

The Influence of Education and European Institutions on the Indigenous Populations of the Colonies

[Editor's note: The following is a speech by Doctor Gustave Le Bon which was delivered in 1889 at the opening of the first general meeting of the International Congress set up by the French government for the study of colonial questions. Le Bon served as president of one of the sections of this Congress.]

I

Messieurs, I propose to consider and investigate with you today a serious and important question, namely: what is the influence that our European civilization is able to produce on the indigenous populations of the colonies? I have seen to research the action that we can exercise over these peoples by means of the European life that we furnish them, by the institutions that we might impose on them, and finally by our education.

Now, the subject that I am drawing your attention to has for some time been in France the object of passionate debate, and it is easy to ascertain in what ways public opinion and the government authorities tend more and more to be engaged.

Every day government officials and others talk to us about *Frenchifying* the Arabs of Algeria, the yellowish populations of Indo-China, the negroes of Martinique; of providing to all these colonies institutions, laws, and organization identical to those of our French departments.

It is not, moreover, only France which finds itself seriously interested in studying these momentous questions. The problem under consideration here is essentially international. It poses or will sooner or later pose itself to all nations that possess colonies, which, needless to say, includes most of Europe.

The questions of colonization that we are proceeding to study together here have not been able to be entertained before by an assembly more competent than your own. Indeed, among the delegates sent by foreign countries to this Congress, I see around me statesmen, eminent jurists, and administrators who head or oversee important colonies. Among the French members, I notice retired First Lords of the Admiralty, illustrious admirals, colonial senators, governors general of our foreign possessions, learned university professors, and famous explorers. In short, it would be quite difficult to come upon a meeting of men more fit to deal with the questions that I intend to raise.

It is therefore a heavy task in inaugurating the first general meeting of this great Congress to be the first speaker to talk on a subject that you know so well. The missions that your organizing committee has conferred on me calls for a voice more eloquent than my own, and I therefore very much count upon your forbearance as I proceed. I am of the opinion that this forbearance is even the more necessary given that in the French delegation of this assembly the general principles that I have seen to advance have never received many approbations. In order for me to uphold them before you, it is necessary to possess this deep conviction, resulting from numerous personal observations, that it is by the sustained application of these principles that the English and Dutch colonies owe the persistent prosperity which they enjoy; whereas our colonies, governed by very different principles, find themselves in an unflourishing situation if one goes by the statistical indications, the unanimous complaints of their representatives, and finally by the continually increasing costs that they impose on our budget.

Now, I have earlier uttered the term “general principles;” but, I have only done so for the sake of convenience, and I do not want to leave you believing for a single moment that I desire to defend before you a particular system while opposing another. Indeed, I do not know of any general systems that are applicable to all cases. Whenever general, broad solutions have been applied to the most different situations, an approach which no doubt the simplest mind find attractive, their rigorous application has always led to the most disastrous results.

The main purpose of my speech today is to demonstrate to you the terrible danger posed by these very general, broad solutions. France, unfortunately, is inclined to adopt such solutions, whereas neighboring nations energetically resist them. England, for example, has carefully varied its colonial system from one country to another, and often from one region to another within the same country. If I were to go over with you the comparative history of the foreign colonies and the French colonies, I would be able to easily show you that the prosperity of the former is ever increasing, thanks to this flexible form of governing which varies according to the circumstances, whereas in ours I would only be able to relate the fatal results engendered by the uniform system known under the name of *assimilation*. This system of assimilation, marvelously simple in appearance, consists, as you know, of providing the very diverse populations which inhabit our colonies—and whatever be their morals, customs, and part—the entirety of our laws and institutions, in a word to treat them exactly like a French department.

But, a comparative table of the French and foreign colonies is not what I propose to lay out before you. Setting aside completely all political questions, where so many diverse interests intermix which prevents an accurate vision of

things, I shall treat my subject from the exclusively scientific point of view. I have therefore seen to research, utilizing appropriate data, what action we are able to exercise on the indigenous populations of our colonies by the means of which we dispose ourselves, that is to say, by education, by institutions, and by religious beliefs. This investigation concluded, we shall determine what the possibility is of civilizing these populations and applying our laws and organization to them.

On the different factors that I have enumerated, the one that I consider to be the most important is education. It is therefore by its study that I wish to begin.

II

Experimental data relating to the influence of European education on indigenous populations cannot be considered as conclusive until they provide a summary of tentative facts of a very large number of individuals over many years. If I begin by speaking of experiments carried out in our own French colonies, one might respond by saying that these experiments have been conducted on too small a scale. It is therefore necessary to support what has been observed in our colonies by what has been observed elsewhere; and this is why I have seen to speak earlier of the experiments of European education attempted by the English on the people of India. This attempt has been made on a population of 250 million people, and has gone on for over fifty years. It is certainly one of the most gigantic experiments ever performed in the history of mankind.

It was in 1835, under the inspiration of Lord Macaulay who at that time was a member of the General Government Council in Calcutta, that the English educational system began to be instituted on a large scale in India.

Hindu mythology as well as the books and sciences of India seemed completely worthless and contemptible to the eminent statesman, and when he compared them to the *Bible* and to the works of the English people, he believed that they ought to be banished from teaching. Thanks therefore to Lord Macaulay's influence, it was decided under the government of Lord Bentinck that British literature and European sciences would be exclusively taught in the English schools of India.

The experiment has continued for about fifty years; today India possesses European universities, 127,000 schools and nearly 3 million students. A total of 50 million francs, in part furnished by the State, is dedicated annually to this educational system. A third of this amount is allocated to primary schools, with the rest going to the secondary schools and universities. All these money amounts may

seem high, but one ought not forget that we are dealing with an empire containing 250 million people, and so relative to the size of the population the money spent on education in India is fairly small. They fully suffice, however, to permit one to judge the value of this educational system.

From the immediate practical point of view, that is to say, in order to obtain at low cost the thousands of subordinate agents needed in India by the English in their administrative offices, posts, telegraphs, railroads, etc., the results have been excellent. The English schools there supply super abundantly a contingent of employees that the English would be obliged to procure in Europe at a cost fifty times greater. Looked at from this point of view, the English educational system has been extremely profitable, at least up to now, to the people who have provided it; but the questions entails various other equally important aspects—aspects which forcefully impose themselves on men of State who care about the future.

Placing ourselves in the political field, for example, we must ask ourselves if the individuals who have received this English education are becoming friends or enemies of the power which has provided it to them. In a more general sense, we must, in addition, ask ourselves if this European education has raised the level of intelligence and morality of those who have received it.

