









THE THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE  
IN THE WRITINGS OF  
PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON

A Thesis

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Enough has been written about Proudhon both in French and in English to make a detailed description of his life and personality quite unnecessary. This is especially true since the publication of the latest biography by Edouard Dolléans (1). His long study of the works, letters and as yet unpublished diary of Proudhon has resulted in a comprehensive and reliable picture of the Franche-Comtois socialist which fills in many gaps left by such early biographers as Sainte-Beuve, von Diehl and Désjardins.

In the present instance, then, there can be no justification for any treatment of the life of Proudhon except insofar as it is necessary for the understanding of the particular points which will be raised.

Since the end of the war, there have appeared in quick succession more major studies of Proudhon than during all the inter-war years. Besides the Dolléans biography, five other complete books deal with one aspect or another of his thought. Pierre Haubtmann has assembled the documents which relate Marx and Proudhon (2), and Alexandre Marc has published selections which connect Proudhon with Charles Péguy and even Charles de Gaulle (3). Of more importance, perhaps, are the studies by Père Henri de Lubac, S.J. and Madeleine Amoudruz, Proudhon et le Christianisme (4) and Proudhon et l'Europe (5), respectively, which

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- (1) Dolléans, Edouard, Proudhon, Librairie Gallimard, Paris, 1948.
- (2) Haubtmann, Pierre, Marx et Proudhon, Economie et Humanisme, Paris, 1947.
- (3) Marc, Alexandre, Proudhon - Textes Choisis, Egloff, Paris, 1945.
- (4) Translated as: The Un-Marxian Socialist, Sheed and Ward, London, 1948, by Canon R.E. Scantlebury.
- (5) Editions Domat Montchrétien, Paris, 1945.



cover thoroughly the fields indicated by their titles. Georges Guy-Grand's Pour Connaître La Pensée du Proudhon (1), the last of the five, fills admirably the need for a short, reliable introduction to an author whose many works deal with a wide range of subjects.

In addition to these books, which, with the exception of Père du Lubac's, are not available in English, a number of articles have appeared on this side of the Atlantic. Among these, Professor J.S. Schapiro's attempt at a revaluation of Proudhon's work in the light of modern Fascism (2) and Professor F.M. Watkins' contention that Proudhon prefigures modern constitutional theory provide an interesting contrast (3).

Most of the revival of interest in Proudhon is, of course, due to the intrinsic value of his thought, but not unimportant is the increased availability of his works. The Librairie Marcel Rivière edition of the Oeuvres Complètes is, unfortunately, not yet complete, but the numerous volumes which have appeared make up what is certainly the best edition yet published. Each volume is introduced and copiously annotated by Proudhonian scholars of long standing; most of whom were members of the group "Les Amis de Proudhon" which was formed prior to the first Great War. The edition, as a whole, is under the supervision of MM.C. Bouglé and H. Moysset, who have also contributed some of the most valuable introductory essays. Whenever possible, this has been the edition referred to in this thesis.

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- (1) Bordas, Paris, 1947.
  - (2) Schapiro, J.S., "Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Harbinger of Fascism", American Historical Review, vol.50, (July 1945).
  - (3) Watkins, F.M., "Proudhon and the Theory of Modern Liberalism", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, vol.XIII, 1947.



Most of the more recent sources, which have been of particular value, have been mentioned here. In the body of the thesis specific reference will be made whenever possible, but it will be realized that this has not always been done. In a work which has few pretensions to originality, a debt could be acknowledged on almost every page, but this would hardly make the pages that follow more readable.

Of the arrangement of the material, little need be said, as it follows to a great extent the topics raised in the first chapter.



## CHAPTER I - INFLUENCES AND INTERPRETATION

Proudhon is usually classed as a socialist in histories of political thought, and although he fits uneasily into this category, it would be more difficult to justify any other. From his first published work, to the end of his life, when we find him giving final instructions to his friend Gustave Chaudey for the completion of De la Capacité politique des Classes ouvrières, he never loses sight of the workers' interests, and although his interpretation of those interests is not that of other socialists, it is nonetheless the result of real sympathy. Nor is this to be wondered at. The son of a cooper and brewer, Proudhon himself worked as a cellar-boy in his early years, and this was not to be his last "blue-collar" job. Cooper, cowherd, printer's apprentice, unemployed craftsman - Proudhon was all of these for short periods and at no time in his life was the possibility of poverty far off.

His pre-occupation with the problems of workers, then, is quite understandable, as is also that bias in favor of the small farmer and shop-keeper which earned for him Marx's judgement: "Proudhon . . . . fait le procès à la société du point de vue et avec les yeux du petit paysan français." (1) His early years in the Jura mountains around Besançon as well as in the town itself were not likely to lead to the same rigidity in his definitions of class as an experience in highly

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(1) Quoted from La Misère de la Philosophie in Dolléans op.cit., p.100. Marx's opinion of Proudhon, in 1844, two years before the publication of the Philosophie de la Misère by Proudhon on which he made the above judgement, was somewhat different. He wrote then, "Proudhon n'écrit pas simplement dans l'intérêt des prolétaires; il est lui-même prolétaire, ouvrier." Sainte Famille, Costes, Paris, 1927, vol.I, p.71, quoted in Pierre Haubtmann, op.cit., p.34.

industrialized centres, such as Paris or Lyons, might have given rise to. The haut-bourgeois is always anathema, but below this level Proudhon wishes no permanent class distinction. Ultimately there must be "un système . . . qui exclut toute exception de fortunes, de rang et de classes . . ." (1).

Although by no means entirely self-educated, (he won a scholarship to the Besançon College at the age of eleven, and remained there until he was eighteen), Proudhon's early works especially show the marks of voluminous, undirected reading and he is led not infrequently into contradictions which give evidence of inadequately digested ideas. Early studies in grammar and philology, however, make him precise in the use of particular words, if not in the complete ideas of which they are a part. He cites the Bible, Hegel and Adam Smith as his chief influences, but to these must be added at least Saint-Simon and Fourier, the latter also a native of Besançon. The effect of Hegel on his ideas he himself exaggerates. Proudhon could not read German, and his knowledge of the German philosopher is the result of inadequate and incomplete French translations, and long conversations with Karl Grun and Karl Marx in Paris. A superficial resemblance, stronger in his earlier writings (especially the Contradictions économiques) and not infrequent references to Hegel have led many writers (2) to emphasize this connection, usually to the detriment of Proudhon. Today, however, most students of Proudhon would agree with Gurvitch that "La dialectique de Proudhon

(1) De la Capacité politique des Classes ouvrières, Marcel Rivière, Paris, 1924, p.124.

(2) cf. Karl Diehl, P.J. Proudhon, Seine Lehre und sein Leben, Jena, 1888-96, vol.I, pp.167-171.

est . . . dès le debut hostile . . . à la dialectique émanatiste de Hegel." (1) and the discussion, below, of the Proudhonian "antinomies" should illustrate this writer's reasons for rejecting a too close link between the thought of Hegel and Proudhon.

The polemical character of almost all of Proudhon's works is another reason for the contradictoriness which was noted above. His controversy with the economist Frédéric Bastiat has been published, but it is in course of his major opuses that his most violent attacks on past and contemporary writers are set forth. De la Création de l'ordre dans l'humanité began as reply to Lammenais (2) and his greatest work, De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Eglise is a strong refutation and denunciation of Cardinal Mathieu of Besançon, who was unwise enough to sponsor a book which defamed Proudhon. To this fact add the unstable temperament of a man who was frequently ill, always financially pressed, often misunderstood, hounded and jailed, yet always ready to smash ahead with continuing vigor from some inexhaustible store, and such complete changes of tack as are evidenced by his varying attitude towards Louis Napoléon (3) become understandable.

It will be contended here, however, that in spite of this superficial lack of consistency, the main threads of Proudhonian thought carry through from his first works to his last. The division of his life into three periods, which seems to have become standard, (4) will prove use-

(1) Georges Gurvitch, L'Idée du Droit Social, Librairie Recueil Sirey, Paris, 1932, p.333.

(2) Correspondance de P.J.Proudhon, A. LaCroix, Paris, 1875, vol.6, Letter to Micaud, 18 July, 1841, p.311.

(3) See La Révolution Sociale démontrée par un coup d'Etat, Marcel Rivière, Paris, 1936.

