Charles Fourier: Prophet of Eupsychia

DANIEL BELL

The mark of the new cultural avant-garde, we are told, is the attack on repression. In the work of Herbert Marcuse, Norman O. Brown and R. D. Laing, a new trinity for a new left, the target is now, fully, modern civilization which is seen as restrictive and repressive. The enemy for all three is bourgeois society, which has distorted original human nature by its demands for delayed gratification, its insistence on heterosexual monogamy, and its specialized division of sexual labor in which all pleasure is restricted to the genital organs. The revolution that must come, they proclaim, must be not only political but sexual as well. For Marcuse, it will liberate Eros, ontologically defined; for Brown, it will reinstate polymorphous-perverse pleasures; for the British psychoanalyst Laing, following the French moralist Michel Foucault, it will erase the distinction between sanity and madness.

We have here, thus, a new recipe for Eupsychia*—the psychological utopia of individual release far beyond the utopia of material plenty and freedom that nineteenth-century prophets (including Marx, himself a sexual prude, at least in public, although he sired an illegitimate son) had foretold for the future.

Despite its contemporaneity, the postmodern mood (for this is

* The term “eupsychia” is that of the neo-Freudian psychoanalyst A. H. Maslow, which has been used by Frank E. Manuel to designate a kind of utopian thinking oriented to the release of psychic impulses rather than to the restructuring of social arrangements. See Frank E. Manuel, “Toward a Psychological History of Utopias,” in Manuel, ed., Utopias and Utopian Thought (Boston, 1966) and A. H. Maslow, “Eupsychia—The Good Society,” Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 1 (1961), pp. 1-11.

○ DANIEL BELL, professor of sociology at Columbia University, adapted this essay from his monograph on Charles Fourier and Albert Brisbane, which will introduce the John Harvard Library’s reissue of Albert Brisbane’s Social Destiny of Man. In this version, most of the footnotes and references have been omitted for reasons of space.
the vision) inevitably has its forebears, none more curious, perhaps, than the utopian socialist Charles Fourier. If Henri de Saint-Simon, the compatriot with whom he is mistakenly linked, was the prophet of technocracy, then in the new cultural Zeitgeist Fourier may be considered the guru of the New Left. In the strong cultural reaction to technocratic modes of thought, with their emphasis on rationality and economizing techniques, there is today the resurgence of emphasis on feeling, sentiment, emotion, and the "natural man" who will live by sensation and impulse, unencumbered by restraint and denial. In this pantheon, the Marquis de Sade is the anti-Christ of the sexual revolution; by the same token, Charles Fourier may be considered its anti-Paul.

The Natural Man

François Marie Charles Fourier (the family name was originally Fourrier, but he preferred to spell it with one r, as he preferred to call himself Charles) was born in 1772 and died in 1837. He was one year younger than Robert Owen (1771-1858), and twelve years the junior of the Comte de Saint-Simon (1760-1825). Although both Owen and Saint-Simon clearly were men of the nineteenth century in their concerns with education and with industry, Fourier, just as clearly, was a throwback to the eighteenth century, and particularly to Rousseau. The ties between the two are extraordinarily strong, although Fourier makes little mention in his writing of Rousseau. For Fourier only Newton and Columbus (in the symbolic sense) were acknowledged as forebears.

"Civilization," writes Fourier, "is . . . a society contrary to nature, a reign of violence and cunning; and political science and morality, which have taken three thousand years to create this monstrosity, are sciences that are contrary to nature and worthy of profound contempt." Fourier, as J. L. Talmon observes, is conscious of reliving the experience of Rousseau, for he quotes approvingly the inflammatory sayings of the eighteenth-century prophet in the Discourse on Inequality:

Tout était bien, sortant des mains de l'auteur des choses; tout dégénéra entre les mains de l'homme. . . . Ce ne sont pas là les hommes, il y a quelque bouleversement dont nous ne savons pas pénétrer la cause.
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All has gone hopelessly wrong in the era of civilization, or rather civilization as such has been one tissue of evils. As Frank Manuel has written:

The works of Fourier leveled the most circumstantial attack on the uses of civilization since Rousseau. What he lacked in style he made up in a profusion of detail. The cheats of ordinary commercial arrangements, the boredom of family life, the deceipts of marriage, the hardships of the one-family farm, and the miseries of pauperism in the great cities, the evils of naked competition, the neglect of genius, the sufferings of children and old people, the wastefulness of economic crises and wars, added up to a total rejection of civilization as a human epoch.

