

The Democrat before Authority

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I. — THE REVOLUTION AND THE PROGRESS OF MAN.

Planetary revolution. — The contradictions of our time. — Ideological inconsistencies. — Man does not change... — ... but his behavior evolves. — The imaginative man. — Culture in the revolution. — Relativity is libertarian.

II. — THE PRIMACY OF POLITICS.

Good or bad, politics commands. — The totalitarian mechanism. — The technocratic illusion. — Consequences of democratic resignations.

III. — CONSIDERATIONS ON AUTHORITY.

The Libertarian Ferment. — Of the Nature of Revolutions. — Of a Definition of Authority. — Of the Authoritarian Sophism of the Mediocre. — Authority of Value, Capacity, Force and Right. — Systems and Facts. — Of the Choice of a Doctrine.

I

The revolution and the progress of man

Planetary revolution

Ours no longer the romantic conceptions of a revolution by which man, freed from social oppression and economic contradictions, would then progress smoothly in peace towards justice.

Thirty years of revolutions and counter-revolutions, throwing the old world into chaos from the Atlantic to the Pacific, all accomplished in violence, passion, sectarianism and cruelty; thirty years of disillusionment incline the sociologist and the philosopher to rethink the problem of human progress on more objective data than the views of the mind of the disciples of Jean-Jacques.

It is also noteworthy that these revolutions have taken place in and through international wars, and that civil war — which is the inevitable corollary of social upheaval — has nowhere escaped the intervention of the governmental forces of other nations.

In other words, the revolution in one country is no longer limited nowadays to the consequences that the inhabitants of that country could expect. These consequences affect the whole world and are modified by this fact. A national revolution is, in a way, a victorious offensive at one point on the front of the planetary revolution. It therefore calls for counter-offensives, reactions at other points.

This explains the state of permanent war in which we have been living since 1914 and the cruel conditions, the totalitarian form of these conflicts, which, in their motives and means, have all the characteristics of a civil war.

The contradictions of our time

Because of these characteristics, the attitudes of the parties and men in these conflicts baffle the understanding. The capitalist aspects of the war that revolutionary pacifists rightly denounce persist. But it turns out that the interferences of conflicting national ideologies place parties and individuals in contradictory situations.

Without dwelling on it further, everyone knows how, for example, capitalism can support fascism against communism and then, embarrassed by the attacks that fascism makes on the “laissez faire, laissez passer” of economic liberalism, turn against this abusive auxiliary. At this moment, the adversaries of fascism, who feel that they will be definitively crushed if fascism prevails, are momentarily linked with their capitalist adversaries. Remarks of the same order explain surprising encounters with regard to the imperialist manifestations of Stalinist communism.

It is obvious that politicians, necessarily committed to positions that fluctuations in the economic situation force them to abandon, then to resume from another angle, cannot avoid the accusation of palinode and maintain the appearance of honest people. In truth, they do not care much about it, trained as they are to judge nothing except in terms of the immediate.

So much for the public demoralization, inseparable from long wars, and for the hardness of men, inseparable from civil wars.

Ideological inconsistencies

What, in all this, is the situation of a libertarian spirit for whom the destiny of man is the reason for fighting beyond the contingencies of time?

His attitude depends and can only depend on his philosophical position. Passionate, instinctive libertarians — who are the most numerous, especially among the young — obey their impulses and easily stumble upon an absolute. Lose everything if necessary, but compromise on no principle.

Who would dare to blame them? Certainly not the objective libertarian, although their position is at the antipodes, precisely because this position commands them to take things as they are, because passionate anarchism is an element of things and because, without it, there would probably be no anarchism at all.

Humans must explore further than is reasonable so that others can later get there by rail. It is enough to know that the engineer who builds the railway does not reason like the explorer.

However, the explorer increases their own chances of success if their geographical knowledge and some other corollary knowledge allow them not to venture at random, and when they propose, at the same time, to hunt the elephant, it is preferable that they do not choose the Amazon as their territory of exploration.

But this is exactly what the explorers of the revolution did during the 19th century. This is what many of their disciples continue to do, who do not consent to compromise on their ideal, even if this “ideal” is fallacious. Although they claim to be anti-religious, they lock themselves in a mystical obstinacy and hunt the white elephant in Patagonia.

The 19th century, which gave birth to the sciences fertilized in the previous century, lent its pupils all the beauties it dreamed of. It thought that if their father man, despite his faults and vices, had given

birth to such beautiful daughters, it was because he carried within him the germ of indefinite progress. All revolutionary ideologies — including Marxism — have proceeded from this illusion. Our disillusionments have flowed from it no less naturally.

Man does not change...

The axiom that the human being's essence does not change, which was the conclusion of the historical study of human behavior, is today confirmed by genetic biology, despite the Soviet biology of the Michurinists who seek to link the evolution of beings to Marxist dogmas.

The progression of man as such, from Pithecanthropus to Cro-Magnon man, can be explained by successive mutations that have occurred during a million years of evolution in the wild. In the modern world there is practically no chance that a favorable mutation — if it occurred — would become fixed and develop. A usefully transformed man would be a monster, and a monster does not last or reproduce within our civilization. Only the potentialities contained in the genes and constantly reproduced, the bad and the good, are transmitted. Despite crossbreeding, the average of these potentialities, by virtue of the law of large numbers, has probably remained the same for some thirty or thirty-five thousand years. There is no reason for it to change.

...but his behaviors are changing

However, the man of Paris is no longer the man of Cro-Magnon. A modification, if not progress, has taken place in his behavior, his thinking has been enriched, his sensitivity has been refined. It is from the study of the conditions of this process that the direction to give to revolutions arises. It is by striving to direct the changes that progress will result.

The process of this progress is easily apparent. The good and bad qualities of man remaining immutable, the conditions of life improve only by a transformation of the social environment in such a way that a kind of premium is acquired for the best qualities. In other words, individual egoism being irreducible — and all the more so since it is a factor of initiative and activity — it is necessary that the conditions of social life lead the individual to behave in such a way that their actions are profitable both to themselves and to the community as a whole.

This view is not new and yet no system has ever succeeded in realizing it. Does it correspond or not to the possibilities? Does its realization depend only on the time factor? The history of humanity answers affirmatively, provided that we consider it from its origins and by sticking to the major curves of the evolution of societies.

The gregarious man

The initial cause of the subjugation of men was their herd instinct, the animal instinct of the species which, dominated by intelligence, translated itself into rites. Unable to explain the nature of things concretely, man imagined explanations dictated by his subjective reactions.

There was a stammering of thought there but also a reflex of instinctive defense against hostile elements. Man defended his life and, first of all, his food and shelter. Hence the hunting and construction rites that made him a prisoner of a narrow conformism. The acts of a man of the clan

resounding on all in this magical world that they had imagined, no one could be free since all depended on the acts of each.

It took the climatic cataclysms of the end of the Paleolithic for men, forced to adapt to new conditions, to free themselves from now-outdated rites. Perhaps it is to this circumstance that is due the more rapid and more ancient evolution of the peoples of the Northern Hemisphere where these cataclysms occurred, including the flooding of the Mediterranean valley.

A first point is to be remembered; it is the upheaval of the climate and, therefore, of economic conditions, which has determined the liberation of the individual in relation to the mystical imperatives of the group. A second point is that the struggles that man has had to carry on, in order to adapt to circumstances, have developed in him objective intelligence.

If we reflect on the inhibiting, emasculating role that subjectivist ideologies have never ceased to play — philosophical or religious — the conclusion imposes itself: man progresses through his struggle for the conquest of a better material being and, on the occasion of this struggle, he develops his faculties of observation and judgment. On the contrary, subjectivist philosophies have the consequence of diverting him from earthly realities and the material well-being that facilitates the release of thought and of inclining him to the eunuchism of imaginative pleasures, to the easy and vain construction of a metaphysical world. By the same token, they distort his judgment.

The imaginative man

The fact remains that man has an innate tendency towards imaginary creations, to escape from his natural condition, to free himself from his animal instincts. He wants to grow and it is through this tendency that the moral progress of societies is made. He constructs hypotheses and it is through them that he is led to discover. Cultivated on this level, imagination is fertile. The problem is that too often he is self-satisfied and substitutes dreams for thought, beatitude for action.

By this substitution, man loses the faculty of reasoning correctly, and therefore of learning to behave alone; he falls back into the chains of rites because his thought is content with the approximations of an abstract logic. Now if logic is a perfect instrument of reasoning, it is to the extent that it starts from verified postulates. It is not in itself a criterion of accuracy. We reason with equal logic on the false and on the true. A judgment is valid only if the elements of the reasoning are true, and they are only so if they coincide with the observable facts.

