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Scientific Anarchism

Herbert L. Osgood

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of inflation. It would tend to make inflation chronic. The scheme, as conceived by Spooner, would work much as “wild-cat” banking did before the crises of 1819 and 1837. After such convulsions in the business world, interest would be certain to reappear, and it would be the salvation of society if it did. As men are, and are ever likely to be, to throw off restraint would be equivalent to the realization in society of the Darwinian struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. This does not open an attractive prospect in any event. The trouble with us now, especially in the workings of our political system, is that the purely individualistic motives are given too full swing. The cause of political corruption is the predominance of self-seeking over public spirit.

For a justification of the state we need not construct any artificial theory, like that of natural rights and social contract. It came into existence with the dawn of society; it is as old as the individual. The existence of society without it, that is without organization and power in the organism to enforce conformity to the necessities of life and growth, would not only be contrary to all experience, but is absolutely unthinkable. To conceive society without government, the anarchists have to construct an imaginary individual; and even in this imaginary individual there is the possibility of lynch law and of the evolution of jury trial and state prisons. We see no prospect at present of the lapse of society into the *Kleinstaateri* of the old German Empire, or into a state where all public questions will have to be decided by Polish parliaments with the *liberum veto* in full operation.

Still, practically the only answer to that which is reasonable and just in the anarchistic argument is the pursuance of vigorous measures of political and social reform, which shall sweep away the evils among us that are degrading to any civilized people.

Herbert L. Osgood.

his enlarged needs, but progress is inevitably conditioned by the forces of the world within us and the world around us.

The perfection of the individual is therefore an idle dream. Man has lived for at least six thousand years upon the earth, and, after making allowance for all the changes caused by increasing civilization, the fundamental characteristics of human nature remain the same. Man has the animal qualities combined with the spiritual. He needs food, shelter and rest. In the struggle to obtain the commodities which will supply these wants, he is often dominated by the worst forms of selfishness and passion. Because the supply of the necessities and comforts of life is at least relatively limited, men monopolize them. Then the development of social inequality begins. The degree of knowledge, foresight, self-control which men possess is limited and exceedingly variable. The results which they achieve differ in proportion. View them as we may, these, and others like them, are primary facts; they lie beyond the reach of forms of organization. They are always to be taken for granted in discussing any social system, whether real or ideal. Every scheme of reform must adapt itself to them. Therefore no direct practical benefit can be derived from imagining a form of society where perfect justice, liberty, and equality may co-exist, and then applying it as a criterion to the existing order. There is so little similarity between the criterion and the system judged, that no satisfactory conclusions can be drawn. We must deal with realities and pursue methods of reform which conserve and promote all the best interests of society. This may be modest and unattractive, but it is the only true or fruitful method. We admit that society is imperfect, but the cause of imperfection lies back of society. If the institution of private property results in unnecessary inequality, it is because it is controlled by imperfect men. So it would be if we lived in voluntary associations, or under any other imaginable system. Individuals would remain essentially the same, and the old phenomena of inequality would continue. The introduction of Proudhon's system of credit would be accompanied by a great financial crisis, the result

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the preceding generations. These different classes of facts, which we have space only to hint at, represent the progress of civilization hitherto; they constitute its favorable side, and should be marshalled over against the wrongs and evils mentioned above. How did the anarchist get the conception of the indefinite perfectibility of man, except through a knowledge of what has already been accomplished? The civilized man is so far in advance of the savage that we can scarcely measure the difference. But all this progress has been made since government originated; most of it before the dogma of popular sovereignty was ever heard of. It was achieved in ages when the control of the state reached the innermost concerns of the individual, when in fact the conception of an individual apart from the state and the organic whole of society was not known. Shall I not then infer that the state, the principle of authority, is the cause of all good? Would it not be quite as logical and justifiable as to argue that it is the cause of all evil? Would not the former conclusion stand the test of historical examination quite as well as the latter? In the one case the induction would be quite as satisfactory as in the other.

But this whole method of reasoning, whatever the purpose for which it is used, is fallacious. No social or political institution, no form of organization, is in itself responsible for all the evils of society. The alleged cause is not adequate to produce the result. Here is one of the fatal errors in the entire socialistic and anarchistic argument. Our friends of that way of thinking indulge in a great deal of denunciation; but did they ever show that the existence of the state and of private property makes A cruel, B licentious, C avaricious, when they would not be so to a greater or less degree under any conceivable organization of society? The source of what we call social evil is in the individual and in the limitations of external nature. Forms of social organization have their influence, but it is wholly subordinate to these cardinal facts. Improvement can be made by civilizing the individual and adapting his* social surroundings to

plation of this side will make a pessimist of any man. A profound dissatisfaction with very much that exists in our political and social system is widespread among our most intelligent population. Those who would look to the state for a certain amount of efficient aid in solving the deeper problems that confront us are always met by the thought: if this plan should be carried out, it will enlarge the sphere of political corruption and open another field for partisanship. We had better not increase the domain of state action till we have a better organized state. The prevalent distrust of our legislative bodies finds utterance in all newspapers and periodicals and even in the state constitutions themselves. These are phenomena to which it is useless, nay dangerous, to shut our eyes. The cry of sentimentalism will not brush them aside. They are tangible facts, as real as those celebrated in the song of triumphant democracy.

But, admitting that our civilization is thus imperfect, does that prove that it is wholly bad or that anarchism has anything better to offer? It is noticeable that the anarchist, in carrying on his crusade against the state, avails himself of the freedom of the press and assembly, and of the protection which the state gives to his person and property so long as he does not attempt to destroy the life or property of anybody else. He also uses the post office, the telegraph, the railway and all other means at hand for spreading intelligence. He uses the printing press, a good quality of paper, and movable metal type. In all his daily life he employs commodities and lives in buildings which have been produced or constructed under the capitalistic system of production, guaranteed by the state. He makes use of knowledge and practical experience, formulates scientific truths, employs arguments and illustrations, appeals to moral ideas and motives, which have been developed in society and have become its common possession since the state came into existence. Really the whole substratum of his work, material, mental, and moral, is furnished by a politically organized society. The vantage ground on which he stands, and from which he works, is not of his own construction, but has been built for him by the labor of all

IN ANARCHISM we have the extreme antithesis of socialism and communism. The socialist desires so to extend the sphere of the state that it shall embrace all the more important concerns of life. The communist, at least of the older school, would make the sway of authority and the routine which follows therefrom universal. The anarchist, on the other hand, would banish all forms of authority and have only a system of the most perfect liberty. The anarchist is an extreme individualist. Using the words of the famous revolutionary formula, he would secure *equality* through *liberty*, while the socialist would secure it through *fraternity*. The anarchist holds that the revolt against authority, which began in the field of religion with the Protestant reformation, and which was extended into the realm of politics by the revolutionary movement of the last century, will end, when carried to its logical and necessary issue, in the abolition of all government, divine and human. He subscribes to the doctrine contained in the opening sentences of the Declaration of Independence. He also claims that men who, like Jefferson¹ and Herbert Spencer, express great jealousy of state control, would, if they were logical and true to their principles, become anarchists and advocate the complete emancipation of society.

I. Proudhon.

Anarchism, as a social theory, was first elaborately formulated by Proudhon. In the first part of his work, *What is Property?*² he briefly stated the doctrine and gave it the name *anarchy*, absence of a master or sovereign. In that connection he said:

¹ "The Declaration of Independence contains numerous internal evidences to show that, were Thomas Jefferson living to-day, he would be a pronounced anarchist." *Liberty* (the organ of the Boston anarchists), vol. ii, no. 5. "The anarchists are simply unterrified Jeffersonian Democrats." Article by Benj. R. Tucker, in *Liberty*, vol. v, no. 16.

² See Tucker's translation, pp. 271-288.

In a given society the authority of man over man is inversely proportional to the stage of intellectual development which that society has reached... Property and royalty have been crumbling to pieces ever since the world began. As man seeks justice in equality, so society seeks order in anarchy.