As in Rousseau, and the romantic denouncers of civilization, the fraternal life for Fourier can take place only in small communities whose members would know each other personally. The village and the small town of the Middle Ages are compared favorably with the modern big city, in which the individual lives presumably in anonymous isolation. "No more capital cities, no more big cities," cries Buonarroti, Babeuf's comrade-in-arms and the historian of the "Conspiracy for Equality," the first pronunciamento of political communism in modern times. Large cities, echoes Fourier, are a symptom of public ill-health.

Yet it is not communal living alone that is the answer. After all, in the small town and village public opinion exercises full control over human behavior, and public opinion, operating through such regulatory techniques as shaming and gossip, can enforce as cruel a conformity as any regulated army. The true salvation of man, the only basis of happiness, is the complete release of the passions. Repression is responsible for the evils of civilization; the abolition of repression is the condition of the free expression of the personality.

The original error of mankind was not to taste of the fruit of sexual knowledge, but, contrary to the intentions of the Creator, to proclaim that the release of those passions was evil and sinful. Out of that repression, a double standard of morality was created in which men would secretly and shamefully search out their lust and yet publicly and piously denounce those impulses and its expressions. Marriage in contemporary society, Fourier wrote in the
Théorie de l'unité universelle, is "pure brutality, a casual pairing off provoked by the domestic bond without any illusion of mind or heart."

Family life, the key social institution of the civilized state, was Fourier's most compelling example of an unnatural institution, holding men in its iron grip, bringing misery to all its members. All utopias promise freedom, but most of them are utilitarian, concerned with household arrangements, the organization of labor, and the sharing of goods; even where there is a full equality for women, monogamy is the usual, permissible social practice. Only the Marquis de Sade and Fourier, as Manuel observes in a study of French utopias, "would open wide the floodgates of promiscuous sexual encounters to those who desired them."

The claim may be exaggerated. In the utopia of the Marquis de Sade, which is described in Aline et Valcour, while the boys and girls of Tamoe, the mythical isle of the South Seas, are permitted to sleep with each other and to decide, after a week's trial, whether to become married or not, once married they are permitted only two divorces. In the phalanstères of Fourier, his musée imaginaire, free choice and free play of passion are emphasized, but he envisages a tie of "compound permanence" based on the constancies of complementary passional attractions. Yet it is true that the chief aim of both men is the enhancement of pleasure. Sumptuousness, voluptuousness, pleasures gastronomic and sensual—these were the fantasy visions that bubbled in Fourier's mind. The natural man of Rousseau had desired only "food, a female and rest." (What the "natural woman" wanted was unclear.) For Fourier, these three desires remained basic but their fulfillment would not take place just en plein air but in the heated rooms of the seraglio as well. To paraphrase the old remark of Terence, for Charles Fourier nothing passionate was alien to him—at least, in his dreams.

The Farrago of the Heavens

"Sent by Providence to deliver humanity from the bondage of incoherence." This was the self-intoxicated vision that Fourier himself had of his destiny on earth. Moi seul and moi le premier
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were recurrent motifs in his writing from the start. "Moi seul j'aurai confondu vingt siècles d'imbécillité politique. . . ."

I alone shall have confounded twenty centuries of political imbecility, and it is to me alone that present and future generations will owe the initiative of their boundless happiness. Before me, mankind lost several thousand years by fighting madly against Nature; I am the first who has bowed before her, by studying attraction, the organ of her decrees; she has deigned to smile upon the only mortal who has offered incense at her shrine; she has delivered up all her treasures to me. Possessor of the book of Fate, I come to dissipate political and moral darkness, and, upon the ruins of the uncertain sciences, I erect the theory of universal harmony: Exegi monumentum aere perennius.