At first sight the answer to these latter questions does not seem doubtful, for among us no one has ever denied the benefits of instruction; we even gladly regard it as some sort of universal panacea that's destined to remedy all the problems of this world. Now, if this instruction renders such services in Europe, it seems evident that it must render the same services to the people of India, whose civilization is very ancient and quite developed.

Unfortunately, messieurs, the results of this huge experiment in India have been dramatically opposed to those suggested by theory. To the great stupefaction of the professors, European education has only succeeded in completely disequilibrating the Hindus and removing their ability to reason, without speaking of causing a frightful abasement of morality—a point which I shall occupy myself with later on.

It is this fact that the most ardent partisans of European education themselves recognize today. Their opinion can be summed up by the following quotes which appear in a book by Professor Monier-Williams, professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, who like me has visited and examined India in every manner and sense:

“I must confess, in all truth, that I have not been favorably impressed by the

general results of our educative campaign. I have met with very few truly educated men, whereas I have encountered very many semi-educated men and an even much larger number of badly-educated and poorly-trained men, that is to say, men without force of character and sound judgment. Such men might to have learned much from books, but when they reflect and think by themselves, their thought is without consistency. In fact, the majority of them are nothing but great babblers; one would believe that they have been attacked by some sort of verbal diarrhea. They are incapable of any lasting effort; or, if they have the energy to act, they act without any basis or agreed upon principle, and in a way that's almost entirely detached from what they say or write.

...They abandon their own language, literature, religion, philosophy, the rules of their own castes, their own customs perpetuated over the centuries certainly, however, without becoming good disciples of our societies, honest skeptics or sincere Christians.

...After a great many efforts, we fabricate what is called the *educated native*—and immediately he turns against us? Instead of thanking us for all the trouble that we have gone to on his behalf, he takes vengeance on us for the harm that we have caused to his character, employing his imperfectly-received education against his teachers.”

I especially call your attention to this last remark of Professor Monier-Williams, as it answers the question that I posed earlier: does European education make the indigenous person who receives it a friend or enemy of the people who have provided it to him? Thousands of other similar quotations, moreover, could be provided on this point. There is hardly any English administrator in India who is not solidly convinced that out of every 100 Hindu students enrolled in the English schools there are exactly 100 who are irreconcilable enemies of the British rule and power, whereas for every 100 indigenes taught in the Hindu schools there are very few who are hostile to this rule. These latter, on the contrary, appreciate the profound peace that the British rule assures them, a rule which, besides, is not any more foreign to them than the one of the Mongols, under the yoke of which they lived for a century.

In order to know what the Hindus educated like a European think of the English, one only needs to read the numerous journals that these Hindus publish, where the British government is treated more harshly than our own government is by the angriest anarchists. Nothing is as strange as seeing the Hindus, formerly notable for their extreme docility, become immediately fierce by the English education that has affected them. If England succeeds in maintaining its prestige in the face of similar attacks, it is because these attacks do not resonate in the heart of a population whose immense majority does not know how to read. The war cry of

of the Hindu men of letters educated by the British is: “India for the Hindus!” But, this cry will have little effect in a country composed of the most diverse races, where over 300 entirely different languages are spoken, and where the population, not acquainted with any other political and social unity but the caste system and village, possesses no common interest. What impedes this new class of literate Hindus from being redoubtable is the small number who belong to it; however, this number is increasing each day, and it constitutes the most serious danger which menaces the future of the British power in India.

The facts that I have just cited sufficiently answer these two questions: Does European education raise the intellectual level of the Hindu? Does it make him the friend of the people who have provided it to him? It remains for me to answer this last question: Does European education elevate the morality of the Hindu?

On this fundamental point the answer will prove to be unequivocal. Far from elevating the moral level of the Hindus, European education diminishes it to a point where the persons who have undergone such an education only possess a hint of it. This education transforms good beings, inoffensive and honest, into deceitful, rapacious men without scruples, insolent and tyrannical towards their compatriots, vilely servile with their masters. Here is how Professor Monier-Williams expresses himself in this regard:

“It is necessary to take into consideration the fact that Europeans possess vices that are just as strong as their virtues, and that the Hindu, though rarely able to assimilate our positive qualities, is on the contrary very apt to possess himself of our defects... Officers with years of experience, who have seen our empire in India progressively extend itself, have told me that in the newly-annexed territories they have never come across at first in the inhabitants the lying, cheating, the love of lawsuits, avarice, and other character defects that later on these people will demonstrate in so striking a manner before our courts (as all the official reports reveal).”

But, it is above all when one finds himself in contact with the subordinate employees who've been educated in the English schools that one is surprised by their profound lack of morality. The English administration, totally cognizant today on this point, is compelled to take the most meticulous precautions and multiply to infinity the means of control in order to cover up the depredations of its Hindu agents. This immorality, moreover, is nearly exclusively observed among those indigenes who have received the European education. This education, maladapted to the mental constitution of the Hindu, has as its consequence the destruction in him of all the results of an earlier, long-lasting culture, shaking up



Stereographic photo of Victoria Railroad Station, Bombay, British India, one of many government facilities staffed by Hindus that have received an English education.

the old beliefs on which he formerly based his conduct, replacing such beliefs with scientific theories that are too abstract for him. He has lost the morals of his ancestors without having adopted the principles and character qualities of a European. He was formerly destitute of needs. His new education creates in him a multitude of needs that he does not understand, without providing him the means to satisfy them. He despises his brothers, but he himself feels despised by his masters. He does not have a place anymore in society, finds himself constantly miserable, and inevitably becomes implacable towards those who have provided him this deadly education.

It is not the instruction itself, most certainly, but an instruction that is poorly-adapted to the mental constitution of a people which produces the sad results that I have seen to bring to your attention. One can convince himself of this fact by comparing the results of European education to those produced by the exclusively Hindu education that has been administered for centuries in India. Hindu scholars, taught by Hindus, are educated, honest, estimable men, most of whom would be capable of appearing and participating in the large European assemblies, and whose completely dignified comportment is without correspondence with the altogether insolent and cringing attitude of the Hindus emerging from the European schools and colleges.

Let us now quit India and take up the case of Algeria, the most important of our colonies. There is a lot of talk nowadays—and most of our economists

are in agreement on this—of Frenchifying Algeria (this is the authorized expression) by means of our institutions and educational system. Here it is a question undoubtedly of races quite different from those inhabiting India. We shall see, however, whether the experiments already performed in Algeria might make us hope to obtain, by providing European education to the native Algerians, better results than the ones that the British have obtained in their great Asiatic empire.

