

IV – BASED ON A LETTER TO GEORGES MINOIS

N.B. :

The unframed texts are not from the original letter.

Dear Professor Georges Minois,
Your *Dictionary of Atheists** offers us a full historical perspective of the subject. It is also impressive because of its coverage and depth of the subject and also by the tone that each entry silently carries.

*Georges Minois,

*Dictionnaire des athées, agnostiques, sceptiques
et autres mécréants.*

(Dictionary of atheists, agnostics, skeptics, and other miscreants.)

Albin Michel, Paris, 2012.

Prefaced by André Comte-Sponville.

There are over 650 entries from Alain to Zola via Aristotle, Darwin, Einstein, Nietzsche and Monod, not forgetting Hemingway and Houellebecq. All articles include citations and commentaries by Georges Minois. The historian recalls the existence of Sylvain Maréchal's *Dictionnaire des athées* (1800) - Dictionary of Atheists (a whole page entry).

This is certainly a great lesson in altruism, especially since I have been trying to understand the strange Subject of "Religion" for some time now. I would advance the following proposition – 'a phenomenon extended over hundreds or thousands of years cannot be a human phenomenon, even if its presence is fully dependent on the human race.'

Over time, for example, a large predator – the Wolf – is transformed into a Pomeranian dog. Is this result of Man’s wishes? Hunter-gatherers since the beginning of time, farmers for over a hundred centuries... today men are delicate city dwellers. No one would have imagined modifying a strong carnivorous animal, codifying its appearance, turning it into a ‘boudoir guest’. Despite this evidence, the public is fully content to admit that the ‘domestication of the wolf’ should be credited to human genius...

The creator may have had a little help. Natural selection – as noted by Charles Darwin – is incessantly and inescapably at work. It is the discrete mechanism that recognizes the needs, wishes, fantasies, fashions and so on, of many generations of men and women. However, the real agent of the development from Wolf to Dog is the general DNA malleability at work in the *Canis lupus* species. Random mutations are initiated by the host environment (in this case, human beings) adapting the genetic information to successive and discordant ecological niches. The misattribution is based on the fact that our brain system is not accustomed to dealing with realities stretching over thousands of years.

*Do I dare, dear Professor, ask you some questions ? In so doing, do I dare draw on the preface by André Comte-Sponville ? Firstly, “Does God exist [...] No science will ever be able to answer that question.”**

* ‘[...] The question “Does God exist?” is metaphysical. It is sufficient to say no science will ever be able to answer that question, nor has any experiment ever been conclusive.’ (A.C.-S.)

Modern man only differs from other primates in his constitutive fragility and in the strange refinement of his cerebral faculties. These have evolved through accelerated natural selection, the like of which is not found anywhere else in nature. In animals, the descriptive information of a true technical object – such as a nest, burrow, trap – is recorded more or less directly in the hereditary material. The evolutionary process is slow. In humans, technical information abounds – permanently recorded in the nervous systems and their various, more concrete memory reminders. As for the need to preserve descriptions in

space and time, it is shaped by the communication of a group or group-of-groups – a privilege of gregarious beings. Beyond the first generation of carriers, human technology becomes part of the community and tends towards universality – but not without strengthening itself to its limit. Technical and cerebral complexity go together, but it is first and foremost, technical information that is exposed to a strong, natural selection so that it becomes a weapon, a tool, a construction, and so on... which has accordingly given rise to the development of a neuronal complex out of reach of the animal species.

The continuous accumulation of knowledge within evolved human societies could only lead to the emergence of the faculties of interpretation and abstraction. They were soon able to explain the hitherto inexplicable pre-scientific universe, generating gods and devils, then philosophies and finally inventing the metaphysical firewall. The power, the indifference, and the atrocities of nature appear to be definitively humanized. Thus, mind triumphs over matter simply through its creative power. However, Technical Information only thrives on concrete matter, which is both coherent and predictable. Its growth is achieved through successive neuronal adaptations. Therefore, it is not the quickly blamed experimental knowledge which, in the long run, rejected those hazardous cerebral certainties, painfully drawn from the prescientific nothingness. It was the impact of an irresistible technical evolution.

