

The Phalanstery

Charles Fourier

1822

The announcement does, I acknowledge, sound very improbable, of a method for combining three hundred families unequal in fortune, and rewarding each person--man, woman, child--according to the three properties, capital, labor, talent. More than one reader will credit himself with humor when he remarks: "Let the author try to associate but three families, to reconcile three households in the same dwelling to social union, to arrangements of purchases and expenses, to perfect harmony in passions, character, and authority; when he shall have succeeded in reconciling three mistresses of associated households, we shall believe that he can succeed with thirty and with three hundred."

I have already replied to an argument which it is well to reproduce (for repetition will frequently be necessary here); I have observed that as economy can spring only from large combinations, God had to create a social theory applicable to large masses and not to three or four families.

An objection seemingly more reasonable, and which needs to be refuted more than once, is that of social discords. How conciliate the passions, the conflicting interests, the incompatible characters, in short, the innumerable disparities which engender so much discord?

It may easily have been surmised that I shall make use of a lever entirely unknown, and whose properties cannot be judged until I shall have explained them. The passional contrasted Series draws its nourishment solely from those disparities which bewilder civilized policy; it acts like the husbandman who from a mass of filth draws the germs of abundance; the refuse, the dirt, and impure matter which would serve only to defile and infect our dwellings, are for him the sources of wealth.

If social experiments have miscarried, it is because some fatality has impelled all speculators to work with bodies of poor people whom they subjected to a monastic-industrial discipline, chief obstacle to the working of the series. Here, as in everything else, it is ever SIMPLISM (simplisme) which misleads the civilized, obstinately sticking to experiments with combinations of the poor; they cannot elevate themselves to the conception of a trial with combinations of the rich. They are veritable Lemming rats (migrating rats of Lapland), preferring drowning in a pond to deviating from the route which they have decided upon.

It is necessary for a company of 1,500 to 1,600 persons to have a stretch of land comprising a good square league, say a surface of six million square toises (do not let us forget that a third of that would suffice for the simple mode).

The land should be provided with a fine stream of water; it should be intersected by hills, and adapted to varied cultivation; it should be contiguous to a forest, and not far removed from a large city, but sufficiently so to escape intruders.

The experimental Phalanx standing alone, and without the support of neighboring phalanxes, will, in consequence of this isolation, have so many gaps in attraction, and so many passionless calms to dread in its workings, that it will be necessary to provide it with the aid of a good location fitted for a variety of functions. A flat country such as Antwerp, Leipzig, Orleans, would be totally unsuitable, and would cause many Series to fail, owing to the uniformity of the land surface. It will, therefore, be necessary to select a diversified region, like the surroundings of Lausanne, or, at the very least, a fine valley provided with a stream of water and a forest, like the valley of Brussels or of Halle. A fine location near Paris would be the stretch of country lying between Poissy and Conflans, Poissy and Meulan.

A company will be collected consisting of from 1,500 to 1,600 persons of graduated degrees of fortune, age, character, of theoretical and practical knowledge; care will be taken to secure the greatest amount of variety possible, for the greater the number of variations either in the passions or the faculties of the members, the easier will it be to make them harmonize in a short space of time.

In this district devoted to experiment, there ought to be combined every species of practicable cultivation, including that in conservatories and hot-houses; in addition, there ought to be at least three accessory factories, to be used in winter and on rainy days; furthermore, various practical branches of science and the arts, independent of the schools.

Above all, it will be necessary to fix the valuation of the capital invested in shares; lands, materials, flocks, implements, etc. This point ought, it seems, to be among the first to receive attention; I think it best to dismiss it here. I shall limit myself to remarking that all these investments in transferable shares and stock-coupons will be represented.

A great difficulty to be overcome in the experimental Phalanx will be the formation of the ties of high mechanism or collective bonds of the Series, before the close of the first season. It will be necessary to accomplish the passionless union of the mass of the members; to lead them to collective and individual devotion to the maintenance of the Phalanx, and, especially, to perfect harmony regarding the division of the profits, according to the three factors, Capital, Labor, Talent.

