

Fourier and the Fourierists: A Case of Mistaken Identity?

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Charles Fourier and his followers, the Fourierists, shared little, apart from their name. The objective of this paper is to explain why this was so.

Fourier's ideas are tolerably familiar, those of his followers far less so. Fourier has been the focus of a number of studies, the most detailed being that of Jonathan Beecher,¹ although, apart from a fourteen-page pamphlet in 1827,² none of his writings were translated into English until 1996.³ The Fourierists have attracted far less attention in modern times. In recent years there has been a small biography of their leader, Victor Considérant, in French and a major study by Beecher.⁴ There have been no modern translations of the writings of the Fourierists although Considérant alone wrote fourteen full-length accounts of their ideas in the 1830s and 1840s and at the time there were a substantial number of English commentaries on Fourierism published in England and America.⁵

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¹ J. Beecher, *Fourier. The Visionary and his World* (Berkeley, 1986).

² C. Fourier, *Political Economy Made Easy. A Sketch Exhibiting the Various Errors of our Present Political Arrangements. Presented to the London Cooperative Society by the Translator* (London, 1828). This was translated by the Owenite, William Thompson.

³ G. Stedman-Jones and I. Patterson, *Fourier: Theory of Four Movements* (Cambridge, 1996).

⁴ J. Beecher, *Victor Considerant and the Rise and Fall of French Romantic Socialism* (Berkeley, 2001); Michel Vernus, *Victor Considerant, 1808-1893* (Dôle, 1993).

⁵ Z. Gatti de Gamond, *The Phalanstery or Attractive Industry and Moral Harmony* (London, 1841); A. Brisbane, *A Concise Exposition of the Doctrine of Association* (New York, 1847). De Gamond was a Belgian Fourierist who joined the French movement in the early 1830s and took part in Arthur Young's attempt to create a Fourierist community at Le Citeaux. Fourierism became popular in America and was publicized by A. Brisbane, *Social Destiny of Man or Association and Reorganisation of Industry* (New York, 1840). In addition there was Godwin Parke, *A Popular View of the Doctrines of Charles Fourier*, 2d ed., (New York, 1844). Hugh Doherty, an Irishman who started as a follower of Robert Owen, did his best to gain support for Fourierism in England. He wrote *Charles Fourier's Theory of Attractive Industry* (London, 1841), and also *False Association and its Remedy* (London, 1841).

Fourier's first book, *Théorie des quatre mouvements*, was published in Besançon in 1808. His next major work came in 1822,⁶ and a third full-length book in 1829.⁷ His two basic ideas constituted radical social revolution. He started from the premise that the most important reform needed to change modern society was the liberation of women from monogamous marriage, followed by the restructuring of "civilized" society into autonomous, profit-sharing *phalanges*. He assumed that once both were achieved man's natural goodness would re-emerge and universal harmony would prevail. There would be no further need of restraints on the individual, neither human nor divine. Indeed, Fourier did not believe in an interventionist deity.

Fourierists, who emerged as a movement led by Victor Considérant when the Saint-Simonian movement fragmented at the end of 1831, revered Fourier, but few could ever have read his works.⁸ Their ideas quickly diverged from those of their master. While continuing to assert the need to liberate women, and attracting the support of a lively group of women on the strength of this mantra, with a tiny number of exceptions, Fourierists proclaimed the virtues of monogamous marriage and the traditional family as the basic of social organization. The *phalange* was diluted into the commune which was lauded as a basic element in society, but Fourierists looked to the state to initiate social reform and eliminate poverty. Thus Fourierists asserted a stronger, more bureaucratic state, quite the opposite of their master. The Fourierists did not believe in natural virtue, but assumed that strict moral codes would continue to be essential to police society. Finally, Fourier's rather dismissive ideas on the supernatural were replaced by a Christian God, almost a Roman Catholic one, which Fourier would have deplored. This paper will focus on these three issues which were fundamental to both Fourier and his followers, that is, women, social organization and morality, to try to understand why their ideas were so different.

