

2 THE TWO REVOLUTIONS

THE BREAKUP OF THE OLD ORDER

The fundamental ideas of European sociology are best understood as responses to the problem of order created at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the collapse of the old regime under the blows of industrialism and revolutionary democracy. This is the only conclusion one can reach when he looks at the character of the ideas, the nature of the works in which they appeared, and the relation of idea and work to age. The intellectual elements of sociology are refractions of exactly the same forces and tensions that also produced the outlines of modern liberalism, conservatism, and radicalism.

The breakup of the old order in Europe—an order that had rested on kinship, land, social class, religion, local community, and monarchy—set free, as it were, the varied elements of power, wealth, and status that had been consolidated, however precariously, ever since the Middle Ages. Dislocated by revolution, scrambled by industrialism and the forces of democracy, these elements can be seen tumbling across the political landscape of Europe throughout the nineteenth century in search of new and more viable contexts.

In the same way that the history of nineteenth-century politics is about the practical efforts of men to reconsolidate these elements, the history of social thought is about theoretical efforts to reconsolidate them: that is, put them in perspectives having philosophic and scientific relevance to the new age. The nature of community, the location of power, the stratification of wealth and privilege, the role of the individual in emerging mass society, the reconciliation of sacred values with political and economic realities, the direction of Western society—all of these are rich themes in the nineteenth-century science of man. They are

equally rich as issues in market place, legislative chamber, and, not infrequently, on the barricades.

Two forces, monumental in their significance, gave urgency to these themes: the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution. It would be hard to find any area of thought and writing in the century that was not affected by one or both of these events. The cataclysmic nature of each is plain enough if we look at the responses of those who lived through the revolutions and their immediate consequences. Today it is only too easy to submerge the identity of each revolution in long-term processes of change; we are prone to emphasize continuity rather than discontinuity, evolution rather than revolution. But to intellectuals of that age, radical and conservative alike, the changes were of almost millennial abruptness. Contrast between present and past seemed stark—terrifyingly or intoxicatingly, depending upon one's relation to the old order and to the forces at work on it.

We shall be concerned in this chapter less with the events and changes of the two revolutions than with the images and reflections that are to be found in the social thought of the nineteenth century. What either the Industrial or the French Revolution was in its historical actuality, in its concrete relation to what preceded and what followed, is not a matter for assessment here. Our interest is in ideas, and the relation between events and ideas is never direct; it is always mediated by *conceptions* of the events. The role of moral evaluation, of political ideology, is therefore crucial.

The Industrial Revolution, the power of the bourgeoisie, and the rise of the proletariat may or may not have been all that Marx thought them to be, but the fact remains that apart from his *conception* of them there is no way of accounting for perhaps the major intellectual and social movement in the subsequent history of the West. The same is true of the French Revolution. Alfred Cobban has recently referred to "the myth" of the French Revolution, by which he seems to mean that not only the suddenness but the significance of the Revolution have been exaggerated. But from the viewpoints of some of the founders of sociology—Comte, Tocqueville, Le Play—the French Revolution was myth in quite another sense, one rather that Sorel was to give to this word. To these minds—and to many others—the French Revolution appeared almost as an act of God in its cataclysmic immensity. With the possible exception of the Bolshevik Revolution in the twentieth century, no event since the fall of the city of Rome in the fifth century has aroused emotion so intense, thought so preoccupied, nor been the basis of as many dogmas and perspectives regarding man and his future.

Words, as E. J. Hobsbawm has written recently, are witnesses which often speak louder than documents. The period comprised by the last quarter of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century is, from the point of view of social thought, one of the richest periods of word-formation in history. Consider the following which were either invented during this period or—which is the same thing—modified to their present meanings: *industry, industrialist, democracy, class, middle class, ideology, intellectual, rationalism, humanitarian, atomistic, masses, commercialism, proletariat, collectivism, equalitarian, liberal, conservative, scientist, utilitarian, bureaucracy, capitalism, crisis*.¹ There were others, but these are the crucial ones for what we shall be concerned with in this chapter.

Plainly these words were not simple counters in a game of abstract reflection on society and its changes. One and all these words were saturated with moral interest and partisan identification. This was as true at the end of the nineteenth century as at the beginning, when the words first made their appearance. To say this is not to deny or cast shadow on their later efficacy in the objective study of society. All major ages of thought in the history of culture are characterized by the proliferation of new words and new meanings of words. How else can the bonds of intellectual conventionality be cut through except by the sharp edges of new words that alone can express new values and new forces struggling for expression? It is only too easy at the time of their first appearance to fling the epithets "jargon" and "linguistic barbarism" at the words—some of which indeed deserve the epithets and receive the just punishment of later oblivion—but the history of thought makes plain that few if any of the key words in the humanistic study of man and society do not begin as neologisms born of moral passion and ideological interest.

THE THEMES OF INDUSTRIALISM

Nowhere is this more plainly to be seen than in the impact of the Industrial Revolution on nineteenth-century thought. Although it is English thought and writing—literary as well as scholarly—that most plainly reveals the force of the Industrial Revolution, if only because this revolution is as distinctively English as the political revolution beginning in 1789 is French, the implications of industrialism were not lost upon French and German thinkers. The wide reading which Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, had received throughout Europe gave even the most cloistered of scholars a forewarning of what the is-

sues of the Industrial Revolution would be. Well before the phrase "Industrial Revolution" gained currency, the words, "English System" were used by German and French writers to describe the combined forces of legal individualism and economism which were transforming English society. As we shall repeatedly see in the chapters that follow, problems of community, status, and authority were dealt with by sociologists, from Comte to Weber, in the almost invariable contexts of the changes wrought on European society by the forces of division of labor, industrial capital, and the new roles of businessman and worker.

What were the aspects of the Industrial Revolution that were to prove most evocative of sociological response, most directive in the formation of sociological problem and concept? Five, we may judge, were crucial: the *condition of labor*, the *transformation of property*, the *industrial city*, *technology*, and the *factory system*. A great deal of sociology can be seen as response to the challenge of these conditions, its concepts as subtilizations of their impact upon the minds of such men as Tocqueville, Marx, and Weber.