This difficulty will be greater in northern than in southern countries, owing to the difference between devoting eight months and five months to agricultural labor.

An experimental Phalanx, being obliged to start out with agricultural labor, will not be in full operation until the month of May (in a climate of 50 degrees, say in the region around London or Paris); and, since it will be necessary to form the bonds of general union, the harmonious ties of the Series, before the suspension of field labor, before the month of October, there will be barely five months of full practice in a region of 50 degrees: the work will have to be accomplished in that short space.

The trial would, therefore, be much more conveniently made in a temperate region, like Florence, Naples, Valencia, Lisbon, where they would have eight to nine months of full cultivation and a far better opportunity to consolidate the bonds of union, since there would be but two or three months of passionless calm remaining to tide over till the advent of the second spring, a time when the Phalanx, resuming agricultural labor, would form its ties and cabals anew with much greater zeal, imbuing them with a degree of intensity far above that of the first year; it would

thenceforth be in a state of complete consolidation, and strong enough to weather the passional calm of the second winter.

We shall see in the chapter on hiatuses of attraction, that the first Phalanx will, in consequence of its social isolation and other impediments inherent to the experimental canton, have twelve special obstacles to overcome, obstacles which the Phalanxes subsequently founded would not have to contend with. That is why it is so important that the experimental canton should have the assistance coming from field-work prolonged eight or nine months, like that in Naples and Lisbon.

Let us proceed with the details of composition.

At least seven-eighths of the members ought to be cultivators and manufacturers; the remainder will consist of capitalists, scholars, and artists.

The Phalanx would be badly graded and difficult to balance, if among its capitalists there were several having 100,000 francs, several 50,000 francs, without intermediate fortunes. In such a case it would be necessary to seek to procure intermediate fortunes of 60,000, 70,000, 80,000, 90,000 francs. The Phalanx best graduated in every respect raises social harmony and profits to the highest degree.

One is tempted to believe that our sybarites would not wish to be associated with Grosjean and Margot: they are so even now (as I believe I have already pointed out). Is not the rich man obliged to discuss his affairs with twenty peasants who occupy his farms, and who are all agreed in taking illegal advantage of him? He is, therefore, the peasant's associate, obliged to make inquiries about the good and the bad farmers, their character, morals, solvency, and industry; he does associate in a very direct and a very tiresome way with Grosjean and Margot. In Harmony, he will be their indirect associate, being relieved of accounts regarding the management, which will be regulated by the regents, proctors, and special officers, without its being necessary for the capitalist to intervene or to run any risk of fraud. He will, therefore, be freed from the disagreeable features of his present association with the peasantry; he will form a new one, where he will not furnish them anything, and where they will only be his obliging and devoted friends, in accordance with the details given regarding the management of the Series and of reunions. If he takes the lead at festivals, it is because he has agreed to accept the rank of captain. If he gives them a feast, it is because he takes pleasure in acknowledging their continual kind attentions.

Thus the argument urged about the repugnance to association between Mondor and Grosjean, already associated in fact, is only, like all the others, a quibble devoid of sense.

The edifice occupied by the Phalanx bears no resemblance to our urban or rural buildings; and in the establishment of a full Harmony of 1600 people none of our buildings could be put to use, not even a great palace like Versailles nor a great monastery like Escorial. If an experiment is made in minimal Harmony, with two or three hundred members, or on a limited scale with four hundred members, it would be possible, although difficult, to use a monastery or palace (like Meudon) for the central edifice.

The lodgings, gardens and stables of a society run by series of groups must be vastly different from those of our villages and towns, which are perversely organised and meant for families having no societary relations. Instead of the chaos of little houses which rival each other in filth and ugliness in our towns, a Phalanx constructs for itself a building as perfect as the terrain permits. Here is a brief account of the measures to be taken on a favourable site... .