"The extension of the privileges of women is the basic principle of all social progress," asserted Charles Fourier in 1808. Fourier was the most radical feminist of all. He was convinced that society would not improve until women were emancipated, both in their working and private lives.⁹ His motives were practical. He completely rejected the almost universal view at the time that child rearing and family matters were necessarily the center of a woman's universe. He regarded them as the enslavement of women. He asserted that confining women to perpetual mothering was uneconomic, making them life-long domestic servants, preventing them making their rightful contribution and thus holding back the rest of society. Curiously, he cited Japan and Tahiti as societies which respected women and were thus economically more advanced than Europe. Fourier had no doubt that nature intended sexual equality. Women were confined to the home, but only one in eight were natural homemakers. There was no reason in nature why women should not be doctors, teachers, writers, dressmakers or athletes.¹⁰ Contemporary society forced poorer women into prostitution because they were denied the chance to undertake adequately paid work.¹¹

If anyone claimed that women were not capable of doing the same work as men, Fourier rebutted them by pointing to the superior abilities of women when they were

⁶ C. Fourier, *Traité de l'association domestique-agricole*, 2 vols. (Paris and London 1822).

⁷ C. Fourier, *Le nouveau monde industriel et sociétaire* (Paris, 1829).

⁸ Fourier liked to have fun with his readers, inventing words to make fairly simple social analyses sound complex and swopping between page numbering systems as well as typefaces.

⁹ Fourier, *Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales* (Paris, 1808), 180.

¹⁰ Fourier, *Traité*, 2: 363-4.

¹¹ Fourier, *Théorie*, 205.

rulers and not burdened with domestic responsibilities, such as Elizabeth I, Catherine II and Maria-Theresa.¹² The subjection in which women lived in contemporary society trapped them into appearing empty-headed and frivolous, but, he wrote, this was because their natural, non-monogamous instincts were repressed. Men also suffered from their determination to keep women in the home because they had to do all the earning.¹³ In Fourier's *Harmony*, women would be able to work according to their capacity and strength. Communal meals and childcare would liberate women and everyone would benefit.

Fourier believed that the second most corrupting force in civilized society after capitalism was monogamous marriage. He decried marriage as slavery for women and a sexual prison for husband and wife, against which both partners constantly rebelled by lies and deceptions. He was convinced that all husbands were cuckolds and classified them into seventy-two types, short-horned, long-horned and so on. Cuckoldry had become a major concern since the introduction of the Civil Code of 1804. A husband was obliged to bequeath his property equally among all his surviving offspring, legal and illegal. Contemplation of the resulting deceit led to numerous hilarious cartoons and plays depicting cheating wives/husbands.¹⁴ Fourier argued that all adults should be free to change sexual partners in response to their desires. "Il y a fausseté partout où il y a un régime coercitif; la prohibition et le contrebande sont inséparable, en amour comme en marchandise."¹⁵ Unlike some contemporaries he believed that both women and men possessed sexually passionate natures which were frustrated in traditional marriage.

Fourier was the only utopian socialist to plump for a sexy paradise. He praised sexual diversity, variety, even recommending philanthropic sex for those insufficiently appealing to attract partners.¹⁶ He recognized three sexes, male, female and an indeterminate or sometimes immature third category.¹⁷ In *Harmony*, the immature of both sexes were to be chaste. Fourier was convinced that sex would distract the young from study, even from work, and tempt them into frivolity, idleness and expense. However from around sixteen years, Fourier encouraged a sex life for everyone. He argued that a multiplicity of partners would add to the sense of harmony and well being in the *phalange*. People would retain fond feelings for each partner, and the uncertainty of paternity would make all possible male parents feel a sense of attachment to the offspring. Harmonious sex was not for nighttime and intimate pairing, but for daytime occasions along with huge convivial meals. (He never seems to have thought that the two might be mutually exclusive.)

Fourier's ideas on the liberation of women challenged conventional bourgeois morality but at the time they caused no storm of moral indignation because almost no-one read any of Fourier's main published works and his *Nouveau monde amoureux*, the sexual parallel of his study of industry, was not published until 1967.¹⁸ When the liberal journalist Reynaud published the first comparative study of the early socialists in 1841, he had nothing but praise for Fourier's utopianism. He clearly had no notion

¹² Ibid., 202-3.

¹³ Fourier, *Traité*, 2: 334.

