SUMMARY. This article examines the life and work of Dr Paul Carton (1875—1947), a French physician who promoted 'naturist vegetarianism'. His career and the evolution of his ideas were influenced by his own experience as a young man of treatment for tuberculosis, and by an anti-materialist philosophy. He developed a diet for his patients that became influential through his writings and through the activities of the French Naturist Society. Although by no means the only advocate of such ideas, Carton's influence has survived and can still be discerned in a close reading of the present-day French popular press.

KEYWORDS: Dr Paul Carton; Hippocratic-Cartonian Method; naturist vegetarianism; tuberculosis; simple cooking; natural medicine; materialist medicine; health; Catholicism; social classes; anarchy; hygiene

Although not especially well known outside France, the writings of Paul Carton are an important part of contemporary French vegetarianism. Take, for example, the sociological and dietary characteristics of Mrs Nathalie B. Her profile, taken from interviews conducted among French vegetarians, is typical of the other 122 people taking part in Gilles Daveau's 1997 organic and vegetarian cooking classes in Nantes (Western France). The results of the questionnaire and the analysis of the interviews showed that these respondents perfectly illustrated what could be portrayed as neo-Cartonianism in present-day France.1 A non-practising Catholic, without affiliation to any kind of association, whether sanitary, humanitarian, ecological, or animal welfare, Mrs Nathalie B., aged 37, married, mother of three, is a nurse in Nantes' main University hospital, and spoke about her vegetarian interest as follows:

Five years ago, after my first child birth, I became eager to feed my family in a healthier way. To be honest, I feared overfeeding my daughter and making her obese, as I learned that obesity depends on the ways of eating in early years. I began reading alternative journals on diet, going to organic shops without necessarily buying anything, as it was expensive there. . . . One day, I got a free journal in a shop, and discovered a good vegetarian recipe, borrowed from Dr Carton's book named Cuisine Simple. I then decided to find that book. . . . It was not easy because the local bookshops did not deal with Carton's publisher. After many requests, I finally ordered the book from Mrs Tellier I think, who was Dr Carton's granddaughter and who was concerned to distribute his works. I just have this book, full of recipes not all of which I am able to cook by myself. One needs help because it is so uncommon to cook and make meals based only on vegetables. . . . That is the reason why I turned to vegetarian cooking lessons. . . . Mr Daveau knows Carton's recipes very well: he updated them, respecting their founder's ideas. . . . Anyway, I am not actually

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1 The questionnaire survey was undertaken with the purpose of analysing the dissemination of vegetarianism in France. The survey concerned people (n = 123) attending Gilles Daveau's organic and vegetarian cooking courses from 1988 to 1997.
completely vegetarian, and don't know if I want to be. . . From what I know, Carton did not advocate vegetarianism at all costs. About every two weeks, I cook fish or meat.

Carton’s legacy lives on in France today. Mrs Nathalie B.’s account epitomizes the principal features of this Cartonian heritage. But there are other, darker aspects of the legacy that also linger. For instance, the Goncourt prize-winner Maxence van der Meersch’s celebrated novel, *Bodies and Souls* (1948), portrayed Carton as an unruly hero, playing the role of a quack and nonconformist physician who exhorted many gullible people to defy conventional medical orthodoxies. Furthermore, controversies over Carton’s work culminated in 1951, when he was accused of having contributed to the death of Van der Meersch from tuberculosis.

By way of redemption of that negative image, sympathetic accounts of Carton’s *œuvre* followed, mainly from his close friends and disciples, glorifying both the radiance of his humanism and spirituality and the *grandeur* of his thought. It was only in the late 1980s, when alternative medicine became a subject of serious historical inquiry, that such polemics died down, and an unfettered approach to Carton’s medical and social philosophy became possible. Since then, scholars have generally studied Carton’s work piecemeal, as part of the history of alternative medicine, physical exercise, or natural diet, and most authors have been more concerned with Carton’s role as a forerunner of nonconformist ideas than with the intellectual and social significance of his ideological system as a whole. It is the role of this paper to challenge this existing historiography.

Dr Carton was the first writer to formulate a coherent physiological analysis of the various new anxieties about health and nutrition that emerged during the 1920s and 1930s in France, and to propose a systematic regimen that he believed would resolve them. The ‘naturist vegetarianism’ which Carton advocated was the cornerstone of the conception of health and disease that he called ‘médecine naturiste’ and promoted as the ‘methode hippocratique cartonienne’. Developing into a vegetarian bible, and subject to subsequent revisions, Carton’s dietary claims vividly illustrate the extent to which vegetarianism can be seen as a cleansing and purifying undertaking. To study the processes by which that evolution was
possible will lead to a better understanding of the social significance of Carton’s
document and its lasting impact.

I

Carton was already well-known to the intellectual milieu for his book *Les
Trois Aliments Meurtriers: la Viande, le Sucre, l’Alcool* (The Three Lethal Foods: Meat,
Sugar and Alcohol) published in 1912. *La Cuisine Simple* (Simple Vegetarian Cookery),
published in 1925, established his international reputation with the general
public.10

Carton was born in 1875 into a Catholic and middle-class family in Meaux (near
Paris). He received a classical medical education at the École de Médecine de Paris.
At the age of 26, two years before defending his doctoral thesis in medicine in
1903, Carton was struck by a severe case of tuberculosis. As diagnosed by the
traditional medical establishment, it was terminal: he was condemned. During his
‘struggle’ to survive, he sought help from the adherents of the scientism of his time;
from theosophists, who advocated spiritualism, evolutionism, retributive justice,
and reincarnation; from Pythagoreans, who exalted wisdom as the condition for
health;11 as well as from religious orders for whom asceticism, pushed to the limit
of Christian sacrifice, had spiritualizing value.12 If we do not know exactly which
groups Dr Carton frequented in Paris, we do at least know that it was in that milieu
of alternative medicine that Dr Carton discovered naturist vegetarianism and that
he felt he had recovered his health by applying its precepts.13 From then on, Carton
could no longer repress his indignation that the beneficent virtues of the
old medicine were ‘abandoned’ and ‘forgotten’, and replaced by a ‘materialist
medicine’ unfit for curing disease. Even less could Carton repress his indignation
that in France, as elsewhere, the extraordinary growth of biomedicine in the early
twentieth century seemed irreversible, and carried innumerable consequences
counter to his professional and humanist sensibilities as a Hippocratic physician and
to his strong values as a Catholic.

