it should be – takes its starting point in the atom from which derive all phenomena, from those of physics, chemistry and biology, to those of the human psyche and morality. We also recognise that: if our atomic hypothesis is false, the philosophical system on which it rests is also invalid. It will vanish. But this would be a pity, because no other philosophy, whether from the past or the present, appears likely to meet rationally the current needs for moral guidelines, so urgently needed by human society, threatened, as it is, in its civilisation, if not indeed in its very existence, by revolutions and wars."