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四次运动的理论

The Theory of the Four Movements

Fourier

傅立叶

Edited by

GARETH STEDMAN JONES

and

IAN PATTERSON

中国政法大学出版社

查尔斯 傅里叶
CHARLES FOURIER

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*The Theory of the
Four Movements*

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HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT



CHARLES FOURIER
The Theory of the Four Movements

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剑桥政治思想史原著系列

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在政治理论领域，“剑桥政治思想史原著系列”作为主要的学生教科丛书，如今已牢固确立了其地位。本丛书旨在使学生能够获得从古希腊到 20 世纪初期西方政治思想史方面所有最为重要的原著。它囊括了所有著名的经典原著，但与此同时，它又扩展了传统的评价尺度，以便能够纳入范围广泛、不那么出名的作品。而在此之前，这些作品中有许多从未有过现代英文版本可资利用。只要可能，所选原著都会以完整而不删节的形式出版，其中的译作则是专门为本丛书的目的而安排。每一本书都有一个评论性的导言，加上历史年表、生平梗概、进一步阅读指南，以及必要的词汇表和原文注解。本丛书的最终目的是，为西方政治思想的整个发展脉络提供一个清晰的轮廓。

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CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Introduction

The Theory of the Four Movements appeared in the war-torn France of 1808.¹ By any standards, it was an outlandish, disorganised and disconcerting mixture of ingredients. A well-observed critique of marriage, of the iniquities of free competition leading to 'industrial feudalism', of the tedium of work in civilisation and of the errors of the French Revolution was set side by side with assertions about the copulation between planets, oracular pronouncements about the life-span of the earth, extravagant promises about a new religion of 'voluptuousness' and a cryptic prospectus of the amorous and gastronomic delights which would accompany it. No author's name appeared on the title page and the place of publication, Lyons, was misleadingly stated to be Leipzig. Finally, whatever the other merits of the book, the exposition of *The Theory of the Four Movements* itself was bewilderingly brief: barely four pages, much of it in a footnote, scarcely more than the space-filling digression on the sad decline of provincial theatre.

Some of these obscurities can be attributed to worries about censorship during the First Empire.² So can some of the circumlo-

¹ *The Theory of the Four Movements* (henceforth *TTFM*). The first edition was republished in 1967: C. Fourier, *Théorie des Quatre Mouvements et des Destinées Générales*, Paris (J. J. Pauvert), 1967. The standard modern edition of Fourier is *Oeuvres complètes de Charles Fourier*, 12 vols., Paris (Anthropos), 1966–8 (henceforth *OC*). 'Théorie de l'unité universelle' occupies vols. II–V. On the different editions of *TTFM* see translator's introduction.

² J. Beecher, *Charles Fourier. The Visionary and his World*, Berkeley, CA, 1986, p. 126. Beecher's book is the best and most comprehensive modern study of Fourier and his ideas. For the historical and biographical background to the publication of *The Theory of the Four Movements*, see chapter 6, pp. 116–40.

cutions. For instance, the war between France and England was prudently renamed 'the battle against insular monopoly'. The author had already discovered that Bonapartist officials were particularly allergic to military pessimism. But, generally, the bizarre form of the book faithfully reflected authorial intention. The author, the enigmatically named 'Mr Charles at Lyons', was in fact the genuinely obscure Charles Fourier, a small silk broker and commercial traveller around the fairs of Europe. He did not intend the book to clarify, but to tantalise. His book should provide no more than 'a glimpse' of the truth. It was only to be a prospectus. The theory itself would be revealed in a six-volume treatise, once supported by one thousand subscribers.

But when the book was published, ridicule was the only attention Fourier received. Reviewers did not notice 'the pearl in the mud':³ those intimations of a great scientific discovery discreetly deposited by Fourier amid the queerly assorted passages which made up the book. Their attention was riveted by the promise that the Earth would recover its 'northern crown' and that the sea would taste of lemonade. The mockery hurt. France was therefore 'punished' by the author's silence. The first instalment of the promised treatise did not appear until 1822.⁴

Despite its weirdness and its inauspicious reception, *The Theory of the Four Movements* did represent an important moment in the history of political and social theory. Not only did it announce the most extraordinary utopia of the nineteenth century, it was also perhaps the first to define 'the social problem' as the nineteenth century came to conceive it. The evils of 'free competition'; the poverty that accompanied civilisation; the uselessness of the rights of man without a right to work or the right to a minimum standard of living; the resort to adultery or prostitution as the product of women's subordination; the hypocrisy and 'cuckoldry' which belied civilised marriage; the misery, waste and overproduction which resulted from the lack of association between capital, labour and

³ Beecher, *Charles Fourier*, p. 121; this term derives from an 1816 manuscript 'Le Sphinx sans Oedipe', published in *La Phalange*, Paris, 1849, pp. 193-206.