Firstly, I must direct your attention, messieurs, to the most widespread opinion held today in France on this question. I find it very well-summarized in a recent book entitled *La Colonization chez les peuples moderne*. This book has its author the eminent economist, Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, a member of the Institute and professor at the College of France. Examining the three key choices that we can take in regard to the Moslems of Algeria—driving them back into the heart of the Sahara, blending them with the European population, or finally respecting their customs and distinguishing them morally from the Europeans (a plan called by the author “abstention”)—Professor Leroy-Beaulieu states the following: “The third choice, which is the complete respect of their customs, traditions and morals—or, in other words, what is often called the Arab nationality—if this is applied with logic, it will require that our armies and colonists leave Africa.”

Why we must leave Algeria, if we conduct ourselves in regard to the Moslems exactly like other peoples are conducting themselves with success in regard to their colonies’ natives, this is what the author does not tell us. The only approach possible, according to Professor Leroy-Beaulieu, is to Frenchify the Moslems. Nothing is easier, it seems, as from what he assures us it will suffice to “radically modify the tribal system, collective property, and the polygamous family.” And what is the magic wand which ought to produce, according to him, these radical transformations? Simply education and the application of our institutions.

It is very difficult to verify experimentally the value of these theories on the Algerian Moslems because, according to Professor Leroy-Beaulieu himself, out of 3500 students enrolled in the schools in Algeria one encounters only 192 Moslems, and that for very 700 indigenious Algerians there is only 1 who attends primary school. Let us nevertheless investigate whether it will be possible to bring to light the results of European education on the very limited number of Arabs who have received it. Although the experiments have been conducted on a very small scale, they have, however, already furnished sufficiently conclusive results. In a recent work entitled *Les Français d’Afrique*,

Monsieur Paul Dumas provides some of them, stating as follows:

“In 1868, during the famine, Cardinal Lavigerie, archbishop of Algiers, in inaugurating there his system of doctrine, took in a large number of abandoned indigenous children, boys and girls. This charitable foundation has given rise to the most instructive, but also the most heartrending, of experiments. Not very long ago, in betaking myself from Algiers to Constantine, I had occasion while on the train to chat with a very distinguished ecclesiastic, a man who did not seem any longer to entertain any hope on the subject of amelioration of this unfortunate Arab race. He recounted to me the lamentable history of the orphans of Cardinal Lavigerie: ‘About four thousand children,’ he told me, ‘have passed through his hands, and only a hundred remain Christians; nearly all are returning to Islam. Moreover, these orphans have in Algeria the most detestable reputation: various well-intentioned colonists who have ventured to employ some of them have been obliged to quickly rid themselves of them; robbers, idlers, and drunkards, they synthesize all vices—those of their race that they indelibly have in their blood, and ours in the bargain. We have the idea of marrying them to each other; we have then settled these married couples in special villages, providing them land and tools—in short, putting them by rights in a better state. The results have been lamentable. In 1880, in one of these villages, they assassinated their parish priest!’”

The preceding experiment, well-known moreover in Algeria, is completely characteristic. At first 4,000 children were taken in and supported, and then these children, entirely removed from the action of their parents, were placed in excellent conditions in order to be subjected to our influence.

Now, whether it is a matter of children or adults, of instruction by textbooks or by daily contact with men, the results obtained have always been similar. For example, no other discipline is more apt certainly to tame souls than that of the regiment, and we do not possess any more efficacious means of placing in contact the Arab and Frenchman than by making them serve together under the same flag. In fact, very many Arabs have already served in the regiments in Algeria, commanded by noncommissioned officers and French officers. Have they, messieurs, become Frenchified by this close contact over many years? Not in any way. They are assuredly very brave soldiers; but once they lay aside their uniform, they rid themselves at the same moment of the thin veneer of European civilization that they had been able to acquire. Monsieur Dumas puts it this way in his above-cited work:

“Immediately after being discharged, our Algerian sharpshooter hastens to take to wearing again his burnoose, takes up again the ways of his village or

tent encampment, is fond only of always eating couscous, and takes as many women for himself as he feels necessary and can support; morally, he always regards that there is only one God, and that Mohammed is his prophet, that Christians are dogs, and that women are beasts of burden... He becomes as little French as possible. Most of the time he assimilates something of ours—our vices, alas! And, among them, the only one that he might not have as his own is habitual drunkenness.”

The opinion that I have expressed to you on the impossibility of making the Arabs of Algeria adopt our civilization by imposing our education on them is not at all just my own personal opinion. More and more this viewpoint is diffusing itself amongst all those persons who have studied Algeria and who are without prejudices or interests of any sort with respect to the Algerian question—that is to say, in all those who hold no preconceived theory regarding Algeria. Quite recently a very keen observer, Alexandre Ribot, professor of psychology at the College of France, shared with me this very same opinion, which is one, I should add, that highly-educated Arabs also hold. Indeed, the judgment that I have been able to receive from Moslems of all races—from Morocco to the heart of Asia—has been completely unanimous on this subject. All consider that our education renders Moslems into becoming inveterate enemies of Europeans, towards whom they do not profess otherwise but a disdainful indifference. All the discerning Arabs with whom I’ve been able to consult assert that the only result of our education is to deprave and make miserable their compatriots, instilling in them artificial needs without providing the means of satisfying them. Our education makes clear to the Arabs the distance that we place between them and ourselves. Every page contained in French and European history books teaches them that there is hardly anything more humiliating for a people than to support without revolt a foreign domination. If European education becomes general in our Mediterranean colony, the unanimous cry of the native inhabitants will be: “*Algeria for the Arabs!*”—the same as “*India for the Hindus!*” is the password for every indigene in India who has received an English education.

Such are the facts, whether it is a matter of India, Algeria or of any other people; they are identical and sufficient to prove to us how fruitless the idea of Frenchifying the Arabs by education is. It therefore seems dangerous to continue to attempt such experiments in a country which—according to the estimates provided by Monsieur Vignon in his interesting work on Algeria—has already cost us 3 billion 600 million francs and which one cannot say is yet pacified; indeed, in order to maintain the peace among 3 million Algerians, it has been necessary for us to station an army that’s nearly equal in size to the

one that England employs in order to maintain in profound peace 250 million people, of whom 50 million are Moslems who are just as fanatical as those of Algeria.