¹⁴ P. Mainardi, *Husbands, Wives and the Problem of Marriage in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven and London, 2003), 21-46.

¹⁵ Fourier, *Traité*, 2: 363.

¹⁶ S. Debout-Oleszkiewicz, ed., *Le nouveau monde amoureux* (Paris, 1999).

¹⁷ Fourier, *Nouveau monde industriel*, 195.

¹⁸ A recent new edition by the Fourier enthusiast, S. Debout-Oleszkiewicz.

of Fourier's ideas on sex.¹⁹ There were signs later in Fourier's life that the criticism of rather puritanical female friends, some of whom helped to pay his bills, modified his hostility to monogamous marriage. In 1829, he conceded that marriage could be acceptable if it developed by degrees, becoming permanent only after the birth of children, because love and paternity were the last of the passions to be fitted into the *phalange*.²⁰ He was obliged to deny that he had ever recommended "libertés en amour," and acknowledged that promiscuity carried the risk of syphilis.²¹

If Fourier's notions of sexual liberation were virtually unknown, those of the Saint-Simonians were a very different matter. Led by Prosper Enfantin, who had clearly read, though did not acknowledge Fourier, they vigorously and publicly espoused women's rights and particularly trial marriage. Sisters and wives of engineer, lawyer and doctor members, including Claire Bazard and Eugénie Niboyet, shared the leadership. A much more radical move for the time was the campaign to attract worker members. A number of young girls working for a pittance in the needle trades signed up, including Jeanne Deroin and Suzanne Voilquin. The Saint-Simonians offered them a faith, literacy, a way out of their poverty—and love.

Although Enfantin and some of the other Saint-Simonian men enjoyed the benefits of sexual liberation, Enfantin himself was no enthusiast for sexual democracy. At the end of 1831, while continuing to insist that they should seek out a female "pope" to share his throne, he removed women from positions of authority within the movement. Some of the dispossessed women, including Eugénie Niboyet, as well as Lucie Schmalzigang and Angélique Arnaud moved on to become Fourierists.²² A group of the working girls, including Désirée Véret, Marie-Reine Guindorf, Suzanne Voilquin, Jeanne Deroin and Pauline Roland started up the first-ever newspaper written by and for women, called initially *La Femme libre*. They published a copy when they could scrape together enough cash and it ran on and off for two years. They wrote about the feminist issues that concerned them most; a woman's right to education and a living wage; equality within marriage, but not temporary or trial marriage. In some cases, their disappointment with Enfantin's change of position led to tragedy, as in the case of the suicides of Marie-Reine Guindorf and Claire Démar. Démar had been a passionate Saint-Simonian. In *Appel d'une femme* she proclaimed her Saint-Simonian faith:

L'individu social complet c'est l'homme et la femme; cependant nous sommes les esclaves des hommes ... mais nous ne voulons pas être les très humbles servantes, car nous sentons clairement que nous sommes nées libres comme l'homme ... Nos droits, enlevées par la justice brutale, le glaive, nous voulons les resaisir par le justice-femme, c'est à dire par la persuasion et l'amour, l'amour qui apprendra de nous à n'être plus qu'une faiblesse ou une débauche, mais à être digne de l'homme et la femme, exaltant en lui et avec lui *sagesse, force et beauté*; car ces trois aspects forment le nouvel amour qui doit embrasser le monde; l'amour, qui est la vie, la vie qui est Dieu; Dieu qui est l'amour universel.²³

The suicides and single mothers shocked the bourgeois monarchy. In 1832 Enfantin and Michel Chevalier were jailed for a year for undermining morality. The

¹⁹ L. Reybaud, *Études sur les réformateurs contemporaines ou socialistes modernes. Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Robert Owen* (Paris, 1841).

²⁰ Fourier, *Nouveau monde industriel*, 182-3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 283.

²² L. Adler, *A l'aube du féminisme. Les premières journalistes (1830-1850)* (Paris, 1979), 91-96.

²³ C. Démar, *Appel d'une femme* (Paris, 1832), 6-7.

