

# OF ERRORS AND TRUTH

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*In this excerpt from his book, Of Errors and of Truth, the Unknown Philosopher, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, explains the ten leaves of the priceless book that Humanity received at its birth.*



Humanity's inexpressible advantages in their original state were connected with the possession and comprehension of a priceless book that was counted among the gifts which they received at birth. Although this book consisted of only ten leaves, it contained all the lights and knowledge of what was, is, and will be. The power of humankind was then so extensive that they possessed the faculty of reading through the ten leaves of the book at once and taking it in at a glance.

At the time of humanity's degradation this book was indeed still in their possession, but they were deprived of the faculty of comprehending it as easily as before, and we can no longer understand all the leaves except by reading one after the other. However, we will never be entirely reestablished in our rights until we have studied them all. Although each of these ten leaves contains a special knowledge, they are, nonetheless, so intertwined that it is impossible to understand one perfectly without attaining an understanding of them all. Even though I have said that humanity can no longer read them except in succession, none of their steps will be assured if we do not examine them in their entirety—and the fourth leaf particularly, which serves as a rallying point for all the others.

This is a truth to which humanity has paid little attention. It is however one which is infinitely necessary for us to observe and understand as we are all born with the book in our hand. If studying and understanding this book are precisely the tasks we need to accomplish, we can then judge

how advantageous it is for us to avoid making any errors in its study.

Yet humanity's negligence concerning this matter has been carried to an extreme. Very few among us have noticed the essential union of the book's ten leaves which renders them absolutely inseparable. Some have stopped in the middle of the book, others at the third leaf, others at the first—a situation which has produced atheists, materialists, and deists, respectively. It is true that a few have perceived such ties, but they have not understood the important distinction that needs to be made between each of these leaves, and, finding them bound together, they have believed them to be equal and of the same nature.

What has been the result? By limiting themselves to that part of the book they did not have the courage to go beyond, and by depending upon the fact that they were nevertheless expressing themselves according to the book, they have pretended that they possess an understanding of the entire book. Thereby believing themselves infallible in their doctrine, they have exerted all their efforts to prove it. But such isolated truths, receiving no sustenance, have soon deteriorated in the hands of those who had thus separated them, and there remained nothing for these imprudent people but a vain phantom of knowledge, which they could not offer as a solid body, nor as a true being, without having recourse to imposture.

This is precisely where all the errors we shall examine eventually in this treatise originated, as have all those we have already

disclosed, such as the two opposing principles, the nature and laws of corporeal beings, the different faculties of humankind, and the principles and origin of religion and rites.

The part of the book in which these errors have primarily occurred will be shown afterwards, but before considering this matter we will round out the understanding that one must have of this incomparable book by presenting in detail the different learning and properties, the knowledge of which is contained in these leaves.

The FIRST dealt with the universal principle or center from which all centers continually emanate.

The SECOND dealt with the creative cause of the universe, of the dual corporeal law supporting it; of the dual intellectual law manifesting in time; of the dual nature of humanity; and generally of everything that is composed of and formed by two actions.

The THIRD dealt with the foundation of bodies; of all the results and productions of all genders. This where is found the number of immaterial beings who do not think.

The FOURTH dealt with all that is active; of the principle of all languages, whether temporal or beyond time; of the religion and rites of humankind. This is where is found the number of immaterial beings who think.

The FIFTH dealt with idolatry and putrefaction.

The SIXTH dealt with the laws governing the formation of the temporal world and the natural division of the circle by the radius.

The SEVENTH dealt with the cause of winds and tides; of the geographical scale of humankind; of its true knowledge and the source of its intellectual or sensate productions.

The EIGHTH dealt with the temporal number of that which is the sole support, force, and hope of humanity—in other words, of that real and physical being which has two names and four numbers due to its being active and intelligent at the same time. And since its action extends over the four worlds, it also dealt with justice and all legislative powers, which include the rights of sovereigns and the authority of generals and judges.

The NINTH dealt with the formation of the corporeal human in the womb of woman and with the decomposition of the universal and particular triangle.

Finally, the TENTH was the channel and complement of the preceding nine. It was undoubtedly the most essential and that without which all the others would not be known, because, by placing all ten in a circumference accord-

ing to their numerical order, it will be found to have the closest affinity with the first, from which all emanate. And if one desires to judge its importance, let it be known that the Author of all things is invincible because of it, as it is a barrier which protects the Deity from all sides and which no being can pass.

Thus, we perceive in this enumeration all the knowledge to which humankind can aspire and the laws that are imposed upon us. It is clear that we will never possess any knowledge, nor will we ever be able to fulfill any of our true duties, without going to and drawing from this source.



We also actually know the hand that must lead us to it, and although we cannot take a single step toward this fertile source on our own, we will certainly advance towards it by forgetting our own will and allowing [the source] to act for us.

Therefore, let us congratulate humankind for still being able to find such a support in our misery. Let our hearts be filled with hope when we perceive that even today we can discover without error in this precious book the essence and properties of being, the reason for things, and certain and invariable laws of human religion and rites which we must necessarily render to the Primary Being. In other words, due to humans being at once intellectual and sensate—and nothing in existence is not one or the other—we must recognize our own relationship with everything which exists.

