

# Galileo

A Drama

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

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## [introduction by translator, Benjamin R. Tucker]

In two recent issues of "La Nouvelle Revue" (February 1 and 15) appears a remarkable article under the above title from the pen of Edmond Lepelletier, embodying an outline sketch, left by Proudhon and now for the first time published, of a play which he had in contemplation, to be entitled "Galileo: A Philosophical Drama in Four Acts and Five Tableaux." As no one had dreamed of Proudhon as a dramatist, this is a surprising revelation. The article opens with a summary biographical sketch of Proudhon, which, in point of fact, contains nothing new, and, in point of opinion of Proudhon's work, goes nearly to the ordinary extent of misconception. Indeed, nothing better could be expected from a man like Lepelletier, who, although a journalist of considerable ability, a recognized literary critic, a moderately successful novelist and dramatist, and a leading Freethinker who eats priest three times a day and four times on Friday, has no better understanding of the revolution now in progress than to foam at the mouth whenever a bomb is thrown, to write articles urging the conviction of anarchists arrested for printing their opinions, and, after their acquittal, to write other articles inciting the *bourgeois* to violence against their fellow-*bourgeois* who sat on the jury. But the fact that Lepelletier is a man of this stamp renders all the more valuable the tribute that he is forced to pay to Proudhon's character and capacity. In the partial translated reprint which is given below I include, therefore, besides Proudhon's sketch of his contemplated drama, the tribute with which Lepelletier prefaces it and the comments with which he follows it, but I omit from it the biographical portion.

## [introduction by Lepelletier]

Proudhon, a tumultuous genius; a foaming ocean; a brain never at rest, but always in flux and reflux; believing what he said at the moment when he said it, and hence neither skeptical or impartial or indifferent; a sincere sophist; an enraptured rhetorician; an earnest demolisher of the fecundity of ruins; a surgeon of philosophy, of political economy, of Socialistic systems, of nationalities, of reputations, of consecrated works, who was persuaded that, in plunging his lancet haphazard into healthy and diseased parts alike, he preserved and cured,—Proudhon, I say, looms up in the recession of time, with his immense faults, his intolerable onslaughts, his intentional extravagances, and his spontaneous flights, as one of the most powerful, most colossal men of our century and of preceding ages. He is at once our Kant and our Hegel, with less than their calmness and more than their eloquence. Like all great and true thinkers, he was encyclopedic. Action escapes him. He lived immured in dream, in idea, and was preeminently a citizen of Utopia. Although mingled with the political events which led up to and followed the fall of Louis Philippe, he was rather a spectator than an actor in the tragi-comedy of 1848. Chosen a representative,—for in those days the voters sought thinkers, philosophers, historians, and even poets,—he participated only from above dominant and ironical, in the assembly debates usually conducted on a plane beneath his level. Moreover, he spent a part of his term in prison or in exile. At the moment when cannon were thundering in the *faubourgs*, which the rioters had barred with barricades surmounted by red flags, Proudhon was discovered on his way to Ménilmontant. They questioned him suspecting that a Socialist like him might be deserting the assembly and the government to join the insurgents behind their heaps of paving-stones, Proudhon shrugged his shoulders. “I was simply going,” he quietly answered, “to contemplate the sublime horror of the cannonade.” Paris in revolt in the gloomy days of June awakened in him an artist’s sensations.

A man prodigiously endowed, formidably complex, a veritable intellectual Proteus! for, although successively, and sometimes simultaneously, linguist, economist, philosopher, pamphleteer, historian, polemic, exegete, and legislator, he deserves also to be classed among the artists. In the first place, by his style. In the next place, by the aesthetic interest that marked especially the close of his laborious career, making him a citizen of the world of art.

He left behind him, the astonishing polygraph, an incomplete, imperfect work, of which his hand, already enfeebled by approaching death, wrote some unfinished pages, some uncorrected lines, but in every phrase of which the critical sense and the notion of the beautiful, the true, the just, are brilliantly apparent. “The Principle of Art and Its Social Destiny,”—such is the title of this fine book in which a new Proudhon arises, as strong, as novel, as superior, but more exact, more poised, and less paradoxical, than in his polemical and philosophical works. This is not all: he was not content to formulate his sensations and his theories regarding painting and sculpture; it was also his wish to deal with the special art of the theatre, so difficult, so synthetic, so profound. And we have a Proudhon who is a dramatic author. He did not have the time to write his work; he could only drive the stakes in the scenic field which it was his design to cover.

He had in his head a "Galileo,"—a vast and serious subject which also tempted Ponsard. But how superior would have been Proudhon's drama, at once philosophical and human, to that of the author of "Honor and Money," who saw in the duel between faith and science, in which Galileo and the Inquisitors were the combatants, only the commonplace adventure of a good father of a family withdrawing an imprudent word in order to be able to marry his daughter advantageously.

Proudhon constructed his "Galileo" in outline only.