Saint-Simonian idea of the “new woman” made superb copy for cartoonists and playwrights. *Le Royaume des femmes ou le monde à l'envers* took place on an unknown island on which a Parisian artist arrived by balloon. It was run by women with a lascivious queen, Nellora. The chorus sings

La femme est pleine de valeur
De force et de science
Elle est soldat ou procureur
Elle fait tout
Et son amant
Fait la soupe et garde l'enfant

The predatory chief minister seduces Reyonsed, a poor artisan. His mother challenges the offending lady to a duel.²⁴

Meanwhile, former Saint-Simonian women became a significant force in Fourierism. They made sure that Fourier's rejection of monogamy was reversed and traditional concepts of the family were re-asserted. Jeanne Deroin may have asserted in her Saint-Simonian *profession de foi* the equality of men and women, the right to terminate a marriage and that for a wife to take her husband's name was as bad as branding a slave across the forehead with the owner's name, but she and her husband formed a life-long attachment. Clarisse Vigoureux, a wealthy widow from Fourier's home city of Besançon, was one of his most energetic champions, as well as his main financier. She composed an adulatory account of Fourierism, which bore little relation to Fourier's actual ideas.²⁵ She squared her own puritanical morality with Fourier's views on sex by arguing that if nature did leave women free to rove, their modesty would keep them monogamous. In a review of the Belgian Fourierist Gatti de Gamond's summary of Fourier's ideas, which retained some aspects of Fourier's own feminism, she remarked that anyone who believed that liberation could lead to sexual immorality did not understand women.²⁶

Even Gatti de Gamond, although she envisaged the possibility of divorce, actually stressed life-long marriage and the primacy of mothering. The moral role of women was no longer associated with sleeping with multiple partners and instilling some vague sociable spiritual cement in the community in the process, but in advocating a spiritual morality. De Gamond's feminism was practical. She robustly blamed women themselves for their lowly status, not the Civil Code or men. In a series of articles in Leroux's *Revue encyclopédique* in 1833 she insisted forthrightly “La condition de la femme n'est pas heureuse; mais la faute n'est-ce pas à elles seules? Les femmes sont dans un état de dépendance et d'infériorité à l'égard des hommes; mais n'est-ce pas qu'elles s'abaissent volontairement?”²⁷

For de Gamond, who later became an inspector of girls' schools in Belgium, the answer lay partly in women accepting that they had responsibilities within society as well as in the home. Above all, she stressed the need for education, criticizing Guizot, whose law providing primary education for boys was under debate in parliament at the time, for failing to provide schooling for girls and training colleges for women

²⁴ C.L.F. Desnoyers, *Le royaume des femmes ou le monde à l'envers, pièce fantastique en 2 actes*, performed at the Ambigu-Comique in 1833 with much singing and dancing.

²⁵ C. Vigoureux, *Paroles de providence* (Paris, 1835).

²⁶ *Le phalanstère. Journal pour la fondation d'une phalange agricole et manufacturière associée en travaux et en ménage*, 1 Oct. 1838.

²⁷ Gatti de Gamond, “2ème Lettre sur la condition des femmes au XIXe siècle: Education spontanée,” *Revue encyclopédique* (Mar. 1833), 125.

teachers. “Le pacte social impose l’obligation à la société de donner à chacun des ses membres une éducation morale et des moyens d’existence.”²⁸ She also campaigned for “the right to work” for women, so that they could be considered for well-paid jobs and professions. Fourier’s preference for sexual liberation as enjoyment and fun was decried by Hippolyte Carnot, former Saint-Simonian and son of the republican of the 1790s, as “immorales et absurdes.”²⁹ Fourierists staunchly defended the family as the cornerstone of the *phalange*.³⁰ De Gamond’s version of Fourier was popular. In less than two years an abridged and even more simplified English translation appeared.³¹

Eugénie Niboyet, transformed into a Fourierist, set up short lived newspapers and literacy classes for girls in Lyon where her husband worked. Although she herself enjoyed a lively public existence as a writer and charity worker, she always asserted the primacy of motherhood. “Aux hommes la politique, les lois, la defense du pays ... aux femmes la sacerdoce de la morale, le culte de la famille, le maintien du devoir.”³² It was by rearing and educating her children that she expressed her equality.³³ Although this sounds very smug, Niboyet was still aware that poorer women struggled to feed, never mind educate, their children and that they faced destitution when they could no longer work. Other bourgeois Fourierist women, such as Anaïs Ségalas, also later moved away from concern with social reform into the fashion and marmalade type of women’s writing.³⁴