The ‘health for all’ agenda that the Third Republic addressed led to the elabora-
tion of plans for extensive hospital provision.14 From 1905, Radicals, preferring to
help relieve the poor rather than to continue paying parish priests, voted for the
disestablishment of the Church and organized free medical care for the elderly, the
disabled, and the incurable. Such a programme was characteristic of the so-called
‘materialist medicine’, and its advocates were people whose intellectual and polit-

10 The book was translated into many European languages, notably into English in 1931 by E.
11 Carton later devoted a biographical essay to Pythagoras and his diet. See his *La Vie Sage:
Commentaires sur les Vers d’Or des Pythagoriciens* (Paris, 1918).
12 *Bienheureux Ceux qui Souffrent* (Happy are Those who Suffer), published by Carton in 1923, was a
hymn to Christian sacrifice.
14 From 1871 to 1911, the number of hospitals increased by 320 per cent, and hospital expenditure
by 142 per cent. See J. Léonard, *La Médecine entre les Pouvoirs et les Savoirs. Histoire Intellectuelle et
ical views epitomized what Carton most hated. They were the early twentieth-century physicians who, as Jacques Léonard showed, were torn 'between rules and knowledges' and who believed that the future of the medical profession depended on its ability to match the medical demands of its newly growing middle-class members and their worldviews.\(^\text{15}\)

As members of the Left-wing progressive movement, with republican, radical, or socialist affiliations, the 'materialist' physicians were also strongly politicized.\(^\text{16}\) Under the Third Republic, they were frequently deputies and senators and sometimes even cabinet members. They were also frequently anticlerical, and advocated equality of education, health care, and life chances for all. Practising more often in the greater industrial cities, these physicians saw their incomes rise as the number of potential middle-class patients increased.

There was a philosophical harmony between the liberal principles of successive governments and those of the medical profession, and the materialist physicians played an important role in the modernization of the medical profession and of contemporary medical structures and techniques.\(^\text{17}\) Their social pre-eminence went hand in hand not only with the social decline of the older generation of physicians—the lords and the notables of the Right wing' as Gambetta used to call them—but also of the physicians practising in rural areas and hospices. Social mobility, rural depopulation, and urban poverty accelerated the erosion of the social and economic status of the latter. Physicians like Carton, whose practice was composed of poor, working-class patients, could not make a fortune. To earn more, they had to secure more consultations. These 'physicians of the poor' hoped to rise into the middle class. However, their prospects were overshadowed as time passed, because the rapid transformations of both medical profession and social structure led to low expectations for preferment.\(^\text{18}\)

Naturist vegetarianism is defined as a synthetic system of healthy and pure living in which dietary principles (abstinence from meat, processed foods, and alcohol), hygienic principles (physical exercise, hydrotherapy, air- and sun-bathing, climato-therapy), as well as mental exercise, faith in God and prayers, are intimately associated. Food intake, physiological nourishment, and the necessary individual adaptation to dietary and hygienic principles, were the key concepts of Dr Carton's gospel of physiological and social regeneration, to which he devoted his entire life.\(^\text{19}\) Drawing his conception of naturism almost entirely from Hippocrates, Carton had to campaign against the common association of the word with nudism. He considered nudism a doctrine of moral degradation, shameless, and, at best, good only for reminding people of the pagan cult of the flesh. Carton mainly attributed the cult of the naked body to Rousseau's influence, and he urged his readers to distinguish it from the 'true naturist synthesis, Hippocratic and Graeco-

\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 305.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 2.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 302.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 310.

Roman in origin, source of order and spiritual progress, which sought to define a spiritual reform movement and a return to religion.  

Indeed, the whole of Carton's work can be considered as a hymn to Hippocrates' glory as the 'Father of medicine', and as the precursor of naturist medicine. Before paying his own tribute to Hippocrates in 1923 by publishing a book devoted to him, Carton mainly derived his earlier Hippocratic views from Gardeil, author of *Œuvres d’Hippocrate*. Hippocrates' books *Du régime dans les maladies aigües* and *Aphorismes* had been the focus of Carton's attention, as he drew from them his definition of the medical art, his defence of the individualizing of treatment, and the importance of individual temperaments in medical treatment. In addition, the psychophysiology and the notions of vital forces and intuition developed by the philosopher, Henri Bergson, from 1896 onwards, emphasizing the close relationships between the mind and the body, contributed to Carton's doctrine of syncretic naturism.

Although a profoundly anti-materialist physician, Carton was not anti-science. He argued that naturist medicine had benefited from the progress of science and had been subjected to transformations which were parallel to the evolution of the human mind. However, according to Carton, naturist medicine remained unchanged in its central tenets, and could still be regarded as the source of truth on which contemporary medicine had to draw. Carton's medical views remained entirely dominated by his religious convictions. He advocated asceticism in eating, drinking, sex, clothing, as in all aspects of life, and was particularly ready to adopt the austere, missionary, and populist vision of naturist medicine, and even to become its prophet. Carton's crusade against biomedical hegemony took the form of theoretical and practical militancy as well. Through numerous writings, he expected to restore naturist medicine's pre-eminence, and by curing sick people in hospital he hoped directly to re-establish the truth on which that medicine was grounded.

II

Paul Carton's work was most significant in the context of the battle against phthisis, considered during the nineteenth century as the disease of the life-weary élite. The battle against tuberculosis, as working-class phthisis was called, was still not won by the start of the twentieth century. The sick poor were perceived to be

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23 Transl. C. Daremberg (Paris, 1843).

24 Transl. C. Daremberg (Paris, 1855).


the principal source of contagion. Although at the time it was possible to slow the disease, it was not possible to avoid its fatal outcome. Tuberculosis remained an incurable disease until the availability of antibiotics in the decade following the Second World War. The experience of tuberculosis was one of complex physical and mental suffering. Even in remission, sometimes for a very long time, patients were permanently diminished in body but they remained fully alert mentally. The impotence of medicine was clear.

Some conventional doctors affirmed the curable and avoidable nature of tuberculosis. But the therapeutic methods used—climatotherapy, zomotherapy (raw meat), eating copiously or serotherapy—were disappointing. The ‘holy war’ which physicians had been waging with the help of teachers and philosophers since 1870 against ‘the social disaster’ of tuberculosis was not yet won. ‘What about these deplorable food habits which make us a generation of sick people in the process of being decimated by diseases which are predominantly gastro-intestinal: gastritis, various enteritis, appendicitises, cancer?’, asked Carton in 1911. His identification of the nutritional ‘causes’, the ‘overfeeding of the patient’ that he fought against, was not original. Doctors such as Huchard, Pascault, Maurel, Monteuis, and Triboulet, among others, had already published books in which they demonstrated direct causal relationships between modern eating habits and the onset of tuberculosis. In particular, Maurel and Huchard listed the advantages of a vegetarian diet in cases of noisy and rough neurosis, sclerosis, nephritis, quivering arrhythmia, all forms of arthritis, albuminuria, and hepatic insufficiency. For Carton, ‘it was overeating which caused arthritis and then tuberculosis; it was strict control of eating which would allow the patient to be cured’. He therefore assigned great importance to restricting all those ‘foods too copiously consumed, overly acidic, overly fatty, artificially concentrated’, which already had innumerable disadvantages for the healthy, but were all the more harmful for the sick organism.