About twelve years before Proudhon published his views, Josiah Warren³ reached similar conclusions in America. But as the Frenchman possessed the originality necessary to the construction of a social philosophy, we must regard him as altogether the chief authority upon scientific anarchism.⁴

Proudhon, in his destructive criticism of existing institutions, made constant use of the logical formula of Hegel: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Negation he called his first principle, as that of God is in religion and thought in the system of Descartes.⁵ He denied the truth of every dogma and showed the contradiction or "antinomy"⁶ existing in every human institution. Like all *a priori* reasoners, however, he was forced to start with a dogma, and this

³ For an account of this man, see Ely's *Labor Movement in America*, p. 238. Also Warren's books: *True Civilization an Immediate Necessity*, and *Practical Details of Equitable Commerce*. His views are best stated in Stephen Pearl Andrews' *True Constitution*of Government*, New York, 1852.

⁴ So far as I know, all scientific writers who have discussed Proudhon have placed him among the socialists. But at the same time they have either expressly or tacitly protested against the classification. It has always been admitted that he stands apart from the other revolutionary leaders. In the light of the development of anarchism during the last ten years, his position seems to be clearly defined. Amid all the inconsistencies and contradictions which may be found in his works, his central thought is clear. His contemporaries did not understand him because they had not conceived of anarchism.

⁵ *Œuvres complètes*, tome 6, p. 144.

⁶ In his *Système des Contradictions économiques*, tome 1, p. 67, Proudhon explains antinomy to mean a law with a double face or with two tendencies, like the centripetal and centrifugal forces into which attraction may be analyzed. These opposite tendencies do not destroy one another, but if kept in equilibrium "are the procreative cause of motion, life, and progress."

appears, then, that we might expect theoretical anarchism to originate either in France or in America, because in those countries the notion of social contract has played the greatest rôle. As a matter of fact, it originated independently and at about the same time in both, in the minds of Proudhon and of Josiah Warren, and, leaving Russia for good reasons out of the account, in these countries it has obtained most of its adherents. Then our economic conditions, in the mining and manufacturing districts and large cities, are so far similar to those of the old world, that they may well occasion, when combined with the more independent spirit prevailing here, the rise of theories very extreme in their nature. Finally, the faults in our political system, especially in municipal government and in the relations between representatives of the people and corporations, are such as to give a certain amount of justification to the criticisms of the anarchists. These things furnish the food upon which such criticism thrives. If we wish to find the source of anarchism, we should contemplate the extremes of poverty and wealth which face each other in all our centres of population; weigh the arrogance, brutality and vice, which prevail too much in the employing class, over against the disappointment, hopelessness, and positive suffering so common among the employed; study, until it is definite and clear, the picture of manipulated caucuses, purchased ballots and falsified returns, of bribery, direct or indirect, in the halls of legislation, of political deals wherein the interests of the locality or the country are sacrificed for party success, of efforts on the part of the great majority of public men to secure party triumph rather than the country's weal; and consider, finally, the superficial nature of the questions at issue in nearly all political contests. In certain quarters of this country, such is the rapidity with which one political scandal follows another, so great the number of crimes of a semi-public nature, so intense and essentially brutal the struggle for wealth and power, that one is at times almost tempted to say with Proudhon that we are living in a state of anarchy. Our civilization at its great centres has a dark side, and an exclusive contem-

In the first place it is useless to claim that it is wholly a foreign product, and for that reason to clamor for restrictions upon immigration. Newspaper utterances on this phase of the subject have consisted too largely of appeals to ignorance and prejudice. There probably are good reasons why immigration should be restricted, but this should weigh very lightly among them. It provokes a smile when we think that the agitation carried on by a few thousand anarchists — probably not more than ten thousand in all — should force this people to change its policy in so important a matter as that of immigration. Such a suggestion goes to confirm what the socialists say about the cowardice of the *bourgeoisie*. And then, unless the restrictions were made so severe as to check the peopling of this country, the spread of anarchism would not be prevented. Such crude means do not reach the seat of opinion. Anarchism, so far as it has a scientific basis, is, like socialism, a natural product of our economic and political conditions. It is to be treated as such, both theoretically and practically. Anarchism is a product of democracy. It is as much at home on American soil as on European. The general belief to the contrary is one of the survivals of the notion that Providence has vouchsafed us a peculiar care and an especial enlightenment. If we wished to argue that anarchism is a peculiar and characteristic American product, reasons would not be lacking. Our political system is based on the ideas of liberty and equality. The minds and the writings of our revolutionary heroes were full of the theory of natural rights and social contract. The founder of one of our political parties was a living embodiment of that theory. The anarchists ask for no better statement of their premises than the opening sentences of the Declaration of Independence. From the standpoint of the doctrine of natural rights, it is impossible to overthrow their argument. Theoretically no fault can be found with the way in which Proudhon dealt with Rousseau, nor with his statement of what he considered to be the true doctrine. But Proudhon by his analysis showed the total lack of historical basis for the theory in any form, and at the same time its practical absurdity. It

was that justice and certain rights—emphatically those of liberty and equality — are natural, exist prior to law, and furnish the criteria for judging all legal and social systems. He defined justice to be “the recognition of the equality between another’s personality and our own.”⁷ This, it will be seen, is the golden rule put into philosophical language. Proudhon, in fact, declares at the outset⁸ that he accepts that declaration of Christ as the correct rule of conduct; but he aims to make it more precise and positive by expounding the idea of justice which it contains. Every one should claim from others the full recognition of the manhood in him, stripped of all its accessories, and should yield the same recognition in return. If with this were combined the humanitarian spirit, which Proudhon called *tquti*, or social proportionality, a perfect form of society would be the result.⁹ Equality and liberty would be harmonized, and both would be developed to the highest possible degree. Society, justice, and equality would then be three equivalent terms. All unequal, and therefore unnatural, conditions would disappear. Force would no longer be resorted to. Everything would be regulated by reason and persuasion. Thought, knowledge, virtue would hold undisputed sway.

Furnished with this ideal conception of society, which he had deductively attained, Proudhon attacked and in his own opinion demolished every institution which he found in society about him. In his *Systkme des contradictions economiques* he went through the entire series of economic phenomena, — value, division of labor, the use of machines, competition, credit, property, international trade, taxation, population, — showing first their beneficent effects and how they meet the needs of a progressive society, and then by way of antithesis their evil effects, their fatal, tendency toward the development of inequality. Like the socialists, he borrows from Adam

⁷ What is Property? trans. p. 231. Proudhon repeated this definition and expounded it at length in a six-volume work entitled *La Justice dans la Revolution*.

⁸ What is Property? trans, p. 26.

⁹ What is Property? trans. p. 242.

Smith the doctrine that labor is the true measure of value. The utilities which it produces should always exchange in proportion to their cost. In other words, cost should be the limit of price. But value in exchange, arising from demand, is “antinomical” to value in use, which arises from labor and utility. The two tend in different directions and become divorced. We have therefore this result: that the more utilities are multiplied, the less becomes their value. In the natural or perfect society, where exchange-value and utility are held in proper equilibrium, this would not be true, but the value of any product would be the formula, or monetary statement, which would express the proportion which the product bore to the sum of social wealth.¹⁰ Then the producer of a utility would receive its full value in exchange. The laborer would reap the full benefit of improvements in the methods of production, or, as Proudhon expressed it, “all labor would leave a surplus.”

The way in which Proudhon deals with other and less obscure economic phenomena will be readily seen. For example: he declares that the division of labor is a prime condition of social progress. Without it, labor would be sterile, and neither wealth nor equality could exist. But the principle, when followed out to its natural consequences, becomes a most prolific source of misery. The realization of justice in the economic sphere, which is “to give equal wealth to each on condition of equal labor,”¹¹ is prevented. Hours of labor are increased; the conditions under which the work is done grow worse; and the laborer suffers mentally, morally and physically. He tends downward to the condition of a serf, while his master, the owner of the factory, becomes a moneyed aristocrat. The gulf between the two grows ever wider, and association, education or other schemes of improvement popular with economists cannot bridge it. It would seem that the introduction of machines might check the growing inequality, because through them the forces of

¹⁰ *Systeme des Contradictions economiques*, tome I, p. 82.