Within the Enclosed World of ‘Humanity’, it is certainly very reassuring and justified during one’s lifetime, to maintain belief in this great heritage of Existents, who are hosts from the Higher Spheres. It is only necessary to remember that, without science, half of the earth’s population would vanish immediately, while the life expectancy of the survivors would be halved. Inspiration without any rational basis can always conjure up something ... but only once. Any adjustments in response to the drift of ecological niches are only a stopgap. If the non-scientific brain needs one or more deities to psychologically neutralize the hostile manifestations of nature, that is fine – but knowing it will only last for so long.

Throughout his *Treaty on Atheology*, Michel Onfray, the French philosopher, draws attention to and even mocks the multiple inconsistencies and internal contradictions that cover the pages of the three Founding Books of the great monotheistic religions. His powerful work

thus reiterates the age-old assertions – that have not borne fruit, as testified by Georges Minois' Dictionary and its six hundred and fifty miscreants. In short, 'strong minds' who, even in the 21st century, still blame the credulity of some, the duplicity of others, together with the illogicalities and impostures – have chosen the wrong opponent. They regard what represents the very food of tough Terrestrial Presences – both non-biological and trans-temporal – as human failings.

A Sacred Book provides Information, a conglomerate of ideas and thoughts like a swarm of bees. Three Sacred Books are three such pieces of Information. All three of them are still in use and have been actively studied for centuries. They are irreproachable as Accomplished Earthly Presences. They are not accountable to humans and no human is to be chastised for their success. It is obvious that no intelligence in the world could have written the Torah, the Bible or the Qur'an and no Divinity could have dictated their paragraphs. The conclusion must be that the Holy Books have created themselves over the course of time, paragraph after paragraph. They came about after many trials and errors in the biotope of each brain ... followed by the natural selection of new ideas that shook the carrier group. Darwinian mechanics have blindly composed the three Information Rivals over time.

As a lucid host of the Enclosed World of 'Humanity' the atheologist Michel Onfray communicates as much as possible with his peers and his diverse readership. Everything is clear – but the idea of the British biologist Richard Dawkins is more hazardous. In his book, *The God Delusion* (2006), he describes how he intends to "do away with God". For a man of science, who is in his comfort zone outside the Enclosed World, this is truism. But the author sincerely wishes to convince any hesitant or even misguided mind. To this end he descends into the *Homo sapiens* arena with the dangers this entails, denouncing the many examples of arbitrariness and illegitimacy in the beliefs of contemporary society. It remains to be seen how a book, even a brilliant statement such as this, can harm Earthly Presences – the religions of the Book - manipulating hundreds of millions of believers due to legions of professionals spreading the Sacred Word.

In actual fact, the examples and quotations gathered by Richard Dawkins illustrate the ordinary mode of persistence of an informational host system in the human psyche. The key is to connect to the right hereditary and societal programme. The insertion is quickly done as it

does not need to be written into the DNA memory. Not even for a moment should one forget that if there is Information in persistence somewhere it is, by definition, the guarantor of its continuity and therefore holds the defensive and offensive means of its existence. First of all, the mastery of the human carrier relies on thorough persuasion, or dependence or subjection. The impression comes from a kind of non-biological compulsion attributable to non-material Presence. In short, ‘Religion of the Book’ Information would be able to subdue the individual psyche as well as the collective psyche of the group and the whole society, courtesy of the different admissible readings.

*Then : ‘[...] no science tells us [...] whether life is meaningful or not.’**

* “For in the end, science cannot tell us whether we are free or determined, or what justice or happiness is, or whether life has meaning or not.” (A. C-S)

The incredible complexity of the living world is now examined in the most sophisticated manner in world laboratories. At the macroscopic level – witness all those television documentaries about animal life – awareness of an improbable perfect pre-human reality is understood yet undreamed of. The way nature is organized and the infinite variety of life forms has not had to wait for the human species to justify their existence.

The fact that humanity has been ignorant of its own nature for most of its existence cannot be overlooked. What seems to us to be self-evident as a matter of course – in support of the slightest reflection – was lacking ... without any difficulty at all. Science is limited to the objective study of the data of the universe, including the Earth, Life and Man. Therefore, it considers ‘objects’ without any predetermined ideas, without bias and without any preconceived objectives. Science doesn’t judge. Scientific information only makes sense if it is not reliant on either the sender or the receiver.