Beyond question, the most striking and widely treated of these aspects was the *condition of the working class*. For the first time in the history of European thought, the working class (I distinguish "working class" from the poor, the downtrodden, the humble, which, of course, form timeless themes) becomes, in the nineteenth century, the subject of both moral and analytical concern. Some recent scholarship has suggested that the condition of the working class under even the first stages of industrialism was better than that which had prevailed for a couple of centuries before. This may be true. But it was rarely the view of independent observers in the early nineteenth century. For radical and conservative alike, it was the undoubted degradation of labor, the wrenching of work from the protective contexts of guild, village, and family, that was the most fundamental, and shocking, characteristic of the new order. The decline of the status of the common laborer, not to mention the skilled craftsman, is as much the subject of conservative indictment as it is of radical. On the Continent, both Bonald and Hegel referred with distaste to "the English system," noting the general instability to society that would be the necessary consequence of man's loss of the roots of his labor in family, parish, and community. In England, as early as 1807, Robert Southey based his criticism of the new manufacturing system in large part on its impoverishment of ever larger segments of the population. Nine years later, in his *Colloquies*, he wrote: "[A] people may be too rich; because it is the tendency of the commercial, and more especially of the manufacturing system, to collect wealth rather than to

diffuse it . . . great capitalists become like pikes in a fish-pond, who devour the weaker fish; and it is but too certain that the poverty of one part of the people seems to increase in the same ratio as the riches of another."² The contrast between his own age and earlier times is stressed by Southey, as it is to be throughout the century. "Bad as feudal times were," Southey has his central spokesman Sir Thomas More say in the *Colloquies*, "they were less injurious than these commercial ones to the kindly and generous feelings of human nature."³

Turn now to the writings of the ablest of the English radicals in the same period, William Cobbett, hated and persecuted relentlessly by the forces in power. The basis of his criticism of the new economy is not very different from Southey's; it is precisely what he believes to be the dismal decline of the worker's status. The new system "has almost entirely extinguished the race of small farmers; from one end of England to the other, the houses which formerly contained little farmers and their happy families, are now seen sinking into ruins, all the windows except one or two stopped up, leaving just light enough for some labourer, whose father was, perhaps, the small farmer, to look back upon his half-naked and half-famished children. . . ."⁴

"I wish to see," Cobbett wrote, "the poor men of England what the poor men of England were when I was born; and from endeavouring to accomplish this wish, nothing but the want of means shall make me desist." All around him Cobbett could see traditional, security-giving relationships being ground into dust, craftsmen and farmers transformed into "hands," subject now to "Seigneurs of the Twist, sovereigns of the Spinning Jenny, great Yeomen of the Yarn . . . When *master* and *man* were the terms, everyone was in his place, and all were free. Now, in fact, it is an affair of *masters and slaves*."⁵

The likeness between the conservative Southey and the radical Cobbett here is reflective of a certain affinity between conservatism and radicalism that was to last throughout the century. (I am referring, of course, to the evaluation of industrialism and its byproducts. There was little if any affinity when it came to political matters.) What conservatives such as Tocqueville, Taine, and the American Hawthorne were to write in horrified reaction to the scene presented in Manchester and other cities of the Midlands in England did not differ in descriptive character or emotional intensity from what Engels was to write. It was Manchester that became the "ideal type," so to speak, of conservative and radical reactions to the new industry and to the displacement of working class from rural confine.

Even Marx, whose distaste for ruralism was as boundless as his

hatred of the past, found himself, in the *Communist Manifesto*, contrasting the "feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations" of the past with those which have left no other "nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment.'" Industrialism has drowned the "most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy waters of egotistical value."⁶ To be sure, Marx took a cynical view of the patriarchalism of the past, seeing in it but a veil that hid real exploitation. But his terminology could have been accepted without demur by many a conservative of the time. Reference to "cash-nexus" is owing first, apparently, not to the radicals or liberals, but to Carlyle, whose *Signs of the Times*, written in 1829, dealt eloquently and passionately with the commercialism that Carlyle felt was despoiling European culture.⁷ In France the conservative Balzac would write: "There is no kin but the thousand-franc note." And before him Bonald, in an essay on the rural and urban family, made commercialism the prime attribute of all that he hated about modernism.

This is why the indictment of capitalism that comes from the conservatives in the nineteenth century is often more severe than that of the socialists. Whereas the latter accepted capitalism at least to the point of regarding it as a necessary step from past to future, the traditionalists tended to reject it outright, seeing any development of its mass industrial nature—either within capitalism or a future socialism—as but a continued falling away from the superior virtues of Christian-feudal society. It was what the socialists accepted in capitalism—its technology, modes of organization, and urbanism—that the conservatives most despised. They saw in these forces causes of the disintegration of what Burke called the "inns and resting places" of the human spirit, Bonald, "les liens sociales," and Southey, "the bond of attachment."

The second of the themes to emerge from the Industrial Revolution has to do with property and its influence in the social order. As we shall note below, nothing in the French Revolution so outraged conservatives as its confiscation of property and its weakening of the institutional supports of property. Property, and its desired role in society, goes further than any other single symbol to separate conservative from radical in the nineteenth century. For conservatives, property was the indispensable basis of family, church, state, and all other major groups in society. For radicals, increasingly, the abolition of property, save as a vague collective sentiment, became the prime goal of their aspirations.

And yet there is here, as in the condition of the working class, a curious affinity between radical and conservative. In part it was interpre-

tative. Marx and Le Play were perfectly agreed upon the unvarying economic basis of the family in history, and both could have agreed with some highly illuminating words that a twentieth-century conservative, Sir Lewis Namier, was to write: "The relations of groups of men to plots of land, of organized communities to units of territory, form the basic content of political history; social stratifications and convulsions, primarily arising from the relationship of men to land, make the greater, not always fully conscious, part of the domestic history of nations—and even under urban and industrial conditions ownership of land counts for far more than is usually supposed."⁸ No conservative could have doubted the truth of these words; no more could a radical, though liberals might.

