The Problem of Social Change as Seen in the Life and Work of Jean Jaurès and George Sorel

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THE PROBLEM OF SOCIAL CHANGE AS SEEN IN THE LIFE AND WORK OF JEAN JAURES AND GEORGES SOREL

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to determine the place of the thought of Jean Jaures and Georges Sorel in the continuum of the French revolutionary search for a social and political order that would protect individual liberty and guarantee justice. Biographical sketches, showing the influences that helped to shape the thought of Jaures and Sorel are followed by an analysis of their concepts of liberty and justice as the motivation for change. The major aspects of the works and careers of each are studied to determine how consistent they were. There was an underlying consistency in their thought. Both were conservative revolutionaries, but neither directly influenced French social and political change. Jaures' rational thought and monistic world view and Sorel's pragmatic, pessimistic thought and pluralistic world view represent the contrast between idealistic revolutionary ideology and the prophecy of totalitarianism.
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INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century saw the development of ideas about social change which can be seen as a continuation of the search begun in the eighteenth century for a social and political order that would protect individual liberty and guarantee justice. The search was based on the realization that the French Revolution had not fulfilled its task. It was centered in men who were either unusually intelligent or eccentric or courageous enough to go to prison or be exiled for their efforts, or on a combination of these traits. The search went to extremes and came to be called socialism. The early figures in the quest were concerned with the realization of complete social equality. With the arrival of Pierre Joseph Proudhon on the intellectual scene, the concern became one of finding true liberty and justice.

The problems of liberty and justice and the interpretations of the exact meanings of the words have been stumbling blocks to social change. These intangible ideals could be inculcated by education and experience, it was thought, yet to change the old ways called for a magnanimity foreign to the vested interests of those in power in nineteenth-century France. Socialism grew as an intellec-
tual force in France after the revolutions of 1848. It sought answers to the problems of those who were frustrated by the political, social and economic environment. Socialist leaders were, with few exceptions, intellectual bourgeois who can best be described as humanitarians. Their basic premise was that the private ownership of land and the means of production must cease in order that all citizens might enjoy a just share of the nation's wealth. This, they advocated, would lead to true liberty and justice.

The earliest threads of socialist activity have been tenuously traced to Gracchus Babeuf's "Conspiracy of the Equals" during the French Revolution. The conspiracy was based on the idea that true economic equality was the law of nature and that it was the aim of society. Early in the nineteenth century, Henri Saint-Simon sought to find the way to true economic equality. His classification as a socialist is tenuous because of his emphasis on business. He is said to have foreseen the problems of modern industrialization in the sense that his search for a science of society


resembles what is now referred to as technocracy. It was his followers, the Saint-Simonians, who linked part of his ideas to the concept of property and thus to the developing ideas of socialism.

Charles Fourier was next in the line of French socialist thinkers. His work has been described as chaotic and based on a childlike religious faith. He is seen as a link between the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century. Fourier's thought was born of an intense revulsion to the lack of organization and the waste that he saw in the capitalist system. Basically his plan was to criticize and destroy society and rebuild it on the basis of co-operation. In the long run his major influence was on the anarchists. Louis Blanc was next in prominence as a critic of society. He strongly disliked the basis of the capitalist system, competition. In order to prevent injustice to those who had to live by their labor, he proposed national workshops based on the postulate that those who had only their labor for market value had therefore the "right to work." In a real sense he represents a transition from the highly imaginative socialist concepts of Fourier to a concentration on basing change on a proletarian movement. Blanc's

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3 Gray, Socialist Tradition, p. 166.
4 Ibid., p. 160; Soltau, French Political Thought, pp. 146-49.
5 Ibid., pp. 168-95; Ibid., pp. 150-56.
propaganda was influential in the revolutionary crises of 1848 and his position in the Provisional Government after 1848 resulted in the fiasco of establishing national workshops and represented a stage in the development of the concepts of state socialism.\(^7\)

The prominence of the role of Proudhon in French socialist thought cannot be denied. He has been variously interpreted due to the chaotic and contradictory nature of his work. His was one of the most original minds of the nineteenth century. The essence of Proudhonian thought was his fundamental concept of justice, which he equated with equality, and his concept of extreme individualistic liberty. His thought was most influential on the anarchist and syndicalist movements,\(^8\) and as will be seen, he had a profound influence on Georges Sorel. Proudhon's emphasis on liberty and justice was an advocacy of moral change in society. It has been said of Proudhon, "He was a real man, whereas Marx was only a mind; he was entirely sane and healthy, whereas Nietzsche was partly decadent and diseased."\(^9\) He was an energetic and elusive thinker whose ideas provided the springboard for the thought of others.

The apogee of socialist thought was the work of Karl

\(^{7}\text{Ibid., p. 229; Soltau, French Political Thought, pp. 162-64.}\)

\(^{8}\text{Gray, Socialist Tradition, pp. 234-35.}\)

\(^{9}\text{Quoted by Soltau, French Political Thought, p. 290.}\)
Marx. His work is also the basis of modern socialism, with its emphasis on materialism. Marx, for better or for worse, has left an indelible imprint on the world of ideas. There was nothing new in the work of Karl Marx, rather it was his synthesis of German philosophy, French social thought and English economic history that made his theories unique. Even though unique, Marx's thought was bound, like that of his predecessors, to eighteenth-century rationalism, and to the conviction that history evolved according to natural laws. His most famous work, a pamphlet entitled *The Communist Manifesto*, appeared in 1848 and was quickly repressed along with other socialist works in the crises of that year. Many thought, hopefully, that the socialist trend was finished and that the frightening ideas of Marx were buried with it. Extremism was repressed again in 1871 at the end of the Franco-Prussian War, this time brutally.

Ideas and events were beginning to coalesce again in French history, this time leading to a steadily growing socialist movement which was to find expression of its social discontent in the political arena. The repression of the Paris Commune was to have a profound influence on those who opposed the functioning of liberalism. The term "Commune" refers to the form of municipal government in Paris during the Middle Ages. It had been revived during the Revolution and was revived again as the Franco-Prussian War wound down and the newly elected General Assembly turned out to be so heavily monarchist. Led by Leon Gambetta, it was republican
backed and in effect represented the age-old conflict in
France between town and country. The Commune was born of
socio-economic and political realities and instincts that
were foreign to the newly formed government and to the over-
whelming majority of Frenchmen at the time. The government
was neither ready nor able to empathize with the Communards' point of view; therefore Adolph Thiers, head of the govern-
ment, ordered the army to invade Paris on April 2, 1871. As
a consequence, 20,000 men, women and children died in Paris. Another 13,000 were deported as prisoners, of whom 3,000
died because of the poor treatment that they received. The
fact that the Republic had been able to overcome the uprising earned it favor as a system of government.

The use of the force of the state to suppress a social and political problem merely sharpened the tensions that had existed since the Revolution. The repression was only a temporary setback for socialist ideas.

The Third French Republic was legitimized by a con-
stitution in 1875. In 1877 Jules Guesde founded L'Égalité,
once again bringing socialism to the fore. At this time
the democratization of France and growth of socialism as an


11 Sedgwick, Third French Republic, pp. 7, 9.

12 Soltau, French Political Thought, p. 433.
active socio-political force became parallel developments.

The problem facing France throughout the period of the Third Republic was two-fold. It had to develop within its citizenry an attitude of collective interest, and, of greater importance, there was a need for a social consciousness, i.e., an evaluation of the ideals of liberty and justice in relation to society as a whole. This problem is hardly limited to Frenchmen, yet their process of coming to terms with it was more stormy and divisive than that in other western democratic nations. With the advent of the Third Republic many attitudes of the past began to dissolve. The battle between church and state, over republic or monarchy, between clericalism and anti-clericalism and militarism or parliamentarianism was resolved.13 The Republican democratic system was a fact. All but the aristocracy, which chose to isolate itself, turned their efforts toward working with the new system. The land-owning peasantry found the Republic an effective means to protect its property interests; workers had gained the right to organize and therefore to make their needs known; the middle-class had found a convenient path toward careers within the parliamentary Republic, which led to the negative aspect of a monopolization of power by the bourgeois class.

In this milieu the majority of industrial workers

13 Thomson, Democracy in France, p. 72.
found creeds and men to lead them. They had no other means of earning a living than by their labor. The recompense for this labor was often not enough for subsistence. The growing number of industrial workers constituted a large segment of the population that was dispossessed of the means to improve the quality of their lives. Socialism considered the capitalist economic system to be the root cause of the proletariat's plight and foresaw the abolition of private ownership of the means of production as the solution. In a society where the means of production were owned collectively, all human beings within that society would be assured of the means to fully develop their human potential. Such generalizations as these tend to infer massive trauma within the so-called proletarian class, and can thus be misleading. French socialism during the Third Republic was reformist. For the majority of the workers, including those in syndicats, which were anti-political, the purpose of organizing was a means of expressing group interests. They did not organize in order to destroy the state.¹⁴

In the intellectual realm, however, one finds the theoretical view of socialism and of the problems of defining liberty and justice. Here the continuum of post Revolutionary development in ideas and in the turbulence of the

Third Republic that the works of Jean Jaurès and Georges Sorel enter French intellectual history.

Jean Jaurès and Georges Sorel were humanitarians. They were men of high intellectual calibre who became polemical writers in late nineteenth-century France. They were philosopher-historians. Jaurès was a man of thought and action, an editor, author and a politician. Sorel was strictly a man of letters. Both men were born of bourgeois Catholic parents. Each rejected Catholicism as adults. Each was frugal in his lifestyle. Each was essentially a philosopher. They both gained prominence in the intellectual milieu during the early 1890s. Most significant, however, is the fact that, like their predecessors, they sought happiness and well being for every member of society. In light of these common denominators, how did they arrive at diametrically opposed concepts of social change? What were the influences in their lives and work that determined their world views? What did they see to be the motive forces in social change? What, in light of earlier thinking about liberty and justice, did they perceive these words to mean? What were their plans for change? Were they consistent in their views? What, in the final analysis, was the relevancy of their work? The answers to these questions will be sought through brief biographical sketches of Jaurès and Sorel, followed by a study of their concepts and ideas. Once the basis of their thought has been determined, the major aspects of their careers and works will be studied in order to assess the position of
these two men in the annals of French intellectual history.
CHAPTER I

THE EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL CHANGE: THE TRAINING AND CAREER OF JAURÈS CONTRASTED WITH THAT OF SOREL

Jean Jaures was born on September 3, 1859, in Castres, a small village in the department of Tarn in the province of Languedoc. His parents were bourgeois. His father was neither successful financially, nor did he provide a strong father figure for his sons. It was the mother who was dominant and the strength of her influence can be attributed to her individualized practice of Catholicism. Madame Jaures displayed a tolerance for every person's right to make his own decision about God and the Church.

As a small boy Jaures loved the countryside and was often found outdoors. Although the Tarn was lightly industrialized, it remained largely agricultural. The environment is most graphically described by Jaures' biographer, Marcelle Auclair. Through his eyes one sees Jaures growing to manhood in complete harmony with the wonders of nature and with the people of the Tarn. This harmony continued throughout the years during which he represented the region as a socialist deputy in parliament, and it is...
epitomized in Auclair's poignant prologue in which he
describes the stunned Tarnaisians of Carmaux as they received
news of Jaures' assassination. One miner quietly remarked,
"They have cut down a mighty oak."  

Jaures' education began in a small private establishment under a priest, Abbé Rémy Sejal, from whom he quickly learned the fundamentals of Latin and French. Due to the limited opportunity for education in France at the time, a sacrifice on the part of the family was necessary to afford Jean and his brother, Louis, this schooling. They were again fortunate when, in 1869, they were able to enter the Collège de Castres under a scholarship. The scholarship was divided for the benefit of both boys through the influence of their mother and her distant cousin, Admiral Jaures. With considerable difficulty Madame Jaures provided the remainder of the necessary funds, thus insuring her boys' early training.  

Jean proved to be a scholar par excellence to the delight of his teachers. His thirst for knowledge was insatiable and his ability to internalize it was exceptional. He showed special interest in the Greek and Latin classics and spent many hours walking and talking with the professor of ancient literature. Along with his scholarly abilities he also

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displayed in these early years his gift for oratory.  

At the school Jaurès was exposed to the attitudes of his teachers toward progressive ideas, toward rationalism, toward the belief in progress and toward republicanism. Within his family, his father was an Orleanist and his brother was an enthusiastic republican. Personally, Jaurès avoided controversy of any kind and particularly that roused by politics, which seemed to him to be a waste of time.  

In 1876 Jaurès traveled by train to Paris where he was to spend several years as a student, first at the preparatory school of Sainte-Barbê, and then at l'École Normale Supérieure. He spent his scholarly years successfully and finished third in the annual aggregation, a competition dating from 1766 which determined who would receive the top teaching positions in France. Jaurès requested a position at the lycée of Albi in order to be near his parents. It was during the years 1881 to 1883 that he began to discover the external world of people, problems and politics, and to incorporate his thoughts about them into his philosophy. In 1883 he received a position in the Faculty of Letters at Toulouse. For the next two years he was more and more drawn to the world of politics. Overcoming indecision about running for

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4 Ibid., p. 31. Ibid., p. 11.
5 This was later evident in one of his student's lecture notes. The notes were those of Louis Rascol, who was a student of Jaurès from 1882-83. Goldberg, Jean Jaurès, p. 486.
office in 1885, he submitted himself as a candidate for election to the Chamber of Deputies on the republican ticket, and was elected in the October 18 balloting. Thus the young Tarnaisian scholar and erudite professor of philosophy entered an unknown world. Naive, idealistic and unprepared though he was, he was imbued with a sincere conscience and a long-held conviction, as stated in an 1882 letter to a friend, Charles Salomon, that in spite of his own shortcomings he felt that he would be "capable of showing less petty ambitions than many others." 6

The transition from theory to political action was "the most simple in the world." His ideas were translated into practice by his action, i.e., his complete lack of personal ambition left no doubt ever as to his motives. 7 Jaurès served in the Chamber from 1885 to 1889 when he was defeated for reelection. The young republican deputy who believed deeply in the democratic movement of the Republic was attracted to socialism in this period.

As soon as I began to write in the newspapers and to speak in the Chamber, around 1886, I had possessed socialism entirely and had made a profession. I do not make a point of saying this in order to refute the legend which makes of me a left center convert, but simply because it is the truth. But it is also true that I adhered to the socialist and collectivist

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7 Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Jean Jaurès, Essai biographique, Nouvelle édition suivie de lettres inédites (Paris: F. Rieder & Cie., 1924), p. 84.
idea before adhering to a socialist party. I imagined that every Republican, in pursuing the idea of the Republic to the utmost, would have to come to socialism.\(^8\)

Upon the electoral defeat Jaurès returned to his teaching position at Toulouse and to preliminary work on his thesis. The lure of politics proved irresistible, however, and his election to the town council of Toulouse in 1890, as well as his writing articles for the \textit{Dépêche de Toulouse} delayed completion of his two theses until 1892.

The philosophical approach that Jaurès was to take toward the problem of social change is clearly evident in his thesis, \textit{De la Réalité du Monde sensible}. In a word, the world view of this philosopher-politician was unity. Within the thesis Jaurès revealed his pantheistic concept of God as a Becoming "the order and harmony of things."\(^9\) One might say that it was the nature of his being to seek harmony and unity. This required a reconciliation between the ideal and the real, between cerebral idealism and the material universe. The influence of the ancient philosophers, of his own philosophy professors, of the positivists, of the doctrine of evolution and of modern social theories conjoined with his practical experience as a politician to produce an exposition of reality which all men, commoners and philosophers alike could understand. The strong influence of Michelet is

\(^8\)Ibid., quoted on p. 99.

evident in Jaurès' desire to "make an elite of humanity."\textsuperscript{10} Jaurès' thesis lends itself to such an interpretation. He wrote that "Every man carries within himself both the common and the philosophical."\textsuperscript{11} "The real is that which is intelligible. . . . It is a sublime metaphysic which is the hidden energy of the most practical minds and the most common existences."\textsuperscript{12} Reality is the continuous conjunction between the mind of man in concert with his senses, and the objective matter which exists exterior to man.\textsuperscript{13}

Having resolved the contradiction between idealism and the material world in his own mind, Jaurès related the same concept to his study of German socialism. The result was an interpretation of German socialism which analyzed socialist thought in general and evolved a theory of reconciliation between Marx and the moralists. The spirit of socialism antedated the rise of industry in Germany, having been born of philosophical idealism, wrote Jaurès.\textsuperscript{14} Differences in French history and German history had predisposed the former nation to moral socialism and the latter to dialectical socialism. The hour was not far off when they would converge into one socialism "of all souls, minds, forces and faculties

\textsuperscript{10}Lévy-Bruhl, \textit{Essai}, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{11}Jaurès, \textit{Oeuvres}, VIII, 14.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 19.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., pp. 14, 17.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., III, 58-59.
of conscience, as well as brotherly Christian communion, the dignity and true liberty of the human being and even the imminent dialectic of things, of history and of the world."\textsuperscript{15}

Although the basis of Jaurès' socialist thought had taken shape he had not joined a socialist party. In 1892 he met Jules Guesde, chief of the most organized socialist party in France, the Parti ouvrier français, and discussed with him socialist theory and method. Guesde was an orthodox Marxist. It was the mutual respect which the men had for each other as well as Jaurès' deep socialist convictions which led to his being asked to run in a special election on Guesde's P.O.F. platform. Jaurès accepted the candidacy without reservations and was reelected to the Chamber in January 1893. From this moment, his life and the history of French socialism are joined.\textsuperscript{16}

Jaurès became the undisputed leader of the socialists by virtue of his oratorical skill and his humanism. Events often led to actions on his part which one might call opportunistic. These actions were in fact a product of political realism. In describing the contradictions between his idealistic goals and his political actions to a collaborator he said that "I have often compared socialism to the heart; it has, like the heart, pulsations, rhythm, alternate

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. iii.

\textsuperscript{16}Auclair, \textit{La vie}. This is the thesis of Auclair's biography. See also the statement on p. 444. Ligou also states this view, p. 232.
movements of expansion and contraction. . . . Is it surprising to observe in the organic development of my thought the same phenomena of systole and diastole?" This metaphor, as noted by Goldberg, strikingly illustrates Jaurès' philosophy of unity. Intellectually it was a blend of ancient and modern wisdom. His socialist method alternated "participation and opposition, reform and revolution." The ultimate goal was the harmony of mankind.18

His career began conservatively. Jaurès was a socialist who was a staunch believer in the Republic and democracy. His "libertarian socialism" was based on the conviction that democracy was a stage in the evolutionary march of history toward the socialist world order. A number of practical changes could help mankind to hasten the transition. Jaurès was a supporter of the separation of church and state and strongly advocated the removal of education from church control. He joined the Dreyfusards in defense of the Republic and in the coalition of left and center which defeated the reactionaries. He supported the participation of the socialist Millerand in a bourgeois ministry. This created quite a furor within the still ill-defined socialist movement.

17Le Matin, April 8, 1907. Quoted by Goldberg, p. 152.

18Ibid.

19Maurice Boitel, Les Idées libérales dans le socialisme de Jean Jaurès (Paris: L'Émancipatrice, 1921). Boitel uses this term to define Jaurès' socialism which he sees as a blend of classical liberalism and Marxism.
and set back his dream of unity for years. Following the Dreyfus affair and the Millerand case, the problem of the embourgeoisment of the parliamentary socialists became evident and Jaurès cautioned his fellow socialists to guard against this danger.

As a leading socialist, Jaurès was an influential delegate to the French Socialist party congresses and the congresses of the Second International. Often he aided in working out compromises over the major issues confronting these bodies of diverse interests. The magnitude of the disagreement on the question of socialist method seems to have eluded all of the leaders of the Second International. All resolutions were compromises, and none was enforceable, thus they were dead letters at their inception. Each leader in his own way thought that everything would work out. Jaurès certainly was convinced that reason would prevail and he was faithful to this belief through all of the years of his preoccupation with the central issue of his career, the problem of peace. From the time of socialist unity in 1905 until his assassination he tirelessly fought to control the forces of imperialism and militarism, which he saw as utterly opposed to national interests.

Aside from his work as a Deputy and a socialist leader, Jaurès was also a prolific writer. He accepted a job as the writer of political editorials for La Petite République in 1898, following his defeat for reelection to the Chamber. He supported his family with his writing in this interim
period, 1898 to 1903. In the pages of *La Petite République* he wrote a series of articles entitled *Les Preuves*, which comprised a detailed analysis of the facts in the Dreyfus case. This analysis had a significant impact on the initiative for a retrial of the case.  