In contrast, traditional humanity is steeped in the subjective. Its questions and answers focus on a single ‘subject’ ... the human being. It is a being deemed to be different from everything else in the cosmos. Classical thinking has a mental universe outside the sciences, first

taught and then personalized by trial and error and by borrowing from the cultural environment. This may suffice for a lifetime, but it is not the answer to everything. All things considered, this being does not comprehend that it inhabits a purely human space, a cocoon of 'Humanity', wedged between an unappreciated pre-human world and, more recently, an unnoticed post-human world. The Cocoon is rich and reassuring, but it is an illusion. The *quid pro quo* is simply that a cocoon, seen from the inside – be it for centuries – reveals nothing of its true nature.

First and foremost, therefore, it is a matter of breaking down the overly protective casing. The only possible solvent is undoubtedly the use of experimental knowledge. This alone avoids both the influence of genetic programmes and the whims of societal traditions. However small the scientific discovery, it is impersonal in its essence – and so universal. It differs in this respect from all other human propositions and creations. It follows that a mind that is confined – by choice or by strategy – to the richly Enclosed World of 'Outside Science' at the same time renounces the right to judge non-human phenomena ... including *Homo Sapiens*.

On the inner walls of the psychic 'Humanity' Cocoon, a thousand interpretations of the Human Terrestrial Presence wrestle with each other, clash and occasionally annihilate others, which are then immediately renewed. All this is best accommodated by a general obscurity in the darkness of the Enclosed World. Life has no meaning (in the sense of direction or significance) in that all meanings are good, each one proclaimed unique and unsurpassable, without any of them being unanimously applauded.

The human experience based on intuition, sensitivity and logic is accumulated and continually refined over time. This evolution of thought has produced nothing more than prodigious, artistic, intellectual and conceptual wealth. Scientific experiments, however, transform the mental function. DNA impregnated neural production has been replaced by neutral experimental production. The latter endeavours to retain the facts only after official confirmation by a series of contradictory experiments.

Science – a kind of community accumulation of verifiable data – has revealed amongst other things the nature of living. Everything that exists on earth (except for minerals) is Information. This strange non-

mineral layer enclosing the globe only lasts in the application of non-material *organizing descriptors*, recorded on material carries (ribonucleic or deoxyribonucleic acid) in the probable order of appearance. The principle of *carried information* accounts for the entire biological world. It also covers the technical and psychic worlds. Information – in an infinite number of forms, producing concrete effects – gives nature its appearance. Non-mineral reality and Carried Information are one and the same thing.

Finally, “[...] *atheism remains without proof* [...]”*

* “[...] my answer to the question ‘does God exist?’ is quite clear and in the negative. To my mind, this question is, however, a conviction, not a demonstration: atheism remains without proof, as much as the various religions do [...]” (A. C-S)

The word ‘proof’ is specific to the hosts of the Enclosed World. Sciences do not proceed by proof but by *tests*, i.e. experiments, and in general by the evaluation of probabilities. Each advance in knowledge, however small, reduces the probability of transcendent existence to the point of infinitesimality.

The symbiosis with the Technical Object has gradually made the survival of *Homo sapiens* species artificial. Specifically, the permanence of the social body is no longer guaranteed by the herd instinct of the DNA record, and the concept of *proof* reflects the difficulty of establishing the equilibrium of a human group linked by its choice of weapons and tools. The cohesion of the group now rests only on rules deemed to be decisive, on the ‘Law’, another Artificial Earthly Subject. Everywhere laws are based on the idea of *concrete proof*. The law relies on purely objective elements to decide between right and wrong. It has nothing to do with what disrupts the application of rules ... such as the activity of microbes or the expression of genes.

In fact, without knowing anything about micro-organisms and hereditary programmes, divine law achieves the highest expression of the principle of law by establishing the concept of Supreme Power. The ‘Divine Law’ Information models itself by trial and error to the various human aspects and also covers the fatalities of nature and the deviations

of heredity. As the host of collective psyches, it pre-supposes a solid assurance of carriage by human groups in the long term. Therefore, it must offer the ‘truth’ that is conducive to the psychological balance of the faithful. But largesse is sometimes only a form of domestication and every Informational Subject implanted into the brain has an infallible means of domestication – access to the most obscure devices buried in the DNA heredity. A question naturally arises, more disturbing than mere non-biological and non-material constraints. Psychological remuneration (inner peace) and domestication (the anaesthetization of cumbersome instincts) are not necessarily followed by a kind of psychic parasitism, the guarantee of the most tenacious grips.