In short, man has won material advantages under the rule of necessity. He has acquired an enlargement of objective thought, but he does not quite succeed, even in the man of the laboratory, in disciplining his necessary imagination to what is the domain of his faculties, that is to say, to the exploration and apprehension of reality.

How can he acquire this discipline, which will keep him from the prisons of the mind? Quite simply, in the same way that the tendencies towards the least effort, which give rise to the invention of machines at the expense of physical health, are reconciled: sport, effort turned into play, restores balance. Similarly, the culture of the mind satisfies the instinctive impulses that lead man to surpass himself, without him having to renounce the pleasures of the flesh, which his very culture incites him to naturally moderate. The more a man is cultivated and, above all, eclectically cultivated, the less he offers a hold to dogmas of all kinds, to truisms, to conformisms. The more he concerns himself, outside

his specialty, with paying attention to various disciplines, keeping up to date with the things of the wide world, the more he becomes delicate in the choice of his pleasures and understanding of the predilections of others.

Culture in the revolution

Thus, remaining biologically similar to himself, the barbarian that we see reappear in so many individuals, when troubles unleash and exacerbate the instincts of the repressed brute, this barbarian manifests himself sociable, courteous and sometimes generous in a social atmosphere as if oiled with civility. The accumulated and decanted culture has developed in the environment what is profitable to humanity and tended to inhibit what is harmful to it. Each individual participating in this culture and bathing in this atmosphere has made the best of his nature flourish and constrained or masked the bad.

The athlete, by cultivating his musculature, also frees himself from unhealthy fat deposits and the bad mood caused by poor circulation. Thus, the cultivation of the brain and sensitivity diverts bad inclinations. Individual scruples, the social disciplines imposed by the collective rules of ethics, the emulations and competitions of aesthetics make the inclinations of solidarity, courtesy and affectivity predominate in social relations. If the average of good and bad feelings is not modified, the average of their manifestations tends to rise towards the better. From which it is correct to conclude that if all social disorder, by dissociating moral rules, reveals a regression of the average of social feelings and affective relations, there does not follow a condemnation of the ideas of progress. Simply, the law of progress is subject, like everything that is alive, to the accidents of a discontinuous evolution, which man must constantly arouse, defend, resume and tirelessly promote.

It seems, then, that we can admit that the essential part of human progress lies in the deepening and wide diffusion of culture; that freedom lies in the unhindered expression of ideas and the correction of freedom in the confrontation of ideas with facts. Freedom disappears with authentic culture when individuals are subjected to directed teaching, whatever it may be; when opposition, contradiction and flexible eclecticism are banished, that which serves to inform oneself and not to evade.

The greatest crime against intelligence is to lead the individual, by means of apparently objective teaching, to subjective reflexes, which render him incapable of reacting to the argument of authority. Such an education is worse than the formation of a religious subjectivism. Religion presupposes faith. The inconsistencies of religion can destroy faith or remove it from the imperatives of the temporal clergy. Nothing can remedy the deformation of young brains in which a rigorous method of one-way reasoning is inculcated. It would be better not to reason than to reason in a manner that is systematically false.

It is when it leads to this conception of the imbecilic unification of a people that a revolution — whatever else justifies it — is a dangerous reaction, a reversal of evolution and that it would be foolish to consider it as progress all the same because it is called revolution. A libertarian spirit cannot, without denying itself, give in to attitudes dictated by the fetishism of words. It is not the words that count, but their content, at a given time and in given circumstances. It is with this faculty of choosing the content under the labels and packaging that the exercise of authentic freedom begins and that a society can be called democratic.

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Relativity is libertarian

The observation of men and things has long forced me to think that social libertarians too often tend to justify their refusals by the evidence of abuses. If the validity of a revolt implies in the honest man the will to destroy its cause, it does not necessarily imply that it is necessary to take the opposite view of this cause in order to access the truth. It is an effect of the year, a process of “sloganing” to paint things in opposition of black and white. Life is more complex and the relationship of men with things is constantly a conditioned relationship: relativity of time, place, circumstances. A libertarian who forgets this, in order to judge only according to an absolute of speculation, is not far from substituting for the libertarian spirit a spirit of dogmatism and intolerance.

I understand that too much understanding, too much intelligent contempt, too much subtlety paralyze action. It is the circumstances of the action alone that determine what principles must concede to current facts. But when it is the principles that, in advance, do not agree well with the facts, the action that follows is very likely to be nothing but sterile agitation.

It is an exciting task, and one that must always be resumed, to deliver societies from all the good that they contain. It is clumsy to abort them through excess of haste and it is foolish to want to extract from them at all costs what they do not contain.

Similarly, is it advisable, when one wishes to be understood, to amputate from words a part of their meaning in order to retain only that which involves a pejoration? Thus we make the word political to which we oppose the economic because, without a doubt, it is preferable that we govern things rather than men. Nevertheless, to govern things is to engage in politics and that the government of things determining the condition of men, we have, in saying this, only operated a substitution of words.

Thus is done with the authority of the State, against which grievances abound and are justified. But throughout the interregnum of the Roman State and the monarchical State, things were not better in the chaos of the clans and then of feudalism, and not much better either for the little people within the bourgeois communes.

It is that the State and its government, the commune and its municipality, the union and its office, the cooperative and its managers, these are entities embodied in men. Men that authoritarianism always makes odious and that, sometimes, their personal authority makes beneficial.

Let us try to see clearly in these relativisms of politics and authority, which are the cornerstones of democratic constructions. Governments will last long enough before the libertarian ferments have modified human behaviors for us to have to talk about them in a way to contain their abuses while waiting for the dreamed age of harmonious diversity. We will contain them with all the more relevance if we avoid criticizing them out of place.

II

The primacy of politics

Good or bad, politics commands

The 20th century posed an absurd question, namely whether economics should take precedence over politics. This is a parallel question to those sometimes put forward by certain demagogic polemicists during the quarrels between intellectuals and manual workers or city dwellers and rural dwellers: should not manual workers prevail over the intellectuals they support and rural dwellers over the city dwellers they feed? This last proposition, renewed by the physiocrats, for whom the soil was the source of all wealth, even became an axiom of government in France during the great misery of the armistice. And it was this misery that provided the answer by revealing the silliness of these slogans. The facts soon showed that agriculture could no more do without the industry that provides it with fertilizers, bactericides, machines, clothing and means of transport than industry could do without agriculture. If it was given to the manuals to argue against the intellectuals, they could do so only by the processes of a dialectic that an intellectualism enslaved to demagoguery conferred on their spokesmen. These are as crude stupidities as the simplistic argument of good people, such as I have heard some of, for whom the question was resolved when they had triumphantly noted that one must eat before thinking. Still, it was obvious that these good people were less convinced of their truth than humiliated by their intellectual inferiority.

Spiritualists and materialists agree without difficulty on the primacy of the spirit. They cease to agree when the spiritualists advance that the spirit exists in itself, survives individually the corporeal person. If the materialists conceive the spirit only as one of the forms of universal energy and admit its individuation only within an organized living body, all find themselves in agreement in subordinating the acts of the body to the imperatives of the spirit, whether these imperatives are conscious or instinctive, whether they arise from atavistic habit, acquired reflexes or reflective thought. After that it matters little that one must eat before thinking, it is ultimately thought that determines what one will eat and how one will eat it.

It will therefore be said just as falsely and with just as much appearance of reason, that no society is possible without an economic system first ensuring the existence of its members. Our era will provide this additional argument, seized in current facts, that all economic disorder leads to a social revolution, an argument constantly verified by history, which history itself reduces to nothing because it is always through the consequences of a bad policy that imbalance is introduced into the economy.

In truth, theorists and practitioners of economics have never been mistaken. Before declaiming against the primacy of politics, they did not fail to take up in various forms the exact joke of Baron Louis: "Make me good politics, I will make you good finances." The difficulty was to agree on the nature of a good politics. For practitioners of economics, this was one that would ensure the maintenance of the capitalist regime, the sustainability of its privileges and the success of its enterprises. Unfortunately, the condition of capitalism in the 20th century diverted it from normally assuming its social function, while the role of political power, reminded of its own duties by alert public opinion,

was to force the masters of the economy to fulfill their function. It was then that they put forward the principle of the primacy of economics, giving it the implicit meaning that, since the life of a country is linked to its economy, everything must be subordinated to the interests of trade. In fact, this whole implied the abandonment of the country's resources to speculators, their disorderly exploitation to the point of exhaustion, as the event has only too clearly shown. Under the appearance of political freedom, we have been subjected to the law of coalitions of interests, especially that of trusts indirectly in control of power, whereby, the demonstration having been made by the proponents of economics that the possession of goods gives authority only insofar as it allows control over politics, the primacy of the latter is a foregone conclusion.

