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1. One of the most common statements to be found in general histories of the social sciences is that the two greatest influences on the development of the social sciences in the first half of the nineteenth century were the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution respectively and in combination. When you think about it, such statements, while true, are not very revealing. After all, one would hardly expect such momentous happenings as the French and Industrial Revolutions to leave anything untouched, especially the history of efforts to comprehend the workings of society, polity, and economy. They were both events which could be said to usher in the modern political and economic world we have inhabited for the past 200 years. Apart from the obvious fact that one had its origins in France, while the other began and was best illustrated by Britain in the first half of the nineteenth century, one of the main differences between the French and Industrial Revolutions -- -- is that the Industrial Revolution was more cumulative and obviously irreversible in its effects; it issued no intellectual bulletins or prospectuses to compare, say, with the Declaration of the Rights of Man, though it did, of course, give rise to a large body of literature attempting to analyse and assess its consequences. Indeed, the term Industrial Revolution was not widely used until the 1830s and 40s, when, with the benefit of hindsight at least, we can see that it had been under way for at least 60 years. What we have to sort out with regard to the French Revolution are those reactions and attempts to come to terms with its causes and consequences which had some lasting effect on the attitudes adopted by the next generation of social theorists towards social and political change. What gives the French Revolution special significance to the history of the social sciences?

2. One powerful and attractive approach to this question runs in terms of ideology: it draws attention to the number of modern ideological "isms" that were born during, or as a result of the French Revolution -- nationalism, romanticism, and some forms of radical liberalism and even socialism. Paradoxically, but more significantly for the social sciences, I shall argue, however, that perhaps the most potent "ism" spawned by the French Revolution was conservatism. An equivalent approach to the Industrial Revolution would point to
the ideologies connected with it, namely industrialism, capitalism, and various forms of socialism and communism. But we still have to connect these "isms" with the history of the social sciences. These "isms" may serve well as descriptions of the programmes of social movements, but this does not mean that they have the same uses or significance to the history of the social sciences. We have to ask about their deeper intellectual roots and repercussions.

3. But first let me consider the implications of the word "Revolution". From a twentieth-century perspective, the term has been devalued by over-use. Not only does it appear to be a constant feature of some political regimes, but we have become used to it being applied to technological change, whether of a genuine variety or simply inspired by the self-interested claims of advertising copy-writers. But this over-familiarity and devaluation of the word may have a useful byproduct or unintended consequence: it reminds of the dual meaning of the word. Thus it can mean what most of the proponents and many of its opponents want us to believe, namely a fundamental break with the past, the initiation by violent or peaceful means of an irreversible set of changes in our social, economic, and political arrangements. But it can also mean what it originally meant, namely motion around a relatively fixed axis, with events forcing a return to the original starting point. In other words, circular or revolving motion and cyclical repetition, where everything changes but in some fundamental sense remains the same. One could say of the first French Revolution which began in 1789 -- first, because it established a pattern for subsequent revolutions in France and elsewhere in 1830, 1848, and 1870 -- that it began as a revolution in the first sense and ended as an illustration of revolution in the second sense. It began as something quite extraordinary, as a seismic shift occurring not in some obscure and perennially unstable Ruritanian republic, but in Europe's most powerful, populous, and civilised monarchy. It ended, however, as something that was far more predictable, as a chain of events in which almost everything has returned to its original condition.