It is this outline, sufficiently complete and even minutely detailed, accompanied by reflections, critical comments, and interesting indications, that we now place before the public for the first time. It was found among Proudhon's unpublished papers, though it does not appear in the list of posthumous works announced by his executors. It is in the handwriting of Mlle. Catherine Proudhon, who was her father's secretary. It has been placed in my hands by M. Albert Lecroix, the former publisher of Proudhon's works, who acquired it by a contract made with Proudhon's widow covering all the works of her illustrious husband.

"Galileo" was conceived, thought out, and fixed in the very clear, theatrical, and lifelike form in which the reader is now to read it. The drama is made. The edifice is constructed. It remains only to fill in the dialogue. It is my intention at some future day to perform this complementary work. The text now presented, copied from the original manuscript without addition, subtraction, or correction, will suffice to prove that the multiple genius of Proudhon embraced a veritable dramatic author.

# [Galileo—A Drama, by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon]

**GALILEO.**

**A DRAMA.**

Is it possible to dramatize the struggles of the mind and the agitations of thought in such a way that the spectator may take an interest in them, just as he takes an interest in the struggles of the passions and the revolutions of politics

To this question one would like to see a philosophical reply given by a writer applying the resources and rules of dramatic art to a philosophico-religious event, —such, for example, as the trial of Galileo.

Here is pretty nearly my conception of the plan and method of this drama.

## **ACT I.**

**Scene I.**—The scene opens in Galileo's house.

The philosopher, in presence of a company of friends and disciples, is finishing the demonstration of the double movement of the earth.

A religious man as well as a philosopher, a savant from motives of curiosity and recreation, Galileo warms his soul with song and music. The lesson finished, after a few enthusiastic words as to the religious and philosophical future of humanity, master and chorus sing in chorus a few verses, in a free translation, of the *Cœli Enarrant*.

Galileo's daughter, a young person remarkable for her talents and the knowledge which she has acquired in her father's society, accompanies them on some musical instrument. She is her father's usual musician.

Among those present are:

Torricelli, the celebrated disciple;

A young lord, the *fiancé* or lover of Galileo's daughter, and an intimate friend of Torricelli;

Two spies from the Holy Office, ruined noblemen living by their wits and as informers.

The song over, one of the spies asks Galileo an insidious question as to the difficulty of harmonizing the text of the Bible with the Copernican system.

Torricelli, a man of pure science, prudent and distrustful, who is inclined to condemn the mystical tendencies of Galileo, hastens to take the floor. He protests, after the fashion of the *savants* of the time, against any comparison between human science, so uncertain, an eternal subject of dispute, and faith; maintains that the question propounded cannot be admitted, without temerity, among simple and modest philosophers; that it is not within the sphere of lay science; and that even to raise it is to be lacking in fidelity to the Church. And, after these words of edification, he asks that the question be set aside.

“It is very well known,” he says, “that, of all the children of the Church, Galileo is the most submissive and faithful, and that all his disciples are fervently orthodox. The truths of religion are of a superior order, and their keeping is entrusted to the Church; beneath, far beneath, is the practice of philosophy, ever ready, like a humble servant, to sacrifice her data at the slightest symptoms of disagreement with revelation. Such questions are rash; they encroach upon the ecclesiastical mission and the episcopal prerogatives, and lead to temptation.”

There can be nothing more edifying than Torricelli’s words.

Galileo looks at his disciple with an ironical expression in his eye; repressing his thought and taking up the question propounded, he rushes full tilt into the speculations of which he is so fond.

He maintains that the truths of reason and those of faith do not form two orders separated by analysis, but that there is a close and positive bond between them; that together they form but one and the same chain,—the only difference being that the truths of faith, hidden from our intelligence, are revealed to us by the grace of heaven, while those of reason fall under our observation. The savant holds one end of the chain, the Church the other; the problem before each is that of following the chain until the two meet.

Meantime he points out that Scripture is erroneously interpreted.

Torricelli expresses his disapproval by signs of impatience, but always in equivocal terms, misleading to the auditors.

Galileo ends by prophesying, in the name of science, a sort of coming of the Holy Ghost, and a future of unequalled glory for the Church.

The two spies and all the company retire. Galileo shows his guests out. Torricelli and the lover are left alone.

**Scene II.**—Torricelli reveals to the young man his suspicions concerning the two spies and recommends him to secrecy on this point, especially with Galileo, whose frankness and candor would compromise everything, and who must be saved in spite of himself. Then, changing the subject, he tells the young man that, whatever the merits of Galileo’s daughter, he does not approve his suit.

“Can you be dazzled by her pretence to knowledge? Do you believe in scientific women, in the philosophy of a Hypatia? And, though she were her father’s equal, is it fitting that a gallant knight, a man of the world, should be burdened with a Minerva?”

Reflections upon learned women.

“Do you intend, then, to form a sect with your wife and your father-in-law?”

Reply of the young man (twenty eight to thirty years of age).

“You are mistaken,” he says to Torricelli, “regarding the signora. She is other than she seems. Married, restored to her nature, she will tear off her veil of pedantry, which I desire no more than you, and her knowledge will add to her charm.”

**Scene III.**—Galileo reenters.

Discussion between him and Torricelli.

The latter energetically blames Galileo’s ultra-scientific tendencies. He accuses him of being deficient in philosophical dignity, and of pursuit of chimeras.