The naturist physician was above all things an educator, so Carton aimed at displaying the ‘errors’ of judgement in food and exalting the ‘virtues’ of good hygiene. Carton’s book, although destined for the medical milieu, marked out the main lines of his doctrine of the healthy and pure life. He postulated that the principal food vices were derived from ignorance, routine, and gluttony. Among the most toxic foods from which the sick should abstain, he distinguished high game, fatty fish, mussels, canned meat and fish, and red meat (which Carton considered to be more toxic than white meat); then followed by vegetables, especially some varieties of beans, and finally by stimulants like tea and coffee. However, when eaten in ‘exaggerated quantities’, even vegetables and sweet fruits became harmful. Carton also advised the renunciation of ‘the old habits of stuffing oneself with foods’. What was required was ‘enough patience and reason to educate

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31 Ibid., p. 186.
oneself in the gastric sensations of overfed people; to attempt ‘through regular physical exercise, to bring on an easy daily elimination of the waste products accumulated within our tissues’ and to reduce to a minimum the gastro-intestinal fermentations, ‘providing through food, the elements of an easy and unceasing sweeping of the digestive tract, because everything which stayed there had good grounds for fermentations’.  

Foods like ham, butter, sardines, and brains, because of their fat content, were ‘violent poisons which stopped gastric digestion with their presence’. When a food like sauerkraut was combined with fat, such as pork, it composed ‘an indigestible dish’, while it ‘was remarkably tolerated when it was simply cooked with water and a few potatoes’. We must, he argued, be very sceptical about culinary processes which consist in ‘saturating the foods’, and in serving them as sweet pastry, ‘where eggs, butter, sugar, chocolate and coffee were used’.

Les Trois Aliments Meurtriers: la Viande, le Sucre, l’Alcool (The Three Lethal Foods: Meat, Sugar and Alcohol), published by Carton in 1912, provided a detailed definition of the edible and the inedible. Here, he showed that, since different foods possessed neither the same chemical composition nor the same physiological properties, they could not be consumed without careful consideration. One must identify the ‘retrieving’ foods, including eggs, milk, cheese, meat, fish, mushrooms, cereals (bread, flour, pasta), dry beans (lima beans, French beans, peas, lentils), dry or oleaginous fruit (walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds), which reconditioned the muscles and represented the ‘machine spares’. Secondly, there were combustible foods, including starches (cereals, bread, pasta, beans), sugars (watery fruits, honey, industrial sugar), fats (butter, cheese, oil), which maintained heat and organic functions. These ‘were the economy’s fuel’. Thirdly, he distinguished the mineral foods, which included raw green vegetables (green salads), cereals (whole bread), sweet fruits, oleaginous foods, egg yolk, milk (for children), pure water and, finally, the vitalizing foods, which included raw butter, fresh cream, curdled milk, cheese, raw salads and vegetables, raw fruit, malted cereals, and leavened doughs. These groups of foods provided the indispensable vitamins and minerals necessary for maintaining energy and immunity, so that they ‘constituted, in some sense, water for the boiler’. Finally, he identified stimulating foods, which included alcohol and fermented beverages, meat, fish, refined sugar, spices, tea, coffee, acidic fruit, and prepared foods (sauces, deep fried and browned food). These were ‘high flavour foods’: they stimulated digestive secretions, ‘fulfilling the role of the match that lights the hearth’.

With the exception of stimulating foods, Carton stipulated that each of the categories must be a part of the daily menu, especially the principal meals at noon and in the evening. The reason was that ‘normal nourishment must be all-encompassing to be properly assimilated’. The raison d’être of these foods was to ‘ensure normal stimulation, a sufficient supply of potential vital forces, active secretion by the digestive glands . . . to enable conservation, and for children, even

32 Ibid., p. 187.
33 Ibid., p. 188.
growth of body tissues, and, finally, to maintain normal physical and thermal functions'.

While *Les Trois Aliments Meurtriers* established Carton's reputation within the intellectual milieu as a food reformer, *Notre Aliment Fondamental: le Pain* (*Our Basic Food: Bread*), published in 1914, was a book of social exhortation expressing his health concerns and his social and political despair in the context of changes in the French economy. Carton deplored the decline in French wheat production, due primarily to cheap imports of foreign grain, but he was less concerned with the economic aspects than with the physiological and nutritional consequences. He assumed that the principal victims of food innovations were generally the members of his own generation, and among them, more particularly those who had recently settled in urban areas.

The warnings Dr Carton borrowed from physiology, rather than from economics or psychology, revealed a relentless rejection of novelty in food. Driven by Lamarckian dogma, according to which the function creates the organ, Carton argued that 'the foods that had constructed our digestive organs must continue to preside over their maintenance and development, if we wanted them to stay within the norms, that was to say in a state of health'. Man [sic] was the reflection of his food, and the physiological mode of this food was fixed for him by his heredity. Deriving his arguments from phylogenesis, comparative anatomy, and from the physical, chemical, clinical, and therapeutical sciences, Dr Carton stated that only those foods closest to their natural state were appropriate for human physiological life. Such foods maintained their 'vitalizing properties' and thus their physiological virtues.

In accordance with Sylvester Graham, the famous American vegetarian and health reformer of the 1830s, Dr Carton associated the ancient methods of fertilization with the 'hard' and 'creative' labour of the ancient peasant, with maintaining the 'virginal purity' of the soil, and with the 'honesty' and 'probity' of the peasant and the nutritive 'quality' and 'nutty taste' of his bread. He deplored the fact that the peasant's bread—the wholemeal bread which 'from time immemorial was the food that, together with salt, he offered to the gods he worshipped, to the warmly welcomed foreigner', bread which played a central role in domestic production, bread baked on the family hearth, from wheat harvested nearby—had ceased to fulfil its function of family cohesion, and purveyor of health, and had become a mere 'commercial product', 'industrial', and therefore devitalized. Similarly, Carton associated white bread with his own sickly generation and established a connection between modern cylinder mills and white flour, which was less vitalizing, and contained only calories, in contrast to the traditional mill stones and the more complete and whole brown flour. Wholemeal bread—"more

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35 Ibid., p. 25.
37 Ibid., p. 97.
38 S. Graham, *A Treatise on Bread and Bread-Making* (Boston, 1837); see also the study devoted to the reformer by S. Nissenbaum, *Sex, Diet and Debility in Jacksonian America. Sylvester Graham and Health Reform* (London, 1980).
savoury, more flavoursome, more stimulating, more nourishing’—kept better and facilitated digestion. It was a true ‘power and stamina food par excellence, conducive to high energetic and long term endurance’ and was indisputably ‘the most physiological food for the vigorous, normal and active man’.39

Was not the case of alcohol the proof that ‘the food with the most calories was not necessarily the most physiological or vitalizing’? Decrying the ‘debilitating influence of the caloric theory’,40 Dr Carton was saddened to see the peasantry (the model of the healthy and simple physiological life) take to the consumption of white bread. A ‘diminished’ food product, white bread was a particularly defective food for healthy individuals, with the result that by consuming it, they were then obliged to have recourse to other ‘bad and toxic foods’, such as alcohol and meat, which made up for the deficiencies of white bread ‘only through intoxication’.41

According to Carton, ‘food errors’ naturally varied by social group, but auto-intoxication remained the common fate. For example, if over-consumption was less frequent among poor peasants or workers, dietary ‘errors’ nevertheless remained legion. Dr Carton shared the then dominant view of conventional hygienists, that the poor ‘chose [foods] badly, always as a result of prejudices concerning their nutritional value’: giving too much importance to meat and not enough to carbohydrates. The general view of all hygienists, such as Louis Landouzy of the Académie de Médecine and Henri and Marcel Labbé of Laennec Hospital in Paris, most of whom had worked on tuberculosis in the early years of the twentieth century, was against the consumption of wine and the associated plague of alcoholism, which they considered to be sources of ill health among the poor.42 At the other end of the social spectrum, the well-off overrated eating due to a prejudice that all weakness resulted from insufficient food and that any poisoning had to be countered by copious nourishment. The more one ate, the more energy one had. Meat was seen as a great fortifier, and sugar in great quantities was a reliable source of energy.