That Fourier’s ideas on sexual liberation were buried is comprehensible in the social climate of the 1830s and 1840s when the “immorality” of the poor was so actively deplored and statistical surveys showed an increase in both prostitution and syphilis, but what of his ideas on social organization? Why did the Fourierists damn the *phalange* with faint praise and smother it in a doctrine of the “organization of work?” This actually elevated the right of the state to run the economy, almost the exact opposite of what Fourier preached. Fourier’s *phalange* was to be a profit-sharing group of about 1620 psychologically compatible individuals. They would share all work, but not the land on which the *phalange* was constructed. The property-owner would also take a percentage. Fourier was no communist egalitarian. He argued that the economy of the *phalange* would be more efficient if large-scale communal production was undertaken. Fourier constantly sought patrons to offer land on which a *phalange* could be constructed and always argued that his project was not utopian, but a practical solution to contemporary economic problems.

The first opportunity came in 1832. Financed by Clarisse Vigoureux, a Fourierist periodical was founded which advertised the *phalange* as a practical and profitable investment. About 1.5 million francs would be needed to buy land, but a tenancy would be adequate at first. A further million francs would be needed for buildings, although it was assumed that at the outset people would work and live in large, moveable tents. The total initial outlay would be four million francs. The editors explained that the money would be raised by founding a company and selling the shares.³⁵ Fourier’s own contribution was minimal. He favored a location near Paris because he assumed that it would attract a lot of visitors, who might then be

²⁸ Gatti de Gamond, “3ème Lettre. Education publique,” *Revue encyclopédique*, Apr. 1833, 421.

²⁹ H. Carnot, “Réunion de l’Ouest,” *Revue encyclopédique*, Mar. 1833, 320.

³⁰ M. Briancourt, *Visite au phalanstère* (Paris, 1848), 79.

³¹ Gatti de Gamond, *The Phalanstery or Attractive Industry and Moral Harmony*.

³² E. Niboyet, *Le vrai livre du femme* (Paris, 1863), 17.

³³ *Ibid*, 72.

³⁴ A. Segalas, *Almanach des dames et des demoiselles* (Paris, 1854).

³⁵ “Programme de la Fondation proposée,” *Le phalanstère*, 1 June 1832, 7-10.

encouraged to invest in the commune. A devoted supporter, the member of the Chamber of Deputies, Baudet-Dulary (1792-1878), who spent his entire fortune trying to set up *phalanges*, persuaded his friend Devay to offer his rather decayed estate of 455 hectares at Condé-sur-Vesgré, near Rambouillet, south-west of Paris in return for shares in the founding society. Baudet-Dulary bought some adjoining land to make the commune 750 hectares in total. The plan was announced in the *Phalanstère* in November 1832.

There was considerable initial enthusiasm, particularly among former Saint-Simonians. At first they hoped to create a joint-stock company, but found few takers. Thus they created a *société anonyme*, a more precarious arrangement, to which the two men contributed all the land, to a total value of 280,000 francs. Nearly one million francs were to be raised by selling shares and the opening was planned for March 1833. For reasons of economy the two men ignored Fourier's magic size and planned for six hundred members, calling their venture a "societary colony." By February they had recruited two hundred members and only a few shares had been sold. Devay himself paid the workers for clearing the land and the opening was delayed. The colony was beginning to take shape in June 1833,³⁶ but the land was poor, sandy and neglected and the existing buildings were in a bad state. By December only just over a third of the required minimum shares had been sold.³⁷ A scheme to specialize in chicken production the following year came to nothing. Baudet-Dulary was forced to pay off the shareholders; his total loss amounted to just under five hundred thousand francs. Fourier was predictably scornful of the failure. The estate was turned into, and remains, a Fourierist retreat.³⁸

