

Tarde, Gabriel (1903): LAWS OF IMITATION

CHAPTER I

UNIVERSAL REPETITION

I

CAN we have a science or only a history, or, at most, a philosophy of social phenomena? This question is always open. And yet, if social facts are closely observed from a certain point of view, they can be reduced, like other facts, to series of minute and homogeneous phenomena and to the formulas, or laws, which sum up these series.

Why, then, is the science of society still unborn, or born but recently, among all its adult and vigorous sister sciences? The chief reason is, I think, that we have thrown away the substance for its shadow and substituted words for things.

We have thought it impossible to give a scientific look to sociology except by giving it a biological or, better still, a mechanical air. This is an attempt to light up the known by the unknown.

It is transforming a solar system into a non-resolvable nebula in order to understand it better.

In social subjects we are exceptionally privileged in having veritable causes, positive and specific acts, at first hand; this condition is wholly lacking in every other subject of investigation. It is unnecessary, therefore, to rely for an explanation of social facts upon those so-called general causes which physicists and naturalists are obliged to create under the name of force, energy, conditions of existence, and other verbal palliatives of their ignorance of the real groundwork of things.

But are we to consider that human acts are the sole factors of history? Surely this is too simple!

Let us ward off this vague idealism. Let us likewise ward off the vapid individualism which consists in explaining social changes as the caprices of certain great men.

On the other hand, let us explain these changes through the more or less fortuitous appearance, as to time and place, of certain great ideas, or rather, of a considerable number of both major and minor ideas, of ideas which are generally anonymous and usually of obscure birth; which are simple or abstruse; which are seldom illustrious, but which are always novel.

Because of this latter attribute, I shall take the liberty of baptising them collectively inventions or discoveries. By these two terms I mean any kind of an innovation or improvement, however slight, which is made in any previous innovation throughout the range of social phenomena—language, religion, politics, law, industry, or art.

The true causes can be reduced to a chain of ideas which are, to be sure, very numerous, but which are in themselves distinct and discontinuous, although they are connected by the much more numerous acts of imitation which are modelled upon them.

Our starting-point lies here in the re-inspiring initiatives which bring new wants, together with new satisfactions, into the world, and which then, through spontaneous and unconscious or artificial and deliberate imitation, propagate or tend to propagate, themselves, at a more or less rapid.

I confess that this is an extremely difficult analysis. Socially, everything is either invention or imitation. And invention bears the same relation to imitation as a mountain to a river.

If we consider the science of society from this point of view, we shall at once see that human sociology is related to animal sociologies, as a species to its genus, so to speak. That it is an extraordinary and infinitely superior species, I admit, but it is allied to the others, nevertheless.

Tarde - Laws of imitation

M. Espinas expressly states in his admirable work on *Sociétés animales*, a work which was written long before the first edition of this book, that the labours of ants may be very well explained on the principle " of individual initiative followed by imitation." This initiative is always an innovation or invention that is equal to one of our own in boldness of spirit. To conceive the idea of constructing an arch, or a tunnel, at an appropriate point, an ant must be endowed with an innovating instinct equal to, or surpassing, that of our canal-digging or mountain-tunnelling engineers.

M. Espinas is very frequently impressed in his observation of the societies of our lower brethren by the important role which is played in them by individual initiatives. Every herd of wild cattle has its leaders, its influential heads. Developments in the instincts of birds are explained by the same author as " individual inventions which are afterwards transmitted from generation to generation through direct instruction."

What, then, do we know in the scientific sense of the word? Of course, we answer that we know causes and effects. And when we have learned that, in the case of two different events, the one is the outcome of the other, or that both collaborate towards the same end, we say that they have been explained.