“All these crotchets,” says Torricelli, “are the corruption of science; they would be the corruption of religion, if in religion there were anything to corrupt.”

He warns his master to be on his guard, lest his religious notions and his free utterance may ruin him.

Galileo, after making sport of what he terms Torricelli's jugglery and dubbing him an impious man and an atheist, at which the young *savant* bursts into loud laughter, then maintains that science is but a means for man, an instrument for philosophy; that it would be little worthy of esteem if it were not to enlighten us in turn upon the things of which religion has a monopoly,—rights, duties; morality, destiny, etc. He complains of Torricelli's materialism, etc.

The two men do not refute each other, and they leave the scene unconvinced.

**Scene IV.**—Love-scene between Galileo's daughter and her suitor, a typical young *savante*, but with tenderness and devotion predominant in her nature. One feels that she has been turned to study more by admiration for her father and by domestic influence than by her own genius.

It is the family spirit, transformed under another influence. It is especially by the religious side of her father's ideas that she has been attracted; through it she feels poetry and love itself. She does not like Torricelli, and she fears his influence on the mind of her *fiancé*.

The young man is the type of a self-possessed lover, knowing what he does, what he wants, and where he is going,

**Scene V.**—Reenter Galileo and Torricelli. They come from the laboratory.

Arrival of a summoner from the Holy Office, bearing a document commanding Galileo to appear. The same personage informs Torricelli and his friend that they are summoned also.

Galileo reads the document.

A few words indicate, as an aggravation of his offence, that he resists all the observations of his pious disciple and friend Torricelli, who continually opposes him. So that the religious man, Galileo, is transformed into an unbeliever by the cunning of the police and the imputations of justice, and Torricelli, the skeptic, the materialist, the atheist, into a paragon of orthodoxy.

The latter, whose foresight is justified, again recommends his master to be prudent.

The difficulty in this first act is to give enough movement to the dialogue to prevent the discussions from dragging.

Success in this is to be attained by giving a solemn character to the teachings of Galileo and a strong impression of novelty to his ideas, and by brilliantly emphasizing the opposition between faith and science and the gravity of the resultant danger to the Holy Office.

A little cry of conspiracy for the spread of such ideas would not be amiss.

## ACT II.

The action takes place, as in the first act, in Galileo's house, at the moment when he, together with the other persons summoned, is appearing before the examining magistrate of the Holy Office. So that the action is double; it takes place at the same time in the Holy Office and in Galileo's house, the events occurring at the former being echoed at the latter.

The philosopher's friends have learned of the charge brought against him,

They arrive one after another, offer their services, and ask anxiously after news. The summoned witnesses also arrive by turns, and report the proceedings and the turn that the affair is taking.

**Scene I.**—The young girl and her lover. Declaration by the signora that she has made up her mind, if misfortune comes to her father, to break off her engagement to her fiancé and follow her father's fortunes. The young *savante* has disappeared; only the woman is now to be seen. To the reply of her lover that their union would only add to the consolations of the philosopher, she



answers that it is impossible; that now she owes herself entirely to her father, but that, married, she would owe herself entirely to her husband.

“Let us not put duty and love on the same side,” she says.

**Scene II.**—Arrival of Torricelli. He was the first witness to be examined: to his fine words he owes this honor. They almost tried to make him the denouncer of his master. He has had much difficulty in preserving his equanimity.

But he fears the house will be searched. They are beginning to suspect Galileo of carrying on propagandism and forming a sect. The philosopher’s replies tell against him more and more; his obstinacy in maintaining that he is within the true doctrine of the Church aggravates his danger with every minute.

Torricelli has no longer any doubt as to the part played by the two individuals whom he at first regarded as spies. He advises prudence in their presence. As for himself, he goes to Galileo’s library to take away his papers, his correspondence, and any books that might aggravate his situation.

Departure of the lover for the Holy Office.

**Scene III.**—Entrance of sundry personages wearing various expressions on their face,—disconsolate, surprised, bigoted, etc.

**Scene IV.**—Arrival of the two spies. They pretend to hope that all will go well, “If Galileo would only talk like Torricelli,” they say; “but he is obstinate.”

**Scene V.**—A new personage arrives from the Holy Office. Galileo is injuring himself more and more. His explanations only confirm the suspicions that rest upon him.

The loftiness and frankness of his answers deliver him to the Inquisition.

One would almost think, to hear him, that his best friends are false witnesses trying to destroy him.

Animated recital of a speech made by Galileo to the magistrate.

Those present are frightened; their faces grow longer and longer. As the bad news arrives, the house empties, every one fearing lest he may be considered a friend of the heretic.

**Scene VI.**—Return of the lover. His story is brief; he tells it in presence of the two spies. In an aside to Galileo’s daughter, he declares that he is going to try to make them leave, either voluntarily or by force.

**Scene VII.**—Arrival of a new personage. Galileo’s exaltation increases. He cannot lie or maintain silence at the proper time. There is to be a search of the house.

