

## **UNE TRADUCTION ANGLAISE DE L'ESSAI SUR LES SIGNES**

L'Essai sur les signes et sur les idées fut publié par Saint-Martin en 1799, sous forme de brochure et repris dans le Crocodile, en 1799, où il constitue le chant 70. Il est aujourd'hui disponible dans un volume du "Corpus des oeuvres de philosophie en langue française" consacré à Saint-Martin intitulé Controverse avec Garat précédée d'autres écrits philosophiques (Fayard, 1990).

Cette réponse à une question mise au concours par l'Institut n'avait guère de chance d'emporter le prix, tant elle était antagoniste du système régnant de l'idéologie. Elle avait, oserai-je dire, d'autant moins de chances d'être primée que SM n'adressa pas son mémoire à l'Institut et, par conséquent, choisit de s'exprimer sans concourir. (N'en déplaise à ce professeur à la Sorbonne qui, dans un article de 1992, affirme que SM, après l'échec supposé, "récupéra" son manuscrit afin de le faire imprimer!) On trouvera le point sur cette affaire dans l'introduction au fac-similé du Crocodile (SM, Oeuvres complètes, Hildesheim, Olms, en préparation).

La seule traduction anglaise de l'Essai parut en 1939 dans l'édition américaine de la revue trimestrielle publiée par l'Ordre du Lys et de l'Aigle, sous le titre la Force de la vérité. (Sur les liens entre cet ordre initiatique et le martinisme, voir l'EDC, n°12.)

Aux pages traduites dans le n°2, il a paru utile d'ajouter la page de titre et les deux dernières pages de cette livraison, le tout en fac-similé, réduit de 10 %

# **THE FORCE OF TRUTH**

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# TREATISE OF THE SIGNS

by L.C. of Saint-Martin.

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Besides, as to our signs of a subsidiary nature and those of industry, one should take care to reconcile in this manner, our pretensions with our means, and notice that for the class of imperfect and limited ideas that we go through daily, it is possible that the limited and industrial signs that we use are sufficient, and that without going out of these limits, and in applying there all our emulation and all our ingenuity, we should reap from it some fruits which satisfy, provided we remembered that in that measure, our needs, our means and our results are only an approximation.

It should be observed afterwards that, if with these elements of approximation, we would form for ourselves some perfect ideas and some perfect signs, it is probable that it would be an enterprise beyond our forces, because the variable can never produce the fixed; it should be observed at last, that in the art of ideas, the word of formation is perhaps less just, and surely less modest, than that of development, because if in our relations with our fellowmen, we did not find in them a proper germ to receive the fecundation, finally a base analogous to the idea that we want to give them to understand, never could we form in them the least trace of it.

That is why those who have wanted to consider man as a clean sweep (table rase) have been perhaps in too great a hurry, they could, it seems to me, have<sup>been</sup> satisfied to regard him as razed table (table rase) but the roots of which still remain and are only waiting for the suitable reaction to sprout. This middle term could have reconciled, long ago, the ancient system which pretends that we have innate ideas, and the modern system that pretends the contrary, because both of these systems run into extremes.

Indeed, if the complete ideas were inborn, we would not be obliged to undergo, as we do, the imperious law of time, and by the indispensable slow-

ness of the improvement of our intelligence; and if, from another side, the germ of the idea was not sown or did not sow itself in us, it would be in vain that we would go through this invincible law of time and by the slowness of education, since neither the one or the other would produce more effect upon us than upon an oyster.

Besides, with a little more attention, Locke the famous adversary of the innate principles, would not have said so lightly in the first chapter in his first book : If these truths were innate, what necessity should there be to propose to have them accented?

It is very true that if an acorn were an oak, we should not need to sow it and to cultivate it to have it manifest the majestic tree which issues from it: but if, because it is not an oak, one would pretend that the germ or the faculty to produce this oak by culture, is not in the acorn, it is an established fact then that one would uphold an error, fully demonstrated by the fact.