The center of the palace or Phalanstery should be a place for quiet activity; it should include the dining rooms, the exchange, meeting rooms, library, studies, etc. This central section includes

the temple, the tower, the telegraph, the coops for carrier pigeons, the ceremonial chimes, the observatory, and a winter courtyard adorned with resinous plants. The parade grounds are located just behind the central section.

One of the wings of the Phalanstery should include all the noisy workshops like the carpenter shop and the forge and the other workshops where hammering is done. It should also be the place for all the industrial gatherings involving children, who are generally very noisy at work and even at music. The grouping of these activities will avoid an annoying drawback of our civilised cities where every street has its own hammerer or iron merchant or beginning clarinet player to shatter the ear drums of fifty families in the vicinity.

The other wing should contain the caravansary with its ballrooms and its halls for meetings with outsiders, who should not be allowed to encumber the center of the palace and to disturb the domestic relations of the Phalanx. This precaution of isolating outsiders and concentrating their meetings in one of the wings will be most important in the trial Phalanx. For the Phalanx will attract thousands of curiosity-seekers whose entry fees will provide a profit that I cannot estimate at less than twenty million... .

The **phalanstery** or manor-house of the Phalanx should contain, in addition to the private apartments, a large number of halls for social relations. These halls will be called *Seristeries* or places for the meeting and interaction of the passional series.

These halls have nothing in common with our public rooms where ungraduated social relations prevail. A series cannot tolerate this confusion: it always has its three, four or five divisions which occupy three, four or five adjacent locations. This means that analogous arrangements are necessary for the officers and members of each division. Thus each Seristery ordinarily consists of three principal halls, one for the center and two for the wings of the series.

In addition, the three halls of the Seristery should have adjoining rooms for the groups and committees of the series. In the banquet Seristery or dining room, for example, six halls of unequal size are necessary:

1	first class hall in the Ascending Wing,	about 150 people.
2	second class halls in the Center 400
3	third class halls In the Descending Wing 900

Near these six halls of unequal size there should be a number of smaller rooms for the diverse groups which wish to isolate themselves from the common dining rooms of their class. It happens every day that some groups wish to eat separately; they should have rooms near the Seristery where meals are served to the members of their class.

In all social relations it is necessary to have small rooms adjoining the Seristery in order to encourage small group meetings. Accordingly, a Seristery, or the meeting place of a series, is arranged in a compound manner with halls for large collective gatherings and for smaller cabalistic meetings. This system is very different from that employed in our large assemblies where, even

in the palaces of kings, everyone is thrown together pell-mell according to the holy philosophical principle of equality. This principle is completely intolerable in Harmony.

The stables, granaries and warehouses should be located, if possible, opposite the main edifice. The space between the palace and the stables will serve as a main courtyard or parade-ground and it should be very large. To give some idea of the proper dimensions I estimate that the front of the Phalanstery should have a length of about 600 *toises de Paris*. The center and the parade grounds will run to about 300 *toises* and each of the two wings to about 150 ... The gardens should be placed, insofar as possible, behind the palace and not behind the stables, since large-scale farming should be done in the area near the stables. These plans will of course vary according to local circumstances; we are only talking here about an ideal location... .

All the children, both rich and poor, are lodged together on the mezzanine of the Phalanstery. For they should be kept separate from the adolescents, and in general from all those who are capable of making love, at most times and particularly during the late evening and the early morning hours. The reasons for this will be explained later. For the time being let us assume that those who are capable of forming amorous relations will be concentrated on the second floor, while the very young and the very old (the first and sixteenth choirs, the Tots and the Patriarchs) should have meeting-halls on the ground floor and the mezzanine. They should also be isolated from the *street-gallery*, which is the most important feature of a Phalanstery and which cannot be conceived of in civilisation. For this reason it should be briefly described in a separate chapter.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Charles Fourier
The Phalanstery
1822

<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/fourier.html>

theanarchistlibrary.org