

Revolution and Evolution

Part 1 of 3

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As a result of a discussion precipitated by the last tape, I have been impressed with the thought of developing certain ideas under the subject of “Revolution and Evolution.”¹ In the popular understanding of these two conceptions, they’re usually viewed as a contrast between bringing about change in the world through the principle of violent action, in the case of *revolution*, and of bringing about change through step by step progress without the use of violence, in the case *evolution*. But I regard this approach as very superficial and view the two conceptions as forming together a complementary whole; and I shall proceed to develop an idea in this connection that may achieve such an integration.

The word ‘revolution’ is not properly to be associated with simply the idea of determination by violence, but rather has the conception related to the rotation of a wheel or circle. And we may think of evolution as a developmental process along a straight line, which would have a vector value. In using the word ‘vector’, I am borrowing a conception from analytic mechanics in which quantities are viewed as having a directed value, as to the right or left, or up and down. I shall here attempt to combine the two conceptions. If we have placed before us by imagination the notion of a revolving circle, that circle can be thought of as traveling along a line. And if we consider any point on the periphery of the circle, and then the path described by that point as the circle rolls along the line, we describe a curve which is known as a “cycloid.” We could have that point located any place within the circle or upon a line proceeding from the center of the circle outside of the circle and place the point upon the outside of the circle, and consider then the curves produced by these points as the circle rotates along the line without slipping upon the line, and we would generate other curves that belong to this family of cycloids.

But there is another principle involving rotation with respect to a circle that is more pertinent to our interests here, and that is consider a radius in the circle as rotating—in this case, rotating in an anti-clockwise direction. There is generated in this way, by the appropriate means, which I shall not here develop, what is known as a sine curve, which is a curve that oscillates between positions above and below the line and is the curve which typically represents all periodicities such as the oscillation between day and night and, in a particularly important sense, the oscillation between life here in the outer world and that state which we call death, or rather the life hidden from us in the stages entered into by the event called death. Actually we should, in this case, view death not as the opposite of life but as the opposite of birth, and that the two are modes of the total manifestation of the living process.

¹ See the audio recording, “State of the World.”

Now another point needs to be brought into our picture. In the manifestation of inner potentiality thrown outward into the world here below, the whole is not present in manifestation at any one time, but phases of the whole, so that we have a situation in which some particular phase of the whole ascends into manifestation while other phases of the whole are relatively repressed and hidden, leading later to other stages in which the hidden and repressed element comes out into manifestation while the earlier manifestation is in its turn repressed into the background. We can see this process taking place in our society and with this result as part of the total picture, that a certain phase of life condition, such as a certain form of government, or a certain economy, or a certain accentuation of preferred values, facilitates the unfoldment of certain types of individuals but has an adverse effect upon the development of other types of individuals. Because of this, there is built into the system of manifestation, forces that tend to overthrow any form which currently exists, namely, the forces generated by the relatively repressed side. This is what might be called a principle of ever-present instability. Practically it works out this way: that in society, in any particular form, some individuals prosper and others feel themselves in a repressed and coerced position. On the other hand, if those in the relatively repressed or coerced position were to achieve sufficient power they could overthrow the social form that exists and establish one in which they would have a favorable condition for the unfoldment of their interests and predilections at the price of repressing those who had formerly been in the dominant, expressing position. This would indicate a process that we see throughout the history of mankind—one phase is ascendant and after a time it runs into decline and is overthrown and another phase becomes ascendant; and here we can see a rationale back of this process.

We introduce now another component which forms a part of the total picture, and that is the factor of individual psychology. That there are differences in the psychology of individuals was recognized long ago by the ancient Greeks, but in our day it has been specifically developed by Kretschmer, Dr. Sheldon, and more elaborately by Dr. Carl G. Jung. I shall here refer very briefly to the pattern of Dr. Jung. I have elsewhere developed it more completely.² But this pattern implies that in a given individual we have different *attitudes* which may be accentuated, namely, extraversion and introversion, and different *functions* that may be accentuated, namely, the functions of thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition. And along with the accentuation of an attitude or of certain functions, the complementary attitude is relatively repressed and the complementary functions are relatively repressed.

We may see that in the process of the individual evolution, by introducing the notion of reincarnation, that the development and manifestation of certain attitude-function complex will lead subsequently to another life in which there would be an amplification and manifestation of the relatively repressed function and attitude; and thus there would be an oscillation from life to life in which there would ultimately be the development of all sides—each side of the nature however being accentuated in any one lifetime.