It was also during this lull in his political career that Jaurès was approached by Jules Rouff, a publisher, about the possibility of planning, editing and contributing to a multi-volume work on the history of France from 1789 to the end of the nineteenth century. The challenge was all to enticing and consumed his interest, thus as the other contributors bowed out for various reasons, Jaurès carried on to produce by 1903 the first historical account of its kind in French history. It was a monumental study of the Revolution based upon the use of "original sources and documents" carried out by using "the method of historical materialism." Jaurès had sought to explain to his fellow countrymen the reasons for and the results of the Revolution. Essentially, *L'Histoire de la Révolution française* was a socialist history of France written from a Marxist viewpoint, i.e., it centered on the conflict of classes. It reflected the view that the study of the past is also, in a sense, the study of the present. Jaurès' research into the how and why of the

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20 See Goldberg, Jean Jaurès, pp. 240-41 for details on the influence of *Les Preuves*.

revolutionary changes in France deepened his knowledge of social structure and of the historical process. Jaurès was guilty of errors of omission in the work, nevertheless it was praised as a significant contribution to French historical studies.

Jaurès' last major literary undertaking was a detailed study of French military history and preparedness, which he called *L'Armée nouvelle*. His efforts to change any aspect of military affairs were in vain. His book was read and his knowledge was appreciated by many officers, yet there was no interest in the sweeping changes that he proposed. Again in 1913 he fought against the system to prevent the Three Years Law of military service, and again he was defeated. These efforts, General Percin was to write later, were striking proof of Jaurès' genius, prudence and good sense. The events of 1914 to 1917 proved the wisdom of *L'Armée nouvelle*.

By far the most astonishing aspect of Jaurès' career was the fact that he wrote over two thousand articles for the socialist daily, *L'Humanité*. The daily was created in April 1904, with Jaurès as editor. Its circulation never lived up to his optimistic expectations and it was rarely free of financial problems, yet from its inception until his death in 1914 it provided the mouthpiece for France's great

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22 Ibid., pp. 287-88.
socialist leader, and after 1905, for the united socialist party.  

Aside from the work from his prolific pen, Jaurès gave countless speeches many of which were extemporaneous, thus lost forever. He was a dynamo of activity, traveling in France and Europe and, in 1911, to South America as the exponent of evolutionary socialism and anti-militarism. Wherever he was, Jaurès was productive. He loved his work and he lived by his work. Lévy-Bruhl sees in Jaurès' political temperament an original aspect in that his taste for day-to-day action, his clear and sharp sense of the needs of the moment and of the best means of meeting them, were always attuned to his higher vision of humanity's goal. One can hardly imagine a more striking contrast to this idealistic political leader and thinker than that of Georges Sorel, the outsider, the protagonist extraordinaire.

Georges Sorel was born on November 2, 1847, in Cherbourg, Normandy. It is known that the Sorel family was of the bourgeois class and that their financial circumstances took a turn for the worse during Sorel's youth. This fact has been suggested as having influenced him in that it made

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25 Lévy-Bruhl, Essai, p. 87.
him aware of the part that money played in life styles. 26

Sorel is said to have been a pious and studious child who had apparently been influenced by his mother's piety. His famous cousin, the historian Albert Sorel, interpreted this influence as having rendered a mystical aspect to Sorel's character. Pierre Andreu, Sorel's biographer, says that it was not a mystical aspect which Sorel acquired from his mother, but the idea of a sublime ethic, which remained with him throughout his life. 27

Sorel's formal learning was acquired in a private school in Cherbourg and during a brief stay at the Collège imperial Rollin in Paris. It was at the Collège, during a scholarly rebellion that he displayed an independence of character and a trait of fault-finding which never changed. 28 At the age of seventeen he entered l'École polytechnique, where he achieved distinction in mathematics. Having earned a degree from there at the age of nineteen, he took a position in the Department of Bridges and Roads of the French government. He rose to the position of Chief Engineer. Most Sorelian biographers note that he always wore the Legion

27 Andreu, Notre Maître, pp. 24-25.
28 Ibid., p. 28.
of Honor ribbon that was awarded to him upon his retirement, as it symbolized his practical achievement as an engineer and the state's recognition thereof. He did not accept the pension to which he was entitled as a retired civil servant. He was able to take this independent stand, free of official obligations, because of an inheritance from his mother. Thus he retired bourgeois fashion in 1892, after twenty-five years of service, in the Parisian suburb of Boulogne-sur-Seine.

Sorel's political opinions prior to his retirement are unknown. He was a monarchist when he left school. For a few years early in his career he was in Corsica and Albi. During his years as a civil servant he traveled to a succession of small towns, serving his longest and last tenure at Perpignan. He had known well the bourgeois society of the small town and had developed a strong disgust for its life and mores, as well as for the military officers with whom he had been directly associated for twenty years of his career.²⁹ Much of his spare time had been spent in reading and observation. In 1886 an article, "Sur les applications de la psychophysique," appeared in la Revue philosophique. His first two books, le Procès de Socrate and Contribution à l'Étude profane de la Bible, were published in 1889.

These publications launched the second career of Georges Sorel as a self-taught man of letters. The years of self-education by this moralist produced eventually the most

²⁹Ibid., pp. 32-34.
challenging and original political views of the late nineteenth century. His views indicate that he felt a link with the historical process and the problems of man and society. His ideas were based upon his concept of justice as the key to the relationship of man to man, and on the concept of liberty as a continuing problem for man in society.

In his *Procès de Socrate* he chastized the philosophes of the eighteenth century for not making specific proposals about the problem of individual liberty, which he said was "as interesting as in any other epoque."\(^{30}\) His book on Socrates reflected a consciousness of how important economic and social phenomena are to the practical fabric of a people. The first change in his political views came after his discovery of Proudhon and Marx, around 1884. It was not until 1893, however, that his first specifically socialist thinking appeared in an article in the *Revue philosophique* which he concluded with a question that was to guide his intellectual quest: "is socialism able to validly lay claim to establishing an economic science which embraces all of the forms of social life?" Is it true that there is an element in social relationships susceptible of entering into a rational science, as Karl Marx maintains, or as Aristotle thought, is society only a phenomenon which escapes all possible scientific categories?\(^{31}\) Sorel rejected the views of the liberal

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\(^{30}\) *Ibid.*, quoted on page 44.

economists of the time and approached his study from a philosophical viewpoint. From 1894 to 1897 he wrote for two Marxist reviews, L'Ere nouvelle and Le Devenir social. In 1894 he wrote that, "I hold the theory of Marx for the greatest innovation introduced in philosophy for several centuries; it marks the point of departure of a fruitful transformation in the current of our speculations. Today all of our ideas must incorporate themselves around the new principles posed by scientific socialism." Marx, he continues, has put philosophy on its feet and has brought it down to earth, especially as regards production where men work, and searches there "the fundamental principle of ethics in the human phenomenon which develops around the machine." Using this Marxian metaphysics "it is possible to establish a rational knowledge of man..." In 1910 Sorel was to dismiss this thinking with the remark that he had been "full of rationalist prejudices" in the early period of his intellectual career.32

In 1897 Sorel read a book by the Italian Saverio Merlino, Pro e contra il socialismo, in which the author maintained that the basis of socialist theory needed to be revised so that it would be in accord with the social movement in which socialist organizations were taking part. This line of thought accorded with the 1899 work of the German Eduard Bernstein which challenged Marx's tenets.

32Ibid., pp. 52-53.
Sorel accepted the revisionist view of Marxism readily.

In the spring of 1898 Sorel published a work, *L'Avenir socialiste des syndicats*, in which he expressed what was to become the keynote of his theory for change, the call for autonomous action of the workers. In *L'Avenir* his socialist views were comparable to Jaurès' on many points. There was little change in two important prefaces that he wrote in 1899 and 1901. During this period he even expressed admiration for Jaurès, although he felt skeptical about parliamentary socialists in general. Sorel saw in Jaurès' defense of Dreyfus an indication of socialist ethics. He agreed, too, with Jaurès' support of Millerand's entry into the Waldeck-Rousseau ministry in 1899, saying that "the entry of Millerand into the ministry consecrates the cooperation of socialism in the democracy."34

It was the Dreyfus Affair and its political consequences that led Sorel to reject socialism. He was to refer to the Affair later as the Dreyfusian revolution. The aftermath of the Affair saw socialist deputies gaining more seats in the Chamber. These deputies in turn began to play the bourgeois game of using their political positions to improve

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their own lot, rather than working to further the class struggle. Sorel's term for such results was "embourgeoisement." Parliamentary socialists became the objects of Sorel's contempt because of this behavior and he never tired of levying scathing attacks on them.

Having repudiated parliamentary socialism, Sorel found a new hope in the purist organization of the Bourses du Travail, led by Fernand Pelloutier. His affair with revolutionary syndicalism spanned the years 1902 to 1909. It ended as abruptly, and ironically, for the same reason as had his interest in parliamentary socialism, i.e., the bourgeoisment of the syndicalist leaders. The climax of his career as a revolutionary syndicalist came in 1905 with the publication of his Réflexions sur la violence in Hubert Lagardelle's Le Mouvement socialiste. The work was born of the changing social phenomena as much as of the synthesis of his thoughts. Intellectually it reflected the influence of several philosophical systems, both ancient and modern. From Aristotle, as noted, he learned to question whether or not the socio-economic phenomena could ever be explained, and following Plato he rejected the idea of systems since they could only lead to a homogeneous society. Most significant of the ancient influences was the philosophy of pessimism. Pessimist philosophy emphasizes the tragic aspects of life. In his explanation of pessimism to Daniel Halévy one sees clearly how the pessimist philosophy was conjoined with his religious researches.
Pessimism is a philosophy of conduct rather than a theory of the world; it considers the march towards deliverance as narrowly conditioned on the one hand, by the experimental knowledge that we have acquired from the obstacles which oppose themselves to the satisfaction of our imaginations (or if we like, by the feeling of social determinism), and, on the other, by a profound conviction of our natural weakness. These two aspects of pessimism should never be separated although, as a rule, scarcely any attention is paid to their close connection.35

Sorel continued by explaining that the pessimist concept arose from ancient poetic works which tell of the grief endured by man. Regardless of a man's good fortune, he is subject to "malevolent forces" that can overwhelm him at any time, engendering toward him almost universal sympathy. To understand the doctrine of pessimism one should study the ancient literature, as well as its manifestations among historical groups. To guide such a study he explains that "the feeling of social determinism" is the pessimist view whereby social conditions are seen as formed into a system in an iron-clad manner making them unavoidable, ergo our weakness, and changeable only by catastrophe which affects the whole system. He then reemphasizes that the fundamental aspect of pessimism is the means whereby it conceives of a path toward deliverance.36 His religious studies revealed to him that this was also the fundamental aspect of all.

35Georges Sorel, Reflections on Violence, trans. by T. E. Hulme (New York: Peter Smith, 1941), p. 10. All references to Reflections will be to this edition unless otherwise noted.

36Ibid., p. 11.
religious systems recorded by history.\textsuperscript{37}

Sorel was also influenced by the Bergsonian concepts of an ever-changing universe, "an organic and unitary view of reality" in which truth is relative.\textsuperscript{38} From the idea of duration, or the predominant importance of movements, Sorel discovered the historical importance of myths. He was further influenced by Proudhon's call for justice and a new moralism. Indeed, the influence of Proudhon on Sorel was far more profound than that of Marx.\textsuperscript{39} Although the pragmatic method had been anticipated in early works, Sorel was much influenced by the American philosopher of pragmatism, William James. As in the work of every major author whom he read, Sorel found shortcomings in James' views. These he supplemented with the philosophy of Vico, which emphasized the source of knowledge as being based upon what man makes or does.\textsuperscript{40} Contrary to what a cursory examination of his works might show, Sorel was not influenced by Nietzsche. Rather, he found many of his own ideas echoed in those of Nietzsche.\textsuperscript{41} This serves to illustrate the difficulty of

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., pp. 14-15.


\textsuperscript{39}See Meisel, Genesis, pp. 93-99 for excellent summary of Proudhon's influence.

\textsuperscript{40}Humphrey, Prophet, pp. 130-32.

\textsuperscript{41}Meisel, Genesis, pp. 12-15.
unraveling the threads of Sorelian thought. As has been noted, one can play a game of determining which writers strongly influenced Sorel. The final conclusion, in all fairness, is that he was well-read and had analyzed what he read.\textsuperscript{42} Sorel was an angry man, angry because he loved life and hated the failure of people to see through the illusion of rationalism. He had, in common with Nietzsche, insight into the dark recesses of the soul. His was an "intellectual violence intended to protect rational standards."\textsuperscript{43} Sorel was essentially a philosopher whose search for reality made of him in turn a sociologist, a historian and a political scientist and polemicist. The task for man, as he saw it, was to find a vehicle for change, an idea and a movement. This explains his vascillations between political ideologies.

By 1908 when his Reflections appeared in book form, disillusionment with revolutionary syndicalism had set in. The general strike of May 1, 1906, the first in working class history, which had been born of great hope had ended in great despair. It had been followed in 1907 by bloody, hard strikes that left many workers dead and wounded. By 1908 police and administrative repression had left the workers, after "ten years of heroic struggle . . . bewildered and weak."\textsuperscript{44} The resignation of Victor Griffuelhes,

\textsuperscript{42}Humphrey, Prophet, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{43}Meisel, Genesis, p. 169.
\textsuperscript{44}Andreu, Notre Maître, p. 65.
the "workers monitor," as secretary-general of the Confédération générale du travail, marked the end of an era and the demise of revolutionary syndicalism. The great Sorelian hope of "a renovation based on the integrity of a pessimistic proletarian movement, heroic and pure," collapsed. His attention was at this point drawn to Charles Maurras' monarchist organization, L'Action française.

His acquaintance with Maurras developed through George Valois, whom he had known since 1898. Valois published a book, La Monarchie et la classe ouvrière, in 1908. In this book he sketched plans for the alliance of monarchists and syndicalists. Sorel was flattered by the admiration of the young rightists, yet he was cautious in responding to them. In August 1908, he published an article on "Modernism in Religion and Socialism," in which he condemned equally enlightened socialists and liberal Catholics for betraying the fundamentals of their faith. The article was published in the Devenir Social of Rome and the rightist organ L'Humanité nouvelle. Writing to his Italian friend, Benedetto Croce, Sorel said that he was reluctant to be published by the rightist press, yet he "found it difficult to refuse these very intelligent young people who cite him often." The following year Sorel wrote to Maurras that

"In modern France, the traditional monarchy would be the only institution apt to fulfill the immense tasks which the theoreticians of the actual government of the State assign to the government of a great country." Thus Sorel's rapprochement with the right was completed through the new political element of the nationalist movement. Having come full circle in his political allegiance, the question uppermost in his mind was what constituted the best method of reviving the "traditional monarchy." In April 1910 the only article of Sorel's ever to be published in *L'Action française* appeared. It was a review of Charles Péguy's, *Le Mystère de la charité de Jeanne d'Arc*, which he called an eminent work in French history that would, in twenty years, link inseparably the name of Péguy to the renaissance of French patriotism. Patriotism was Sorel's new theme and it became almost as important to him to express his sentiments about the values of French history, French culture, French thought and the French spirit as extolling the merits of marxism in 1893 and of revolutionary syndicalism in 1905 had been. In linking his name with the right, he left himself open for criticism.

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Sorel wrote to Agostino Lanzillo at the end of 1910 that he was not too concerned about associating with the monarchists through their review because such party organs were the only means of reaching the workers. He wanted to make his critics understand that his socialist writings did not comprise the most significant part of his work, and that he intended to devote himself to questions that had long interested him which were foreign to socialism. "The work of the philosopher," he said, "is to see and to understand the movements that seem important to him; he is not obliged, thereby, to side with all the men who make the movements. . . ."^52 He answered the charge that he had aided the revival of patriotism after having maintained that syndicalism was anti-patriotic by saying that his critics must understand two things about his switch from syndicalism to patriotism. First, in order to judge a movement one must place himself within the movement and acquire an intellectual sympathy for it, and, secondly, that one must be free of party affiliations, which is difficult for most since their democratic education conditioned them to think in terms of the goal of conquering the state through a party. They could only see one side of an issue, otherwise they would understand his position. He now sought "to free the French intelligence of all the ideologies which have held

^52 Ibid., pp. 76-77.
currency in Europe for the past century." Sorel's independent attitude was reflected in a new review that was created for him in 1911.

Sorel named the review *L'Indépendance* as an indication that it was free of party affiliations. He was the major writer for the review and his work differed in tone from that of the younger contributors. For his articles he studied as a sociologist and as a historian the causes of the French nation's decadence. In such articles as "L'Abandon de la revanche" and "Le monument Jules Ferry," he attacked democrats, modernists, the Sorbonne, and Dreyfusards. His tone was nationalist and anti-semitic, but unlike Péguy and the younger contributors to the review, he did not take a definite position on the current Franco-German tensions. By early 1913 Sorel began to perceive insufficiencies and narrow-mindedness within the nationalist movement. Furthermore, *L'Indépendance* was acquiring a reputation as a reactionary, nationalist organ. All of this was deeply disturbing to Sorel, so much so that he left the review under the pretext of bad health. Thus did another idealistic venture end in disillusionment for the old master.

Sorel broke with the right completely after World War I began. He remained secluded during the war years and wrote his only purely philosophical work, *De l'utilité du prag-

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54 Ibid., p. 82.
matisme. The events in Russia in 1914 stirred his hopes again for a new beginning, a new movement that would save mankind. He contributed several articles to La Revue communiste, founded by Charles Rappoport, in which he praised Lenin. The old master died without seeing the true colors of Bolshevism.

The foregoing biographical sketches reveal that the most significant differences between Jaurès and Sorel were their educational backgrounds, the age and experience that each had attained before entering the world of intellectual debate, and the spirit in which they approached ideas; Jaurès was essentially a peacemaker and Sorel was essentially a critic. Jaurès was a classical scholar whose training had emphasized abstract logic and argumentation. Sorel's education had been technical with an emphasis on mathematics. In addition, he had spent twenty years as a builder, or creator. This practical experience, coupled with the long years in which he had observed people and society, gave him a far different perspective on the problem of social change from that of the inexperienced and naive Jaurès. The extent to which these differences influenced their philosophical world views is seen in their interpretations of the thought of Karl Marx. A study of the relationship of their thought to the social theories of Marx will reveal the fundamental concepts, or laws of social change, upon which each of them based his plans for change.
CHAPTER II

THE LAWS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Neither Jaurès nor Sorel ever developed a doctrine of social change. Each was predisposed to the course of action that he took. Jaurès was a politician who tried to make abstract ideas work in reality and Sorel was a man of letters who never physically knew the world of the workers and who is best described as an outsider. They were intellectuals who reacted to events in a rapidly changing world. Jaurès has thus been seen as an opportunist who contradicted himself, and Sorel's vacillations in his political allegiances led people to doubt his sincerity.

The determining factor in the formulation of their ideas of change was the way of thought that each had learned, and their way of thought was very much determined by their personalities. Jaurèsian thought was comparable to that of the philosophes and the makers of the Revolution. It was rationalist, or intellectualist. Because he never broke from this mold, he remained an idealist. Sorel, however, did break through the rationalist mold and incorporated new

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1Sorel, Reflections (1950 ed.), Shils introduction, p. 27.
viewpoints into his way of thinking which showed him to be a realist and a man of his time. His thought has been described as irrationalist, or anti-intellectual.

The terms rationalism or intellectualism, and irrationalism or anti-intellectualism are not as mutually exclusive as they would appear. They are philosophical terms used to identify ways of thought which do overlap. Intellectualists were the heirs of the inductive method of Galileo and Bacon, and of the consequent faith in science and the observation of nature. From the Enlightenment they had received an optimistic belief in progress and reason. Reason, or the use of logic, was for the intellectualist the key to knowledge and truth. Anti-intellectualists did not, as the term implies, deny the use of logic, rather they insisted that the use of logic alone limits one's ability to gain knowledge and truth. There were other aspects of human thought which were intuitional and nonrational. The two major philosophical proponents of this thought were Henri Bergson and William James. Their interest in intuition was the philosophical counterpart of the psychological discoveries of Freud and the later sociological applications of Weber. Intellectualism tended to be utopian and idealistic while anti-intellectualism sought realism.