(4) See Gurvitch, op.cit., pp.359-361. Same divisions used by von Diehl, Ed. Dolléans, etc. Periods - (1) up to 1848, (2) 1848-1852, (3) 1852-1865 (Death of Proudhon).



ful occasionally, but unless there is a quite definite change in his point of view, Proudhon's ideas will be stated as they were most completely developed, regardless of the time of writing.

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The foregoing remarks seemed necessary as an introduction for two reasons.

First, to provide a partial explanation for the wide variety of interpretation of Proudhon (and especially of his theory of social change) which will be noted now.

Secondly, to support the point of view which will emerge from this thesis, namely, that much of the interest of Proudhon for contemporary readers is the fact that he can combine the point of view of worker and petit-bourgeois, and integrate them in a single theory of politics and political change. For those who consider fascism one of the main problems in the western world, Proudhon is necessary reading. The position of the "classe moyenne", which finds itself without the power organs of either organized labour or capital is one which has proved disastrous already. Proudhon's concept of society and its movement may shed some useful light.

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Marx's opinion of Proudhon - a petit-bourgeois dealing in misunderstood Hegelianisms - has already been stated, but by way of contrast it is worth noting that one writer or another has seen in Proudhon almost all the main features of Marxian thinking itself. In 1915, Professor Charles Turgeon, in an "Essai sur la Conception de l'Histoire et du Progrès d'après Proudhon" (1) was largely concerned in refuting the con-

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(1) Révue d'Economie Politique, Tome XXIX, Paris, 1915.

tention that Proudhon was primarily an economic determinist, the evidence for which will be examined briefly later. Analogies, of course, are inevitable; both writers were dealing with the problems of the workers at the same point in history, and indeed, traces of such doctrines as the withering away of the state and that of the "class-conscious" proletariat are readily discovered. The differences between the two, however, are undoubtedly profound.

Perhaps more interesting are those economists who emphasize Proudhon's ideas on monetary reform, and see in them his main contribution to a theory of social change, both from their point of view and his. Of some interest in this connection are recent attempts to link the monetary theory of Proudhon with that of Keynes (1).

Kropotkin called Proudhon "the father of anarchism"; and it is with these words that S.Y. Lu begins a thesis on The Political Theories of P.J. Proudhon (2). That Proudhon himself described his thought in these terms in his first memoir on property, and elsewhere, is well known; but that so many people have subsequently accepted this profession at face value is somewhat more surprising.

To the Proudhonian delegates at the first meeting of the 1st International and to Syndicalists like Jouhaux, Proudhon was another man again, one who believed "L'atelier fera disparaître le gouvernement," (3) which did not necessarily mean anarchism. Yet even in 1919 Jouhaux could say

(1) Dillard, Dudley, "Keynes and Proudhon", Journal of Economic History, vol. II, (May 1942) also - Roll, Erich, A History of Economic Thought, Prentice-Hall, New York, 1942.

(2) Lu, S.J.-The Political Theories of P.J. Proudhon, M.R. Gray Inc., New York, 1922.

(3) La Voix du Peuple, 13 Dec. 1849. Quoted by G. Guy-Grand, op.cit., p. 157.

"Que n'a-t-on pas dit de Proudhon? Réactionnaire, royaliste, anarchiste, petit bourgeois, tous les qualifications que l'on peut donner à un homme." (1)

M. Jouhaux' list includes "réactionnaire" and "royaliste". The latter interpretation is that of Maurras, Dimier, Daudet, et al, of the Action Française. As their use of Proudhon does not involve any political theory of social change, and as it has already been dealt with in some detail (2), it will not be necessary to say much on this score. Proudhon's attitude towards the monarchy and nationalism generally will become clear later.

The attempt to make the designation "réactionnaire" apply to Proudhon has received more attention in late years than any of the others, notably by Professor J. Salwyn Schapiro. Professor Schapiro sees Proudhon as a "Harbinger of Fascism", and isolates anti-democratic and anti-working class feelings, (combined with anti-Semitism) as basic in a view of society which makes the hero and the elite the chief social dynamics.

M. Jouhaux would probably have regarded more favorably some other opinions on Proudhon which he does not enumerate. Still within the limits of the author's political, rather than economic or moral thought, the emphasis changes, and the Federalist ideas of Proudhon move into the foreground. The revival of interest in this 19th century writer which

(1) Proudhon et Notre Temps. Joint work of "Les Amis de Proudhon", prefaced by C. Bouglé, Chiron, Paris, 1920, p.33.

(2) See Muret, C.T., "French Royalist Doctrines Since the Revolution", Columbia University Doctoral Dissertation, New York, 1933, pp.233-236. also, Buthman, W.C. "The Rise of Integral Nationalism in France", Columbia University Doctoral Dissertation, New York, 1939, pp.70,72,210-210.



is evident today is intimately connected with this important phase of his works on politics. The Proudhonian inspiration of the French organization "La Fédération" is immediately apparent. This group proposes, through its monthly Revue:

- Un régime juridique où la famille soit considérée comme la cellule première de la vie sociale.
- Une organization administrative fondée sur l'autonomie communale et non sur la toute-puissance de l'Etat.
- Un système économique basé sur le syndicalisme de fonction et la transformation de l'entreprise capitaliste en association de producteurs, dans le cadre d'une organization professionnelle indépendante des partis et des pouvoirs publics, le rôle de ces derniers étant d'orienter, de coordonner et d'arbitrer.,
- Une organization internationale issue de fédérations régionales dont la première à constituer doit être la Fédération européenne, gage de pérennité de la civilisation occidentale.

If any doubt remained as to the primary source of this programme, the next sentence would dispel it.

"La Fédération" réunit dans ce but des hommes désireux de promouvoir un monde équilibrée et pacifique, 'pour l'homme, par la liberté, dans la justice' (1).

But what are the mechanics of social change in the regime proposed by "La Fédération"? At the risk of going into too much detail in a chapter designed simply to outline some of the notions which have been disentangled from the profusion of Proudhon's thought, a short excerpt from a Federation editorial can be cited.

A tous les plans, dans tous les secteurs, l'impératif d'aujourd'hui est: organisation. Non par décret, mais par association, non d'en haut, mais d'en bas. L'ordre vrai n'est jamais imposé: il surgit de la compétence, de l'autonomie, de la responsabilité. Il se fonde sur la justice à l'intérieur des groupes et entre les groupes, là où les hommes se connaissent et peuvent s'estimer, là où peut jouer

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(1) Fédération 9, rue Auber, Paris IX, (April 1948).

la solidarité, parce qu'elle est spontanée, qu'elle à chaleur humaine, qu'elle permet le partage fraternel de l'effort commun et de ses fruits (2).

One further strand must be introduced before a more detailed study begins. Henri de Lubac maintains that "more than anything else, the religious problem exercised him (Proudhon) without respite." (2) The moral element in social change, then, will form part of the developed system, and with the recognition of this last factor the essentials of Proudhon's theory can be discerned. Economic forces, political forces, moral factors - each have their place. Turning to Proudhon himself, the sometimes contradictory, sometimes complementary opinions which have been sketched will be seen in their relations to each other.

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(1) Fédération (Janvier 1948), Editorial, p. 1.

(2) De Lubac, op.cit., p.viii.

## CHAPTER II - THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Proudhon lived at a time when faith in Science was at a peak. The phenomenal successes in physics, and especially in mechanics, of the preceding century were being further developed, and the new world of the biological sciences was becoming more and more intelligible. The hope that society would prove as amenable to the scientific technique of analysis was strong, and Proudhon, on this score, was not the least optimistic Nineteenth Century thinker. The principles and laws of human behaviour, he felt, were discoverable by intelligent observation and deduction, and would prove related to those laws of the physical world which were already proven. Most important was his belief that mankind as a whole was quite capable of developing rational institutions on the basis of the new science. The worker, who was close to the realities of nature and society, was perfectly able to both understand and apply the principles which a true philosophy, a scientific metaphysics, would discover. (1)

Hitherto, men had been bound by a philosophy which the Church had done most to shape. Thinking was crippled by the debilitating doctrine of Grace, by the idea of transcendence. The solution lay in the establishment of a rational metaphysics which grounded itself firmly in nature and society. Immanence would replace transcendentalism in a philosophy which was essentially practical and compatible with the simple good sense of humanity.(2) Proudhon felt that one of his contributions should be the

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(1) De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Eglise, A. La Croix, Verboeckhoven et Cie, Bruxelles, 1868, vol.1, pp.10-13.