But let us imagine a world where there is neither resemblance nor repetition, a strange, but, if need be, an intelligible hypothesis; a world where everything is novel and unforeseen, where the creative imagination, unchecked by memory, has full play, where the motions of the stars are sporadic, where the agitations of the ether are unrhythmical, and where successive generations are without the common traits of an hereditary type. And yet every apparition in such a phantasmagoria might be produced and determined by another, and might even, in its turn, become the cause of others. In such a world causes and effects might still exist; but would any kind of a science be possible?

This is the essential point. Knowledge of causes is some times sufficient for foresight; but knowledge of resemblances always allows of enumeration and measurement, and science depends primarily upon number and measure.

As soon as a new science has staked out its field of characteristic resemblances and repetitions, it must compare them and note the bond of solidarity which unites their concomitant variations. But, as a matter of fact, the mind does not fully understand nor clearly recognise the relation of cause and effect, except in as much as the effect resembles or repeats the cause, as, for example, when a sound wave produces another sound wave, or a cell, another cell. There is nothing more mysterious, one may say, than such reproductions. I admit this; but when we have once accepted this mystery, there is nothing clearer than the resulting series. Whereas, every time that production does not mean reproduction of self, we are entirely in the dark.

When like things form parts of the same or of supposedly the same whole, like the molecules of a volume of hydrogen, or the woody cells of a tree, or the soldiers of a regiment, the resemblance is referred to as a quantity instead of a group. In other words, when the things which repeat themselves remain united as they increase, like vibrations of heat or electricity, accumulating within some heated or electrified object, or like cells multiplying in the body of a growing child, or like proselytes to a common religion, in such cases the repetition is called a growth instead of a series. In all of this I fail to see anything which would differentiate the subject of social science,

"Scientific knowledge need not necessarily take its starting-point from the most minute hypothetical and unknown things. It begins wherever matter forms units of a like order which can be compared with and measured by one another, and wherever such units combine as units of a higher order and thus serve in themselves as a standard of comparison for the latter" (Von Naegeli. Address at the congress of German naturalists in 1877).

How much greater a renovator than revolution is our modern industrial system, accumulation as it is of mutually imitative actions!

Would any organic progress be possible without heredity? Would the exuberant variety of geological ages and of living nature have sprung into existence independently of the periodicity of the heavenly motions or of the wave-like rhythm of the earth's forces?

Tarde - Laws of imitation

Repetition exists, then, for the sake of variation. Other wise, the necessity of death (a problem which M. Delbœuf considers in his book upon animate and inanimate matter, almost impossible of solution), would be incomprehensible; for why should not the top of life spin on, after it was wound up, forever? But under the hypothesis that repetitions exist only to embody all the phases of a certain unique originality which seeks expression, death must inevitably supervene after all these variations have been fully effected.

Nominalism is the doctrine in accordance with which individual characteristics or idiosyncracies are the only significant realities. Realism, on the other hand, considers only those traits worthy of attention and of the name of reality through which a given individual resembles other individuals and tends to reproduce himself in them. The interest of this kind of speculation is apparent when we consider that in politics individualism is a special kind of nominalism, and socialism, a special kind of realism.

All repetition, social, vital, or physical, i. e., imitative, hereditary, or vibratory repetition (to consider only the most salient and typical forms of universal repetition), springs from some innovation, just as every light radiates from some central point, and thus throughout science the normal appears to originate from the accidentâl.

All these admirable uniformities or series,—hydrogen, whose multitudinous, star-scattered atoms are universally homogeneous, protoplasm, identical from one end to the other of the scale of life, the roots of the Indo-European languages, identical almost throughout civilisation, the expansion of the light of a star in the immensity of space, the unbroken sequence from geological times of incalculable generations of marine species, the wonderfully faithful transmission of words from the Coptic of the ancient Egyptians to us moderns, etc,—all these innumerable masses of things of like nature and of like affiliations, whose harmonious co-existence or equally harmonious succession we admire, are related to physical, biological, and social accidents by a tie which baffles us.

liere, also, the analogy between social and natural phenomena is carried out. But we should not be surprised if the former seem chaotic when we view them through the medium of the historian, or even through that of the sociologist, whereas the latter impress us, as they are presented by physicist, chemist, or physiologist, as very well ordered worlds. These latter scientists show us the subject of their science only on the side of its characteristic resemblances and repetitions; they prudently conceal its corresponding heterogeneities and transformations (or trans-substantiations). The historian and sociologist, on the contrary, veil the regular and monotonous face of social facts,—that part in which they are alike and repeat themselves,—and show us only their accidental and interesting, their infinitely novel and diversified, aspect.