The philosophy of history espoused by Jean Jaurès

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2 Humphrey, Prophet, pp. 41-42.

3 Ibid., pp. 40-45. The author clarifies the terms intellectualism and anti-intellectualism.
never changed. Although he displayed a certain tendency toward positivism and pessimism near the end of his life, his metaphysical and optimistic nature remained dominant. His social conceptions were directly bound to his metaphysical and religious ideas, which stemmed from two sources: his love of nature and his faith in humanity's search for justice. This faith is obvious in his interpretation of marxism. The interpretation is a synthesis of Marx's ideas and his philosophy. Sorel's interpretation of Marx, as will be seen, was more of a critical analysis.

In effect, Jaurès only modified the harshness of Marx's theories while using the same scheme for proletarian action. Rather than call for continued class struggle he advocated peaceful evolution toward the proletarian revolution. Georges Sorel, however, upset the Marxian formula completely with his pessimism and pragmatism. He too was guided by the desire for justice. He began his search just as Jaurès did, in accord with the socialist movement in general but he changed his course abruptly when he realized that parliamentary socialists were corrupting socialism. Because of his dismay he retreated into a period of concentration on religious studies between 1902 and 1905. This brought to fruition a unique concept, the seeds of which had been sown


5 Lévy-Bruhl, Essai, pp. 76-77.
long before in his earliest socialist writings.

Justice and liberty were the common denominators in the Jaurèsian and Sorelian views of change, but they conceived of them in entirely different terms. Jaurès believed that there was, in the mind of man, the preconceived idea of justice, a sense of human dignity, and a sense of unity. 6 "Humanity is as a great artist continually in progress." 7

Marx was mistaken, Jaurès maintained, in that he denied an influence of the ideal of justice in human history. It is impossible, he said, to dissociate the moral life of man from his economic life. 8 He agreed with Marx that a society changes because of unstable economic conditions, and that corresponding changes in political, scientific and religious concepts are reflections of the economic structure. The idealist concept of justice and the materialist concept were reconcilable, said Jaurès. They were "two different aspects of the same truth." All intellectual life since the Renaissance had been directed toward "the conciliation, the synthesis of contraries..." 9 He thought that the work of Hegel had culminated this effort and it indicated to him that the rational and the ideal were interwoven: "there is not a rational idea which is not translated into reality and

6 Jaurès, Oeuvres, VI, 15.
7 Ibid., p. 86.
8 Ibid., p. 15.
9 Ibid., pp. 6-8.
there is not a single reality which does not come down to an idea and find a rational explanation." The Hegelian formula of synthesis and conciliation through the identification of the rational and the ideal has been profoundly influential. Two primary applications of this formula were made by Marx, continued Jaurès. One was his theory of class struggle which is described in terms of economic war between the capitalist class and the proletarian class, and the other was his concept that humanity had been the passive object of the unconscious forces of history. The socialist revolution would see a reversal in which humanity "will regulate the march of things." Marx, then, said Jaurès, saw the unconscious forces of history as the preparation for man's consciousness of tomorrow and thereby history was charged with resolving the essential contradiction.  

Jaurès pushed the concept of the conciliation of contraries further. He briefly described his understanding of the physiological and intellectual evolution of man and his economic development, followed with the conclusion that the movement of history was the result of the contradiction between man and the use made of man.  

In the evolution

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10 Ibid., pp. 10-12.

11 Ibid., p. 18. Jaurès actually skirts around the issue in this early doctrinal position. The wording "resulted from the contradiction between man and the use made of man" is, in relation to his overall view of Marx's historical determinism, an evasion of Marx's blunt terminology, the "class struggle."
from one economic form to another, humanity "realizes herself. And there is to be seen in human history not only a necessary evolution, but an intelligible direction and a sense of the ideal." History is a "phenomenon which unfolds according to a mechanical law," as well as "an aspiration which realizes itself according to an ideal law. . . . The development of physiological life as of historical life has been both idealist and materialist." Finally, said Jaurès, Marx himself implies a concept of justice in that he envisioned the consequent communist society as one in which man would be fully free of antagonism, in an era of work, nobility and liberty. 12 In this light, Jaurès could see no contradiction ultimately between his philosophy and that of Marx.

Jaurès never attempted a final synthesis of his philosophy of history. Viewing his disagreement with Marx on the basis of theory one runs into difficulty. However, as practitioners they were in accord. Jaurès, in his acceptance of Michelet's mystical interpretation of the Revolution as the triumph of universal values, as "the reign of law," envisioned a future in which terrestrial justice would reign. Marx was in accord with such a view of the future world. A study by the philosopher Adolphe Landry has shown that the work of Marx was based on unformulated postulates of terrestrial justice. Jaurès and Marx also

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12Ibid., pp. 18-19.
agreed on the significance of the hero and heroics in history. In effect, the historical study of the Revolution, *L'Histoire socialiste de la Révolution française*, which Jaurès wrote under the triple inspiration of Marx, Michelet, and Plutarch, showed that humanity became more moral as it became more social due to the social pressure of interested classes. He interprets the past as a linear progression of "humanity." In the final analysis the grand historical study of Jaurès resembles the grand scheme sketched by Marx.\(^{13}\)

The introduction of Jaurès' *L'Histoire* reveals the strong influence of the materialist concept.

We know that economic conditions, the form of production and of property are the basis of history. Just as work is essential to the life of most human individuals, just as work, which is the economic form of individual activity, most often determines the habits, the thoughts, the sorrows, the joys and even the dreams of men, likewise in each period of history the economic structure of a society determines its political forms, its social mores and even the general direction of thought.\(^{14}\)

Jaurès once succinctly summed up his view when he wrote that social change was the result of "self-conscious egotism, the impersonal dialectic of history, and the deep conscience of humanity."\(^{15}\) He was adamant in the opinion


\[^{15}\text{Jaurès, *Oeuvres*, III, 264. Quoted by Goldberg, p. 81.}\]
that socialism and liberty were synonymous. For the bour-geois to argue that the advent of socialism would mark the end of political and intellectual liberty was to affirm that liberty is "dependent upon the economic bondage of the working class." Either capitalism must be abolished and a collectivist system instituted, or it must be acknowledged "that property, from which complete liberty is inseparable, is eternally the luxury of a minority."\textsuperscript{16} This was not the case, he thought, and history would bear him out. After the Revolution, democratic forces had been thwarted by caesarism, liberty was "devoured" and political liberty was marginal. Workers were under a double depression, political misery and social misery. That is why they adopted the harsh formula of the \textit{Communist Manifesto}, "The workers have no fatherland." This cry is not a rejection, but a plea to the future. "The Manifesto opened up a new world to the workers, yet an obscure one." The essential message of the \textit{Manifesto}, as Jaurès saw it, was the recognition of the class struggle and of the role of the proletariat in building the future.\textsuperscript{17}

The Revolution has proved to be more than just the political arrival of the bourgeoisie. It had, historically, paved the way for the proletariat and socialism through its realization of the prerequisites of socialism: democracy

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., VI, 77-78.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., I, 295.
and capitalism. The period since the Revolution had seen two developments. On the one hand, the capitalists had been centralizing production little by little, and on the other hand, the proletariat had been uniting and agitating for a better future. Both classes would be victorious once the antagonisms were torn down, and liberty would be sovereign under socialism, which is the ultimate expression of individual right.

The goal of liberty would render each individual the opportunity to fully develop his personality. The worker has no choice in the goal of his work or in its organization, therefore he is a double serf. For work to be "truly free" men should have a voice in its direction. In his plight the worker was not free, but he was responsible, he was not consulted, but he could be punished. "There is the paradoxical destiny of the proletariat in the chaotic capitalist order." The "miseries and injustices and all of this disorder" are the result of a system in which one class "monopolizes the means of production and of life and imposes its own law on an entire class." What must take place is the substitution of social property for capitalist property, and an organization of work in which no one can be "the prey or instrument of another person." Jaurès always maintained

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19 Jaurès, Oeuvres, VI, 81-87.
20 Rappoport, Jean Jaurès, le socialiste, pp. 203-04.
the legitimacy of collectivism. Refuting an accusation that
collectivism was theft, he said that if *Le Temps* considered
those who wanted to see the means of production seized by
the nation for the good of all to be burglars and preachers
of the legitimacy of theft, then by the same reasoning *Le
Temps* must admit that the bourgeois revolutionaries of another
century were thieves in the name of the nation when they
seized the goods of the clergy and nobles.\(^{21}\)

Jaurès saw the transition to collectivism as a long
slow process which would evolve within each individual nation
since that is the way in which people are grouped. Social
property would be national property, he said. The nation
alone, in the current system of nation states, was the
"universal association" which "could assure the fullness and
universality of individual rights."\(^{22}\)

Jaurès had blended his philosophy of unity with Marx's
social theories. His thought was guided by abstract ideals,
which is reflected in his basic premises about change. He
thought, first, that the dialectic of history would lead men
to the consciousness of humanity's progress and to the
realization of the historical mission of the proletariat,
and, secondly, he viewed the conscious mission of the pro-
letariat as a dual movement in which the ideal and the real,
or moral reform and economic reform would lead to the


\(^{22}\)Rappoport, *Jean Jaurès, le socialiste*, p. 204
realization of absolute liberty and justice. In discussing the differences between Jaurès' ideas and those of Marx, one becomes embroiled in a problem of semantics. In effect, Jaurès was a Marxist revolutionary intellectually. This will be more evident later when his method and actions will be studied. After the unification of the socialist party in 1905, Jaurès became more committed to official socialism for the sake of unity and sought to lead the Second International toward a policy of action in order to prevent war. It became a question of the degree of his evolution from revolutionary theory to practice.

Jaurès' premises had been clearly defined early in his career. Sorel's premises evolved more slowly. His critical mind and pragmatic method were to lead to realistic premises that were a striking contrast to the idealism of the classical scholar.

Scholars agree on at least one point concerning Georges Sorel, namely, that he was a demolitionist in attacking the ideas of his time. Other less extreme descriptive adjectives are "contrary" and "disputatious." He may also be called the most exasperating and outrageous protagonist of the status quo in the late nineteenth-century intellectual

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25 Hughes, Consciousness, p. 168.
milieu. His scathing attacks on intellectualism, the bourgeoisie, democracy and parliamentary socialism are, in retrospect, a plea for men to take off the blinders of idealism and take a long look at the real world. He tried to show them the way by applying anti-intellectualism to political thought. In his thought man was "conceived as a bundle of emotions rather than as a living theorem." 26

Sorel's thought evolved and came to fruition through the application of his critical method to the study and analysis of Marx's work, of religious history, of philosophical systems and of the social facts of his time. Initially, Sorel was rationalist in his method of thinking, but after twenty years he said that he had managed to rid himself of the false ideas and prejudices of his early training. 27 No doubt his career as an engineer and the practical experience of man's inability to completely control nature enabled him to make correlations between thinking and doing that most intellectuals of the time, especially one with a background like Jaurès', could never conceive. Sorel "admired the makers and doers" and he thought in terms of creating. 28

Sorel was an esthete, a purist, a moralist who sought

27 Sorel, Reflections, p. 3.
28 Humphrey, Prophet, p. 64.
a sublime ethic, a new value system to guide humanity toward liberty. With Nietzsche, he felt the need for a reevaluation of values. He searched for the way through every new movement that showed potential as a moralizing agent, beginning with Marxism.

Sorel saw Marx as having been restricted by the Hegelian dialectic and by idealistic thought. During the years 1893 to 1897 Sorel had accepted orthodox Marxism as a guide to scientific socialism. The maturing of his critical method began when he perceived three shortcomings of Marx's interpretation of the social problem. The most important of these was that Marx had neglected moral factors. Secondly, he had placed far too much faith in science, and lastly, Sorel saw Marx as guilty of an insufficient or erroneous interpretation of social evolution and of the working class movement. 29 It was Marx's use of the Hegelian dialectic that had given his theories the look of scientific socialism, 30 and true to the intellectualist thought pattern, it was accepted literally—at face value. Sorel concluded that such blind acceptance was a mistake and prevented an understanding of the essence of Marx's thought.

Essentially, Marxism was a philosophical interpreta-


30 Deroo, Renversement, p. 137.
tion of the socialist movement. This interpretation opened men's eyes to the concept of the class struggle. The explanation that Engels gave of the dialectic only amounted to a game of words in Sorel's opinion. He thought that Marxism was "none other than the class struggle." The dialectic had "nothing to do with Marxism." Furthermore, Sorel considered the Marxist concept of historical materialism to be too simplistic. The simplicity was understandable in light of Marx's German heritage, whereby he was predisposed to think abstractly. Also, Marx had been unduly influenced by English working class conditions. Sorel proposed to overcome these problems by explaining Marx in light of existing conditions, by remaining faithful to the "spirit of Marx." "One knows," wrote Sorel, "how strongly the Marxist school insists on the impossibility of attempting a revolution as long as capitalism is not developed enough; it is because of this thesis that one can accuse the school of fatalism, because it limits, singularly, the power of the will--even when the material force is at the service of an intelligent will." In his novel approach,

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32 Sorel, Matériaux, p. 181.
33 Rossignol, La pensée, p. 34.
34 Sorel, Matériaux, p. 79.
35 Ibid., p. 80.
Sorel began with the fact of the "profound" discovery of Marx, that the class struggle was a constant force in historical change and that this struggle was economically motivated. In this departure from intellectualist sociology Marx "separates himself from the utopists." This radically alters one's perspective of the problem, says Sorel. It is no longer a question of forming an idea of what society must be; it becomes a question of "what the proletariat can do in the actual struggle of classes." Sorel sought to gain an understanding of the "fundamental causes" of the social conditions of his time by using Marx's concept of historical materialism as a moral and sociological method. In the course of his study Sorel also delved into the origins of law as the social manifestation of justice, and he found indications of the "economic character of juridical discipline." In his study he was concerned with the question of how morality affected economy and law. This led to an understanding of man and his conditions of life, and to a philosophy of history that was diametrically opposed to that of Jaurès.

36 Deroo, Renversement, p. 37.

37 Sorel, Matériaux, p. 82. He is quoting from his preface to the first edition of Antoine Labriola's Essais, p. 4.

38 Ibid.

39 Deroo, Renversement, p. 37.

40 Ibid., p. 50.
As shown, the intellectualist Jaurès conceived of justice as an ideal— as an innate idea in the mind of man and as the goal toward which humanity was moving. He exemplified abstract faith in justice. Sorel, however, perceived of justice as simply the relations between men. The problem of ethics was profound, ancient and permanent, according to Sorel.\(^{41}\) He distinguished between law and morality. The source of law is social. The source of morality is the interior of the individual.\(^{42}\) Sorel thought that true morality required in equal proportions ideas of the pessimist sentiments and ideas of the sentiment of the sublime.\(^{43}\) Further, he thought that each individual's concepts of morality were formed by the influence of woman, family and work.\(^{44}\) Sorel seemed to be saying that law and moral economy, throughout human history, have formed a system which has never known equilibrium. All movement of society derived from the absence of equilibrium within that system. For Sorel then there existed no universal and absolute law. In this sense, then "Georges Sorel is Hegelian and Marxist as much as one can be . . ." Sorel very clearly demonstrates,

\(^{41}\) Rossignol, La pensée, p. 143.


therefore, the dual principle of law. It is relative and it has the character of an absolute.\textsuperscript{45} Law is, in fact, inseparable from its social milieu, as is illustrated by Sorel in a statement in his \textit{Illusions of Progress}.

Law is no less amenable to change than are living species. There is not one big incident which does not give evidence of the existence of forces calculated to modify the law: lawyers, judges and professors, in their defenses, their decisions and their commentaries, always touch on the existing system to a slight extent, due to their personal views. Very often, also, the public at large intervenes in order to exercise pressure on the professionals. In the midst of all these causes, which it would be absurd to try to analyze, there arises a movement: this movement is the fundamental idea of history, and it is this which informs us of the juridical conscience of the people.\textsuperscript{46}

The foregoing statement can also be seen as an example of Sorel's pluralism in that it shows the interrelatedness of the social facts of economy, law and individual ethics as well as group ethics. Sorel also conceived of ethics as a moderator in a philosophical dialectic concerning liberty. In a discussion on pragmatism at the French Philosophical Society Sorel explained his view of the problem of liberty. Within the human conscience he depicted three airtight divisions. A small section, the domain of science, touches on the absolute and finds its perfection in mathematics. There is another small section that touches on the absolute

\textsuperscript{45}Rossignol makes this interpretation in \textit{La pensée}, p. 148-49.

in which we form our ideas of liberty; "it is, if you wish, the corner of morality and religion." Between these very narrow regions of the conscience "there is an immense domain which occupies nearly all the field of our conscience; it is the domain of the operations of daily life. Logic operates there very badly."47 For Sorel, science represented a way to feel and to act in the world, but the absolute of liberty found expression in moral and religious systems. The field upon which it was demonstrated was history. Chance is an important aspect of history.48 "Taken altogether, history is only a chaos of hazards, stranger to all laws of the mind." It has been interpreted that Sorel's concept of absolute liberty conceived of a dialectic between liberty and historical justifications thereof. Between the two poles of the movement lies a permanent moral crisis "since the whole problem, for Sorel, is finally moral."49

These interpretations represent two approaches to understanding the Sorelian mind. On the one hand is his

47 Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie (1907), p. 47. Quoted by George Goriely, Le Pluralisme dramatique de Georges Sorel (Paris: Marcel Rivère, 1962), p. 218. The author notes that Sorel's duality of absolutes evokes the dualism of Kant. One might note the searching for an understanding of the unconscious or intuitive aspects of knowledge that such reasoning indicates, and also note that it resembles Freud's concept of the mind. See also Andreu, Notre Maître, pp. 246-47, wherein he refers to Goriely's important revelation of this work.

48 Sorel, Illusions, p. 171.

49 Goriely makes this interpretation in Le pluralisme, pp. 218-19.
"basic intuition" and on the other hand is the "drama of the mind," i.e., the dialectic between the liberty as an absolute and its historical reality. Goriely quotes three texts in which Sorel commented further on the problem of liberty. In one of them Sorel maintained that man labors under an illusion when he thinks that he can ascertain and direct the procession of things by constructing "outside of reality . . . unitary, absolute, ideal theses." He must always compromise them when he "runs afoul of the impossibilities" of reality.\(^{51}\)

The next excerpt is worth quoting verbatim, since it clearly illustrates the realism of Sorel.

There is nothing more dangerous than the pretension of attaining an ideal which is beyond the realm of general possibilities; when one is imprudent enough to enter into that way, one quickly recognizes the uselessness of normal efforts; thus are born three equally troublesome consequences: the isolation of elite subjects who abandon the world in order to guard their ideal in the bottom of their heart; a great number of skeptics who leave themselves to the hazards of circumstances; the profound corruption of leaders who pretend that the end justifies the means, and that all is permitted when one follows a high ideal.\(^{52}\)

The third excerpt is from Sorel's Preface for Saverio Merlino's, Formes et essence du socialisme, in which Sorel.

\(^{50}\)Rossignol, La pensée, pp. 148-49.


\(^{52}\)Georges Sorel, "Questions de morale" (1900), p. 98, quoted by Goriely, Le pluralisme, pp. 219-20.
states, "Socialism is a moral question:" it is a new way of judging human behavior—which Nietzsche calls a "reevaluation of all values." Socialism does not know if or when it can achieve its goal because "time changes our moral ideas as well as our economic conditions; but it presents itself before the bourgeois world as an irreconcilable adversary, threatening it with a moral catastrophe, much more than with a material catastrophe."53

We can say with Pierre Angel, then, that Sorelian thoughts about man were centered on the problem of liberty. For him liberty, or if you will, absolute freedom, exists only in the mind—within the "interior" of each individual. Within society the movement toward liberty has been expressed in moral or religious ideals, which in turn have influenced and have been influenced by that society's economic and juridical systems. The nineteenth century's preoccupation with the problem of man and society was ludicrous, Sorel thought, since man is an intrinsic part of society and his freedom is relative.54 This preoccupation was manifested in the Enlightenment heritage idea of unity and equality. The socialists had appropriated this idealism from the democrats and conceived a utopian future in which socialism would lead

53Georges Sorel, Preface to Saverio Merlino, Formes et essence du socialisme (Paris: 1898), p. xliii. Sorel also used this quote in his Introduction to Part II of Matériaux, pp. 170-71, and again, twenty-one years later, he referred to socialism as presenting a moral catastrophe in addition to his Illusions, p. 199.