(2) Ibid., p.22.



mapping out of the new role of the social sciences and the techniques by which they could be organized. The creation of order in society was the essential problem and this demanded that the forces immanent in society itself be thoroughly analysed and understood.

This attempt at systematic analysis is made first in the Création de l'Ordre, (1843) but the organization of such a social science had evidently been long in his mind. In a letter to the members of the Academy of Besançon, written in June, 1840, he states that for the past year he has been occupied in such studies and that

my perception of the fact that these sciences, though badly defined as to their object and not confined to their sphere, are, like the natural sciences, susceptible of demonstration and certainty, has already rewarded my efforts. (1)

At first he seems to have been attracted by an almost Pythagorean concept.

To the eyes of the economist, the revolution of empires seem now like the reduction of algebraical quantities, which are interdeducible; now like the discovery of unknown quantities, induced by the inevitable influence of time. Figures are the providence of history. (2)

Soon this notion was modified, and a more complex idea substituted. He borrows from Fourier the "séries" and with its aid explains the ordering of natural phenomena and man's understanding of them. The Création de l'Ordre is not a clear exposition. It is contradictory, diffuse, dogmatic - and exceptionally difficult to summarize. Briefly, "comme, dans la nature, la série est la condition absolue de l'ordre, de la vie; ainsi

(1) What is Property? Humboldt Publishing Co., New York, (no date). Translation by B.A. Tucker, First Memoir, p.2. (This will be referred to in future footnotes as First Memoir on Property).

(2) Ibid., p.247.

dans la science, la série est la condition suprême de l'intelligence et du vrai." (1) Reality no longer consists of numbers, but rather of groupings, nature is "nombré, divisé, différencié, sérié, figuré." (2) Man can understand nothing except relationships, and reasoning is simply the perception of these relationships:

. . . vous ne percevez que dans les séries . . . l'un, le particulier, l'individuel, vous apparaît dans les choses, non par le fait d'une matérialisation grossière, mais par le rapport qui groupe et totalise les unités sérielles . . . (3).

The serial concept enables one to judge social phenomena, for serialization is the essence of order. Armed with an understanding of the series man can authoritatively strike down corrupt institutions which have been long accepted as legitimate. Thus it is demonstrable that slavery is a "fait subversif". Slavery means violence and servility, while legal, just institutions are "dans le droit" and freely organized. As, in a true serial organization, these two aspects would be quite logically incompatible, slavery must be a perversion. Order and servitude cannot co-exist in the same series (4). The serial criterion can be applied to all forms of social and natural organization. Economic institutions which respond to the force of division of labour, for example, can be seen as rightly ordered, "sériees", or "anormales" depending on whether they can be considered manifestations of that force in its pure form:

La division du travail, pour être normale et utile, productrice d'intelligence et d'habileté, doit avoir lieu, non par fragmentation, mais par dédoublement. Le travail régulièrement divisé

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(1) De la Création de l'Ordre dans l'Humanité, A. LaCroix et Cie, Paris, 1873, p. 183.  
 (2) Ibid., p. 175.  
 (3) Ibid., p. 212.

doit offrir toujours, dans chacune de ses divisions unité, variété et synthèse, c'est-à-dire série. (1)

In the Création de l'Ordre, the historical importance of economic forces and the laws derived from them is great, in fact "au point du vue de l'organisation, les lois de l'Economie politique sont les lois de l'Histoire." (2) They operate in the political field as much as in the purely economic; thus, for example, when a social unit reaches any great size it may be necessary to "multiplier le souverain . . . selon la loi économique de division, spécialisation et série, par dédoublement." (3) Proudhon offers no very satisfactory objective criteria whereby a "seri-ally" organized institution can be recognized, however, and the idea is largely transformed in later works. The closest approximation to the "série" is the "groupe" concept of the Philosophie du Progrès. Proudhon distinguishes between the two:

De même que dans la logique l'idée de mouvement ou de progrès se traduit en cette autre la série; de même dans l'ontologie, elle a pour synonyme le groupe. Tout ce qui existe, est groupé; tout ce qui forme groupe est un, par conséquent est perceptible, par conséquent est. (4)

In a footnote in the Rivière edition of the Philosophie du Progrès, M. Ruyssen maintains, with some reason, that the idea of the group adds little precision to that of the series, and points out that the series had actually even more significance in the physical and biological sphere than in the purely logical (5).

(1) Ibid., p. 271.

(2) Ibid., p. 308.

(3) Ibid., p. 320.

(4) Philosophie du Progrès, Marcel Rivière, Paris, 1946, p. 163.

(5) Ibid., p. 63, footnote.



As late as 1859, however, Proudhon found much in his early formulations that was of use to him. While preparing La Guerre et la Paix, he writes that he has gone back to "mes series" and that, through them, "je suis arrivé à comprendre quelque chose." (1)

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A concept which is far more important in the work of Proudhon, and becomes increasingly so in his later years, is the antinomy. As an explanation of the nature and operation of physical and social forces it is far more satisfying than the series. Proudhon's debt to both Kant and Hegel will be evident, but his adaptation and application of their ideas are peculiar to himself, and they form what is undoubtedly one of the most interesting features of his thought. Although the first extensive presentation of an analysis by antinomies occurs in the Contradictions économiques, it must be remembered that both idea and phraseology occur in earlier works and are by no means incompatible with prior analyses.

During the first period of his writing, the concept is often quite similar to the Hegelian dialectic, but never wholly so. Proudhon sometimes has the negation of thesis involve its "absorption" in the antithesis, and the realization of a new synthesis (2), but more often he is attracted to the idea of equilibrium instead. The difference between the fusion of two antagonistic forces and their balancing is, of course, great, but Proudhon for some time oscillated between the two concepts and even attempted to make them seem synonymous.

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(1) Correspondance, vol. 9, Letter to Gustave Chaudey, 5 June, 1859, p. 94.  
 (2) See Création de l'Ordre, pp. 192, 271.  
First Memoir on Property, p. 29.

An analogy with the poles of a battery or an electrical circuit is one which occurs immediately when the idea of tense equilibrium is broached. Proudhon uses it countless times, and even in the Création de l'Ordre he believes that as "le magnétisme présente deux poles égales . . ." so "dans la plupart des séries, les unités sont en rapport d'égalité ou d'équivalence." (1) But it is in the Contradictions économiques that the illustration begins to be used most clearly and effectively.

Comme les pôles de la pile, l'offre et demande sont diamétralement opposées. . . on veut donc savoir s'il n'est pas possible, en toute occasion, d'équilibrer ou faire transiger ces deux puissances, de manière que la prix des choses soit toujours l'expression de la valeur vraie, l'expression de la justice . . . (2).

It is quite clear that this notion owes little to Hegel, but the evolution away from him is not yet complete, for in this example Proudhon still can speak in terms of forces which "tendent sans cesse à s'annuler l'une l'autre." (3) The use of the verb "s'annuler" is significant, as it indicates that the idea of negation is still strong. Yet the poles of a battery do not simply cancel each other out, and one suspects that, even here, the figure itself expresses Proudhon's thought better than his explanation of it. Certainly, the later works leave no doubt that negation is an inadequate description.

Les termes antinomiques ne se résolvent pas plus que les pôles d'une pile électrique ne se détruisent . . . ils ne sont pas seulement indestructibles, ils sont la cause génératrice du mouvement de la vie, du progrès . . . (4).

In De la Justice, he shows that he himself is quite aware of the

- (1) Création de l'Ordre, p. 194.
- (2) Système des Contradictions économiques, vol. I, Marcel Rivière, Paris, 1923, p. 103.
- (3) Ibid., p. 103.
- (4) Théorie de la Propriété, A. La Croix, Paris, 1866, p. 330.

vast differences between Hegel and himself. Hegel has not realized that "l'antinomie ne se résout point, mais qu'elle indique une oscillation ou antagonisme susceptible seulement d'équilibre." (1)

The emphasis on antagonism which the last two citations reveal increases as Proudhon's thought evolves. At first, antagonism is simply inevitable, an attribute of nature and society, which man must accept, even though it may mean that the happiness which he seeks will remain "hors de notre portée." (2) For the mature Proudhon, however, it is only on condition that forces "s'entre-choquent, . . . s'entre brise, . . . s'entre dévorent. . . " (3) that they are truly creative. In La Guerre et la Paix this attitude is most fully worked out, and it will be dealt with in detail when political forces are analyzed.