General agitation ensues. The visitors disappear; everybody is terror stricken

**Scene VIII.**—The spies are left alone with the young girl’s suitor.

**Scene IX.**—Arrival of Galileo. He announces the result of the examination. He is to be judged solemnly by the Holy Office. Can it be possible, he asks himself, that a worshipper in spirit and in truth, like himself, is to be condemned as a blasphemer and an impious man

He is discontented with the precautions taken; is profuse, however, in his eulogies of his disciples, of his future son-in-law, whose devotion he approves at the same time that he blames their fears. He calls them men of little faith. Torricelli urgently beseeches him to make no further answers, and to say, if the commissioner questions him, that he knows nothing. He holds before him the prospect of torture and life imprisonment.

**Scene X.**—Reentrance of Galileo’s future son-in-law. With a glance, with a word, he makes Torricelli understand that the two spies have tried to assassinate him, and that he has killed them.

**Scene XI.**—Arrival of the commissioner entrusted with the search, with two aids.

### **ACT III.**

The action takes place in the Holy Office, at first in a vestibule or waiting-room, then in the audience chamber,

**Scene I.**—Since the first act the case has become strangely complicated. There has been a double murder committed, within a few hundred steps of Galileo's house, on the persons of two of his disciples, heard at the examination and at the moment when the house was about to be searched.

The connection of the circumstances naturally gives the idea to the police of the Holy Office that this murder, happening at such a time, bears some relation to Galileo's trial and was committed by some of his friends, though they know not whom to suspect. No one saw the combat, etc., etc.

The Holy Office is embarrassed. On the one hand, it dares not reveal the secret mission of the two spies; on the other hand, it is convinced that Galileo's family or friends are not strangers to the event, and therein it sees a new indication of guilt, especially as nothing was discovered in the house of the accused beyond some insignificant old books. Nevertheless it has not been deemed advisable to join the two cases.

All this is said in a scene between two members of the tribunal, who straightway withdraw. Tableau characteristic of the ways of the police and the judiciary.

**Scene II.**—Arrival of Galileo, Torricelli, the daughter, and her lover.

The philosopher is full of anguish. He does not understand at all what is going on,—why the assassination of two of his friends is connected with his case, etc., etc.

Torricelli and his friend maintain silence; the young girl herself knows nothing.

In this scene Galileo begins to weaken. Recantation, subterfuge, are repugnant to him; but he is accused of error, of heresy in faith, of spreading false doctrines. He feels that he has not now to explain his ideas, but to justify them according to a doctrine not his own, which seems to him impossible. The result of this position is that he has not yet any fixed plan of defence, and that his counsel finds himself in the greatest embarrassment.

Galileo would like to assert himself loftily: he cannot, he is forbidden to do so. The certainty of his mind shows him, moreover, that it is not in his character to interpret faith and reconcile it with science, and that his stubbornness degenerates into an attitude of pure revolt against the Church. Already he has said it only too clearly,—that his doctrine is not that of the Church; and the whole question is whether or no he will consent to retract.

What is to be done? Galileo decides to entrust his safety to the inspiration of the moment.

**Scene III.**—The tribunal at the Holy Office.

Galileo takes his place on the prisoners' bench.

Trial, verdict, and sentence.

There is no spectacle more interesting than that of a criminal suit; nothing is rendered with greater zest than pleadings, examinations of witnesses, closing arguments, etc.

The repetitions, the tedious passages, do not lessen the interest.

Why should not judicial proceedings, the most dramatic in society, be placed upon the stage?

Yet there are things in it that seem incompatible with rapid theatrical movement,—for instance, the endless repetition of testimony. That which is endured in real life is not tolerable in art. It is impossible to exactly reproduce upon the stage a scene from the criminal courts. Then what is to be done? This is the question that I ask myself. Has any one solved it? I do not know.

Reserving, then, the definitive solution, I confine myself to the presentation of some general indications regarding such a scene, with the given subject and characters.

The witnesses heard are present; their written testimony is on the clerk's desk; they will be questioned only in case an explanation shall become necessary.

No summing-up by counsel. The lawyers are present, but will not speak unless the progress of the scene and the dialogue requires it.

With the exceptions just indicated, everything will be between the accused, the ecclesiastical accuser or grand inquisitor, and the judge,

Thus, in my opinion, must the judicial drama be condensed for the theatre; of course, it is at the option of the author to give a greater or less extension, according to the subject, to the different parts of so great a scene, to the speech of such or such a character.

These principles laid down, this is how I conceive the progress of this grand scene.

The judge sums up the accusation in a few words, points out its gravity, and invites Galileo to explain, unless he prefers to retract purely and simply.

Galileo thanks the judge for his kindness, congratulates himself that he can at last justify himself, relies upon the lights of his judges, and then, gradually becoming animated, explains how he has come to conceive of the union of these two great powers,—the philosophy of nature and faith.

An elevated, sublime speech, for which one may read certain very specious passages in Vacherot's "Metaphysics and Science." In this speech the fact of the motion of the earth comes up as an example; he shows that, in interpreting the passages of the Bible according to the Copernican theory, religion acquires an extraordinary degree of authority by the testimony of science, which, in his opinion, deprives scepticism of its last resources.