4. Before I try to illustrate this statement I must give a drastically abridged account of the train of events which variously exhilarated, astounded and appalled observers and participants. Pre-revolutionary France can be described as an absolute monarchy
superimposed on a social and economic system that was riddled with particularistic feudal privileges and distinctions which had resisted, though not entirely successfully, the efforts of the monarch and his ministers to create a modern, centralised and bureaucratic state. Paradoxically, the revolution can be described as the result of grievances arising both out of the successes and failures of these efforts to achieve reform from above -- efforts which were themselves the product of chronic financial and economic problems. Thus what began as an attempt by the aristocracy, supported by the clergy, to influence royal policies and protect ancient privileges from these changes from above, was taken over by the Third Estate claiming to represent the rest of the population. And what began as an attempt to create a kind of constitutional monarchy along British lines ended up as a revolutionary republic dedicated to Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity and other abstract ideals known as the Rights of Man. In getting to this point by 1793 the blood of the royal family and many of its aristocratic supporters was shed, but this was to prove a drop in the ocean compared with the way in which the revolutionary process, taking place against a background of foreign invasion, devoured successive generations of its own supporters in a sequence of factional purges, acts of terror and mass executions. In an effort to restore order, defeat the combined external enemies of France, and, it was claimed, secure the basic principles of the revolution, a military commander, Napoleon Bonaparte, was given extensive powers -- powers which blossomed within a few years into those of a hereditary Emperor at the head of armies that could simultaneously claim to be extending France's frontiers, liberating subject peoples, and spreading the gospel of the French Revolution abroad by means of conquest.

5. On the one hand, therefore, you could look to the permanent changes secured by the revolution in the form of the abolition of feudal, aristocratic, and clerical privileges. On the other hand, the revolution seemed to exemplify a cyclical view of history: democracy had crumbled into anarchy, followed by dictatorship under a revolutionary elite, followed by military dictatorship and a return to hereditary government. There was one remaining difference, however, namely that the new Emperor succeeded where absolute monarchy had failed, namely in extending France's conquest over large parts of Europe and in finishing the
work they had begun by creating an efficient centralised and modern machine of government which destroyed local and intermediate powers, but had precious little concern with political as opposed to civil liberties. This may help to explain why both supporters and opponents of revolution could later agree that what had begun as a new dawn, a revolution in the first sense, had become a revolution in the second sense, a dismal proof of ancient maxims about the corrupting effect of power and doctrines of original sin. Thus one could go back to the history of the fall of the Roman republic for parallels which showed how idealism gives way to greed and cynicism, how the excesses of liberty lead to the restoration of forms of authority that may be even worse than those they deposed. And I want to stress that this sense of failure was common to supporters and opponents alike, though the further conclusion of opponents was that revolution is never the way to achieve change, while that of supporters might be that next time things would not be bungled. But there was substantial agreement on the fact of failure, and in this respect an interesting contrast can be drawn with an eminently successful revolution, that other eighteenth-century revolution, the one that bulks nowhere near so large in the popular histories of social science, the American Revolution of 1776, a revolution which by 1787 had created a novel kind of federal republic that was to become the testing ground for egalitarian and democratic ideas in the nineteenth century; a revolution whose leaders believed that they were enacting the well-established findings of the Enlightenment "science of politics and legislation". As we shall see, similar claims or charges were made by and against the French Revolution, and the fact of "failure", as I have described it, had major consequences for the Enlightenment ideas associated with the French Revolution.

6. I said earlier that two lasting products the French Revolution were varieties of liberalism and conservatism, and it is a mark of the failure of the revolution that the second of these, conservatism, is by far and away the most novel and lasting of its intellectual repercussions. For although there have always been those who have exhibited a conservative frame of mind, those who attach more weight to tradition and established authority than to innovation and novelty, conservatism as a serious and well-articulated intellectual position is largely a post-French revolutionary phenomenon. You could say that it was not until
certain values were challenged in a wholesale way that it was recognised that conservation was necessary. But another remarkable fact about post-revolutionary conservatism is that the essence and even substance of many of its most characteristic doctrines or values was established almost over night in what was seen to be a remarkable feat of prevision by Edmund Burke, an Anglo-Irish Whig who wrote his Reflections on the Revolution in France in 1790, long before the train of events which appeared to confirm his worst predictions had run its disastrous course.