Proudhon's criticism of Hegel brings to the fore another feature of the former's analysis of social forces. In the Création de l'Ordre he objects to the "idées trinitaires" of the German's thought, maintaining that "la nature . . . se prête aussi bien, à une classification quaternaire qu'à une classification ternaire; qu'elle se prêterait probablement à beaucoup d'autres . . . " (4) and again in De la Justice, the triadic formula seems to him only the result of "le bon plaisir du maître" (1). It would seem that this criticism involves more than the simple rejection of the third term of synthesis, and implies, in addition, that the idea of the single antithesis, of the pairing of polar opposites, is an unwarranted limitation of the possibilities of

(1) De la Justice, vol. I, pp. 28, 29. (footnote).

(2) Contradictions économiques, vol. II, p. 87.

(3) La Guerre et la Paix, Marcel Rivière, Paris, 1927, p. 473.

(4) Création de l'Ordre, p. 116.

antagonism. As Proudhon's ideas are further developed in later chapters, it will become evident that the antinomy, a dualistic concept, is not by any means the only form by which tension is manifested. Systems of equilibrium will involve an interaction of forces which allows of multiple relations. The society of De la Justice, indeed, lends itself more easily to analogy with a complex, molecular equilibrium system than with the simple opposition of positive to negative poles in a battery. Nevertheless, the pure antinomy remains in its own right, a vital concept.

Proudhon's ideas evolved continually, but, after this preliminary sketch, they will be best revealed in a more concrete setting. It will be wise now to turn to the application of his thinking which he makes in the fields of economics and politics. Proudhon was never given to the lengthy contemplation of abstractions; the bustling world about him pressed too close for continuous metaphysical speculation. It is in close relation with the facts of his time as he saw them that further developments in his thinking, not always consistent, take place. They are revealed in his criticisms and his proposals for society, in his analysis of economic and political forces.

### CHAPTER III - PROUDHON'S ECONOMICS

What are the salient features of man's economic existence, past and contemporary? What forces operate in this sphere? What is the nature of these forces? Proudhon's answers to these questions are the concern of this chapter.

Anyone who has heard the name, Proudhon, will probably connect it immediately with the opening line of his first memoir on property: "La propriété, c'est le vol." Proudhon himself seems to have been rather more embarrassed than pleased, in later life anyhow, by the notoriety of this phrase. In more than one of his subsequent works, he felt it necessary to explain it, and in the last years of his life, when political considerations loomed larger for him than economic ones, he was to qualify it almost out of all meaning. The labour theory of value is the basis of his view. Man must labour to provide for the material necessities of life and "the labourer is proprietor of the value which he creates." (1) The matter would be simple then, were it not for the fact that labour is most productive in society, in concert with the labour of others. The labourer's product is part of the social product; "all production being necessarily collective, the labourer is entitled to a share of the products and profits commensurate with his labour." (1) The institution of property distorts this pattern, and proprietors of land and capital receive a share which is based, not on their labour, but on the value of their holdings. But this is not the only or even

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(1) First Memoir on Property, p. 120.

most serious effect of property. Labour requires tools, it is exerted on land or raw materials, and if labour itself is a natural right of all men, so must be the means to this labour. Thus property not only robs the worker of part of his just share of the product, but also of one of his basic rights, his liberty. Property cannot even be legitimized by mutual consent, for "it is to traffic in a natural right, and divest ourselves of manhood" (1). Property is theft.

Faced with the problem of wresting from the earth the means of his livelihood, men have adopted a brutal, suicidal system. All have a right to possess "that which is required, for . . . labour and consumption" (2), but rather than this just, ordered solution, men have developed "the art of robbing the producer" (3). The effects of this degraded system are widespread.

Suppress property while maintaining possession, and, by this simple modification of the principle, you will revolutionize law, government, economy, and institution; you will drive evil from the face of the earth. (4)

Actually, this is a wild statement, which Proudhon, though still enthusiastic, modifies.

Of course, I do not pretend that the principle of property is a complete résumé of all the social forces; but. . . I have been able to reason with absolute accuracy from a single order of facts, certain as I was of the perfect correlation which exists between this special order and universal history. As is the property of a nation, so is its family, and its legislative and judicial institutions. (5)

(1) Ibid., P. 94.

(2) Ibid., p. 55.

(3) What is Property? Second Memoir, Letter to Blanqui, Humboldt, New York, (no date), p. 311. (This will be referred to in future footnotes as Second Memoir on Property).

(4) First Memoir on Property, p. 285.

(5) Second Memoir on Property, p. 362.



The qualification which admits of other forces occurs more often than not, but it does not take away from the strength and definiteness of his opinions.

Undoubtedly there are other elements in human progress; but in the multitude of hidden causes which agitate nations, there is none more powerful or constant than the periodical explosions of the proletariat against property . . . . The downfall and death of societies are due to the power of accumulation possessed by property. (1)

The case of those who see Proudhon as an economic determinist could well rest on these three citations - and with some justice, if the two memoirs on property were the only works of Proudhon.

It will be well to note immediately that Proudhon's method of ordering the forces which have led to property is one of individual possession. "Possession is a right." (2) He rejects the concept of property embodied in the "Phalanstères" of Fourier on the grounds that they mean "a barrier to liberty of transactions and of inheritance, and free disposition of the soil taken away from him who cultivates it." (3) And although in the first memoir on property Proudhon is sterner in his intent to eliminate the vices of property, and insists that

the possessor or usufructuary . . . is responsible for the thing entrusted to him, . . . must use it in conformity with the general utility . . . has no power to transform it, to diminish it, or to change its nature . . . is under the supervision of society . . . (4),

still the communist solution has no appeal for him.

We, members of a community, it is true, have no private property; but the community is proprietor, and proprietor not only of the

(1) Ibid., p. 247.

(2) First Memoir on Property, p.285.

(3) General Idea of the Revolution in the 19th Century, Freedom Press, London, 1923, Translated by J.B.Robinson, p.208, (This will be referred to in future footnotes as Idée Générale).

(4) First Memoir on Property, p. 82.

goods, but of the persons and wills . . . the industrious work for the lazy; the clever work for the foolish. . . Property is the exploitation of the weak by the strong. Communism is the exploitation of the weak by the strong. Communism is the exploitation of the strong by the weak. (1)

Possession lies between the two. "Entre la propriété et la communauté je construirais un monde." (2)

. . . . .

An understanding of the antinomy enables us to explain the further evolution of Proudhon's views on property, which was mentioned above. By 1851, Proudhon had decided to discard the word "possession" as the sole term applicable for the successful ordering of the force which was seen in its perverted form in property. He still protests, however, that "je maintiens intégralement toutes mes négations sur . . la propriété." It is simply more expedient to use a term which will be readily understood: ". . .il ne m'appartient pas de créer des mots nouveaux . . ." and further, as "il n'y a pas de progrès sans tradition . . . il convient . . . de conserver aux institutions nouvelles leurs noms patronymiques." (3) Thus, instead of possession and property he can speak simply of two different types of property. For the absentee landlord, property is simply a source of revenue, while peasant's land is esteemed for itself (4). This verbal change, however, hides a difference in viewpoint which is revealed more completely in De la Justice, and it is here that the influence of his thought on antinomies becomes apparent. Again, he does not repudiate the dictum "La

(1) Ibid., p. 261.

(2) Solution du problème social, A. La Croix, Paris, 1873, p. 346.

(3) Philosophie du Progrès, pp. 78, 79.

(4) Du Principe Fédératif, Editions Bossard, Paris, 1921, p. 175.

propriété, c'est le vol" but rather attempts to explain it away. He believes, now, that property is "un fait aussi nécessaire à l'existence de l'individu qu'à la vie sociale" at the same time as being "celui que la conscience universelle condamne sous le nom de vol." In other words, the force which, perverted, led to property and, ordered, led to possession is now renamed, and reconstituted as a dualism, an antinomy. Referring to his first memoir, he goes on:

De cette contradiction mise par moi dans tout son jour . . . on a conclu que je voulais DETRUIRE la propriété. Détruire une conception de l'esprit, une force économique; détruire l'institution que cette force et cette conception engendrent, est aussi absurde que de détruire la matière. (1)

There can be no doubt that Proudhon reads into the first memoir much more than he wrote in 1840, especially when he denies that he wished to destroy the particular institution which the force had then engendered. This is the later thought of the author who insists that "Rien ne se détruit dans le monde, rien ne se perd." Thus, "la propriété, forme concrète de la liberté individuelle ne se peuvent anéantir." (2)

It will be evident, however, that there is more to the reinstatement of property than can be explained simply by the evolution of his ideas on the nature of social forces. The rest of the explanation lies in the shift in emphasis, mentioned above, from an almost purely economic viewpoint to one which recognizes political forces as more cogent. Proudhon asks of property a justification, he demands "qu'on fait la BALANCE" (3),

(1) De la Justice, vol. I, p. 324.