⁴ C. Fourier, *Traité de l'association domestique-agricole ou attraction industrielle*, 2 vols., Paris and London, 1822, reprinted under the title 'Théorie de l'unité universelle' in *Oeuvres complètes de Charles Fourier*, 6 vols., Paris (La Librairie Sociétaire) 1841-5, vols. II-V.

talent; the tedium and monotony of 'civilised' work: these were issues repeatedly raised in subsequent nineteenth-century discussions of the 'social question' or 'the social evil'.

Equally novel was Fourier's definition of the 'social'. This was now a sphere which at once undercut and transcended the traditional domains of law, morality and politics. Furthermore this depiction of the 'social problem' went together with the rejection of all pre-existing moral and political theory and its supposed result, the French Revolution. Henceforth change was no longer to be expected from the political and ethical realm, but from 'the industrial and domestic'. Politics itself became no more than a symptom of the 'declining' phase of an 'incoherent' social order, a pathological product of the mistaken premises upon which civilisation was based. Similarly, the unit of change was no longer the polity, the social change of the future was to be cosmic.

For these reasons, *The Theory of the Four Movements* was acknowledged not simply as a pioneering exploration of the social, but also as a founding document of socialist thought. In Harmony which was within reach of humanity, there would be no need for the conventional sanctions of political and religious authority. Here then was one primitive source of all those nineteenth and twentieth-century visions of the 'withering away of the state' taken as a consequence of the solution to the 'social problem'.

Representing Fourier

After 1830, Fourier became widely known. In the first surveys of socialist or utopian doctrine, he was depicted as one of the founding fathers of the socialist school.⁵ After the split among the Saint-Simonians, a Fourierist movement was formed. Under its leader, Victor Considérant, it became one of the foremost socialist groupings in the years before 1848.⁶ By the 1840s, at the height of its

⁵ M. L. Reybaud, *Etude sur les réformateurs contemporains, ou socialistes modernes: Saint Simon, Charles Fourier, Robert Owen*, Paris, 1840; A. Blanqui, *Histoire de l'économie politique en Europe*, Paris, 1837; L. von Stein, *Der Sozialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs*, Leipzig, 1842.

⁶ On the Fourierist movement in France see H. Desroche, *La Société festive. Du Fourierisme écrit aux Fourierismes pratiqués*, Paris, 1975; H. Louvancour, *De Henri de Saint Simon à Charles Fourier. Etude sur le socialisme romantique français de 1830*, Chartres, 1913; Alexandrian, *Le Socialisme romantique*, Paris, 1979; M.

appeal, small Fourierist groupings were to be found across Europe and North America and attempts to found Fourierist communities – ‘phalansteries’ – ranged from Massachusetts to Romania.⁷

Fourier also won a prominent place in the Marxian genealogy of socialism. In Germany in 1845, the young Engels translated excerpts on trade from *The Theory of the Four Movements* while excusing Fourier’s ‘cosmological fantasies’ as the product of ‘a brilliant world outlook’.⁸ Marx’s assessment in the *Communist Manifesto* was more guarded: ‘critical-utopian socialism’, of which Fourier together with Owen and Saint-Simon were representative, was treated as the product of ‘the early undeveloped period . . . of the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie’. It was commended for its attack on ‘every principle of existing society’, but faulted for its failure to understand the active and revolutionary part to be played by the proletariat in its own emancipation.⁹ This judgement was repeated, but in much warmer terms, thirty years later in Engels’ pamphlet, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. So, however incongruous, Fourier’s name was assigned a place of honour on the Kremlin wall when the Bolsheviks triumphed in Russia in 1917.

There is no doubt about the substantial historical connection between Fourier and the nineteenth-century socialist movement. But if Fourier’s writings had so strongly helped to shape the subsequent socialist tradition, already by the 1830s the connection was becoming obscure. The idea of a science of the ‘social’ as the discovery which would unleash a global movement towards harmony remained embedded in the common stock of subsequent socialist assumptions. But in Fourier’s presentation, this idea seemed part of a scandalous and apparently ridiculous cornucopia of sexual and cosmological speculation. It became difficult to imagine what, if anything, had bound together a critique of free competition or of the tedium of civilised work with the announcement of a new amorous world or a novel version of reincarnation. To later socialists,

Dommanget, *Victor Considérant. Sa vie, son oeuvre*, Paris, 1929; D. W. Lovell, ‘Early French socialism and politics: the case of Victor Considérant’, *History of Political Thought*, 13/2 (1992), pp. 258–79.