But it must also be understood that politics, in its general power of direction, includes a particular power of control and conciliation of the two essential factors of the constitution of a State: the economic and the social. It cannot therefore be confused with either one or the other. If it goes beyond its role as animator of active forces of all kinds, of maintainer of the conditions specific to the life of the State in a given time, if it directs and governs both the economic and the social in their smallest details, it absorbs and confuses all the orders and, consequently, it leaves no control over the acts of each of them.

At certain exceptional times, during great crises, and if the rare chance of an extraordinary leadership is encountered, unity of conception and action can produce happy results. In the long run, it always leads to the most fatal errors. The practical spirit of the Romans had understood this. They entrusted to a dictator, but to a provisional dictator, the care of getting them out of trouble in difficult times. Rome entered the path of servitude, which was ultimately to be its downfall, when dictators acquired the taste for maintaining themselves in power.

In the prosperous times of the individualist economy, which were those of the rise of capitalism and the industrialization of the West, the hierarchy of powers was relatively easy to regulate, all the more so since the distribution of the wealth created found sufficient outlets through the expansion of trade. It was only through the subsequent expansion of industry throughout the world and through the disorderly increase in production that the crisis of the distribution of products and the remuneration of labor was to pose the social problem with extreme acuity. However, this had already taken shape in many conflicts where, from the 19th century onwards, the just claim by producers of a natural right of use over collectively created goods and of participation in a prosperity of which they were the frustrated artisans was manifested.

The global economic imbalance requiring a solution to this constantly evaded problem, two atrocious wars sanctioned the deficiency of a policy of lamentable compromises in capitalist anarchy. Capitalism was mired in blood and ruin where liberalism succumbed. Who would still speak of liberalism when the conduct of the wars of the 20th century revealed the scandalous subjugation of States to the interests of international high finance and the strange negotiations that passed over the peoples confronted for disguised causes?

Bastiat's "universal harmonies," Taylor's organization of performance, have finally become bottled up in the dead end where the overproduction-underdistribution dilemma has locked them.

The totalitarian gearbox

It is curious to note that, among the doctrinaires who, a century in advance, tried to direct the social economy towards other ends, two of them, through their disciples, have confronted each other in our day in the cruel and bitter struggle between the fascist reaction and the Marxist revolution.

These were the German economist Friedrich List, the author of the *National System of Political Economy*, published in 1841, and the socialist Karl Marx, the author with Engels of the *Communist Manifesto*, published in 1848, on which *Capital* is the immense commentary. If we recall the broad outlines of the works of these German theorists, we will see that it was between their disciples (although of unequal importance) that the battles for the revolution of the 20th century were fought, the anti-Hegelian disciples of Bakunin and Proudhon intervening as a third party through the intermediary of trade unionism.

Objectively, it appears clearly that the doctrine of National Socialism is contained in List, initiator of the Zollverein and, if not the theoretician of “vital space,” at least the protagonist of territorial enlargement through the absorption of “small non-viable nations” and, above all, the doctrinaire of autarky, already in reaction against manufacturing England.

The two salient elements of List's economic and social doctrine, whose morality was developed by the school of Fichte, are the need for a nation to provide for its own needs, that is, to go beyond the framework of natural production (the stage of agriculture), and that of ensuring the power to create wealth, that is, to have industrial potential. We are rich, not from the goods we possess and which must be consumed, and therefore destroyed, but from the goods that we are in a position to produce. True wealth would be to produce everything a nation consumes. The nature of the soil, the climate, the natural distribution of raw materials being opposed to this ideal, it is rational to produce everything possible and to overproduce in the favored sectors in order to ensure a currency of exchange. This is the directed national economy and, as for exchanges, a prefiguration of the clearings.

The factors of wealth of a nation are therefore the power of labor, of its people and its industrial potential. To ensure them with method and continuity, to give the people a taste for effort and even to incite them to sacrifices useful to the collective work, a direction is indispensable which embraces all forms of activity, directs initiatives, exalts and contains minds. Therefore, for List and his successors, the primacy of politics. Two points are obviously common to this doctrine and to that of Russian Marxism: these are the initial principle of the creation of wealth by labor, taken from the doctrine of the Scotsman Adam Smith, and the absolute subordination of the individual to the collective or, more dangerously, of the individual to an entity, the Party master of the State, by which a concept of race is concretized for some, of ideological unification for others.

If Marxism gives primacy to economics, it is because economics ensures the life of the community and gives it power and duration, which is also, but in a narrowly nationalist form, List's conception. In practice, the realization of a planned and collectively organized economy is conditioned by the primacy of politics. In both systems, the organization of internal administration, the complexes of external relations dominate all activity. It is significant that both confine private life within the framework of public life and that the latter is expressed by a “totalitarian” morality. The fundamental difference lies in the nationalist character of List's views and goals, in the universalist character of Marx's views. This difference took on a new aspect in the 20th century. The condition of economic and intellectual

exchanges has revealed both the interdependence of national economies and the natural and lasting particularism of nationalities, a contradiction that can only be peacefully and honestly reduced by equal treaties, economic agreements allowing useful emulation and the fertile diversity of cultures and ethnic characteristics to subsist.

Among the Germans, its solution was sought in a plan of hegemony; List's doctrine was extended, by the ambitions of Prussian and then Hitlerian pan-Germanism, to the dream of a Euro-African continent. As for Marxist universalism, already corrected by Lenin so that the "homeland of the socialist revolution" would live first and defend itself, it took on, under Stalin's rule, an aspect whose colors are strangely Slavic and whose modalities borrow a pragmatic character of directed culture and police harshness which does not fail to disturb the sense of humanity.

An unbiased view of the Soviet experience leads to the observation of an inconsistency which would tend to cast doubt on the effectiveness of proletarian revolutions as a means of promoting the freedom of individuals and which, however, corresponds to a set of facts inherent in the conditions of the social economy in revolution and which push towards authoritarian solutions.

Marxism, its theorists teach, is the condition of freedom because it frees man from economic servitude. To free himself, adds Russian Marxism, the worker must first submit to a rigorous discipline, abnegate his individual thought insofar as it inclines to heterodoxies, so that the conformity of particular attitudes to collective thought confers on the delegates of the people an unquestioned authority, which allows them to take and execute, at the opportune moment, the most unpredictable decisions.

The relative validity of a theory that achieves "unity of command" in the face of a powerfully organized adversary is not disputed. Nor is it disputed that deceit and duplicity are formidable political weapons. That Lenin and, even more so, Stalin incorporated into Marxism the lessons of Machiavelli and Ignatius of Loyola is easily explained by materialist dialectics, although if the end justifies the means it would be surprising if the means had no influence on the end. It is obvious that, under the guise of an illusory liberalism, governments devoted to capitalism have never ceased to draw inspiration from the same methods. We know how, on a global scale as well as a national scale, coalitions of businessmen, devoid of moral as well as social sense, have led us to chaos, through what hecatombs! It is no exaggeration to say that Hitlerism only gave this stupidly selfish leadership, which, moreover, recognized itself in it, its extreme and monstrous form in a systematization of the international gangsterism of trusts.

But, in all this, where has democracy gone? And is it not to be feared that the scale of the means employed to conquer this distant freedom, a flickering glimmer in an uncertain future, will make it completely forgotten by accustoming ourselves to collective ways of life that are rigorously imposed and too constantly exalted before young audiences?

The technocratic illusion

In this respect, a new danger appears in the search for a system that would replace political leadership with a technical organization. This is — on the scale of the physical sciences of the 20th century — a view taken from Proudhon and trade unionism. It does not fail to seduce in that it seems to distinguish social life from individual life. In other words, the individual subjected for a fraction of

time to defined work standards, would be free in his private life to choose his ideologies. This flour-dusted technocracy is a trap.

If it is true that material progress is expressed by technology, it is no less true that technology is not creative, but a function of execution. Its possibilities are conferred upon it by science and, in particular, by pure science, that is to say by disinterested culture. The work of a Branly led to radiotechnology, which Branly did not care about at all. Wave mechanics led to practical applications. In formulating it, Louis de Broglie provided a solution to a problem that baffled reasoning. The use of his discovery was only a subsidiary consequence.