But the affinity between conservative and radical went further. It extended to hatred of a certain type of property: large-scale industrial property, but more especially the abstract and impersonal type of property that was represented by shares bought and sold on the market. The speculator, who best exemplified the new economic order in conservative eyes, is the special object of Burke's condemnation. The malign ascendancy of what Burke called "the new dealers"—speculators in land and property, buyers and sellers of shares of stock—figures prominently in his pages. Burke is forthright about the matter. It is the transfer of political power from the land to new forms of capital that he fears. But beyond this was Burke's deep-seated conviction that the whole order that he was so passionately committed to rested, at bottom, on landed property. In the new economic order he could see the fragmentation, the atomization, of property and its conversion into impersonal shares that would never inspire allegiance or lead to stability. And Burke was, of course, right. It was still another twentieth-century conservative, the economist Joseph Schumpeter, who made this point the very thesis of *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, concluding with the observation that a people in whom hard property has softened to possession of impersonal shares of stock will never even notice the transition, when it comes, from capitalism to socialism.

In the nineteenth-century conservative and radical alike distrusted industrial and finance capital. But whereas radicals tended more and more, after Marx, to see this mode of property an essential step in the evolution toward socialism and its capitalistic evils subject to the cure of revolutionary liquidation of the privateness of its ownership, conservatives thought that it was the very nature of such capital to create instability and alienation in a population, and that this was quite unaffected by the mere matter of public or private ownership. All that had made

landed property the subject of entail and primogeniture in almost every country at one time or other—had led its peasantry and aristocracy alike for centuries to make preservation and continuity of property sovereign over all but religious values, to make it the object of boundless ambition, covetousness, and protectiveness—now made land the pillar of conservative ideology.

A third theme to emerge from the Industrial Revolution was urbanism. In the same way that the social condition of the working class became for the first time the subject of ideological passion, so did the social character of the city. Prior to the early nineteenth century the city, insofar as it was dealt with at all in humanistic writing, was seen as the repository of civilized graces and virtues. Now and then, as in Montaigne's *Essays* or Rousseau's *Confessions*, expressions of distaste might be found, but these were directed less at the nature of the city (even less at the poverty and squalor that might be found) than at the distractions its wealth and more active intellectual life sometimes caused. But actual revulsion for the city, fear of it as a force in culture, and forebodings with respect to the psychological conditions attending it—these are states of mind hardly known before the nineteenth century. It is, as we shall repeatedly see, the city that forms the context of most sociological propositions relating to disorganization, alienation, and mental isolation—all stigmata of loss of community and membership. There was, to be sure, much to shore up presentiments of evil. To take Manchester again: between 1801 and about 1850 the population shot up from some seventy thousand to slightly more than three hundred thousand. Accompanying the raw growth in numbers went, of course, increase in squalor—"illth," as Ruskin was to term it—beyond anything that European man's experience had prepared him for. Here, as in the two other themes we have noted, contrast was inevitable: contrast between the relatively simple, stable, and walled towns that could be seen in hundreds of extant prints of medieval urban life and the sprawling, planless, and unbounded aggregates that eyesight revealed in the new cities of the Midlands. English cities may have presented the worst of the spectacles of urbanism—so regarded by French and German as well as English humanists—but, as the novels of Balzac, Victor Hugo, and, later, Zola make plain, the phenomenon of Paris was sufficiently arresting to the imagination.

In the beginning, radicals and conservatives were largely united in their distaste for urbanism. There is as much nostalgia for the rural past in Cobbett as there is in Burke. But as the century progresses, one cannot but be struck by the increasingly "urban" character of radicalism. I

mean by this not only the demographic roots in the city of almost all nineteenth-century radical movements but also the urban flavor of radicalism, the characteristically urban ordering of values that we see in radical thought.

Marx regarded the onset of urbanism as one of the blessings of capitalism, something to be spread even further in the future socialist order. The essentially "urban" character of modern radical thought (and therefore its theoretical and tactical unpreparedness for the twentieth-century role of peasant populations) derives largely from Marx and a view that made ruralism a recessive trait. Engels, it is interesting to note, whose study of the English working classes has more of the spirit of uplift in it, generally, than of strict Marxism, was, on the other hand, anguished by creeping urbanism. "We know well enough," he wrote, "that [the] isolation of the individual . . . is everywhere the fundamental principle of modern society. But nowhere is this selfish egotism so blatantly evident as in the frantic bustle of the great city."⁹ His words can be set alongside these of Tocqueville, written after a visit to Manchester: "From this foul drain the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilize the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish, here civilization works its miracles and civilized man is turned almost into a savage."¹⁰ The conservatives emphasized the degree to which European culture—from its moral and spiritual ideals, to its crafts and songs and literature—was based on the rhythms of the countryside, the succession of seasons, the alternation of natural elements, and the deep relation between man and soil. Only rootlessness and alienation could be expected from a separation of man from these rhythms and his exposure to the artificial pressures of the city. If modern radicalism is urban in its mentality, conservatism is largely rural.

Two final themes, equally alive, equally freighted with ideological passion in nineteenth-century thought, must be mentioned: technology and the factory system. Under the impact of the former and within the confines of the latter, conservatives and radicals alike could see changes occurring that affected the historic relation between man and woman, that threatened (or promised) to make the traditional family obsolete, that would abolish the cultural separation between town and countryside, and that would make possible, for the first time in history, a liberation of man's productive energies from the restraints that both nature and traditional society had imposed.