An illusory sign of modernity, the consumption of white bread was, according to Dr Carton, the first stage of a mechanism leading to a diseased ‘overconsumption’, from which individuals, especially among the wealthy, could not extricate themselves: tobacco, morphine, spices, coffee, tea, condiments, sweets, and processed foods, were all violent stimulants to which they became addicted. The mechanism, thus defined, clearly showed that the deleterious effects of white bread consumption were direct as well as indirect, since they resulted from the use of foods considered ‘harmful’, consumed as substitutes for wholemeal bread, and were not only the result of the diminished nutritional quality of white bread. According to Carton, from the time humans began to consume considerable quantities of meat, alcohol, sugar, and processed foods, the simpler but more nourishing bread had been disdained, wasted, and trampled upon. Ever since

40 Ibid., p. 37.
41 Ibid., p. 75.
discontent with this bread had become widespread, the torrent of sickness and infirmity had swelled to such an extent that Dr Carton considered it 'an important duty' to advocate 'a return to the true bread of France' and, therefore, to traditional foods. Dr Carton's call aspired to even greater seriousness since he believed that the introduction into the digestive tract of foods which were not part of human evolution, such as meat and alcohol, thwarted ancestral nutritional influences, which were irreversible because they were permanently ingrained. Society had thus committed a grave alimentary error, since the body was ill-adapted to these foods and was thus constrained to spend its vital energies wastefully in an attempt to re-establish its natural defences and immunities. What followed was a rapid erosion of the emunctory functions and an accompanying train of misery and sickness.

In a lyrical passage linking the triumph of white bread to the loss of vitality and to the imminent destruction of the race, he argued for bread to 'become again what it had been for our fathers', the basic and sacred food: that on which one traced the sign of the cross before breaking it; that which in places children were made to kiss to inspire respect 'when they had thrown it to the ground without thinking'; that 'loaf [which] our peasants of old religiously cut, then broke into smaller pieces which they slowly and solemnly chewed'.

For Carton, the 'extraordinary curative virtues' of 'physiological' food revealed themselves fully only to those previously instructed in the specific semiology of food, and who were educated to recognize the clinical signs of efficiency and deficiency, and the individual's tolerance and intolerance to different foods. Nutrition was not only a question of food supply, but above all a question of assimilation and utilization. One of the major characteristics of naturist dietetics was to know how to use food as a medicine.

By concentrating on the changes affecting the production and consumption of bread—our basic food—Carton played on the most sensitive nerves of his contemporaries who, according to him, were particularly exposed to the noxious effects of the rich and toxic foods on the market. It reached the point at which people, and especially Parisian vegans who faithfully followed Carton's doctrine, came to associate his name with that essential element of his message, the home-baking of wholemeal bread. From this viewpoint, what was to become Cartonism could be interpreted as the sanitary and alimentary metaphor of a deteriorating social order, and symbolized the frugality to which the middle classes should adhere in order to cope with the growing hegemony of the industrial economy.

Beyond the accelerating break-up of the domestic economy, what Dr Carton dreaded most in the expanding industrial society was what he perceived as the shattering of a whole structure of ethical and spiritual values (honesty, justice, mutual help, faith) within which were enmeshed people's most healthy relationships to food. Thus, the naturist hygiene preached by Dr Carton was conceived of as a higher realm of life in which the naturist dietetic and hygienic norms were bound up with a necessary apprenticeship in the habits of self-denial, work and religious discipline.

The feelings produced by his recovery from tuberculosis, and finally ideas of grandeur inspired by the rapid acceptance of his naturist doctrine, all disposed Dr Carton to claim the special powers characteristic of the witchdoctor. However, he drew his basic authority as a naturist vegetarian doctor from his long experience of the 2,500 bed sanitarium at Brévannes, near Paris. This sanitarium was a providential gift for Carton, a unique laboratory to try out his dietary and hydrotherapy principles and research his original ideas on temperament, and a nursery for the diffusion of his results. These possibilities were open to Carton because of particular features of the structure of the French medical system. As a Hospital Consultant, Carton belonged to the category of physicians labelled the 'princes de la médecine' or the 'grands patrons' who, because of the dominant position they held in the hospital institution, had an exceptional freedom of action which they retained long after the First World War.

Carton's book, *La Cure de Soleil et d'Exercices* (1917), which has been considered as an account of his curing practices of the young sick in the hospital, helped to disseminate the main ideas which fed the naturist vegetarianism at that time. Foremost in Carton's prescriptions was the importance of physical education or natural gymnastics. Outdoor and indoor daily gymnastics were strongly associated with the diet as a way of curing the nascent tuberculous. The role of exercise in Carton's doctrine became increasingly prominent from 1915 when he met Colonel Georges Hébert. The latter was willing to build the 'whole man' through a re-interpretation and adaptation of military rules and physical exercises; he initiated natural gymnastics in France, which Carton utilized when he sought the best ways to strengthen the race he thought was being weakened. The type of diet Carton was promoting during those years can be termed 'muscular vegetarianism', so concerned was he with the idea of French 'debility'. Dr Carton's books, replete with various statistics and graphs, echoed his deep anxiety. He never ceased to assert the urgency of arresting the growth of racial decadence and the growing number of the insane and incompetent. He saw 'racial decline' as a 'national disaster' that only naturist hygiene could check. Carton's state of mind in the 1920s is well reflected in the following excerpt from *La Cure de Soleil et d'Exercices*:

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45 This was apparent from the titles and also the commercial success of the books covering the period of his hospital work: *La Cure de Soleil et d'Exercices chez les Enfants* (Sun and Exercise Cures for Children) (1917), *Alimentation, Hygiène et Thérapeutique Infantiles en Exemples: Médecine Hippocratique-Cartonienne* (Examples of Food, Hygiene and Infant Therapy. Hippocratic-Cartonian Medicine) (1922) or *Diagnostic et Conduite des Temémapements* (Diagnostic and Control of Temperaments) (1926).
47 *La Cure de Soleil et d'Exercices chez les Enfants* is filled with photographs showing the different types of exercises, both outdoor and indoor, to which the young sick were subjected according to the state of their sickness, and the season.
49 Of course, that was confirmed by various statistics showing an increasing number of the mentally retarded and degenerate.
A fever of material, immediate and easy enjoyment took possession of men; they have been made drunk by their new powers, and believe themselves capable of living in an arrogant independence from divine and natural laws. Recent generations have been led to live, to eat and to cure themselves in an unnatural and unreasonable way. . . . The time has now come to shout out the truth, to prove that we are on the wrong path and to correct the erring ways followed until now. In front of the accumulated plagues, eyes must be opened, minds have to learn and wills have to be educated. One needs just to consider the results of fifty years of complicated unnatural, immoral and insane life to recognize the enormity of the peril. Depopulation has raged so that during some years the number of dead have outmatched that of the births. Alcoholism has devastated society. Degenerative diseases (organic insufficiencies, sclerosis, madness, cancer) have increased tremendously. The race is saturated with sickly and frail individuals. And the most vigorous elements have just been decimated on the battlefields.50