54Humphrey, Prophet, p. 93.
to complete liberty where "no man would be the instrument of another." 55 In fact, as Sorel saw it, the degree of liberty that an individual experienced in his conditions of life was relative. "It is impossible . . . to escape the necessity of relativism." 56 He felt that Proudhon had best defined "the principles of that morality which modern times have in vain sought to realize." He illustrated it with a quote from Proudhon.

To feel and to assert the dignity of man, first in everything in connection with ourselves, then in the person of our neighbor, and that without a shadow of egoism, without any consideration either of divine or communal sanction—therein lies Right. To be ready to defend that dignity in every circumstance with energy, and, if necessary, against oneself, that is Justice. 57

The sad truth of such admirable maxims, said Sorel, was that they were destined to remain ineffectual. To understand the nature of high moral ideas one must realize that they "never depend on reasoning or on any education of the individual will, but on a state of war in which men voluntarily participate and which finds expression in well-defined myths." 58 Here we touch on one of the most significant aspects of Sorel's thought, his recognition of the

55 As expounded by Jaurès. See above, p. 33.

56 Quoted by Angel, Essais, p. 64.


importance of myths in history. Humphrey thinks that this recognition was Sorel's most significant contribution to the study of history and to the understanding of social theory. Sorel, he says, tried to replace utopianism with a "pragmatic social theory." He devised a program for change that was based on the "primacy of the sublime." Regardless of his changing political orientations, Sorel's enemies remained the same, "abstract rationalism and abstract morality," both of which were epitomized in the person of Jean Jaurès.

Jaurès and Sorel sought the same good for society--liberty and justice--but their ideas and methods were diametrically opposed. Jaurès appeared to confuse the idea of an "ideal of justice" which he said that Marx ignored and the idea of universal justice that he saw as implicit in Marx's thought, with his own concept, adopted from Michelet, of a universal system of values under a reign of law. Jaurès had a two-fold concept of justice. He saw it as an absolute and as an ideal to be fulfilled by history evolution. Sorel, on the other hand, saw justice as relative to a particular social milieu and based on the ethical considerations of a people, which in turn derived from the people's

59Humphrey, Prophet, p. 191. Sorel's concept of the myth will be discussed in Chapter V.

60Angel, Essais, p. 122.


62See above, pp. 33-34.
concept of liberty. His exact meaning is difficult to determine, yet what is important is his understanding of the interrelatedness of ethical, social, political and economic phenomena. In accord with Marx, he did not accept justice as an ideal, yet in disagreement he did not foresee the establishment of a perfect, just society. He did not, as Marx and Jaurès did, think that history was evolving according to a predetermined plan. Possibly the strongest influence on their different views of history was their views of the doctrine of progress that had held sway in Europe since the eighteenth century.

The extent to which the idea of progress had permeated French society had been recognized as early as 1850 by M. A. Javary in his De l'idée du progrès. He wrote that "If there is any idea that belongs properly to one century, at least by the importance accorded to it, and that, whether accepted or not, is familiar to all minds, it is the idea of Progress conceived as the general law of history and the future of humanity." Javary noted that the idea was manifest in many prominent works. Michelet and Quinet alike "saw in the march of civilization the gradual triumph of liberty"; it was evident in the humanitarian communism of

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Leroux and Cabet; Louis Blanc and Proudhon were influenced by it; the bourgeoisie utilized it; progress was related to political discussions of the relationship between government and individual freedom; and in metaphysical discussions the questions of necessity and fatalism were related to the doctrine of progress; "is Progress a fatality, independent of human purposes, determined by general, ineluctable, historical laws?" It has been noted that the Revolution had bequeathed the idea of a universal movement toward equality and the eradication of class distinctions, and that inherent in the assimilation of this idea was "the fatalistic doctrine that the movement cannot be arrested or diverted." This, he continues, was central to de Tocqueville's Democracy in America. There is agreement with Sorel's speculation in The Illusions of Progress that this work strongly influenced Proudhon, who held that future civilization depended on energetic individuals, and the existence of liberty, and that the goal was justice, which to him was synonymous with equality. Sorel was to study the history of the ideology of progress in order to attack the illusions that it had created.

In light of this study, Sorel found that the ideology


65 Bury, Progress, pp. 315-16.

of progress had originated at the end of the seventeenth century, at which time "fear of sin, respect for chastity, and pessimism," and thereby Christianity, vanished. Society, however, needed a philosophy; it had to prove that it was justified in discarding the old maxims. An apologist was found in Fontenelle and an ideological formula in Descartes' philosophy. 67 Cartesianism fit in well with the state of mind of the time, said Sorel. It was optimistic, and it avoided ethics. Indeed Descartes seemed never troubled in the least by questions of morality or faith. This made his philosophy quite attractive to those who wanted to be free of Christianity. 68 The doctrine of progress fit in also as it justified pleasure and material advantages, and by its nature freed men from worry about the future. 69 "For our democrats, as well as for the sophisticated Cartesian intellectuals, progress consists neither in the accumulation of technical methods nor even of scientific knowledge. Progress is the adornment of the mind that, free of prejudice, sure of itself, and trusting in the future, has created a philosophy assuring the happiness of all who possess the means of living well." 70

Sorel's thrust was at democracy, at its mediocrity

67 Sorel, Illusions, pp. 11-14.
68 Ibid., p. 20.
69 Ibid., p. 21.
70 Ibid., p. 22.
which he saw as resulting from the continual rationalization of their actions by aristocrats, and later the bourgeoisie, who aped the old aristocracy. The eighteenth century had succeeded in vulgarizing knowledge in its attempt to "enlighten" men.  

In explaining his view of the ideology of the bourgeoisie, Sorel notes how ideas are imported from other countries and how the obscurity of a doctrine renders it force. Marx's theory of value was an example, he said. People do not want to admit that they do not understand "well-turned language by a renowned writer." Another example was Rousseau, who had been imported under the patronage of Locke. Rousseau shaped ideology "by condensing it in a marvelously obscure masterpiece of literary exposition." The men of the eighteenth century unwittingly rushed pell-mell into a holocaust. In retrospect, says Sorel, historians are amazed at their "daring lightheartedness." Of the literary and intellectual atmosphere that led to the Revolution Sorel wrote:

And yet, after reading this magnificent accumulation of nonsense, we are still amazed that all our revolutions end in dictatorship! Our theoreticians had not the slightest idea of the necessary conditions for assuring liberty and law. They could only have had an idea if they had been willing to admit that the truth is not endowed with the beautiful simplicity attributed to it by the world of philosophy. The manufacture of such constitutions was an easy thing.

71 Ibid., pp. 24-27.
72 Ibid., p. 47.
and our fathers fancied that, since social reform consisted in an easy application of extremely simple and certain principles, it would be wrong to fear the great innovations.73

As for the current approach to social reform, said Sorel, many considered it a contradiction that the socialists admired material progress as much as the bourgeoisie. They obviously did not realize that the socialists see material progress as a prerequisite of the revolution. "True revolutionaries" should consider present conditions in relation to building a future,74 and not as conditions that will change according to an overall plan. The more he personally considered the current questions of machine and worker, agriculture and property, energy, science, etc., the more convinced he became that "work can serve as a basis for a culture that would give no cause to regret the passing of the bourgeois civilization."75

Little can be said by way of contrast about Jaurès' idea of progress. Although he would have agreed with Sorel's opinion that work could serve as the basis of a new culture, he would have been unable to relinquish the idea of such a new culture arriving in other than the Marxist revolutionary manner. Jaurès always conceived of progress in the theoretical terms of his eighteenth-century counterparts, and is thus a perfect illustration of the above description of the idea.

73Ibid., pp. 92, 99.
74Ibid., pp. 152-53.
75Ibid., p. 157.
of progress. His intellectualist thought led him to accept the Hegelian dialectic as the culmination of intellectual developments stemming from the Renaissance and Reformation. He saw the process of the synthesis of contradictions as applicable to the solution of the problems of man's exploitation of man and of the dichotomal division between laicism and religion. His philosophy of history as evolution embodies the eighteenth-century idea of progress.

Sorel, the engineer turned philosopher, began his career with an acceptance of orthodox Marxism, but his pragmatic thought and his creative instinct led him to study the problem of man's exploitation of man from the viewpoint of how it reflected morality and man's will. Sorel's philosophy of history was that rather than being an unalterable predetermined process, history was subject to chance and to periods of greatness and decline, and that man's will could affect the course of things. The historical process was motivated by the class struggle, which in his opinion was a division of society that was ethical rather than economic. The source of ethical conflicts was the interior of man, specifically, his concept of liberty, which Sorel saw as an absolute. The social expression of individual liberty was relative to time and place. He saw justice as the relations between men. It was through economic relations that men, based on their ethical ideas, developed laws. This continuing struggle was the motive force of historical change. When men seek change based on abstract ideals, they run afoul of
the reality of the economico-juridical system and the rela-
tivity of liberty. Thus Sorel thought that the way to
generate effective change was to base it on work and con-
servation with a regard for the possibilities of the future.

A study of the major aspects of the careers of Jaurès
and Sorel will allow a determination of how consistent they
were in applying their concepts to their works and actions.
Such a study will also reveal whether or not their thought
was relevant in the turbulent years prior to 1914.
CHAPTER III
JAURESIAN SOCIALISM AND THE TREND TOWARD MARXISM

Jaures' socialism is not as simple to analyze as one might think. His consistent optimism and idealism disguised undercurrents of change in his thought which were never fully reflected in action. There were discernible shifts in action during his career as he adapted his thought and action to events, but the maturing of his social thought near the end of his life, reveals a definite evolution toward Marxism.

Jaures' career fell into four distinct periods. From 1885 to 1889 he was a Republican deputy and an opportunist. This was the period of practical political orientation. The second phase came after he was elected as the Deputy of Carmaux in 1893, at which time he was an independent socialist who expounded evolutionary socialism. The third phase, ca. 1899-1904, encompassed the period of the Ministries of Waldeck-Rousseau and Emile Combes and of Jaures' defense of socialist participation in bourgeois government. During this time he was one of the most prominent leaders of the Left Bloc, and in January 1903 he became vice-president of the Chamber. This was the period of his greatest influence
in parliament. The last phase of his career began with the formation of the united socialist party in 1905 under the name Sécion française de l'internationale ouvrière, or the S.F.I.O.\textsuperscript{1} His attention turned to founding a basis for world peace and therefore a better world through the proletarian Second International.

Prior to 1905 Jaurès interpreted "true Marxism" to be political evolution toward entry into economic power without the juridical property entanglements characteristic of the bourgeoisie. He called it peaceful class struggle, and considered the proletariat to be, at that time, in the epoch of pre-socialism.\textsuperscript{2}

Jaurès thought that the era of proletarian preparation could be aided by unification of the diverse socialist parties and by their agreement on method. From the beginning of his socialist orientation he had seen unity as one of the "most pressing works" ever.\textsuperscript{3} His first "grand offensive in favor of unity" was launched in a press campaign in May and June of 1898.\textsuperscript{4} Concomitant with his press campaign, however, there arose the furor over the Dreyfus affair and a change in the role of French socialism which also changed the

\textsuperscript{1}Auclair, La vie, p. 310.
\textsuperscript{2}Jaurès, Oeuvres, VI, 185.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
conditions of unity. Jaurès, against the advice of Guesde, joined the milieu of the affair with republican forces in the sincere conviction that he was defending the Republic against caesarism, clericalism and militarism. Many socialists followed his lead based on his contention that they must help the bourgeoisie in this fight against militarism and the violation of Dreyfus' human rights. The effort yielded significant results. The more doctrinaire parties were awakened to the reality of political life when they saw the serious threat to the Republic from the French right. Their first priority suddenly became the defense of the Republic.

"In the Dreyfus Affair, formulas ran up against the facts and the formulas flew to pieces."\(^5\) A second beneficial result for socialism was the gaining of many new members who had previously been apathetic. The more doctrinaire members of various parties had not been metamorphosed by the affair. They still held to their old theories and formulas, and became even more intransigent vis à vis Jaurès' socialism and his support of Millerand.

Alexandre Millerand was a moderate socialist noted for his Saint-Mandé speech given at a dinner celebration over the electoral victories of 1893. In the speech he set forth a general outline for a socialist program. The principles

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as he stated them, and the two resolutions that followed, was the general acceptance of the idea of collaboration in parliament between socialist and bourgeois deputies. Waldeck-Rousseau was forming a ministry to replace one that had lost confidence during the Dreyfus affair, and he asked Millerand to accept a post in it. Millerand did so, and in June 1899 the ministry gained a vote of confidence. Thus the first "Left Bloc" of French parliamentary government, born of the Dreyfus affair, joined moderate republicans, radicals, radical-socialists and the majority of socialists. Whereas Jaurès called it the "ministry of combat," many ridiculed it as the ministry of all contradictions. For Jaurès the concept of unity was, in light of these circumstances, based upon two basic ideas. There was a need to defend the Republic against nationalism, militarism, and clericalism, and inversely, there was a possibility of the socialists penetrating the bourgeois Republic. This view was not held by Guesde and Vaillant and their left-wing following. They strongly opposed socialist participation in a bourgeois ministry.

A short-lived truce between factions was gained by the first congress of French Socialist Organizations, December 3, 1899, at which time a plan for unification was proposed that would be based upon the Saint-Mandé program.

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6 Noland, Socialist Party, p. 92.
The semblance of agreement crumbled after the first of the year. Essentially it was the question over socialist method that divided the factions.

The revisionist theories of the German Eduard Bernstein were compounding the search for a viable socialist method. In February 1900 Jaurès challenged revisionism before a group of collectivist students in Paris. At the outset he announced that he fully agreed with Kautsky and only partially agreed with Bernstein. His conclusion was that it was time for socialists to develop a new political socialism and to "modify their attitudes in the face of certain problems, without breaking with the traditions of international socialist democracy. . . . Marxism contains within itself the means for completion and renewal" both theoretically and practically feasible. 8

In his theory of value, said Jaurès, Marx insisted that workers organize to gain salary increases. Therefore Bernstein's theory of activity was not irreconcilable with Marx, "it is all made to no purpose to try to shake the Marxist theory of value, scientifically established, to permit to the working class a role and an immediate power of action which the Marxist theory of value permits them absolutely." As for Berstein's attack on economic materialism, a theory which Jaurès interpreted as a "true social discovery," Marx never intended to say that economic forces

8Jaurès, Œuvres, VI, 20.
stirred alone and immediately without reacting on other systems of ideas. "If we want to found our method of action on a truly scientific basis, we must determine as much as possible the reciprocal rapport of the economic system and of ideas, whether political, religious or otherwise."9 As Jaurès saw it, humanity developed systems of belief and of action which contained within themselves an internal logic that obliged them to develop in certain ways, even though they were limited by and subordinated to economic conditions. "The method of action that this philosophy of history counsels is to act directly on all systems of forces which develop in a society, and following that to apply your maximum of action to the transformation, and to the direction of the essential force, the economic force." This would be in accord with Marx's economic concept of history.10

Jaurès continued by arguing that Bernstein's revisions also did not contradict the dialectical theory that Marx borrowed from Hegel. Marx's dialectic says, in effect, that the principle of movement in all society is the contradiction of forces. There is an antinomy within capitalism which can only be resolved with the disappearance of the system. Production seems more and more to gain a social character, while property continues to have an individual character. Little by little the workers see communism as

the way to resolve the contradictions of capitalism. Bernstein said, "This simple formula of the dialectic deludes the proletariat into thinking things will change rapidly in reality as they do in the brain." Jaurès did not deny the peril of simplistic formulas, and to avoid pitfalls counseled constant observation. It is necessary, he said,

to guard the dialectical interpretation without renouncing positive action, gradual, immediate, efficacious, which is more and more, today, the law of militant socialism. But we were wrong and Bernstein was wrong to tell the proletariat to renounce the force which gives him that dialectical interpretation of history: ... it is necessary for the workers to feel aided even by the dialectic of history ... that they feel carried, so to speak, by the internal reason which asserts itself in reality, and that they not appear to themselves as only a complementary force that is going to deliver the human dialectic.\textsuperscript{11}

There was in this defense of dialectical materialism a subtle shift in Jaurès' attitude about action. Heretofore he had counseled belief in the disappearance of the antinomy in capitalism through evolution alone and had pointed out the growing social character of production as evidence that things are moving in the right direction. Yet to avoid the disillusionment possible for workers because of the simple formula, he now counseled positive action, as when in his discussion of economic materialism he said that the worker could organize to push for shorter hours and more pay without contradicting the theory.\textsuperscript{12} He maintained that it was

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 130.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 123.
the profoundness of Marx that he placed the force of necessity at the disposal of the proletariat in his calculation of development.\textsuperscript{13} Marx's error was one of timing because of his underestimation of the durability of the capitalist system, therefore the proletariat must act to organize itself at a faster rate than the movement of capitalist concentration. By bearing in mind that socialism is by definition revolutionary socialists should be able to live in a "state of socialist grace" and not remain divided over the question of timing.\textsuperscript{14} Finally it was inconceivable to him that their movement could expand without intervening in the function of capitalist society.\textsuperscript{15}

The month after this conference Jaurès began to consider another form of unity as proposed by the socialist group known as the Allemanists, i.e., unity based on autonomous federations. The two congresses held in the fall of 1900 gave him hopes of seeing this plan realized.\textsuperscript{16} The congress of the Second International in September adopted the Kautsky resolution which maintained that the International should make declarations of principle, while leaving it up to individual national parties to decide on tactics. In its explanation of what political circumstances might be

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 131.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 135.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., pp. 138-39.
conducive to ministerial participation and what ones would not, insofar as the revolutionary cause was concerned, the resolution was in effect disallowing participation in principle, but allowing it in practice. The ambiguity did not go unnoticed by socialist critics.

At the Second General Congress of French Socialist Organizations, ministerialism again remained undefeated. For a number of reasons, but mainly because they were a minority party that could not get its way, the Guesdist left the Congress to form a separate organization. This left the French socialists split into two factions: ministerialists, or reformist socialists, and anti-ministerialists or revolutionary socialists. Jaurès remained optimistic since a committee had been established to consider a project for unification. He was confident that it would be along the lines of federated unity. Further, he felt that Guesde's position was untenable in light of the Kautsky resolution. These two men, the strongest contenders in the dissension over method, held a debate at Lille in October. At the outset Jaurès said that the dissension between them did not arise over Millerand's entry into the ministry, but that it stemmed from the Dreyfus affair. If socialist antagonists say that we have abandoned the terrain of the class struggle, then the first question to ask is "what is the meaning of this principle so often invoked and so rarely

\[17\] Ibid., p. 9.
The principle of class struggle consists of three parts, said Jaurès. First is the understanding that society is divided into two distinct categories, possessors and nonpossessors, due to the private ownership of the means of production, which puts the salaried workers at the discretion of the producers. This being the case, it follows that there is a division of antagonistic interests, and that the proletariat must be made aware of this and form a consciousness of the society of tomorrow. The class struggle is completed by the proletariat's conviction "that he and he alone can and must emancipate himself." Consequently, it becomes a question of tactics.