This, however, is the arduous task which the philosopher of history sets before himself and which he thinks that he cannot slur over if he is to do the work of a scholar. He will, therefore, wear himself out in trying to bring order out of disorder by discovering some law or reason for these historic chances and coincidences. He would do better to investigate how and why harmonies sometimes proceed from these coincidences and in what these harmonies consist. I will undertake to do this further on.

And now my readers will realise, perhaps, that the social being, in the degree that he is social, is essentially imitative, and that imitation plays a rôle in societies analogous to that of heredity in organic life or to that of vibration among in-organic bodies.

If this is so, it ought to be admitted, in consequence, that a human invention, by which a new kind of imitation is started or a new series opened,—the invention of gunpowder, for example, or windmills, or the Morse telegraph,—stands in the same relation to social science as the birth of a new vegetal or mineral species (or, on the hypothesis of a gradual evolution, of each of the slow modifications to which the new species is due), to biology, or as the appearance of a new mode of motion comparable with light or electricity, or the formation of a new substance, to physics or chemistry.

Tarde - Laws of imitation

We should then perceive that the crude incoherence of historic facts, all of which facts are traceable to the different currents of imitation of which they are the point of intersection, a point which is itself destined to be more or less exactly copied, is no proof at all against the fundamental regularity of social life or the possibility of a social science.

The origin of atoms is much more mysterious than the origin of species, and the origin of species is, in turn, more mysterious than the origin of civilisations.

We can compare extant living species with those which have preceded them, the remains of which we find in the earth's strata; but we have not the slightest trace of the chemical substances which must have preceded, in prehistoric astronomy, so to speak, in the unfathomable and unimaginable depths of the past, the actual chemical substances of the earth and stars. Consequently, chemistry, which cannot even propound a problem of origins, is less advanced, in this essential particular, than biology; and, for like reason, biology is, in reality, less advanced than sociology.

From the foregoing, it is evident that social science and social philosophy are distinct; that social science must deal exclusively, like every other science, with a multitude of homogeneous facts, with those facts which are carefully concealed by the historians; that new and heterogeneous facts, or historical facts, strictly speaking, are the special domain of social philosophy; that from this point of view social science might be as advanced as the other sciences, and that social philosophy is actually much more so than any other philosophy.

II

Science, as I have said, deals only with quantities and growths, or, in more general terms, with the resemblances and repetitions of phenomena.

This distinction, however, is really superfluous and superficial. Every advance in knowledge tends to strengthen the conviction that all resemblance is due to repetition.

I think that this may be brought out in the three following propositions:

1. All resemblances which are to be observed in the chemical, or physical, or astronomical worlds (the atoms of a single body, the waves of a single ray of light, the concentric strata of attraction of which every heavenly body is a centre), can be caused and explained solely by periodic, and, for the most part, vibratory motions.
2. All resemblances of vital origin in the world of life result from hereditary transmission, from either intra- or extra-organic reproduction. It is through the relationship between cells and the relationship between species that all the different kinds of analogies and homologies which comparative anatomy points out between species, and histology, between corporeal elements, are at present explained.
3. All resemblances of social origin in society are the direct or indirect fruit of the various forms of imitation,—custom-imitation or fashion-imitation, sympathy-imitation or obedience-imitation, precept-imitation or education imitation; naive imitation, deliberate imitation, etc. In this lies the excellence of the contemporaneous method of explaining doctrines and institutions through their history. It is a method that is certain to come into more general use. It is said that great geniuses, great inventors, are apt to cross each other's paths.