But this process is going on with the total mass of the individuals in this humanity, and we can have something that corresponds to a relative repression of certain *attitudes* in a certain type of social organization while others have an opportunity

² See the audio recording “Abstract of the Philosophy,” part 6.

favorable for their manifestation. This must be borne in mind in developing any ideal of social organization. Typically, those who have written and promulgated an ideal of political, economic, and social organization have reflected their own individual psychology and extrapolated it as being true of all men. But in view of the fact that the idea of its being true for all men is demonstrably false, their building of an ideal is utterly inadequate. The ideal would, if implemented and manifested, produce a condition that might be a favorable condition for those who are of the psychological type of the writer, but very repressive with respect to counter-types. Any man who really has a wish to achieve justice in this world is obligated to take this psychological factor into account; but the historic fact is, they have not done so. They have merely formulated a position favorable to themselves and had the arrogance to impose that formulation upon others. Achieving a just organization of society is a matter of supreme difficulty, and it is not present in this world today anywhere.

We introduce now a further factor which must be taken into consideration in connection with our total problem. This is the fact that those who take a position of critical denunciation of the extant social and political organization, whatever it may be, are divided into two classes that stand in contrapuntal opposition to each other. These are represented by the group known as the *collectivists*, on one hand, and the *individualists*, upon the other. Both of these positions have a more moderate and a more extreme formulation. In its more moderate form, it is a contrast between what is commonly called socialism, on one side, and individualism, upon the other side; but in its extreme manifestation, it is a contrast between communism, on one side, and anarchism, upon the other. The idea of the individual and the collectivity represent two poles between which actual concrete social, political, and economic organization oscillates. In the history of mankind, there is a variation in the accentuation. At some times there is a strong accentuation of the principle of the collectivity, at other times a relatively strong accentuation of the individual. Aurobindo has pointed this fact out in some of his writings, but a very important point that he made was that the accentuation of the individual has never historically gone to the extreme that is true in the case of the accentuation of the collectivity. And, in fact, as I look abroad in the world today, we find the accentuation of the collectivity currently in the dominant position. In our own country, if we go back over its history, we find ourselves starting with a formulation of government that stood, I would say, at a position of relative balance between the values oriented to the individual and the values oriented to the collectivity. But there has been modification from the beginning and a drift towards a progressively stronger and stronger accentuation of the point of view of the collectivity until, today, we virtually live in a form of administrative socialism. Here we should come to a better understanding of the different forms of these movements in these opposed directions.

Socialism has a variety of meanings, three of which stand out conspicuously as having been historically rather determinant: one is *administrative socialism* where without a doctrinaire basis that was highly developed governing the socialism, but a practical application of essentially socialistic principles applied pragmatically. This is the method that was recommended and upheld by the Fabian socialists who have played a strong part in English history. It is also characterized in considerable measure by the attitude of the single-tax movement. There is *idealistic socialism* which develops not so much through the use of general public determination by law as by the formation of

groups who orient themselves to a collective principle of group government without having changed or sought to change the law mass of the existing political entities. We have thus Christian socialism which falls in this group and the various other forms of communes and so forth that have existed through history. And there, finally, is a *revolutionary socialism* which is predominantly oriented to the political, economic, social thought of Karl Marx which seeks a general overthrow by force of extant political, economic, and social forms and would apply forced conformity on the part of everybody to this imposed system. This is the form of socialism which is so dominantly enforced in the predominant portion of Eurasia today.³

Opposed to this is the other pole of thought, which is the accentuation of the values of the individual. The values here presented have been formulated in the political philosophy of John Locke in which there was an attitude towards political government as such which was rather denigrating. Political government was viewed as unavoidable but a necessary evil, and that it should be restricted to essentially the police power. There was no intent in this philosophy to overthrow political government as such, but rather a recognition that it had a place, a function to perform, but that function would gradually disappear as man evolved in the ethical sense. Government, forced by the state, was viewed as necessary, but, essentially, a necessary evil. This is the diametrically opposed to the political philosophy of Aristotle. And right here I should like to make a note that those who are oriented to the position that is critical of the thought of the eighteenth century, and would seek to accentuate political power, are actually oriented to something that was developed B.C. The charge that certain of our leaders have gone back to the eighteenth century is more strictly or more properly made with respect to the critics of this position by pointing out that they go back to a political position that was formulated before the time of Christ by Aristotle; their position is actually more ancient.

Liberalism, in the older sense, was an orientation to the political and economic philosophies of John Locke, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer. The political philosophy of John Locke played an enormously important part in the organization of our own government. This is evident from the references to John Locke that are to be found in the letters of Thomas Jefferson. In fact, the hidden influence behind the Declaration of Independence is the political philosophy of John Locke—including both its strong points and its weak points: the strong points being in the form of the accentuation of the principle of freedom, not alone in the sense of economic freedom, or free enterprise, but also in the sense of intellectual freedom and of religious freedom. And that implied a definite curtailment upon the possible encroachments that could be made by political government. In fact, in the case of Herbert Spencer, many of the statements would go to the extreme form of a general denigration of political government and the restriction of it to the exercise of the police power in the broad sense that includes ordinary police action and military action, but the leaving of the society free to act otherwise through non-political means. Today there has been an overturn in the meaning of the word ‘liberal’ so that we find the modern liberal as emphasizing change effected by the political governing entity. The result being that we have tended to identify those

³ For another discussion of these forms of socialism, see the audio recording “Collectivism and Individualism.”

who are still oriented to the earlier liberal position with the position of conservatism. In a sense it is conservative in that it conserves the values of the old liberalism; but recently there has been the development of another term for representing this orientation, namely, that of 'libertarian'.