To one who asked why this wisdom had not been vouchsafed before, why four hundred thousand volumes during twenty centuries of history had failed to disclose the secret of Providence, Fourier gave three reasons: false philosophers had previously obscured the significant meaning of God; the world (here he invoked the names of Columbus and Newton) had to await a new Messiah-Philosopher who would disclose the design of nature; and world history is divided into long periods of development and gestation, periods and phases, none of which could be bypassed. It was only now, in the conjuncture of History and the Man, that the time was ripe.

In the spirit of the Myth of Er, Fourier asserts that the history of the world encompasses eighty thousand years, forty thousand of them in ascending vibrations and forty thousand in descending vibrations. In all there are thirty-two periods, sixteen in the upward ladder and sixteen in the downward. In his time, the world was in the fifth of the first eight stages, having passed through what Fourier called the Sectes Confuses, Sauvagerie, Patriarcat and Barbarie. Ahead lies Garantisme, the realization of human rights, Sociantisme, or Association and beyond that Harmonie; and since human history so far has gone through only five thousand years, Harmonie would reign for another thirty-five thousand. "Thereafter," remarks Alexander Gray, "for eight thousand years we shall have that lofty table-land of perfect bliss, after which the world will go downhill again through precisely the same stages in the
inverse order; and at the end, if any of us are left, we shall be transported to another planet.”

Apart from the occult Pythagoreanism, the effort to escape from the “bondage of incoherence” often founders on Fourier’s eccentric style, which is so difficult that at times it is impossible even to grasp the simplest meanings of his words. Frank Manuel writes:

The works in which Fourier phrased and rephrased the system he had invented are full of neologisms, repetitions ad nauseam, and plain nonsense. There is an eccentric pagination, numerous digressions, and interpolations break the argument. . . . The neologisms are particularly irritating because they require interpretation, a guess at his meaning and are virtually untranslatable. Silberling’s Dictionnaire de sociologie phalanstérienne is useful only to those who have already been initiated into the secret world. Fourier was conscious of the fact that he was pouring forth a torrent of newfangled words, and in his manuscripts he occasionally indulged in light self-mockery on this account. “Hola, another neologism! Haro on the guilty one! but is this any worse than doctrinaire?”

If, for Fourier, words were imperfect, music represented the “harmony of the spheres.” As Albert Brisbane observed in the introduction to his 1876 translation of Fourier’s Theory of Social Organization, “Fourier loved music,” and the musical mode was the framework on which he draped his theory of social organization.

Music is the distribution, classification, coordination and combination of sounds in a measured order. . . . Music is the only art that has been developed to a state of exactness. . . . Forms, colors, perfumes, flavors, etc. await the discovery by science of the theory of their harmonious combination. Vibration and sounds are the sole elements in Nature the means of harmonizing which man has discovered, and therefore it is that this art serves as a model of the harmonious organization of elements in other branches of creation. As such, Fourier prized it highly, and made use of it as an analogical guide in the study of the art of organization in general.

The function of music, according to Fourier, is to guide us to the hermetic mysteries, to reveal the esoteric elements of love and the sexual mysteries. According to Pythagorean tradition, however, the Master alone has the gift of actually hearing the music
of the spheres, and so, from Fourier, we get only a glimpse, alas, through his cosmogony, of the future glories that await the human race. What are they?

The vision is a glorious farrago of the heavens. In this vision, when the human race will approach Harmonie, a Northern Crown (after the manner of Saturn's rings) will encircle the Pole, shedding an aromatic dew on the earth. Six moons of a new and superior quality will replace our present putrid satellite (which Fourier calls a cadavre blafard). The tides will change. The sea will cease to be salty and will be transformed into lemonade, a beverage for which Fourier seems to have a marked partiality.

The stars that rule our lives also have their passions, and from the copulation of the planets will spring not only other stars and planets but also plants and animals. A new race of animals, or anti-animals, will appear whose traits will be the opposite of their present ones. All harmful beasts will have disappeared and in their place will be animals that will assist man in his labors or even do his work for him. There will be anti-lions and anti-crocodiles, on whose backs we shall be able to travel huge distances in no time, and the anti-hen who in six months would lay enough eggs to pay off the English national debt. An anti-beaver will see to the fishing, an anti-whale will move sailing ships, an anti-hippopotamus will tow the riverboats. With no more than a few hours of daily work, men will be free to occupy themselves with play and with developing their intellectual, moral and artistic facilities to an extent hitherto unprecedented in history. But more, in this garden of delights men and women shall live for one hundred and forty-four years, and of these one hundred and twenty will be spent in the active exercise of love. This, then, is the vision of the natural man, in the fulfillment, for the first time, of his new and unnatural powers.

