

How to better make better changes.

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Intro to processes of change, evolution to revolution.

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## The Importance of Change

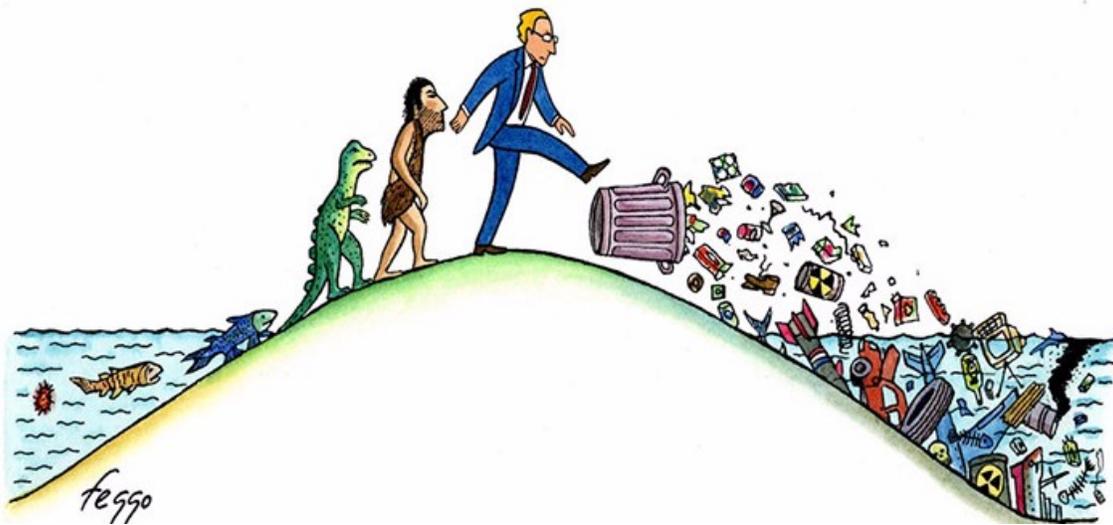
If we don't approach change correctly, we can't make it happen. If you want to make better changes, you need a better understanding of how things change. This applies as much to your own health as it does to society. So I'm going to talk about some basic aspects of change.

One of the most unhelpful notions is evolution. The term evolution was always somewhat boastful, reflecting the mindset of the patrician, colonialist culture from which it originated. The term has now become a placating notion that is mostly about staying the same. With the implication of eternal reward, and the imprimatur of science, evolution is the kind of change most people are willing to pay for.

There are two glaring errors in what we presume about evolution. First, we think of evolution as a means of progress. There is no truth to the idea that evolution is positive or persistent. Outside of furthering some advantage, evolution has no measure of value. Dinosaurs evolved to dominate the earth, which they did for 200 million years, and things could have stayed that way forever if the environment hadn't collapsed.

Things "evolve," according to definition, to gain advantage: better weapons, greater violence with less risk, more incidental pollution. These are secondary consequences of the primary objectives of controlling, exploiting, and extracting resources. This has been our evolutionary reward. Is this good?

The second fallacy is that evolution encourages change through natural selection. This is untrue. Natural selection only amplifies what's driving the process. Natural selection is not about change at all, it's anti-change. It depends on maintaining the status quo, and maintaining the reward structure. It's a process of local optimization, without thought or value.



## Evolution

Evolution sure does sell. It's an idea that says, "Do more of what you want, to get more of what you want, and everyone you want will benefit!"

Do things evolve? They do, and there are some winners, and also limited change and improvement. But this same process of perennial improvement hasn't prevented 99% of species from going extinct. Not a good track record. Should we blame the process? I think we might.

Big change comes from revolution, and big positive change from insightful revolution. The goal of healthcare is to make revolutionary change desirable. Chose not to recognize this, and you "evolve" into more of what you already are.

Understanding real change is the point of this piece.

## Theory or Thought

More than most ideas, evolution is a social meme: a concept that reflects popular fears and prejudice. It's perpetuated more by its attraction than its reward. Evolution is not a scientific theory, rarely even a conjecture, because it has no measure or disproving test. It is an idea associated with observations, vaguely extended to processes in general.

Classical evolution suggests systems change by random events that benefit the individual,

and these benefits go on to benefit the whole. This appeals to people because it justifies their pursuit of satisfaction, exonerating them from responsibility. The concept is thoroughly, thoughtlessly, and uselessly embraced.

Change is more accurately described by Nicholas Klein's 1918 quip, famously misattributed to Mahatma Gandhi:

**“First they ignore you. Then they ridicule you. And then they attack you and want to burn you. And then they build monuments to you. And that is what is going to happen to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.”**

This is how change actually proceeds, so let's understand why.

## **Revolution**

The fundamental error in applying evolution broadly is the assumption that large change is just a collection of small changes. That never happens. A collection of small, unrelated changes leads to chaos. Large, pervasive change, or large change to a single individual, is only positive when the change is coordinated.

Consider how new ideas take hold. Minor improvements can be incorporated immediately. They don't disrupt the “organism,” which could be you, or society. Major changes are disruptive by definition, and must be restricted, or rejected. The primary mandate of all surviving systems is to survive, and while some systems welcome change, they are few among the ranks of the survivors. This is stability.

Consider how a pathogen attempts to dominate your body. It cannot succeed in a series of small steps as your immune system will wipe it out before it has a chance. Instead, pathogens multiply without causing any harm until they number in the tens of millions. Only when their numbers are large enough to prevail do they turn pathogenic. This is opportunity.