It was not only Carton who was interested in the health of France. There were numerous Societies devoted to this task. Carton was, however, critical of them, especially the French Vegetarian Society, even though he had been a member since 1909. He was particularly critical of the secular lines of the Society, but nevertheless regularly provided articles to its journal La Réforme alimentaire. The eclipse of the Society after the First World War made Carton appear as the most prominent advocate of alternative food and medicine, having by the 1920s more than ten major books on the subject to his credit. However, the emergence within France of Jacques Demarquette’s ‘Trait d’Union’ and other rival food reform groups, and from abroad food reform movements such as the New Nutrition Movement in the United States of America, probably hastened Carton’s practical proselytism. He decided to create an appropriate structure for the diffusion of naturist vegetarianism and set up the ‘Société Naturiste Française’ (French Naturist Society) in 1921 together with a journal, created the following year, La Revue Naturiste (The Naturist Review). The Naturist Society aimed to:

Make known the medical doctrine of true Hippocratic-Cartonian naturism. To spread knowledge of the correct reasons for different states of health, the causes of determination of sickness and the procedures for a rational treatment . . . To teach that human life was subject to precise laws of spiritual, vital, physical and individual conduct, which were irreversible and inexorable. . . . To inculcate the necessity of a religious spirit, the love of nature and of the earth, the taste for the simple life, the joy of useful effort, the habit of charity, the obligation of probity. To learn that individual reform, from the free and properly directed will of each and everyone, constituted the most sure means of acquiring health, to achieve progress and to assure peace, etc.51

Indeed, Carton’s creative life coincided entirely with the emergence of the ‘New Nutrition’ which, from 1918 onwards, informed the health and food reform movements with the central ideas of the American Progressive era. However, if Carton quoted some of the promoters of the ‘New Nutrition’ like Fletcher or Irving, he found most of their views flawed, partly because they did not draw enough on religion (which for Carton meant Roman Catholicism), but mainly because they failed to recognize the ‘immaterial truth hidden behind the dietary

50 Carton, La Cure de Soleil et d’Exercices, p. 35.
51 La Revue Naturiste, 8 (1929), 1.
principles they exalted’, 52 and which was the ‘science of the invisible’ which Carton tried to promote through his La Science Oculte. 53 However, if there was to be a common point between Carton and those reformers, it was, in James Whorton’s phrase, their ‘Christian physiology’, through which they attempted to show that conformity of vegetarian hygiene with Christian morals was the guarantee of its goodness and superiority.54

Carton was even receptive to the eugenic arguments widely held at the time. He considered that if virulent diseases were regrettable in and of themselves, they were no less necessary and salutary, for ‘they purified the race and dictated the rapid elimination of all individuals too degenerate to perpetuate a vigorous species’.55 Believing in original sin and Hell, and making the Christian sacrifice a central feature of his worldview and his medical and dietary principles, Carton could in the 1920s define naturist medicine as ‘the medicine of real causes’, which were far from being totally material. Health was something earned and must be merited, with the result that pain had a purifying and expiatory role. Disease was the consequence of an abnormal lifestyle and the penalty for repeated violations of the natural physical and mental laws of human life. In effect, Carton affirmed, infections only broke out as the result of ‘lowered resistance of the organic’; microbes multiplied only in individuals whose ‘corrupted bodily humours offered a favourable growing environment’.56

Indeed, Bienheureux Ceux qui Souffrent (Happy are Those Who Suffer), which Carton published in 1923, was an apostolate of pain.57 Pain was truth. Modern medicine, by striving through chemical and bacteriological research to reduce the suffering caused by disease, failed to recognize this pedagogy of pain. That was most notably the case for the anti-tuberculosis fight, in which the principal factor, ‘the degeneration of the terrain’, with ‘the faults’ which generated it (alcoholism, harmful food, lack of air, sun, and morality) had been neglected in favour of the unique ways of exterminating a microbe which was universally spread and harmless by itself.58

Nevertheless, Carton thought that proper diet control, though essential, must not neglect other facets of healthy living: attentive mastication, avoiding drugs and dangerous medication, sufficient bowel movement, loose clothes, enough sleep. Basic complementary healthcare was a combination of exercise and rest since they were functions of nutrition, as well as hydrotherapy, air- and sun-bathing, and finally spiritual training. That was one of the reasons why religious education was indispensable in helping to accept renunciation and to understand the point of spiritual progress hidden behind the diet’s discipline as well as the sensual sacrifices.

52 See Carton’s Traité de Médecine, d’Alimentation et d’Hygiène Naturistes (Paris, 1920) and his Le Délalogue de la Santé (Paris, 1922) for Carton’s critical accounts of the ‘New Nutrition’ promoters.
53 P. Carton, La Science Oculte et les Sciences Ocultes (Brévannes, 1935).
55 Carton, Traité de Médecine, d’Alimentation, p. 254.
56 Ibid., p. 20.
57 P. Carton, Bienheureux Ceux qui Souffrent (Paris, 1923).
58 Ibid., p. 16.
required to follow the Hippocratic–Cartonian diet. The spirit must command matter. Abstinence from meat had an important ethical virtue. It induced abstinence from all violence and cruelty to animals. Within the relationship of spirit and matter, the different rules aimed to favour chastity. According to Carton, lust constituted an insurmountable obstacle to the elevation of the spirit. Lust established the dominance of purely animal passions:

To maintain one’s mental power and physical energy, one must follow a chaste life. Only temporary or permanent continence allowed the acquisition of magical powers. As far as possible therefore, carnal pleasures must be denied, and only consented to within a legitimate union, so that they could be joined into a spiritual and familial unity without which there was no longer anything human.

Craving to simplify life and food as well, the naturist physician taught people to be their own doctors in their daily domestic life. To eat healthily through knowing how to choose ‘useful foods, composing logical menus, and cooking without complications, implied the primordial virtues of order, simplicity, regularity, and discipline, virtues at the very foundations of physical health and spiritual progress’. In the final analysis, it was a question of reaching towards perfection in the smallest things, so as to be able to triumph over important difficulties. Naturist hygiene was a school of life which rewarded its wards well: they saved money by buying healthy food products and reinforced the good health and security of the family unit ‘by wise eating of good and pure foods’. Indeed, such discourse conveyed health and food concerns experienced by many people in France in the 1920s, and that accounted for the widespread popularity of Carton’s dietary and recipe book, *La Cuisine Simple*. To stay in good health or to be permanently cured of an illness required that one should be one’s own diet director at home, avoiding the ‘bad food ways’ of the collective menus of hotels, restaurants, and clinics ‘where the worst food errors and the art of culinary sophistication’ ruled.

