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A NOTE ON REVOLUTION

I HAVE used the word revolution. I must draw attention to the difference between using a word as a common name (*a* revolution) and as a proper or personal name (*the* Revolution). In the second instance the word "revolution" has all the weight of well-defined historical meaning and is part of the inheritance of a certain group of men, of those who have been most enthusiastic in their wish to bring about the reign of man-centred humanism, of which the Communists are actually the most typical representatives; and, from the very fact that the object indicated has been thus hypostatized, it supposes naturally that "revolution" or the "revolutionary spirit" is the supreme rule for judgements of value and action. It is clear (as was pointed out by the author of one of the replies to the inquiry made in December 1932 by the *Nouvelle Revue Française*) that men are in this case submitted willy-nilly to those who for the moment are the typical representatives of the revolutionary spirit taken as supreme value.

It is obvious that the world has entered upon a revolutionary period, so we only need to state the fact. It follows that people have to say that they are revolutionaries to show that they intend to keep in touch with the facts and that they understand the necessity of "substantial" changes which in their specifically "humanist-inhuman" element reach the principles themselves of our present system.

But the most hidden and active of these principles are of a spiritual order. And the word revolution in its imagery connotes those great changes, visible and sudden, which occur in the material world. Were this imagery to direct thought and desire towards visible and tangible things, towards the external and physical, the speedy (i.e. easy), and considering them of first importance, support a belief in the primacy of immediate results and clumsy temporal means, it would lead to a great deceit. The first supporters of the October revolution in Russia were intellectuals who, desiring a "spiritual revolution," mistakenly substituted for the radicalism of spiritual needs the radicalism of a visible and tangible upheaval which masked the catastrophe of the old evil of the modern mind; Lenin, moreover, got rid of them by expeditious means once he had made use of them.

Péguy said that if the social revolution is to come at all it must be also moral. One is condemned to a work, primarily destructive, if one wishes to change the face of the earth without first of all changing one's own heart—and this no man can do by himself. It may well be that if an almighty love really changed our hearts, the external task would already be half accomplished.

Which all goes to show that it is better to be revolutionary than to call oneself so, above all at a time in which revolution is the most "conformist" of commonplaces and a label claimed by everybody. To free oneself from this phraseology would be, perhaps, a useful act of "revolutionary" courage.

In any case the "rupture between the Christian order and the established disorder" does not *only* involve economic and political issues but the whole of the culture, the interrelation between the spiritual and temporal orders and the very conception of the work of man on earth and at this moment of the world's history which we ought to adopt. It is not *only* a matter of the exterior and visible ordering of human life; it concerns also, and in the first place, the spiritual principles of this ordering. It should be made manifest externally in the visible and tangible order. But the inevitable condition is that it should become consummate first of all in the intelligence and heart of those who wish to co-operate with God in history, and that because they have reached the depths of comprehension.

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