Now all forms of pure culture intervene. Letters, arts and sciences are the diverse expressions of a single effort towards knowledge. They are essentially manifestations of thought, manifestations of man in himself. They dominate and make civilization. It would be an aberration to subordinate them to the contingent utilities of technology.

Let us not be mistaken. A technocracy external to all politics is an illusory concept. These reasons which confer primacy on politics reappear here. Technocrats inevitably institute a politics at the service of technical organization and its efficiency. Conducted by specialized men, it is a limitation; it forces science to be efficient and thus emasculates it; it subjects literature and the arts to a mission of propaganda and coordination, distorts their spirit and reduces thought to a function in a cog. Technocracy is not the direction of the machine by men who are its masters; it is the enslavement of man to the machine through the intermediary of technicians. If we were to be mistaken for a moment about the consequences of this fallacious doctrine, we would quickly return to a healthy notion of the hierarchies of value by referring to the successive purges in the USSR of writers, painters, musicians and even biologists, in consideration of the “plans” of organization and production.

But is it not also towards this technocratic direction that the capitalist “democracies” are moving? Do not the United States — and with them the Western bloc drawn into their orbit — tend to express all social activities in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, and production discipline? Does not such an attitude appear to be inspired by the “spirit of war,” which is properly the debasement of the spirit?

Let no one see in these remarks a condemnation of technology and, even less, of the science that inspires it. Science is inherent in man and it is through it that he grows in knowledge. That is enough. What is not enough is the conscience of men in place who use the fruits of science against its very mission; who disdain the productions of the mind, the gratuitous activity of the intellect; who debase them by establishing between the work of art or thought and any commodity whatsoever a common measure quantified in commercial relation. What is not enough is also the spongy conscience of artists and writers who themselves agree to submit their works to this ignominious measure. What is not enough is the loftiness of the views of politicians in whom the concern for Man without social or professional qualification does not predominate, for Man the sensitive and thinking being whose dignity all political action should tend to safeguard.

It is in this view and in this view only that the term democracy recovers an authentic meaning, just as politics regains its preeminence, which harmonizes social functions instead of abdicating before them and becoming their servant.

Consequences of democratic resignations

There is no man who can be assured of maintaining the dignity that makes the nobility of the species when the social organization does not guarantee the exercise and profit of a profession in accordance with the aptitudes of each and without regard to the opinions he professes, the feelings he manifests in his private life. There is, for the common man, no certainty of escaping an ultimate decline if he does not hold an imprescriptible title to a collective insurance against unemployment, sickness and old age. I mean an insurance that does not impose the humiliation of a premature retirement on those who are still able to work despite their age. I also mean an insurance that is not alms, but a sufficient pension assured to all, not by the profession, but by collective solidarity by means of a levy on all income and varying with price indices. Nor is there freedom when the individual is not granted a sufficient amount of leisure time — and without control over its use — in which his personality can manifest itself.

For a salaried worker, the daily task rarely today includes the satisfaction of work that, alone, still gives the effort of creation. It is therefore not enough to put all the progress of hygiene and mechanics at the service of workers. It is also necessary that their labor remains contained within the limits that leave man, in addition to his rest, the time for a free activity, whatever it may be.

Too much leisure, it has been said, only fills the taverns. In truth, it is not leisure that fills the tavern. The weary worker gets just as drunk there in a shorter space of time. What leads him there is the unattractive, often repulsive lodging and an unpreparedness to know how to furnish his rest. When a well-understood education develops in the youth both a taste for sport and a taste for reading; when — men being only what they are — a certain provoked snobbery directs minds towards the conception of a life brightened by healthy pleasures, experience teaches us that those who most willingly indulge in them are precisely those whom less harsh work has inclined to shun coarseness.

There are works that we love. There are too many which, being only necessary, cannot be exercised with any satisfaction except insofar as they bring, by sufficient gain for a limited time of servitude, a cheerful ease. We live by work; we do not live to work. But how many disinterested works are accomplished for the joy of working that they confer on leisure hours! It is right that the best should be given the choice and the time for these works. It is also necessary that the most restless, the most deeply thoughtful, for whom the banal daily life is not enough and for whom the problem of our destiny is posed — men and women who are the elites of all social classes — should be granted the time and the means of individual culture. For, finally, whatever his work, every man and woman is in it to some extent a machine. The true man begins with the leisure of thought. Even at the price of abuses that a progressive adaptation curbs, this leisure is due to everyone. Or else we must deny the dignity of the person, the autonomy of thought, which is its sovereign expression.

If the independence of people requires their economic emancipation, and if we agree that such emancipation can only be collective, we cannot forget that freedom is only conceived in the individual fact, of which collective freedoms are only the condition. For whomever the daily life — food, sleeping and fornication — is not the whole of life, the pitfalls are numerous between frameworks that leave no exits except those that are officially permitted and controlled. For whomever, finally, the notion of freedom is allied to the notions of justice and responsibility, the morality of power is not an indifferent thing. It is the principles on which political power is based that, in a given time, delimit the field open to personal freedom. It is also on the acceptance of these principles by the people that the government

bases its authority. When it refers to views that are not ratified, at least tacitly, by the average opinion, which is not unrelated to world opinion these days, it can only be maintained by police coercion. Conversely, power tends to mold opinion on a prototype that can apparently identify it with the people. This explains the exalted sectarianism of partisan youth in certain countries. This is how revolutions risk getting bogged down, when the arbitrariness of a neo-conformism, supported by reasons of State, buries freedom in forced labor camps.

The history of revolutions is made up of the discords that bloodied Agramant's camp. "Democracy" taught us that the people had to go towards emancipation by a path bordered by laws where continuous progress would be assured... If the people — who do not have an innate taste for violence and whose sufferings have cultivated a sense of justice — end up abandoning themselves to the attraction of a violent and deliberate subversion, it is because they despair of the effectiveness of the laws of democracy. If they rise up against the revolutionaries opposed to demagoguery and attached to reason, if they confuse them with their enemies, it is because reason has too often committed the sin of adultery on the soft pillow of opportunism. If the authoritarian revolution receives the surprising support of men of science and thought of high merit, coming from liberalism and not inclined by nature to corporatist ways of life, it is because, in the fight of disturbed societies, these men have had to resign themselves to transposing the debris of an antiquated morality onto the plane of a more general ethic which, in the future, will be able — they want to hope — to shape a new man. The horizons of social democracy, blocked by the clouds of pseudo-political democracies, incite the risks of adventure. The gangsterism of the gopers gives rise to a police revolution.

It is all too easy to demonstrate — and this is only too true — that the systematic regimentation of individuals in a system of nationalizations, which absorbs the social with the economic, results in a slave-like standardization; that the maintenance of a hierarchical wage system only substitutes for the capitalism of trusts the capitalism of the State, which is immeasurably restrictive since it is without competition and solidly protected by the public force; that the hierarchy of salaries, in a monolithic economy, tends to constitute a caste, itself hierarchical but united, of the holders of positions of command, with all that the defense of acquired positions, the intrigues, the competitions, involves in terms of arbitrariness, baseness, lies, violence against people.

But, to save from the violence and arbitrariness of the trusts, from the carnages that are largely attributable to them, what have the political democracies done? What are they capable of, in order to rescue man from the dilemma that locks him between two formidable forms of the organization of the forces that dominate the new times?

Will it be necessary to go through the passage, to pass in uniform file, to find further on, much further on, the open air of a world that has finally dominated the chaos of a power that it holds but does not control?

However, when a group of young girls and boys march past singing, united in the love of effort and initiative, in the fraternity of camping and youth hostels, one begins to think that it is freedom that sings and lives in them. The freedom that, perhaps, must at certain times concentrate to regain its strength, harden itself to concentrate, and that one day bursts forth into a renewed world.

III

Considerations on Authority

The libertarian ferment

I could not help ending my previous speech with a few notes of a hymn to liberty. I am quite worried about it. Too often, when man sings hymns of hope, it is because he has little left to hope for.

Nothing would remain of freedom if all that remained was an act of faith. If, from stage to stage, from crisis to crisis, it does not seem that it has ever given up; if the 20th century is passionate about it to the point of the relentlessness with which it dishonors itself in torturing it, the outcome it offers it risks leading it to the choir of a dead-end temple where its holy name will be lyrically evoked for the directed exaltation of the crowds, happy to dream of it, unworthy of using it.