¹¹ *What is Property?* trans. p. 234.

Yet, whatever may be true of their ideals, the methods of reaching them which are advocated and practised by the two anarchistic schools are wholly different. The one expects to attain success through a long process of peaceful evolution culminating in perfect individualism. Although extremely hostile to the church, their programme, so far as it concerns human relations, is essentially Christian.⁵⁴ Christianity first posited the individual as distinct from society, and began the process of freeing him from the restraints of the ancient political system. The strongest historical impulse toward the perfection of the individual has come from Christianity. The Individualistic Anarchists show its influence most clearly, for there is a decided tinge of Quakerism in their attitude toward the state.⁵⁵ But the Communistic Anarchists are revolutionists of the most violent sort. They form the extreme left wing of the modern revolutionary movement. They teach materialism and atheism in their most revolting forms. The method which they propose to use for the destruction of society and the institution of the new order is beneath scientific consideration. It is fit only to be dealt with by the police and the courts. It furnishes the strongest possible proof of the necessity of authority and of a government to enforce it. Thus the plots of one body of the anarchists are among the most serious obstacles in the way of society ever being able to assume that form which the other group desires.

IV. Conclusions.

Having stated as objectively as possible the theory of anarchism, what is to be said concerning it?

⁵⁴ They must agree with many of the ideas expressed by Tolstoi in *My Religion*.

⁵⁵ See Bancroft's account of the principles of the Quakers, *History of the United States*, vol. ii, pp. 336–355: “Intellectual freedom, the supremacy of mind, universal enfranchisement, — these three points include the whole of Quakerism, as far as it belongs to civil history.”

ists, though believing that hitherto force has been the instrument of all human progress, yet protest that it will be banished from society when organized according to their ideal. Absence of government, *Herrschaftslosigkeit*, is their ideal, as well as that of the disciples of Proudhon. The declaration of principles issued by the International in 1883 stated that the economic functions of society should be performed by free associations, and that they should also “by free social contracts” regulate all public affairs. The tendency of their writings seems to be in substantial harmony with this.⁵² The truth seems to be that the one party has been led by its abhorrence of authority to dilute its communism, while the other, to ward off the charge that its theory leads to a *bellum omnium contra omnes*, has left the way open for a plentiful infusion of public spirit and humanitarian motives. The result is that, with the perfected individual whom they both contemplate, the ideal social states of the two anarchistic schools, if ever realized, would be very similar. Both must from the necessities of the case take largely the form of voluntary association.⁵³ If on the other hand the individual remained imperfect, animated very often by passion, ambition, and the lower forms of self-interest, the system of federalism would necessarily degenerate into the strictest communism, while the system of individual sovereignty would plunge society into the worst evils of unrestricted competition. In either case the restoration of the state in some form would be a necessity.

wish a manufactured solidarity, we are satisfied with a solidarity inherent in the universe.”

⁵² See various articles in *Freiheit*, 1885 and 1886, containing a discussion with the Individualistic Anarchists. Also Krapotkine’s writings, especially two articles by him in *The Nineteenth Century* for 1887.

⁵³ Proudhon in *Du Principe Federatif*, 1863, stated at length his belief that the ultimate social system would be one of voluntary associations for specific purposes, each member retaining his independence to the fullest possible extent. He also claimed that local powers would increase as society advanced, so that in the end liberty would win a complete victory over authority.

nature are made servants of man. They both increase and cheapen production. They diminish the amount of human labor necessary to accomplish a given result. The world cannot do without them. But they are gradually eliminating the laborer, reducing his wages, making useless the trade which he had learned and upon which he depended, causing over-production, deterioration of products, disease and death.

Proudhon summed up his views on competition in these words: “Competition destroys competition.”¹² By this he meant that, though indestructible in its principle, competition in its present form should be abolished. In fact, he believed that it was slowly preparing the conditions necessary to its own destruction. Monopoly and credit he treated in essentially the same way, and so the remaining economic categories, till in the problem of population as stated by Malthus he found the culmination of human misery. The conclusion which he reached was that we are living in a condition of anarchy; meaning by that not absence of government, but the other signification of the word, *viz.*: disorder, confusion.

We need not follow Proudhon further in the application of his logical method to social facts. He claimed that by his brilliant dialectics he had reduced them all to absurdities, fraught however with infinite harm. For the present purpose it is more important to note what he considered to be the source of the antinomy, the cause of inequality and hence of misery and decay. Like the socialists, he found this root of bitterness not in man himself, not in the individual, but in society. Something was wrong in the form of social organization; some evil institution had been allowed to develop which by its influence had thrown the whole system into disorder. If this could be swept away, order would be restored, the diseased organism would become healthy and perfect. The Satan in the social philosophy of Proudhon was property: not property right lim-

¹² *Système des Contradictions Economiques*, tome I, pp. 179 *et seq.*

ited by social expediency and high moral considerations, but the *jus utendi et abutendi* of the Roman law, the absolutely unlimited right of private property. But he did not stop there. Property, said he, is not a natural right, but is guaranteed and upheld by the state. Property and the state are correlative terms. The two institutions are reciprocally dependent and must co-exist.

The chief function of the state is that of police, the object of which is to secure to individuals the enjoyment of their possessions and of the privileges connected therewith. In the thought of Proudhon, the essence of property was not the thing possessed nor the act of possession, but the privileges, the power, the possibility of gain, of obtaining rent, profit or interest which accompanied it. To him private property in the exclusive Roman sense was the very embodiment of inequality, and so the efficient cause of all social evils. He sought to sum up in the paradox, “*property is robbery*,” the problem of human woe. The laborer, the result of whose work is embodied in material form, is the only producer. The proprietor, whether he be landlord or capitalist, is an unproductive laborer. He is a parasite because he does nothing but consume. He receives without rendering an equivalent. But since he owns the means of production, he can appropriate a share of the laborer’s products. Because of the inequality thus developed, the tribute exacted constantly increases. The laborer falls in debt and becomes more and more dependent on his employer.¹³ The tenant pays for his land or house many times over, but never becomes its owner. The commodities produced by the workman make his employer rich. The interest paid by the borrower exceeds the capital, but the debt is never paid. The proprietor virtually exercises the rights which of old belonged to a seignior over his vassal or to a master over his slave. The state, which is organized force, legalizes rent, profit, interest, and protects property owners while they plunder the rest of

¹³ See the monograph entitled *Banque d’Echange*, in *Œuvres complètes*, tome 6, pp. 150 *et seq.*

of religion the basis upon which authority could rest would be entirely removed. The earlier writers and experimenters, like Baboeuf, Cabet, Owen, are called state communists, because they proposed to establish their system with the aid of government or under its grants and protection. This later plan is purely anarchistic. The earlier apostles would destroy liberty; the later would preserve it in a perfect form, make it consistent with a stable society, and harmonize it with the greatest possible equality.