Now, messieurs, I do not wish for you to conclude from what I have previously stated that I am in any degree the enemy of education. I have only tried to make you clearly understand that the genre of instruction applicable to civilized men is not at all one suitable for semi-civilized people. What European education ought to become in order for it to be useful to the inferior races, I shall not explore here. However, in passing, I must share with you my belief that very simple notions, especially those comprising the elements of mathematics and some regional-specific applications of the sciences to agriculture, industry or handicrafts will prove to be substantially more useful than the study of the genealogy of the kings of France or the causes of the Hundred Years' War.

III

I have demonstrated to you that our European education invariably results in demoralizing the indigene, transforming him into an implacable enemy of the European, and does so, moreover, without at all elevating his intellectual level. I shall return to these facts and their explanation later on. For now, I wish to examine another agent of assimilation, investigating the influence that our institutions might be able to exercise on the native inhabitants of the colonies.

The idea that one can transform a people overnight, by changing with the issuance of decrees their social organization, is an idea too widespread and too strongly implanted in France for me to dream of dispelling it by means of a discourse. The fact of the matter is, we French relish uniformity—if not in duration, at least in space; indeed, our present-day institutions always appear to us as the best, and our temperament, which tomorrow leads us to overturn them, impels us today to impose them on all the world. Generally based on abstractions rather than on experience, and drawn from what we gladly call “pure reason,” our political and social speculations rapidly assume for us the authority of revealed truths. It is practically as soon as we first possess ourselves of these discoveries that we feel springing up in us the duty to propagate them for the benefit of mankind. While most civilized nations have proven themselves to be quite unamenable to our lessons, we ourselves today press down on our colonial possessions in order to Frenchify them to the extreme. We bring, moreover, to this task the conviction and disinterestedness

which characterize apostles and martyrs. “Destroy the colonies rather than a principle!” is a well-known cry and is one which will still be met with in France in the mind and on the lips of more than one orator in our great assemblies.

These theoretical views have led us and will more and more lead us to organize our colonies like French departments. It matters little, moreover, the nature of the population which occupies them: Negroes, savages, yellow tribes, and Arabs ought to benefit from the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* and from what we please ourselves in calling our “great principles.” All have universal suffrage, town and district councils, all levels of courts, legislatures, as well as deputies and senators who represent them in our National Assembly. Our colonies’ credulous Negroes, who’ve hardly been emancipated for long and whose cerebral development closely corresponds to that of our Stone Age ancestors, have jumped both feet first into all the complications of our formidable modern administrative schemes.

Now, messieurs, this system of governance of our colonies has functioned for a sufficiently long enough time for us to be able to appraise its effects—and they are absolutely disastrous. Formerly prosperous colonies are sinking into the saddest decline. Statistics show us that they subsist today principally off the budget that the mother country dedicates to them, and we never cease hearing from their official representatives the most grievous lamentations. If you wish to convince yourself of this, you only need to peruse a most instructive work: *Les Cahiers coloniaux de 1889*, deposited this morning in the main office of this Congress. It was written by the most authoritative representatives of our colonies: presidents of legislatures, senators, deputies, etc. All complain of the situation confronting them with equal energy.

But here’s an odd thing which proves, in my opinion, how universal the blindness is concerning colonial questions—what all these officials demand in remedying the ills that they deplore is an even more complete assimilation than the one which exists today. In reading so many complaints, conceived in the same sense, I can’t help but think of that earlier era where the doctors treated the most different maladies by bloodletting; the maladies yielded with persistence, but with persistence also the doctors guaranteed the deaths of their patients from their having been bled too much.

One ought not, however, to believe our overseas subjects to be as naïve and simple-minded as their language makes one suppose. When they clamor for assimilation, it is not because of an excess of enthusiasm for the complicated machinery of our administrative and judiciary system. In reality, what they

dream of is to be assimilated into the mother country for all the advantages of our system and not at all for the costs of these benefits. Instead of building at their own expense their roads, ports, and canals, which is the practice in the English colonies, they want the State to undertake and become responsible for their public works, without their being obligated to participate in paying our taxes. To be assimilated signifies for our colonies this: becoming pensioners of the State—this blessed State which, even in France, we delight ourselves in regarding as a sort of all-powerful Providence, with inexhaustible treasures. Their desires in this sense are expressed with a candor which can sometimes disarm the critic. They are clearly summarized in the following remark, made by the President of the Legislature of Réunion, which I found in the work I have previously cited—*Les Cahiers coloniaux de 1889*:

“We wish for the progressive assimilation of our colony to the mother country and for its transformation into a French department, but *without this assimilation compelling us to pay the same taxes as those in France.*”

In placing before your eyes the dismal statistical results and the complaints of our colonists, it is easy for me to prove that I hardly exaggerate when I show you that the decline of our colonies is the direct result of our system of assimilation. I would make an even greater impression on your minds if I next compared this sad state of things with the prosperity attained by colonies neighboring ours and which belong to peoples who are guided by other principles.

However, I am only able here to indicate to you in a very general way the negative consequences of the uniform system which to us is so dear. I completely lack the time to enter into the details. But, even more importantly, I still need to combat an illusion which is connected not more to the results of this system, but rather to its very application. The system of assimilation which, in theory, is seducing by its apparent simplicity is on the contrary, in practice, one that presents frightful complications. Our administrative and judicial institutions are extremely complicated because they respond to the no less complicated needs of our civilization. We are born and live under their yoke, we constantly bring matters and cases to them, and yet we never fail to rail on every occasion against their slowness and the vexations of administration or procedure. In civilized nations the most inevitable actions and events, such as birth, marriage, and death entail administrative formalities. In France itself are there many citizens who are in possession of very precise notions on a town or department council, justice of the peace, municipal court, court of appeals, and so on? And yet you wish that a poor Negro, Arab, or Annamite, who is presented the play of so many complicated wheelworks and who must suddenly

accept them all at once, will understand anything of this? You dream of imposing entirely new obligations which, under the penalty of being fined, one does not have the right to ignore and which results in one finding himself in too frequent contact with numerous functionaries! What we face today in France is the tax collector, customs officer, and many other bureaucrats attending to a thousand circumstance of life. One cannot buy or sell a plot of ground, demand from his neighbor repayment of a debt, without submitting to and enduring the lengthiest and most complicated formalities. And now, not stopping with the inhabitants of France, you have imprisoned our uncivilized and semi-civilized colonists within a series of cogwheels. Up to now these people had dealt with very simple institutions which were in perfect harmony with their needs: a summary justice system, but one very inexpensive and rapid; taxes that were more or less heavy, but ones whose mechanism the people well understood and whose amounts the people were completely habituated to. To such people whose life hardly experiences any shackles, and to whom the remote absolute power of a chief often does not represent at all anything that is direct and real, they find that the pretended liberty provided by us presents itself under singularly tyrannical forms.