(2) Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire, Marcel Rivière, Paris, 1929, p. 316.

(3) De la Justice, vol. II, p. 325.

and he finds that its virtue lies sometimes as a "contrepoids à la communauté", but, more important, as a foe of the state.

L'Etat constitué de la manière la plus rationnelle, la plus libérale, animé des institutions les plus justes, n'en est pas moins une puissance énorme, capable de tout écraser autour d'elle si on ne lui donne pas un contrepoids . . . La propriété est la plus grande force qui existe et qui se puisse opposer au pouvoir. (1)

As Property was the first economic subject to which Proudhon gave extensive treatment, it is to be expected that the change in his viewpoint would be more marked here than elsewhere. This, indeed, is the case, as an examination of some of his other ideas on economics will make evident.

. . . . .

I call certain principles of action economic forces such as the Division of Labour, Competition, Collective Force, Exchange, Credit, Property, etc. . . If these forces are held in equilibrium, subject to the laws which are proper to them, and which do not depend in any way upon the arbitrary will of man, labour can be organized, and comfort for all guaranteed. If, on the other hand they are left without direction and without counterpoise, Labour is in a condition of Chaos; the useful effect of the economic forces is mingled with an equal quantity of injurious effects; the deficit balances the profit . . . (2).

Six years before writing this passage Proudhon had published his most extensive analysis of these economic forces and their dual nature, his Systeme des Contradictions économiques; but in all his works, some aspect of the same problem is broached. The early emphasis, as has been shown, was on the question of property. This was followed by concentration on the problem of the exchange of goods - on money, credit and banking. In the Création de l'Ordre, Proudhon could say of the circulation of values, the formation of capital and the theory of money:

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(1) Théorie de la Propriété, A. LaCroix, Paris, 1866, pp. 136-137.  
 (2) Idée Générale, p. 46.

"Cette branche de l'Economie politique . . . est à peu près achevée, et n'a plus besoin que d'être ça et là rectifiée et mise en ordre. (1)

Yet six years later, in a footnote added to a new edition, he admits that

Là est la plus grande erreur de tout l'ouvrage. L'auteur a prouvé lui-même, depuis la première édition de ce livre, qu'il y avait tout à faire encore dans la question du crédit, de la circulation, de la valeur, et des monnaies. (1)

What, then, was the nature of the problem of exchange and credit and how important was it considered by Proudhon? Mr. Dudley Dillard, in a provocative article comparing Keynes and Proudhon, sums the matter up in this way:

Both Keynes and Proudhon . . . are agreed that financial capital, because of its strategic place in the mobilization and exchange of industrial capital, possesses characteristics that impose profound limitations on the functioning of an otherwise sound competitive system."(2)

Although, as will be made evident below, it is an exaggeration to say that Proudhon, at least, believed the economic system "otherwise sound", the importance of the problem of credit is clearly established; reform is necessary.

Le but ultérieur du crédit est d'arriver à la constitution de toutes les valeurs, c'est-à-dire à les rendre, à l'instar de l'or et de l'argent monnayés, acceptables en tout paiement; ce qui serait évidemment résoudre le problème de la répartition, fonder l'égalité sur la loi du travail, et porter du même pas l'humanité au plus haut degré de liberté individuelle et d'association possible. (3)

The means whereby credit will be freed from monetary shackles, and value "constituted" was the People's Bank. The bank was designed to provide for a universalized bill of exchange, which would completely

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(1) Création de l'Ordre, pp. 354-355.

(2) Dillard, Dudley, loc.cit., p.68.

(3) Contradictions économiques, vol.II, p.111.

replace ordinary types of money, based on gold (1), except for small-change tokens. Any product of labour could, by means of the exchange bank, take the place of money, and, represented by a bank bill, circulate throughout the economy. The economic system would be truly based, then, on

cet aphorisme si connu: Les produits s'échangent contre les produits. Principe incontestable, mais jusqu'à ce jour demeuré stérile au mains des économistes, qui se sont contentés de le constater, sans essayer d'en faire la moindre application. (2)

The natural ordering of the forces of exchange and credit will mean much, for

. . . it is incontestable that the perversion of credit is the most acute cause of the poverty of the masses . . . Is it not evident that the tendency of society is toward poverty, not through the depravity of men, but through the disorder of its own elementary principles? (3)

The disorder of other principles or forces is similarly important, and, as has been noted, the Contradictions économiques deal fully with them. Each force has its positive and negative aspects. The division of labour "hors de laquelle point de progrès, point d'égalité, subalterne l'ouvrier, rend l'intelligence inutile, la richesse nuisible, et l'égalité impossible." (4) For "fractionné en parcelles infinitésimales ou réduit à ses derniers éléments, le travail est, pour celui qui l'exécute, chose inintelligible, aboutissante, stupide." (5) Similarly,

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(1) cf. Edouard Dolléans and Georges Duveau in the Introduction to La Révolution sociale and Projet d'Exposition Perpetuelle, Marcel Rivière, Paris, 1936, p.102. "Proudhon, soixante dix ans avant l'économiste Maynard Keynes, a déclaré que l'or est 'un reste de la barbarie'."

(2) Projet d'Exposition Perpetuelle, p.308.

(3) Idée Générale, p. 54.

(4) Contradictions économiques, vol.1, pp. 138-9.

(5) Création de l'Ordre, p. 272.



competition "analysée dans son principe, est une inspiration de la justice; et cependant nous allons voir que la concurrence, dans ses résultats, est injuste." (1) In its results it is in fact, "la guerre civile." (2) But if competition is civil war, monopoly, which has also a theoretical justification, is "le massacre des prisonniers." (3)

Monopoly in England has led to untold miseries for the workers, and

S'ils se concentrent pour faire augmenter leur salaire, on les jette en prison. Tandis qu'ils devraient poursuivre devant les tribunaux leurs exploiters, c'est sur eux que les tribunaux vengeront les attentats à la liberté du commerce. Victimes du monopole, ils porteront la peine due aux monopoleurs! O justice des hommes, stupide, courtisane, jusqu'à quand, sous les oripeaux de déesse, boiras-tu le sang du prolétaire égorgé? (4)

Grouped together men have a "force collective", but the grouping may easily degenerate into an association which places fetters on the liberty of the workers (5). The importance of credit and banking has already been seen, but, here again, the dual nature of these forces was remarked very early.

The greatest enemy of the landed and industrial aristocracy, the incessant promoter of equality of fortunes, is the banker. . . and yet, by the strangest antinomy, this same banker is the most relentless collector of profits, increase, and usury ever inspired by the demon of property. (6)

These, then, are some of the forces which form the dynamics of the economic system. Their antinomical nature is immediately evident and they were described in these terms from the commencement of Proudhon's detailed study of them. Thus there is no exaggeration nor any suspicion

(1) Contradictions économiques, p. 222, vol. 1.

(2) Ibid., p. 265.

(3) Ibid., p. 265.

(4) Ibid., p. 272.

(5) Idée Générale, pp. 81, 82.

(6) Second Memoir on Property, p. 313.

of afterthought when Proudhon explains, in De la Justice, that

c'est à l'exposition de ce système que j'ai prélué en 1845 par la publication de mon ouvrage sur les Contradictions économiques, dans lequel j'ai démontré qu'il n'est pas un principe, pas une force dans la société, qui ne produise autant de misère que de richesse, si elle n'est balancée par une autre force dont le côté utile neutralise l'effet destructeur de la première. (1)

. . . . .

With the completion of this preliminary description of Proudhon's conception of the nature and action of economic forces, a more detailed and comprehensive idea of the institutional forms of the society which are to effect the ordering of forces can be given. The discussion of Proudhon's ideas on credit and banking has already provided a picture of one type of institution - the people's bank, which will enable product to exchange for product - and it has to be noted that the most precise economic ideas of Proudhon deal with money and exchange, the distributive process rather than the productive process. In the Capacité Politique especially, however, an overall idea for the economic system is described quite clearly.