The difference between the ideals of these two bodies of anarchists, when traced back to its source, seems to spring from this. Proudhon, in his search for the root of social evil, hit upon the principle of authority, of monopoly and privilege supported by it and indissolubly connected with it. If that could be eradicated, private property would no longer be fraught with harm and might continue. That was the order of his thought. All socialists, however, from Rodbertus and Marx down, have considered private property and competition to be the cause of poverty and the evil entailed thereby. They have not gone back of property and competition to find the source of their perversion in the legal system which sanctions and upholds them. Therefore the followers of Proudhon primarily attack the state and proceed from that to their criticism of property right. On the other hand the Communistic Anarchists direct their chief assaults against private property, and through those are led to seek the entire overthrow of the state. Proudhon really leaves the individual member of his regenerated society with only the right of possession, of usufruct conditioned upon his subordinating his interest to the common weal. What restrictions this would practically lead to, neither he nor any of his followers, so far as I know, have ever shown.⁵¹ On the other hand the International-

⁵¹ In an editorial in *Liberty*, vol. i, no. 3, are the following statements: “We do not believe that any one can stand alone. We do wish social ties and guarantees. We wish all there are. We believe in human solidarity. We believe that members of society are interdependent. We would preserve these interdependencies untrammelled and inviolate, but we have faith in natural forces. The socialists

universal peace would prevail after the final catastrophe of revolution was passed, and by no possibility could the state, the system of force, revive. This is the ideal of the Communistic Anarchists.⁵⁰ It is the system of economic federalism: the substitution of the free competition of local groups, holding property in common, for the complex social order which now exists. Within this social order, nations and national hate will no longer exist; a purely economic regime will take their place and make political struggle impossible. It is claimed that this is essentially different from all the older communistic schemes, because with the destruction of the state and

⁵⁰ “We desire no property. All that exists upon the earth must serve for the satisfaction of the needs of all. The appropriation of these things, — of land, mines, machines, and in general of all instruments which contribute toward producing the necessities of mankind, which should serve the community, and which can be produced only by the co-operative efforts of all humanity, — the appropriation of these things as the property of individuals or of certain groups is the retaining of them to the exclusion of their rightful possessor, the community, it is robbery committed against the latter. We would see it abolished. If all the instruments of production were once restored to the possession of the community, then would the latter by a rational system of organization care for the satisfaction of human needs, so that all men who are able to work could be supplied with useful occupation, and every one could secure the means necessary to an existence worthy of a human being... But with private property will disappear at once the chief supports of all civil authority. For only upon the gradation of classes which private property produces could that instrument of popular oppression, the state, be erected.” *Freiheit*, Oct. 31, 1883.

“What we are striving after is simply and clearly: 1. The destruction of the existing class rule, and that by the use of all possible means, by energetic, pitiless, international revolution. 2. The establishment of a free society based upon community of goods. 3. Associative organization of production. 4. Free exchange of products of equal value by the productive associations themselves, without middlemen or profits. 5. The organization of education upon an altruistic, scientific, and equal basis for both sexes. 6. Regulation of all public affairs by the free social contracts of autonomous communes and associations resting upon a federalistic basis.” *Freiheit*) Oct. 13, 1883.

“While communism will form the basis of the future society, anarchy, absence of government, is the future form of public organization.” *Freiheit*, Dec. 15, 1883.

society. Hence arises the poverty to which the masses of men are condemned, and poverty is the mother of every form of crime. Society thus appears amid terrible agony to be ever consuming itself.

These thoughts and more of a similar nature Proudhon poured forth in volume after volume during the years immediately before and after the revolution of 1848. He lived amid the ideas, the enthusiasm for liberty and equality, from which that movement sprang. So vividly did he see and feel the tragedy of human existence that he regarded revolution as the only conserving force. He considered it inevitable, imminent: no force could check its progress. It rested with society only to determine whether it should be gradual and peaceful, or violent.¹⁴ He taught the theory of revolution as a permanent factor in social life. Reaction, he said, could only quicken the onward movement. The revolution must continue till right was done, till justice was established.

According to Proudhon the great uprising of 1789 was not a revolution, but only an important step of progress.¹⁵ It was an attempt to establish justice; but it failed, because it only substituted one form of government for another. Had it abolished government and instituted the rule of reason, it would have been a genuine revolution. As it was, however, the work of revolution was only half done. Parliamentary government, democracy, the rule of the *bourgeoisie* took the place of the old absolutism. The reign of force was not brought to an end, but rather entered upon a new phase. Militarism continued, though under a slightly different form. Now the contest is waged for the control of the markets of the world rather than for political supremacy. England has led the way in this struggle by the development of manufacturing and the overthrow of her protective system.¹⁶ But monopoly supported by force is as triumphant as ever. The corrupting influence of wealth is seen in all

¹⁴ *Systeme generale tie la Revolution*, p. 9.

¹⁵ *What is Property?* trans. p. 32.

¹⁶ See chapter on Balance of Trade, in *Systeme des Contradictions economiques*, tome 2.

departments of political life. Hence the work of August 4 must be taken up where the Constituent Assembly left it and carried on to completion.

To Proudhon, the revolution of 1848 was the proclamation of a new era. It meant the substitution of an economic and social regime for one of a governmental, feudal and military character.¹⁷ By this he meant not a system in which any economic class should become dominant, its rule being based upon political power, but, as he expressed it, an organization of economic forces based upon contract and operating according to the principle of reciprocity. This means the entire abolition of the state and the transfer of the control of social interests to individuals, acting either singly or in voluntary association. Such is the programme of the anarchists. It will be interesting to examine a little more closely the course of thought which led Proudhon to adopt it.

Like all social reformers, he was led to the study and criticism of society by the sight of human misery. In the early pages of *What is Property?*¹⁸ he says that perhaps he would have accepted property as a fact without inquiring into its origin, had all his fellow citizens been in comfortable circumstances. As they were not, he would challenge this chief of social institutions and put it upon its defence. The result of his examination has already been stated. But property and the state he found to be inextricably bound up together. The state, property, inequality, misery, became to him

¹⁷ *Idee generale de la Revolution*, pp. 177 *et seq.* This idea was also enforced by Proudhon in his speech delivered before the National Assembly, July 31, 1848, in reply to criticisms of the committee of finance on his report in favor of gratuity of credit. (*Euvres completes*, tome 7, pp. 263–313.)

¹⁸ Translation, p. 53. In *La Justice dans la Revolution*, tome, 4, p. 291, Proudhon spoke in most pathetic terms of the feeling of inferiority which oppressed him because of his inherited poverty. He felt powerless to raise himself to a position among the learned and happy. He therefore resolved to search for the origin of inequality. He found that the economists affirmed the natural origin and necessity of inequality, while the revolution said that equality was the law of all nature.

and murderous weapons of all kinds, they hope to destroy all existing institutions, ecclesiastical, civil and economic. Upon the smoking ruins they will erect the new and perfect society.⁴⁹ Only a few weeks or months will be necessary to make the transition. During that time the laborers will take possession of all lands, buildings, instruments of production and distribution. With these in their possession, and without the interposition of government, they will organize into associations or groups for the purpose of carrying on the work of society. To Krapotkine and the continental anarchists the commune appears best suited to become the centre of organization. The idea of the Russian *mir*, or of the primitive village community, is also very attractive to them. They would carry the principle of local self-government to an extreme. They would have no centralized control beyond that pertaining to the village or city, and, within that, the actual exercise of authority should be restricted as far as possible. A member, if dissatisfied, would be allowed to retire at any time and join another commune. The members of the commune would jointly control all its property and business. Perfect community of relations would exist within each group. The spirit of enterprise would be kept up by competition between the communes or associations. The larger ones would contain within themselves productive groups enough for the satisfaction of nearly all the needs of their inhabitants. Where such should not be the case, commodities could be obtained by inter-communal traffic. The industrial bonds thus established would prevent strife and war. Thus

⁴⁹ For full details as to the "propaganda of deed," see the files of Most's *Freiheit*; the *Chicago Alarm* and *Arbeiter-Zeitung*; and Most's *Science of Revolutionary Warfare*, an outline of which was printed as a part of the testimony in the Anarchists' case at Chicago. The testimony in that case is given in outline in *Northeastern Reporter*, vol. 12. The speeches of the anarchists and a history of the trial (favorable to the condemned) has been issued by the Socialistic Publishing Society of Chicago. — In book form, the most important statement of the programme of the Communistic Anarchists is Krapotkine's *Paroles d'un Revolte*, Paris, 1885. See also Ely's *Labor Movement in America*, and Laveleye's *Socialisme contemporaine*.

ciety, perfect solidarity combined with perfect individuality, the true harmony of interests, the reign of righteousness, the golden age, the millennium—will be realized and made permanent, not by multiplying the bonds which unite society, not by increasing administrative machinery and strengthening the tendencies toward centralization, as the socialists propose, but by perfect decentralization, by destroying all political bonds and leaving only the individual, animated and guided by intelligent egoism. In a society thus regenerated the anarchists expect that their system of agitation will culminate.