But, this objection hardly hinders our theoreticians who believe it a duty to bring good fortune to foreign peoples notwithstanding themselves. In spite of the most natural feelings of aversion and resistance, our enemies must enjoy the benefit of our complicated institutions; and accordingly, in order to set up and organize these institutions, we dispatch legions of functionaries. This latter is, moreover, pretty much our only article of serious exportation, as each colony receives prodigious quantities of such. In Martinique, for example, where Negroes make up 85% of the population, we have 800 functionaries. Meanwhile, in the three or four small villages of India that we still possess, and whose inhabitants are exclusively Hindus, we have, besides a senator and deputy, 200 functionaries, of which 38 are magistrates. All depart from Europe animated with ardent zeal, but it soon becomes necessary for them to acknowledge that forcing a people to renounce their institutions in order to adopt those of another is a task that one only realizes in books, and all their endeavors only produce as a result complete disorder. In grappling with difficulties of all sorts, each functionary tries to improvise a bastard system intended to satisfy all interests and which, naturally, is unable to satisfy anyone. With the task of assimilation imposed on them appearing from the very first to be impossible, most of the colonial functionaries resort to the customary practices of the country, and then as soon as possible request their recall to Europe. Needless to say, what happens next is the recallees find themselves being replaced on the return route by new shipments of functionaries dispatched



“Mango Pickers” of Martinique (1887 painting by Paul Gauguin)
Semi-civilized people such as these cannot be expected to accept, let alone comprehend, our complicated regulations, laws, and institutions.

from the mother country. Now and then, an energetic and very clairvoyant governor applies severe blows to these thick ranks of bureaucrats and legislators, and the colony momentarily breathes again. It is in this manner that in Indochina Governor Constans has recently done away with in a single strike a number sufficient to populate a town, thus realizing in this unique phase of the colony’s existence an annual saving of 8,500,000 francs.

It is certainly not due to a lack of ability of our functionaries that one can attribute their failure, but rather to the absurdity of the task that is imposed on them. They leave France with the mission of applying our institutions to uncivilized and semi-civilized peoples who do not know how to accept them or even comprehend them. From afar nothing seems easier, but hardly after first arriving at their post, discouragement lays hold over them along with the feeling of powerlessness. Moreover, from the smallest colony to the largest, they are like passersby, and succeed each other with dizzying speed. For example, in six years 15 governors served in succession in Indochina, each one being in office an average of only five months.

Instructed by the dismal results obtained by his predecessor, each one

initiates a trial of a different system, and in the process only succeeds in increasing the disorder. I must add that it is not always his own personal views that he tries to apply, but rather they are often ones that are telegraphed to him to impose. For example, Governor Constans, in a most interesting address he gave a few months ago in the Chamber of Deputies, remarked that during a reign of six months he was obliged to obey three or four Naval Ministers or Undersecretaries of State, “each one of whom had provided me a different impulse.”

You can easily divine what will result from such a system: disorder and anarchy at first, and then open rebellion or at the very least the deep hatred of the populations. The witnesses are, unfortunately, unanimous on this point. We read, for example, in the interesting work I have previously cited the following:

“The real cause of the piracy prevailing in Indochina is not an idea of patriotism which urges the indigenous populations to rise up against the invader. Instead, it is we who have instigated it. We have indisposed the peaceful populations by requisitioning porters, driving them off their farmlands in order to make them coolies, burning their villages, tyrannizing the natives, and establishing everywhere and on all heavy taxes which surpass by three or four times the value of the products; the piracy therefore is only the result of the pestering of our administrators as well as the crimes of the mandarins who we protect.”

It is not only in Indochina, messieurs, where our disastrous system displays its calamitous consequences. We also are trying to assimilate all our colonies, both new and old, and everywhere are experiencing the same deplorable results. I have chosen not to detail for you—because this example is not quite applicable to my present demonstration and I do not wish to loiter—that the cause of the last uprising which well-nigh made us lose Algeria was the incomprehensible measure by which we naturalized en bloc one entire part of the population. But, I shall quote from eyewitnesses what is happening in Senegal even today. Doctor Colin points out what our mania of imposing our institutions on people who do not want them can produce, stating, “By our assaulting prematurely the organization of Negro society, we will have war, perpetual war without mercy, and we will find opposing us all the fetish-worshipping peoples and Moslems, let alone the slaves themselves who will also be against us.”

Undoubtedly, we will not always have war, not any more so in Senegal than in our other colonies where quite obviously we are very powerful; however, everywhere we are faced with the hostility of the populations that we disturb, and sometimes we face even worse.

One very wise observer who has frequented our colonies for a long time, Doctor Poitou-Duplessy, Chief Physician of the Navy, wrote the following:

“The premature granting of universal suffrage to the colonies, and then putting all the principal posts up for election have had the effect of causing all the power to fall into the hands of the seven or eight times more numerous blacks, and thanks to the weakness and pusillanimity of the metropolitan power and its representatives, sojourning in the islands is rendered impossible for the white race, devoted today to oppression or disappearance. It is the fatal return to barbarity, with the example of Santo Domingo providing proof of this... If one considers the number of electors represented by the typical colonial deputy who comes to Paris to legislate on our most cherished interests, one arrives to this singular conclusion: a Negro of the Antilles counts seven or eight times more than a citizen of France in determining the destiny of our fatherland.”

I have come to the end of what I have wished to say to you concerning the results produced by the application of European institutions on the indigenous inhabitants of colonies. Having studied in succession the influence of education and that of institutions, it only remains for me to examine the influence of religious beliefs.

IV

With regard to the influence that we might be able to exercise by religious beliefs, I shall be very brief. It would be difficult to accuse our present men of State of religious proselytism, as we are no longer summoned to the time where one would take up arms in order to defend missionaries who by their preachings had ended up disrupting the social institutions of Eastern peoples. If it necessary to accuse of anything, it would rather be of negative proselytism. Indeed, we generally leave our colonial indigenes completely undisturbed in the practice of their different cults.