The reply of the ecclesiastical attorney is no less elevated. Galileo is not prosecuted because he cultivates philosophy and the sciences. He is not reproached for cultivating mathematics and astronomy and teaching them to his pupils.

The Church is not an enemy of science. Before Galileo, Pope Sylvester of holy memory, the Cardinal de Cusa, have cultivated science, without prejudice to the Christian faith. The latter even taught things similar to those which Copernicus and Galileo offer as new.

The accusation is that Galileo tends to introduce into the Church a foreign authority, into faith a new element, which would subvert it. This authority, this element, is philosophy.

The innovators of the sixteenth century, by the cry of reform and in the name of morality, brought dissension into the Church of God.

Something similar is going on today, in the name of science and by virtue of the pure reason of man.

There is a tendency—and Galileo is an example—through natural philosophy to an integral renovation of the essence and forms of religion.

Here the orator shows the consequences of such an innovation.

Today it is the interpretation of Scripture.

Tomorrow it will be the interpretation of dogma.

Next a discussion of the authority of the Church.

Evidently a movement in the direction of full Protestantism.

The testimony of Torricelli, who has so clearly distinguished between these two orders of ideas, is dwelt upon against Galileo. The ecclesiastical counsel compliments Torricelli.

Galileo is a second Luther, more dangerous than the Luther of Wittenberg.

Galileo, stung, attempts a retort.

He says that it is extremely dangerous for religion to thus hold itself aloof from science.

That man is so constituted that truths demonstrated by the senses, by calculation or geometry, outweigh all others in his mind; that such truths cannot be called in question; that they are as certain as the truths of faith; that with these they form a complete whole, and that by as much as it is evident that the earth moves, by so much it is evident that the religious doctrine is to be transfigured by science.

To deny it is to deny, he says, the movement of the earth, and I affirm the movement of the earth.

The necessary conclusion of the discussion is that Galileo has placed himself in this dilemma.

Either the Christian doctrine, as taught hitherto, is insufficient, erroneous in its propositions and in its terms, and then the authority of the Church is illegitimate, fallible, outranked by philosophy;

Or else this doctrine is true, there is no relation between it and revelation, and every philosophy that aspires to supplant it is pure heresy and the suggestion of the devil. There is not, there cannot be any connection between faith and science; they are not resolvable into each other; even though reason should fail to sustain it, tradition, the Church, discipline, the whole Christian system, are there to demonstrate it.

Confronted with this dilemma, Galileo has no resource save disavowal,—retraction or punishment.

To properly conceive and render this scene it is necessary to note:

That at bottom Galileo is right both against the Church and against Torricelli;

That philosophy embraces everything and aspires to explain everything, even the things of religion;

That science is nothing if it does not rise to the knowledge of right, duties, society, and destiny;

That, if religion and the Church are not confirmed by its testimony; they must be rejected.

So that the crown of philosophy is virtue and the ideal.

Galileo, if he is logical and has the courage of his logic, must go as far as this.

But Galileo cannot be logical,—he does not know enough for that; he is not an unbeliever, and is prevented from being one by his mysticism; so he remains religious. He does not dream of denying the authority of the Church; consequently, he falls into inconsistency.

It is necessary to bring into relief the Church's error and Galileo's inconsistency, and to show the latter aggravated by presumption (for Galileo knows nothing of social matters) and by insubordination (for he disturbs society without knowing its doctrines).

Galileo is sentenced to retract his errors or else suffer torture and life imprisonment.

It is dishonor or death.

He is given three days to decide.

## ACT IV.

In Galileo's cell.

**Scene I.**—He is alone.

At first he has refused to retract.

Then, being put upon the wooden horse, he has retracted.

He has dishonored himself. Monologue.

**Scene II.**—Arrival of Torricelli, who comes to console him.

They converse in low tones. Torricelli again urges his master to sign the declarations that are asked of him, to forget his philosophy, to devote himself to science which alone will immortalize him, and to make no account of the theology of Rome and of the Church. Here the disciple's contempt for theology bursts forth vehemently; his hatred of the priests is shown without concealment. He points out how accurately the grand inquisitor foresaw the future when he said that science would kill religion.

Galileo's soul is full of melancholy; he has made his sacrifice; he will repress his sentiments, if necessary. But he, too, foresees the downfall of faith, the separation of philosophy and religion, and a formidable revolution.

**Scene III.**—Arrival of Galileo's daughter, and then of her suitor.

They inform Galileo that, by reason of his tardy recantation, his sentence is commuted to one year's imprisonment.

The drama ends with the young girl's self-sacrifice in renouncing marriage and consecrating herself to her father in his sad old age.

The lover does not withdraw his suit, but asks that he may still hope.

In this last scene Galileo reveals himself completely. His reformatory zeal does not go as far as martyrdom, and this fact he bewails. He would have preferred to die by torture rather than withdraw from it a diminished man. But his delicate nature refuses. While keeping his convictions, he feels that his mission is not that of an apostle.

He thanks his friends for what they have done to save him, but he regrets it. It would have been better, he says, to let things take their course; they have gained nothing by the attempt to dissemble, since he has said all. He lets them see that he has clearly divined the secret of the death of the two spies, and he extends his hand to his future son-in-law.