III. *The Communistic Anarchists.*

The Individualistic Anarchists accordingly profess to have very little in common with the Internationalists. The latter are Communistic Anarchists. They borrow their analysis of existing social conditions from Marx, or more accurately from the “communistic manifesto” issued by Marx and Engels in 1847.⁴⁷ In the old International Workingman’s association they constituted the left wing, which, with its leader, Bakunine, was expelled in 1872. Later the followers of Marx, the socialists proper, disbanded, and since 1883 the International in this country has been controlled wholly by the anarchists.⁴⁸ Their views and methods are similar to those which Bakunine wished to carry out by means of his Universal Alliance, and which exist more or less definitely in the minds of Russian Nihilists. Like Bakunine, they desire to organize an international revolutionary movement of the laboring classes, to maintain it by means of conspiracy and, as soon as possible, to bring about a general insurrection. In this way, with the help of explosives, poisons

⁴⁷ In *Freiheit* the manifesto is constantly referred to as of the first importance.

⁴⁸ See proceedings of Pittsburg Congress, 1883, and the manifesto there issued in *Freiheit*, Oct. 22 and 27, 1883. Also Ely’s *Labor Movement in America*, p. 228, and appendix.

synonymous terms. It made no difference what the form of the government might be; its essential nature remained always the same. History shows that nations are revolving in a fatal circle of imperial despotism, constitutionalism, democracy, and from this by political means they can never escape.¹⁹

Experience finally proves [he says] that everywhere and always government, however popular it may be in its origin, has taken sides with the richer and more intelligent class against the poorer and more numerous; that, after having for a time shown itself liberal, it has little by little become exclusive and partial; finally, that, instead of maintaining liberty and equality among all, it has, because of its natural inclination toward privilege, labored obstinately to destroy them.

According to Proudhon, contract is the only bond which can unite individuals into a society. But Rousseau’s theory of contract he rejects, and in the most admirable manner reduces to an absurdity. He says that the idea of contract excludes that of government. It imposes upon the contracting parties no obligation but that which results from their personal promise; it is not subject to any external authority; it alone constitutes the common law of the parties; it awaits execution only from their initiative.²⁰ It should embrace all citizens, with their interests and relations. If one man or one interest is left out, it is no longer social. The welfare and liberty of each citizen should be increased by the contracts; otherwise it is a fraud, and should be overthrown. It should be freely debated, individually assented to, and signed, *nomine proprio*, by all those who participate in it. Otherwise it is systematic spoliation. “All laws which I have not accepted I reject as an imposition

¹⁹ For Proudhon’s political philosophy see *Idee generale de la Revolution*, pp. in *et seq.* Also *Du Principe Federatif*, *Œuvres completes*, tome 8.

²⁰ *Idee generale de la Revolution*, p. 117.

on my free will.”²¹ The true social contract has nothing in common with the surrender of liberty or submission to a burdensome solidarity. The premise from which Rousseau starts, *viz.* that the people is a collective entity having a moral personality distinct from that of the individual, is false. The conclusions drawn from it, *viz.* the alienation of liberty for the sake of all, a government external to society, division of powers, *etc.*, are equally false. Rousseau has in his theory misrepresented social facts and neglected the true and essential elements of contract itself. His theory is like a commercial agreement with the names of the parties suppressed, the values of the products and services, the conditions of quality, delivery, price, *etc.*, in short all essential things omitted, and with only the penalties and jurisdictions given. In other words, the theory is absurd.²²

Equally without reason in their practical operations are the constitutional systems of government, whether monarchical or republican, which are based upon this theory. The election is the pivot about which they revolve. Its fundamental idea is decision by number or lot. In what respect is this principle better or more just than generation, the basis of the family; than force, the basis of the patriarchy; than faith, the central dogma of the church; than pri-

²¹ *Idee generale de la Revolution*, p. 138. In *Du Principe Fédératif*, p. 53 n., Proudhon defines a law to be “a statute arrived at as the result of arbitration between human wills.”

²² In connection with the history of political theories it is interesting to note what the anarchists have to say about the doctrine upon which the American Revolution was fought, and its conformity with actual political facts. Lysander Spooner, in his Letter to Grover Cleveland, says: “It was once said in this country that taxation without consent is robbery. But if that principle were a true one in behalf of three millions of men, it is an equally true one in behalf of three men, or of one man. Who are ever taxed without their consent? Individuals only. Who then are robbed, if taxed without their consent? Individuals only. If taxation without consent is robbery, the United States government has never had, has not now, and is never likely to have an honest dollar in its treasury.” As soon as taxes are paid, he says further, all natural rights are lost. The individual cannot maintain them against the police and armies which the government will procure with the money.

Or, stating the anarchistic programme a little more definitely, it is expected that political corruption and capitalistic tyranny, coupled with revolutionary agitation, will after a time so undermine respect for law and confidence in government that it will be possible for a small but determined body of anarchists to nullify law by passive resistance. When the experiment has once been successfully tried, the masses of men, tired of the old system, will accept the new as a welcome deliverance. Then it will no longer be possible to enforce obedience to law. People will meet in conventions, organize upon the principle of voluntary associations, and choose their natural leaders.⁴⁵ These leaders however can exercise no authority, but only use persuasion and advice coming from a wider practical experience. Those who do not wish to follow, may go their own way. Each individual can take possession of and use what property in land and raw materials he needs, but he must not thereby infringe the equivalent right of every other person. Property, thus, must be so used as to contribute to the highest social weal. Human nature will be so purified from gross selfishness that it is believed that the system of private property can be preserved formally intact. All the functions of social life, now classed as public and private, will be performed by individuals, either singly or in voluntary association. The system of mutual banking will be established, or, as the American anarchists express it, each man will be allowed to issue his own notes, based upon such property or security as he may command, and make them circulate as far as he is able.⁴⁶ In banking, in carrying of the mail, in railway and telegraph business, as in everything else, the fittest institutions and companies will survive. These results — the banishment of crime, the elimination of poverty, prosperity so great and generally diffused that the spectre which Malthus raised will never return to affright so-

⁴⁵ *Liberty*, vol. i, no. 19. See a description of this process in *Liberty*, vol. i, no. 5.

⁴⁶ *Liberty*, vol. i, no. 19. See Spooners Letter to Grover Cleveland.

But one thing can justify its exercise on any large scale, viz. the denial of free thought, free speech and a free press. Even then its exercise would be unwise, unless repression were enforced so stringently that all other means of throwing it off had become hopeless. Bloodshed in itself is pure loss. When we must have freedom of agitation, and when nothing but bloodshed will secure it, then bloodshed is wise. But it must be remembered that it can never accomplish the social revolution; that that can never be accomplished except by means of agitation, investigation, experiment and passive resistance; and that, after all the bloodshed, we shall be exactly where we were before, except in our possession of the power to use these means... The day of armed revolution is gone by. It is too easily put down.⁴³

Again:

What we mean by the abolition of the state is the abolition of a false philosophy, or rather the overthrow of a gigantic fraud, under which people consent to be coerced and restrained from minding their own business. The philosophy of liberty can be applied everywhere; and he who successfully applies it in his family, in the place of avenging gods, arbitrary codes, threats, commands and whips, may easily have the satisfaction of abolishing at least one state. When we have substituted our philosophy in place of the old, then the palaces, cathedrals and arsenals will naturally fall to pieces through neglect and the rust that is seen to corrupt tenanted and obsolete structures.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Liberty*, vol. iv, no. 3, May 22, 1886, editorial suggested by the bomb-throwing at Chicago.