In establishing tactics, he continued, it is only possible to draw up a plan of general directions. Invoking the general formula of the class struggle will render daily problem solving impossible. Each case is unique. In each case it is only necessary to act in the best interests of the proletariat. Further, the socialists cannot make the principle of the class struggle the basis of making themselves into a party of the opposition. A party of strict opposition will not be able to make any difference between bourgeois parties or between successive bourgeois governments. The Socialist party should be united in order to have any great effect. "I say to you, all great revolutions have been made in the world because the new society had

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18 Jaurès, Oeuvres, VI, pp. 191-95.
penetrated through all cracks by little roots into the soil of the ancient society." Jaurès went on to say that as the Socialist party grew so would its responsibility, and he expressed his confidence in the proletariat, certain that it would become organized and unified. It was other anarchic and discordant parties that presented a problem, he said, for it was due to them that the proletariat formed neither a party nor a class.\textsuperscript{19}

From 1901 to 1904 Jaurès was totally engrossed in the politics of republican collaboration and did little toward devising a concrete plan of unity.\textsuperscript{20} Also during this period he was not active in either the International or the Bureau socialiste international, the BSI. Countless articles and discourses indicate Jaurès' single-minded purpose during this period, i.e., the defense and strengthening of the Republic, the increase of legal parliamentary reform and the constant critique of militarism, caesarism and clericalism. He widened his synthesis of the internationalism of the workers as expounded in the \textit{Communist Manifesto}. Marx and Engels had tied the workers movement only to the economic struggle\textsuperscript{21} and had spoken of the nonpossessing class with its lack of privileges as being "sans-patrie." To take Marx's formulas literally was nonsense, said Jaurès. He emphasized that Marx had foreseen the proletariat's

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 206.  
\textsuperscript{20}Feller-Benoit, \textit{L'unité}, p. 11.  
\textsuperscript{21}Jaurès, \textit{Oeuvres}, I, 239.
organization as taking place nationally, since men are so grouped. It was also at the national level that communist production would be instituted.\textsuperscript{22} Universal communism would be a federation of free parties, "Thus, neither from the movement's point of departure nor at its termination, is there a complete separation of the proletarian from his country."\textsuperscript{23} The expanding synthesis in this period encompassed the concepts of socialist unity nationally as well as internationally in the struggle for social and economic gains as well as for peace. Unity and peace had been seen by Jaurès as inseparable as early as 1898 when he wrote an article "Puissance américaine," in which he foresaw the militaristic consequences of capitalist expansion. "The struggles between nations take the proportions of struggles between continents."\textsuperscript{24} In light of this, he said, the European proletariat as an organized force could be decisive.

His close collaboration with and support of the Left-Bloc was decried by the revolutionaries of the left who thought only in terms of economic conflict. Jaurès, however, had evolved a synthesis which foresaw the end of class struggle and the arrival of international peace. In an article in December 1903 he said that capitalism is internal war, since it pits the possessors against nonpossessors and

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 301.
\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., p. 302.
\textsuperscript{24}Auclair, \textit{La Vie}, pp. 220-24.
perpetuates the oppression of man by man. Socialism would bring internal peace through the disappearance of classes and their absorption into organized and productive communities. He continued that

when we try in each country to erase the forces of reaction, of ignorance, or privilege, which maintain and prolong the exploitation of man by man; when we struggle to institute a new order where they will no longer have privilege to defend and where consequently it will be useless to put the machinery of force at the service of oligarchic interests, we prepare total and universal disarmament, social disarmament as well as military disarmaments, the profound reign of peace in the daily rapports of individuals as in the rapports of nations.  

Jaures was alone among prominent socialists in this broad concept of the proletariat's role as an agent of antimilitarism. He was also "out on a limb" in his strong support of radical anticlericalism. His collaboration with the radicals bore one especially profound result, the separation of church and state. The culmination of that work took four years, 1901 to 1904, and it cost Jaures dearly. 26 Both socialists and non-socialists criticized Jaures and considered him more a bourgeois in disguise than a socialist revolutionary. Peguy repudiated Jaures morally and intellectually, seeing his position as "complicated" and "evil." 27 Sorel called him a "socialist diplomat." 28

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25 Jaures, Oeuvres, II, 57.
26 Goldberg, Jean Jaures, p. 296.
27 Goldberg, Jean Jaures, p. 299, quoted from Peguy, Oeuvres, XII, 42-43.
28 Sorel, Reflections (1941 ed.), pp. 77-78.
for his opportunistic political maneuverings. Yet, as Jaures saw it, the rather harsh and difficult task of separation was vital to the democratization of France. It was the logical outcome of the eighteenth-century ideal of individual liberty. According to Jaures' interpretation, democracy made liberty a political fact in the struggle toward socialism. Socialism, once achieved, would be the reign of universal liberty. In a discourse in July 1904 at l'École laïque at Castres, Jaures explained his thoughts about liberty, education and the Republic. There were two conquests that stemmed from the Reformation and the Revolution, he said, the autonomy of the individual conscience and the organization of science. These principles had rendered each human being his right and his value, and had freed him from dogma. Republican liberty was, he said, the great universal educator through which all citizens were given the right and even the duty "to intervene in the conduct of public affairs." This liberty "obliges him unceasingly to acknowledge an opinion and a will and is therefore an incessant appeal to all men, to the force of thought and to the force of need."  

Democracy and laicization are identical, he continued. Democracy respects all consciences, beliefs and cults, but

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30Ibid., p. 4.
does not make any dogma "the model and the foundation of social life." It follows, therefore, that "democracy has the duty of educating the child, and the child has the right to be educated according to the same principles that will later assure the liberty of the man." The intervention of a person, family or congregation in the nation's work would be, in effect, interference with the child's rights, said Jaurès. Democratic education was, in his view, the vital means whereby the child would learn to distinguish between the religious order, which was a matter of individual consciousness, and the social and legal order, which was essentially laic. There must be no confusion between the two orders. The point was well made by Jaurès, and the significance of the distinction that he drew between the religious and the legal social order was of major concern in that era when the crumbling aristocratic and clerical social order was finally yielding to the Revolutionary heritage. Also, this distinction touches on the core of Jaurèsian socialism and his concern for the fullest possible development of each individual personality.

This concern on Jaurès' part was a reflection of his bond with the eighteenth century's tradition of classical liberalism, yet he conceived of this development in a fuller

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31 Ibid., p. 6.
32 Ibid., p. 8.
33 Ibid.
sense. Jaurès inverted the formula: "the socialist individualism of Jaurès takes liberty for a goal, even more than as a method." He enlarged the concept of the Declaration of the Rights of Man. In the Chamber on January 24, 1909, he said that the declaration of a principle alone would not suffice, that it was necessary to make the free exercise of liberty possible for all men. This could be accomplished through education and through equalizing the opportunities for the realization of one's individualism. It has been noted that this concept of "fair play" shows the close resemblance between Jaurès' individualist socialism and liberalism. It further suggests that Jaurès' social thought was inspired by classical liberalism which he thought was good. The problem however was that the functioning of the liberal regime was bad, and this was what Jaurès' libertarian socialism sought to change. As he had written, "the work of humanity is to create for all men the social conditions of well-being. . . . The true way, the only way . . . is to make of property not a domination, but a guarantee, it is to make of work not a battle, but a

35 Ibid., p. 41.
36 Ibid., p. 47.
37 Ibid., p. 44.
Those who upheld the ideals of classical liberalism did not accept this extensive interpretation of individual rights. They could not, or would not, see that birth and privilege were stumbling blocks to total equality of opportunity. The value of an individual human is derived "neither from fortune, nor from birth, nor from religious investiture, but from his title as man" and the failure to realize this was, Jaurès said to his adversary, Clemenceau, "the negation of all the great movements of progress which have determined history, it is the negation of the French Revolution itself." Jaurès was to maintain throughout his career that the Revolution had given birth to socialism, a conviction that became firmer after his multi-volume work on the Revolution. His *Histoire* reflects both his character traits and his political orientation. It also explains in a large measure why he continued to hope for a policy of collaboration with the radicals even after socialist unity.

The unification of the French socialists at the particular time in which it occurred, was a mixed blessing

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39 Quoted by Boitel in *Idées libérales*, p. 78.

40 Quoted by Auclair in *La Vie*, p. 333.

for Jaurès. The International Congress at Amsterdam in 1904 had passed the Rheims-Dresden resolution, which in effect had ordered the socialist factions of each country to unite in order to present a united front and to hasten the work of socialism on an international level. In France only those socialist groups which were truly dedicated to the socialist ideal agreed to the Pact of Union which created the S.F.I.O. on April 25, 1905. Millerandists and many who were what Sorel called bourgeois reformers bolted the unity congress at Rouen. Jaurès was branded a traitor by those who had followed his policy of reform and collaboration. Yet, it was a difficult transition for him, too, as it meant that he had to renounce collaboration in theory, accept the revolutionary tactics of the orthodox Marxists, and withdraw from the Left Bloc.42

The initial transition took several months and must have been frustrating for Jaurès. His attitude showed equivocation during this period. In August and September he attacked the Dresden motion to abandon bloc politics, and then he remained silent on the issue of unity altogether between October 1904 and February 1905.43 It was during this period that he seriously compromised his values by supporting the Combes ministry over what was called the

42 Goldberg, Jean Jaurès, pp. 338-42
43 Feller-Benoit, L'Unité, p. 16.
affaire des fiches.

Jaurès supported the government for opportunistic reasons, to preserve the bloc until the work of separation of church and state and the reform for two-year military service were completed. However, with the formation of the Rouvier ministry on January 15, 1905, the bloc, for all practical purposes, was in effect dissolved.

Other studies indicate that Jaurès was slow to abandon the idea of collaboration, even though he did accept the principles of S.F.I.O. unity. On the one hand, he realized that strict adherence to the non-collaboration policy would eventually be seen as unrealistic. On the other hand there was his belief that the radicals would eventually adhere to socialist idealism. This was based upon his view that capitalism had created a "cursed society" which made victims of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. He could not conceive of the bourgeois class being happy in its "situation of degradation." They too were alienated by the situation of permanent civil war. Between 1905 and 1907 he vacillated between hope and disillusion. "When will we be delivered from this regime of classes?" he asked.

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44 Ibid., pp. 15-16.
46 Goldberg, Jean Jaurès, p. 340.
48 Ibid., p. 4.
Its dissolution would result from the education and organization of the proletariat and from the humanity of the bourgeois. Another time he wrote that "If men had good sense they would abolish the capitalist regime by a unanimous decision." Jaures at one time referred to the bourgeois work of reform as evidence of their "discovery" of socialism. He apparently could not accept the realistic opinion which he had stated as early as 1905, that it was a utopian notion to hope that the bourgeoisie would raise itself to a general plan of transformation. They were incapable of "that act of clairvoyance. The privileged classes would persist in their resistance up to the end."

The problem was one of conscience for the radicals, said Jaures. The S.F.I.O. meant that socialism had passed the stage of pre-socialism and had entered a period which was properly socialist. Between 1905 and 1906 he repeatedly expressed the hope that the radical conscience would make the step toward "integral socialism." Yet, there was a paradox to Jaures' reformism which he never resolved. By

49Ibid., pp. 4-5. Quoted from Jaures, L'Humanité, 14 janvier 1907.

50Ibid.


53Jean Jaures, L'Humanité, 11 octobre 1905, quoted ibid., p. 4.
assuring the proletariat that the march toward revolution was aided by each and every reform and by dramatizing reform, he actually stiffened the resistance of the radicals.\(^{54}\)

In other ways, too, the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie was compounded. The year 1905 saw an increase in the number of strikes by French workers and witnessed the first Russian revolution. Jaurès found parliamentary action increasingly difficult in the face of bourgeois repression of strikes, yet even though in this period he supported the revolution and denounced Tsarism, and began to extol the merit of the direct action of the Confédération générale du travail, he was not fully aware of the underlying changes taking place which could possibly have been exploited in light of the events in Russia. His rapprochement with syndicalism was based on his view of the general strike as a method of economic gain and of advancing the political goals of the proletariat.\(^{55}\) It was also a striking example of his devotion to the ideals of unity through the resolution of contradictions. Jaurès was willing to synthesize methods and principles. This was illustrated in his invoking the value of French syndicalism at the plenary session of the B.S.I. in June 1907 prior to the congress of Stuttgart.

One interpretation of his work at this session is that

\(^{54}\)Le Bras, Collaboration, p. 5.

he was, because of his attachment to internationalism and the International, less concerned with the basis on which socialism was organized than with the organization itself.\textsuperscript{56} His dedication to the work of the International was no doubt strengthened as his hopes for a revival of democracy in Germany due to the force of the Russian revolution were crushed. In the years 1905 to 1907 he envisioned the rise of European democracy, and via democracy the triumph of socialism on the continent. But the revolution was checked, the radicals in France became more resistant and political liberty was not achieved in Germany. His disillusionment over these events led Jaurès toward 1909, to see reformist England as the hope of the working class for socialist democracy.\textsuperscript{57} Most significantly, Jaurès began to lose faith in government socialism and opted for a new ideal, libertarian communism, or the socialism of institutions. His ideas on this form of socialism resembled those of the Russian, Sir Peter Kropotkin.\textsuperscript{58} He proposed his new system in the Chamber in July 1909, and explained that he would study "according to the method of evolution . . . minutely,


\textsuperscript{57}Yves Le Bras, "Jaurès et la Révolution russe," Bulletin de la Société d'études jaurésiennes, no. 42 (1971), pp. 2-4. Jaurès was distressed about the dissolution of the Reichstag at the end of 1906 and the failure of the election to render any change in what he saw as token democracy. Germany, in his opinion, was still absolutist.

\textsuperscript{58}Boitel, L'Idées libérales, pp. 168-69.
in the diverse economic categories and in the movement of these categories: landed property, personal property, rural labor, the movement of the exchanges, organization of the bank, organization of finance and of the stock exchange . . . " The purpose would be to discover the series of reforms necessary to prepare, little by little, the new order. 59

In fact, Jaurès was already in the process of the minute analysis of one institution, the army. He had resolved at the congress of Amsterdam in 1904 to devote himself both to the cause of socialist unity and to learning as much as he could about military affairs and the nature of defensive power. 60 The proposal of 1909 was no doubt influenced to a certain degree by his in-depth study of military affairs. The study, the first of a projected series, was published in 1910 and entitled, L'Armée nouvelle. The general title of the series was L'Organisation socialiste de la France. His purpose was to determine how France and the world could guarantee peace, and if peace were broken by an attack on the fatherland, what would be the best means of assuring salvation and victory. 61 He wanted to prove that national defense and internationalism were not contradictions. He emphasized that since the proletarians too

59 Quoted ibid., p. 168.

60 Auclair, La Vie, p. 349.

would be desirous of defending the nation, they had the
gight and even the duty to demand that army organization be
ased only on the concern for national defense without any
consideration of class. His tenth chapter is very long
and it represents a synthesis of his thought. Comprising a
survey of the past century, he concluded that as long as
democracies develop and nations are formed, the proletariat
will have the work of completing social and political demo-
cracy. They would have "to penetrate autonomous patries
with the international spirit and assure the evolution of
social justice in universal peace" by their concerted effort.
"But democracy and the nation remain the essential, funda-
mental conditions of all ulterior and superior creation."
This chapter reflects the essence of Jaurèsian socialism.
It is a synthesis of his own all-embracing "resolution of
contradictions." Above all, it is a statement of faith,
and it illustrates the epitomy of his political thought.
Two other major aspects of his thought were his views on
religion and socialism, and his paradoxical view of interna-
tionalism.

On the subject of religion Jaurès said in the Chamber
on January 21, 1910, that his religious views were the same
then as they had been when he had written his thesis twenty

62 Ibid., p. 5.
63 Ibid., p. 442.
years earlier.\textsuperscript{64} This appears true in essence, but an analysis of his thought in his works indicates that a subtle change was taking place. There was an essay that remained unpublished until 1959, "La question religieuse et le socialisme,"\textsuperscript{65} in which Jaurès exposed the contradiction of capitalism and Christianity and showed that socialism could, because it incorporated the ideals of Christianity, result in a moral, material and religious revolution. "Traditional Christianity is dying philosophically, scientifically and politically."\textsuperscript{66} In their society, he wrote, Christianity was "only a theocratic organization at the service of social inequity, and it is above all a question of reversing it. Men do not need charity, which is a form of oppression; they need justice."\textsuperscript{67} Jaurès wrote that he did not feel uneasy about the future religion of humanity, i.e., materialism, because it was necessary for religion to be life itself, "taking conscience in its intimacy of its own principle" rather than appearing to men as something exterior to

\textsuperscript{64}Madeline Rebérioux, "L'arrière-pensée de Jaurès?" Bulletin de la Société d'études jaurésiennes, no. 22 (1966), p. 4. She quotes from the Chamber speech.

\textsuperscript{65}Rebérioux, "L'arrière-pensée," p. 3. Rebérioux says that the essay was written in 1891, while Goldberg says that it was written after 1904. Goldberg, p. 456.


\textsuperscript{67}Ibid., p. 49.
life.  

In the same vein, he said in 1908 that if the separation of church and state could effect a revival of Christian idealism, then "the Christian renewal would be obliged to recognize that the harsh capitalist society, which puts gain above moral life, is the negation of the fraternity exalted since the first days."  

On another occasion in 1907 at La Chaux-de-Fonds while toasting a Protestant pastor who had become a socialist, Jaurès said, "I think that Christianity and socialism are two currents of modern thought which must expand side by side until their convergence determines the arrival of an era of justice and peace."

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68 Ibid., p. 53. The reasoning in this essay on religion is very reminiscent of the last chapter of Jaurès' Réalité, which might bear out Rebérioux's dating of it. She notes in her essay that Jaurès was quite engrossed in the problem of religion ca. 1891-1892, and that in his later years his thoughts were only alluded to here and there, making them difficult to pinpoint. Her essay was written to refute Henri Guillemin's contention that Jaurès reverted to Christianity toward the end of his life.

69 Yves Le Bras, "La Révolution russe," p. 5. This was quoted from a speech at Bordeaux given in April 1908, and later printed in L'Humanité. Le Bras notes that Jaurès came to foresee in the person of Christ a force for revolution, and that he wanted to show Christians the antinomy between capitalism and Christian idealism. This transition in religious thought occurred, Le Bras maintains, between 1906 and 1908.

70 Rebérioux, "L'arrière-pensée," p. 8. Yves Le Bras, "La Révolution russe," p. 6. Le Bras accepts this as an authentic statement by Jaurès on the basis of contemporary texts which were similar. Further, he conjectures that Jaurès was influenced in this line of thinking by Russian socialists who were in Europe and whose articles had been printed in L'Humanité during their stay.
The last example of Jaurès' religious attitude is taken from *L'Armée nouvelle*. If one were able to demand of nature her secret, he wrote, one would first ask "why is it necessary that even justice is bought at the price of so much violence, that so much human misery is the condition, often ignored in itself, of a little human progress?" This question is followed by the poignant statement: "After all, I have on the world, so cruelly ambiguous, an afterthought without which the life of the mind would seem to me hardly tolerable for the human race."71 These thoughts seem to reflect both a sense of frustration at the difficulty of bringing about social change and a belief that there is a reason for it all. It has been variously interpreted, since it is of such a somber tone and seemingly unrelated to the discussion of the capitalist system in which it appears. Madeline Rebérioux is perhaps closest to the mark in her opinion that Jaurès' *l'arrière-pensée* was only a thought, that it was a consolation representing the integration of the Marxist analysis of the alienation caused by the class struggle with his own philosophy. It was his experience with the proletarian movement, with French and international socialism, which made the difference in tone in his works between 1910 and 1914. This difference is seen by her as being expressed in terms of possibility. Jaurès viewed the arrival of socialism as putting an end to ambiguities and

making the birth of a new man possible. "That's where his thought, born of reflection, but also of combats, is revolu-
tionary." 72

The second aspect of Jaurès' messianism, international-
ism, made him truly the apostle of peace. He never failed
to maintain that peace was essential to the free development
of nations and that it was particularly important for the
free and peaceful evolution of France. 73 He conceived of
France as playing the leading role in the search for peace.
By increasing its defensive power, he said, France increased
the chances for world peace. By aiding in the juridical
organization of peace and by basing it on the concept of
arbitration and law, it would also increase its own defensive
power. "That is why I present indivisibly the projects of
organizing defense and organizing peace." 74 His project was
a direct expression of his patriotism, which was itself a
reflection of the Jacobin revolutionary heritage, which saw
the defense of France as the defense of liberty and human
progress. 75 From his earliest years in the Chamber and as
a journalist, Jaurès was concerned with the triangular
problem of patriotism, pacifism and internationalism. His

73 Jaurès, Oeuvres, II, 213.
75 Jack Don Ellis, "The French Socialists and the
University, 1965, p. 11.
attention became fixed on these after the founding of the S.F.I.O. and in light of the increasingly tense nature of French foreign policy problems after 1905. It was, of course, entirely in character for Jaurès to write and to speak in one breath of patriotism and internationalism, two seemingly contradictory concepts. Yet Jaurès' view on the similarity of patriotism and internationalism was shared by the majority of the reformist members of the S.F.I.O. They were in the middle of three factions present in France at this time. Their patriotism combated Hervé's anti-patriotism and call for insurrection in the event of war, on the left, and on the right they combated the nationalists led by Clemenceau and the Catholic leader, Comte de Mun.77