Each theme, technology and factory, is the subject of countless

tracts, sermons, and orations as well as scholarly works in the nineteenth century. Among the radicals there is a kind of ambivalence toward both. The worker's subjection to the machine, his anonymous incorporation into the regimentation enforced by factory bell and overseer, his proletarianization of status are, plainly, rich themes in radical writing. But here too the conservative response is the more fundamental. For while Marx could see a form of enslavement in the machine, and a manifestation of alienation of labor, he came increasingly to identify this enslavement and alienation with private property rather than with the machine as such. And as for the discipline of the factory, Engels' words, aroused by anarchist condemnation of the factory system, are reflective of what became nearly universal in radical writing by late century: "Wanting to abolish authority in large-scale industry is tantamount to wanting to abolish industry itself, to destroy the power loom in order to return to the spinning wheel."¹¹ From acceptance of the factory and its mechanically imposed division of labor as historically necessary, it was but a short step to the kind of idealization of factory and machine that we find in early twentieth-century radical writing and art.

The conservatives distrusted the factory and its mechanical division of labor as they did any system that seemed, by its nature, calculated to destroy the peasant, the artisan, as well as family and local community. It was easy to see in the workings of the rotary steam engine, the flying shuttle, or the spinning jenny a form of tyranny over the mind of man and an instrument in his moral degradation. Between man and machine there was occurring, it seemed, a transfer of, first, strength and dexterity and, then, intelligence that boded ill for creatures made in the image and likeness of God. In exactly the same way that the factory (which to Bentham had appeared the very model of what all human relationships should be) became to such men as Coleridge, Bonald, and Haller the archetype of an economic regimentation hitherto known only in barracks and prisons, so the machine became in their minds the perfect symbol of what was happening to men's minds and culture.

Carlyle spoke for conservatives and for humanists alike when he wrote: "Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but the internal and spiritual also. . . . The same habit regulates not our modes of action alone, but our modes of thought and feeling. Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavour, and in natural force of any kind. Not for internal perfection, but for external combinations and arrangements, for institutions, constitutions—for Mechanism of one sort or

other, do they hope and struggle. Their whole efforts, attachments, opinions, turn on mechanism, and are of a mechanical character."¹² In the same spirit, Carlyle wrote: "Mechanism has struck its roots down into man's most intimate, primary sources of conviction; and is thence sending up, over his whole life and activity, innumerable stems—fruit-bearing and poison-bearing."¹³ And Tocqueville saw in the machine and in the division of labor that accompanied it instruments of a degradation of man more awful than any that had befallen him under ancient tyrannies. All that was given to the machine in the way of skill and direction was, Tocqueville thought, taken out of man's essence, leaving him weak, narrow-minded, and dependent. "The art advances, the artisan recedes."¹⁴

DEMOCRACY AS REVOLUTION

The French Revolution was no less shattering in its impact upon cherished dogma and traditionalist feeling. And the political revolution in France had what the economic revolution largely lacked: dedicated emissaries and disciples who made of it the first great ideological revolution in Western history. Whether the political changes of the French Revolution proved more fateful in subsequent European—and world—history than the economic changes of the Industrial Revolution will always be debatable. But by its very nature the French Revolution was possessed of a suddenness and dramatic intensity that nothing in the Industrial Revolution could match. The stirring Declaration of the Rights of Man, the unprecedented nature of the laws that were passed between 1789 and 1795, laws touching literally every aspect of the social structure in France—not to emphasize the sanguinary aspects of the Revolution, especially those embodied in the Terror—were sufficient to guarantee to the Revolution a kind of millennial character that was to leave it for a whole century the most preoccupying event in French political and intellectual history. All that industrialism is to English letters, social movements, and legislation in the nineteenth century, the democratic revolution in France at the end of the eighteenth century is to French.

Today every schoolboy knows that the French Revolution did not commence the processes of centralization, equalitarianism, nationalist collectivism, secularism, and bureaucracy that partisans on both sides first thought it had. Before the nineteenth century was well under way,

there were historians, the most notable among them being Tocqueville, who pointed to the deep roots these processes had in French history. But the Revolution gained its tenacious hold upon European consciousness before these roots had been made clear by historical analysis. In any event, quite apart from all that had happened prior to the Revolution in preparation of the way, nothing could detract from the exciting spectacle of a small number of men composed of liberal reformers, political intellectuals, financial speculators, economic visionaries, moral zealots—to name a few of the types who flourished together, or successively, during the course of the Revolution—who thought themselves, and who were thought by others on both sides of the Atlantic, to be engaged in the building of a new social order. Taine, whose scholarship and judgment may be questioned, but not his acumen, did not err in describing the Revolution as the most important single historical event in Europe's history after the fall of Rome.

We can do no more here than hint at the scope and intensity of the Revolution's influence on European thought. It will suffice to look at the sociologists. Without exception, from Comte to Durkheim, they gave the French Revolution a decisive role in the making of those social conditions with which they were immediately concerned. Thus, it was social disorder engendered by the Revolution that Comte specifically pointed to as the background of his own work. It was, Comte thought, the "false dogmas" of the Revolution—equalitarianism, popular sovereignty, and individualism—that, above even the new industrial system, were responsible for the spread of moral disorganization in Europe. Tocqueville was haunted by the Revolution; it is the real theme of his study of American democracy, and he planned a long work specifically on its effects. Le Play repeatedly attributes to the Revolution the chief causes of the distressed condition of the working classes in mid-century, as well as the secularization of education, the individualization of property, and the acceleration of bureaucracy that he so disliked. At the end of the century Durkheim is still concerned with what he calls the Revolution's replacement of "corporate egoism" by "individual egoism." The intellectual impact of the Revolution was hardly less general in Germany. Of Hegel's fascination with it there is ample record, and it was undoubtedly the dramatic rationalization of law undertaken by the revolutionaries that was the immediate impulse of Savigny's studies. Otto von Gierke found in the Revolution's destructive impact on such intermediate associations as monastery, guild, and commune the principal inspiration of his monumental study of state and association in European history. And Leo

Straus is undoubtedly correct in his statement that Max Weber's basic categories of authority—traditional and rational and charismatic—owe much to the Revolution and its impact on the old order.¹⁵ Mosca, deeply impressed by his reading of Taine, took from the Revolution the essential elements of his theory of power. Michels was not less affected in the formulation of his "law of oligarchy" and his critique of "democratic centralism."