⁴⁴ *Liberty*, vol. i, no. 19.

mogeniture, upon which aristocracy rests? Elections, votes never decided anything. Inferior matters of little importance may be decided by arbitration; but important things, the organization of society, my subsistence, I will never submit to an indirect solution. I emphatically deny that the people in elections are able to recognize and distinguish between the merits of rival candidates. But when presidents and representatives are once chosen, they are my masters. What do numbers prove? What are they worth? You refer my interests, subsistence, etc., to a Congress. What connection is there between the Congress and me? What guarantee have I that the law which the Congress makes and hands to me on the point of the bayonet will promote my interest?²³ Furthermore, how can I, in such a situation, maintain my dignity as a sovereign and party to the social contract? The democratic theory is thus an attempt to harmonize two wholly inconsistent principles, those of authority and of contract. The origin of authority is in the family. The necessity for the maintenance of order, for the establishment of an artificial, and therefore of an impossible, harmony between individual and common interests, is the only argument in its favor. This means that government is based upon force, is in its nature and operation wholly arbitrary. The belief that the people, either collectively or individually, consent to its acts, or that the will of the people can be ascertained, directly by the *plebiscite* or indirectly through so-called public opinion, is a superstition. It is one of the fictions with

²³ For another brilliant specimen of the destructive criticism which the anarchist applies to representative government see Prince Krapotkine's chapter on that subject in his *Paroles d'un Revolte*, Paris, 1885. One could not wish to see the *demos krateo* principle more completely demolished than it is here. The superficiality and crudity of the notion that great public questions can be properly decided by elections; the petty self-seeking of politicians and party managers, to say nothing of their positive corruption; the disturbing influence of parliamentary tactics; the enormous disparity between the knowledge and strength of the legislator and the number and magnitude of the public questions with which he has to deal, are admirably stated and illustrated. The files of any daily newspaper will substantiate it all.

which the law and politics abound. But, Proudhon would say, if it were really possible that the majority should rule and carry its desires into effect, its government would be as tyrannical as that of a single despot, for it would impose upon the citizen the will of another, it would violate the true principle of contract.

Returning then to the point whence we started, it appears that Proudhon's social ideal was that of perfect individual liberty. Those who have thought him a communist or socialist have wholly mistaken his meaning. To be sure there is an expression here and there in his works which savors of communism,²⁴ but when more closely examined it will be found to be in harmony with the general trend of his thought. No better argument against communism can be found than is contained in the chapter on that subject in the *Système des Contradictions économiques*. In *What is Property?* he speaks of communism as follows:

The disadvantages of communism are so obvious that the critics never have needed to employ much eloquence to thoroughly disgust men with it. The irreparability of the injustice which it causes, the violence which it does to attractions and repulsions, the yoke of iron which it fastens upon the will, the moral torture to which it subjects the conscience, the debilitating effect which it has upon society, and, to sum it all up, the pious and stupid uniformity which

²⁴ See, for example, *What is Property?* trans. p. 244, where he says that "inequality of wages cannot be admitted by law on the ground of inequality of talents;" But on p. 132 of the same treatise he explains his meaning as follows: "Give me a society in which every kind of talent bears a proper numerical relation to the needs of the society, and which demands from each producer only that which his special function requires him to produce, and, without impairing in the least the hierarchy of functions, I will deduce the equality of fortunes/" This means that utilities must be brought into such perfect proportionality that there will be just as many Platos and Newtons as are needed and no more. The same shall be true of all other producers down to the lowest grade.

avorable to existing institutions as tending to weaken confidence in the state, refuse to co-operate with any party of social or political reformers.⁴² They believe that there is no positive power for good in association; therefore co-operative schemes have no attraction for them. Attempts to deal with men in the mass, to educate them by united effort, do not awaken their confidence.

I do not admit [says Tucker] anything except the existence of the individual as the condition of his sovereignty... Anarchy has no side that is affirmative in the sense of constructive. Neither as anarchists nor as individual sovereigns have we any constructive work to do, though as progressive beings we have plenty of it.

Again:

History shows that liberty results in more perfect men, and that greater human perfection in turn makes increased liberty possible. It is a process of growth through action and reaction, and it is impossible to state which is antecedent and which consequent. But the action of propagandism is more effective when brought to bear upon institutions and conditions, than when aimed immediately at human nature. So we do not preach the gospel of goodness, but teach the laws of social life.

It naturally follows, from what has been said, that the anarchists who fully accept the doctrines of Proudhon believe that a long process of evolution is necessary before their programme can be put into successful operation. They are opposed to the use of violence:

⁴² See discussion carried on in *Liberty*, vol. iv, 1886 and 1887, between Tucker and Henry Appleton.

expanded till they reached the scope of deity. What the state is in politics and property in economics, God is in religion, a source of inequality, oppression and woe. The idea of authority originates in the conception of God; therefore, as Bakunine said: "If God existed, it would be necessary to abolish him."³⁹ "Who denies his king, denies his God," said Proudhon. Yet, though the anarchists believe that the church is one of the bulwarks of the state and that its spirit is essentially hierarchical, they uphold the doctrine of absolute religious freedom. Those who choose to believe in religion and to worship the Christian God, or any other divinity, should be permitted to do so without molestation. But every form of worship should be self-supporting. "Let the hearer pay the priest." If religion is of any value, let it be shown in open and free competition with all other forms of belief.⁴⁰ The anarchists of to-day are wholly atheistic, and will probably remain so, however much their number may be increased.

It thus appears that the anarchists have a programme which is as simple as it is sweeping. To every social question they answer *laissez faire, laissez passer*; Throw off all artificial restraint. Leave men to themselves. Liberty is the great, the only educator. Every question will solve itself by the operation of natural laws. All that is needed is equality of conditions. They are anti-monopolists pure and simple. Referring to the contest for the abolition of slavery, they compare themselves to the abolitionists proper⁴¹ and constitutional republicans to the colonizationists. The latter are constantly applying palliatives; there is but one remedy, and that is the destruction of inequality at the source. Therefore the anarchists who are strictly logical, while they sympathize with all criticism unfa-

³⁹ God and the State, trans. p. 17.

⁴⁰ *Idee générale de la Révolution*, p. 261.

⁴¹ Any standard history of the anti-slavery conflict, or the files of the *Liberator*, will show the close connection between the doctrines of the Garrisonian wing of the abolitionists after about 1840 and those of the anarchists. The appeals of the abolitionists to "the higher law" were decidedly anarchistic.

it enforces upon the free, active, reasoning, unsubmitive personality of man, have shocked common sense, and condemned communism by an irrevocable decree.²⁵

This passage, together with his famous sayings: "Communism is inequality"; "Communism is oppression and slavery"; "Property is the exploitation of the weak by the strong, communism is the exploitation of the strong by the weak," furnish sufficient documentary evidence upon the question. Proudhon regarded the rise of socialistic and communistic opinions as an added sign that the times were out of joint. Writers of that school make a diagnosis of the social disease very similar to his own, but when it comes to the application of the remedy Proudhon differs from them in most essential particulars.

Proudhon believed that if the state in all its departments were abolished, if authority were eradicated from society, and if the principle of *laissez faire* were made universal in its operation, every form of social ill would disappear. According to his view men are wicked and ignorant because, either directly or indirectly, they have been forced to be so: it is because they have been subjected to the will of another, or are able to transfer the evil results of their acts to another. If the individual, after reaching the age of discretion, could be freed from repression and compulsion in every form, and know that he alone is responsible for his acts and must bear their consequences, he would become thrifty, prudent, energetic; in short he would always see and follow his highest interests. He would always respect the rights of others; that is, act justly. Such individuals could carry on all the great industrial enterprises of to-day either separately or by voluntary association. No compulsion, however, could be used to force one to fulfil a contract or remain in an association longer than his interest dictated. Thus we

²⁵ What is Property? trans. p. 259.

should have a perfectly free play of enlightened self-interests: equitable competition, the only natural form of social organization. The dream which had floated before the mind of the economist of the Manchester school would be realized.