Consider the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly. There is nothing evolutionary

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about this process, as it's orchestrated in exquisite detail. Here the ideas of random mutation and reward-based direction are absurd. In essence, there are no "steps" at all. You must see the process as a whole. It is something to which one must be committed from start to finish. This is revolution.



Opportunities for real change come from outside the plan or paradigm. They lie outside the problem domain, the current system, or the status quo. The incorporation of outside solutions seems unlikely at first, perhaps impossible, and it may well be. This is the "*they ridicule you*" stage. If the forces for change persist, the status quo reacts to defend against them. This is the "*attack and want to burn you*" phase.

If, at this phase, the force of change is small or limited, as in evolutionary change, then the change is neutralized and rejected. When pathogens are few, the body attacks them. When vocal advocates of change are few, society responds by eliminating them. When ideas that threaten the hierarchy appear from within the hierarchy, they are ridiculed and disowned, in an attempt to sterilize them.

It's not that the status quo does not want to hear new ideas, it just insists on being able to vet them first, to assimilate them when advantageous. But when change is threatening, then the pen is not mightier than the sword. Such change prospects are easily and permanently resolved with a bullet, bomb, or ice pick, as has been shown time and again.

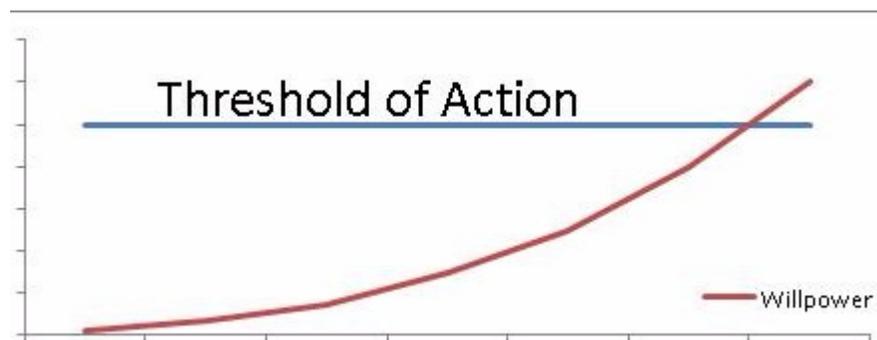
## 100 Monkeys

For a real change to gain traction, it must have breadth, depth, and support. Maybe it is motivated by reason, but usually fear, faith, or money, as so many

wars and genocides have shown. There may be no logical reason, and no obvious value to the foot soldier beyond the manipulation of human nature. And there must be no half measure, because there is no real change in halves.

You can't determine the value of change immediately. Its advocates always claim it to be positive, and those who resist claim otherwise. What caterpillar would enlist to become a butterfly? Reflect on your own processes in the course of your life. Major changes that seem good in retrospect have rarely been welcomed. Those that prevail, whether good or not, are either accepted by the majority, or insisted by the authority. Consider repealing the income tax. Serious argument is not allowed.

What we can be sure of is that real change is resisted; it is not gradual. Nicholas Klein's conclusion that "*then they build monuments to you*" is not a foregone conclusion, it's unusual. Whatever is against you, is not going to stop trying to defeat you, after trying just once. This is why it takes 100 monkeys.



In the 100 monkeys parable of change, a new idea does not spread until a critical level of acceptance is reached. Once this threshold is reached, the idea spreads everywhere, as if by magic. With less than 100 monkeys, other monkeys are uninterested. If we're talking about humans, the others would be indifferent, disdainful, or destructive. We've seen this with iPhones and eCommerce: once these tools revealed the complete picture, everyone piled in.

## It's Genetic

How do we create change if not from a single seed? We can start small with a repeatable formula, an easy explanation, or simple demonstration. A free market cultivates word of mouth, a captured market hires crusaders. If converts

can make converts, then growth is exponential.

The converted profess a gain dramatic enough to sway the skeptical. The advertisement is underscored by testimony and demonstration. Enthusiasm exceeds understanding, so benefits are not exactly as expected, requiring more testimony, further demonstration. Change builds on itself.

There is always a honeymoon phase, this is part of the process. It must be followed by an appreciation of value. Appreciation follows enthusiasm as surely as love follows romance. Whether monuments are built or not, permanent acceptance must rest on reliable, understood value. Value must become part of the organism.

This is ownership, not an evolutionary process. Ownership is complex, nuanced, and carefully balanced with thresholds and catalysts. It is made stable not by evolution, but by chemistry, ecology, or the enzymes in your brain. Evolution, such as it is, is heavily managed, with only the occasional new behavior, balance, or idea.

Imagine you need to change, and change big. Imagine you have a disease, or are told you do. What will you do? You cannot rely on evolution, as your situation is unique, and you don't want more of the same. You'll need to change, and whether it's building the Federated Garment Workers, or an octopus's eye, you'll find yourself rafting the rapids of choice.



What does this mean for your personal health? It may require the activation of latent attitudes. Skills encoded in your ancestry but not expressed. Revolutionary ideas recessive up to now. Your choice must be determined by your ability to perceive the outcome. What you do now is determined by what you perceive on the boundary of your future.



In this story I expected the lineage of Mahatma Gandhi, but was surprised to find my own. My grandfather was an activist in the same union as Nicholas Klein, in the same cities, at the same time. How is it that I think I arrived at these ideas on my own? Are these ideas mine, or are they in my genes turned on to better serve me, as they did my ancestors, in my own time?

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