In the 1830s, Considérant and other Fourierists continued to press the case for the reform of society through the social and economic structural transformation, but gradually the concept was diluted into praise of basic communal organization. By 1837 for Considérant the commune was "l'atelier social, l'élément alvéolique de la province, de la nation, de la société générale. ... L'organisation de la commune est la pierre angulaire de l'édifice sociale, quelque vaste et quelque parfait qu'il soit."³⁹ Whereas the term *phalange* would have sounded alien and rather military to contemporaries, a commune was simply the traditional basic political unit in France. Just before Fourier's death in the same year, a group of influential Fourierists including Ordinaire, Fugère, Taudonnet, Gingembre and the Irishman, Hugh Doherty organized a meeting to try to persuade Considérant to return to Fourier's first principles. They wanted to turn their movement into a more formal organization with a set of rules proclaiming that Fourierism was a social science, with a library and an annual conference on Fourier's birthday with prizes and an *essai pratique* to work towards the organization of work (which last phrase they and Considérant always wrote in capital letters). They criticized Considérant for being a dithering dictator and a poor organiser,⁴⁰ but in reality they were no more precise. Although Louis Blanc was at the meeting, he was not part of the organising committee.

The divisions among the Fourierists persisted and although affiliates called themselves Fourierists or the *école sociétaire* or sometimes *phalanstériens* they were never again a united movement. In some ways this was an inevitable consequence of the resistance of the Orleanist monarchy to the existence of associations. Legislation

³⁶ *La réforme industrielle ou Le phalanstère*, 14 June 1833.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 Dec. 1833.

³⁸ J. Beecher, *Fourier*, 454.

³⁹ V. Considérant, *Destinée sociale* (Paris 1837), 28-9.

⁴⁰ *Institut sociétaire. Aux phalanstériens: Commission préparatoire* (Paris, August 1837).

in 1834 had extended the Penal Code's ban on formal associations. Divisions within Fourierism ran deeper and were personal. Considérant remained the main editor of the periodical, which gave no direction to Fourierism, but contented itself with frequently changing its name and printing enormous jaw-threatening extracts from Fourier's rightly-unpublished works. He refused support for other experimental communities. The English philanthropist Arthur Young bought the former abbey at Citeaux and tried to construct a *phalange*, but only Gatti de Gamond went to help. Considérant was highly critical. Leroux set up a community at Boussac, with the financial backing of George Sand and the literary skills of Pauline Roland, but he did not claim that this was a *phalange*. Considérant turned Fourierism into a timid war of words against poverty, in which the state, not individual philanthropists, would guarantee work and provide jobs. Timid because he effectively sloughed off socialist ideas to adopt a statist policy, the extension of the role of the state in the economy, a process launched in the seventeenth century by Colbert and developed in the eighteenth by Turgot.

Fourier himself detested politics and had about as much enthusiasm for the state as Proudhon. Under Considérant's influence, his followers welcomed engagement with the Leviathan. They floundered in a number of directions, suggesting that the idea of *phalange* could be instituted to end slavery in America and Russia, would be ideal for Belgium and an excellent way to organize French colonization of Algeria.⁴¹ Fourierists promoted the idea that France would benefit by developing new colonies, and tried to enlist one of Louis-Philippe's sons, the Prince de Joinville, in a Fourierist take-over of Madagascar. Colonies would contribute to the development of trade and the growth of the economy, and offer a safe location for surplus and turbulent people,⁴² a concept a million miles from Fourier. Many Fourierists became almost indistinguishable from Orleanists. In their transformation they abandoned the utopianism of their master in favor of a limited reformist creed. That Fourierism became state-orientated reformism is not all that surprising. The change was implicit when rebel Saint-Simonians joined Considérant at the end of 1831. Many of these new converts were practical men, government engineers and doctors, looking for achievable social reform, which was why they had abandoned *Enfantin*. They were used to action within the framework of the state and forgot their earlier dreams.

Fourier assumed that society would be instantly harmonious if the individual was liberated back to a "natural" state. His disciples, on the other hand, adopted a high moral tone and urged the sacrifice of the self in the interests of altruism. Fourier spoke of the passions, his followers of democratic humanitarianism. Fourier occasionally referred to divine providence in a distant cosmic tone. His followers used more intimate terms to describe the Almighty.⁴³ Fourierists still insisted that their ideas on human destiny constituted a social science,⁴⁴ but God now had pride of place. Considérant noted that man's "attractions" were God-given, were the revelations of Universal Harmony and the *raison d'être* of creation.⁴⁵ On the title-page of his *Destinée Sociale*, published in 1837, Considérant recorded, "Les destinées sont les résultats présents, passés et futurs des plans établis par Dieu, conformément aux lois mathématiques."⁴⁶ Considérant divided the "law of universal unity for man" into three

⁴¹ Gatti de Gamond, *Fourier et sa système* (Paris, 1839).