Let us beware of prophecy. Since Prometheus gave a lesson to men, freedom has never ceased to assert itself in chains; the elusive radiance of the spirit has insinuated itself through the walls of all the fortresses. A Stoic in decadent antiquity, when barbarism ravaged the garden of Epicurus, a Christian at the dawn of the Middle Ages, it was in the 16th century the spirit of humanism, in the 17th century the spirit of the libertines, in the 18th century that of the Encyclopedists, in the 19th century the liberal spirit, so liberal that it allowed itself to be emasculated and prostituted by all the pimps swimming under the dirty waters of *laissez-faire* and *laissez-passer*.

The hard and positive 20th century, the century of mass theory, will perhaps measure, for the safeguarding of the conscious and dignified person, the efficiency of the libertarian spirit. However underlying it may be, the role of the libertarian spirit is greater than is commonly thought. In the 19th and 20th centuries, it intervened and will continue to intervene at the heart of social developments as an active ferment. It insinuates in the individual the sense of personality, the contempt for gregarious and prejudiced opinions, the will to oppose all charlatanisms, all sheepfolds, all crystallizations. Its ethics carries the seeds of all possible freedoms; the taste for discovery and adventure distancing its followers from the stumbling blocks, it is in the field of others that they drop the mutant seeds as they pass by. Mixed with other seeds, only a few observers know that they imperceptibly modify the quality of the harvest. It does not matter, it is the harvest that counts and, for men rich in overflowing life, the joy of sowing.

This is because, in libertarian philosophy, the human factor is primordial. Man is both the subject and the object. Certainly, the social fact and the economic fact hold all the necessary place in the bases of the existence of individuals, but at no time does it allow itself to be led to sacrifice the portrait to its frame. Its concept is essentially an ethic and, by inseparable consequence, an aesthetic.

Its first moral axiom is the negation of any validity of ethnic and social classes. However, its corollary aesthetic principle combines with the desire for conformity to biological laws to note the existence of classes of men, that is to say, a hierarchy of moral values and aesthetic values. Without which, there would only be vague individualities with dissimilar characters swarming in disordered

herds. Now let us not forget that the libertarian spirit is based on this magnificent paradox: anarchy is order.

Order, in that the libertarian rebels against arbitrary social classifications determined by the power of wealth or the chance of situations. This order requires that, all chances being made equal at the start by an equal possibility of cultivating the faculties that one has, each person can use them without any other obstacle than natural accidents.

Here we encounter the opposition that separated the German state authoritarianism of Marx and Engels from the antiauthoritarianism and antistatism of Proudhon and Bakunin. We also encounter the excesses of both. The excess of the statism of the Marxists, which has since asserted itself in power. The excess of anarchism, which does not take sufficient account of the evolution of things, of the nature of beings, and has perhaps not been sufficiently concerned with the real content of words.

If we admit that the libertarian spirit (more flexible and more alive than the social theories of a 19th century anarchism, sclerotic in summary doctrines) must be our safeguard and the condition of the progress of freedom, we must seek what the principle of authority to which it opposes itself really contains and how Proudhon's conception of the anti-governmental revolution behaved in the face of the political facts that occupy the greatest place in the historical evolution of societies; a place such that it would be idle to evoke their chronology. From the point of view of our study, it is the general meaning of political revolutions that will retain our attention.

On the nature of revolutions

Let us first note that the terms political revolution, economic revolution or social revolution, commonly used by publicists and sociologists, are extremely arbitrary and never completely encompass their object.

It is obvious that, in principle, every change of regime — when it goes beyond palace revolutions, which have no other effect than changes of persons — proposes social progress and, if it does not accomplish it, at least it always realizes some transformation of consequence of social and economic order. This was the case with the revolutions of Pisistratos and Cleisthenes in Athenian times, of the Gracchi among the Romans, of the communes in the Middle Ages, of the French Revolution and those of the nineteenth century. Whether or not the condition of the popular masses was improved, the fact remains that this condition was modified and that, *ipso facto*, the economic order, which is the elementary substratum of social life, was modified.

Conversely, any economic or social upheaval, even if fortuitous, has repercussions on the political regime. The latter either transforms itself, adapts quickly enough to dominate the change, direct it and fix it, or it disappears to make way for a suitable system, which, although born of a new economic and social state, will nonetheless be the crowning achievement and, ultimately, its means of organizing itself and lasting.

Every revolution is therefore political; it is only because, in the uninterrupted succession of troubles, anxieties and tragedies of the twentieth century, ideas are strangely confused that we are forced to recall this truism, contested in vain by demagogues. The facts that have allowed them to deny this axiom of elementary sociology are none other than the deficiencies and failures of political power.

But it is precisely these deficiencies and failures that confirm its primacy, since its impotence or resignation leads to economic and social disorder.

No doubt agreement on this point would be easily obtained if the choice of a system of government, in accordance with the conditions of a given time, were to be guided only by concern for the administration of things. Let us understand by things not only the economy but also that part of the social that concerns the satisfaction of material needs, that is to say the organization and remuneration of work. It is because the form of government, it is because the principles that found it, have repercussions on all aspects of individual and social life, and particularly on its emotional and moral aspects, that its choice unleashes passions and that revolutions are ultimately violent and cruel.

Of a definition of authority

To stick to a panoramic and summary view, one would say that political struggles were formerly and recently, and still are today, the struggles of the spirit of freedom against the spirit of authority. One would give this definition an appearance of accuracy by classing among the supporters of authority the individuals belonging to the materially and intellectually privileged classes, consequently leaders in this double capacity and interested in the preservation of their privileges. It is on this path that demagogy goes astray because it thus poses an insoluble problem because it is a false problem.

If it is true that in the practice of social struggles privilege normally falls under the banner of authority, it is because power is in fact its emanation and governs in its service. In truth, it is therefore to the abuse of authority that privilege rallies and it is against this abuse that the oppressed freedom of the people is justified in its demands. But the problem thus posed is that of civic equality and not that of freedom against authority.

Authority in itself is not necessarily the emanation of privilege. By definition, it is intended to be the guarantor of order and, consequently, the arbiter between classes, groups, and individuals. As such, and by definition again, it claims to safeguard the freedoms of individuals and communities, within the limits where these well-defined freedoms are granted as long as they do not contradict the established order. We have indeed seen authority sometimes redress wrongs against the powerful. In revolutions, authority destroys established privileges... before creating others. The problem is therefore not that of authority; it is that of its limitation and control.

Let us note that the vices of government authority are all contained in its function as arbiter between classes (which are reconstituted in the very aftermath of a revolution) in that the preponderant class suppresses arbitration by seizing the arbiter. The limitation and control of authority will be in vain as long as the existence of social classes maintains the inequality of economic situations as normal. However, we must be careful that the abolition of classes does not prevent the vices of authority from reappearing and worsening if we allow a caste of sovereign officials to be formed with the power to institute authority everywhere, which then quickly degenerates into authoritarianism. This is why it is good that, according to the Proudhonian tradition, the intervention of power is set aside as often as free contracts are sufficient to regulate economic or social relations.

This being said, if we admit — and it must be admitted socially — that freedom is maintained in order; it does not appear that authority is contradictory to it by reasoning in the absolute. On the level of principles, we will say that the two dangers of authority thus defined are, first, that it does not

consent to the entirety of the natural freedoms to which any normally constituted individual can aspire; then, that it does not suppress unjustified privileges (because there are some that merit and utility justify to a certain extent) only to constitute others that are just as detestable. These dangers do not destroy the theory. The first is an abuse. The second is a deviation. It remains to be seen whether it is the nature of authority to abuse and deviate.

This problem is solved by transposing it. Authority, practically, is the will and power of one or more men. Now it is in the nature of man to abuse and to deviate. We can therefore affirm *a priori* that the exercise of authority adulterates the principle and that, if it escapes all control, it suppresses freedom. Similarly, the control of authority being itself also a form of authority and, in a certain sense, a higher form of power, it only fulfills its object insofar as it does not overflow it. In other words, the dualism authority-government and authority-control would allow the balance, which is properly order. Unfortunately, control is also a power held by men whose nature is to abuse and to deviate. When control becomes abusive, the governmental function is paralyzed; when it deviates, that is to say when it comes to imposing directives instead of limiting itself to controlling acts and enforcing defined rules, the confusion of powers which ensues leads to waste in the State and to demoralization among the people.