7. Burke's attack was two-pronged: partly directed against the actions and theories of the revolutionaries in overturning the established political institutions of France, the monarchy, aristocracy and Church; partly against the vocal supporters of the revolution in England, especially those dissenting radicals whom he rightly suspected were employing events in France to support their case for remodelling the British constitution along similar lines. Burke's early denunciation of the French Revolution certainly produced a remarkable series of replies from the British radical camp -- by Thomas Paine, William Godwin, Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, and Mary Wollstoncraft. They defended the aims of the revolution in terms of fundamental or natural rights, and they revived, in more radical form, a Lockean interpretation of the English Revolution of 1688, according to which the English people had formed a contract with the monarchy which could be revoked or modified by the people if it failed to concede and protect certain fundamental liberties and rights. Another common feature of Burke's opponents was an emphasis on reason as the foundation for political institutions; and this was expressed in highly optimistic hopes concerning the possibilities of indefinite progress based on reason and the application to social and political problems of man's higher capacities for knowledge.

7. As you will quickly have realised, many of these radical and individualistic assumptions were features of the Enlightenment, particularly the French Enlightenment. They represent the most optimistic wing of Enlightenment thinking in their emphasis on the capacity of social science to remodel social and political institutions. Those of you who attended my last lecture will also realize that these radical interpretations of
the Enlightenment are at odds with the less individualistic, less rationalistic assumptions which lie behind the work of Hume, Smith, and Scottish historians of civil society. What makes the revolution of particular interest to the history of the social sciences is the way in which it was treated by all its opponents from Burke onward as a direct byproduct of certain ideas associated with the Enlightenment: secularism and anti-clericalism; the optimistic assumption of indefinite progress through the application of human reason; and an emphasis on individual rights and liberties that was thought to be incompatible with orderly and satisfying social relationships. Such philosophes as Voltaire, Helvetius, Condorcet, and Rousseau, though holding extremely divergent political views, were accused of disseminating a critical spirit towards established institutions, of creating an atmosphere in which authority was more difficult to exercise, and in which the benefits of the social bond were reduced to a crude contractualism. (See Burke's attack on the contract idea in the extract circulated.) It was these ideas that had laid the groundwork for revolutionary hopes and ambitions. The rootless, alienated, and, in the end, irresponsible intellectual had been introduced as a major actor on the stage of human affairs; and the conspiracy theory which the philosophes had employed against the Church was now employed against them: they were the evil geniuses of revolutionary disruption. The powerful myth which connected the Enlightenment with the revolution was given an appearance of substance by the way in which Robbespierre and other revolutionary leaders made secular Gods of such figures as Rousseau; but it is not too difficult to show that Rousseau would never have approved of the uses to which his ideas on popular sovereignty and the general will were put by revolutionary leaders. Hence also the origins of another powerful myth, namely that Rousseau was the patron saint of what later became known as totalitarian democracy, whereby a mass electorate creates a monolithic state and places control in the hands of a despotic avant garde who claim to be implementing the general will in the name of the people, the nation, or the Party -- a situation in which the individual citizen, isolated from his fellows and from his God, stands naked and powerless before the limitless powers of the state.
9. As I have hinted, most of the elements of the conservative backlash can be found in Burke's Reflections and his other writings during this period. They can be distilled into a number of propositions which remain defining characteristics of conservatism: 

a) Man is essentially a religious animal, and his social institutions require a religious underpinning which recognises his inherent capacity for evil as well as reverence.

b) Society is an organic product of slow evolutionary growth, which means, in the conservative form of this idea, that existing institutions embody the wisdom of previous generations. History is not merely what has happened, it contains a prescriptive element. It follows that there is always a normative presumption in favour of established government, and that violent or radical reform usually destroys more that is valuable than it can possibly create.

c) Man is a creature of instinct and emotion as well as reason. And habit, prejudice, and concrete experience are a better guide to how his institutions should be ordered than reason and abstract theory, and appeals to a golden future.

d) The community is superior to the individual, and men are better defined by their duties to their fellow men than by their rights against them.

e) Men are not equal and undifferentiated, except in the ultimate sense of being equal before God. The essence of social organisation is man's membership of classes, orders, and other sub-groupings.