⁴² D. Laverdant, *Colonisation de Madagascar* (Paris, 1844), 10, 13, 162.

⁴³ Gatti de Gamond, *Fourier et sa système*.

⁴⁴ V. Considérant, *Études sur quelques problèmes fondamentaux de la Destinée sociale* (Paris, 1837), 61.

⁴⁵ Considérant, *Description du phalanstère* (Paris, 1848), 10.

⁴⁶ Considérant, *Destinée sociale*, 9.

parts: the unity of man with himself, the unity of man with God and the unity of man with the Universe.⁴⁷ Fourierists mainly retained the anti-clericalism common to most radicals. However some Fourierists drew close to social Catholicism, urging the clergy to take a lead in addressing social problems. In 1843, Victor Hennequin wrote in the Fourierist newspaper, *Démocratie pacifique*, “Deux puissances existent: l’esprit moderne et la foi catholique; on ne peut pas les détruire: il faut donc les unir.”⁴⁸

The energetic and influential women affiliates, usually the main organizers of local groups, had a profound influence on Fourierist ideas on morality and religion. Gatti de Gamond argued that Fourierism had little significance without a return to God. “The societary system may easily be reduced to the simple limits of an industrial agricultural farm,”⁴⁹ whereas a true *phalange* would strive to improve itself and its members and would involve God and morality, “A societary state can ... be introduced only by the growth of a higher nature in man.”⁵⁰ Clarisse Vigoureux,⁵¹ a close friend of Fourier’s, in whose house he lodged in Paris, was particularly insistent in defining God as their active, directing moral force. Eugénie Niboyet was notably active in social reform. She became secretary to the *Société pour la morale chrétienne*, whose members demanded prison reform and visited inmates. It included other former Saint-Simonians such as Carnot and traditional philanthropists like Lamartine and the Duke de Liancourt-Rochefoucauld.⁵²

Fourierists everywhere stressed Christ and a personal God as the central element in the *phalange*. Harmony would no longer be the automatic consequence of the free exercise of man’s passions, but a quintessentially Christian quality in which freedom was not the first consideration. True to the bourgeois background of most Fourierists, the ladies were convinced that nature needed correction and *phalansterian* man had to accept discipline and restraint. A personal God was required to justify the moral codes of the *phalange*. The Fourierist women believed the popular contemporary feminist notion that women had a special role in disseminating spiritual morality.⁵³ They were also convinced that women were more effectively protected, if not fully liberated, by moral codes governing love and the overarching example of the spiritual love of God. Gatti de Gamond wrote “Love is the most powerful of the attractions ... and yet what does love, the gift divine, become in the society where all the passions, turned from their natural courses, are dark and cruel?”⁵⁴

Although Fourierists, like some other early socialists, resisted engagement in July Monarchy politics, *Considérant* and *La démocratie pacifique* became increasingly critical of the Guizot government and supported the Banquet Campaign (1847-8). After the February Revolution, Fourierists appeared to be the most successful group among the early socialists. Fourierist women, including Niboyet, Deroin and Roland, launched a newspaper and club with the same name, *La voix des femmes*. They demanded education for girls, nurseries for the babies of working mothers, improved pay for women, the revival of a law legalizing divorce and votes for women. Carnot, appointed Minister of Education, made another Fourierist, the playwright, Legouvé, professor at the Collège de France, with the task of delivering a

⁴⁷ *Considérant*, *Description du phalanstère*, 10.

⁴⁸ Victor Hennequin, *La démocratie pacifique*, 16 Nov. 1843.

⁴⁹ Gatti de Gamond, *The phalanstery*, 144.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁵¹ C. Vigoureux, *Paroles de providence* (Paris, 1835).

⁵² M. Thibert, *Le féminisme dans le socialisme français de 1830 à 1850* (Paris, 1926), 202-3.