If quantity signifies resemblance, if every resemblance proceeds from repetition, and if every repetition is a vibration (or any other periodic movement), a phenomenon of reproduction or an act of imitation, it follows that, on the hypothesis that no motion is, or ever has been, vibratory, no function hereditary, no act or idea learned and copied, there would be no such thing as quantity in the universe, and the science of mathematics would be without any possible use or conceivable application.

It also follows upon the inverse hypothesis, that if our physical, vital, and social spheres were to enlarge the range of their vibratory, reproductive, and propagative activities, our field of calculation would be even more extensive and profound.

Tarde - Laws of imitation

This fact is apparent in our European societies where the extraordinary progress of fashion in all its forms, in dress, food and housing, in wants and ideas, in institutions and arts, is making a single type of European based upon several hundreds of millions of examples. Is it not evident that it is this prodigious levelling which has from its very beginning made possible the birth and growth of statistical science and of what has been so well called social physics, political economy? Without fashion and custom, social quantities would not exist, there would be no values, no money, and, consequently, no science of wealth or finance.

III

In the first place, repetitions are also multiplications or self-spreading contagions. If a stone falls into the water, the first wave which it produces will repeat itself in circling out to the confines of its basin. If I light a match, the first undulation which I start in the ether will instantly spread throughout a vast space. If one couple of termites or of phylloxeras are transported to a continent, they will ravish it within a few years. The pernicious erigeron of Canada, which has but quite recently been imported from Europe, flourishes already in every uncultivated field.

The well-known laws of Malthus and Darwin on the tendency of the individuals of a species to increase in geometrical progression, are true laws of human radiation through reproduction.

In the same way, a local dialect that is spoken only by certain families, gradually becomes, through imitation, a national idiom.

In the beginning of societies, the art of chipping flint, of domesticating dogs, of making bows, and, later, of leavening bread, of working bronze, of extracting iron, etc, must have spread like a contagion; since every arrow, every flake, every morsel of bread, every thread of bronze, served both as model and copy.

Every social thing, that is to say, every invention or discovery, tends to expand in its social environment, an environment which itself, I might add, tends to self-expansion, since it is essentially composed of like things, all of which have infinite ambitions.

This tendency, however, here as in external nature, often proves abortive through the competition of rival tendencies.

In this sense, this tendency towards expansion presupposes that the environment in question is homogeneous, a condition which seems to be well fulfilled by the ethereal or aerial medium of vibrations, much less so by the geographical and chemical medium of species, and infinitely less so by the social medium of ideas.

But it is a mistake, I think, to express this difference by saying that the social medium is more complex than the others. On the contrary, it is perhaps because it is numerically much more simple, that it is farther from presenting the required homogeneity; since a homogeneity that is real on the surface merely, suffices.

Besides, as the agglomerations of human beings increase, the spread of ideas in a regular geometrical progression is more marked.

Let us exaggerate this numerical increase to an extreme degree, let us suppose that the social sphere in which an idea can expand be composed not only of a group sufficiently numerous to give birth to the principal moral varieties of the human species, but also of thousands of uniform repetitions of these groups, so that the uniformity of these repetitions makes an apparent homogeneity, in spite of the internal complexity of each group. Have we not some reason for thinking that this is the kind of homogeneity which characterises all the simple and apparently uniform realities which external nature presents to us ?

It has been said that the faculty of foresight is the criterion of science. Let us amend this to read, the faculty of conditional foresight.

Tarde - Laws of imitation

Now it is precisely on the same ground that the sociologist is, strictly speaking, a scientist. Given the centres, the approximate velocities, and the tendency to separate or concurrent motion of existing imitations, the sociologist is in a position to foretell the social conditions of ten or twenty years hence, provided no reform or political revolution occur to hinder this expansion and provided no rival centres arise meanwhile.