The Primacy of the Passions

What will put everything right, of course, is the release of the passions. The passions, says Fourier, are "the drives given us by nature prior to any reflection, persistent despite the opposition of reason, of duty, and of prejudice." At the core of Fourier's sys-
tem, therefore, is the elaboration of the passions of man which, like
the signs of the zodiac, the gods of Olympus, and the apostles, are
twelve in number. Why twelve? Why not eleven or thirteen? Oddly
enough, there was no explicit reason. According to Charles Gide,
Fourier's sympathetic interpreter, the number twelve was chosen
only because it made a better working number than eleven or thir-
ten. No matter. Since Fourier was deriving his scheme from a
reading of God's intentions, if he picked the number twelve, there
had to be a reason.

Inevitably, Fourier sees man's passions as eventually coming
together—his simile is the trunk of a tree—in a Unityisme. But
any tree has branches, and the passions are classed under three
kinds. The first kind, five in number, are the sensuous passions,
which Fourier calls "luxurious" because they give the pleasures
of sensation: sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch. As Fourier re-
marks, "It is scarcely credible that after 3000 years of studies, men
have not thought of classifying the senses. At present even our five
senses are cited pell-mell; no distinction of rank is admitted among
them." For Fourier, there is no equality among the senses. Taste
and touch are the two superior ones, because they are active, while
sight and hearing are passive, and smell is mixed. But as he says,
most characteristically, taste "is the first and last enjoyment of man,
it is almost the only resource of children and old men in matters
of pleasure."

Next are the "group" passions, four in number, also called the
affective passions because they derive from men's gregariousness.
These consist of the desire for friendship (sometimes rendered as
respect or honor), the drive of ambition, the need for love, and
the repose of family. Men have always known these needs, although
they have become cruelly distributed under civilization.

Finally come the three distributive or serial passions, the unique
discovery of Fourier, that will flower only in the next, higher stages
of society. These are men's passion for intrigue or discordance
(which is labeled cabalist), the need for variety and change (which
is called butterfly, or alternating), and the desire for concordance
(which Fourier calls composite).

The three serial passions are the bases of Association, for only
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with their release can the sensory and affective passions come into full play. The cabalist is the love of intrigue and competition. In Garantisme, or the first stage of Association, groups will be set against groups in all types of contests to generate satisfactions. Intrigue will infuse added zest into routine jobs; it will turn work into mystery and play.

The cabalista is a favorite passion of women; they are excessively fond of intrigue, the rivalries and all the greater and lesser flights of cabal. It is a proof of their eminent fitness for the new social order, where cabals without number will be needed in every series, periodical schisms in order to maintain a movement of coming and going among the sectaries of the different groups.

There is something of the butterfly in all persons. But only the grubby caterpillar locks itself within the walls of the cocoon; the butterfly, from the first moment of its emergence, flits from flower to flower, using only “attraction” as its guide. Men do not want to be tied down to long hours, or to the drudgery of a single job. In the phalanstère, therefore, men will work at a single task only up to the period of maximum interest (about two hours) and then change to a different sort of job in order to revive their spirits and broaden their talents. And if consistency in vocation is undesirable, it is equally galling in sexual matters as well. If men should not be tied down to the drudgery of a single job, why should they be bound to a single woman? Men become stale and bored when chained by the bonds of matrimony. Consequently, in the higher forms of Association men will find their pleasure in the fulfillment of their butterfly nature in all ways of living: to be hunters in the morning, fishermen in the afternoons, and lovers of different women at night.