The idea of derogatory parasitism between humans only becomes sensitive in sufficiently rich and organized societies. The idea pre-supposes clairvoyance, which has the effect of uncovering double standards. According to the order of nature, what clairvoyance quite rightly calls parasitism is in fact nothing more than the legitimate anchoring of an animal or plant species in the host environment. It is up to the malleability of the so-called Parasitized Information to reduce or compensate for the damage to its material representation. In short, the essential happens at a level of reality of Informational Subjects.

A new medium has appeared on the planet – a strange, virtual biotope – the collective human psyche. This virgin biotope could not remain indefinitely so, given the negative of the unavoidable mechanics of chosen trials. Among the myriad of candidate hosts – which are more or less adjusted to the various genetic reliefs – religious systems capable of maintaining themselves throughout successive generations of believers are very rare. Some respect is most definitely required. This information owes its unusual persistence to the mastery of three great levels of reality – the immaterial, the non-material and the material.

The perception of the immaterial may well go back to a primary wisdom of the animal world. The most elementary basis for survival, both for defence and attack, is based on a pre-science, part DNA and part experience. ‘There is no smoke without fire.’ Man has not forgotten this innate wisdom. However, his intelligence has been literally shaped by a Technical Object, often with vital requirements. The mind is trained to process information, and it reflects the axiom: ‘There is no effect without cause’. From cause to effect, when the Explanation of a technical-social order is absent without any recourse, the fertile human

imagination does not vanish ... it invents a totally omnipotent Ultimate Cause.

At its level of reality, the non-material seems less indecipherable. The rise of the non-DNA Technical Object is through the rise of articulated language – there has been co-emergence and co-development. By definition, the ‘Articulated Language’ Information must remain finely tuned to the exchange and transmission of technical knowledge. It follows that the usual communication of the human group is in no way adapted to the socio-cultural circulation of the ‘Reality of the Indescribable’ Information.

There can be no viable religion without appropriate language and the new exclusive vocabulary is being expanded on demand – words created, new meanings added to existing words, literal meanings forgotten in favour of malleable symbolic meanings, and so on. All this is irrelevant to simple believers. A body of specialists is needed who are all increasingly singularised. The officiant has his own gestures, he handles solemnity, compunction, gesture, and intonation, while the habit he wears is no longer a garment. It proclaims the belonging to something sacred. Natural selection has thus provided Information on ‘Religion’ with a biological carrier capable of conveying everything, reviving the deeds of the founders, re-telling tales and legends, regulating in detail the daily life of the faithful, promising blessings and pronouncing ex-communications. The non-material is what makes the heavenly voices audible, in all registers of the imagination.

As an unexpected consequence of the high yields of the Technical Artefact ‘Agriculture’, innumerable buildings of a religious nature have been constructed over the millennia. Between the time of megaliths and that of sumptuous cathedrals, a variety of monuments, temples, synagogues, churches and mosques compete, jostle for position and often overlap. This extraordinary continuity in diversity is interpreted differently depending on whether it is seen from the inside or the outside of the Enclosed World of ‘Humanity’. Seen from the inside, it is clear that a community of believers gives weight to its beliefs by materializing them. If a cohort of officiants has taken shape, it is appropriate that the monument evolves into a sacred enclosure, an exclusive retreat for the Divine and his ministers.

Seen from the outside of the ‘Humanity’ cocoon, the colossal mass of manual labour and the debauchery of talent and genius mobilized

over the ages is striking, primarily in the material expression of the religious fact. This is all the more remarkable in view of the natural versatility of the human mind and the sense of economy of means, inherited from animals. One can hardly see it, but informational entities called 'Religion' are capable of ensuring this elaborative constancy, basing it on the rich depths of DNA. In particular, the Technical Object of 'Agriculture' generates a sense of labour that is exploitable for purposes beyond the individual, the group and even generations.

If there was non-biological parasitism, it would be truly gigantic. In nature, there is nothing exceptional about gigantism and proliferation. These aspects merely reflect the success of life formulae, which are eminently susceptible to evolution by trial and error. One cannot blame a 'belief' information for being ecologically successful in the same way as an invading biological species. Reaching the stage of 'Absolutist Religion' is then only a matter of natural selection and adaptive plasticity. As everywhere in the biosphere, it is not a question of parasitism, but of making the most of the environment.