⁷ See Desroche, *La Société févère*, pp. 200–2.

⁸ *Marx-Engels Collected Works* (hence *MECW*), Moscow, 1975–, vol. iv, p. 615.

⁹ *MECW*, vol. vi, pp. 514–15.

the details and extravagances of Fourier's system appeared embarrassing and inexplicable. They seemed to have little to do with socialism, as it came to be understood, particularly after 1850. Hence, the growing difficulty of assimilating Fourier's writings into a system of thought, of which he was also supposed to be a founding father.

In the later nineteenth century, it was Engels who hit upon the simplest formula for domesticating Fourier into an acceptable socialist history. His picture was that of the satirist, of the remorseless critic of 'the material and moral misery of the bourgeois world', and one whose 'imperturbably serene nature' made him 'assuredly one of the greatest satirists of all time'.¹⁰ In this account, due homage could be paid to Fourier's genius, while the contents of his theory could be safely ignored.

The Fourierist School of the 1830s and 1840s had been faced with a different problem. Unlike later socialists who could only acknowledge Fourier at the expense of his theory, Fourier's immediate disciples regarded him as the founding theorist of socialism, the 'Newton of the human soul'; but only at the cost of discarding his satire and, more flagrantly, the whole sexual dimension of the theory itself.¹¹ If the Fourier of Engels was the unsurpassed satirist of bourgeois society, the Fourier of the Fourierists was the great and solemn humanitarian, the philanthropist who had solved the problem of human misery, the genial, yet practical social reformer who had charted the passage to harmony. In the semi-official biography of Charles Pellarin in 1839, Fourier was turned into a saintly figure, a chaste teetotaler with lovable eccentricities, a lover of flowers and cats.¹²

In fact, Fourier was neither a humanitarian nor a satirist, nor even, as the later twentieth century has liked to portray him, the precursor of surrealist or modernist poetics. If, as Barthes for

¹⁰ *MECW*, vol. xxiv, p. 292.

¹¹ Fourier's sexual speculations were omitted from the first collected edition of his works, *Oeuvres complètes de Charles Fourier*, Paris, 1841-5. They were first published in the 1960s. See Simone Debout-Oleskiewicz (ed.), 'Le Nouveau monde amoureux', *OC*, vol. vii, Paris, 1967.

¹² Charles Pellarin, *Charles Fourier. Sa vie et sa théorie*, Paris, 1843. For an exposition of Fourierism as seen by the Fourierist school see V. Considérant, *Destinée sociale*, 3 vols., Paris, 1834-44.

instance suggests, Fourier's text can be read as that of a 'logothete', it is not because his project was ludic or parodic.¹³ His solemn claim upon the world was not that of the writer, of the playful maestro of the signifier, but of the inventor, the 'Columbus' of the social, the projector of true cosmic order, determined to ensure his patent. By taking more seriously Fourier's claim to have made a 'discovery' and by clearing away, so far as is possible, later assumptions of meaning superimposed upon Fourier's work, it is possible to identify more precisely the source of Fourier's critique of 'civilisation'.

Fourier's formation

Charles Fourier was born in Besançon in 1772. In *The Theory of the Four Movements*, Fourier boasted that it had fallen to the lot of 'a near-illiterate' to confound 'all the voluminous writings of the politicians and the moralists'. This claim was exaggerated. Fourier was provincial, but came of bourgeois stock. His father, who died when Fourier was nine, was untutored, but had made a considerable fortune as a cloth merchant. His mother was pious and narrow-minded. Fourier was brought up as heir to the business, the only boy among three sisters. He was educated at the Collège de Besançon, where he received a firm if narrow grounding in Latin and theology and in 1789 was sent to Lyons to become apprenticed as a merchant.

Three points about Fourier's early upbringing may have been important in shaping his later views. Firstly, if he were by no means 'a near-illiterate', it is true that his background was narrow-minded and oppressive. Besançon was scarcely touched by the Enlightenment; it was a garrison town near the frontier and the seat of an archbishopric. The Church was the main employer of its population of 35,000 and the piety of Counter-Reformation catholicism set the cultural tone of the region.¹⁴ There seems little doubt that Fourier's childhood experience of this religious milieu engendered a profound hostility towards the Catholic religion. In *The Theory of the Four Movements*, Fourier condemned the French Revolution not for its

¹³ See R. Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, London, 1976, pp. 76-123.