What is true of sociology is equally true of many other areas of thought in the century: historiography, jurisprudence, moral philosophy, political science. One and all, they found themselves dealing with the issues raised dramatically by the Revolution: tradition versus reason and law, religion versus state, the nature of property, the relation of social classes, administration, centralization, nationalism, and, perhaps above all others, equalitarianism. It was the word democracy that summed them up, and in its modern form, this word springs straight from the French Revolution. "It was not," E. Weekley writes, "until the French Revolution that *democracy* ceased to be a mere literary word, and became part of the political vocabulary."¹⁶

Why did the Revolution, as no revolution ever had before, seize the minds of men for a century after, dominating thought in so many areas, affecting the very categories of men's identification of themselves and their relation to politics and morality? The full answer is complex, but there is one important aspect that is relevant to our purposes here. The French Revolution was the first thoroughly *ideological* revolution. This is to take nothing away from the American Revolution, which had excited the mind of Europe with its Declaration of Independence. But the goals of the American Revolution were limited, limited almost wholly to independence from England, and at no point do we find any of its leaders—not even a Tom Paine—suggesting that the Revolution be the means of social and moral reconstruction which would involve church, family, property, and other institutions.

The French Revolution was a very different phenomenon. Within a few months after it had begun, moral principles became clamant and, as the Revolution progressed, very nearly total. We may say all we wish about the economic causes, the role of the non-ideological businessman or civil servant, the importance of purely administrative processes, and the internal effects of the foreign wars the Revolution found itself fighting. But all we need to do is examine the preambles of laws that began to appear by 1790, the debates that went on in Assembly and Convention, the tracts and pamphlets that were circulated throughout France, to

make it apparent that, whatever the underlying forces were in the beginning, the power of moral utterance, of ideological affiliation, of sheer passionate political belief reached a point shortly that is without precedent in history, save possibly in religious wars or revolts. The ideological aspect is plain enough in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and in the early debates on the place of religion, but it reaches almost apocalyptic intensity by the time of the Committee of Public Safety ("Salvation," as Albert Guerard has suggested, is the more expressive translation of the French "Salut" here).

It was the conservatives, beginning with Burke, who first called attention to the ideological character of the French Revolution. Burke was bitterly attacked for suggesting in 1790 that the aims of the Revolution were fundamentally different from those of the American Revolution. He was accused of having betrayed the principles that had actuated his indictment of the East India Company and his defense of the American colonists. But Burke saw in the French Revolution a force compounded of political power, secular rationalism, and moralistic ideology that was, he believed, unique. And Burke was right. However prejudiced his account may be of actual events and laws, however sentimental his regard for French monarchy, however malicious his characterization of those in revolutionary power, there is a certain ironic humor in the reflection that by 1794 such men as Robespierre and Saint-Just would have had to find Burke's account of the implications of the Revolution far closer to reality than that of the liberal Richard Price which had, as we know, been the immediate impetus to Burke's *Reflections*. For, whereas Price saw no further than the announced political objectives of the Revolution, Burke saw the underlying oral, quasi-religious intensity of the political rationalism within which these objectives took form. What the philosophers of rationalism during the Revolution took away from the hated Christianity, they vested with truly missionary zeal in the work of the Revolution.

A generation later, Tocqueville was but giving new phrasing to Burke's assessment when he wrote: "No previous political upheaval, however violent, had aroused such passionate enthusiasm, for the ideal the French Revolution set before it was not merely a change in the French system but nothing short of a regeneration of the whole human race. It created an atmosphere of missionary fervor and, indeed, assumed all the aspects of a religious revival—much to the consternation of contemporary observers. It would perhaps be truer to say that it developed into a species of religion, if a singularly imperfect one, since it

was without a God, without a ritual or promise of future life. Nevertheless, this strange religion has, like Islam, overrun the whole world with its apostles, militants, and martyrs."¹⁷

It was the ideological character of the Revolution that made it the obsession of intellectuals for decades afterward. Mere events, even those involving dethronement, expropriation, and beheading, do not captivate the hopes of romantics, idealists, and visionaries for generations, nor torment the apprehensions of traditionalists. Dogmas and heresies are required, and these the Revolution had in abundance. It was the Revolution that contributed to Western Europe states of mind about political good and evil that had previously been reserved to religion and demonology.

The whole character of politics and of the intellectual's role in politics changed with the structure of the state and its relation to social and economic interests. Politics now became an intellectual and moral way of life, one not unlike that which Rousseau had described in his *Confessions*. "I had come to see that everything was radically connected with politics, and that however one proceeded, no people would be other than the nature of his government made it."¹⁸

In his *Discourse on Political Economy*, Rousseau wrote: "If it is good to know how to deal with men as they are, it is much better to make them what there is need they should be. The most absolute authority is that which penetrates into a man's inmost being, and concerns itself no less with his will than with his actions . . . If you would have the General Will accomplished, bring all the particular wills into conformity with it; in other words, as virtue is nothing more than this conformity of the particular wills with the General Will, establish the reign of virtue."¹⁹

Rousseau's relation to the Revolution is an interesting one. To think of him as one of the "causes" of the Revolution is, of course, absurd. He was too little read, too little respected in France during the years that preceded the Revolution. Even in 1789, when the Revolution broke out, there is little evidence that his ideas mattered very much. But by 1791, thirteen years after his death, he had become the Gray Eminence of the Revolution: the most admired, most quoted, and most influential of all the *philosophes*. His exciting combination of individualistic equalitarianism (so vivid in the discourses on the arts and sciences and on the origin of inequality) and of a General Will that gave legitimacy to absolute political power (expounded in the *Discourse on Political Economy* and in *The Social Contract*) was made to order for revolutionary aspirations.