And finally, the twelfth of the passions—men will find their true being in the composite, in the combination of pleasures that are physical and spiritual. Any single pleasure alone degenerates into boredom; only in the composite is there that spontaneous enthusiasm “which is born only of the mingling of the two kinds of pleasure.” The composite, says Fourier, “is the most beautiful of the twelve passions, the one which enhances the value of all the others. A love is not beautiful unless it is a composite love, com-
bining the charm of the senses and the soul. It becomes trifling or deception if it limits itself to one of these springs. An ambition is not vehement unless it brings into play the two springs, glory and interest. It is then that it becomes capable of brilliant efforts.”

These twelve passions, Fourier declares, are the design of God. They are psychological invariants since they are analogues of God’s attributes. God, the “eternal geometer” of the passions, has created these dimensions of the human psyche just as he has created the immutable shades of color, the “perfectly ordered” science of music, the constant orbit of the planets and the dimensions of the physical world. But they have been distorted by men, particularly in civilization, which has introduced artificial distinctions in the allocation of fulfillments: under civilization, wealth alone allows the man who desires good food or good music to “luxuriate” his senses, while the familial passion, organized around a domineering and authoritarian father, exercises primacy at the expense of the other affections. Man’s need to fulfill the totality of his passions is the expressed will of God, and since these are intrinsic to his nature, they must be afforded absolutely free expression.

But if anything goes, will not the willful and destructive urges that men have manifested for thirty centuries simply be given free reign, ending in a sanguinary saturnalia of sex and aggression? Was this not, after all, what the prophets of the Old Testament feared when they beheld the licentiousness of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Tyre and Sidon? For Fourier, however, it is passion that is good, and repression that is evil. From the debris of his manuscripts, his disciples found the following argument which was printed in Volume IX of La Phalange:

Every passion that is suffocated produces its counterpassion, which is as malignant as the natural passion would have been benign. . . . Nero loved collective cruelties or their general application. Odin had made of them a religious system and de Sade a moral system. This taste for atrocities is nothing but a counterpassion, the effect of a suffocation of the passions.

Fourier’s answer to the moralists is fairly clear. In the higher stages of society such impulses would either be drawn into appropriate channels or combined in a salutary way with complementary
drives. Nero, for example, would at an early age have been attracted to work in the slaughterhouses. In the “natural” scheme of things, vice is a distortion of the passions, virtue their harmonious realization.

The rational and the passionate—these are the axes around which social thinkers have organized their conceptions of human nature since the dawn of philosophy. But which is to prevail if men are to be just and free? For the classical theorists, the answer was plain. The rational “truly taught and trained,” as Plato puts it, must be “set over the desiring element, which of a truth makes up the greatest part of each man’s soul, and is by nature insatiably covetous.” Virtue is possible only when a man recognizes the proper limits of each part of the soul and accepts the principle “that the rational element must rule, and there is no rebellion against it.”

Even Rousseau, although accepting the goodness of man in the primitive life, found that “the passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces in man a very remarkable change, by substituting in his conduct justice for instinct and by giving his actions the moral quality they previously lacked.” If one recognizes that the “social contract” is not a description of the society of Rousseau’s time, but a utopia to which men will move by the metaphysical imperative of the general will, Rousseau’s words in defense of reason against passion become understandable.

The voice of duty succeeds physical impulse and a sense of what is right the incitements of appetite. Man ... learns to consult his reason before he listens to his inclinations ... his faculties so unfold themselves by being exercised, his ideas are so extended, his sentiments so exalted, and his whole mind so enlarged and refined, that ... he ought to bless without ceasing the happy moment that snatched him forever from [the state of nature] and transformed him from a stupid and ignorant animal to an intelligent being and a man.

But Fourier, more than any other radical, utopian thinker, builds his entire social system on the primacy of the passions. The Marquis de Sade had called for the absolute release of instinct in order to enthrone absolute freedom. But Sade had recognized acutely that, where all desires are permissible, in the ensuing con-
flict of wills the world would end divided between the dominators—the masters or supermen who were entitled to their rule because of their recklessness, strength and courage—and the dominated—the bondsmen and the slaves who, fearing to risk their lives in the duel of wills, accepted servitude. Fourier, however, with his theory of the complementary nature of contradictory passions, believed that social harmony would result if all repression were lifted. For Fourier, the harmony of the released passions would be proven in the operations of the phalanstères that he had designed with such meticulous detail.