Moreover, the social forces of any real importance at any period are not composed of the necessarily feeble imitations that have radiated from recent inventions, but of the imitations of ancient inventions, radiations which are alike more intense and more widespread because they have had the necessary time in which to spread out and become established as habits, customs, or so called physiological "race instincts."

I must not be accused of the absurd idea of denying in all of this the influence of race upon social facts. But I think that on account of the number of its acquired characteristics, race is the outcome, and not the source, of these facts, and only in this hitherto ignored sense does appear to me to come within the special province of the sociologist.

IV

Let me point out a new order of analogies. Imitations are modified in passing from one race or nation to another, like vibrations or living types in passing from one environment to another. We see this, for example, in the transition of certain words, or religious myths, or military secrets, or literary forms, from the Hindoos to the Germans, or from the Latins to the Gauls.

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL RESEMBLANCES AND IMITATION

IN the preceding chapter I merely stated, without developing, the thesis that imitation is the cause of all social likeness. But this formula must not be lightly accepted; to grasp its truth and that of the two analogous formulas relating to biological and physical resemblances, it must be thoroughly understood. Upon our first glance at societies, exceptions and objections seem to abound.

In spite of its apparent gravity, it merely offers an opportunity of copying in sociology a distinction that is usual in comparative anatomy between analogies and homologies.

If this form of discrimination is legitimate for the naturalist, I do not see why the sociologist should be refused the right of treating the functional analogies of different languages, religions, governments, and civilisations with equal contempt, and their anatomical homologies with equal respect.

Moreover, I admit that, in general, when the current of human genius has once set towards inventions and discoveries, it finds itself confined by a sum of subjective and objective conditions, like a river by its banks, between narrow limits of development.

This difficult step must have been an unique event; without it, our richly developed world would have been chained to the limbo of unrealised possibilities. Without this spark, the flame of progress would never have been kindled in the primæval forests of savagery. This original act of imagination and its spread through imitation was the true cause, the sine qua non of progress. The immediate acts of imitation which it prompted were not its sole results. It suggested other acts of imagination which in turn suggested new acts and so on without end.

Thus everything is related to it. Every social resemblance precedes from that initial act of imitation of which it was the subject.

Every natural phenomenon is seen through the prisms and coloured glasses of a mother tongue, or national religion, or ruling prejudice, or scientific theory, from which the most unbiassed and unimpassioned observation cannot emancipate itself without self-destruction.

Tarde - Laws of imitation

The social environment, in defining and actualising this form, has, in truth, appropriated it. Even desires for nutrition and reproduction have been transformed, so to speak, into national products. Sexual desire is changed into a desire to be married according to the different religious rites of different localities. Desire for food is expressed in one place as a desire for a certain kind of bread or meat, in another, for a certain kind of grain or vegetable. This is all the more true of the natural desire for amusement. It expresses itself as desire for circus sports, for bull-fights, for classical tragedies, for naturalistic novels, for chess, for piquet, for whist.

Since, then, all inventions and discoveries are composed of prior imitations, excepting certain extraneous accretions, of themselves unfruitful, and since these composites are themselves imitated and are destined to become, in turn, elements of still more complex combinations, it follows that there is a genealogical tree of such successful initiatives and that they appear in an irrevocable, although otherwise indeterminate, sequence, suggestive of the pangenetic theory of the old philosophers.

Every successful invention actualises one of the thousand possible, or rather, given certain conditions, necessary, inventions, which are carried in the womb of its parent invention, and by its appearance it annihilates the majority of those possibilities and makes possible a host of heretofore impossible inventions. These latter inventions will or will not come into existence according to the extent and direction of the radiation of its imitation through communities which are already illuminated by other lights.