Nevertheless, according to the human criteria of appreciation, there could be parasitism – the observer registers high consumption of energy and raw materials attributable to informational systems hosting the societal psychism. Two contradictory pieces of evidence immediately attract attention because of their size and discrepancy. On the one hand, there are the glorious marks of the Presence of 'Religion' covering the inhabited terrestrial space. On the other hand, murmurs and clamours endlessly castigate this kind of appropriation of minds and energies. However, both pieces of evidence seem to be reconcilable.

Unlike the great polytheisms – which tend to crumble and lose their influence – a Religion of the Book enjoys an advantageous singularity... but this has proved its Achilles heel. The terrestrial materiality of the Existant called 'Religion' is based on interconnected neural networks, both within and between the crania. Over time, the Information thus conveyed has undergone multiple assaults from successive environments and this selective effect has endowed it with a perennality that is, in principle, definitive. From then on, the Psychic Information thus freed has the value of a fresh ecological niche. The entire biological organization suggests, no virgin ecological niche remains so indefinitely.

A 'Religion' Information shaped over time has only survived through the existence of an effective body of professionals who maintain and diffuse it. Since only the long term leaves its mark, this body will only function correctly over time if it truly believes in the faith it strives to share. Following this logic, the tutelary Information tends to utilise the carriers of favourable disposition for its own benefit, while counteracting the adverse genetic programmes of the officiants. In this way, a brotherhood of representatives is formed, which is by vocation, docile and devoted.

It is fairly predictable that a successful Informational Presence will sooner or later require an internal (military-style) hierarchy. However, in an evolved monotheism such as the one that has long ruled Europe, the predictable hierarchy is complicated by internal struggles as well as divergent and conflicting interpretations of sacred texts ... leading to many historical upheavals. This state of affairs requires some interpretation, and biology offers a mechanism that is advantageously non-human.

Between an animal species – the Wolf, for example – and its ecological niche, compatibility is guaranteed. Each of the two entities defines itself through the other. In its niche, the "*Canis lupus*" Information has, in principle, reached the extremity of its evolutionary potential through exo-selection. It reaches a plateau and the ever-present natural selection is reduced to the diligent maintenance of the qualitative level attained. However, beyond this, universal trial and error has come to produce a novelty, an unusual endo-selection.

This postscript to the Description of the 'Wolf' induces the individual to a well-established behaviour in the sexual species – mammals, birds, batrachians, insects and so forth. The males no longer only fight against the environmental disorders, they fight amongst themselves to access the females. What at first seems absurd, dangerous and a somewhat futile expenditure of energy is, in fact, a forward-looking logic – the selection of the strongest is always the best. There is certainly no finality, teleonomy or vital impulse. At the risk of being prosaic, only those lineages that have integrated this kind of apparently futile exercise can survive in the long term. The wolf pack benefits from always having a prolific pack leader, or in less anthropomorphic terms, a fertile alpha male. A certain conjunction of genes has given the carrier

the hormonal instruction to subordinate everything to the service of his gonads – a high priority that could be called ‘the alpha drive’.

In the *Homo sapiens* species, the alpha drive relies, as elsewhere, on DNA resources. It also makes use of technical information in all its forms, such as weapons and tools, speech and writing. The impulse also extends to non-material objects, using the Existant ‘Religion’ instead of serving it.

Those who can hardly be called leaders of the pack now, are resistant to psychic domestication. In varying degrees, they have retained their individuality. The genetic lottery means that among the candidates for the alpha position, some turn out to be subtle and wise visionaries. If they show themselves to be altruistic, it is for the benefit of the great family of clerics, according to a scheme similar to that which ecologists call *kinship selection*, with dogma replacing DNA.

On the one hand, additional contenders have similarly retained their psychic autonomy, generally oriented towards self-satisfaction. By instinct, they are opportunistic, ambitious, skillful and lucid – all qualities that feed all kinds of inclinations. They put their plans before their faith and use the Information ‘Religion’ instead of serving it. The ‘alpha drive’ is then more than welcome, practically settling the matter.

In this way, a human parasitism of the ‘Monotheism’ Presence is adjusted and through it, a parasitism of the collective carrier – including the mass of loyal officiants. The overwhelming Informational Subject – the absolute master of its ecological niche – seems to be damaged from within, down to its very foundations. It is hardly surprising that reasonable minds protest – from one generation to another – argue and protest without perceiving that they are protesting against non-biological Presences justified by nature. Their real target was unimaginable – a discreet human parasitism of the non-human.