Among the different forms of monopoly which afflict society at present, Proudhon considered the money monopoly to be fraught with the greatest evil.²⁶ By this he meant, in the first place, the selection of two commodities, gold and silver, from among all the rest, to be the standard of value and the intermediaries in all exchanges. This gave them sovereign power, established as it were the monarchical regime among commodities; for he who possesses money, the universal representative of value, can command wealth in all its forms. To metallic money, in course of time, the idea and forms of credit were added. This greatly facilitated exchange and made more convenient the form of the circulating medium. But the issue of paper, as well as of metal money, was made a monopoly, in the hands either of the government, or of bankers designated by the government. In all the more important business operations paper has taken the place of metal, and property may now almost be said to exist in the form of credit documents. Those who issue and deal in these virtually control the rate of interest and, through that, rent and prices. Proudhon condemned usury as strongly as did Aristotle or the mediaeval theologians. To him it was the direct result of monopoly, and the taking of it, theft. Its percentage indicated the rapidity with which the borrower was being expropriated. According to his view, if usury or interest could be abolished, monopoly in every other form 'would fall with it. Rent and profits, considered as the return which the proprietor can exact by virtue of his position as monopolist of land and of the instruments of production, would disappear, and wages or reward for actual service

²⁶ Proudhon's theory of money and credit may be found in the sixth volume of his Complete Works, and in the second volume of his Economic Contradictions.

legislation and through the interference of the police the traffic in obscene literature. This is not because they wish to uphold vice: on the contrary, they desire the purification of society, but believe that it can be brought about only by the abandonment of every form of compulsion. Organize credit, let people know that the individual must endure all the results of his conduct, and that he will be held responsible for the deeds of no one else, and in process of time vice will disappear. The operation of self-interest will secure its abolition. In no sense do the anarchists advocate community of wives.³⁷ They desire to preserve the home and to keep the children in it, subject to parental government, till they reach such a degree of maturity that they can assume the responsibilities of life for themselves. Family government should secure its ends by reason and love, rather than by force. Should the parents separate, the young children will go with the mother. While the children remain in the family, there would of course be an opportunity for their education; but, after they leave parental control, that, like everything else, would depend solely upon their own choice. Compulsory education is inconsistent with the anarchistic system.

Proudhon, who wrote the eloquent prayer to the God of liberty and equality which concludes the first part of *What is Property?* spurned the God of the bible as the chief antagonist of man and foe of civilization.³⁸ The problem of human evil drove him to this conclusion. He found a fatal antinomy between God and man. Man's nature involves constant progress and development, while that of God is fixed and unchangeable. Therefore as man advances, God retrogrades. Man was created deformed rather than depraved, and a Providence, called all-wise and beneficent, has therefore condemned him to eternal misery. To Proudhon such a being possessed the worst qualities of man intensified and

³⁷ See Proudhon's bitter condemnation of this in his chapter on Communism and Population, *Contradictions économiques*, tome 22, pp. 258 *et seq.*

³⁸ See chapter on Providence in *Contradictions économiques*, tome I, pp. 351 *et seq.*

methods. The influence of money in politics, the wanton disregard of law by corporations and the inability of our legislators and executives to restrain them, the self-seeking which enters into all political contests and the general lack of earnestness which characterizes them are to the anarchist proofs that the state is decaying and will soon fall to pieces at a touch. It is of no use, they say, to labor for any of the plans of reform which are now agitating parties. The state is too corrupt to be reformed: abolish it altogether.³⁵

Concerning the family relation, the anarchists believe that civil marriage should be abolished and “autonomistic” marriage substituted. This means that the contracting parties should agree to live together as long as it seems best to do so, and that the partnership should be dissolved whenever either one desires it. Still, they would give the freest possible play to love and honor as restraining motives. They claim that ultimately, by this policy, the marriage relation would be purified and made much more permanent than it is to-day. They are “free lovers/” but not in the sense of favoring promiscuity of the sexes. They hope to idealize the marriage relation by bringing it under the regime of perfect liberty. They would not restrain those who wish to practise polygamy or any social vice.³⁶ They view with abhorrence all efforts to prevent by

³⁵ The anarchists believe that universal suffrage is a snare prepared to entrap the unwary. As to the extension of suffrage to women, Lysander Spooner wrote: “They have just as much right to make laws as men have, and no better; and that is just no right at all.” “Women want to put us all into the legislative mill and grind us over again into some shape which will suit their taste. Better burn all existing statutes. *Liberty*, vol. ii, no. 22.

³⁶ *Liberty*, vol. i, no. 12: “Liberty therefore must defend the right of individuals to make contracts involving usury, rum, marriage, prostitution, and many other things which it believes to be wrong in principle and opposed to human well being.” — Some of the anarchists hold to the monogamic ideal; others reject it, believing in what they term “variety,” which they distinguish from promiscuity in the sense that human refinement is distinct from bestial recklessness. One of the most eloquent pleas for the monogamic family ever made is Proudhon’s *Amour et Mariage*. He was utterly opposed to divorce. See *Œuvres complètes*, tome 24.

would alone remain. In one of his *brochures*,²⁷ written during the excitement of the revolution of 1848, Proudhon recommended that the state should take the initiative and, first, reduce incomes by a progressive scale, increasing the percentage of reduction with the size of the income. Then prices should be lowered to an equivalent degree. This should be followed by a corresponding reduction of taxation. By these measures the industrial equilibrium would be maintained, hoarded capital would be brought out, and general prosperity would ensue. He thought, however, that in order to help the peasantry and prevent their migrating to the cities this policy should not be applied to agriculture. Proudhon did not attempt to justify such wholesale confiscation of incomes by the state, but said that it was necessary to resort to it preparatory to the organization of credit.

This suggests the most important feature of Proudhon’s scheme of social reform. His idea was that in the perfect social state services should exchange for services, products for products. To this end money must be abolished; for so long as products and services are exchanged for it, discount, interest, and other forms of tribute to monopoly must be paid. As a substitute for money he would “generalize the bill of exchange.”

Now the whole problem of circulation consists in generalizing the bill of exchange; that is to say, in making of it an anonymous title, exchangeable forever, and redeemable at sight, but only in merchandise and services.²⁸

In other words, using the language now current in the money market, he would base bank paper upon products. By means of the bill of exchange he would mobilize all products, make all as

²⁷ *Organization du Credit et de la Circulation*, *Œuvres complètes*, tome 6, pp. 89–131.

²⁸ *Œuvres complètes*, tome 6, pp. 114 *et seq.*

readily exchangeable as money is now. It was this which Proudhon in company with Coignet tried to do in Paris by means of their *banque d'change* or *banque du peuple*, established there in 1848.²⁹ Its operations however were soon brought to an end by the exile of its founder. Let us see what results Proudhon hoped would follow from his plan, if it could have been carried into successful execution.

“In obedience to the summons of the government, and by simple authentic declaration,” as many producers from every department of industry as could be induced to do so, should unite, draw up articles of agreement and promise to abide by them. They would in this way organize the bank. Every subscriber should keep an open account at the institution and bind himself to receive its notes at par in all payments whatsoever. The bank would thus do the ordinary business of deposit and issue. “Provisionally and by way of transition, gold and silver coin will be received in exchange for the paper of the bank, and at their nominal value.” But as the new institution should grow in popular favor and become universal, gold and silver would go out of use as the exclusive bases of currency. They would be estimated solely as commodities.

What reason had Proudhon for believing that his bank, if put into open competition with moneyed institutions as they now exist, unsupported by the state, would out-compete them all, force them to close or to change their method of doing business and, finally, entirely reorganize society? It was this: the bank would charge no interest or discount on loans and would pay none on deposits. Nothing whatever would be taken or received for the use

²⁹ The theory was first stated by one Fulerand-Mozel in 1818. He founded such an institution at Paris in 1829, and another at Marseilles in 1832. In 1848, John Gray, a Scotchman, tried to carry the same theory into practice in Edinburgh, and published a book upon it, entitled *Lectures on the Nature and Use of Money*, Edinburgh, 1848.