It will be sufficient for me to provide a few numbers in order to demonstrate to you the slight influence that our religious beliefs have exercised on peoples of the Middle East and Asia. But, these numbers are superfluous given the admissions of ineffectiveness by the missionaries themselves. For example, in regard to the Arabs, I have already related to you the case of the 4,000 orphans of Cardinal Lavigerie. Raised in the Catholic religion and apart from any indigenous influence, nearly all of these orphans are returning to Islam once they reach adulthood. Meanwhile, this experience is repeating itself on a much larger scale elsewhere in the Orient, notably in British-ruled India. During a recent Congress of the Anglican church, a canon, Monsieur Isaac

Tylor, was obliged to inform his fellow churchmen of the distressing failure of the English missionaries who in ten years, despite the protection of the government and enormous expenditures of money, have only been able to make a very small number of converts, even among the lowest castes. In the Moslem countries, where the missionaries cannot expect the support of their government, they experience even more conspicuous defeats. After having spent a half-million pounds and ten years of effort in Arabia, Persia and Palestine, they have only been able to obtain a single conversion, that of a young girl who is notoriously known, moreover, as being an imbecile. (Incidentally, these numbers I have just cited come from the recent English Ecclesiastic Congress and were published in the journal *le Temps*.) Now, this case of the imbecile girl being the only convert that the missionaries could bring to pass exemplifies, when added to all the other futile attempts at conversion, the impossibility of making, by whatever means, our ideas, conceptions, and civilization penetrate the minds of the Orientals. The ineffectiveness of religious beliefs, next to that of education and institutions, is important to note. However, all in all this point just contributes in an accessory way to my argument. And, let me be clear, messieurs, on one additional point: I do not at all engage in the practice of being the enemy of missionaries, whose courage and illusions I respect, and who often render us great services in the semi-civilized countries which do not belong to us, such as Syria, for example, spreading our language by means of their schools.

I regard my main task as having come to an end, for I have demonstrated to you that our education and institutions, when imposed on the indigenes in colonies, only result in profoundly disturbing their conditions of existence, and transform these people into irreconcilable enemies of Europeans. These, messieurs, are the facts, independent of all theory. But, these facts must have causes, and it is these causes which I shall now try to determine. Now, the facts I have detailed to you are particular cases of very general laws. In the case which occupies us, there is a clear interest—without even speaking of the purely psychological interest—to research the causes of our failure up to now to elevate to the level of our civilization the completely barbaric or semi-civilized peoples.

V

When one carefully examines the history of the diverse elements whose ensemble constitutes a civilization—that is to say, the institutions, beliefs, literature, language, and arts—one soon recognizes that they correspond to certain modes of thinking and feeling of the peoples who have adopted them,

And that they transform themselves whenever these modes of thinking and feeling themselves happen to change. Education only summarizes for us the results of the civilization; the institutions and beliefs represent the needs of this civilization. It is therefore easy to foresee that if a civilization is not in harmony with the ideas and sentiments of a people, the education summarizing this civilization will not have any hold over them; likewise the institutions, which correspond to certain needs, will not know how to suit different needs. Now, the quickest comparison shows that the distance which separates the peoples of the Orient—*notably the Moslems and Indochinese*—from those of the West is much too immense for the institutions of the latter to be applicable to the former. Ideas, sentiments, beliefs, and modes of existence all differ profoundly. Whereas nations of the West tend to disengage themselves more and more from the influences of the past, those of the Orient above all live in the past. Oriental societies possess a fixity of customs, a stability that is unknown today in Europe. Beliefs that we do not have anymore they still have. The family, which tends to dissociate itself so greatly among the peoples of the West, has preserved among the peoples of the Orient its time-honored stability. Principles which have lost all action over us have maintained all their power over them. They possess a very strong ideal and very weak needs, whereas our ideal is vague and our needs, already very large, are destined to grow even larger. Religion, family, the authority of tradition and custom—altogether the fundamental bases of ancient societies—so profoundly undermined in the West, have preserved all their prestige with the Orientals: the concern of having to replace them has not yet crossed their mind.

But, it is mainly with the institutions that there exists between the Orient and the West a formidable gulf. All the political and social institutions of the Eastern peoples, whether it is a matter of the Arabs of the Hindus, are solely derived from their religious beliefs, whereas in the West the most religious peoples have for a long time separated their institutions from their religious beliefs. There is no civil code in the Orient; instead, there are only religious codes, and any novelty—no matter what—is only accepted on the condition of its being the result of theological prescriptions. Under penalty of losing all influence, the English are reduced, despite their rigid Protestantism, to restoring the pagodas, supporting generously the priests of Vishnu and Siva, and in all circumstances to profess the highest regard for the religion of their subjects and for all the institutions which proceed therefrom. The ancient Code of Manu, an altogether religious and civil code, remains the fundamental law of India after two thousand years, just like the Koran, likewise a religious and civil code, has remained the supreme law of the Moslems ever since Mohammed.

However, it is not only in the mental constitution, institutions, and beliefs that the profound difference which separates us from the peoples of the Orient resides. One finds it again in the smallest details of existence, and above all in the simplicity of their needs compared to the complexity of ours. The slight needs of the Orientals, the ease with which they are happy living under conditions of existence which would be considered in Europe as extreme poverty, has always struck travelers. A cloak, hut or tent and some handfuls of vegetables comprise their fortune and suffices to content them. As soon as we educate these same people like a European, they inevitably immediately acquire a certain number of artificial needs that our civilization has created; and since it is impossible to provide them at the same time the resources necessary for satisfying these needs, they become very displeased with their lot and completely miserable. It is most especially in British India, where European education is delivered on a large scale, that this fact is striking. An indigene who has received an English education, and who has good patrons, can obtain a salary of 30 francs per month. As soon as he starts drawing his salary, he tries to ape the European gentleman. He wears shoes, becomes a member of an indigene club, smokes cigars, reads newspapers, and immediately finds himself totally unhappy with an income that two families raised in Hindu practices could easily live on.

It is, moreover, sufficient simply to compare the needs of an Arab of Algeria to those of a European colonist in order to understand how two races who've reached different degrees of civilization can, while inhabiting the same land, possess different exigencies. The small provision of flour necessary for making his couscous, pure water, a tent or cabin for habitation, and a modest burnoose for clothing largely suffice to satisfy all the needs of the indigene. By contrast, how much more complicated are the needs of a European colonist, even though he might belong to the most modest and unassuming classes of society. He considers it necessary for him to have a house, meat, wine, an assortment of clothes—in a word, all the complex material goods to which the average European is accustomed.