*The real debate is no longer about the existence or non-existence of Divine beings, or about submission or protests.**

* The real debate is no longer about the existence or non-existence of Divine beings, or about submission or protests. Man is no longer the great maker of gods. These are self-made – like the living – always the result of some propitious circumstance – perhaps the genius of a prophet.

It is high time to assess what remains in the 21st century of the immense historical power of the 'Religion' phenomenon. All the more so as this assessment could well lead to a very real need to redress a social injustice that has been ignored.

To resume, Information on 'Religion' is 'born' somewhere, by some happy combination. In essence, it has only one justification ... to raise awareness of a higher, immaterial reality. Consequently, the *service* due to the divinity must permeate the daily life of individuals and groups. Within the human group, a body specializing in prayer, ritual and worship, is soon formed by decantation. This zeal is forever held to be necessary and sufficient; it can still be found occasionally on a small scale.

Like everything else, Monotheism evolves. History confirms this and its richest example by far is Roman Catholicism. Service to the Divine is becoming more discreet, jostled by the demands of service to humans. Orphanages, schools, dispensaries, hospices and asylums, provide help to people of all ages. Social support is a major part and society accepts – as a matter of course – the grafting of the secular onto the spiritual.

This Organisation would be viable in the long term if it was not for the fact that secular powers also tend to encompass more and more. Modernity imposes on the State the concern to remedy societal deficiencies and inequalities, to hunt down falsehoods and to provide for the well-being of every citizen. In the ecological niche, the religious people will give way to the civilians. In the end, it finds itself stripped of its second legitimacy... benevolence.

It would seem that the secular extension of 'Monotheism Information' leaves all the Informational Presence with regard to the collective psyche untouched. But all beliefs have to fear the inexorable advance of exact knowledge and it is the most advanced religions (that is to say the most self-defending, the monotheisms) which are the most exposed to a face-to-face confrontation with science. Basic research is alien to the Cocoon, but nonetheless, it facilitates, by ricochet, the relationship of living beings with the harsh realities of their brief existence. The base of true believers is shrinking. For the first time, the non-material artifact 'Religion' is experiencing an irreversible erosion of its historical power. Only the imposing hierarchy of religious professionals remains more or less intact.

This long-formed hierarchy is clearly bipolar. At the top is a pyramid of entrenched dignitaries; at the bottom, battalions of officiants formatted to listen, worry and comfort their followers' anonymous world. The high order suffers little from the decline of the Informational Presence. It preserves the immediate enjoyment of secular properties; political and economic spheres are treated on an equal footing, with the regime of co-opting meaning that any individual failure is tacitly concealed. However, for the priest in daily charge of the souls of a village, the ministry has become most ambiguous. There was a time when the religious vocation was offered to those who came from nothing and constituted a clear, definitive social and personal promotion – but that has ceased to be. However protective the Informational Subject 'Religion' has been for its servants, today it hardly brings anything but confusion and uncertainty. It is hard to imagine that the incessant flow of technical, social and conceptual changes leaves no trace in the intimacy of any judgement that is well carried out.

In the secular world, anyone is, in theory, free to change his or her profession for another that is more rewarding – both literally and figuratively. He will receive approval from his family, his relations and his neighbours. This is infinitely riskier for the shaven cleric who aspires to change his state. His life is totally run by his Institution – he will have to provide for his own needs. People listen to him, respect and fear him – he will fall into anonymity. One can understand the irresolution, then the resignation and predictable frustration of his mind. A once famous example appears in Georges Minois' Dictionary, which includes nearly three pages of quotations and comments, introducing Jean Meslier (1664-1729), the parish priest of Étrépy in the Ardennes. During the forty years he was a priest, he secretly wrote a voluminous memoir to be published after his death. In it, God, the Church and the faith are quashed.