IV

At the end of the 1920s, Carton was increasingly receptive to evolutionist theories. He no longer believed in a general change of health habits in France, as he was convinced at that time of the irreducible character of the differences between individuals. Thus, in his view, even if a vegetarian diet was incontestably the ideal, ‘because it was simultaneously physiological, adapted to fruit-eating human anatomy, purifying, and morally and spiritually improving, all the individuals did not have the required mental ability or organic adaptability quickly to make the best of the vegetarian diet’. It was this science of diet and marshalling of food which was the core of naturist therapy.

60 Ibid., p. 60.
61 Ibid., p. 24.
63 Ibid., p. 12.
Castigating the 'omnivorous bias', Carton tried specifically to allocate the carnivorous, vegetarian, vegan, fruitarian, and crudivorian diets to categories of appetite (big eater, medium eater, small eater); to 'individual organic budgets' (matching the particular needs of manual workers, intellectuals, etc.), to 'personal vital potential' (whether a person was vigorous, sickly, mentally or physically active), to age, to sex, and to temperament. He then agreed to make concessions to the sensuality of those spontaneously hostile to any idea of renunciation, to pay attention to the desire for spiritual progress of those who progressively avoided meat, and, especially, to encourage the 'pure' people to adopt the 'evolutionary superior diet' which was vegetarianism:

Thus, when a person reacted well to a continuous vegetarian diet, without excessive loss of weight, with his general state of health undiminished, and when he obeyed his instinct and his understanding of moral law to avoid useless killing and the refusal to feed on cadavers, there was nothing more to do than to encourage him to persevere with a strictly vegetarian diet. 65

A faithful believer in the Hippocratic conception of medicatrix naturae, the naturist doctor did not systematically try to get rid of the patient's morbid symptoms. To regain and above all maintain good health, Carton would call upon the occult powers. He looked for 'past and current dietetic and hygienic errors' and set up a health programme 'which corrected previous errors and fitted the individual to the best conditions of life for the species and for his individual constitution'. 66 He tried to reconstruct how the individual usually organized his life (diet and daily schedule) and then 'with the help of hidden keys', he tried to uncover all 'his psychic individuality and organic predisposition'. 67

Carton's diagnosis of the degree of vital force and willpower was based on the presence of visible signs, marks considered as 'endowed personal characteristics', such as facial features (physiognomy), hand forms (chirology), thoracic structure (skeletal or sternal appendage), hand and arm movements or handwriting (graphology). 68 The procedures Dr Carton tried out at the hospital were also prescribed for his private patients who consulted him at his home. He received only one patient per day when he consulted. Previously the patient had sent him a handwritten letter in which were detailed his weekly menu and any health problems he had encountered. That letter helped Carton to control the so-called 'organic budget' and to analyse the handwriting. Carton's consulting room at the hospital and at home resembled a corner of a chapel where the consultations took many hours. In addition to the usual clinical examination, they entailed investigation and collation of the principal signs of the face, body, and hands, with inclusion of the signs previously observed through handwriting. Generally, the patient never received any prescription. A sound, detailed, naturist, vegetarian diet, along with

66 Ibid., p. 25.
prayer and physical exercise, were the common medications that Dr Carton recommended.

Carton distinguished two large social categories: the great mass of people, for whom the principal causes of ‘food vices’—ignorance, fear of change, and gluttony—dominated, and an élite minority, raised within the sphere of intellectual and moral enlightenment. According to Carton, the progressive distillation of a succession of truths and of wise behaviour was the condition for maintaining the first group in ‘the right direction’. Thus, in treating this group, he helped to decrease the strength of the ‘meat myths’ among its members, and then led them to reduce their consumption of foods such as meat, sugar, or processed food.\(^{69}\) One could clearly see that the naturist doctor, who audited and verified ‘organic budgets’, was led necessarily, by the multiple links he found between heredity and temperament, food habits and individual character, socially to stigmatize the food habits of the poor. The probability that poor food habits were transformed into poor taste, and thus into vice, was so much the greater as the necessary conditions for pure food were more restrictive. On the other hand, because of the affinity between their upwardly mobile social ethic and the Cartonian categories of frugality, sobriety, and self-deny, members of the middle class, Catholic and educated, seemed the most suited to benefit from Cartonian naturist vegetarianism. For those groups predisposed to adopting the diet, the dietetic rules (vegetarianism, periodic fasting) were combined with ritual prayer, precautionary measures suggested by astrology, and physical exercise, together with singing, music, and hygienic recommendations (ablutions, showers, baths, etc.), which were aimed at purifying the vital forces.

Carton’s insistence on the necessity of individualizing treatment threw a new light on his rejection of the ‘democratic’ logic of modern medicine. By ‘using the false pretext of [individual] equality’, this logic denied ‘the multiple human, material and spiritual, inequalities’. As such, it was opposed to naturist therapeutics which was based on these very inequalities so as beneficially to individualize medical treatment.\(^{70}\) For Carton, inequality among individuals was natural, engraved by evolution. He despised the Rousseauian theory of majority rule, ‘a corroding demagogy’, preferring that of the élite. He professed a hatred of free public schools which levelled down and denied the hierarchy of intelligence—the ‘spontaneous selection of talent’.\(^{71}\)

Indeed, the social exhortation within which Carton’s doctrine was embedded received a new impulse in the 1930s with the Catholic revival; of course, that movement had many trends which affected the whole spectrum of French political and intellectual life from the extreme Right to the extreme Left. It could have progressive and conservative elements.\(^{72}\) As one would expect, Carton had strong affinities with the anti-Republican Right who accused Republicans and the Left of perverting both society and medicine.\(^{73}\) And above, Carton hated the

\(^{69}\) Carton, *Les Clés du Diagnostic*, p.15.


\(^{73}\) Carton, *La Science Occulte*, p. 48.
Freemasonry that he saw everywhere, in the government, and in the medical establishment, fomenting war. In La Science Occulte (1935), Carton endorsed the anti-masonic views of Robert Vallery-Radot, for whom the first World War began with the death of a Jew and ended with a treaty imposed at Versailles by the notorious Masons, Woodrow Wilson and Lloyd George, 'with the goal of establishing universal Democracy and the religion of humanity'. For Carton, it was no coincidence if that treaty had led to the dismemberment of 'Catholic Austria-Hungary' and maintained a unified 'Protestant Germany'.

Dr Carton was ill at ease in his century. Indeed, he was not alone. He identified with the demands of the visionary Catholics of his time, such as Barrès, to whom he sent his books, and Maurras whom he admired, and above all Léon Bloy, to whom he dedicated a book: Un héraut de Dieu: Léon Bloy (A messenger of God: Léon Bloy) in 1936. Like Carton, these nationalists placed a very high value on Christianity, the natural, the local, the authentic, the pure, which they contrasted with the changed, the foreign, the artificial, the impure. They all rejected the present order and wanted to revive the glorious days of the past. Carton, craving monarchy, came to find in Action Française the only newspaper treating all the 'pent-up indignation against modern society'.