There was, to begin with, the majestic Declaration of the Rights of

Man which clearly specified that "the source of all sovereignty is essentially in the nation; no body, no individual can exercise any authority that does not proceed from it in plain terms." And further, "Law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have the right to take part, personally or by their representatives, in its formation. It must be the same for all whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in its eyes, are equally eligible to all public dignities, places and employments, according to their capacities, and without other distinctions than those of their virtues and talents."

Much of the specific legislation of the Revolution can be seen in these terms.²⁰ In a law of March 2-17, 1791, the hated guilds and trade corporations were abolished for once and all, inaugurating freedom of occupation (*liberté du travail*). This law was followed three months later by a more rigorous measure, the famous *Loi Le Chapelier* of June 14-17, which not only confirmed abolition of the guilds but forbade the establishment of any analogous form of new association. "There is no longer any corporation within the state; there is but the particular interest of each individual and the general interest . . ." At a stroke, democratic assemblies were thus able to present a magnitude of power that had eluded the efforts of supposedly absolute kings. Rousseau's dislike of "partial associations" within the state was now converted into legislative action. "Citizens of certain trades must not be permitted to assemble for their pretended interests." A state that is "truly free," one of the legislators said, "ought not to suffer within its bosom any corporation, not even such as, being dedicated to public instruction, have merited well of the country." Benevolent societies and mutual-aid associations were made illegal or at least suspect. "It is the business of the nation," Le Chapelier declared in an address before the Assembly, "it is the business of the public officers in the name of the nation, to furnish employment to those who need it and assistance to the infirm." If old corporations were unacceptable, on the ground of their corruption of general will, why should new ones be allowed? "Whereas the abolition of all kinds of corporations of citizens of the same estate and of the same trade is one of the fundamental bases of the French constitution, it is prohibited to re-establish them *de facto* under any pretext of form whatsoever."

Napoleon's later edicts respecting associations were but extensions and reinforcements of what the Revolution, in its democratic-liberal phase, had already begun, a fact sometimes overlooked by historians who stress Napoleon's "reactionary" relation to the Revolution. Admittedly his laws were more encompassing, and he had a police system for

their enforcement that was lacking in 1791. But he did not originate them; he merely extended and systematized them. Thus, in 1810 new articles were appended to existing laws which forbade associations numbering more than twenty persons. Although popular protest led to a moderation of these restrictions in 1812, it was not until nearly the end of the nineteenth century that three generations of bitter political controversy on associations were terminated by final repeal of the laws forbidding or limiting them. We will find that Comte, Le Play, and Tocqueville, to name but three sociologists, were deeply concerned with the implications to society of restriction of the freedom of associations.

The family also underwent profound change in law during the Revolution.²¹ Like the *philosophes*, the Revolutionary legislators found patriarchal customs and the indissolubility of the marriage tie "against nature and contrary to reason." In a law of 1792 marriage was designated a civil contract and several grounds for divorce were made available. The arguments for such measures invariably rested on natural law with frequent citation of philosophy. That the relaxation was not unwelcome in some quarters may be inferred from the fact that in the sixth year of the Republic the number of divorces in Paris exceeded the number of marriages. But there was more to follow in reform of the family. Strict limitations were placed upon the paternal power, and in all cases the authority of the father ceased when the children reached legal age. In 1793 the age of majority was fixed at twenty-one, and in the same year the government decreed the inclusion of illegitimate children in matters concerning family inheritance. The attitude of the legislators was plainly hostile to the customs governing the solidarity of the old family. Such men as Lepelletier and Robespierre, specifically appealing to the precepts of Rousseau (in his *Discourse on Political Economy*), insisted that the state should have primacy of claim upon the existence of the young. The legislators held that within the family, as elsewhere, the ideals of equality and individual rights must prevail. The family was conceived as a small republic (*une petite république*), and the father prevented from exercising "monarchical" authority. Relations between the family and its domestic dependents, such as servants, were put upon a contractual basis. The patriarchal unity of the family was thus dissolved, in law at least, in line with general policy toward all groups.

Property was no less thoroughly modified by the Revolutionary legislators.²² Before the Revolution, custom and law had encouraged a system of inheritance under which estates, both large and small, tended to be preserved intact, and were passed on from generation to generation in

the same families. It now became difficult for family property to perpetuate itself in the aggregate. The government, taking the view that property belongs to the individual members of the family, proclaimed the *partage forcé*, whereby the father was legally obliged to will to his children equal amounts of property. By limiting the testamentary freedom of the father and forcing an equal division of property, the economic solidarity of the family was weakened. This, as we shall note, above anything else the Revolution did, obsessed Le Play, leading indeed to a vast study of family and property.

As one more expression of its dedication to the liberation of individuals from ancient authorities, the government, in 1793, took from the family the control of education.²³ Previously, primary education had been the joint concern of family and church. Universities in France were semi-autonomous ecclesiastical institutions. The successive governments of the Revolution, believing with Danton that "after bread, education is the chief need of the people," passed numerous measures designed to centralize and broaden education simultaneously, making it not merely the right but the political duty of all citizens. This legislative design for centralization of education was given powerful effect by Napoleon, who avowedly regarded education as a machinery for the production of efficient subjects. "In the establishment of a teaching body," he remarked, "my principal aim is to have a means of directing political and moral opinions; for so long as people are not taught from their childhood whether they are to be Republicans or Monarchists, Catholics or free-thinkers, the State will not form a nation."²⁴ Omitting the matter of motivation, the words could have come from either Rousseau or one of the Jacobins.

Religion also was deeply affected, and here the link between Enlightenment and Revolution is perhaps clearest of all. The Abbé Raynal, whose anti-ecclesiastical writings had earned him censure by the church, achieved belated revenge during the Convention, when his words were read aloud enthusiastically. "The state is not made for religion; religion is made for the state. The state is supreme in all things; any distinction between temporal power and spiritual power is a palpable absurdity, and there cannot be more than a sole and single jurisdiction throughout in matters where public utility has to be provided for or defended."²⁵ At Christianity, but there was plainly desire to regulate it completely. If there was to be a church, it must reflect the character of the new political order. In the name of *liberté*, the Assembly suppressed all perpetual mo-

nastic vows and all religious orders. Educational and charitable functions held by the church and its various orders were transferred to the state. Bishops and parish priests were to be elected like ordinary officials. It was ruled that clerics must accept their living from the state, and in such capacity must take an oath of fidelity to the state. Those who refused to swear fidelity were declared enemies of the people.