Finally, he is informed that he is to be transferred to another prison, and that the palace of XXX will be given him for a retreat.

"Let us devote ourselves to pure science," say they all.

This last act is weak, and I know not how to make it more interesting.

But it is plain that such a drama is a possibility.

It is plain also that there is ample opportunity for action, for interest, and even for character delineation. Galileo, Torricelli, the grand inquisitor, Galileo's daughter; and her suitor, would be, as I conceive them, types new to the stage.

The danger lies in the temptation to philosophico-theological dissertation. To avoid this, the play as such must be studied carefully, the character and thesis of each personage must be grasped with force, and the idea must be brought into relief by broad strokes and profound expressions.

The young girl's love must be characteristic of the *savante*, of the artist, and of the neophyte; thereby it departs from the commonplace.

The characters move in theocratic surroundings, already traversed by gleams of atheism.

Style, manners, everything remains to be created.  
Might one not, before dramatizing this subject, try it as a novel?

## [afterward by Lepelletier]

The outline sketch of “Galileo” [from this point it is Lepelletier that speaks] must fill us with regret that Proudhon did not have the time to realize his dramatic idea.

It is to be observed in the reflections scattered through it, in his own criticism upon it, wherein he anticipates objections and the possible refusal of a manager to undertake the piece, how deeply he is concerned as to the practicability of its production. He endeavored to give his work the customary foundations, proportions, arrangement, and distribution. He sought nothing strange, abnormal, or extraordinary. He accepted the ordinary rules, and submitted to them with good grace. This universal demolisher respected the barriers and the scaffolding of the stage. He intended to reveal himself as a regular, acceptable, playable dramatic author. He has insisted on the ordering of the scenes, and was not at all disposed to neglect the carpenter-work. Like a number of revolutionists, Proudhon, in theatrical art, preferred the classical opinion. Almost every line of this plan of “Galileo” shows care as to the action, the movement, the warmth which must animate every conception thrown into the dramatic mould. The difficulties of the subject have not escaped him. He has foreseen the suspicions and the incredulous smiles. How could he, Proudhon, constitute himself a dramatic author and presume to enter the lists with Ponsard? Incredible audacity, a rash project for which the author deserved punishment. Our age dotes on classifications and specialties. We pen minds up. Brains are forbidden to wander. Intelligence is destined to fixture. A writer who moves is distrusted, and credit is denied to the pen of a nomad. Arranged talents are the true talents. When a philosopher goes prowling behind the scenes, things are getting serious. Proudhon as economist, linguist, polemic,—that is enough. Let him not stray into this theatrical labyrinth where no guiding thread will be offered him. He would quickly lose his way, and he would cause others to lose theirs. A man should not desire to meddle with so many things. This pretension to universality is insolence on the part of those who have but one string to their bow or their lyre. Furthermore, it is insurrection. There is a Tchín, a caste in the empire of intellect. It is not allowable to rise above one’s condition or to tread paths that are beneath it. It is even forbidden to step to the right or the left. Where fate has placed you, there you must remain. Genius may browse only within the length of its tether.

Foreseeing that the question whether he possessed the theatrical faculty would be a subject of dispute, he wished to answer in advance the criticisms expected, as well as the doubts arising from his personality, from his past, and from the popular estimate of him. To dissipate the prejudices—flattering, it is true—which his philosophical mind, his usual loftiness of vision, his concentrated thought, his critical spirit, his battlesome erudition, and his controversial temperament aroused as to his knowledge of theatrical requirements, he has seriously elaborated and fashioned his project, like good and studious dramatic pupil; at the same time he has pointed out the weaknesses and obstacles involved in the chosen subject, and recognized the difficulty of imparting warmth and movement to a drama not turning solely upon love and offering no other catastrophe than the unjust judicial prosecution of an old man.

Was the “Galileo” of Proudhon, as shown in this skeleton, viable? If the play had been completed, would it have been playable?

It is very difficult to pass judgment in such a matter. Hypothesis has no credit in literary inquiries. In art, execution cannot be presumed.