To be sure, only the most useful, if you please, of the future inventions—and by most useful I mean those which best answer the problems of the time—will survive, for every invention, like every discovery, is an answer to a problem.

It is difficult for us to imagine how necessary genius and exceptional circumstances were for the development of the simplest ideas. To tame and make use of harmless indigenous animals, instead of merely hunting them, would seem at first to be the most natural, as well as the most fruitful, of initiatives, an inevitable initiative, in fact. Yet we know that, although the horse originally belonged to the American fauna, it had disappeared from America when that continent was discovered, and, according to Bourdeau, its disappearance is generally explained (Conquête dit monde animal) on the ground that "in many places (in the Old World as well) it had been annihilated by the hunter for food, before the herdsman had conceived the idea of domesticating it."

And so we see that this idea was far from being an inevitable one. The domestication of the horse depended upon some individual accident.

CHAPTER III

WHAT IS A SOCIETY?

I

What is a society? The general answer is as follows: It is a group of distinct individuals who render one another mutual services. But this definition is as false as it is clear.

It has been the source of all those confusions which have so often been made between so-called animal societies, or the majority of them, and the only true societies, which do include, in a certain connection, a small number of animals.

Tarde - Laws of imitation

For this wholly economic notion, a notion which bases the social group upon mutual helpfulness, it might be an advantage to substitute a purely juristic conception of society. In this case, an individual would not be associated with those to whom he was useful or who were useful to him, but with those, and only with those, who had established over him recognised rights of law, custom, and conventionality, or over whom he had analogous rights, with or without reciprocity. But we shall see that although this is a preferable point of view, yet it unduly restricts the social group, just as the economic point of view unduly enlarges it. Finally, we might think of the social tie as entirely political or religious in character. Belief in the same religion or collaboration for the same patriotic purpose, a purpose common to all the associates and one absolutely distinct from the different individual wants, for whose satisfaction it matters little whether they aid each other or not, would constitute a true social relationship. Such moral and mental unanimity is undoubtedly characteristic of mature societies; but it is also true that social ties may begin without it. They exist, for example, among Europeans of different nationalities.

Society is far more a system of mutually determined engagements and agreements, of rights and duties, than a system of mutual services. This is the reason why it is established between beings who are alike or who differ little from each other.

Society may therefore be defined as a group of beings who are apt to imitate one another, or who, without actual imitation, are alike in their possession of common traits which are ancient copies of the same model.

CHAPTER V.

THE LOGICAL LAWS OF IMITATION

Now, social causes are of two kinds, the logical and the non-logical. This distinction is of the greatest importance.

Logical causes operate whenever an individual prefers a given innovation to others because he thinks it is more useful or more true than others, that is, more in accord than they are with the aims or principles that have already found a place in his mind (through imitation, of course). In such instances, the old or new inventions or discoveries are themselves the only question; they are isolated from any prestige or discredit which may have attached to those circulating them or to the time and place of their origin. But logical action is very rarely untrammelled in this way.

In general, the extra-logical influences to which I have referred interfere in the choice of the examples to be followed, and often, as we shall see further on, the poorest innovations, from the point of view of logic, are selected because of their place, or even date or birth.

Invention and imitation are, as we know, the elementary social acts. But what is the social substance or force through which this act is accomplished and of which it is merely the form? In other words, what is invented or imitated?

The thing which is invented, the thing which is imitated, is always an idea or a volition, a judgment or a purpose, which embodies a certain amount of belief and desire. And here we have, in fact, the very soul of words, of religious prayers, of state administration, of the articles of a code, of moral duties, of industrial achievements or of artistic processes. Desire and belief: they are the substance and the force, they are the two psychological quantities which are found at the bottom of all the sensational qualities with which they combine; and when invention and then imitation takes possession of them in order to organise and use them, they also are the real social quantities.