10. You will see from the above just how much that was essential conservative doctrine was an inversion of features of the radical French Enlightenment. If the Enlightenment stressed reason, progress, individual rights, popular sovereignty, secularism, the universality of human needs, liberty, equality, and the power of science to yield blueprints for the future of society, conservatives stressed instinct, faith, emotion, the superiority of communal values and duties over individual rights, organic growth and inherited wisdom, the persistence of evil that could not be attributed to corrupt or faulty social institutions, the natural inequality of man, the importance of the local and particular as opposed to the universal, the complexity, heterogeneity, and relativity of cultural forms rather than the way in which these could be made to conform to cosmopolitan and abstract criteria derived from individual rights and common needs. Conservatism has been described as a philosophy of "permanent imperfection" rather than a philosophy of perfectibility; and instead of celebrating what is
modern, what is a portent of the future, it stresses attachment to the past. As Karl Mannheim put it, "the progressive experiences the present as the beginning of the future, while the conservative regards it simply as the latest point reached by the past".

11. I have emphasised the elements in conservatism that are common to post-Revolutionary conservatives from Burke onwards, but I should perhaps distinguish between conservatives and reactionaries. De Maistre, De Bonald, and Chateaubriand were reactionaries in the sense that they were committed to turning the historical clock of progress backwards to a more theocratic age, and age in which the Church possessed spiritual and secular authority in the conduct of everyday life. Similar retrogressive elements will also be found in English conservatives such as Coleridge, and in the revival of interest in the Middle Ages, the period known to the Enlightenment as the Dark Ages. Such reactionaries turn out to have something in common with radicals and revolutionaries, namely they are both affronted by the modern world and are looking either to the past or to the future to reinstate a sense of community. In this sense they share a utopian belief centering on a golden past or a golden future. A more common conservative, as opposed to reactionary position, is lack of commitment to any ideal state or Utopia, past or future. In this Burkean form it becomes a belief in preserving whatever happens to exist, rather than an attempt to preserve a specific set of social arrangements. Another important difference between conservative and reactionary ideas is that conservatism may embrace reform or change, sincerely or purely tactically, as a means of preserving the essence of what is good about present arrangements from more radical changes.

12. But what, you may be asking, has any of this to do with the history of the social sciences? None of the figures I have mentioned as representing the conservative position bulks large in that history, and as well shall see next week, the influence of certain forms of Enlightenment social science persisted well into the nineteenth century in the form of Benthamite Utilitarianism and political economy. What then were the permanent intellectual residues left by post-Revolutionary conservatism? The brief answer is that in France, two authors, St Simon and a disciple of his, August Comte, were deeply influenced by what
Comte called the "retrograde school". Moreover, as post-revolutionary figures, they saw themselves as capable of forming a higher synthesis based partly on Enlightenment ideas of progress, and partly on conservative or reactionary values such as community, solidarity, hierarchy, and the need to combat the corrosive or alienating effects of individualism. They attempted to construct a "positive" science of society, a science that Comte was the first to describe as "sociology", by combining doctrines of technocratic progress derived from Turgot and Condorcet with conservative insights into the importance of order, stability, and authority in society. In this way they hoped to replace the merely "critical" understanding of the Enlightenment with a more organic conception of social statics and dynamics that would serve as a blueprint for social reorganisation. This explains why they tried to merge the Enlightenment idea of the philosophe as scientific expert with the conservative or reactionary belief in the essential contribution to stability of a priesthood or Church hierarchy, and why religion and science became so thoroughly fused and confused in Comtean forms of positivistic sociology. A new priesthood of scientists would emerge, capable of reconciling order with change, and imbuing mankind with a new secular religion of humanity designed to produce social consensus and overcome the destructive and alienating individualistic tendencies released by both the French and Industrial Revolutions. Fortunately, I need to say little further on this subject because the argument for the connections between post-revolutionary conservatism and French sociology is well-presented in the work of Robert Nisbet on the reading list, who shows the connection at work in St. Simon, Comte, Le Play, and finally in Emil Durkheim's overriding concern with finding ways of achieving social solidarity under modern conditions of change.