It is unquestionable that dissertations, arguments, and controversies are precisely the opposite of dramatic art. Yet the subject adopted by Proudhon was not so ill-adapted to scenic development as one might think, and as he himself declared, it to be. Galileo Galilei is one of the loftiest of human-figures; and, as such, eminently fit to be the hero of a historical drama. Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, Mohammed, Luther, Jeanne d’Arc, Napoleon, Guttenberg, William Tell, Bernard Palissy, Richelieu, Mirabeau may inspire the poet, the novelist, the dramatist. These enormous personages carry with them the atmosphere of an entire century. They condense entire periods of human history. Their genius, their glory, their influence upon events and upon men furnish the author with half his drama; their existence, by turns adventurous, tragic, and sublime, gives the rest. What more powerful personality could come from the brain of a writer than the philosopher, the *savant*, the thinker of Pisa? Galileo dominates the beginning of the seventeenth century and radiates over all the centuries that have followed it. He was born on the day when Michael Angelo died. There are successions in the dynasty of geniuses. A star rose above the horizon of intellect at the setting of the sun which had illuminated the arts. The world escaped night. Science substituted its light for the splendors of painting and sculpture. The young student, observing in the cathedral at Pisa the oscillations of an astral lamp, discovered then the isochronism of the pendulum, precluding thus the most marvellous discoveries in mechanics, physics, astronomy, and mathematics. A professor at the age of twenty-four, teaching by turns at Pisa, Padua, Venice, Florence, and Rome, the young geometer combats Aristotle, publishes a treatise on fortifications, invents the thermometer, and then turns the acuteness of his genius toward the celestial gulfs. To fathom the starry depths declared solid by Aristotle, Ptolemy, and the Bible, he devises a surprising instrument,—the telescope. It is the key to space. To Galileo the heavens are opened. He surveys them. The astronomer, ruining the power and industry of the astrologists, traverses the spheres as a proprietor traverses his domain, and, when he descends to earth again, he relates what he has seen. Unfortunately, to see otherwise than with the eyes of faith made the observer an object of suspicion. The earth motionless in the centre of the universe, the sun and stars constructed, arranged, and illuminated for the benefit of man and manoeuvring around our little globe to light it and serve as its satellites,—such was orthodox science. Aristotle, Ptolemy, Job, Joshua, and the Inquisition agreed in the view that the earth is stationary. With the authors, with the Scriptures, with the formidable casuists of the Holy Office, the popular voice, that Monsieur Everybody, persuaded that he has more wit than all the Voltaires past, present, and future, expressed sovereign contempt for Galileo, who dared to maintain that our sphere went bouncing about in senseless rotation, a squirrel turning in a planetary cage.



## **[aside by Tucker]**

Lepelletier further depicts Galileo's character and discoveries, and sustains Proudhon's view that he was prosecuted as a philosopher rather than as an astronomer. He points out also that Proudhon has followed the truth of history in not exaggerating the degree of Galileo's torture.

## [Lepelletier, continued]

He has not sought to produce an impression by exhibiting instruments of torture or by over-drawing ecclesiastical cruelties. Galileo's torture was principally moral. What pain this great savant must have felt when he found himself constrained to give the lie to science, abjure the truth, and retract the scientific formula which he had discovered, of which he was so proud, and which imposed itself upon his conscience. There is the drama; the rest would be ordinary melodrama, and Proudhon has avoided it. This critic without respect for any prejudice had no desire to flatter anti-religious passions by transforming Galileo into a purely physical martyr. It is the spiritual suffering endured by the great man in having to apologize to ignorant and prejudiced monks that constitutes the pathos of his piece, and the dramatic strength is found, not in the torturer's wooden horse but in the duel between Dogma and Doubt, between Faith and Inquiry. Galileo, thus presented, appears as another Luther, and this revealer of the secrets of the universe becomes the destroyer of supernatural revelations. In his masterly sketch Proudhon comprehends him, and depicts him as he stands in history, erect in the light of the dazzling dawn of modern philosophy.

This drama of thought and mental action perhaps would have contributed to the renewal of our dramatic art. The contemporary theatre must progress or perish. Circus, pantomime, and scenic display will be the only possible spectacle, if our dramatic authors continue to practise their ancient contortions on the old boards. Wings! New flights! That is what is needed now. Long enough we have dragged and crawled; it is time to free ourselves from the slime into which every dramatic conception sinks.

We are passing through a period of dramatic exhaustion. The *bourgeoise* comedy, the sensational drama, the inept vaudeville, and the musical medley are evidence of a decline analogous to that of the mythological or heroic tragedy, of the comedy of imbroglions, and of the travesty that was common at the end of the eighteenth century. Adulteries, the paltry heroes of the Iliads of vulgar alcoves, the commonplace passions of young simpletons for intolerable coxcombs whom in the last act the paternal hand is sure to lead before the mayor and the priest, have really become repulsive themes. These comedians, these traitors, these lovers, these modern intended husbands, are as worn-out as the tragedy kings flanked by their confidants. We are tired of the eternal story of people who desire to couple and succeed in doing so after encountering difficulties more or less unforeseen. The adventures of disunited couples, the chasing after another's wife, the conjugal disasters developed in black or in yellow according to the author's intention to provoke tears or laughter, all these old fairy tales have nearly lost their power to drive away the spleen; it takes other inventions than these to relieve human ennui. The grown-up children that we are want other stories at night in order to forget life and enable the eternal hour-glass to suffer time to pass insensibly away.

Love, the sauce with which the theatrical cooks serve all their dishes, is getting tiresome. We are clamoring for a change in the bill of fare. Does love really occupy in the minds of most men a place as important as the play-makers attribute to it? It shows a misunderstanding of the

time to give such a preponderance to this passion, universal undoubtedly, felt at some time or other by every living being, worthy of all the attention of philosophers, but in social life as well as in the purely physical realm beyond the competence of novelists, vaudevillists, and comedy writers, and requiring the examination and study of thinkers, legists, and sociologists. The phases of amorous life are neither the most numerous or the most decisive in the order of a destiny. The necessities of the condition in which fortune has placed you; labor; study; diseases; accidents; avaricious, ambitious, and æsthetic desires; gaming; sports; moral duties; age; lassitude; anxiety for the morrow,—all of these are factors diminishing the coefficient of amorous force at man's disposal. In obedience to what conventional tradition, what mental habit, do all theatrical writers make it their first thought to give love the leading rôles? No play that has not its lovers; sometimes three pairs of them. If we may believe our authors, there is scarcely any motive capable of exciting the spectator except love, the monotonous godfather of all the tragic or burlesque farces which the footlights illuminate.