¹⁴ For details on eighteenth-century Besançon see C. Fohlen (ed.), *Histoire de Besançon*, vol. II, Paris, 1965, pp. 135-232; see also Beecher, *Charles Fourier*, chapter 1.

attack on the Church, but for the imaginative poverty of its religious and philosophical alternatives. Catholicism remained a central target of Fourier's attack upon civilisation. Not only can his cosmology be seen as an attempt to invert Catholic doctrine, but many of the daily practices of Harmony are also best deciphered as systematic inversions of the liturgy and calendar of the Church.¹⁵

Secondly, the mercantile life for which Fourier was trained was from the beginning fraught with tension and animosity. It is improbable that the child Fourier swore a 'Hannibalic oath' against commerce after being punished for refusing to deceive a customer, as Fourierist legend would have it. But it is known that Fourier attempted to run away from his merchant apprenticeship in Lyons in 1789. A more likely origin of Fourier's deep antagonism towards trade was the real and substantial fraud practised by his uncle in the management of the paternal estate after the death of Fourier's father in 1781. By the time Fourier received his portion in 1793, only 84,000 of 204,000 livres remained.¹⁶

Lastly, and more speculatively, it may be suggested that the early loss of his father, his uncle's unscrupulous behaviour and an upbringing in an overwhelmingly female household must have helped to shape the strongly feminine cast of his utopia. Whether Fourier can be considered a feminist has been a matter of dispute.¹⁷ What is not disputed is that no theorist before him had conceived a more resolutely anti-patriarchal vision of social and sexual order. Fourier went much further than Montesquieu in arguing that the extension of the privileges of women provided the basis of all social progress. His was a systematic attempt to breach the law of the father at every conceivable point. In Harmony, women were ensured full sexual freedom at the age of eighteen. No longer constrained by monogamy, they were free to form simultaneous erotic or companionate relationships with several men. Women would control reproduction, just as children would be free to choose

¹⁵ See J. Beecher, 'Parody and liberation in the amorous world of Charles Fourier', *History Workshop Journal*, 20 (1985), pp. 125-34.

¹⁶ Beecher, *Charles Fourier*, p. 28.

¹⁷ See Simone Debout, 'L'illusion réelle', *Topique*, 4-5 (1970), pp. 11-78; Catherine Francblin, 'Le Féminisme utopique de Charles Fourier', *Tel Quel* 62 (1975), pp. 44-69. For a summary of this debate in English see M. C. Spencer, *Charles Fourier*, Boston, 1981, pp. 91-5. See also C. G. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 1984.

between real and adoptive fathers. The relation between the child and the mother would no longer be disrupted by the father, nor would it be inhibited by the legal and religious authority which protected the father's power. Harmony was built upon the explicit elimination of such authority.¹⁸ Clearly, Fourier's own childhood, or rather the day-dreams conjured out of it, supplied much of the raw material from which this non-patriarchal utopia was composed.

But whatever part childhood played in shaping Fourier's vision of Harmony, there can be no doubt that it was the French Revolution which set Fourier in pursuit of an as yet unknown science of 'social well-being'. Fourier was not a dispassionate witness of the events of the revolutionary decade, but an involuntary victim. Early in 1793, he set himself up as a merchant in Lyons with what remained of his inheritance, but in July the city was placed under siege. The goods which Fourier had purchased were requisitioned without compensation and when the city fell to the Jacobins he was lucky to escape execution in the ensuing reprisals. He fled to Besançon and after a brief imprisonment and an unlikely spell as a cavalry officer in the army of the Rhine, he resumed work as a commercial traveller for his former employer in Lyons. His work took him mainly to Marseilles, the centre of a region ravaged by poverty, crime and brigandage. It was there in the late 1790s, in an economy afflicted by food shortages and by wartime profiteering, that Fourier's theory of 'free competition' as the 'declining' phase of civilisation took shape. For Fourier, these local calamities were but the symptoms of a universal condition, a basic disorder of civilisation with cosmic consequences.