Now, it is precisely because the primary result of European education is to create in people complicated needs, without providing them the means to satisfy them, that this education renders so miserable the Orientals who have received it. Fortunately for them, they generally refuse to submit to it. Indeed, up to now only one Oriental country—Japan—has sincerely tried to adopt our civilization, and I am not optimistic about any future good results arising out of this attempt. Its present consequences have been brought to light in a work by a former professor of our law school here in Paris. This professor left the law

school a few years ago with the mission of teaching our legal code in Japan. He has returned profoundly disillusioned and, in a most interesting book, he tells us how the old condition of the Japanese is preferable to that of the needy, overworked, out-of-breath laborer who toils to make his living in our European-like workshops. Overburdened with taxes, not having the means to satisfy the new needs that we have supplied them, these people, formerly so happy, today must be deeply reflecting on the wisdom of the ex-legislator who years earlier had adamantly desired to deny foreigners access to their land.

Ought we to expect that our European education will allow the Orientals to leap over the deep gulf which so clearly separates them from us today? The facts that I have cited hardly warrant this expectation. Moreover, theory comes to the support of these facts because it shows us that hereditary sentiments are the most difficult thing to change in a people. Now, it is precisely in the difference of sentiments where the fundamental differences separating the Orient from the West mainly reside.

With respect to these national sentiments, formed by the same milieu, institutions, and beliefs operating over the centuries, European education, I repeat, cannot take hold. These sentiments, in effect, represent the past of the entire race, the result of the experiences and actions occurring over a long series of generations. They constitute an infinitely large weight, whereas the results produced by education only constitute an exceedingly small weight. These national qualities, as you all know, play a fundamental role in the history of peoples. The Romans, for example, dominated Greece, and a handful of English today dominate India, much more by the development of certain national aptitudes—perseverance and energy, for example—than by the development of their intelligence. There isn't any type of education which is able to prevent certain peoples—Negroes, for example—from continuing to be impulsive, improvident, and incapable of making sustained efforts with any sort of lasting energy.

Now, if we only regard instruction as the art of fixing in the memory a certain number of results, we will certainly be able to say that those races classified as inferior races by anthropologists—including the most inferior, such as certain Negroes—can be educated like Europeans. A professor at our University, Monsieur Hippeau, who has visited America, speaks with admiration of the young Negroes that he has seen in classes, repeating very well geometry proofs and admirably translating Thucydides. He tells us the following: "Never have I better seen that Negroes and whites are children of the same God; that nature has not established between the two any fundamental differences."

I do not know, for lack of sufficient information on this point, if Negroes and whites are children of the same God; however, what I believe I well know is that in this case the author has been taken in by an illusion, one, moreover, that is shared by many persons, notably the missionaries, who trouble themselves with the education of inferior peoples.

I said “by an illusion,” and here are my reasons. The instructional lessons that students receive in schools are overwhelmingly nothing more than mnemonic exercises whose purpose is to place in the memory material that the intelligence, once it has developed itself, will be able to utilize. It will be able to utilize such information thanks to hereditary intellectual aptitudes as well as to modes of thinking and feeling which represent the sum of the mental acquisitions of an entire race. It is precisely these differences in aptitude furnished man at birth which establish between races inequalities, the mark of which no system of education will be able to efface. The child belonging to a semi-civilized or half-savage people will generally succeed quite as well at school as the European, but only because classical studies are mainly memory exercises made for the minds of children; in addition, the intellectual differentiation between races hardly manifests itself except among the adults. Whereas the European child loses as he grows up his child’s brain, the inferior man, incapable by the laws of heredity of surpassing a certain level, comes to rest at a lower phase of development and accordingly does not know how to utilize the materials and information that the instruction of the college has provided him. If you follow the life of these whites and Negroes, formerly equal in school, you will soon see appear these profound differences which separate races. In fact, the sole definitive result of European education, as much for the Negro as for the Arab and Hindu, is to alter for the worse in him the hereditary qualities of his race without providing him those of the Europeans. They will sometimes possess bits of European ideas, but do so along with the reasoning and sentiments of savages and semi-civilized men. They float between contrary ideas as well as contrary moral principles. Tossed about by all the hazards of life and incapable of gaining mastery over any, they only have as their guide the impulse of the moment.

Now, is this to say that these semi-civilized or barbarous peoples cannot succeed in elevating themselves to the level of European civilization? Such is not, most certainly, my opinion. On the contrary, messieurs, I believe that they will reach this point one day; but, they will only elevate themselves to our level after having surmounted successively—and not in a single leap—the numerous steps of civilization which separate them from us. Our ancestors themselves had been barbarians, and it was necessary for them to expend nearly a thousand

years of efforts in order for them to make their exit from barbarism and be able to utilize the treasures of the Greek and Roman civilization. You are all aware of what successive stages our ancestors had cleared and how from the very first they had found it necessary to modify the elements of the civilization which they had inherited—notably, the language, institutions, and arts. To their barbarous minds, this refined civilization was not in more accord with them than we are with the minds of inferior peoples. This therefore is one historical example which one ought not to forget, one whose value subsists up to today, as it well demonstrates the fact that no savage people have ever been successful in overcoming at one swoop, without passing through intermediate stages first, the enormous distance which separates them from civilization. Indeed, it is easy for foresee that such a sight will never be presented to mankind. The laws of social evolution are just as vigorous as the ones pertaining to the evolution of organic beings. A seed does not become a tree, a child does not become a grown man, and societies do not elevate themselves to superior forms but after having passed entirely through a series of gradual developments that are nearly imperceptible in their slow necessities. While we can, through violent measures, disturb and throw into disorder this inevitable evolution in peoples—just as we can suspend the seed's evolution by breaking it—we are not at all provided the ability to modify the evolutionary laws.

The theoretical reason as to why it is impossible for us to make inferior peoples accept our civilization may be expressed in a word: *too complicated*. Our civilization is just too complicated for them. The only institutions, beliefs, and education whose influence might have an effect on them are those which, by their simplicity, remain within reach of their nature and do not modify their conditions of existence. Such is, for example, the Islamic civilization, and thus this is what accounts for the profound influence, seemingly so mysterious, that the Moslems has exercised and still exercise in the East. The peoples invaded and overrun by them most often were or are Orientals like them, possessing needs, sentiments, and conditions of existence very similar to theirs; and these conquered peoples, by adopting the fundamental elements of the Islamic civilization, do not have to undergo and suffer through the radical modifications that the adoption of a Western civilization entails.