Proudhon himself, in his sketch, has bowed to this rule, more reputed than, and as useless and superannuated as, that of the three unities. But with great insight into that art of the future which he foresaw he reduced his lover to a mere utility man, and of Galileo's daughter he tried to make a sweetheart removed from the commonplace. This affectionate maiden is provided with a heart and brain that counterbalance the weight of the senses. She loves her father and admires him; she even goes beyond the ordinary sentiments of education and affection; she rises to a height where she understands her father. She is more the disciple of Galileo than the *fiancée* of an amiable knight. Proudhon's play does not end with the ordinary joining of hands. As she believes renounce worldly joys to dwell with their God in the solitude of the cloister, so Galileo's daughter sacrifices her youth and her charms to the austere company of the proscribed old man. She will be the Antigone of his exile and will become the chaste priestess of that science of which her father is the pontiff and the martyr. But, it being necessary to make some concession to spectators surprised at seeing a curtain fall on two loves not united, the hope endures that some day, when the aged *savant* has descended into his grave; his daughter will be able to reward the fidelity of the enamored young knight, who does not withdraw his pledge. If there were no other evidence of Proudhon's ingenuity and originality as a dramatic author, the figure of this young girl would alone establish it. He broke with the consecrated types of those stage loves who have become as insipid, conventional, and stale as the Leanders and the Isabellas of the *répertoire*.

The Scandinavian drama, the power and originality of which should not be exaggerated, has just accustomed literary spectators to an abstract theatre. The characters stand for general concepts, such as the fatalism of heredity, the impossible union of dissimilar souls, the antagonism of wives and husbands, of children and parents, of masters and servants, the insurgence of feminine independence, the hypocrisy of the virtuous people, the pillars of society. The actors of Ibsen, Björnson, and Strindberg appear like philosophical systems provided with gestures, like physiological laws clothed with the power of speech. At present this school is very much in fashion. It certainly exercises an influence upon our theatre, which has always been rejuvenated by the transfusion of younger, tarter, and somewhat barbarous blood. This health-restoring serum has been supplied successively by Spain, Italy, and England. Now it comes from Scandinavia. The origin is a matter of indifference; the essential thing is the avoidance of an overdose. Proudhon, in his "Galileo," anticipated this revelation of the theatre of ideas. It was his desire to show upon the boards, costumed after the fashion of their time and condition, characters which were

only acting formulas and talking syntheses. His "Galileo" was the renovation, if not of the entire drama, at least of the historical drama.

Men of genius, as well as secondary authors, who have borrowed their heroes from history, have been accustomed to treat only the anecdotic and concrete side of their subject. They have sustained the interest only by following the loves, misfortunes, misdeeds, or disputes of the characters. Victor Hugo has not escaped this tendency, and Francois Coppée submits to it. One of the best known authors among modern dramatists has endeavored, as Proudhon proposed, to dramatize the struggles of the mind and the agitations of thought. Consequently their finest and most popular plays have the fault of resembling those histories in which all the importance is placed upon battles, sieges, treaties, and births and marriages of princes, while the superior motives of humanity, the theatrical strokes of thought, the catastrophes of conscience, and the denouements of effects that follow causes, which are the real drama of history, are left in the shadow, in the background.

This sketch of "Galileo," transformed into a finished play, placed upon the stage, and enacted, would certainly have given us, in its picturesque frame of the beginning of the seventeenth century in Italy, an original and powerful work. The critical genius of P. J. Proudhon, his polemical nature, and his theological erudition would have found in the trial of Galileo, that is, of knowledge, of experiment, of observation, of doubt, of scientific evidence, by the Church in the name of dogma, tradition, and consecrated error, developments, demonstrations, and refutations of vast reach and attractive depth. Conversing with Galileo, like Goethe with his doctor, he would have examined the system of the worlds, scrutinized the infinite depths of universal harmony, analyzed the problems of life, and traced ideas and sentiments to their origins, while Torricelli, as a sort of Mephistopheles, would have furnished the mocking retort to the assertive stupidity and simple ignorance of the doctors of the Holy Office. Consequently it is much to be deplored that the work was left unfinished. Though Proudhon, as dramatic author, had failed in his unexpected attempt; though he had scarcely surpassed the heavy Ponsard; though he, the brainy colossus, had given birth to a product as paltry and ridiculous as the "Galileo" that we saw on the stage of our foremost theatre in 1809; though his drama had been rejected by the manages as not playable,—yet, in spite of all, we should have had a strong and beautiful book: France would have had a second "Faust."

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Pierre-Joseph Proudhon  
Galileo  
A Drama  
March 23, 1895

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