At what stage Fourier came to consider that immediate events could only be understood in the light of a universal theory is not known. But the ambition to discover such a theory was already present in 1799, when he spent a year in Paris studying natural sciences at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Here he made his 'Columbus-like' discovery of the universal science of 'passionate attraction'. By 1800, however, he had spent what remained of his fortune and was forced back to work for his old employer. Now he was indeed 'the lowly shop-sergeant' described in *The Theory of the Four Movements*.

¹⁸ See S. Debout, 'Introduction', in C. Fourier, *Théorie des Quatre Mouvements et des Destinées Générales*, Paris, 1967, pp. 50-7.

In 1803 Fourier attracted attention in the Lyons press with an enigmatic proclamation of his discovery, together with some outrageous samples from his cosmology. In the same year, after receiving an official reprimand for a pessimistic article on the likely outcome of the struggle between France and Russia,¹⁹ Fourier wrote a ten-page 'Letter to the High Judge' outlining his 'discovery' and requesting that it be communicated to the First Consul (Napoleon).²⁰ This letter, which got no further than the police, is important because it shows that the essentials of Fourier's theory were already in place. Thereafter, until his book appeared, his publications were confined to poems, theatre criticism (some of which found its way into the book) and a pamphlet attacking Parisian merchants in Lyons. In private, however, between 1803 and 1806 Fourier laboured on a manuscript, developing his criticism of metaphysics, politics, political economy and moral philosophy. Parts of this were used in the third 'critical' section of his book.²¹ *The Theory of the Four Movements* itself was put together in the course of 1807. According to Fourier's later account, it was hurriedly composed partly to satisfy requests from the 'curious', and partly to escape a yet stricter censorship law imposed the following year.

The theory of passionate attraction

If Fourier is treated as he treated himself, as an *inventor*, questions about his seriousness become easier to answer. The ambition to tantalise, the mischievous setting of 'the pearl in the mud', formed part of an armoury of artless devices, designed to protect the discovery itself. Despite later denials, it is clear that Fourier hoped his book would be taken seriously. An all-too-successful determination to protect his invention appears to have been the reason why, alongside claims for his scientific discovery, Fourier had interspersed speculations about Earth's barren efforts to procreate, the

¹⁹ 'Triumvirat continental et paix perpétuelle sous trente ans', *Bulletin de Lyon*, 17 December 1803; for a description of this piece see Beecher, *Charles Fourier*, pp. 103-4.

²⁰ An English translation of this letter is published in J. Beecher and R. Bienvenu, *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier*, London, 1972, pp. 83-93.

²¹ See 'L'Egarément de la Raison démontrée par les ridicules des sciences incertaines', *OC*, vol. XII, pp. 587-682.

future recovery of its six moons, the prospective end of sea monsters and the future lemonade flavouring of the sea.

Fourier's claim was to have stumbled upon the 'social compass'. It was with the aid of 'a small calculation about association' that he was able to uncover the 'analytic and synthetic calculus of passionate attraction', his 'Columbus-like' discovery of 1799. His claim was not to have conceived a vision of human community as it might be, but to have 'discovered' a science of the world as it was.²²

The steps towards this discovery were recounted in *The Theory of the Four Movements*. What disturbed Fourier about the Revolution and its aftermath was not the disappearance of traditional authority, but rather the calamitous results of putting into practice the errors of metaphysics, the moral and political sciences and political economy. In the years up to 1793, France had become 'the testing ground for philosophical theories': first the hated Jacobin cult of equality and virtue, which had driven the country back to barbarism, and subsequently the 'free competition' celebrated by the 'economists', with its attendant scourges of poverty and unemployment.

This experience suggested to Fourier 'the absence of some form of organisation intended by God but unknown to our savants', or even that 'civilised industry' was 'a calamity invented by God as a punishment for the human race'. It was a growing certainty about the systematic falsity of the 'uncertain sciences' that prompted Fourier to adopt the principles of 'absolute doubt' and 'absolute separation'. 'Absolute doubt' led Fourier to question the 'necessity', 'excellence' and 'permanence' of civilisation itself. 'Absolute separation' led him to seek the source of improvement, not in politics or religion, but in the sphere of the 'domestic and industrial', which 'would be compatible with all governments'.²³

Fourier's researches began with the 'much-despised' problem of 'agricultural association'. How could three hundred families of differing degrees of wealth be brought together to form a 'NATURAL or ATTRACTIVE association', 'a society whose members would be driven to work by competition, self-esteem and other stimuli compatible with self-interest'? Fourier's disarmingly simple answer was:

²² Beecher and Bienvenu, *The Utopian Vision*, p. 84.

²³ *TTFM*, p. 9.