Considering the nonconformist character of Carton’s doctrine, one might expect him to have made common cause with others such as the French renascent Vegetarian Society and the multitude of sanitarian groups which fought for medical reform. But, because of his Manichean world-view, Carton was sectarian. He could not even recognize any value in any other kind of health or food reform body. In La Science Occulte, he reviewed the different reform groups and ideas of his time, and fulminated against the majority of them. These included cartomancy, telepathy, astrology, spiritism, medical magnetism, radieesthesia, homeopathy, and acupuncture, which he associated with witchcraft, black magic, or merely charlatanism. In particular, Carton considered acupuncture to be a 'treason towards the white race'. Christian Science and its promoter, Mrs Blavatsky, Annie Besant and theosophy, Rudolf Steiner and anthroposophy were all condemned for being anti-Christian (especially anti-Catholic) as they claimed affinities with non-Western religions and secularism. Carton’s Manicheeism and sectarianism probably accounted for the fact that he did not mention the German Swiss doctor Bircher-Benner (inventor of Bircher muesli), who exalted the same theology and who was already known worldwide in the 1930s.

V

The defining worries and discontents of naturist vegetarianism (urbanization, food processing, air pollution, the vulnerability of the new city dwellers) were all quite symptomatic of the 'food malaise' later more fully described by Claude and Chris-

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76 Carton, La Science Occulte, p. 345.
tiane Grignon. Medical and naturist vegetarian issues and the discourse surrounding them were at the centre of discontent felt by a variety of groups and were inevitably expressed in a contradictory manner. The ability of Cartonian naturist vegetarianism to gain acceptance in a wide and composite spectrum of movements was testimony to its vitality and longevity. It testified to contemporary concerns over a climate of spreading ill-health, produced not only by unemployment, alcoholism, delinquency, and violence, but also by patterns of diet and self-care.

From the beginning of the century, vegetarianism had a growing audience among the Parisian middle class. Their prior knowledge of different types of diets and the chemical composition of food made them receptive to the alarmist health warnings of the medical hygienists. The Universal Exposition, the millennial atmosphere at the turn of the century, and the Tuberculosis Congress also contributed to greater knowledge of vegetarianism. In addition, there was the flowering of the Société Végétarienne de France (French Vegetarian Society), founded in 1880. The turn of the century saw its rebirth, as its founders sought especially to seize the Universal Exposition as a unique occasion to propagate their cause. Members of the middle and upper classes were all the more receptive to Carton’s medical arguments, because he encouraged combining physical exercise and a frugal diet as a way to be professionally dynamic, while at the same time conserving physical and mental vigour. In addition, the democratization of meat consumption made meat less desirable for the upper classes.

That Carton’s work quickly became the essential reference point, not only for traditional vegetarian circles but also for other diverse social groups, was due to the success of his book *Les Trois Aliments Meurtriers*. In addition, Carton found himself at the centre of the central ideological agenda within interwar vegetarianism: the advocacy of the simple life, naturism, clothing reform, the rejection of allopathic medicine, vivisection, Marxism and scientific materialism, a belief in intuition, and feminism. For example, the passion for wholemeal bread extolled by Carton became a sort of doctrine for spreading his naturist and vegetarian convictions; a doctrine followed by all who saw in naturist themes and their ascetic discipline both a pedagogical instrument for peace of mind and a weapon against the risk of physical destruction. Although he refused to distinguish between the physiological dangers and the social threat from processed, unhealthy, and polluted foods, Dr Carton advocated physical and not social struggle.

78 We know that the consumption of meat per capita increased, but we do not know how to measure the social incidence of this consumption. Until just after the Second World War, meat consumption statistics were rare, or did not exist. See J. C. Toutain, ‘La Consommation Alimentaire en France de 1789 à 1964’, *Cahiers de l’ISEA*, 5 (11) (1971), 2013–18.
After the October 1917 Revolution, it was their rejection of both Bolshevism and capitalism that must be adduced to understand the eagerness of numerous philanthropists, and particularly the Left-wing anarchists, to advocate vegetarian themes, even though it meant sharing some values with the Right-wing conservatives. As if seeking to compensate for their rejection of the Christian faith with the display of an irreproachable way of life, a notable group of vegetarian anarchists extolled knowledge, continence, sobriety, cleanliness, and the virtues of domestic life. In the vegetarian centre of Bascon (a small village near Chateau-Thierry, department of Aisne), which they founded around 1919, the notions of discipline, restraint, work, and purity constituted the leitmotif of the ideal life. A high degree of asceticism was practised in the daily life of the centre—manual work in the fields, cooking according to Carton’s dietary principles (even advocating veganism instead of mere vegetarianism), and so on. Everything was carried out to a high ascetic standard in order to show that the merits of their ethical and aesthetic sensibilities were well-founded.⁸²

If the criticisms of the social order expressed by the anarchists came from anarchist ideology, their ethic of physical health and spiritual peace made common cause with Carton’s physiological individualism. From 1917 to at least 1930, the principal followers of Cartonism were the anarchists, whose leaders were George Butaud and his wife Sophie Zaikowska. They integrated Cartonian vegetarian naturism with their insistence on natural treatments and pacifism, and even made it an integral part of their gospel of social and sanitary regeneration. Between 1918 and 1920, they organized a long series of vegetarian conferences in the city hall of Paris. The audience was essentially composed of workers such as cabinet-makers, fitters, varnishers, actors, turners, sales clerks, masons, and draughtsmen. They were generally of rural origin and most had only recently moved to Paris.⁸³ Until the middle of the twentieth century, naturist vegetarianism was the object of tense and diverse ideological battles and alliances because it was an intersection of a rapidly changing social situation and the specific culture of destabilized groups. Central to Carton’s ideas was that, by avoiding orthodox doctors and drugs, everybody could be healthy. His Revue Naturiste Française sought to spread this viewpoint. The fundamental dietary principles of Cartonianism were based on natural medicine and seemed to correspond with popular representations of medicine.⁸⁴ For the many who were sick and had been disappointed by the systems of treatment then current, Dr Carton organized the symptoms of their illnesses into a single coherent syndrome with a single cause. And that cause could easily be understood and corrected.

⁸² See A. P. Ouedraogo, Le Végétarisme. Esquisse, for a full account of this group and bibliographic references to it. Information was unobtainable on the number of visitors at the Centre and on the date of closing.


⁸⁴ This similarity would explain the relatively important impact of Carton’s ideas on hygiene among the lower classes. Dr Carton assigned a medicinal power to plant foods. He was thereby in accordance with ancient, classical concepts of scholar medicine, concepts which had been dropped by the learned of his time but had been adopted or retained by the lower classes. See J. Chauveau, Paul Carton, p. 20.
Dr Carton presented himself as the poor man’s doctor. From his long experience at the Brévannes sanitarium, he saw himself as an example of positive social ethics, a teacher who simply desired to communicate the virtues of an age-old wisdom. Unable to control the world around him, the individual, however poor he may be, could at least exercise control over his own body. In spite of Carton’s own conservative ideology, his conception of the perfectibility of man through the practice of proper hygiene meshed well with the liberal and democratic aspirations of the period, and with the idealistic and utopian aspirations of individualist anarchism. That idea of perfectibility proceeded from the idea that the acquired characteristics of individuals, even if they were hereditary, were not immutable.

