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New Propositions Demonstrated in the Practice Of Revolutions

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

1850–55

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1. The interests established by society are mobile, subject to a constant and fundamentally unstable shifting.
2. Fixity, permanence or perpetuity in the relations of interests is a chimera.
3. That mobility of interests is the primary source of revolutions.
4. An interest, however unjust it may be, can only be abolished on the condition of being replaced by another, which itself could appear every bit as unjust later.
5. The human mind has a horror of the void; it does not accept pure negation, even if it is the negation of the greatest of crimes.
6. Nations do nothing from pure love or pure justice; there is always a self-serving motive for every reform.

7. The worship of truth for its own sake is pure nonsense in revolution.
8. All religion, every political institution, all the economy of society are successive modifications of cannibalism.
9. The ideas that govern society, with the interests, are mobile like those interests themselves, liable to increase and decrease, subject by nature to conflict and contradiction, perpetually changed.
10. Consistency in ideas is the opposite of the social Mind; the immutability of symbols and professions of faith, in Society, is a chimera.
11. That fundamental oscillation of ideas is the second cause of revolutions.
12. An idea, however absurd it may be, can never be entirely abolished, except when it is replaced by another, which could appear as absurd later.
13. The mobility of ideas and interests is not sufficient to explain Revolutions.
14. Human Nature remains the same, with regard to worthiness and unworthiness;—well-being increases, the sum of knowledge is multiplied: the quantity of virtue remains the same.
15. *Evil, vice, selfishness* and *sadness* are essential elements of humanity.
16. The antagonism of powers creates all of our life: the *status quo*, bread, the absolute, happiness, sanctity, perfection is nothingness, death.
17. The intimate knowledge of that truth is the principle of resistance to revolutions.

18. The feeling of the beautiful and the sublime, the fascination with the absolute, is the cause that tips the balance and incites revolutions.
19. The beautiful, the sublime, the absolute, the perfect, the true and the ideal are the infinite in thought.
20. This feeling produces the marvelous in Humanity; it is the supreme cause, the *ultima ratio* of revolutions.
21. The idea of God is not the conception of a *Supreme Being*, but of a *Supreme Ideal*.
22. The supreme ideal is without reality: *there is no God*.
23. A society cannot exist without a transcendent ideal: without religion, modern society is in danger of dying.
24. Every ideal has a real and intelligible basis: every reality and every idea is susceptible to idealization.
25. The mind inevitably tend to realize its *ideal*, in nature, in labor, in person, in government, in religion: that is why it decides to make a revolution.
26. Society needing an ideal, and that ideal needing to belong to a real being, we must seek a supplement to the idea of God.
27. Truth, as well as Justice, is essentially mobile and historical; there is nothing absolute or eternal about it.
28. Only the laws of movement are absolutely and eternally true.
29. The state of revolution is the normal state of societies.
30. Every manifestation supposes a subject: thus, the series of revolutions leads us to suppose a revolutionary subject.

31. *Revolutions* are the *Transitions* [Passages] of Humanity
32. There have been some presentiments of that idea; the Peoples, the Poets, the Writers have had an intuition of it.
33. The phenomena of revolution can only be explained and understood with the aid of this hypothesis
34. The hypothesis of a revolutionary subject is as rational and more legitimate than that of God and that of Providence.
35. A being is not a simple thing, but a group.
36. All beings, living and unorganized, are groups.
37. Everything that forms a group is a reality or has the power of realization.
38. The old ontology went astray which it defined the *Being* as a simple substance.
39. Simple substance, *mind* or *matter*, is a chimera.
40. A man is an organized group, in which the mind arises from the organization.
41. The People are an organized group: thus, the People are a real being, endowed with Life, Personality, Will, Intelligence and prescience.
42. The definition of man by Bonald is the same, at base, as that of Cabanis:—a simple transposition of terms has made all the difference.
43. The family, the familial group, is a *Complex Being*, which has its Self, like the People and the Individual.

44. The old ontology, in its materialist form, leads to this proposition: Matter does not exist.
45. In its spiritualist form it leads to this other proposition: Mind does not exist.
46. To set aside the notion of *substance* and *Cause*, and move onto the terrain of *Phenomena* and *Law*, or of the Group.