Historians assert that the Islamic civilization propagates itself by force, and that this therefore explains the prodigious moral and intellectual influence exercised by Moslems in the world. However, in expressing this assertion, they are falling into a singular error. In fact, one must not ignore this important reality: the Islamic civilization has continued to rapidly expand itself long after the political power of its propagators had been destroyed. For example, the

Koran counts 20 million followers in China where the Mohammedans have never exercised even the shadow of power; in addition, it counts 50 million followers in India today, which is infinitely more Moslems than there were during the most brilliant era of the Mogul domination. These enormous numbers continue to grow with astonishing rapidity; in the last ten years, for example, the Moslems have made 3 million new converts in India. Besides the Romans, the Mohammedans are the only civilizers who have been successful in getting the most diverse races to adopt the fundamental elements of any social culture—that is to say, the culture’s religion, institutions, and arts. Far from tending to disappear, their influence increases each day and surpasses what it was during the most splendid eras of their material power. The Koran and the institutions which spring from it are so simple, so much in rapport with the needs of primitive peoples, that their adoption always happens without difficulty. Everywhere where Moslems have passed, be it common merchants, traders or whoever, they leave behind their institutions and beliefs. As deep into Africa as modern-day explorers have penetrated, they have found tribes professing Islam. Indeed, the Moslems presently civilize the tribes to the extent where they may exist, and extend their powerful action over the mysterious continent, whereas the Europeans who pervade the Orient in all directions, be it as conquerors or for the needs of commerce, do not leave any moral influence behind them.

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The conclusion which can be clearly drawn from this latter part of my discourse is, messieurs, identical to the one that I have already made from the plainly-evident results obtained in our colonies by the system of assimilation. Neither by education nor by institutions, religious beliefs or any other means at their command are Europeans able to exercise civilizing action over Orientals, and even less so over totally inferior peoples. The social institutions of all these peoples are the consequence of a mental constitution which is the work of centuries and which only centuries might be able to transform.

It is therefore necessary—and this essentially observation cannot be emphasized enough—to regard as a dangerous chimera all our ideas of assimilating or Frenchifying any inferior people. Leave to the indigenous people their customs, institutions, and laws. Do not try to impose on them the wheelworks of our complicated administration, and only maintain on them a high protectorship. In order for this to happen, we need to reduce enormously the number of our colonial functionaries, and we must require them to thoroughly study the morals, customs, and language of the indigenes; we must,

in addition, guarantee our functionaries an important job possessing great stability, and enhance their prestige by all possible means.

With respect to these projects of reform—or more correctly speaking, projects of simplification—I have restricted myself to enunciating them in a concise, summarized way given that I do not consider it a useful task to develop them in detail at the present time. Perhaps, messieurs, I may have succeeded in shaking up a little your convictions, but I do not flatter myself with the belief that I might influence public opinion on this supreme question today, an opinion in which ideas contrary to the ones that I have set forth are still so deeply entrenched. Now, it is mainly sentiments which dictate to us the fantastical and foolish enterprise of assimilation to which we have devoted so much money and so many men; and with respect to sentiments, reason does not know how to handle them. Without a doubt reason always ends up triumphing, but at the price of the most cruel experiences. It is therefore incumbent on eminent men such as you to take on the role of enlightening public opinion in order to spare our country the catastrophes which you yourselves can prevent by turning on the light in less clairvoyant spirits.

With grief I ask the following: is it truly possible that, in order to satisfy sentiments which are only pure illusions—illusions as chimerical as the religious beliefs on behalf of which our forefathers spilled so much blood—we will persist in our dangerous follies? Is it indeed likely that there are still men of State who continue to think that we possess the providential mission of increasing the happiness and prosperity of other peoples in spite of themselves? Is it allowable that we should still listen to economists who claim that, in order to change the mental constitution of a people such as the Arabs, it is sufficient to prohibit polygamy and “radically modify the system of the family and collective property?”

Imagine how much some of these great simplistic humanitarian theories that we so cherish have cost us! It is in their name that we have shed our blood for the liberty or unity of peoples who are today our worst enemies. It is in their name that we desire and attempt to Frenchify populations who live tranquilly under their ancient laws, whereupon these populations immediately turn against us. And if we ask ourselves what all these foolish undertakings have ultimately yielded us, it is necessary for us to answer with embarrassment: *enemies only, enemies forever!*

I said “with embarrassment” because this is the feeling which all too often our Don Quixoteism prompts. It is this same feeling that the French

Traveler also experiences when he leaves our colonies in order to visit ones of other European nations, notably those of England and Holland, who refrain from drawing inspiration from our great principles. What a marvelous spectacle he beholds in the gigantic empire of India, where 250 million indigenous people are governed in profound peace by a thousand functionaries supported by a small army of sixty thousand men, and which is covered by canals, railroads, and works of all sort without it costing a cent to the mother country! Moral prestige constitutes the only force of this handful of governors, but such a prestige that we have never known how to instill in our own colonies. To be sure, these 250 million indigenes do not at all possess universal suffrage, legislatures, nor have representatives in Europe in the form of deputies and senators. Ignorant of our complicated institutions, they govern themselves according to their old practices under the high and distant protectorship of a small number of European functionaries who intervene as little as possible in their affairs. Do you believe, messieurs, that they are unhappier than the indigenes of our colonies who are pestered in every sense by our thousands of agents and who must contend with laws and institutions to which they can hardly understand? If you believe it, go visit the three or four small villages that comprise the last vestiges of our large empire of India. You will find there a hundred French functionaries whose only possible role is to overthrow from top to bottom the ancient institutions of the Hindus. You will see there all the burdens that weigh upon the indigene from what we call "liberty," and you will see there the discords and internal strife that it has engendered in a population that was formerly so peaceful. You will also clearly observe there how, in exchange for all our sacrifices, we are obtaining little in affection and respect. If you wish then to understand the influence of a different form of government, travel a few miles further and visit the same populations governed by the British. In the very first minutes you will be struck by the deep respect that the indigene shows you; after a few days you will realize how the single functionary who superintends a vast district little affects the public or private life of the indigene, respects his institutions, customs and morals, and leaves to him in reality an absolute liberty. If I were able to force all the French to take a similar trip, the proposition that I have supported today before you would not have any opponents, and we would renounce very quickly the idea of imposing our institutions on other peoples for the sole satisfaction of making our great principles triumph.

Most certainly, messieurs, these great principles ought not to be disdained. They are the forms of a new ideal, offspring of religious illusions which we no longer have. They ought not to be disdained because mankind has not yet learned to live without illusions. But, it is necessary to renounce the role

of apostles, and one must not forget that in the terrible battle for existence that the modern world engages itself in more and more, the right to live belongs only to the strongest peoples. It is therefore not with chimeras that we will assure the future of our country; however, it is with chimeras that we might lose it.