

Lectures to University Students

Part 7 of 7

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Dr. Merchant and Fellow Students:

This is the seventh time I've had the privilege of addressing some of you. The other six times were at the residence of your teacher. I have had a mandate that we should have a building up of conceptions based upon what has been said heretofore. But I understand that nearly everyone here has never heard me before and so that is not the case. But to find out, I'd like any of those who have been present at the other meetings to put up your hands—only about four or five or half a dozen.

Among the several subjects that I suggested to Dr. Merchant, she thought it would be well to speak upon this very live subject not only for many students but for everybody—that which is known as the student revolution. I don't have . . . ¹ is this significant? It is so important that the January issue of *Fortune* magazine, which is one of the most important business magazines, gave the whole issue to the subject. To outline the facts so far as we know them, and there's much we don't know, it is only a minority of the students who are in a state of revolt; but such a minority exists virtually all over the world. It is found that in general, though not always, the students in revolt tend to come from families of good, superior economic status. The large mass of students who come from blue-collar backgrounds, to use the usual figure, are not contributors to the revolt. They are serious students anxious to rise to some higher level of life. The goals attained by the affluent are goals which they wish to attain. They enter the schools for the purpose of learning a capacity so that they may earn more. They are quite serious. They are the majority to be sure. But there are students who come from families that have had evidently everything, and they are the ones that are dissatisfied. They seem to find a certain emptiness in the kind of life that consists of everything, at least in the sense that you can buy with money. What is the objective? A search of the subject has found no agreement as to positive objective. There are certain elements that are highly noble. I've been fortunate in contacting that part of the revolt, and that part only, in the meetings at Dr. Merchant's residence, and I was impressed. I saw and felt a response in terms of a great beauty and sweetness that left me with a feeling of standing upon holy ground. And it was quite evident that there was here something of the emergence of what is known as the 'psychic being'. What I saw was a treasure. But at the other pole there is something, indeed, dark, destructive, evil, ignoble—something dumbfounding and well-nigh inexplicable. This I know only from the news, but it leaves one with a sense of being threatened. What does it mean? This is something not only of the West. It is of South America. It is of Europe. It is this side and the other side of the iron curtain. What do they

¹ Ellipses have been inserted into this transcription to indicate missing text due to the poor quality of the audio recording.

want? There is no defined positive objective as yet found. There's agreement in only one thing—something must be destroyed. And it becomes a sort of universal against-ness, not an orientation to a desirable objective. So far as I know revolution, this is very strange.

Let us look at the three greatest revolutions that we have known in our Western history. Take our own that led to the Revolutionary War during the latter part of the eighteenth century. Back of that was a very developed philosophy concerning government. I refer to the political philosophy of John Locke—one that is referred to again and again by Thomas Jefferson. It initiated what is known today as the 'old liberalism', and this I regard as the only true liberalism. The liberalism that is derived from the word 'liber', to be free; not the liberalism derived from the other root 'libit', it pleases. The thesis in this philosophy was essentially that political government at best is a "necessary evil," that the ideal of freedom—a man to choose as he pleases and to do as he pleases—is all that's important, is supreme. Of course in practice, any intelligent person knows, you cannot step with an unevolved humanity to a state of absolute freedom from coercive government in one step. There is too much that's dark in the soul of man, too much that does not mean well; and one that looks abroad carefully, knows perfectly well that the day when you can dispense with all coercion has not yet arrived. But as an ideal and as something to work towards, I know none better in the field of politics, sociology, and economics: the ideal where all coercive government ceases to be and men work together under the guidance of good will. The motto derived from this philosophy of government is that which is attributed to Thomas Jefferson: "That government governs best, which governs least." Since the founding of this government of ours, we have departed from that position step by step until today we're aware of the coercion of government on every side. I remember when I was a young person, around the turn of the century, I knew of government only from distant things in far away Washington and something you contacted likely in the post office, but that was all. Today our lives are touched on every side by the coercion of government. This I'd call a move quite far to the Left; whereas, the movement towards the elimination of all coercive government, I would call movement towards the Right. This is not everybody's definition of those terms; it is part of my definition. Another part of it is that those orientations which are towards materialism are towards the Left, and that those orientations which are towards increasing spirituality are towards the Right.