But the most severe blow fell when the property belonging to the church was confiscated by the state. From the point of view of the nature of social groups and associations under the law, the chief interest of this act lies in the discussions which were precipitated concerning the corporate nature of the church. The question was raised by more than one member of the Assembly whether the church, by its corporate being, should not be indemnified for the expropriation. Older corporate ideas of jurisprudence still found expression, even in that body. But they were drowned out by the overwhelming flood of natural-law arguments that persons other than natural persons (that is, individuals) do not in fact exist, and any rights which the church might claim disappear before the sovereign rights of the state. Thouret declared, in a legislative address: "Individuals and corporations differ in their rights. Individuals exist before the law, and they hold rights drawn from nature that are imprescriptible, such as the right of property; all corporations, on the other hand, only exist by law, and their rights are dependent on the law."²⁶ He concluded with the pregnant observation: "The destruction of a corporate body is not a homicide."

In countless ways, then, the Revolution must be seen in fact for what it was in image to generations of intellectuals afterward: the combined work of liberation, of equality, and of rationalism. Tocqueville was to write that equalitarianism quickly became, after libertarianism's first excitement had waned, the compelling moral ethos of the Revolution. But we should not overlook its rationalism and the appeal that this rationalism had for all those who, following Plato, believed in the rational foundations of the just state. A passion for geometrical unity and symmetry in the minds of the Revolutionary legislators drove them beyond such relatively minor matters as reform of the currency system and standardization of weights and measures to the more exciting task of rationalization of the units of space and time within which men lived. The ancient provinces were to be abolished, to be replaced by geometrically perfect units and sub-units of political administration, all oriented ultimately toward their center, Paris. The calendar was reformed, with new names for the days and months in order to remind the people con-

stantly of their separation from the old regime. For, if a people are to be both free and wise, they must be liberated from old memories and the prejudices embedded in traditional associations and symbols. Traditional centers of education having been abolished, new centers must be established, an office of propaganda formed, in order that the people might be emancipated, in Rousseau's words, from the "prejudices of their fathers."

The Revolution was also the work of power; not power simply in the mechanical sense of force applied to a people by external government in the pursuit of its own objectives, but power regarded as arising from the people, transmuted by libertarian, equalitarian, and rationalist ends so that it becomes, in effect, not power but only the exercise of the people's own will. This was Rousseau's dream and it was the dream of a great many during the Revolution.

What gave the Revolution epochal significance in the minds of its leaders and, even more, in the minds of nineteenth-century revolutionaries for whom the Revolution became an obsessive model, was its unique blend of power and freedom, of power and equality, of power and fraternity, and of power and reason. From a purely intellectual point of view these affinities come close to representing the successive phases of the development of the Revolution. How else than by the massed power of the people, represented first by Assembly and Convention, then by Committee, and finally by one man alone, could the freedom of the millions of suffering and oppressed be achieved from the hated authorities of church, aristocracy, guild, and monarchy? From power conceived as liberation it was but a short step to power conceived as equality, for if each citizen of France was by definition a participant in the new political order, did this not bring with it equality of power; the most basic form of equality? And in the structure of the nation, which had from the beginning been declared the only legitimate source of authority in the Republic, lay a form of fraternity that made all older forms seem obsolete and discriminatory. Finally, how else could the political, social, and economic confusion that was the legacy of feudalism be exterminated, and a new system of society inaugurated, save by the exercise of a power that would be as rational as it was limitless?

"The transition of an oppressed nation to democracy," the Committee of Public Safety declared, "is like the effort by which nature arose from nothingness to existence. You must entirely refashion a people whom you wish to make free, destroy its prejudices, alter its habits, limit its necessities, root up its vices, purify its desires."²⁷

Nor can one miss in the Revolution the rising note of political moralism, sometimes total moralism, that is added to the themes of liberation, equality, reason, and power. Rousseau had shown the way in his *Discourse on Political Economy* and in *The Social Contract*. Power without morality is tyranny; morality without power is sterile. Hence, as the Revolution progressed, the increasing appeal to virtue in support of the most extreme measures taken by the government. With moralism went, inevitably, a new manifestation of religious consciousness. "How are you to know a Republican?" asked Barère de Vieuzac. His answer might have been taken directly from Rousseau's chapter on the civil religion in *The Social Contract*. You will know him, Barère declared, when he speaks of his country with "religious sentiment" and of the sovereign people with "religious devotion." With reason have historians of nationalism traced its modern origins directly to the Revolution. Political sentiment became a flame, melting all social relationships and symbols that stood between the citizen and the goal of France *une et indivisible*.

It was Jacobinism that came to appear, in later decades, most expressive of the Revolution's unique fusion of rationalism, moralism and absolute power. No matter what recent research has revealed of the middle-class origins, the merely economic objectives, and the debating-club techniques of a majority of the members of the Jacobin clubs, the image of Jacobinism that was ever after to inspire the radical and to torment the conservative was of something much closer to the reality of twentieth-century revolutionary politics than of anything to be found in liberal, bourgeois nineteenth-century society. The historian, Robert Palmer, has suggested something of this in the following words on the Jacobins:

"Their democratic Republic was to be unitary, solid, total, with the individual fused into society and the citizen into the nation. National sovereignty was to check individual rights, the general will prevail over private wishes. In the interest of the people the state was to be interventionist, offering social services; it was to plan and guide the institutions of the country, using legislation to lift up the common man. It was to resemble more closely the states of the twentieth century than those of the nineteenth . . . 'The function of government,' Robespierre had said on 5 Nivôse, 'is to direct the moral and physical forces of the nation.'"²⁸