⁵³ E. Legouvé, *Histoire morale des femmes* (Paris, 1848).

⁵⁴ Gatti de Gamond, *The Phalanstery*, 122.

series of lectures on the role of women in modern society.⁵⁵ Considérant was made a member of the Luxembourg Commission, elected to the Assembly and joined its Constitutional Committee. Initially his proposal that a “right to work” be written into the constitution of the new republic was accepted. However the optimism of the republic was short lived and, although the right to work was debated by the Assembly at length, it was conclusively excluded. Proposals to improve the status of women were abandoned, suggestions that a divorce law be re-established and women be given the vote were lampooned, not least in the cartoons of Daumier and de Beaumont.

For Fourier, if he had lived, the worst betrayal would have been 13 June 1849, when Considérant helped Ledru-Rollin to lead a protest against the Legislative Assembly’s foreign policy and was subsequently forced into exile. Fourier always condemned revolution as a solution to society’s ills. Considérant and Fourierism had lost their way. Considérant later set off on an abortive quest to found experimental communes in America. Without him Fourierism as a movement disintegrated. About the only common element that had remained between the master and his disciples was the belief that man was shaped by his environment and that the physical structure of the *phalange*, or commune, should reflect a communal purpose. The confidence of Fourier and his disciples that architecture could help reform and shape society did not die. Haussmann acted on it in his radical restructuring of central Paris in the 1850s, but instead of utopian philosophy, his objectives were profit and the avoidance of revolution. Likewise Louis-Napoleon’s enlistment of former Fourierists/Saint-Simonians in his economic policies reflected only the shell of their fraternal aspirations.

The shift from utopian dreams to capitalist profit, from women’s liberation to a firm restatement of monogamous domesticity, from rationalism to faith and above all the renunciation of the belief in the innate natural goodness of man, were less a matter of a philosophical change of heart than the effects of lived experience. The optimism of Fourier and other utopians was part of the Romantic Movement, whose poetical, musical and artistic exponents still uplift the spirit. However the writers who hoped thus to remake society and political systems discovered that actual politics was far more complex than trying to construct a *phalange* or *Icarie*. The problems of industrializing, urbanizing society left their mark in repeated economic crises in the first half of the nineteenth century. The events of 1848 were cataclysmic and catastrophic for idealists. After the February Revolution, itself an accidental product of combined political and economic crises, along with other socialists, Fourierists were obliged to pin their hopes on what survived of a Romantic belief in the essential brotherhood of society now to be achieved through universal suffrage. This proved to be a terrible disaster. Instead of a republican assembly, the nine million adult males, voting directly for a parliament for the first time, chose mostly wealthy very conservative notables who had sat in the assemblies of the previous constitutional assembly. The vast majority in this constituent assembly had no faith in a republican future and totally abhorred the prospect of radical social reform, particularly of a socialist hue. The assumed “natural” alliance of working people and republicans was shattered in June 1848 when the Parisian artisans rebelled against the Assembly’s

⁵⁵ These were immediately published, frequently reprinted during the rest of the nineteenth century and were revered by former Saint-Simonian/Fourierist women like Niboyet and Deroin. E. Legouvé, *Histoire morale des femmes*. Curiously Legouvé’s father had dabbled in mildly feminist poetry and Amable Tastu, who was associated with the Fourierists, presented Gabriel Legouvé as the star of her two-volume collection of writings about women (and some by women), *Mme. Dufrenoy and A. Tastu Livre des femmes* (Ghent, 1823).

decision to close the National Workshops which had been set up, not as a socialist, but as a temporary expedient, to tide workers over the serious economic depression. Worse still, in December 1848, the mass electorate elected Napoleon's nephew as president of the fast-disintegrating democratic republic.

Louis-Napoleon, the new president, emasculated democracy by creating a plebiscitary regime, and used the machinery of the state to drive all republicans, and especially socialists, out of public affairs and in many cases into exile for the remainder of his rule. Ironically, coercion was barely needed. Ange Guépin, a doctor in Nantes and former inspiration for Saint-Simonian, Fourierist and republican initiatives, wrote in 1871: "We have given the vote to *political minors*, to illiterate peasants who only think of money."⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Loire-Atlantique, Archives départementales, 19J9, Oct. 1870.