See Courcelle-Seneuil, *Traite des Operations de Banque*, pp. 411 *et seq.* Also, by the same author, *Liberte et Socialisme*, pp. 100 *et seq.*

monarchies. Liberty prevails here no more than there. In some respects the system of majority rule is more obnoxious than that of monarchy. It is quite as tyrannical, and in a republic it is more difficult to reach the source of the despotism and remove it. They regard the entire machinery of elections as worthless and a hindrance to prosperity. They are opposed to political machines of all kinds. They never vote or perform the duties of citizens in any way, if it can be avoided. They would not pay taxes, if there were any means of escaping it. Judges are regarded by them as the hirelings of power, and courts as centres of despotism. They regard the proceedings of legislative assemblies as vain and worthy only of contempt. They would destroy all statute books and judicial decisions. Josiah Warren stated the principle³⁴ that, in the case of the infliction of injury by one individual upon another, the government might, with the consent of the injured person, interfere and cause reparation to be made. But the penalty imposed upon the offender should never exceed in amount the damage which he had done. In accordance with this, the anarchists contemplate for a time at least the maintenance of a mild system of penal law, and with it trial by jury, though they do not believe in compulsory jury service. As long as there are individuals so imperfect that they insist upon infringing their neighbor's rights, they must be restrained.

The anarchists have no words strong enough to express their disgust at the scheming of the politician, the bidding for votes, the studied misrepresentation of facts, the avoidance of serious issues, and all the forms of corruption which stain our political life. Our municipal governments furnish them unlimited material for comment. They call attention to the immense labor which it takes to keep the political machinery in motion, and compare with it the little which is accomplished towards the solution of the really important social problems. No good, only evil, can be done by such

³⁴ *True Civilization*, p. 12.

II. *The Individualistic Anarchists.*

Proudhon's theory is the sum and substance of scientific anarchism. How closely have the American anarchists adhered to the teachings of their master?

One group, with its centre at Boston and with branch associations in a few other cities, is composed of faithful disciples of Proudhon. They believe that he is the leading thinker among those who have found the source of evil in society and the remedy therefor. They accept his analysis of social phenomena and follow his lead generally, though not implicitly. They call themselves Individualistic Anarchists, and claim to be the only class who are entitled to that name. They do not attempt to organize very much, but rely upon "active individuals, working here and there all over the country."³² It is supposed that they may number in all some five thousand adherents in the United States. But they measure their strength by the tendency towards greater liberty which exists in society. The progress of liberty everywhere and in all departments of social life they welcome as an added pledge of the future realization of their ideal. So they would reckon the nominal adherents of anarchism, the potential anarchists, by the hundreds of thousands. Their views and plans are deductions from the theory of Proudhon. They are a commentary on his works, an extension and occasionally a clarifying of his thought. It will be necessary, however, to explain more precisely the attitude of the anarchists toward the political and social institutions of this country.³³

They, like Proudhon, consider the government of the United States to be as oppressive and worthless as any of the European

³² Letter from Benj. R. Tucker, at present the leader of the Boston anarchists.

³³ The following statements are taken directly from the columns of *Liberty*, the paper published by the Boston anarchists; from Lysander Spooner's Letter to Grover Cleveland; William B. Greene's pamphlet on Mutual Banking; Bakunine's God and the State, and other books and documents recognized by the anarchists as authoritative.

of capital. The only charge made by the bank would be enough to pay its running or office expenses. These would never amount to more than one per cent and probably could be reduced as low as one-half of one per cent. "Services should exchange for services, products for products." Reciprocity is the principle at the basis of the plan. The fact that no interest was charged would attract borrowers from the other banks and thereby force capitalists to place their funds with the new bank.

But this plan may be viewed from another standpoint, which will give it a familiar look to those who are acquainted with the most advanced socialistic schemes. If producers living at different places could know at the same time their mutual needs, they could exchange their products without the use of money. The bank could furnish that knowledge and so bring producers and consumers together. What it could do for one community, a network of banks could do for a nation or for the civilized world. This could be effected without the interposition of a government. The bank need not even own warehouses or magazines for the storing of commodities. The producer could, while keeping possession of his product, consign it to the bank by means of a bill of lading, bill of exchange, *etc.* He would receive in return notes of the bank equal to the value of his consignment, minus a proportional share of the cost of running the establishment. With these he could purchase of other producers, made known to him if necessary by the bank, such commodities as he desired. Meantime the bank would find for him and all others who had dealings with it purchasers of their goods. Thus supply would be adapted to demand; over-production and crises would be prevented. Every one would be assured of a market for whatever product or obligation he might possess, through the general intermediary, the bank. The bank would deal in credit documents, notes, mortgages, *etc.*, if properly indorsed and secured.

It will be seen at once that, if this form of exchange should become universal, rent, profits, interest, every form of proprietary and capitalistic expropriation would disappear. The bank, if it ever

became strong enough, would fix the reward for the use of property of all kinds and for effecting exchanges. The former would be *nil*, and the latter, as we have seen, would be less than one per cent. For example, Proudhon argued,³⁰ while the process of transition was going on, capital would flow toward city lots and buildings and reduce their rents till the conditions prevailing in “laborers’ cities” should become approximately universal. Rents would only yield enough to make good the capital spent in building, repairs and taxes. Finally, the commune could decree the abolition of rent by providing that after a certain time all payments should be carried to the account of the property, which itself should be valued at twenty-five times the yearly rent. When the payments had been made in full, the commune could give to the occupiers a title to perpetual domicile, provided they kept the property in as good condition as it was when the grant was made. Proprietors need not be disturbed in the occupancy of their own estates till they pleased. All changes, after the first mentioned above, must be made by contract between citizens, and the execution of the contracts should be intrusted to the commune. In this way Proudhon would ultimately extend the capitalization of rent through the agricultural districts of the nation and everywhere transform proprietorship into possession. He claimed that the saving of wealth made possible by the abolition of interest would be so great, and the stimulus thereby given to production so strong, that all public and private debts could be quickly paid off, taxation reduced and finally abolished. The expense of administering government would be correspondingly lessened. But with the permanent and abounding prosperity which would be felt by all classes in the nation, poverty, the cause of crime, would gradually disappear. Courts and police administration would then be no longer necessary. Finally, as the new system extended among the nations, their internal well-being would so increase that wars would be no longer necessary. Hence the army

³⁰ Œuvres complètes, tome 10, p. 203.

and the navy could be dispensed with and diplomacy would become a lost art. By this process of development the departments of finance, of justice, of police, and of foreign affairs would disappear. There would be no more use for them. The state itself then would be thrown aside like an old and worn-out garment, and society would enter upon a new period of existence, the period of liberty and of perfect justice. This is what Proudhon thought could be accomplished through the organization of credit. Then the perfect individual described above would need only freedom and the equality of conditions insured by freedom to reach the highest development of all his powers. Such is the anarchistic ideal. Proudhon has repeatedly set it forth. I quote one of the passages:

Capitalistic and proprietary exploitation everywhere stopped, the giving and receiving of wages in its present form abolished, exchange equal and really guaranteed, value constituted, a market assured, the principle of protection changed, the markets of the globe opened to the producers of all countries; consequently the barriers broken down, old international law replaced by commercial conventions, police, justice, administration put everywhere into the hands of those engaged in industry; economic organization taking the place of the governmental and military regime in the colonies as well as the mother countries; finally the free and universal commingling of races under the sole law of contract; that is the revolution.³¹

³¹ *Idee generale de la Revolution*, p. 297. In *Justice dans la Revolution*, tome 2, pp. 99–134, may be found one of the best statements of Proudhon’s views of the future system of industrial and political federation, and of the method of transition to it.