The major criticism that the members of the S.F.I.O. had to counter was the inconsistency of their patriotism in view of Marx's statement that the workers had no patrie. Jaurès refuted this argument many times and in L'Armée he said that Marx no doubt had only meant the remark as a witticism. In an early attempt to define patriotism he wrote that "The true formula of patriotism is the equal right of all countries to liberty and justice, it is the


77 Ibid., p. 98.

78 Jaurès, L'Armée nouvelle, p. 436.
work of all citizens to increase in their country the forces of liberty and justice." To prefer one's own country above all others is, he continued, "the formula and the doctrine of the barbaric nationalist."\(^7^9\) Vandervelde explains Jaurès' internationalism as an action with a double goal; to assure the independence of all nations and to unite them in a federation.\(^8^0\)

Vandervelde asks the important question as to whether Jaurès' internationalism sacrificed the true interests of his own country to other interests. His essay simply makes the point that in spite of Jaurès' dual view of internationalism and his dual approach to \textit{L'Armée nouvelle}, he would never have abandoned France in August 1914. Vandervelde's question implies the opposition in parliament to Jaurès' views, and to the socialists' anti-military votes and their fight against the three-year law. It implies as well the tendency of many Frenchmen to confuse Jaurès with the radical Hervéists. Also, Jaurès was against the revanche movement. He advocated instead independence for Alsace-Lorraine and rapprochement with Germany. These and many other positions on foreign policy matters, in particular, in light of the Marxist goal of the International, would

\(^7^9\)Rappoport, \textit{Jean Jaurès, le socialiste}, quoted on p. 80.

have made Jaurès appear from the rightist viewpoint, anti-patriotic. Therefore, the question remains whether Jaurès' internationalism may have diminished the impact of his plan for the reorganization of the army. History bore out his predictions about the state of French military organization and preparedness, and even more significantly it bore out his predictions for the results of a European war which he said would bring revolution, the fierce reaction of counter-revolution, suffocating dictatorship, militarism, a chain of violence, hate, reprisals and servitude.81

There is, however, another view of Jaurèsian internationalism which argues that one would have "to be as ignorant as a bourgeois" not to see Jaurès as a patriot. This is the interpretation of Raymond Lefebvre who sees the most solid proof imaginable of his patriotism in Jaurès' desire to regenerate the army. As an antimilitarist and antipatriot himself, Lefebvre considers Jaurèsian internationalism to have represented a "subtle" danger. "Jaurès, if he had been able to realize his new army, would have rejuvenated from head to foot the idol that wants to smash internationalism."82 Due to the fact that Jaurès practiced a policy of prevention, he never proposed an effective "solution to the problems of war and counted on the action of time and

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81Ibid., p. 104.

of democratic reform to lead to "the universal patrie of independent and friendly nations."\textsuperscript{83} The socialists before the war did not see the imprecise and restrictive nature of their internationalism, says Lefebvre. The restrictions were that the meaning of the word patriot was too much influenced by the 1793 meaning of the word, and there was the thorny problem of nationalities in view of the abstract International of the future. Jaurès avoided the latter problem, he says, waiting for time to work things out.\textsuperscript{84}

The author makes the point that Jaurès was imbued with the faith of prewar socialism and that in light of the patriotism and internationalism of the time he is to be admired. He sees Jaurès as a man who reflected in his work, \textit{L'Armée nouvelle}, uncertainties and fears, a man who would look left and right for answers and method, "groping" his way and being "contradictory," but above all a man who never made choices on the basis of self-interest.

The Second International to which Jaurès had dedicated himself could only point to one concrete achievement in 1914, and that was the policy of socialist unification in all countries, which led to the founding of the S.F.I.O. Within the S.F.I.O. there remained diversity, just as there remained diversity within the International. Further, in France the potential strength of the working class movement was hampered

\textsuperscript{83}Ibid., pp. 12-13.

\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., pp. 14-16.
by the large following in the apolitical C.G.T., which was also a case of unity amidst diversity. The C.G.T., generally, accepted the premise that the class struggle must be intensified and that action in the form of strikes and violence, completely apart from parliament, was the only way to ever bring about the revolution. Jaurès alone never gave up hope that someday there would be a meeting of minds between the two great labor organizations. Throughout their existence, however, they worked at cross purposes in the struggle to find the key to keeping peace.

Jaurès and Vaillant were firmly agreed that the working class position on war should be twofold; socialists must fight if their country were attacked; they must wage a general strike and insurrection, use public agitation and parliamentary means to prevent their country from attacking another.\textsuperscript{85} This was the crux of their resolution proposed at the Stuttgart congress of the International in 1907. The resolution on militarism and war that came out of the congress was a compromise of every proposal offered, and it is notable for its ambiguity, indeed it could hardly have seemed a threat to the nationalists and imperialists of the world. The resolution was reaffirmed in the atmosphere of continued international crisis at Copenhagen in 1910 and at Basel in 1912. As has been succinctly stated, given the attitudes

of the parties involved, the resolution "did not make sense." 86

Jaurès was waging a three-way fight for peace: one, to seek accord between the C.G.T. and the S.F.I.O. for concerted action in the event that it should be necessary; two, to gain agreement in the International for a policy of action in the event of war; and, three, a daily struggle in parliament against imperialism, colonialism and militarism. The last great parliamentary battle was over the three-year law for military service in 1913, a reflection, in retrospect, of the state of crisis in Europe.

It is a truism that in human affairs tragedy and crisis generate noble efforts among people. Such was the case in July 1914 as the socialists frantically sought to influence the diplomats in Europe. Ever the optimist, Jaurès demonstrated his belief that even the intransigent German social democrats would adopt the idea of strikes and insurrection to prevent war. He had seen Karl Liebknecht on two occasions in July and it is speculated that these visits with the young minority leader in the German party influenced Jaurès' remark in L'Humanité, that although for fifteen years the Germans had not accepted the idea of the general strike "it is now seriously discussed by them, and considered as a

86 Ibid., p. 103. See Chapter II for a survey of the International between 1900 and 1914.
means of struggle." His hopes were great, too, at the extraordinary gathering of the S.F.I.O. from July 15 to 17. It seemed that, at last, a positive, concerted stand might be demanded. In his speech to the party, Jaurès called for a simultaneous international general strike. "There should be no more room for equivocation. The representatives of the International united at Vienna are going, for the first time, after the hesitations and groping procedures which have characterized the preceding congresses, to find before them a concrete proposition that they must accept or reject, but it will be impossible to accept ambiguity or to equivocate." The Austrian note to Serbia on July 23 changed circumstances, though, and the Bureau socialiste international summoned its members to meet in Brussels on July 29 and 30. The Bureau unanimously decided to publish a declaration in which it called for all proletarians to continue and to increase manifestations against war. The Germans and French were to pressure their respective governments to influence Austria for moderation. Notably, the Bureau changed the date and place of the upcoming Congress, which was summoned for August 9 in Paris, at which time there would be a great


demonstration in favor of peace. On this positive note the delegates returned to their countries.

Back in Paris in the evening of July 30, Jaurès was approached by Merrheim and a delegation of the C.G.T. about gathering forces for a massive demonstration. The C.G.T. proposed August 2, whereas Jaurès maintained that it would be more effective if they would go along with the August 9 date since he had already committed the S.F.I.O. to that date. Two demonstrations would not be effective, he said, vigorously exclaiming, "Such would not be necessary. Certainly the situation is grave, but not desperate. There will be highs and lows, and we will perhaps be closer to war than we are today, but the diplomatic negotiations will endure for several weeks yet, that is why I think that we will be able without inconvenience to delay our demonstration until August 9." Jaurès had allayed his anxiety, said Merrheim, and he personally left the meeting feeling more at ease.

In his last article for L'Humanité, written the day after this meeting and the last day of his life, Jaurès again displayed his faith in man. We must appeal to the intelligence of the people, he wrote. "The peril is great, but it is not unsurmountable if we guard the clearness of mind

89 Ibid., pp. 5, 6.

and the firmness of hope, if we are able to have both the heroism of patience and the heroism of action. Clear sight of the goal will give us the force to fulfill it." 

One cannot say of Jaurès' idealism and of his well-written and well-spoken words that they were all sound and fury signifying nothing. "Jaurès' idealism was an act of faith in the human person." In light of the numerous crisis between the years 1905 and 1914 that had been peacefully resolved, he could not believe that Europe would go to war. What would have been the nature of post-war Jaurèsian socialism can never be known. It seems clear that Jaurès was evolving in his thinking and that he would have remained a great leader in France's young democracy. Jaurès' basic premise was that the ideal of justice guides humanity and that humanity, following that ideal, would arrive at the perfect communist society. In the light of social and economic reality, though, he gradually began to advocate strike action as a means of reenforcing men's consciousness of the future and of aiding the historical dialectic. The threat of war and the failure of the government to consider his proposals for reorganizing the army, and the failure of the antimilitary efforts of socialists in the Chamber, led him to adopt and advocate more forcefully than any prominent European socialist leader the policy of the general strike.

91 Jaurès, L'Humanité, 31 juillet 1914, in Oeuvres, IX, 398.

and public manifestations as war preventive measures. He was, in this sense, more of a revolutionary than the Marxists.

The most obvious flaw in pre-World War I socialism was its faith in historical determinism and in a cataclysmic change to a new social order. Socialism, as an all-solving creed, meant different things to different people. Jaurès' view, based on the ideals of unity and harmony, was illustrative of the old monistic view of the universe. He labored under an illusion in his effort to direct the historical process toward liberty on the basis of absolute, unitary theories. Even so, his faith in democracy and his practice of democracy reflect his realistic approach to the actual problems of social change. Thus, the idealistic thinker was a realist in his actions.
CHAPTER IV

SOREL'S INTELLECTUAL ODYSSEY

The second career of Georges Sorel found him productive strictly on an intellectual level. His thought and allegiance wandered among the new political sects that appeared to him to be potential agents for change. His work represents a kind of intellectual odyssey which comprised four distinct ventures. The first venture spanned the years 1893 to 1902, during which time he moved, fairly optimistically, within the socialist movement from an orthodox Marxist position to revisionism. It ended in bitter disillusionment and the absolute rejection of democracy. The second venture lasted from 1905 to 1909, approximately. In this period Sorelian thought extolled revolutionary syndicalism, and his works of explanation and justification in effect gave the movement a theoretical guide. Yet this too became a disappointment and he wandered briefly, between 1910 and 1913, into the nationalist and monarchist movement of L'Action française. The final venture, during the war years, was into the realm of pure philosophy. Toward the end of his life Sorel's hopes were again revived by two other movements.
for change, the Bolshevik revolution and its leader Lenin, and fascism. In the sense that he always saw new potential in new movements, Sorel was an optimist.

When Sorel published his study of the syndical organizations, *L'Avenir socialiste des syndicats*, in 1898 he was already a revisionist. There were several factors about the syndical organizations that appealed to him. They did not adhere to an orthodox doctrine such as orthodox Marxism. To do so, he maintained, was not faithful to the "spirit of Marx." The workers' syndicates were not fatalistic like the Marxist groups that thought that revolution could occur only after capitalism had reached a certain point.¹ Also the syndicates excluded intellectuals. Although they were criticized for this exclusion, it was in Sorel's opinion, to their credit.² The most impressive characteristic that he saw in the syndicates was that they were not utopian, rather they reflected Marx's concept of class struggle at the grass roots level, showing that the problem was actually one of determining what action the proletariat could take to further the class struggle.

Sorel used Marx's historical materialism as a method of investigating the syndicalist organizations in order to determine how they could serve as agents of preparation for

²Ibid., p. 93
the future revolution. Sorel was particularly impressed with the syndicalist chiefs, whom he referred to as "men of sense and experience." Although they were intellectually unable to convert their ideas into scientific formulas, they were in a position to teach more about the working class movement than they could learn about it from intellectual socialists. The syndicalists, said Sorel, could see through the intelligentsia's pretenses. Their method was to convince the workers to elect them to parliament so that they could immediately form the dictatorship of the proletariat when the revolution broke out. Sorel interpreted such campaign promises as political exploitation, the chief occupation of intellectuals, which would lead to "representative dictatorship of the proletariat," but never to self-government by the syndicalists. The whole object, he said, was for the proletariat to become sufficiently developed to throw off the domination of external forces whose goals were different from theirs. Marx had shown them how to achieve this object when he wrote, "But the struggle of class to class is a political struggle." Sorel felt that what had to be done and what could be done in accord with Marx's scheme was a complete decomposition and recomposition of the disordered working class.

3 Ibid., p. 82.
4 Ibid., pp. 87-92.
5 Ibid., pp. 93-99.
There is no doubt, he continued, that based on Marx's *Capital* working class recomposition must be through an "interior mechanism . . . in the heart of the proletariat." It must use its own resources and demand reconciliations of public power toward its goal of the transformation of society. To achieve its goal the proletariat enters the electoral process. "The reason for the political struggle finds itself well-determined; one no longer has in view an arbitrary or ideal end, as that which the political revolutionaries seek."\(^6\)

The political revolutionaries sought to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat based on an abstract doctrine. The self-conscious proletarian class, on the other hand, would seek to implement new juridical principles based on the reality of the class struggle.

Herein Sorel's pragmatism is evident. His observation that workers spontaneously organized into societies of resistance as an expression of their will suggested to him that such organizations originated in the souls of the workers, born of "juridical principles in contradiction with those consecrated by tradition."\(^7\) It is this concept of the contradiction between juridical principles as the motive force of the class struggle and of the movement of history that is the essence of Sorelian thought. The self-conscious proletarian organization would result in

\(^6\)Ibid., pp. 99-100.

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 101.
the passage from the blind mechanical order, commanded from the exterior, to organic differentiation, intelligent and fully accepted; in a word, it is a moral development. It comes about through long practice and experience acquired in life. All institutions are formed in the same manner; they do not result from decisions of great heads of State nor from the calculations of wise men. . . .

The transformation of society as Sorel interpreted it in _L'Avenir_ would be a moral transformation reflected in the juridical conflict of interests. In light of the fact that so many moral systems had failed to change the world, the pragmatic Sorel again redirected the question and asked if there existed "a mechanism capable of guaranteeing the development of the morality." In conjunction with studies by the sociologist Emile Durkheim, he concluded that the syndicates were excellent candidates for a moralizing mechanism because of their high degree of productive capacity, of intellectual energy, of devotion to each other, and especially significant, the fact that their organizations were based on liberty, prompted by the necessity of the economic struggle.

One characteristic of all of Sorel's works is the emotional tone that varied from one to the other. In _L'Avenir_ there is reflected a deep concern for finding an effective agent for moral reform and an effective method of

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8 Ibid., p. 111.
9 Ibid., p. 127.
10 Ibid., pp. 128-29.
action for that agent. There is also in *L'Avenir* an optimis-
tic attitude that the syndicats and socialism could direct
the forces of history in a positive manner. Another charac-
teristic of his work is that Sorel never felt a sense of
urgency as to when the transformation of society would take
place. Like Jaurès, Sorel felt that timing was not impor-
tant.\(^\text{11}\) He considered it to be a matter of patient,
methodical preparation. Those revolutionaries who expected
an imminent apocalypse were deluding themselves, said Sorel.\(^\text{12}\)

In his "*Préface pour Colajanni*" the year following
*L'Avenir*, still in the revisionist tide, Sorel defended the
parliamentary rapprochement instigated by the Dreyfus crisis
as being the evolution of progress, "the passage from the
sectarian spirit to the political spirit, from abstract
speculation to real life." The political party, he said,
must mingle with the general life as "an organ in an
organism. Socialism is becoming more and more in France a
worker movement in a democracy."\(^\text{13}\) When he edited this work
in 1910 for republication, Sorel said that if he had known
more about pluralism he would never have formed such a
synthesis in analyzing the syndicats' role. As he said, he
had not at that early point in his writing career freed
himself from the rationalist prejudices of his bourgeois

\(^{11}\)Ibid., pp. 82-83.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., p. 112.

\(^{13}\)Ibid., pp. 177-79.
education. One can see again in the "Préface," however, the persistence of his basic concept of the juridical basis of the class struggle.

In the "Préface" Sorel defended Colajanni for not concerning himself with the theory of the dialectic, which he saw as "truly only a game of words." Marxism is "none other than the class struggle." Since Colajanni did not attribute much importance to this in his work, Sorel examined the theory to see what could be made of it. He analyzed Marx's use of the term "class" and found it used in several senses. Actual observation, he said, showed no such clear-cut division of society; even for Marx it was an abstraction. Sorel concluded that it was a matter of studying the ideas of historical periods regarding social transformation. The hopes and fears of groups appeared to him to be the basis of the solutions that they offered for change. "Each particular solution depends on general solutions and participates in two contrary theories. If the dichotomy does not exist in the real world, one discovers it in the basis of all the moral factors of historical struggles."\(^{14}\)

Sorel maintained that the resolution of these "contraries" would be dependent upon a struggle for the conquest of rights. Thus one would find on the one hand a fairly large mass of people who opposed the current reigning ideas, and on the other hand conservatives who transform

\(^{14}\)Ibid., pp. 180-87.
systems according to theories that are more absolute than reality could ever be. From this point of view, he concluded, Marx's Manifesto of 1847 made sense. It represents the struggle between the juridical ideas of two antagonists. The revolutionary idea would be incomprehensible without the dichotomical division, nor could the notion of a moral catastrophe be disseminated. Sorel went further and reinterpreted the last chapter of Capital along the same line. If one were to term Marx's apocalyptic text as "social poetry," i.e., as a "product of the mind," it could lead to the formation of images useful in developing the proletarian conscience.\(^{15}\) The difference between these ideas of Sorel, the revisionist Marxist, and the ideas of Sorel, the revolutionary syndicalist, is, as will be seen, only a matter of degree.\(^ {16}\) Sorel's seemingly natural inclination to distrust politicians and his distaste for representative government were clearly evident in his early works. The impetus for the change in his attitude toward democracy and the proletarian movement was the Dreyfus affair and what he called the embourgeoisment of the parliamentary socialists.

Following the elections of 1902 and the formation of the Left Bloc, Sorel repudiated parliamentary socialism and democracy. Evolutionary socialism was showing itself to be

\(^{15}\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 187-89.}\)

\(^{16}\text{Rossignol, La pensée, p. 226.}\)
mere reformism and could only lead to a democratic marsh, as he saw it.\textsuperscript{17} The purist Sorel decided that he could not accept a method of change that involved the compromise of principles so often evident in politics. He thought that rather than acting like a purifying agent, official socialism was becoming corrupted by those of its members who entered parliament.

During the years 1902 to 1905 Sorel turned his attention to studying religious history. Prior to this withdrawal from political writing he had been hardly more noticeable than any other bourgeois intellectual writing about socialism, even his lack of actual contact with the people of the working class was not unusual. With the publication of his thoughts about violence, which he named \textit{Reflections on Violence}, Sorel revealed himself to be completely detached intellectually from the mainstream of life, an "outsider among outsiders," a political separatist whose ethical standards were never met by any of the other outsiders whom he knew.\textsuperscript{18} Most significantly, his \textit{Reflections} revealed a powerful, rampant intellect which had grasped an understanding of the myriad aspects of the social problem confronting France, and in turn he proposed an ethical method by which the proletariat could prepare itself to win someday the class struggle. This work reveals an intellectual rage over

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\textsuperscript{17}Sorel, \textit{Reflections}, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{18}Sorel, \textit{Reflections} (1950 ed.), Shils introduction, p. 27.
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the senseless social order and decadence around him, a pessimistic attitude toward the bourgeoisie and the parliamentary socialists, contempt for democracy, the state and modern religions as moralizing agents. He does not, conversely, see the proletariat as endowed with noble characteristics. He sees it, one might say, as a "diamond in the rough," the one segment of society uncorrupted thus far by bourgeois education and mores. Above all, in Reflections Sorel reveals his basic optimism, without which he never could have concerned himself with the invention of his elaborate theory for the moral rejuvenation of the world.