In the radical primacy of the passions, one encounters a strange “modernity” in Fourier and sees some strange descendents. As the sensibility of our time becomes increasingly intent on sensation and the erotic, it is in the writings of Paul Goodman and Herbert Marcuse, and other precentors of Eros that one finds, oddly roosting, the silkworm eggs of Charles Fourier. And, in psychology, Fourier has other, academic heirs as well. For in Fourier one finds not just a generalized emphasis on the passions, but the further, first effort to set up a tableau psychologique, a table of emotions that would map the permutations and combinations of the human passions, just as the physiocrats had set up a tableau économique, an input-output table to chart the flow patterns of economic exchange. And, even though in his megalomaniac excess Fourier eventually bursts the bounds of rationality,* one can still recognize, despite the madness, the validity of his effort to set forth a basic compass of human needs and a fundamental grid of personality prototypes, so as to have an adequate theory of human motivation within the broader context of a generalized theory of social action.

* Here, for example, is a basic table of the “affective” and “distributive” passions:

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<th>Friendship</th>
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<td>Sol</td>
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<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Subtraction</td>
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<td>Si</td>
<td>Ambition</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Multiplication</td>
<td>Hyperbola</td>
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<td>Re</td>
<td>Cabalist</td>
<td>Indigo</td>
<td>Progression</td>
<td>Spiral</td>
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<td>Fa</td>
<td>Alternating</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Proportion</td>
<td>Quadratrix</td>
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<td>La</td>
<td>Composite</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Logarithms</td>
<td>Logarithmic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ut</td>
<td>UNITYISM</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Powers</td>
<td>Cycloid</td>
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(See “Of the Role of the Passions,” Selections from the Works of Fourier, p. 57.)
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And finally, in his glimpse into that far-beyond future where anti-lions and anti-sharks are born, does not his vision of a third hermaphroditic sex, male and female combined, which would prove “with a beating of rods that men as well as women are made for its pleasure,” foreshadow the contemporary prophets of polymorphous-perversion pleasures who proclaim a new resurrection of love’s body? Is this not the final point when gratification, no longer specialized and delayed, achieves its fullest fantasy?

Childhood’s End

For a man imbued, drenched with the idea of passion, Charles Fourier led the most extraordinarily narrow and crabbed life. A bachelor, odd and already set in old-maidish habits in his youth, he had no grand love affairs, or even any amorous relations at all with a woman. Compulsive in detail and obsessive in his habits, “his walking stick was regularly marked off in feet and inches, and everything remarkable which met his eye was instantly reduced to measurement and calculation.” He was precise and exact in the arrangement of his life. “Today, Candlemas, I have written twenty thirty-sixths of my book,” he recorded in a journal. He was completely self-absorbed. “In the three years of my association with Fourier,” Albert Brisbane recalled, “I never saw him smile. . . . Any familiar conversation with him was out of the question. I saw him among his disciples; I saw him at dinner parties; I saw him at the society’s celebration, but never did I see that concentrated expression of the face change. I recall vividly the impression this great reserve made upon me the first time I met him. . . .” A denizen of boarding houses, Fourier kept cats and parrots and tended flowers, breaking his fixed routines only to follow regiments of soldiers through the streets, keeping time to the sound of military music, spending long hours watching the soldiers drill “not from any warlike taste . . . but from a love of uniforms, plumes [and] evolutions conducted scientifically.” Like children or old people, writes J. L. Talmon, “he took delight in assembling, arranging, and rearranging bits and pieces of all kinds of formations, full of symmetry and ingenious balance.”

If a biography is a record of the meaningful events in a man’s
life, one could cover the task in saying that Charles Fourier was born in Besançon on April 7, 1772, and died in Paris on October 7, 1837. A character fit for the theater of the absurd, Fourier lived his life entirely in the mind.