Societies are organised according to the agreement or opposition of beliefs which reinforce or limit one another. Social institutions depend entirely upon these conditions. Societies function according to the competition or co-operation of their desires or wants. Beliefs, principally religious and moral beliefs, but juristic and political beliefs as well, and even linguistic beliefs (for how many acts of faith are implied in the lightest talk and what an irresistible although unconscious power of persuasion our mother tongue, a true mother indeed, exerts over us), are the plastic forces of societies. Economic or æsthetic wants are their functional forces.

II. The Logical Duel

CHAPTER VI

EXTRA-LOGICAL INFLUENCES

In the second place, imitation may be conscious or unconscious, deliberate or spontaneous, voluntary or involuntary. But I do not attach great importance to this classification. Is it true that as a people becomes civilised its manner of imitating becomes more and more voluntary, conscious, and deliberate? I think the opposite is true. Just as with the individual unconscious habits were originally conscious and self-determined acts, so in the nation everything that is done or said by tradition or custom began by being a difficult and much-questioned importation. I should add, to be sure, that many imitations are from the very beginning unconscious and involuntary.

This is so of the imitation of the accents, manners, and more often of the ideals and sentiments peculiar to the environment in which we live. It is also plain that imitation of the will of others—I know no other way of defining spontaneous obedience—is necessarily involuntary. But let us observe that the involuntary and unconscious forms of imitation never become voluntary and conscious, whereas the voluntary and conscious forms are likely to take on the opposite characteristics.

I. Imitation from Within to Without

The vocal function, like all functions of intercourse, is eminently imitative, particularly on its intellectual side, in diction and pronunciation, not in the timbre of the voice. Accent is also transmitted. But this happens gradually and during youth. Every city retains a characteristic accent long after its food and dress have become like those of other cities.

M. Ribot has pointed out that the memory of sentiments is much more persistent than that of ideas. I should say the like of the imitation of sentiments compared with the imitation (i. e., the spread) of ideas. Certainly morals and religious and moral sentiments which consist of reciprocal impregnations of affective states have a greater tenacity than opinions or even principles.

The opposite occurs among animals, where imitation is effected in a pretty inexact manner, and only in the reproduction of songs and cries and muscular acts and where the transmission of nervous phenomena, of ideas and desires, is always vague. Because of this animal societies stand still; for although some ingenious idea might gleam through the brain of a crow or bison, it would, according to hypothesis, die with him and be necessarily lost to the community.

With animals, it is primarily and pre-eminently muscle which imitates muscle; with us, it is primarily and pre-eminently nerve which imitates nerve and brain which imitates brain. This is the chief contrast through which we may explain the superiority of human societies.

In them no good idea is lost, and every exceptional thinker lives on in the posterity which he raises up to his own level.

CHAPTER VII

EXTRA-LOGICAL INFLUENCES (CONTINUED)

Custom and Fashion

II. Religion

Religions have often been divided into two great classes: those that proselyte and those that do not. But the truth is that at first even the most hospitable religions began by being jealously closed to the foreigner. We shall find this so, at least, if we go back to their true origins. Buddhism, to be sure, appealed from its very birth to men of every race; but Buddhism is only a detached branch of Brahminism, and Brahminism admits of no means of propagation, in principle at least, but transmission through blood. As for Christianity, it did not spread before the time of St. Paul beyond the Jewish race.

Tarde - Laws of imitation

In brief, this famous distinction between proselyting and non-proselyting religions merely means that the need of expansion that is common to all alike is satisfied in the one case by the transmission of useful maxims of piety to the posterity of the same race, a posterity that is always becoming more and more numerous,—this is the cause of the ardent desire of the Hebrew and Aryan of antiquity for a numerous offspring,—whereas in the other case, the same need seeks an easier and a quicker satisfaction in the transmission of its rites and dogmas to contemporaries of other race and blood. In the first case the propagating agent is custom; in the second, that which I call fashion. And the passage from the first to the second is only an extraordinary advance of imitation; it has passed from pedestrianism to flight.