Now, as a footnote I might refer to an experience I had in 1964 when for a brief time we were at Barrow, Alaska, and met the Eskimos, having already read of them in the work of Carrighar in the book called *Moonlight at Midday*. She became closely acquainted with the Eskimos over a period of ten years, became a familiar in their homes, had the intestinal fortitude to eat their meals—and believe me it takes intestinal fortitude—and had their confidence. One of them told her that a missionary once was talking to him and asked him what were their laws. He said what do you mean? The missionary said you must have laws, something written down in a book by which people live. And the Eskimo said to her, wasn't he foolish, everybody knows what is right. We don't need any laws.² They had no government, coercive government, whatever before aliens came in and took them over. They had very little violence. They had a strong sense

² Sally Carrighar, *Moonlight at Midday* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), 127-128.

of human fellowship. He who had food always shared with him who had not. They could not understand at first why the manager of the trading post shouldn't give away articles when they were needed. They couldn't understand a money economy. This was a revelation to me, for here was an example of what has been known as the ideal of philosophic anarchy, lived by in the case of these people in the far north. I was impressed. Maybe that ideal is not so utopian as most would lead us to think.

Now, that is the ideal laid down by the philosophy back of our revolution, which I think was the greatest of all the revolutions—a revolution really orientated to freedom, as far as freedom can be a political or social ideal. Real freedom involves more than that. Real freedom involves advanced yogic attainment, but in this approximate, not the ultimate sense, there is a sense we can apply to the word and that is this: freedom from political coercion. This was espoused by John Stuart Mill and by certain other authentically liberal philosophers throughout the nineteenth century. It is not what is meant by liberalism today. Liberalism today would increase governmental coercion. Liberalism that is oriented to what is known as Marxism, communism, but which I prefer to call dialectic materialism, allows little or no freedom of decision on the part of the individual—the diametric opposite of the revolution upon which our country and our government was based.

However, if you step over to the second revolution, namely that of France, we find again that there was an ideal, an aim, something formulated by Rousseau, and Voltaire, and some others. And the violence in that case—and the violence in ours—was subordinate to the working toward a goal. Also, in the case of the dialectical materialistic revolution that has taken hold in Russia, China, and elsewhere, there was a philosophy, whether you regard it as good or not is beside the point, there was a formulation, a definite attempt at a critique of what is and a pointing out of a possible attainment of something which was supposed to be better. And, again, while this has entailed more massive violence than either of the other two, there at least was something of a goal, an objective.

What, then, do we mean by a revolution where there is no use of goals? I don't know. It's therefore a problem. It is very much easier to see wrongness than to know how to correct the wrongness without jumping into a greater wrongness. It is not too difficult to see that there is wrongness in this world. That's easy. But to strike out simply to destroy that wrongness without any thought or consideration of something to replace it is more likely to be a leaping from the frying pan into the fire than it is to be anything else; for this is a truism, whatever it is now has proven that it is viable, that is at least possible to live in. However much there may be in it that is far from ideal, and there is much, at least it is viable. It would be the easiest thing in the world to produce a condition that was not viable, a condition in which it would be utterly impossible for three billion people to live in this world, where at least two billion would have to die because of a declining, inefficient economy becoming more and more coercive. Perhaps more than that if you go back to a nomadic culture where you live by hunting and by picking, getting what you can by crude means, perhaps this world would support 500 million and no more. It wouldn't be hard at all to start a process that would mean a massive death, as would be the case in an atomic war. So, it is not enough merely to be against an evident wrongness. There must be serious tackling of the problem of what may replace that wrongness which would be at least less wrong.

However much we envisage an ideal state where life is perfect, it is only realistic to recognize that we move step by step, that there are forces in man's soul that are far from regenerate. You cannot destroy, for instance, violence in mankind until you have destroyed violent emotion in yourself. The outer violence is but the effect of this inner violence. Now, I say, tackle that inner violence, reach the point where anger no longer arises within yourself, where in the face of provocation and insult you do not reply with the feeling of violence. I'm not talking merely about the act of violence; I'm talking about the feeling. Reach that point and you've done more to bring about a better world than any external action whatsoever, for you have been destroying the evil at its source. Now, that is a task to test the resources of every individual whatsoever. Making progress is the best outcome, possible progress, for a better world. Enough for that point.

It has been found in a study of this general student revolt that there are groups that lean one way and groups that lean another. There are those that are listed under the letters SDS—Students for a Democratic Society; there's the Black Power movement; there are others that are oriented to what has been called the hippie life—whatever that may be. It certainly attracts one's attention. I know back in my young days, the young men at least would have been greatly embarrassed if someone said they couldn't tell them from girls by appearance, and yet that is what is happening among hippies today. Our young men seem to be different from what they were. Grooming standards, I should say, are very less than ideal on that level. And also connected with this is an interest in certain chemical substances that produce psychical effects. I want to speak about this at some length a little later. There is also a group that's radically nonviolent in its orientation—a conscientious objector group. With them I have a great deal of sympathy, for I went that way myself. But they contrast with groups that are extremely violent, that behave in a way that is not only legally but is also morally criminal—purely destructive, putting up objectives which it's impossible to grant, and they've even said if these objectives were granted, we would put up others in addition and keep the violence going on. That is just as dark as the first class I spoke of that touched me so strongly.³ And it reminds me of an ancient formula which runs this way: the shadows are darkest when the light is brightest. There is, then, in the student revolution both extremes.