From power to terror is the final step. In a revolution worthy of the name this step must be taken. For, as Robespierre declared: "If the basis of popular government in time of peace is virtue, the basis of popular

government in time of revolution is virtue and terror: virtue without which terror is murderous, terror without which virtue is powerless.”²⁹ No doubt some of the fascination and sense of self-justification which Christian onlookers found in the burnings of religious non-believers and heretics during the Inquisition were found by Revolutionary onlookers of the guillotinings of political counter-revolutionaries and traitors in Paris in 1794. It was in the context of the Terror that the peculiarly modern connotations of treason and subversion had their origin: each connotation is as inseparable from the character of modern mass democracy as heresy is from the character of the medieval church. To a Saint-Just, inspired by the spiritualized, disciplined ferocity of a medieval inquisitor, terror could take on the properties of a cauterizing agent: indispensable, however painful, to the extermination of political infection. It was in these terms that nineteenth-century revolutionists, such as Bakunin, could justify the use of terror. It is a justification that continues in the twentieth century—in the works of Lenin and Trotsky, of Stalin, Hitler, and Mao. There is, to be sure, a vast difference between the reality of the French Revolution and the reality of twentieth-century totalitarianism, but there is, as such present-day scholars as J. L. Talmon and Hannah Arendt have stressed, following insights of Tocqueville, Burckhardt, and Taine, vital continuity nonetheless.

INDIVIDUALIZATION, ABSTRACTION, GENERALIZATION

If one looks at the two revolutions from the point of view of the most fundamental and widespread processes they embodied in common, three are especially striking. I shall call them *individualization*, *abstraction*, and *generalization*. Together these terms convey a great deal of what revolutionary change meant to philosophers and social scientists of the nineteenth century. And the relevance of each has lasted well into the twentieth century.

INDIVIDUALIZATION Everywhere in the modern world, the clear direction of history seemed to be toward the separation of individuals from communal or corporate structures: from guild, village community, historic church, caste or estate, and from patriarchal ties in general. Some, perhaps most, people saw this separation in the progressive terms of liberation, of emancipation from tradition grown oppressive. Others took a more somber view of the separation, seeing the rise of a new type

of a society, one in which moral egoism and social atomism were the dominant qualities. But whether from the over-all point of view of progress or decline, there was a unanimity of recognition that covered philosophers as different as Bentham, Coleridge, Tocqueville, Marx, Spencer, and Taine. Not the group but the *individual* was the heir of historical development; not the guild but the *entrepreneur*; not class or estate but the *citizen*; not corporate or liturgical tradition but *individual reason*. More and more, society could be seen as a vast, impersonal, almost mechanical, aggregate of discrete voters, tradesmen, sellers, buyers, workers, worshipers: as, in short, separated units of a population rather than as parts of an organic system. To be sure there were those such as Marx who saw, along with the decomposition of old hierarchy and authority, the formation of a new type—that of the industrial system—but this did not prevent Marx from seeing the individual as nonetheless the beneficiary of the process and, when once separated from the tyranny of private ownership of industry, the recipient of final salvation.

ABSTRACTION This is related to individualization, but refers primarily to moral values. What struck a great many minds in the century was not merely the tendency of historic values to become ever more secular, ever more utilitarian, but increasingly separated from the concrete and particular roots which for many centuries had given them both symbolic distinctness and means of realization. Honor—as Tocqueville was to show in a masterly chapter of *Democracy in America*—and loyalty and friendship and decorum had all begun, as values, in the highly particular contexts of locality and rank. Now, without their appeal as words, as symbols, becoming in any way lessened, the contexts through which their meaning and direction had for centuries been communicated to human thought and behavior were undergoing profound alteration. Many of these values had depended for their effect on man’s direct experiencing of nature: of its rhythms and cycles of growth and decay, of cold and warmth, of light and dark. Now a technological system of thought and behavior was coming between man and the directness of natural habitat. Still other values had depended on the ties of patriarchy, of close and primary association, and of a sense of the sacred that had rested upon a religious or enchanted view of the world. Now these values were becoming—through processes of technology, science, and political democracy—abstract; removed from the particular and the concrete. Here, again, this could represent progress to many, cultural decline to others.

GENERALIZATION The nation and even the international sphere

44 IDEAS AND CONTEXTS

come to be seen more and more as essential areas of man's thought and allegiance. From family and local community to nation, to democracy, to visions of international order: this is the course of thought in the age. Loyalties become broadened, along with interests and functions. So do perceptions. Men saw their fellows less as particular individuals and more as members of a general aggregate or class. As Ostrogorski has written: "In decomposing the concrete, the logic of facts as well as that of ideas, opened the door to the general. Here, as elsewhere, industrialism gave the first impulse. In the eyes of the manufacturer the mass of human beings who toiled in the factory were only *workmen*, and the workman associated with the factory-owner only the idea of *capitalist* or *master*. Not being brought into immediate contact, they formed a conception of each other by mentally eliminating the special characteristics of the individual and retaining only what he had in common with the other members of his class."³⁰ What the Industrial Revolution accomplished in the economic sphere, revolutionary democracy did in the political. In each instance the particularism of the old order—the tendency to think in terms of the concrete, *identifiable* rich or powerful, poor or helpless—disappeared along with its localism. The same tendency to think now increasingly in terms of "the working class," "the poor," "the capitalists" expressed itself with equal force in the tendency to think in terms of "voters," "bureaucracy," the "citizenry," and so on.

In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* Burke wrote: "Many parts of Europe are in open disorder. In many others there is a hollow murmuring underground; a confused movement is felt, that threatens a general earthquake in the political world."³¹

But not even Burke's prescience could have told him how general, how limitless, was the earthquake that began in Western Europe, spread to the rest of Europe and the Western hemisphere in the nineteenth century, and goes on unabatedly in the twentieth century in Far East, Middle East, Latin America, and Africa.