Where there are no dramatic episodes or actions, hagiography must content itself with anecdote. And the disciples of Fourier recorded these in fair number. Charles Fourier was the only son of a woolen draper, the youngest of four children. When he was five years old ("we have heard him state," remarks a disciple Hugh Doherty), he conceived an implacable hatred against falsehood when his father punished him for telling the truth to a customer about the actual cost of a piece of goods. At an early age, too, he developed the tendency, as Brisbane puts it, to "mental analysis." Fourier, it appears, accompanied his mother regularly to the confessional,

and becoming thus initiated into the character of this rite, he began, then, at the age of seven or eight, to ponder over the subject very seriously. The result was that he drew up a list of all the sins known to the Church, so far as he could collect them, and thus provided repaired alone to the Confessional, where he began a recitation of the whole list. The priest listened attentively for a few minutes, and then, with a jocose reprimand, asked him what he was thinking of. Fourier answered that he wished to make a confession in which no sin should be overlooked. His idea being, that if he took in the whole category, he would secure an integral absolution. This list of sins is now a relic of curiosity. It is written in a clear, firm hand, and the regularity and completeness of the analysis are very remarkable. In it we see a foreshadow of the future analytic tables, distributed through the works of the great thinker.

Fourier, like his father, was doomed to be a merchant, and, like him, not a very successful one. In 1793, at the age of twenty-one, he received about a hundred thousand francs, a sizable sum in those days, as his share of the property left by his father. With this sum, he went into business in Lyons as a merchant and importer. But the raw materials and spices he had purchased at Marseilles were not long in his possession when the city of Lyons rose in arms against the French revolutionary government. Fourier's bales of
cotton were taken, along with those of other merchants, to erect barricades, while his rice, sugar and coffee were seized and distributed among the sick and the soldiers. In less than a year, he lost everything he possessed in the world. He almost lost his life as well. Pressed into armed service during the siege of Lyons, he narrowly escaped death during one militia charge against the government cavalry. When the Jacobin revolutionary agents entered the city, Fourier was imprisoned and escaped death a second time by telling the lie ("three different times in one day") that he was not a merchant but had been forced into the city militia against his will. ("Notwithstanding his horror of falsehood and lying, he had never felt the slightest remorse for having made that exception to the heavenly laws of truth," writes the admiring Doherty.)

Following two years of service in an Army cavalry unit on the Rhine and the Moselle, Fourier was discharged in 1795 because of ill health, and became a clerk in a commercial house. One further incident related by his biographers completes the tale of Fourier's recoil from society. In 1799, while employed in a wholesale warehouse, he discovered that his firm had secretly been storing large quantities of rice in the hope of reaping a large profit during a near famine at the time. When the stocks began to rot, Fourier was ordered to go with a number of stevedores and secretly throw the spoiled rice into the sea. The hagiographic embellishment was quickly added to the story:

He thenceforth resolved upon studying incessantly until he had discovered . . . the means of permanently and effectually preventing . . . [such crimes against humanity]. This holy resolution . . . was crowned with success before the end of the year. In 1799 [the same year], Fourier discovered the universal laws of attraction and the essential destiny of humanity upon earth.

From that first éclaircissement to his death thirty-eight years later, Fourier devoted himself to the exposition, elaboration, iteration, and greater elaboration of the Newtonian "psychophysics" which was the root of his system. To be confined constantly in a warehouse or countinghouse now seemed intolerable, and Fourier became what in France is called a courtier marron—an unlicensed commercial agent—while pursuing his studies and
working out the increasingly complicated numerology (mathematics would be too rational a word) of his computations.

In 1808, Fourier published his first work, the *Théorie des Quatre Mouvements*, a book of about four hundred pages, which set forth the theory of universal attraction and repulsion. But as Doherty wrote:

The first volume was merely a prospectus of the work, intended to procure the means of publishing the rest by subscription; but little or no notice being taken of the prospectus, the publication was suspended. He had bestowed eight years’ labour in working out the principles of his discovery, before he attempted to publish them; and having discovered that certain parts of his theory were still incomplete when he published the first volume, he resolved to withdraw it from circulation, and continue his studies.