Now, I'm not in the least inclined to deal lightly with those who act in a criminal way. I think our authorities have been weak. This has no place in a university, among university students. The university is supposed to be the citadel of the mind, not the place for the . . . , for the destroyer of property, the arsonist, the kidnapper, and all of this has been part of the student revolution—the dark and evil part. There should be no concession whatever to demands implemented that way. Concession is weakness. And here is a thing to take note of, there are those who were in Germany during the days before the rise of Hitler, and the same sort of thing was happening in the universities of Germany at that time. Is this the sort of thing that's going to come out? I say it's a thing to be nipped in the bud or we will indeed be dumped into a fire fully as bad as an atomic war. Give consideration to requests supported by reason always—I would say that to academic governments—but be adamant whenever the tool of violence is employed, for

³ Obviously Wolff meant to say, "That is just as dark as the first class I spoke of that touched me so strongly is light."

otherwise you've got a . . . and you may help advance the day when another Hitler or another Genghis Khan will rule the world. Now, while I'm sympathetic in one sense, I'd be just as stern as a . . . with, of all things, the student whose supposed to be unfolding the powers of mind denigrating himself down to the level of the . . . He deserves less than . . . because he's already in the temple of the mind.

No doubt, many of these who are following this way do not know what they're doing. They are following others who lead. There are some dark signs that there's a hidden leadership somewhere. Methods that have been brought—destructive methods that have been employed in different parts of the world have a disturbing similarity. It's hard to believe that methods so similar could exist without conscious planning, though as yet it does not seem they've been able to trace or unearth such conscious leadership. It is known that there is a class of perpetual, professional students who take minimum hours, just enough to stay within the university, and that such have been local leaders. It suggests something conscious.

Now to come to the side for which I feel a real sympathy. Shortly before we left to come over to Arizona a young man came up to our place, which is about nine miles from town at 6,000 feet, and wanted to see me for a conversation. He acknowledged that he had been a user of LSD and marijuana, though he said he had discontinued it, that apparently in connection with it some doors were opened and he became oriented to yoga, and he found that a serious orientation to yoga made it impossible for him to continue with the use of the drugs. Rather surprisingly, he was oriented to *Bhakti* yoga. Western males you would expect more normally to be oriented to either the yoga of knowledge or the yoga of action. I loaned him for an overnight perusal—and told him if he came back the next day—a volume of Sri Aurobindo's *Synthesis of Yoga*—a 1000 page book—suggesting that he focus upon the yoga of devotion in there. He wouldn't do that, but he said he'd read through it, and he found himself deeply disturbed by the fragments he was reading. The upshot was that we managed to get the book into his hands and he has it now. This came out of the student revolution—part of the cream. He told me that there were in the vicinity of Lone Pine about 150 people who were users of marijuana. He himself was a guest of the County for a couple of months at our county seat. I think you can interpret what being such a guest is. They thought he was selling; he wasn't, he said. He was rather philosophical about it. He had a slightly, well, off style appearance, but it wasn't unattractive. It was modified so it looked attractive. He was neat. Well, I had become interested in what it is that happens in connection with the use of these chemical substances such as LSD, marijuana, so on, and several others, and including alcohol. It is well known they produce psychical changes in the consciousness. A William Brady, a reporter, was led to go into the subject rather deeply and wrote a book. He formulated every part of the experience that came from the use of LSD. I had meant to bring that down to read to you. The startling thing was, that many of those experiences were similar to those that come out of authentic mystical experiences—part of the process of Realization—even an orientation to the 'ground' or the 'thing-in-itself'. That was the language of the article, something rather fundamental; and to me it was disturbing, for if by a drug, a chemical, one can open a Door that ordinarily, it is said, takes seven incarnations, something is wrong somewhere. I could hardly blame a person who had experiences such as these described to be very reluctant in giving them up, because I know the power of the mystical experience, and that to turn one's back upon

the indefinite enjoyment of it would be . . . There's something wrong. I can tell you, without being able to prove to your satisfaction, the fact that there is a very serious damage and no glimpses are received . . . to consciousness, which is our true inheritance when acquired legitimately. These glimpses are paid for at a price that may well be catastrophic—possibly even psychical disintegration.

Now, there may be and probably are some among you who have experimented this way. I don't want to make you despair, but I do want to warn . . . gone far, for the danger is great. Lightly touching it and turning away, you may . . . may avoid what I've spoken of. To illustrate what happens, I would recall to you an experience . . .