An understanding of the economic forces gives rise to a "droit économique" which regulates the mutualist society from which it grows. Proudhon inclines always to a legalistic solution of social problems. The overwhelming importance of "Justice" will be indicated later, but, in addition, law, right, and contract are essentials in almost every Proudhonian analysis, criticism and proposal. The contract was basic to the sketch of the economic order in the Idée Générale, and his definition of "the reign of contract" as opposed to the "reign of law" (2)

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(1) De la Justice, vol. II, p. 365.

(2) Idée Générale, p. 112.

there has led some students to conclude that Proudhon wished to eliminate the latter completely (1). The development of the idea of "droit économique", however, belies this interpretation, and Gurvitch's contention that "il reconnaît aussi nettement que possible l'existence du droit positif formel . . ." (2) seems amply substantiated. "Le Droit fut le plus grand et la plus puissant des dieux . . ." (3). Nevertheless, the importance of the contract as a basic part of mutualism and its law is undeniable. It is an agreement between man and man, group and group, in which the state as such has no part (4). As such . . . "not only does it leave the party free, it adds to his liberty." (5)

La vraie mutualité, nous l'avons dit, est celle qui donne, promet et assure service pour service; . . . garantie pour garantie; qui, substituant partout un droit rigoureux à une charité languissante, la certitude du contrat à l'arbitraire des échanges. . . . tend systématiquement à organiser le principe même de la Justice. . (6)

Pour qu'il y ait mutualité parfaite, il faut donc, que chaque producteur . . . conserve sa pleine et entière indépendance d'action, toute sa liberté d'allure. . . (7).

What will be involved when society becomes mutualist?

Qui dit mutualité suppose partage de la terre, division des propriétés, indépendance du travail, séparation des industries, spécialité des fonctions, responsabilité individuelle et collective, selon que le travail est individualisé ou groupé; réduction au minimum des frais généraux, suppression de parasitisme et de la misère. (8)

Of the pauperism and crime which are features of "la FEODALITE CAPITALISTE - INDUSTRIELLE - MERCANTILE - PROPRIETAIRE" (9), we learn that "ces causes se réduisent à une seule: le droit économique partout violé. Le remède

(1) cf. von Diehl, op.cit., p. 108.

(2) Georges Gurvitch, op.cit., p. 355.

(3) Capacité Politique, p. 128.

(4) Idée Générale, p. 112.

(5) Ibid., p. 112.

(6) Capacité Politique, p. 132.

(7) Ibid., p. 142.

(8) Ibid., p. 142.

(9) Ibid., p. 363.

n'était pas plus difficile à découvrir: retour au droit économique par l'observation de la loi de mutualité." (1)

Institutionally, mutualism will involve

assurances mutuelles, crédit mutuel, . . . enseignement mutuel; garanties réciproques de débouché, d'échange, de travail, de bonne qualité et de juste prix des marchandises, etc. . . . Ici, le travailleur n'est pas un serf de l'Etat . . . c'est l'homme libre . . . . (2).

Mutualism, and the "droit économique" which is its law, thus make certain promises; they do not simply involve the negative prohibitions of laissez-faire. "Le nouveau droit est au contraire positif. Son but est de procurer avec certitude et ampleur, tout ce que l'ancien droit permettrait simplement de faire . . ." (3). But, it must be emphasized that the State is not an agency involved in this law and these economic institutions. There is to be no paternalism, no state communism, which signify "hiérarchie, indivision, . . . centralisation . . . développement de fonctions improductives, accroissement indéfini de frais généraux, par conséquent création du parasitisme et progrès dans la misère." (4) This would be no solution to the old regime, which, logically enough, balanced political authoritarianism with the anarchy of laissez-faire (5). Instead of creating authority in economic relations as well as in political, both must be based on freedom under a law which grows out of the interaction of economic and political forces, and equilibrates them.

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(1) Ibid., p. 136, That this is the third "sole cause" of poverty etc. which has been quoted in this thesis is evidence of the contradictions in Proudhon noted in the introduction. cf. pp. 18 & 24 above.

(2) Ibid., p. 125.

(3) Ibid., p. 221.

(4) Ibid., p. 126.

(5) Ibid., p. 225.

Inevitably, political considerations have come to the fore at this stage, and an understanding of Proudhon's attitude to the problems of politics will be necessary before the ideas on social change which have been outlined in this section can be developed.

#### CHAPTER IV - POLITICAL FORCES

At first, the transition from Proudhon's economic ideas to those on politics is hardly appreciable. Economic forces are still of primary importance; it is simply foolishness when "instead of altering our public economy, we demand an electoral reform" (1). In actual fact, the political concept, anarchism, in his early period differs little from his later economic mutualism. The analysis of certain political forces, however, is necessary, in addition to the previous analysis of the economy, before a clear idea of "anarchy" can be obtained.

The chief political forces with which Proudhon is concerned are what he terms the Principles of Authority and Liberty and the Principle of Association. Authority is the "principe familial, patriarcal, magistral, monarchique, théocratique, tendant à la hiérarchie, à la centralisation, à l'absorption . . . essentiellement fatal ou divin . . .". Opposed to it is the "Principe de liberté, personnel, individualiste, critique, agent de division, d'élection, de transaction . . ." (2). In late years Proudhon came to believe that a true "constitution politique" would consist in a "Balancement de l'autorité par la liberté," (3) as both were "indissolublement liés l'un à l'autre, et restent, quoi que nous fassions, en lutte perpétuelle." (4) Earlier, however when the idea of a new synthesis from opposition was still a part of Proudhon's thought, the opposition was rather between authority and association,

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(1) First Memoir on Property, p. 333.

(2) Du Principe Fédératif, Editions Bossard, Paris, 1921, p. 48.

(3) Ibid., p. 49.

(4) Ibid., p. 47.



with liberty the result. Whatever difference between these attitudes is not the result of a change in terminology and emphasis is due to Proudhon's increasing regard for the purely political, and the evolution of his views on association and the role of the state. These will become more evident subsequently. In the first memoir on property and other works of the early period, authority is defined in much the same way as above. Its origin in the family, and in patriarchal society, and its development through royal absolutism and other modern forms, including liberal democracy, is traced. The conclusion Proudhon reaches is that

In a given society, the authority of man over man is inversely proportional to the stage of intellectual development which that society has reached; and the probable duration of that authority can be calculated from the more or less general desire for a true government . . . (Then) society seeks order in anarchy.(1)

(The paradoxical identification of anarchy with true government can be ignored for the moment.) "Authority has always been for riches against misfortune: the history of governments is the martyrology of the proletariat." (2) Men have tried to make use of the principle of authority in their eternal search for social order; they have believed that "the stronger the Government, the nearer order approaches perfection." (3) But authority finds that it must make endless concessions to liberty, and finally, when it is transformed into "pure democracy, or direct government, ends in the impossible and the absurd." (4) The use of the principle of authority is mistaken; "there are many ways of conceiv-

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- (1) First Memoir on Property, p. 277.
- (2) Idée Générale, p. 108.
- (3) Ibid., p. 129.
- (4) Ibid., p. 128.

ing order; but who has proved to us that order in society is what its masters choose to call it?" (1)

The principle of authority is a political force which must be reckoned with. In its manifestation in governmental absolutism, it is to be condemned, but, when Proudhon comes to believe in the impossibility of merging or synthesizing it with liberty, its function as a counter-poise to unlimited freedom is recognized. Both authority and liberty must be balanced, as must all the antinomical forces of society.

Association is a more complex force, and Proudhon's treatment of it is much less consistent. From the statement of the Series and the theory of the Group in the second chapter, we have evidence of the prime importance of associated entities in nature and society, and in man's understanding of natural and social phenomena. But, doubtless because the term association is connected with the phalanstère or communauté type of social unit which other socialists propose, and which Proudhon rejects, the word itself is frequently scorned. There is more to Proudhon's lack of regard for the principle than this, however. Though he is never led to propound the atomistic ideas of early liberalism, (and, as will become evident shortly, Justice is meaningless removed from its social context) nevertheless the petit-bourgeois, petit-paysan in Proudhon shrinks from a too-close involvement in any type of institution. At the end of his life, in the Capacité Politique, as at the beginning, Proudhon makes this clear. Speaking of mutualism he avers that

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(1) Ibid., p. 129.