It was another fourteen years before a second volume by Fourier appeared. In 1814, he came into a small legacy of forty pounds a year when his mother died, and he retired to Belley, where one of his sisters lived, to continue his work. He was almost ready to publish his book in 1819 but delayed it, we are told, because of a new discovery he had made in the field of cosmogony, which took him a few years to verify. Three years later, in 1822, the first two volumes “of his great work on universal unity” were published under the modest title *A Treatise on Domestic and Agricultural Association*. Fourier went to Paris in the hope of having them favorably reviewed and to find the necessary funds for realizing the practical part of the system. He waited in vain for a year, realizing finally that bribery was the only means of obtaining notice in journals and reviews. His funds exhausted, his book ignored, Fourier left Paris, but the lure of the capital, unhealthy city that it be, proved too great, and he returned to take a job as a correspondence clerk in a commercial house for five years without, as his biographer writes, “obtaining any serious review of his work or making himself known to any influential person.”

In 1829, on the advice of friends, Fourier published a one-volume abridgement of his treatise, with a title that was the obverse of the earlier one—*The New Industrial and Societary World*. But again the work attracted no notice, although Fourier sent it
Charles Fourier: Prophet of Eupsychia

to everybody he thought likely to be interested in the ideas. It was only toward the end of his mean life that Fourier began to receive any attention. In 1832 the Saint-Simonians had attracted a large following by the creation of a new religious cult, but the factionalism inherent in any such effort, following the death of its prophet, soon led to schism. Some of the disillusioned acolytes found a new prophet in Fourier and started a journal, bridging the two creeds, called Le Phalanstère, ou La Réforme Industrielle. Other efforts followed. A joint-stock company was formed to carry out the theory of association, and a new follower of Fourier, Baudet Dulary, a member of parliament for the nearby Paris district of Seine-et-Oise, bought an estate near Rambouillet, for five hundred thousand francs, to put the theory into practice. But the theory proved too demanding, and the practice failed.

All his life, Fourier maintained a childish faith in some powerful benefactor or providential intervention that would transform the world for him. He looked for a capitalist to launch his first phalanx and he kept a list of four thousand “candidates” who might be persuaded to save humanity. In 1817 he wrote to the Russian Czar offering him the tetrarchate of the world and promising that the climate of Russia would become as pleasant as Italy’s, if Fourier’s system were instituted; but the Czar did not answer. Fourier wrote to the Rothschilds, offering the Kingdom of Jerusalem; but they rejected him as a false messiah. There was, at one point, a glimmering hope. In 1830, he was introduced to the Baron Capella, minister of the French Crown for the Department of Public Works, who promised to study his proposals, but on July 24th the Baron wrote Fourier regretting that he was obliged to suspend the examination of his system because of the extraordinary press of state business. The next day the July Revolution deposed the regime and Fourier was again reduced, as Doherty writes, “to the necessity of seeking for the means of realisation amongst skeptical, indifferent and even ignorant strangers.” Every day, for the remainder of his life, according to the story told by his acolytes, Fourier returned home at exactly twelve noon to await a possible patron; but none came.

In the early part of 1837, Fourier met with a serious accident
from which he never thoroughly recovered. One dark night, he
missed his footing on the staircase leading to his rooms and fell
two flights, fracturing his skull. Having no confidence in medical
science, he refused all medical aid even though his face swelled
and his stomach refused to function. Nor would he allow anyone
to attend him, except an old woman who cleaned his rooms. One
morning, two months after the accident, she found him kneeling
at the bedside, dead.

Charles Fourier was buried on October 11, 1837, in the ceme-
tery of Montmartre. On his tomb were engraved the three funda-
mental axioms of his doctrine:

1. *La Série distribue les Harmonies.*
3. *Analogie Universelle.*

The third axiom, however, is represented not by words but,
faithful to the hermetics of the system, by his own mathematical
notation.

In his writings one can see Fourier's deep and permanent long-
ing for the eternal childhood of man which so many poets and
Arcadians have celebrated. He resists relentlessly the expulsion
from Eden and childhood's end. In Corinthians, Paul had put away
childish things and seen through a glass darkly, but this "anti-
Paul," with tinkling cymbals and a sounding brass, preached a new
orgiastic chiliiasm, the release of all restraints, the recurrent pleas-
tures of childhood on earth. And this is the recurrent and perma-
nent appeal of Charles Fourier.