VI

Carton’s system, which was designed to govern every aspect of private routine, survives in French vegetarianism today. On the evidence of the questionnaire survey undertaken among French vegetarians in 1997, the Hippocratic–Cartonian Method proved to be highly compatible with the health and sanitary beliefs and practices of the educated members of the lower middle-classes. Seventy–three per cent of the respondents to this questionnaire were professionals, working in different areas of the medical or paramedical services, in social work, in youth work, and in university teaching. They were young (60 per cent of them were aged between 35 and 45 years), highly educated (80 per cent were graduates), and very receptive to the dietetic norms which emphasized exercise and a diet with less meat as the means to a healthier life. The ethical and social dispositions of these sections of the lower middle-classes inclined them more than any other social group to adopt nonconformist attitudes and practices towards diet, the body, and environment. Indeed, these social groups were the targets for Carton’s doctrine. Carton called for an increase in the level of people’s education as the best means for spreading his dietary teachings. One may therefore expect the increase in the average level of education in France, and the growing importance of professions such as social work and the paramedical services, to play an important role in the continuing appeal of ideas and practices shaped by Carton’s doctrine.

Furthermore, the respondents justified their interest in organic food and vegetarian diet in terms of self-medication, alimentary discipline, and a mistrust of orthodox medicine and conventional meat-eating habits, or of a taste for ‘simple cooking’, all kinds of practices and convictions Carton would easily have accepted. Of course, not all the respondents knew Dr Carton’s name before hearing it during the courses, nor can all their dietary claims be attributed to Carton’s unique influence. To fully understand the relationship between the dietary interests of the respondents and Cartonian principles, we must locate the organic and vegetarian

86 Carton, La Cuisine Simple, p. 255.
cooking course itself in the broader context of a growing social interest in the ‘médecines naturelles’ (natural medicines) in France.

Furthermore, we need to recognize that the Hippocratic—Cartonian Method became an integral part of that natural medicine. At least two major factors contributed to that integration. First of all, let us recall that the word *mèdecine naturelle* had been coined for the first time by Dr André Schlemmer and Dr Jacques Chauveau, both disciples of Carton, who were, from 1950 to 1987, the two main contributors to *Les Cahiers de la Méthode Naturelle en Médecine* (successor to *La Revue Naturiste* mentioned above). True visionaries, the two disciples anticipated the coming growth, in the 1960s, of 'natural medicine'. Through long prefaces and introductions to Carton's republished books, they attempted to popularize the medical, philosophical, and spiritual contents of Carton's 'syncretic naturism'.

The central messages of *Les Cahiers* were, first, that human life is the product of combined physical, psychic, and spiritual forces, and cannot be fully understood by using exclusively the methods of the 'hard medicines' (or conventional medicine); and, secondly, that the mind and the body are so united that they constitute an integrated whole. Taking into consideration the individual's social, psychic, and spiritual environment as well as his or her physical constitution is the best way to have a correct appreciation of the visible and hidden aetiologies of disease. Profoundly anti-materialist, Carton's disciples in their *Cahiers* also blamed conventional medicine not only for treating the patient as an 'object', but also for considering illness as a 'breakdown', the physician as a 'plumber', and the hospital as a 'repair shop'. The authors depicted the 'médecine naturelle' which they advocated as a model for the future, as an advancement on all other models of hygiene.

Undoubtedly, such an emphasis on the necessity for a holistic view of the human organism and, consequently, on the importance of the 'terrain' as accounting for the appearance of diseases, was characteristic of a particular trend of contemporary thought at the intersection of medicine, philosophy, and spirituality. It met the health expectations and beliefs of the educated sections of the lower middle classes since, although increasingly secularized like Mrs Nathalie B., they were inclined to be introspective about their daily behaviours and to regard frugality in diet, simplicity in dress, and moderation in every action as a way of attaining health of body and mind.

Indeed, the spread of Carton's views has been such that, when reading the present popular medical or ecological press, one is impressed with their Cartonian

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*88 In 1998, Carton's book, *Les Lois de la Vie Saine*, first published in 1922, was re-issued by the publisher Le François. It should be noted that there is an absence of data on the number of adherents of the nationwide 'Société Naturiste Française', on the number of Carton's books published, and on the distribution of the *Revue Naturiste* or its successor from 1950, *Les Cahiers de la Méthode Naturelle en Médecine*. This constitutes a serious gap in the evidence for a study of the social impact of a doctrine. Unsuccessful approaches have been made to Carton's publishers. Personal communications with Carton's granddaughter, Mrs A. M. Tellier (86 years old) confirmed the impossibility of finding any record of her grandfather's books. Additionally, for reasons of commercial confidentiality, she was not willing to give details about the books she managed for re-publication.

*89 See *Les Cahiers de la Méthode Naturelle en Médecine*, 1 (1950), Editorial, or, ibid., XX (1972), 25-40.*
Not only are Carton's books often quoted, but his occultist, spiritual, and neo-hippocratic interpretation of the relationship between health and food is increasingly present in the media.

Polls suggest that the spread of 'natural medicine' in France is associated with an increase in associated beliefs such as astrology, fortune-telling, parapsychological phenomena, and oriental religions, like Buddhism. This is illustrated by the annual exhibitions in Paris such as the now famous Salon Marjolaine and Salon de la Médecine douce, both devoted to alternative medicine, and the Salon de l'Agriculture biologique devoted to sustainable and organic agriculture.

By way of conclusion, let us pose a question on behalf of Carton. Why did so many individuals suffer from so many illnesses, enfeebling the national community socially, economically, and militarily? What had gone wrong? For him the answer unquestionably lay in the poor dietary habits of the French people, which resulted in their illnesses. In dressing up his medical theories with religious precepts, Dr Carton sought to reinterpret the relations between God, people, and nature in such a manner as to transcend the rising influence of materialism both in society and medicine. It was easy to dismiss Carton, as the leading academics of his day favoured meat eating. Yet it is more interesting to discern in his work, if not the expression of the major concerns of a society in transition from rural to urban life, at least those of social groups experiencing fluctuating fortunes in a maturing economy. Be they sick or merely 'truth' seekers, those mobile groups found consolation in Carton's words or recipes, giving his work an important social and symbolic signification.

A central strand in Carton's polemic is that dropping meat was not sufficient to avoid diseases, and especially coronary diseases. To attain actual health, one needs to devote oneself to complementary practices, such as prayers and love, and to seek the correct behaviour at any level of daily life. More interestingly, the emphasis Carton put on simple diet and physical exercise also has resonance in present-day dietary concerns and accounts for the continuing topicality of his diet. Additionally, the holistic medicine he exalted helps us to understand certain aspects experienced at the present time by the followers of various alternative medicines, and especially the interconnected relationships one can find there, between health and food (and especially between meat eating and diseases), between tradition and change, between mind and body, between nature and culture, and between the sacred and the scientific.


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