As this book contains only ten leaves and yet contains All, nothing can exist without belonging, by its very nature, to one of these ten leaves. Thus, there is not a single being which does not indicate in itself the nature of its class and to which of the ten leaves it belongs. Every being offers us thereby the means necessary for instructing us in everything concerning it. But, to direct ourselves in such understanding, we must distinguish the true and simple laws constituting the nature of beings from those which humans think up and substitute for them every day.

Let us now consider that part of the book which I have declared as having been the most abused. It is the fourth leaf which has been recognized as having the closest affinity to humanity, as this is where our duties and the true laws of our thinking being have been written, as well as the precepts of human religion and rites.

If, indeed, we followed with exactitude, constancy, and pure intention all the points clearly expressed therein, we could obtain the help of the very hand that had punished us; elevate ourselves above that

region of corruption to which we are relegated by condemnation; and recover traces of this ancient authority by virtue of which we determined, in the past, the latitudes and longitudes necessary for the maintenance of universal order. But, since such powerful resources were attached to this fourth leaf, it is also, as we have stated, in this part of the book that humankind's errors were the most considerable. And, truly, if humans had not neglected such advantages, all would still be peaceful and happy upon earth.

The first of these errors was to transpose this fourth leaf and substitute in its place the fifth, or that which deals with idolatry. In so doing, humanity distorted their religious laws and thus could not derive the same benefits from them nor the same assistance as they would have had they preserved the true rites. On the contrary, receiving only darkness as their reward, they engulfed themselves in it to the point of no longer even desiring the light.

As we said at the beginning of this book, the course of this principle was such that it made itself evil by its own will. Such was the error of the first being, and such has been that of many of its descendants, chiefly among the peoples who seek their Orient [East] in the South of Earth.

This is what constitutes this error or crime which cannot be forgiven and which, on the contrary, is inevitably subject to the most rigorous punishment. But the majority of beings are protected from these errors, because it is only by walking that one falls, and the greater number of beings do not walk. However, how is it possible to advance without walking?

The second error consists of having taken a rough idea of the properties connected with this fourth leaf and to believe that they could be applied to all, because attributing them to objects for which they are unsuitable makes it impossible to discover anything.

Moreover, who does not know how slight has been the degree of success attained by those who base matter upon the four elements, who dare not refuse thought to animals, who attempt to square the solar calculus with the lunar calculus, who search for longitude upon Earth and for the quadrature of the circle—in a word, who attempt every day to find an infinity of discoveries of this sort and in which they never gain satisfactory results (as we shall continue to show later in this treatise). Yet this error is not directly aimed against the universal principle. Those who follow it are not punished except by ignorance, and it does not demand any expiation.

There is a third error by which, and through the same superficial ignorance, humanity has believed itself in possession of the sacred advantages that this fourth leaf could, indeed, communicate to them. Pursuing this idea they have spread among their fellow beings the uncertain notions of truth which they themselves have created. They have directed the eyes of the people, who should only have directed them towards the Primary Being, upon themselves, as well as the physical, active, and intelligent cause—and upon those who, by their accomplishments and virtues, have obtained the right to represent the Primary Being upon earth.

This error, without being as disastrous as the first, is however infinitely more dangerous than the second, because it gives beings a false and childish idea of the Author of all things and of the paths leading to the Author. To summarize, those who have had the impudence and audacity to announce themselves thusly have, so to speak, established an infinity of systems, dogmas, and religions. These establishments, already so lacking in substance in themselves and their institutions, could not avoid experiencing further alterations so that, being obscure and shadowy at the moment of their origin, they have completely disclosed their deformities through the passing of time.

Therefore, by adding the enormous abuses that have been made in the knowledge contained in the fourth leaf of this book, of which we are all guardians at birth, and by adding the confusion that has proceeded therefrom to all that we have observed regarding humankind's ignorance, fears, and weaknesses, as well as our departure from the symbols, we will have the explanation and origin for this multitude of religions and rites prevalent among people.

Without a doubt, we can only despise them when we perceive this variety which distorts them and this mutual opposition which unveils their falsities. But if we do not lose sight of the fact that these differences and peculiarities have never affected any but the sensate, and if we recall that humankind, being by our thinking the image and likeness of the Primary and Highest of thinking beings, brings with us all our own laws, then we shall recognize that when they are born our religion is also born within us. Far from having come to us as a result of the entreaties, caprice, ignorance, and terror which nature's catastrophes may have inspired within, all of these causes, on the contrary, constitute what has often distorted humankind's religion and brought people to the point where some even distrust the only remedy available to us for the alleviation of our misfortunes. We shall recognize to even a much greater extent that beings alone suffer from these variations and weaknesses, and that the source of their existence and the way granted them for attaining it will never be less pure. We shall also recognize that we will always be certain to discover a point of reunion that will be common to us and our fellow beings whenever we direct our eyes towards this source and towards the only light that must lead us to it.