It is quite idle, in reaction against an unrestrained authority and, alternatively, against the deficiencies of a shameless control, to dwell on the reciprocal advantages and disadvantages of regimes of authority and regimes of freedom. Neither authority nor freedom should be evoked on the occasion of acts which, in either case, are either excesses of authority or perversions of freedom. Both are indispensable to each other, but since both are in the hands of men, it is difficult to maintain them in a balanced relationship.

It will have been enough to say that the political and social question is based on a balance between authority and freedom to make it clear that there is not and cannot be opposition between the two principles. The problem of authority or freedom does not exist. When we pose this false dilemma, we mask under the rigor of the first term a desire for tyranny and coercion, that is to say, authoritarianism and not authority — while we lend to the second a caricatured aspect which is only that of disorder. If political revolutions seem to us to present an alternation of authoritarianism and liberalism, both relative, it is because most often the excess of authoritarianism intervenes in reaction against the consequences of a freedom fallen into license and disorder, just as by invoking freedom the people shake themselves and free themselves from the consequences of a power which exceeds them. But when the people have shaken themselves up, all that remains for them, in order to resume their proper tasks, is to delegate explicitly or tacitly the power they have just demonstrated. They delegate it to men whom circumstances, and sometimes merit, have marked with the sign of authority.

In truth, whether on the national, social or individual level, there is only one problem, that of freedom, of which authority is only one of the givens. The difficulty is to define the dose of authority which, in the social complex, will counterbalance the excessive initiatives of individuals and associations of individuals. It is at this point that oppositions of tendency and fact take on meaning. It is at this point that some people try to substitute for authority considered as a conventional instrument and rule of social measurement an authority that would contain its definition in itself, a metaphysical entity deemed necessary and whose primacy as such should be unquestioned.

The evolution of humanity has never ceased to tend towards the establishment and extension of freedom in institutions. One cannot, therefore, without opposing a natural impulse, substitute the primacy of authority for the primacy of freedom. The measure and the only justification of authority is the guarantee that it confers on public freedoms against the encroachments of cliques and coalitions and the possibilities that it gives to individuals, once social obligations have been satisfied, to cultivate themselves, to develop their faculties, in a word to “realize themselves” at their pleasure, which is how intellectual and moral evolution is accomplished, the origin and condition of all progress.

On the authoritarian sophism of the mediocre

There are some reasons to think, when meditating on the consequences, the successes and the failures of revolutions, that the rule of objectivity applies in sociology as in any other science, although it is necessary, with regard to social reactions that are difficult to predict, to reserve the share of risk. Nevertheless, to study social phenomena and to act on them, we would lose nothing by submitting to the discipline that Francis Bacon bequeathed to us in his *Novum organum*: “It is our ignorance of the cause that deprives us of the effect, for we can only conquer nature by obeying it,” a directive that the great physiologist Claude Bernard took up in his famous “Introduction”: “We can only govern the phenomena of nature by submitting ourselves to the phenomena that govern them.”

Let us consider that man was not born free, that at his origins he was not free in any respect and that he will never be absolutely free. The absolute is the divine, a completely subjective concept that the understanding sometimes believes it encompasses on condition that it refrains from analyzing it exactly. In the relative, which is the environment proper to natural evolution, man was and remains subordinate. It is quite useless to insist on this point which founds authoritarian doctrines, at least those which are served by people of good faith. For if tyranny can make authority a means, it remains that it has license to use it only insofar as the people count in number, and in all classes, men convinced that authority being natural it is necessary, so that there cannot be too many of them, which is to forget the play of balanced opposites, which is no less natural and no less necessary.

Let us not infer from this that these men deny and hate all freedom. Not at all. They are simply convinced that it is an emanation of power. According to their somewhat myopic pen-pushers' views, a certain amount of freedom is essential for man to work to the best of his abilities and too much freedom can only pervert him and disrupt order, it is up to power to dispense it, under control, in a dose that it alone is in a position to appreciate as a sovereign and responsible institution. This explains how the average civil servant and the personnel of the industry executives assigned to controls easily accommodate themselves to a totalitarian social organization, whatever its spirit, when their situation is maintained there.

The sophism of directed freedom, of theological origin, satisfies the small needs of average minds as much as those of limited minds, in that the latter are marked with the animal sign of fatality and the former consider that power acts wisely as soon as it confers on each person a hierarchical freedom where he finds exactly the place that suits him, that is to say a place that nourishes him best and allows him to hold a particle of authority, even if only that of husband and father of a family. It is to this psychology that refers the fact of constant observation that reveals to us many a revolutionary rigorously conservative in his home.

The illusion of freedom with which these people of good faith are satisfied does not, moreover, fail to be maintained by an education appropriate to the regime which, by directing and limiting their faculties of thought and feeling, leaves them without desires in the order of aesthetics, the least stable there is. They also have, to convince themselves that they are well situated within the norm of societies, the pragmatic example of non-conformists punished for their presumption, the excesses, the errors, the failures of revolutionary troubles, all the social accidents and all the national accidents which, to be of all times, of all regimes, of the fact of life in a word, are nonetheless related to ways of thinking which diverge from the healthy methods whose excellence is, it seems, demonstrated by the proliferation of herds under the firm hand of a qualified breeder.

We forget too much, both in the excess of praise and in the excess of pejection with regard to the masses, that the individuals who compose them, and of whom each of us is a more or less constrained member, obey in their private lives laws that are neither those of the masses nor those of the herds; that these laws are imposed on each one and incite him to distinguish himself from the mass, even in the devotion that he sometimes devotes to it, in his own way of being in solidarity with it by spontaneity, by reason or by reluctant necessity. It is this will to distinguish oneself which is the leaven of freedom. It is in the nature of authority to attenuate it because it is its role to avoid its disorder. But it is harmful to the individual, harmful to the social body and, finally, dangerous to reduce this leaven to the extreme because it is the essential element of evolution. We dominate it — that is to say, we guide its action — “by obeying it.” On the contrary, we make it proliferate madly by tormenting it too much: the revolt of men, since the ruptures of the original clans, provides proof of this. The curve of evolutions shows us, moreover, a constant of the obstacles opposed by nature to human freedom.

The nature of man himself is socially contrary to this in that the individual has an innate sense of his social responsibilities only insofar as they impose themselves on his reflexes in the form of gregarious imperatives that are antinomic to his emancipation. Emancipated, the sense of personal responsibility, inseparable from a healthy freedom, must reach consciousness. It reaches it spontaneously only by exception. Hence the need for a moral authority that guides the evolution of the individual towards his awareness, an authority that is valid only insofar as it is itself an expression of freedom, that it prohibits any constraint, direct or indirect, of the manifestations of the personality. As for authority, let us say temporal authority, whose role is situated in the contingent of the social, it is worth what the convention that founds it is worth, that is to say the regime from which it emanates. Its relative conformity to moral authority measures the respect that can be dedicated to it and its right is that which the consent of the greatest number confers on it, provided that it does not prohibit minorities from the critical and constructive expression of ideas that prepare new statuses. In this respect, power is liberal only to the point where it feels threatened. As a result, temporal authority inevitably manifests itself as “authoritarian” at some point and thereby condemns itself. It would be more easily defeated by attacking it as guilty of deviation than by contesting its principle.

Authority of value, capacity, strength and right

Political oppositions, the approximations of polemics distort the meaning of words in such a way that it becomes difficult to use them properly. However, it would be so absurd for a free and objective mind to turn away from a fact through fear of a word, that we will find the justification of authority, in a certain sense, under the pen of writers who are notoriously libertarian, the term being defined by the

context. I remember reading somewhere, under the pen of Kropotkin, an exposition touching on the hierarchy of values, which was an acceptance of one of the valid forms of the authority of reason, of that which retains attention by its own quality, without being accompanied by conventional constraints. Of this order are essentially the moral values, which are distinguished completely from the precepts of morality. Precepts are formal laws that the power decrees as much as it believes them indispensable to order and that it practices for its part more or less, in which it is imitated by the greatest number of citizens. One conforms publicly and the social order is satisfied. One evades secretly, with varying degrees of success, and thus the new precepts are prepared.

True moral values may well, in the form of their manifestation, also be contingent; in their substance, they correspond to the best tendencies of man, to aspirations of faith, reason or aesthetics that he has manifested from the earliest ages, unconsciously at first, consciously after first aesthetic creations that have seduced him with his gifts. Three words sum up these tendencies: sympathy (others would say love or charity), beauty (that is to say harmony), justice (that is to say respect for persons which is exactly respect for the freedom of consciences). When a man translates them into acts, whatever religion or philosophy he claims, he is received as an example. He does not impose his way of seeing; if he did, he would lose his power, since he would lose virtue by ceasing to respect personality.