13. I should like to close by considering two other figures who are of considerable significance to the social sciences in the nineteenth century, Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill, only the first of which gets any mention in Nisbet's treatment of the history of sociology. Although the French Revolution raised fundamental questions about individualism as the prime characteristic of the modern world, it was preeminently a political event; and it was on this level that Tocqueville and Mill were primarily concerned with it. Naturally,
however, when I say that it was a political event, or sequence of events, I do not mean that it was susceptible to a political analysis or solution only. As heirs to a tradition created by Montesquieu and the Scottish Enlightenment, they treated political institutions as part of a larger pattern of social and economic relationships. But they did not follow the line taken by many nineteenth-century social scientists -- by figures as varied as Comte, Marx, and Spencer -- in treating political institutions as mere surface phenomena.

14. One of the main lessons which they drew from the French Revolution was as follows: liberty, equality and fraternity, the aims of the Revolution, do not spring from the mere abolition of abuses and privileges. Nor does the creation of democratic mechanisms guarantee the viability in the long run of liberty in the fullest sense. Liberty may actually be in conflict with equality; and it may not be a plant that can survive transplantation into hostile social soils. Put somewhat differently, the attempt to combine liberty and equality under the unpropitious social circumstances presented by France in 1789 and throughout the first half of the nineteenth century simply gives you the vices of liberty without its virtues.

15. Emulating the comparative approach of Montesquieu, Tocqueville attempted to pursue these propositions by means of strategic sociological comparisons between France, England and America. Thus in his work on Democracy in America he asked what it was about American society -- the surrounding laws, ideas, customs and manners of the American people -- that made equality and democratic institutions compatible with liberty. Why were similar political institutions in France so unstable, such that successive revolutions ended in failure, or rather, usually ended up by increasing the powers of the central government at the expense of genuine participation by the citizenry. When he wrote his study of the Ancien Regime and the French Revolution in 1856, it was an attempt to show why the Revolution was not so much a change as the continuation of an illiberal national tradition of centralised power. Successive revolutions had taken the same form, with both Left and Right attempting to seize control over the state apparatus, leaving everything much the same. An equivalent twentieth-century analysis of the Russian Revolution would stress the continuities between Tsarist bureaucratic rule and that exercised after the Revolution by the Communist Party.
16. John Stuart Mill, partly influenced by Tocqueville and Comte, was also led in a comparative-historical, or sociological direction to question the benefits of democratic political institutions as the sole means of embodying ideas of liberty and equality. It became the focus for his own worries about the rise of modern forms of equality and uniformity that might actually undermine diversity and lead to what he variously described as "the tyranny of the majority" and "Chinese stationariness". The individualism of modern society might be in conflict with individuality and the capacity for self-development, and hence progress. This is, if you like, the Millian equivalent of Marx's diagnosis about alienation in modern society.

16. Although these brief remarks about Tocqueville and Mill are quite inadequate as they stand, I make them in order to indicate that the intellectual repercussions of the French Revolution for the social sciences went deep into the nineteenth century, and that they were not confined to sociology as Comte and Durkheim came to understand it. Social reconstruction requires adequate and educative political institutions to prevent new forms of social tyranny from reproducing themselves in new guises. The persistent pattern of revolutions in France seemed to show that even when the old fabric has collapsed, reconstruction is a more hazardous enterprise than most partisans of revolution believed. It certainly required a good deal more than the exercise of revolutionary will, the implementation of technocratic blue-prints, and control over the central apparatus of power and the means of education and propaganda. Cultural traditions and ingrained habits may reassert and reproduce themselves under changed institutional forms.

17. This could be a depressing conclusion to a generation of nineteenth-century social scientists, most of whom were committed in one shape or another to the idea of social progress, and to the view that understanding progress was the chief task of any social science. It led Marx and others to focus on underlying economic factors rather than on political and legal institutions; and it led those like Mill and Tocqueville to consider ways in which the habits inculcated by social and economic activities could be harmonised with political institutions by changes that effected both sides of the equation. In other words, post-French-Revolutionary conservatism supplied many of the values, if not methods of diagnosis, which
informed the work of later social scientists, even those who were not attached to conservatism as a political creed.