Ni système de gouvernement, ni communauté ou association. . . ne peuvent à la fois, en unissant aussi intimement les hommes, leur assurer une pareille liberté. On nous a reproché de fomenter, par ce développement du droit, de fomenter l'individualisme . . . Calomnie! . . . Partout ailleurs nous avons le matérialisme du groupe, l'hypocrisie de l'association, et les chaînes pesantes de l'Etat. Ici seulement, nous sentons dans la justice la vraie paternité." (1)

Earlier, association was damned in even stronger terms. In the Idée Générale, it is sterile, even injurious, since it places fetters on the liberty of the labourer (2). Yet the workers, he recognizes, must associate if their future position is to be commensurate with their powers and capabilities. The type of association, however, which will fit their needs is the productive cooperative rather than the trade union form, and they must remember that "the best association is one into which, thanks to a better organization, liberty enters most and devotion least." (3) As a universal principle for society, as the "means and end of the Revolution," association is simply a sham, and a cloak for "robbery and despotism" (4). For association, as the term is used by such men as Louis Blanc, implies an unnecessary, excessive degree of "obligation, common responsibility, fusion of rights." (5) Men in society should rather be bound by contractual relationships, which are entered into for a specific purpose, and never extend beyond what is necessary for the realization of the single end of each (6). The necessity for grouping, for collective action is never really denied, but the maximum amount of freedom of action must still remain with the

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(1) Capacité Politique, p. 222.

(2) Idée Générale, p. 83.

(3) Ibid., p. 98.

(4) Ibid., p. 79.

(5) Ibid., p. 84.

(6) Ibid., p. 87.

individual.

Pour moi, . . . je regarde la société, le groupe humain, comme un être sui generis, constitué par le rapport fluidique et la solidarité économique de tous les individus soit de la nation, soit de la localité ou corporation, soit de l'espèce entière; lesquels individus circulent librement les uns à travers les autres, s'approchent, se joignent, s'ecartent tour à tour dans toute les directions . . . (1).

Skirting the term "association", then, what are the desirable features of "collectivités humaines?" From the group comes collective force; "le produit de ces individus ainsi groupés est fort supérieur à ce qu'eût été la somme de leurs produits particuliers," and "la force collective étant un fait aussi positif que la force individuelle, . . . les êtres collectifs sont des réalités au même titre que les individus." (2) Isolated individuals are almost helpless, "Semblable à un corps dont les molécules auraient perdu le rapport qui détermine leur cohésion, au moindre choc elle tomberait en poussière" (3). The true society finds its strength in the interaction of these groups - thus "pouvoir social varie, son intensité s'élève ou s'abaisse, selon le nombre et la différence des groupes: quant à l'unité, elle reste immuable" (4). Perhaps even more important,

L'organe de la raison collective est le même que celui de la force collective: c'est le groupe travailleur, instructeur; la compagnie industrielle, savante, artiste; les académies, écoles, municipalités; c'est l'assemblée nationale, le club, le jury; toute réunion d'hommes, en un mot, formée pour la discussion des idées et la recherche du droit: Ubi cumque fuerint duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi sum in medio eorum. (5)

Raison publique, then, "gardienne de toute mérite et de toute Justice" (6)

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- (1) Philosophie du Progrès, pp. 66 & 67.
  - (2) De la Justice, vol. II, p. 100.
  - (3) Ibid., p. 101.
  - (4) Ibid., p. 105.
  - (5) De la Justice, vol. III, p. 119.
  - (6) Ibid., p. 97.

which differing from "la coalition des raisons particulières. . . est supérieure à toutes," (1) "qui résiste avec tant de force et un succès si complet aux fantaisies de la raison individuelle," (2) - this raison publique cannot be achieved without the grouping of men in associations.

The only just conclusion from this evidence must be that it is really only "association, par elle-même, et sans une pensée de droit qui la domine" which is rejected. Seen in this light, the principle of association (3) is another important part in the system of antinomies. Its dual nature, its potentialities for good or evil, demand that it be balanced by the force of individual liberty. In practical terms, it must be made subject to the equilibrating authority of the law, which aims at a fruitful relation of all the forces of society.

The name which Proudhon first gave to a society, ruled by law rather than particular forces, was "anarchy". Anarchy meant the absence of governmental authority and of cramping ties of too-close association. It meant liberty, but liberty restricted and ordered by law. "J'écrivais en 1840 . . . : Je suis anarchiste, posant par ce mot la négation, ou mieux l'insuffisance du principe d'autorité." But he explains that this is the dictum of a man who is the firm friend of order, who sought "une

(1) Ibid., p. 115.

(2) Ibid., p. 116.

(3) A further reason for Proudhon's distrust of association, especially when it is seen as a ruling principle in society, relates to his economic ideas. Capitalist association means "donner l'exclusion à la petite industrie, . . . tuer le petit commerce . . . transformer en salariés la partie la plus nombreuse et la plus intéressante de la bourgeoisie. . ." Capacité Politique, p. 187. See below the similarly injurious results of "coalition des ouvriers", as opposed to their legitimate productive association. cf. G. Gurvitch, op.cit., pp. 349ff for an interesting study of Proudhon's "métaphysique du groupe," which perhaps underestimates the importance of the author's anti-associational ideas. cf. also, Aimé Berthod's Introduction to the Marcel Rivière edition of Idée Générale.

conception rationnelle et pratique de l'ordre social." (1) While anarchism provided an answer to political questions, however, it did so still by allowing the economic factor to predominate. Anarchism is described as the rule of "Economy" and its laws; the primary equilibrating agent is the "droit économique", through which, "les fonctions politiques étant ramenées aux fonctions industrielles, l'ordre social résulterait du seul fait des transactions et des échanges." (2) As this is the case, the political implications of anarchism are best understood in terms of his criticism of the rule of "government".

The definition of "government" which Proudhon gives in his anarchist stage is significant. "Remember, the aim of government is not to harmonize antagonistic interests, it admits that it is quite incompetent to do this; but to keep order in society, despite the conflict of interests." (3) Government suppresses the antinomies of society instead of balancing them. Rather than this arbitrary despotism, the rule of law - which is anarchism - is obviously preferable. Nor is the form of government - rule of monarch, oligarchy or mass - particularly important. Monarchy and democracy are "in both cases, the sovereignty of man instead of the sovereignty of the law, the sovereignty of the will instead of the sovereignty of the reason; in one word, the passions instead of Justice." (4) Liberal constitutionalism is also condemned, but for different reasons. The system includes legal forms, a juridic spirit and other essentials of a just order, but this serves only to camouflage

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(1) Philosophie du Progrès, pp. 74, 75.

(2) Du Principe Fédératif, p. 56. Here, anarchy is classed as an unrealizable form of government.

(3) Idée Générale, p. 158.

(4) First Memoir on Property, p. 33.



a "confederation of the bourgeoisie against the labourers and against the king." (1) The false legal facade has little in common with real justice, and the worker instinctively "a le sentiment vague de cette immense spoliation". The proletariat soon see that "les garanties constitutionnelles le touchent peu. . ." (2).

Proudhon's repudiation of state democracy embodies a remarkable critique of the simple majoritarian idea, and shows a deep understanding of much of what has become essential to modern democratic constitutionalism. Society must aim at the reconciliation of group interests, rather than dictatorship of a majority. Majority rule implies

that there is in the collectivity of the People some special kind of thought, capable of representing at once collective and individual interests, which can be reached with more or less exactitude, by some sort of balloting process; (3).

This is not the case, balloting proves nothing, for "What is number? . . . What is it worth? . . . What relation is there between the opinion of the voters, more or less sincere and unanimous, and that which rules all opinion, all voting, - truth and right?" (4) Truth and right for a particular era are immanent in society as a whole, the "raison collective" of society is its expression (5). But the "raison collective" cannot be determined by the ballot; it is a much more subtle thing, which depends on a social organization having "pour principe, la plus grande contradiction, pour organe, la plus grande multiplicité possible" (6). A majority

(1) Second Memoir on Property, p. 361.

(2) Du Principe Fédératif, p. 88.

(3) Idée Générale, p. 147.

(4) Ibid., p. 138.

(5) "...le juste et le vrai...ne sont donnés avec plénitude que dans la raison collective" De la Justice, vol.III, p. 120.

(6) De la Justice, vol. III, p. 119.

opinion, even unanimity, is irrelevant when we think in terms of the "raison publique" (1)

The cry for universal suffrage, which was heard so strongly during Proudhon's life, seemed to him at best a mistaken emphasis. To have real meaning for the Revolution, universal suffrage would have to be accompanied by economic order, the relief of proletarian poverty, the education of the masses. Universal suffrage elected Louis Bonaparte, will always, given social conditions which make an immediate solution to the misère of the workers the paramount issue, prefer the energetic speed of dictatorship to the sloth of democracy.