Such a conception of authority is so far removed from that in which power is exercised that it was only worth mentioning for what we have said about the nobility of the term.

In a much more down-to-earth order, the word and the thing retain a nobility when we consider the authority of capacity. Already, however, it is subject to caution; the establishment of the hierarchy of capacities in business and techniques would sink into the confusion of tastes and judgments if we did not refer to conventions. However, whatever the diplomas, the seniority, the chance of a happy initiative, practice would be enough to give or withdraw the consent of the subordinates, consequently to justify this hierarchy. It is only detested by virtue of the adage: "Our enemy is our master", because, too often, the leader behaves like a master and, just as often, he does not justify the quality of leader any more than others. It is not the superior that freedom condemns, it is not being subordinate that offends the sense of dignity, it is being one who holds a social position and not a position of capacity, it is above all being subject, beyond the professional function, to directives of personal life that it is not up to the leader to give. It is hard to imagine the author of *Ethics* receiving moral lessons from the manufacturer who employed him to polish his glassware. The mason is not humiliated to conform to the architect's plans; he would not like the architect to reproach him for not keeping his Easter, even if he gives him a church to build. In primitive societies, the role, limited in time and in its object, of the elected war chief is significant in this regard, as is the manifest dignity of the simple warrior in his respect for the chosen chief. What is no less significant in the opposite direction is the extension of this respect to the descendants of the chief and the enslavement that followed. From which one will conclude that some ingratitude is better than an unreasonable deference going as far as idolatry. If respect were dedicated to works and not to man, man would lose his influence from his first palinodes.

It is by way of hierarchical authority insufficient for its object, or on the contrary exceeding it, that we arrive at the authority of government, where the same incongruities pervert the function and justify the council, which Proudhon dispensed from, to guard itself above all from authority. However, Proudhon is one of those libertarian writers extremely concerned with true order and who, before Georges Sorel, made an apology, not for violence, but for violent force as a justification of power. One

of his speeches, dated July 31, 1848, proclaims that “wherever force is found, and until a principle, an authentic constitution, comes to regulate it, there is authority, legitimacy.”

In July 1848, we must understand that Proudhon legitimized the authority that was based on revolutionary force. He justified by this, he the adversary of particular violence, of tyrannical violence, the concerted violence for the reestablishment of order, of an order consecrating the right of the people to civic liberty and to their share of life. It is no less true that the right of force is natural and constant and that, moreover, history has never condemned it except in its excesses or its motives contrary to the progress of societies. Let us note nevertheless that history is willingly indulgent to success and that its judgment is based on criteria, doubtful as to morality. Now morality plays a certain part in the lasting acquisition of human progress. “Authority, legitimacy” are in force only insofar as it proposes a high goal, as it does not contradict another force, that of moral ideas, which may well bend under brutality, but always has its revenge, without which humanity would have to renounce all progress. This is what is very rightly expressed by the corollary of Proudhon's affirmation: “until a principle, an authentic constitution comes to regulate it.” Indeed, the ideas of right and justice are hardly anything in nature other than facts of reciprocity within a united group; it is man who has brought them to light and aspires to realize them against his own instincts. For nature does not fail to manifest divergent tendencies. It is to release, isolate and develop those that are useful for the improvement of man's lot that man uses his highest faculties.

He has against him that his highest faculties are of a slow and difficult culture and that most men remain close enough to animality to understand more quickly, and to accept more quickly, what corresponds to the primary instincts. From Proudhon's apophthegm, the masses grasp and easily retain the legitimacy of force, without reflecting that by stopping there it is Attila that they legitimize. It is only when bent under the sufferings of devastation and oppression that they lend a mystical ear to the evocation of the saving right. With the same infantile abandon, they then deify it and believe that they have done everything in his service when they have exalted it without reserve, have lent it all the virtues and have given their faith to its omnipotence. They forget or ignore that universal law is a continuous creation, a work in perpetual development that cannot for a moment be abandoned to itself, much less to the good faith of competing governments. Now the creative elites cannot defend their work against the elementary force of the instincts, which are retarded in the people (and artificially excited by combat propaganda), except insofar as a concrete organization supports the force of right. Nationally and internationally, in the deficiency of this organization the highest civilizations perish and their fall takes with them for a time the faith in the destiny of spiritual values.

Such falls are singularly facilitated by the fickle nature of crowds. “Man is a wonderfully vain, diverse and undulating subject,” the clairvoyant Montaigne tells us: “it is difficult to base a constant and uniform judgment on it.” Thus there is hardly a system of government that does not adulate and reject in turn its whim, that does not exalt its hopes and condemn its setbacks. Since the end of modern times, the great driving force behind its revolutions has been the search for equality: political equality, social equality. We see it ungrateful towards the elites or a merciless censor of their actions, as if to take revenge for an inequality that should be emulation. Its science of psychophysiology is entirely focused on the discovery of means to redress natural inequalities. Nevertheless, a remark from Aristotle's *Politics* remains literally valid: “Men have long since contracted the habit of being unable to bear

equality; On the contrary, they only know how to command or resign themselves to the yoke of whoever holds power.”

Such an observation is the breviary of careerism. Ethics would have to be a word devoid of meaning for elite hearts to resign themselves to accepting it as the key to the government of men. If the man who thinks about facts and does not ride on the clouds hardly refers to Jean-Jacques, he will not hesitate, in this case, to ask him for the comfort of a reflection that is rightly revolted: “Force is a physical power; I do not see what morality can result from its effects. To yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will; it is at most an act of prudence. In what sense can it be a duty?” There is a long way, as we can hear, from the Social Contract to Proudhon. Here, their agreement is easy. If, instead of force, Rousseau wrote violence, as it is in his thought, what man born with a sense of his dignity would not adhere to his revolt? The force that Proudhon justifies is the healthy force that right sanctions.

We will admit, I think, that it matters little whether peoples have the governments they deserve, since they all deserve them and acclaim them alternately. The form of government in itself has only relative importance if it is not imposed arbitrarily and maintained by terror, since regular governments hardly differ from their people. Carlyle, who realized this paradox of being a sort of precursor of “totalitarian” views and, at the same time, a fierce individualist, a passionate defender of freedom in the people at the same time as a merciless censor of democracy, Carlyle held that it is noble peoples who make noble governments. This idea is certainly less false than its opposite. It founds the oppositions to a supposed duty of blind submission to constituted authority, particularly to authority considered in its relations with ethics.

In truth, it is circumstances that impose governments, and occasions that determine their share of utility and harm, their own character being able only to increase one or the other share. It is circumstances again that create a state of mind in the people by which one form of government prevails over another. The misfortune of men is that it is impossible for the masses to dominate circumstances and to incline passion before reason.

Another of their many misfortunes is that the failure of a poorly conceived view rarely prompts them to rethink it; either they foolishly persist in it until the most bitter setbacks or they abandon it by rejecting even the principle which could be right, even if it means returning to it after other disasters.

Systems and facts

It is wise to foresee the constant hazards that result from the inadequacy of the facts, because of the obstinacy of men in referring to systems; it is good to know how illusory are the preconceived theories, always distorted by the unpredictable incidences, by the transformed conditions of the economic and social state at the moment when their application is attempted.

In this respect, the application of Marxism in Russia, contrary to Marx's categorical predictions, is significant. Equally relevant is the lesson to be learned from Proudhon, with the difference that Proudhon himself had foreseen the possibilities of failure of his views, which facilitates analysis. In his *General Idea of the Revolution in the 19th Century*, which was written between the failed revolution of 1848 and the *coup d'état* of 1851, Proudhon presents an extremely tight critique of government authority. But, always anxious to replace what he destroys, he offers us in exchange an economic and social system that he believes alone is capable of establishing an order that conforms both to the nature

of things and to justice. Here, with reference to the summary he himself made of it, is what results from his project examined from a century later.