The thought in Reflections is a tribute to the work of "pure intelligence, of constructive idealism, of high and inextinguishable, incomprehensible passion."19 It was precisely because the work was such a sophisticated intellectual construction that it was subject to misinterpretation and abuse by clever and ambitious men. Sorel, it has been said, sought to evoke the sublime, but succeeded in unleashing the beast.20 Alas, although he understood the limitations of rationalism and the fallacy of its abstractions, his pragmatic social theory was no less an example of political messianism than Jaurès' utopianism. For all that was original in his most famous, or infamous, work, Sorel remained

19 Angel, Essai, p. 142.
bound to the concept of the "dichotomal division of society and of catastrophic messianism. . . ."21

Sorel's purpose in writing his Reflections was to make a thorough study of customs and to determine "how the feelings by which the masses are moved group themselves together. . . ." Specifically, he wanted to understand the function of working class violence.22 It seemed clear to him that this was an important undertaking in light of the "one great social fact" that the "revolutionary and direct method . . . is not on the verge of disappearing."23 The Reflections were written, too, as an apology for the strike violence employed by the new school, revolutionary syndicalists. Parliamentary socialists, he wrote, see the new school as demagogues. They do not understand its ends because "they imagine that ultimately all socialism can be reduced to the pursuit of the means of getting into power." With disdain he asked if the parliamentary socialists thought that the new school would wish to appeal to their electors and rob them of votes. Quite the opposite was their goal, he said. He hoped that an apology for violence might open the workers' eyes and lead them to

21 Goriely, Le pluralisme, p. 186.

22 Sorel, Reflections, pp. 44-46. Lytle, "Apostle," p. 276. Lytle notes that this interest in groups had been foreshadowed in Sorel's Proces de Socrate. The "emotional tones of active groups" were important because they represented an irrational stimulus which is the source of effective social action.

23 Sorel, Reflections, p. 70.
abstain from voting altogether.\textsuperscript{24}

Thus Sorel's intellectual quest had found its definitive purpose, the total destruction of democracy. Every revolutionary crisis of the nineteenth century had resulted in the reinforcement of the state, he said.\textsuperscript{25} The Revolutionary formula of liberty, equality and fraternity had been given impetus by Rousseau's myth of the general will.\textsuperscript{26} In Sorel's opinion, there was no such thing as the rule of the general will, only rule by a majority-supported oligarchy. French democracy in particular was a flagrant violation of the liberty that it purported to protect, i.e., liberty of the individual conscience. This force, the liberty of the individual conscience and its social expression, was the object of Sorel's search for reality.\textsuperscript{27}

As Sorel saw it, the myth of democracy had been instilled by the promulgators of the Revolution as a means of conquering power. This was done under the guise of equality. It was therefore necessary to propose a new myth that would embody the same heroic, warlike character as that of the French Revolution and of Christianity itself. Above all, the myth must be capable of serving as a stimulus to act.

\textsuperscript{24}Sorel, Reflections, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{25}Sorel, Reflections, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{26}Rossignol, \textit{La pensée}, pp. 174-75.
\textsuperscript{27}Goriely, \textit{Le pluralisme}, p. 49. Hughes uses the expression "search for reality," to explain Sorel's thought.
Following his study on Renan and Church history, from 1902 to 1905, Sorel assimilated the ideas from his studies of history, sociology, philosophy, religion, and politics into a social theory. In effect, he made a transposition of Christian dogma into modern terms. He transposed the social reality of the syndicalist general strike into the myth of the general strike.

Sorel's myth of the general strike had a pragmatic value. In the same vein as Nietzsche, Sorel thought that nothing short of a complete renovation of morals would suffice to defend individual liberty. His myth revealed the faith "of one of the most original and freest minds of his time, . . ." The myth was pragmatic because it had a goal, moral rejuvenation, and it was an irrational stimulus because it would inspire sentiments of heroism and virtue in the spontaneous organization of worker syndicats. Thus he conceived of the bourgeois-proletarian struggle as a conflict between an old and a new metaphysic, "between a pluralist and a monistic view of the universe."

The social theory contained within the revolutionary theory of the myth was actually predicated on the ideal of

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31 Humphrey, Prophet, p. 95.
social conservation, the conservation of the decadent, capitalist middle class side by side with a violent proletarian class; "if a united and revolutionary proletariat confronts a rich middle class, eager for conquest, capitalist society will have reached its historical perfection." To achieve such perfection it was necessary to see, on the one hand, that the proletariat perfected its organizations and developed ideas based only upon its position as a producer, taking nothing from middle class thought. On the other hand, vitality must be restored to the middle class. Pierre Lasserre has argued in his polemical study of Sorel that the myth was actually a paradox, since it sought to instill fear and to inspire hope. Another analysis of the theory of the myth has pointed out the tension within Sorel between conservatism and revolution.

A second and equally important aspect of Sorel's social theory is that it conceives of a collectivity of individual acts of creation. Deroo has referred to the myth as a "unifier of consciences." From the Bergsonian philosophical concept of the innermost depths of the mind and what happens therein in a creative moment, Sorel derived the following concept. "To say that we are acting, implies that we are creating an imaginary world placed ahead of the

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32 Sorel, Reflections, p. 91.
33 Lasserre, Théoricien, pp. 195-97.
34 Angel, Essais, pp. 48-49.
present world and composed of movements which depend entirely on us. In this way our freedom becomes perfectly intelligible."\textsuperscript{35} Such an act of creation is, according to Sorel's philosophy, an example of "artificial nature," i.e., the scientific ability to understand and to control the chaotic and unfathomable world of "natural nature."\textsuperscript{36} This distinction was conceived through the influence of Vico's work.\textsuperscript{37} When these artificial creations are prevalent in a group of people, then one has an example of what Sorel called a social myth, which can be traced historically. Myths, he maintained, are "expressions of a determination to act."

Utopias, on the other hand, are products of the intellect, they are models which can be compared to an existing order of society and whose "effect . . . has always been to direct men's minds towards reforms which can be brought about by patching up the existing system . . . ."\textsuperscript{38}

Thus Sorel's social myth, the product of his pragmatism, led him to this pluralist view.\textsuperscript{39} As he stated it, his system juxtaposed progress and catastrophe, and in his opinion it accorded perfectly with Marx. What Marx had


\textsuperscript{37}Humphrey, \textit{Prophet}, p. 132.

\textsuperscript{38}Sorel, \textit{Reflections}, p. 33.

\textsuperscript{39}Humphrey, \textit{Prophet}, p. 133.
wanted understood, he maintained, was "that the whole preparation of the proletariat depends solely on the organization of a stubborn, increasing, and passionate resistance to the present order of things." Furthermore, he continued, a revolution in a period of economic decadence will not succeed. Experience had shown the success of workers' revolts that occurred in periods of economic prosperity. The revolution would be dependent "on the constant and rapid progress of industry. . . ." His final point was that Marx had decried utopian plans. The proletariat's programs for the future had already been developed in the workshops. "The idea of a technological continuity dominates the whole of the Marxian position." Likewise one will not find in Sorel's work "a single line against capitalism or the regime of production . . . ." In light of his reasoning, Sorel concluded that the general strike would make the revolution appear as a pure and simple revolt.

According to Sorel's interpretation, the new school would base its search for reality on ethical considerations rather than on the idealistic models of the Christian middle class. From Renan, Sorel derived the idea of syndicalism as an underground development capable of creating a prolet-

40 Sorel, Reflections, pp. 156-51.
41 Andreu, Notre maître, p. 158.
42 Sorel, Reflections, p. 151.
arian ideology, and from Kautsky he borrowed the concept that "the motive force of the revolutionary movement must also be the motive force of the ethic of the producers." Unlike Kautsky he did not see the influence of the syndicats on the laborers as direct, rather he saw the syndicats as analogous to the revolutionary warriors in the wars of liberty who were individuals, free men, as opposed to the soldiers of the royal armies who were automatons. The influence as he saw it would be based on the sentiments of heroism and elitism. The influence would be, in effect, the morale of the producers which would arise out of the struggles between the workers and their masters. Sorel concluded that the only motive force capable of the triple inspiration of the ethics of work, the revolution, and future economic progress was the myth of the general strike.

The myth of the general strike would dominate the working class movement, it was the movement's work of preparation, an apprenticeship, in effect. Setbacks were to be expected, Sorel warned, but they would only indicate to the proletariat that its preparation was insufficient and that it "must set to work again with more courage,

43 Ibid., pp. 262-65.
44 Ibid., p. 282.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., p. 39.
persistence, and confidence than before. 48 This apprenticeship in ethical training would be none other than pessimism, which Sorel defined as a philosophy of conduct, the "march towards deliverance." 49 Sorel never seems to have consciously connected the terms "apprenticeship" and "march towards deliverance." They are only encountered in his letter to Daniel Halevy, which serves as the introduction to his Reflections. The apprenticeship is the myth of the general strike; the "march towards deliverance" reflects Sorel's pessimist philosophy. As has been noted, then, social theory and his philosophy are intimately related. 50 Further, his "march towards deliverance" is a paradox in that it is both pessimistic and optimistic. Sartre, too, has commented on the "enormous dose of optimism" contained in that march towards deliverance. Sorel never questioned this aspect of his philosophy, rather he limited himself to drawing only those conclusions from his thesis that would aid in the education of the proletarian elite. 51 Nor did he ever concern himself with the question of timing, or of details as to what society would be like after the rejuvenation, for as he conceived of it, the movement was everything, the goal indeterminate, as he said

48 Ibid., p. 36.
49 See Chapter I, p. 29.
50 Sartre, Élites, p. 113.
51 Ibid., p. 76.
in *Reflections*.

The myth must be judged as a means of acting on the present; any attempt to disclose how far it can be taken literally as future history is devoid of sense. It is the myth in its entirety which is alone important; its parts are of interest insofar as they bring out the main idea. . .

The general strike, he continued, is a body of images which can evoke sentiments that correspond with manifestations of the war between socialism and modern society. Strikes engender noble, deep feelings among the proletarians, drawing them together intensely. Strikes evoke painful recall of past conflicts, coloring "with an intense life all of the details of the composition presented to consciousness. We thus obtain that intuition of socialism which language cannot give us with perfect clearness, and we obtain it as a whole, perceived instantaneously."52

Thus it was by intuition that the workers were to become aware of the myth of the general strike. Strikes and the violence that they engendered were seen by Sorel as heroic acts by revolutionary elites in quite a striking contrast to the socialism of the parliamentary socialists. He made a distinction between the violence of the workers, which he saw as acts of revolt against the State or the middle class, and force which was the method used by a minority in power to maintain a certain social order.53

53 Ibid., p. 195.
The whole point of Sorel's myth was that it provided a means of acting, an expression of will. Also, it was a philosophy of hands and not a philosophy of heads. It had but one thing in sight: to lead the working class to an understanding that its future hinged on the idea of the class struggle; to lead it in a direction where it will find the means to organize itself for the struggle, to reach the point where it can dispense with its masters; to persuade the proletariat that it ought not to follow the examples set by the bourgeoisie.54

The revolutionary syndicalists were like monks, he said, and they would serve the purpose of maintaining the purity of Marxism just as the monks had maintained and enhanced Christianity.55 Is it any wonder, in consideration of the myth of the general strike and of the role of the syndicalist revolutionary elite, that Jaurès dubbed Sorel the "metaphysician of syndicalism"? One can hardly imagine a program for change that would have less chance to "catch on." Yet there is no denying the significance of Sorel's contribution to political thought of the realization of the role of myths and the role of elites in history.

Sorel was still supporting the arguments of Reflections as late as 1910 in an article on "Strikes and the Right to Work." Before the proletariat can understand its mission, he wrote, it must create a juridical system based on the

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54Sorel, "La Décomposition du socialisme," trans. in Horowitz, Radicalism, p. 249.
55Ibid., pp. 253-54.
ideas of Proudhon and translated into doctrines reminiscent of Roman law. The right to work and the right of constraint within this system would only apply in periods of revolutionary crisis. Otherwise, "the working class has two radically distinct kinds of activity." On the one hand it has a normal place in the modern world in institutions compatible with the bourgeois order, and on the other hand it prepares itself in the march on the road that would lead to the destruction of democracy. Knowledge of proletarian revolutionary tendencies would provide a moral force that would awaken the bourgeoisie from the sleep induced by prosperity.

Sorel arrived at his conceptions because his was an original mind at the crossroads of rationalism and irrationalism. He sought to understand man and his institutions and the impetus for their development. His personal experience led him to conclude that the basic weakness of the principles of democracy and liberalism as expounded by the bourgeoisie was its oversimplification of complex social data. He saw this weakness as being the result of the rationalist penchant for reducing everything to a scientific formula and to unity. The method that he employed was the diremption. This was the means by which social philosophy can study historical phenomena, means by which each part of a social problem can

56 Sorel, Matériaux, p. 407.
57 Ibid., pp. 410-12.
be studied in isolation without consideration of its connection to the whole. In this way the "character of their activity" may be determined to a certain degree. Perfect understanding of the parts reveals that unity is impossible.\footnote{58}{Sorel, Reflections (1951 ed.), p. 287.}

The term "diremption" was coined by Sorel,\footnote{59}{Hughes, Consciousness, p. 173.} and in the use that he made of it there is a close resemblance to pragmatism. Indeed, Victor Sartre has noted the synonomous character of the terms in his statement that Sorel sometimes referred to his pluralism as diremption and at other times he called it pragmatism.\footnote{60}{Sartre, Élites, p. 113.} Whatever he called it, Sorel's method led him to recognize the plurality of interests within society. This recognition of plurality did not negate his pre-Jamesian pragmatic concept of the \textit{Reflections}, rather it expanded the concept of the myth. The dichotomical division was implied in the myth that would inspire the future apocalypse, was always, in his thinking, an ethical division of society and not a class division. He never abandoned hope for the possibility of an ethical renewal of society. Pierre Angel, too, has wondered that such "an incurably pessimistic observer" as Sorel could maintain "the hope of a tenacious optimist for the radical transformation of man."\footnote{61}{Angel, Essais, p. 202.} His hope was based on his own assumptions about man and
ethics which he projected onto socialism, syndicalism, *L'Action française*, and somewhat obstinately onto bolshevism and fascism.

The era of the *Reflections* saw Sorel vigorously combating democracy in other writings, among which were his essay *"L'Organisation de la démocratie"* and a speech on *"La Décomposition du Marxisme."* In the first work Sorel maintained that there was a negative value to the democratic system which could lead to despotism, basing his thinking on a fragment of Proudhon's work that had been published posthumously. German socialism also offered an example of his thinking, he said, since it comprised many voters who were duped by people who were actually seeking the intransigent negation of national traditions. He considered this to be a problem common to all European democracies. He compared the negative nature of modern democracy with what he called primitive democracy, two examples of which could still be seen in nineteenth century Switzerland and in North African Cabyles. A primitive democracy was actually a family association which adhered to ancestral tradition, having a "profound respect for the decisions of social authorities," maintaining the "genius of the race."

The virtue that Sorel saw in such a system was that it adhered to moral regulations that were imposed on clan

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63 Ibid.
members by their religion. Modern democracies he saw as hollow and meaningless. They were composed of individuals who felt no ties with the past, who did not value their homes deeply enough and who failed to consider future generations. In a modern democracy the emphasis was on gaining riches by one's wit, rather than on work for the "seriousness of work." Also characteristic of modern democracies was the preference for living in cities "where men pass like shadows" and where "political committees have replaced ancient social authorities which have been ruined by revolutions." Marx's socialist disciples, who had degraded socialism by downing Proudhon, fit perfectly in this democratic milieu. A return to Proudhon through his De la Justice dans la révolution et dans l'église, would reveal to them that modern democracies had omitted an important institution, the judiciaries. Sorel felt that the syndicats could, in organizing such institutions, play the role of the defunct social authorities.

Although Sorel had criticized socialists for their democratic tendencies in his essay, he was to carry the critique further in his speech. The speech on the decomposition of Marxism was an attack on reformism as opposed

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64 Ibid., pp. 385-86.
65 Ibid., pp. 386-87. About this, see Meisel, Genesis, pp. 150-53.
66 Ibid., pp. 393-94.
to radicalism. The main point was contained in the question, "Could this (Marxism) not be a philosophical concept applicable to the study of social struggles rather than a collection of political precepts?" As always, Sorel took the philosopher's approach in revealing the paradoxes of modern socialism, which he saw leading to the greater paradox that politicians who consider themselves to be "true upholders of the revolutionary idea" were in actuality conservative. Even a socialist and revolutionary political party must function like a bourgeois party, vying for votes and compromising. Marxism, however, is totally committed to revolution; therefore it cannot participate in the political process. The new school realized this and maintained its separation from political parties in order to "preserve what seemed to it to be the kernel of the Marxist doctrine." Marx's apocalyptic text corresponds perfectly with the general strike. Opposed to the official socialist methods, the myth of the general strike represented, in Sorel's opinion, practical action that would not become obsolete since it could work under any political circumstances. He warned the socialists that it would be self-destructive for them to remain in the democratic system, and he cited the Dreyfus Revolution, the political revolution par excellence.

67 Horowitz, Radicalism, p. 201.
68 Ibid., p. 232.
69 Ibid., p. 228.
to illustrate his point.

The efforts made by the French government after the Dreyfus affair, to gain the favor of the leading figures in working class circles have contributed much to the clarification of the nature of relations between society and democracy today. Admittedly the doctrine of progress is in vogue today. It became impossible not to consider democracy as a stage between the aristocratic society of the ancien régime and socialism. . . . Marx believed that a democratic system offers this advantage: once the attention of the workers is no longer drawn to the struggles against royalty and aristocracy, the idea of class struggle becomes much easier to understand. Experience teaches us, on the contrary, that democracy can work effectively to hinder the progress of socialism by orienting working class thought toward a government sponsored trade unionism. . . . Thus one is led to look with suspicion on political revolutions.70

Another development occurring at the same time as this political revolution was the fortuitous entry of anarchists into the syndicalist organizations. Because of that, society was saved from complete "deformation."71

It was not until about 1909 that signs of vacillation became evident in Sorel's work. He was on the verge of his venture into the nationalist-monarchist movement when he wrote a scathing pamphlet on what he called Dreyfusian revolution. As was so often the case with his work, this was a rebuttal to the work of another writer, Joseph Reinach, who had written on the Dreyfus case. Reinach, said Sorel, revealed for all the world to see the point of view of the

70Ibid., pp. 249-52.
71Ibid., p. 253.
triumphant in a revolutionary situation. Sorel concerned himself in the first part of this work, as in much of Reflections and Illusions, with the nature of revolutions. Yet his most succinct statement on revolutions occurred in his 1910 essay "Mes raisons du syndicalisme." He was convinced that upon reflecting on modern history one could not help but see the truth of the following statement:

A revolution only produces profound, durable and glorious changes if it is accompanied by an ideology, the philosophical value of which is proportional to the material importance of the overthrows accomplished. The ideology gives actors in the drama courage, it helps to head off reaction of jurists and historians who want to restore tradition; later the revolution is justified by the ideology, which is considered as the "victory of reason realized in history." At this point it is clear that Sorel did not have a definite position as either a conservative or a revolutionary. In the denigration of modern democracy he extolled the virtues of ancient social authorities and tradition, and in "Mes raisons" he shows an abhorrence for the "reaction of jurists and historians who want to restore tradition." Indeed, the accuracy of the description of Sorel as a demolitionist becomes evident.