Historically, the discussions with respect to the contrast of collectivism versus individualism have been in the form of an over-accentuation of the economic factor. Persons have seen abuses in the economic field and have been blind to the abuses in the political field, and tended towards a wish to transfer the control of the instruments of production directly to the political entity. But there are certain implications that grow out of such a move. If the governing of economic factors is by free enterprise, there is a selection of a certain type of mind that succeeds in reaching the position of power in this; and if it is predominantly by the exercise of political power, then a certain number of [this] psychological type ascends into the power position. And if we transfer all economic power to the political entity instead of being in an independent form, we give an overwhelming emphasis to the type of individual who gravitates to political power. In other words, all collectivistic movements, in the larger sense of using the coercive power of governments for its imposition, lead to an accentuation of political man.

Now, this leads, then, to the need of analyzing what *political man* is essentially. Now, while I haven't the time here to go into this question in any large degree, I'll note the fact that political man is a Machiavellian. He becomes so by a principle of selection. No doubt, there are idealists who seek political position, and quite unselfishly, but an analysis of the history of politics down the ages from Pontius Pilate, particularly, to the present shows that the type of man who survives in the field, and is therefore selected, is the Machiavellian. We thus, when we transfer economic power to the normal political types of power, such as that of politics and of the military, build up an unchecked power principle; whereas, in a society where the money, or money power, or economic power is administered by one group and political power by another, we have a sort of check and balance between these two kinds of power, and thus freedom is not destroyed so greatly as is the case when both kinds of power are administered by the same type of individual. This is an important point to bear in mind, and may be the decisive point when one finally has completed his analysis of the whole problem.

An identification of the two orientations is more fundamentally psychological than it is economic. I'd like to quote, in this connection, from the article on socialism in Baldwin's dictionary:

The individualist is the man who in a number of debatable cases believes that the good from freedom outweighs the evil. The socialist is the man who in these same cases believes that the evil outweighs the good. The difference between the two is in many cases a matter of temperament. The man who reasons more acutely than he feels is pretty certain to be an individualist; the man who feels more acutely than he reasons is likely to

be a socialist. For the good of freedom is essentially an indirect one, only to be fully understood by those who are capable of abstract reasoning.⁴

This, I think, brings us to the very heart of the matter. In a way, the seeing of economic abuses is incidental. Generally, those who see economic abuses are more or less blind to the abuses of the political mind; and those who see the political abuses may very well prefer the abuses that come from the economic mind. Here is a question of powers; and in my analysis of the powers at work in the world, I find there are three fundamental ones. They are military power, political power, and economic power or money power. The military power is wholly brutal. It compels by the power to impose suffering or death—an utterly obnoxious power. It is akin to the power exerted by the individual who seeks his way by murder. Political power operates through psychological chicanery, by the use of psychological forces that operate below the belt of reason; it is operation of power by the principle of psychological seduction. Only in the field of money power or economic power does the principle of reason have an opportunity to function with reasonable effectiveness. There are flaws here too, but for my part I would judge them as less objectionable than the flaws which grow out of political power and military power. Granted that this is a matter of temperament, I nonetheless feel that this whole problem of social organization should be raised to the level of a psychological evaluation. And in point of fact, the purely economic side of it is incidental. Temperament, or psychological type, is determinant here, and an individual has the right to his psychology. Therefore, if we are ever to have a just government, it must have the complex organization necessary to give equal freedom and equal coordinate responsibility to the different psychological types. A democracy cannot do this for the simple reason that democracy reflects the attitude of whatever is the predominant type. It is crushing upon the functionings of elite man and tends to orient overwhelmingly to the standpoint of mass man, or rather to those who have the psychological capacity to manipulate mass man. This means that we have to reevaluate our whole orientation in coming to a decision as to what course will lead to the final emergence of governance with the maximum of justice.

A final point as a footnote may be added. Someone, I think an Englishman, has said that the young man who has not been a socialist has something wrong with his heart, but the old man who remains a socialist has something wrong with his head.⁵ This illustrates the point: the collectivistic position makes its strongest appeal to those who are most developed in the function of feeling, but individualism makes its strongest appeal to those who are oriented to the function of thinking. Both have their place; the point is how to organize a society so that neither is crushed.

⁴ James Mark Baldwin, ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan Co., 1911), 541-542.

⁵ This statement has been attributed to many notable figures; however, recent research credits Francois Guizot, a French historian and statesman, as having been its originator.