First of all, a definition of authority-government that is not exact; it is from the family, he writes, that was borrowed “the principle that is exclusively proper to it, authority.” This is the patriarchal family, which, in truth, was constituted when the authority of the leader was already asserting itself and perpetuating itself. In fact, it is posterior to the latter, of which it was, in part, the consequence. Proudhon could not have known this since, at the time he wrote his book, nothing was still known about the matriarchal family and the primitive structure of clans. Then, this correct view: “under the governmental apparatus, society slowly and silently produces its own organism.” Indeed, societies obey a determinism of things, which governments can indeed hinder or distort, but not entirely prevent. Nevertheless, it was risky to claim that any form of authority-government is contrary to this natural organization; we know today that the natural organization of primitive societies included, in addition to the influence of the sorcerer, a direction of the council of elders in times of peace and of the elected chief in times of war. It was even more risky to advance that evolution towards the better takes place with a constancy which would flow from immutable principles inherent in human nature. Since then, some of these principles, supposedly congenital, have been revealed as being views of the mind not confirmed by observation. Thus, for example, for the indefinite perfectibility of the individual and of the species. This view, common to all the progressives of the 19th century and which, in our day, Marxism has not abandoned, is undoubtedly true of society itself, but biologically doubtful as to the individual and the species.¹ Thus again for the identity of the interests of the members of a society. In absolute theory, this proposition seems defensible. In practice it turns out to be false, if only because of the competition, which, despite the principles of morality, is regulated and maintained only by the interventions of an authority. As for the sovereignty of reason, then fashionable, the evolution of science has taught us that reason falls under the chapter of relativities and that it is wise to ask it only to be the interpreter of reality explored by objective intelligence.

By virtue of these principles and a few others that are less essential, Proudhon establishes a society in which laws are replaced by contracts. This is what remains partly valid and should be used more in many sectors of the economic and social spheres. He also replaces political powers with economic forces. Now we know too well, after the shocks of two world wars, how economic forces — even if they are of a cooperative nature — know how to take control of political powers and use them to their advantage. As for substituting collective force, as he writes, for public force, we do not clearly grasp what Proudhon means in practice by this ambiguity, any more than we can conceive, for the reasons already given, that the fallacious identity of interests makes the police useless.

Ensuring peace without standing armies through international agreements and the play of exchanges provided by industrial companies is again an ideal view that industrial companies have not precisely justified. One tends rather to think that the play of trusts has so far focused on war and that it would be imprudent to entrust them with the political direction of a country. Because replacing political centralization with economic centralization, as Proudhon suggests in a system based on the dominance of the economic, is to pass from Charybdis to Scylla, it is, moreover, to neglect social values (letters, arts, sciences, thought) which, not being able to do without the economic while being

¹ See above: ch. I, “Man does not change.”

humanly superior to it, would no longer find arbiters. This is ultimately what happened with the evolution of deliberately economic Marxistism.

It is easy to compare each of the points recalled above with the conditions of current life and to judge. One cannot judge better than Proudhon himself when he writes: “If government is indispensable for diplomacy, it will be equally indispensable for war and for the navy, and, as everything is connected in power and society, we will soon see governmentalism re-establish itself in the police, then in the administration, then in justice.” This is why neither diplomacy nor war is necessary. For this to be so, for this application of a rigorously anti-authoritarian system to be possible, the revolution must be general because, Proudhon concludes, “the revolution would be ineffective if it were not contagious; it would perish if it did not become universal.”

After a century, we note that revolutions and wars have turned the world upside down without any of the vices of governments having disappeared. Revolutions have given rise to dictatorial regimes and their theorists, far from tending to reduce authority, have sought to legitimize the oppression of the individual by the absolute primacy of the collective and ideological entities. This illustrates the pertinent remark that all the intelligence and all the audacity of thought cannot make theories prevail over the nature of things. We will nevertheless retain from the lesson of Proudhon and the bloody barbarities inherent in the authoritarianisms of our time, that the authority-government should only have the right and power to intervene in the functions that are proper to it, those that relate to order and the general interest and among which is the function of arbitrator, if it were possible that government were not the thing of a faction. For the rest, it is probable that if most matters — including the labor market — were handled by way of contracts, they would not be any worse off. But, here again, since fairness, the independence of the contracting parties, the somehow “governmental” character of the mandated unions are open to question, we find ourselves faced with the problem of the control of authority or real power, a problem that remains posed after as before revolutions. Relativism, in this case, being a matter of reason, there is no theoretical criterion except in an affirmed tendency to eliminate unnecessary constraints, to confine the authority of the State to the functions incumbent upon it: general administration, international relations, management of general public services and control of commercial services of common interest, coordination statistics and arbitration. As for the criterion of modalities, it resides in the event.

On the choice of a doctrine

Between the opposing economic and social doctrines, there is no valid choice, that is to say no lasting one, unless determined by the line of trends. But the active choice is contingent and inflects the line of trends to the imperatives of the conjunctures. We are given too many opportunities to see the leaders of the game practice a pragmatism of circumstance (which is certainly political) for the balanced individual not to limit his adherence to such a pragmatism by refraining from engaging the permanence of his philosophical ideas. It is enough to control his provisional choice that the acts it calls for are not contradictory to his essential morality. This reserve prohibits a libertarian spirit from formally adhering to any partisan doctrine because party doctrines mutate and change color as often as the weather varies and their managers rarely know how to resist the attraction of the donkey bridge of current events.

We therefore take it for granted that systems of government (of political and social organization, if you prefer) are illusory as systems. However, in the incessant struggles waged by men so that civilization may be maintained and progress, so that social conditions may be improved and regression may not take away acquired well-being, so that, finally, revolutions may rapidly transform social states where life has become impossible, it is necessary that in these struggles the coordination of efforts, the orientation of trends be ensured by a reference to general views common to all the members of each party engaged in these struggles. Systems assume this role. They are landmarks, beacons capable of guiding men of action along paths converging toward a common goal. Their usefulness is limited to that; it is in the course of action itself, in contact with the realities of time, place, and circumstances that modalities are developed and doctrines are adapted.

My choice of a guide to lead us along the paths of greater economic and social freedom inclines me, without dogmatic rigor, without ideological blindness, towards the very general views that underlie the doctrines of the federalist tendency focused on cooperation, democratic unionism and collective agreements. But let us not delude ourselves about the disappearance of all authority-government in these kinds of organizations stemming from libertarian concepts: from the primary federations of trades, industries, social and cultural groups, going back to the national confederations coordinating and covering everything, deciding for all as to the provisions of general interest, we encounter many vices of ambition, selfishness, duplicity that are inherent in human societies. We finally find there a way of government. Yet it is probably in this form that the individual, as a social cell, and the primary societies of individuals gathered in small numbers as administrative and technical cells, defend themselves best against the two deadly sins of statism and collectivization: the inhumane civil service of administrators and the amorphous gregariousness of the administered.

In this regard, a favorable bias emerges from two orders of professional and economic organisation that have been successfully implemented within centralizing capitalism: trade unionism and cooperation. This is an indication that beyond the current revolutions, subject to the conditions of struggle imposed on them by military states and trustee economies, subsequent developments must tend towards a break-up of authority in order to give freedom the conditions for its development.

What matters in daily action, and particularly in troubled times, are the elements of judgment that correct doctrines. It is obvious that the useful guide that a formal theory constitutes would quickly become a factor of stagnation if it took the form of dogma. One does not enclose the data of a revolution in a rigid framework. Nor does one suspend life in expectation of a revolution.

This is why democratically valid freedom requires, for the *a priori* judgment of doctrines and their current and future consequences, a criterion that both relates them in action and dominates them in the long term. It must not, if this view is correct, be based solely on the social advantages that one is entitled to expect from them, nor even on the freedom that will result from them in the order of material things, although one must never lose sight of the fact that the economic emancipation of the worker is the preliminary condition of the emancipation of the thinking person. However primordial the material condition of man may be, it is, of all his states, the most casual, the most transitory. Only the acquired spirit remains, as long as it is allowed to renew and expand itself. The choice must therefore be determined by a projection towards the future: what freedom, what possibilities are left to man to learn from the whole tradition of knowledge, without any reserve; what possibility is given to him to add to it without any other law than that of his conscience, subject only to the reservation of

use concerning the effective attack on the provisionally established order. For, whatever doctrine one claims, one cannot neglect the fact that every social order is transitory, that as such it can only command the transitory and that it must allow the evolutionary conditions of change to organize themselves.

Without falling into the dualism of mind and matter, in the metaphysical sense where these two terms are opposed, we will say that thought escapes actuality in that it is continuous in time. It is essentially man. To limit it would not only be to ruin its path, which leads societies, slowly, painfully, but still leads them towards liberating ethics; it would be just as much to ruin its work of creation in the material order, where man abuses and misuses, no doubt, but which is the first condition of rising civilizations.

If, therefore, freedom is not entirely included in freedom of thought, the latter is, in any case, its surest criterion.

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