Sorel was torn between the extremes of tradition and

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73 Sorel, Matériaux, p. 249.
anarchism, each of which shared his goal, the destruction of democracy. His dilemma becomes very noticeable in *La Révolution dreyfusienne*. One of the essential ingredients of a revolution, he wrote, is the transformation in ideas.74 During the Dreyfus revolution much social legislation was produced to gain the support of the poor, and the rich were victimized by a newly created philosophy which convinced them that they had a great social work to perform. This philosophy is called *la philosophie de l'hypocrite lâcheté*.75 The motives of the protagonists in that drama represented to Sorel a historical experience of "inestimable value." He was referring largely to the role played in a revolutionary situation by men of letters. In the case of the Dreyfus revolution, Sorel directed a scathing attack against Anatole France, Francis du Pressense, and Émile Zola. "In all revolutions we find such aristocrats whose pride plays a considerable role; these people contribute very powerfully to ruin the groups who would have to defend the established order."76

As he had in his *Illusions*, Sorel scorned the pretentious men of letters who he felt had no real concept of the value of ideas. He saw them as adopting "unforeseen attitudes" that "disturb deeply the public order," all for

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75 Ibid., p. 15.
76 Ibid., p. 23.
the sake of the success it gave them. Revolutions, he continued, present a blend of the ridiculous and the sublime, making it difficult to judge men who appear to be both buffoons and heroes. The buffoon of his time was Emile Zola, and due to the buffoonerie of these men of letters, the majority of the country rallied to the cause of Dreyfus and calm was restored. Sorel's final conclusion was that "the Dreyfus affair resulted in the ruin of the social structure which had rendered a passable functioning of the parliamentary regime possible."78

In order to put this conclusion in perspective, we need to digress briefly and sketch the evolution of Sorel's view of the church, which is directly related to his changing political orientations. This aspect of Sorel's thought has been treated in detail by his biographer, Pierre Andreu. Between 1894 and 1901, he says, Sorel thought that the Church was an organization interested only in upholding the actual order of society.79 His philosophical evolution in the period 1901 to 1910 led him to renounce anticlericalism. It seemed to him that the events of the Dreyfus era had contributed greatly to "the transformation of specifically socialist ideologies into ideologies very similar to

77Ibid., pp. 24-32.
78Ibid., p. 57.
79Andreu, Notre maître, p. 204.
those employed by democracy . . ." 80 Whereas in the earlier period he had seen the ancient conflicts between science and religion weakening, a result of his attachment to material determinism, 81 by 1910 he saw the two worlds as co-existing. Material determinism, he said, is not a fact of the real world, rather it is a creation of the experimenter, as "artificial nature." "Twentieth-century philosophy must restore the idea of chance against all determinisms." 82 Sorel did not see, at this point, either the need or the possibility of destroying Catholicism. It would be around for a long time to come because of its duration through the centuries and because it appealed to the mystical faculty within man. 83

In 1910 Sorel was to study the working class movement from a psychological viewpoint. However, his essay "Mes raisons" was more of an autobiographical essay of the evolution of his own ideas about contemporary society. In one particularly telling statement he said that the Dreyfus revolution had generated a psychological state in the working classes highly conducive to the development of revolutionary syndicalism. The revolution's consequences were both

81 Andreu, Notre maître, p. 205.
82 Ibid., p. 211, quoted from an article in Revue Métaphysique et de Morale (1909).
83 Ibid., pp. 205, 211.
material and intellectual. The most prominent intellectual consequence, as he interpreted it, was the realization by syndicalists that an "intimate bond existed between syndicalist ideology and that which was most original in Marx's work." Even though recent developments had been unfavorable to the progress of his own ideas, Sorel smugly remarked that "I have reason to think that the doctrines of the Reflections On Violence ripen in the shade; they would undoubtedly not be so often denounced as perverse by the syncophants of democracy if they were impotent." Among the unfavorable developments regarding his ideas was the boycott of his Révolution dreyfusienne by many of his old socialist and syndicalist friends.

This essay in which Sorel still advocated syndicalism was written in the spring of 1910, and at about the same time he wrote an essay for Il devenir sociale of Rome which was, in effect, an adieu to the movement, an adieu reflecting his discouragement in that it showed little hope for the future of the movement. Sorel's discouragement had been growing since 1908, along with his attraction to L'Action française. He made his rapprochement with the right warily, participating initially in an effort to found a syndical-nationalist review, La Cité française, which never mater-

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84 Ibid., pp. 284-86.
85 Meisel, Genesis, p. 178.
86 Andreu, Notre maître, p. 70.
alized. It remained no more than a prospectus composed of a declaration of principle and three articles, one of which was by Sorel entitled "L'Indépendance française." Its first and foremost goal was the freeing of French intelligence "of all of the ideologies which have held currency in Europe for the past century." The founders believed that the only way that the questions of the modern world could be resolved was by the destruction of democratic institutions, for contemporary experience shows that democracy comprises the greatest social peril for all classes in that it permits several groups of politicians, in association with financiers to exploit the producers." La Cité called for the awakening of class-consciousness and a restoration of the virtues of each class in order to fulfill the historic mission. Sorel's article constituted a "pressing summons" to Frenchmen to help in restoring independence to the French mind by following "the noble routes opened by the masters of national thought."

We see that even as he embarks on this venture, Sorel's change is once again only a matter of degree. The old themes of class-consciousness and historic mission are still present, as is his relentless war against democracy. Also, his habit of psychological analysis as a means of justifying his argument is still present, reiterating the virtue of heroism

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87 Ibid., pp. 327-28.
88 Ibid., p. 329.
and myth. Humanity, he said, is not instinctively swept along by a great movement, and it can be argued that human nature fears the "granduer of masterpieces," rebelling from such by powerful and lowly instincts.

History teaches us that the heritage of the masters would not be long conserved without the semi-heroic efforts of will. That which is called decadence is nothing other than the awakening of powers, the vulgar, barbaric or absurd manifestations of which had been momentarily retrieved by an artificial order imposed by the mind. Ainsi, le vrai est fort instable chez nous, tandis que notre mauvais fonds engendre perpétuellement le faux.

The new note in Sorel's third venture is patriotism, a full-blown and passionate regard for the history and culture of his country. French civilization had been eminent in many historical epochs due to the superior intelligence of its people, he said. Several years ago a satisfying sentiment of values began to appear in France "in the return to classical taste, representing to many an effort to return to reasonable orientations." For too long, he continued, French thought has been enslaved by persistent prejudices. The profoundness of Proudhon's influence on Sorel is again evident as he calls for a return to the works of that Frenchman, the greatest socialist writer of France, who alone among socialists had been nurtured on the best French traditions. "The only hope of success would be for many people of good will to energetically participate in the work of regeneration."89

89Ibid., pp. 329-31.
Thus one sees Sorel the outsider exposing a deep and loyal love of country that was no less fervent than that of his socialist scapegoat, Jean Jaurès. What many of the leading protagonists of the day had in common was patriotism, which, it might be maintained, became distorted and misunderstood by their adversaries due to their adherence to extreme ideologies. Jaurès, as was shown, was branded antipatriotic because all socialists were considered Marxist, therefore without a country, i.e., antipatriotic. Sorel faced an even more difficult situation since he had originally proclaimed that revolutionary syndicalism was by nature antipatriotic. Once he accepted the direction of the nationalist-backed periodical, L'Indépendance, he undoubtedly appeared to most of his old associates to be a traitor, and to a casual observer Georges Sorel must have been thought to be a senile, crazy old man who did not know left from right. Yet time was to reveal that Sorel had read well the signs of his times, even his vasccillations reflect those signs, all of which indicates that the forces that were leading Europe pell-mell toward self-destruction were uncontrollable, whether by a metaphysical prophet of the sublime or by an idealist apostle of peace. In Sorel's case his vasccillations were all based on common denominators.

The political movements supported by Sorel had in common the basic concepts of the revolutionary myth as the motive force. Each was to be led by elites and each was dedicated to violence. They were totalitarian in that the
myth would both inspire the changeover to a new order and it would maintain the morale necessary to guard the movement's purity. Further, each movement would produce "societies of heroes." His association with the nationalist-monarchist L'Action française in this third venture was not a whole-hearted one. He viewed L'Action française as a bourgeois elite and the myth of nationalism as a means of purging the nation of foreign elements assimilated into French culture and institutions since the height of its glory in the seventeenth century, such elements as Judaism, Protestantism, Freemasonry, and especially parliamentary government. Integral nationalism would result in a new order in which the proletariat would have a place, he thought. For other leaders of the movement, however, this was not the case. Sorel began to realize this in 1913, seeing that L'Action française was not interested in either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie.

His sojourn as director of L'Indépendance was one in which he did not produce his usual calibre of writings. He was definitely nationalist, and as always, anti-Semitic. In all he wrote fifteen articles for the periodical, articles that were polemical rather than creative, and which differed in tone from those of the younger contributors who were becoming preoccupied with the fear of the German danger.

90 Roth, "Revolution and Morale," p. 221.
91 Ibid., p. 213.
92 Meisel, Genesis, p. 204.
More and more their attitude took on too nationalistic and reactionary a character to suit Sorel. He finally told Variot, who had led Sorel into his work on *L'Indépendance*, that he did not like what was happening and that he would use his health as the reason for quitting the publication.93

Following his departure from *L'Indépendance* Sorel was led by his devoted disciple, Eduoard Berth, into a flirtation with a new association, the Cercle Proudhon. This association was a curious conglomeration of young Frenchmen of extreme views: royalists, leftists who would not renounce republicanism, nationalists who wanted a strong state, and syndicalists who continued to oppose any kind of state. Sorel had doubts about the possibility of an efficacious compromise between such diverse viewpoints. The only opinions that the diverse elements had in common were that the work of Proudhon should be saved from the hands of "democratic worshipers" and in accord with Proudhon, the Cercle agreed that "Democracy is the great error of the last century." They also agreed that capitalism must be maintained and strengthened, but that it must be purged of its "political" elements. The melange of ideas that these groups coalesced into an acceptable constitutional scheme bore in retrospect a strong resemblance to the post-war corporate state.94 Sorel's

93Ibid., p. 206, and Andreu, *Notre maître*, p. 82.
94On Sorel's association with Cercle Proudhon see Meisel, pp. 206-12, and Andreu, pp. 84-89.
association with this group was both brief and tenuous. He was not attuned to the enthusiastic hopes of the younger generation, and he had come to perceive a narrowmindedness in nationalist thought prior to the war. Again, he used his health as a reason to bow out of the group.

The old pessimist philosopher remained relatively quiet during the war years and contented himself with writing on the philosophy of pragmatism. Events after the war rekindled his hopes for ethical movement. Sorel wanted to see positive features in bolshevism and fascism, and even went so far as to add an essay, "In Defense of Lenin," to the fourth edition of his Reflections in 1919. In the essay he maintained that bolshevik terrorism and repression should be seen in light of the Moscovite character. The number of people shot by the Bolsheviks was less than the number killed by the "official organs of democratic justice," i.e., the Allies helping White Russia. As for the violent leader of the revolution, he says:

Lenin is not, after all, a candidate for the prize for virtue awarded by the French Academy; he is accountable only to Russian history; the sole really important question that the philosopher may consider is whether he is directing the orientation of Russia toward the construction of a republic of producers, capable of embodying an economy as progressive as that of our capitalist democracies.

Sorel continued by maintaining that he had never written anything that was an apology for proscriptions such

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95 Andreu, Notre maître, p. 89.
as were occurring in Russia. However Lenin devised his method, and whatever those methods were, they were in Sorel's opinion somehow justifiable since they were aimed at the downfall of plutocratic democracies. Before he died, he said, he hoped to see the triumphant democracies humiliated.96

In effect, Sorel saw what he wanted to see in Lenin, which was a new way to save society. He, too, was an optimist extraordinaire. The fatal flaw in his thought was his purist attitude which led him to expect too much of man. Like Jaurès, he was unable to avoid thinking of large-scale change in other than messianic terms. His pessimist philosophy, his concept of the ethical basis of economico-juridical conflicts as the origin of change, his realization that liberty is relative to time and place, his understanding of the role of myths in motivating change and of the importance of elites and heroes were dramatic contrasts to prevailing ideas in political thought. Sorel's thought delved deeper into the problems of society and searched at the grass roots for the determinates of change. Unfortunately his insights were obscured by his sublime plan and his caustic language. It is an irony that, on the basis of his fairly sound premises and his pragmatic realization of the pluralism of society, he did not see the impossibility of a salvationist creed as a way to "save society." One wonders how Sorel could not have seen the merit of the democratic

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system, a system that allowed his antagonism! Finally, one wonders that this man who saw that liberty is relative to time and place could not accept democracy, even with its imperfections, as the most realistic expression of social and political liberty that man had derived. The dilemma of the modern world is reflected in his thought.
CONCLUSION

The works of Jean Jaurès and Georges Sorel represent philosophical approaches to the problem of social change. Each devised a scheme by which he thought the perfect society could be achieved. Jaurès was a classical scholar and a philosopher by training. He was by nature an idealist and an optimist. His philosophical thought blended the ideal with the real and conceived of the universe as a harmonious unity of consciences. His philosophy was exemplary of eighteenth-century rationalism. As such it reflected an old, or monistic view of the universe. His political career represents a tireless effort to bring about the means by which humanity could achieve unity and harmony. Thus, Jaurès saw the political process as the most efficacious method of changing social inequities. He saw the Revolution as having established the prerequisites for socialism, capitalism and democracy. He interpreted the formation of a united socialist party as the beginning of the true socialist era.

Sorel was a self-taught man of letters. He, too, was a philosopher. He possessed a highly critical mind which led him to new insights into the motive forces of social change. Sorel was pessimistic about the actual possibility of effective social change, yet his pessimistic sentiments
never obliterated his basically optimistic hope that humanity would find the way to organize the perfect society. The least efficacious method, in his opinion, was the political process. His ideas were derived from the social reality of the apolitical revolutionary syndicalist movement, and were later adopted by an extremist group of the right, the Action Française. Sorel saw the crux of the problem of change as ethical. He felt a constant tension between the ideal and the real; between the aspirations of the Enlightenment heritage on one hand and the frustrations and complexities of an increasingly industrial and interdependent world on the other hand. Sorel was a pragmatist, and as such his philosophy represents the new world view of pluralism.

Jaurès and Sorel began their quests from common starting points as humanitarians who wanted to awaken the social consciousness of their fellowmen. Their interpretations of Marx's thought reflected their philosophical world views and led to diametrically opposed concepts of change which were, in the final analysis, messianic. Both Jaurès and Sorel were conservative revolutionaries.

The primary factor in determining the basis of their thought was seen to be the relationship of their ideas to Marx's social theories. Neither Jaurès nor Sorel accepted Marx's theories per se. Jaurès was critical of Marx for not considering the ideal of justice as a factor in historical evolution. Jaurès' philosophy of history was patterned after Enlightenment thought and the ideology of progress.
He viewed history as linear progression in an intelligible direction, with a sense of the ideal, and according to a mechanical law. He represented history as human progress. Thus he only modified Marx's material determinism and viewed the march of history as ideal and material progress toward the goal of justice and liberty.

The Hegelian dialectic and Marx's use of it represented, in Jaurès' opinion, the culmination of the intellectual development that had begun during the Renaissance and Reformation. It was a clear demonstration to him that the synthesis of the ideal and the rational was possible. Through the dialectic, he said, Marx had revealed the existence of the class war and of the unconscious force of history upon humanity, and he had shown that the socialist revolution would lead to man's conscious direction of the forces of history. Jaurès' faith in unity and harmony precluded his undaunted adherence to the synthesis of contradictions.

Georges Sorel rejected the method of the dialectic because it was a product of rationalist thought and an inadequate means of understanding reality. Marx had been hindered by that method, he said, yet it had led him to the profound recognition of the class struggle as the motive force in the historical process. The essence of Marxism was, for Sorel, the class struggle. He thought that to continue in the orthodox belief and method of Marx's historical materialism was fatalistic. It limited the power of man's will and it was actually unfaithful to the spirit
of Marx. In contrast to Jaurès, Sorel thought that man's will could influence the forces of history at any time. History was not predetermined, he maintained. It was subject to the hazards of chance and reflected periods of greatness and decline. Taking Marx's discovery of the permanent crisis of the class struggle in history, Sorel used historical materialism as a method by which to determine the motive forces in social, ergo historical change.

Further contrasts between Jaurès and Sorel lie in the idealism of Jaurès and its influence on his concepts of liberty and justice, vis à vis the sublime and pessimist sentiments of Sorel and his concepts of liberty and justice. This is the key to understanding why their thought took such diverse paths. Idealism envisions things as they should be. The sublime is characterized by lofty, noble, awe-inspiring sentiments. The pessimism of Georges Sorel reflects the cynical attitude, as well as a sentiment which he saw in ancient literature that emphasized the tragic aspects of life. On the basis of these views, Jaurès and Sorel arrived at opposing premises, or "laws of social change."

The laws centered around the concepts of liberty and justice. Jaurès conceived of liberty in the liberal sense, as derived from enlightenment heritage. That is, he saw it as a political reality under the democratic Republic. He also thought of liberty as an ideal, the goal of the future society. Justice also had a dual character in his thought. It was the ideal that guided humanity, as exemplified in
Michelet's concept of the universal reign of law, and it was a goal of the future society in which the relations between men would not be based upon class, but upon their title as man.

Sorel, who had not been trained in classical scholarship and whose career as an engineer had been that of a creator, derived an imaginative concept of the mind that conceived of a small portion of man's mind that touched on the absolute of liberty. He thought that it was on the basis of this absolute that religions and morals were founded. Liberty in the real world was a continuing problem for man, one which Sorel saw as eternally interesting. Between the absolute of liberty and that which was justified as liberty historically, he saw a permanent moral crisis. The moral crisis was one of the motive forces of social change. It acted on the social system formed by economy and law. Law was relative to the particular social milieu in which it developed, and it had the character of an absolute. The source of law was, therefore, social, influenced by the ethical considerations of the people involved. Justice was, for him, simply the relations between men. Within the system formed by economy and law, there had never been equilibrium, there was permanent moral crisis, the source of historical change. Neither Jaurès nor Sorel, then, could avoid the consideration of justice in history. It was their basic concern for effective and just change that made them conservative revolutionaries.
Evidence of Jaurès' conservatism is his evolutionary socialism which in effect sought to reform the evils of the liberal regime without traumatizing society. Sorel had made note of the actual conservatism of parliamentary socialism. Evidence of Sorel's conservatism is seen in his basing his scheme for change on the idea of conservation, concomitant with the ethical education of the people by an elite. Jaurès' advocacy of efficacious strike action and of massive, concerted direct action to prevent war, and Sorel's myth of the general strike and advocacy of direct action through strikes and boycotts, were tactics in the preparation for the great catastrophic change. Each thought that the foundations of the new society had to be built slowly and methodically.

Sorel's original contribution to historical thought was the discovery of the significance of myths in history. The myth represented to him an expression of will. It was exemplified throughout history in systems of belief that provided the impetus for action, the most outrageous example of which was, in his opinion, democracy. Sorel conceived of the myth of the general strike as capable of a triple inspiration; it would inspire the ethics of work, the revolution, and future economic progress. An elite would guide the ethical education of the workers under the apprenticeship of the myth of the general strike. Time was unimportant and the goal was unimportant. The movement was everything. The apprenticeship was a march toward deliverance in the form of an apocalyptic moral rejuvenation. The
march toward deliverance represented pessimist philosophy, the fact of man's inability to completely control the forces around him, and therefore knowledge that the movement would be subject to ups and downs.

Jaurès' plan was comparable to Christian idealism. By outlining the framework of the future society, he ranked himself among the utopian social planners. His plan was a modification of Marx's social theories. When he became more adamant about the use of direct action against economic oppression and against war in the last years of his life, he showed himself to be leaning toward Marxist revolutionism in deed as well as in word.

Jaurès and Sorel each acknowledged the hold that religion had on men's minds and they accepted its parallel existence with their own all-solving creeds. Jaurès saw the Renaissance and Reformation and their consequent intellectual development as evidence of the liberation of the individual conscience from religious domination. Religion and socialism would eventually converge in the future religion of materialism, which would be an earthly religion, not one external to man and his daily life. Sorel would have religion replaced by the ethical myth following a sufficient period of coexistence. The apocalyptic rejuvenation would lead to the social expression of the liberty of the individual conscience.

These two men also had in common the simple fact that they were Frenchmen who were staunchly patriotic. Jaurès' internationalism was not, in his thinking, the least bit
inconsistent with patriotism. Sorel's nationalism was none other than patriotism. Nationalism to him did not mean revanche or vicing with other powers in the imperialist race. It was simply the means of extolling the virtues of France and its culture and restoring purity to that culture.

Jaurès is seen as the greatest French socialist. He was a charismatic leader whose moderation, compassion, optimism and faith in democracy was a positive influence in the strengthening of many people's faith in the Third Republic. He was a renowned socialist leader in all of Europe, and even in South America, which he toured in 1911. His effectiveness was that of moral suasion. No concrete change occurred due to his efforts. Social legislation and labor negotiations were social expediencies which were not influenced by socialist ideology. Jaurès' dream of change, though noble was not realistic. Perhaps the war would have brought his ideas in line with twentieth-century reality. As it is, Jaurès' thought can be seen as a last vestige of Revolutionary ideology.

Sorel was not directly influential on social change either. Essentially a "loner," he was known by only a few people. In spite of his insights and realism, he too devised an unrealistic and equally messianic plan for change. Yet there is so much in Sorel that anticipated the twentieth century. It is not accurate to see Sorel as an influence on Bolshevism or on Fascism. It is accurate to see Sorel as reflecting the forces at work that led to these aberra-
tions. In this sense he was a prophet of totalitarianism.
I. Works by Jaurès and Sorel


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Books on Jaurès and Sorel


III. Books


IV. Articles in Learned Journals and Periodicals