This sort of destructive testament could be considered to be the hatred of an embittered man who takes revenge on a single enemy ... his hierarchy of pack leaders. However, the Dictionary recalls the significance of the document ... 'all of Europe knows it'. An independent and thoughtful Europe probably applauded in silence. The simplest hypothesis is therefore not that of revenge but that the priest felt bound hand and foot. All that remains is the pretence of a masked life as a thinking, free human being... a public life in a cassock. Throughout the

founding nations in the 21st century, there has not been a Jean Meslier for a very long time – a man who, throughout his life, was held under deliberate mental restrictions. Existence is no longer limited to the satisfaction of elementary needs that are culturally recognized. A thousand opportunities and a thousand satisfactions are offered at all levels of choice, pleasures, culture, knowledge, and self-improvement. On the contrary, clerical life implies the accepted rejection of these so-called ephemeral riches.

“[...] What are the psyche's responses when it comes to preserving survival in the face of entities that are dominant by nature?”*

* “Your analysis could not be more accurate and ‘dramatic’. Should we finally leave aside the environmental reality of social organisations ? An imprescriptible, evolving informational presence is always more or less oppressive. What are the psyche's responses when it comes to preserving survival in the face of entities that are dominant by nature?”

In short, the priest has effectively espoused an Informational Presence born from the depths of time, not seeing that it has long since reached an optimum psychic hold on most minds. Nor does he see that such Information serves as both an offensive and defensive, non-material weapon for certain groups of humans, providing them with otherwise unattainable environmental advantages. Symbioses formed in this way (and deemed inextricable) have broken down. They have been unable to resist the intrusion of a new planetary complex, techno-science, which is now inseparable from the human condition. Nothing else can feed ten billion *Homo sapiens*.

As a servant of the Divine – who now has no justifiable ecological function – the priest has lost his very reason for existing, whether he is aware of it or not. He finds himself alone and a victim on two fronts. Firstly, he is a candid victim of Techno-Science, the third great post-biological Information after the Technical Object and Agriculture. Secondly, he is a victim too, of the embarrassment or prudence, or even the impotence of the protective secular authorities. The State gives the impression that it accepts that a small minority of educated and peaceful

citizens should not be allowed to choose from the variety of lifestyles that are characteristic of modernity. Constitutional neutralism is indeed a great precept in the face of the very private choices of spiritual life. It has nevertheless become very embarrassing.

The *laissez-faire* principle is based on the highly recognized *free will* of each citizen. However, many agents influence, shape and impact mental functions, such as the obscure hormonal balance, family and social pedagogy, the calls of sexual reproduction, the insights of experience and even the health of a microbiota. The classical excuse of free will was only an escape. Since free will is a decoy, the cleric is nothing more than a disarmed and suggestible being. He must therefore be protected from false statements, especially at the age of the first choices in life. On the other hand, the Liberal State is obliged to ensure the strict neutrality of teaching ... despite the dilemma and embarrassment.

The separation of the profane from the sacred has been a considerable advance. This legal prudence removed from civil power the threats of a conquering informational system, backed by celestial powers. However, in doing so, the state unwittingly signed a 'blank cheque' ... "full licence to recruit auxiliaries, to train them and to control their material life." As a youth, a person was led to adopt an obsolete way of life, without any objective justification. The neophyte has deceived himself, or has been deceived by others. He deserves to have his rights restored to a full existence as a modern citizen, whatever the reasons of State. Prudence, in this case, is the equivalent of negligence.

Even in the 21st century, the public still seems powerless to stop the glaring disparity between civil and religious life. This is understandable. The Informational Subject 'Religion' obtains the best of the gregarious animal instinct, in its exclusive *Homo sapiens* version. The old impulse is expressed to the group in a non-material form, by the irrepressible need to preserve habits and customs *ad vitam aeternam*. This essential factor in preserving what has been acquired, usually called 'tradition', consists of mechanically transmitting from one generation to the next a resistant block of thoughts, actions, beliefs and community certainties. The total represents a colossal force of inertia from which the 'Religion of the Book' Presence permanently benefits. Understandably, the State struggles to fulfill its duty of social equity in the face of the Goliath tradition. On the one hand, its level of reality

places it outside the Enclosed World of 'Humanity'; on the other, it has to deal with the issues that typically agitate the inside of the Cocoon. History is full of examples of civil powers that are approved but powerless to rectify a particular state of affairs the world has evolved and moved on.

The community of citizens, believers and non-believers alike, already takes responsibility for the safety, health and retirement of professionals of the faith. It has neither the capacity nor the slightest reason to do more. It is up to contemporary liberal regimes to find ways of helping the small minority of priests to choose whether or not to live a normal life as ordinary citizens. This would only be fair.