

of opposition and the law of adaptation. In the sequel he is led to oppose especially the fundamental conception of Herbert Spencer. Instead of finding with the latter the beginning of things social or natural in a homogeneous instability, he says "all that constitutes the visible universe, accessible to our observation, we know proceeds from the invisible and impenetrable, from an apparent 'Nothing,' out of which all reality rises inexhaustibly. If we reflect on this strange phenomenon, we are surprised at the power of a prejudice, at once popular and scientific, which makes every one—a Spencer not less than every first-comer—regard the infinitesimal as insignificant, *i.e.*, as homogeneous, neutral, without character or spirit."¹

In his criticism of Herbert Spencer's theory of the origin of things and processes in the monotony of an "unstable homogeneous" condition,² out of which through some unexplained influence the endless variety of phenomena arises, we are reminded of Hegel's criticism of the Absolute of Schelling which "is the night in which all cows are black." And as Hegel thought it imperative to start with a living and active principle, not with a mere identity or indifference, so M. Tarde sees the original fact in a creative process or a series of creative

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His criticism of
Spencer.

¹ Gabriel Tarde, *loc. cit.*, p. 159.

² "Je sais bien ce qu'on va m'objecter: la prétendue loi de l'instabilité de l'homogène. Mais elle est fautive, mais elle est arbitraire, mais elle a été imaginée tout exprès pour concilier avec le parti pris de croire indifférencié en soi l'indistinct à nos yeux, l'évidence des diversités phénoménales, des exubérantes variations vivantes,

psychologiques et sociales. La vérité est que l'hétérogène seul est instable et que l'homogène est stable essentiellement. La stabilité des choses est en raison directe de leur homogénéité. La seule chose parfaitement homogène—ou paraissant telle—dans la Nature, c'est l'Espace géométrique, qui n'a point changé depuis Euclide" (*loc. cit.*, p. 160 *sqq.*)