Thus man is like the earth in which the germ of any seeds cannot be created, but, in which they can all be developed, because they find in it some analogous properties. Thus all ideas whatsoever are destined to pass through the earth of man and to receive there their kind of culture. Thus the signs which, in general, must be the result of the different germs of the beings, and the manifestation of their properties, whether material or sensible or intellectual, form principally the commerce of man, because he is the soil suitable to produce them, to select them, to understand them and to propagate them.

#### OF THE SOURCE OF THE SIGNS. OF THE DIFFERENT CLASSES OF SIGNS. MISTAKE UPON THIS OBJECT.

In spite of the references of union and the relations of activity which the simple elements have between themselves, as also the natural objects which belong to the mineral and vegetal classes, they cannot be regarded, strictly, as being signs, the ones towards the others, although they have always this title with respect to us, and that because they do not communicate with themselves, in their respective commerce, either sensations or ideas.

In reality, when a cloud announces to us the ap-

proaching storm, wind, hail or rain; when the metallic and vegetal substances, act and produce their effects according to their law, these different classes of beings are not aware of what they announce, neither do they notice what they put in action. The animal class often feels a part of these results as a consequence of its correspondences with all that is elemental and is embodied like itself; but it limits itself to be passively bound to a part of these phenomena. For us, we have the right to judge; in these phenomena, and the animal class itself; since we have that right of being able to use, as we like, all these things in our signs.

Moreover, all these natural objects have each an ostensible and indicative character which renders them to us, easy, to know; because every thing in them is, so to say, in the open, because their constitutive and characteristic principles, unfold in a clear, regular and constant manner; because the mode of their development is of but one species for each principle; that they are brought about in the same circle where their individual principle is fixed, and that they need not come out of it to accomplish their law; finally because their principles of life and of activity, have, in some way, but one uniform interval to go through in order to come from their source to their term, provided that their mutual operations limit themselves to manifest only forms and qualities.

Also, is there no question to be made upon all these inferior classes, only to the natural objects themselves which compose them, since they do not cease to offer themselves sensibly to us with all the clearness and the simplicity of which they are susceptible; and the human intelligence that would know how to study them in this frank and manifest (open) state in which they show themselves, would receive more light, than in going to ask for the key of it from some systematic doctrines of which the ones pretend that they have none, and of which the others pretend that it is impossible to discover it.

Besides, in order that the mutual commerce of the signs exists relatively to us, we must not only find how to have our senses understand, as we have said before, but we must have in us a germ of desire which would be as the radical motive power of the idea that we intend

to express; it is only after these two conditions are complied with that the sign can be born.

A man desires to have a garment to protect him from the inconvenience of the cold; to this desire, when it is converted into resolution, succeeds the idea or the project of the garment; afterwards the garment arrives, and procures to him who has desired it, all the enjoyment that he anticipated.

In this example we see that the idea, the plan of the garment, is the sign or the expression of the desire that this man has to be clothed; and that the garment is the sign of the idea and of the plan that he has conceived in consequence of the desire. We see here that the primitive source of all kinds of signs, is the desire; we see here that the signs take different characters, in passing from the order of the idea to the order of the senses; that they must change likewise in repassing from the order of the senses to the order of the idea; and that at last it may be found that in these operations an infinity of combinations exist, where the intelligent order and the animal and sensible order play alternatively or conjointly their part, and which will multiply or will simplify themselves, in consideration of complicated or simple examples that one will want to choose.

In fact, when some exterior signs, either natural or accidental, come to act upon us and react according to their class and according to the nature of our senses, the sensible impressions that they occasion, uncover for us a new region, where the senses and the thought are enveloped and sealed under the same stamp, as the alloy and the gold are enclosed in the same crucible.

So the results that these sensible impressions offer us at first, are much more obscure and more concentrated than those that we notice in the two kingdoms mineral and vegetal. They have a march less uniform and more uncertain, until the diverse combined sources to which they belong have taken each their post and their rank. One must let all the terms of these different quantities set themselves in order to discern and to reassemble their values.

(To be continued)

## **"Love and Reciprocity in the Heart of Humanity"**

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### **THE FORCE OF TRUTH**

**"The Force of Truth"** is a bi-monthly review of the Occult Sciences, devoted to the dissemination of the Teachings of the Aonian Tradition.

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