. . . il doit être permis au philosophe, au républicain, de constater, pour l'intelligence de l'histoire et l'expérience de l'avenir, que le suffrage universale, chez un peuple dont l'éducation a été aussi négligée que le nôtre, avec sa forme matérialiste et héliocentrique, loin d'être l'organe du progrès, est la pierre d'achoppement de la liberté. . . (2).

Comment le suffrage universale parviendrait-il à manifester la pensée, la vraie pensée du peuple, quand le peuple est divisé, par l'inégalité des fortunes, en classes subordonnées les unes aux autres, votant par servilité ou par haine . . . quand l'exercice de ses droits se borne à choisir, tous les trois ou quatre ans, ses chefs et ses charlatans. . . ? (3).

Thus when the "soi-disant théoriciens de la souveraineté du peuple prétendent que le remède à la tyrannie du pouvoir consiste à le faire émaner du suffrage populaire" they are talking nonsense.

Car du moment que les conditions constitutives du pouvoir, c'est à dire l'autorité, la propriété, la hiérarchie, sont conservées, le suffrage du peuple n'est plus que le consentement du peuple à son oppression; ce qui est du plus niais charlatanisme. (4)

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- (1) The similarity between this concept and the general will of Rousseau extends to the authors' agreement that the choice of a representative is not an expression of either idea. (Contrat Social, Book 3, Chap. 15.)
- (2) La Revolution Sociale, p. 171.
- (3) Les Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire, Marcel Rivière, Paris, 1929, p. 229.
- (4) Contradictions économiques, vol. I, p. 340.

Nor will any true answer to the problem of the people's participation come from either direct government, which only means "renewed life for destroyed aristocracies and broken down thrones" (1) or the referendum whereby "to questions proposed by the government, the people may answer Yes or No like a child in the catechism." (2).

These long quotations on Universal Suffrage serve to illustrate obliquely a rather important factor in Proudhonian social theory which cannot yet be fully developed. The idea of a real social interest which is different from that which may be willed at any given time is strong. Unless social conditions are such that a true ideal can be formed from their study, men are liable to will their own downfall. As we shall see, progress involves a close interaction between the real and the ideal, and it is only when man is able to crystallize from reality the ideal of justice, that he can will his own best interest.

It will be noted that many of the above citations, containing some of Proudhon's criticisms of state democracy, come from books written in the middle period (1848-1852) of his life, when the disasters of the February Revolution and the events leading to Bonaparte's coup d'état were uppermost in his mind. Later Proudhon becomes more constructive politically. He borrows from his solutions of the economic problem a model for politics: the pluralistic society of De la Justice, and, institutionally more precise, the Federalism of Du Principe Fédératif. This new model is, in reality, a developed form of "anarchism", which allows a place, still small, for central government, and states more definitely

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(1) Idée Générale, p. 110.

(2) Ibid., p. 148.

the role of the semi-autonomous groups which constitute society.

We have seen that the "force collective" of men in association goes to make up social force as a whole, that from the interaction of groups (1), freely operating, is made up the "raison collective" - the criterion of truth and right. The state is the result:

la réunion de plusieurs groupes différentes de nature et d'objet, formés chacun pour l'exercice d'une fonction spéciale et de la création d'un produit particulier, puis ralliés sous un loi commune et dans un intérêt identique. C'est une collectivité, d'ordre supérieur, dans laquelle chaque groupe, pris lui-même pour individu, concourt à développer une force nouvelle, qui sera d'autant plus grande que les fonctions associées seront plus nombreuses, leur harmonie plus parfaite, et la prestation des forces, de la part des citoyens, plus entière. (2)

Each group, equal and without preponderance over another (3), is the seat of a certain part of the social force, but "de même que la propriété, la concurrence, et toutes les forces économiques, toutes les forces collectives, le pouvoir est, par nature, étranger au droit; . . ." (4). The problem is, as always, the creation of order through the equilibration of these forces. "Or, cet équilibre ne peut être l'effet d'une détermination arbitraire; il doit résulter du balancement des forces, agissant les unes sur les autres en toute liberté, et se faisant mutuellement

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- (1) While in the section of De la Justice from which the following citations are taken, emphasis is entirely on groups, the individual, as a social agent, is not completely ignored. Society consists of "groupes et sous-groupes. . . jusqu'au dernier terme de la série sociale qui est l'individu." (De la Justice, vol. II, p. 106) In the Capacité Politique the role of the individual is vastly increased: "il est évident que les trois quarts, sinon les quatre cinquièmes d'une nation comme la nôtre, propriétaires, agriculteurs, petits industriels, gens de lettres, artistes, fonctionnaires publics, etc., ne peuvent jamais être considérés comme vivant en société. . ." (Capacité Politique, p. 194).
- (2) De la Justice, vol. II, p. 101.
- (3) Ibid., p. 104.
- (4) Ibid., p. 105 & 106.

équation." (1) In all existing governments, a true equilibrium could not be reached, due to the "appropriation des forces collectives, et. . . la corruption du pouvoir social." (2) Instead of a multiplicity of autonomous groups, huge hierarchical power structures have arisen, both in political and economic worlds. There has resulted the

Consécration du principe d'inégalité, . . . abolition de la Justice par la raison d'Etat; la direction livrée à l'arbitraire du prince, si l'Etat est monarchique, et, dans toute autre hypothèse, aux cabales des partis; Tendance continuelle à l'absorption de la société par l'Etat:.. .(3).

This type of state, these forms of government are intolerable. The Revolution must mean the ordering of social forces on the basis of law and justice; government must have as its only object "de protéger la liberté et de faire observer la Justice." (4) It will consist of a legislative body, elected on the basis of certain "catégories de fonctions"(5) of the citizens. There will also be an office of jurisprudence, a bureau of information and statistics, of which the Cassation Court will be a part. Little else is specified for "Il est inutile de pousser plus loin ce détail." (6) It is note-worthy however, that police functions remain with the group, "à la charges des localités." (7).

The type of relationship which will hold between the basic units themselves, and the division of power and function between central and local authorities is given more detailed treatment in Du Principe Fédératif and other writings subsequent to De la Justice and the model

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- (1) Ibid., p. 123.
- (2) Ibid., p. 107.
- (3) Ibid., p. 115.
- (4) Ibid., p. 124.
- (5) Ibid., p. 128.
- (6) Ibid., p. 127.
- (7) Ibid., p. 126.

is subject to extension on an international scale. As in De la Justice, the similarity and inseparability of the techniques of ordering both political and economic spheres is emphasized: "dans la Démocratie nouvelle le principe politique devait être identique et adéquat au principe économique. . .c'est le principe fédératif, synonyme de mutualité ou garantie réciproque. . ."(1),

"il faut au droit politique le contre fort du droit économique"(2).

There is new stress on regionalism in the social groupings. A "loi du groupement naturel des populations par régions, cantons, communes. . ."(3), exists in addition to that based on the division of labour and function. "L'idée fédérative, indigène à la vieille Gaule, vivait comme un souvenir au coeur des provinces. . ."(4) and this localism is taken into account in the central power, as well as in the formation of the groups themselves: ". . .chaque député est avant tout l'homme de la localité qui l'a choisi pour son représentant. . ."(5)

The functions of the central power are more interesting:

Dans une société libre, le rôle de l'Etat ou gouvernement est par excellence un rôle de législation, de création, d'inauguration, d'installation; - c'est le moins possible, un rôle d'exécution. . . La création opérée, l'installation ou l'inauguration faite, l'Etat se retire, abandonnant aux autorités locales et au citoyen l'exécution du nouveau service. (6)

The government must understand, however, that

Les services publics ne doivent être ni exécutés par lui-même, ni convertis en entreprises privées et anonymes, mais confiés à forfait et par baux à terme à des compagnies d'ouvriers solidaires et responsables. (7)

- (1) Capacité Politique, p. 194.
- (2) Du Principe Fédératif, p. 153.
- (3) Capacité Politique, p. 190.
- (4) Du Principe Fédératif, p. 180.
- (5) Capacité Politique, p. 279.
- (6) Du Principe Fédératif, p. 115 & 116.

"Qu'il y ait un inspecteur pour suivre et surveiller la fabrication, je le veux; le rôle de l'Etat ne va pas au delà." (1) Public utilities, education, banks, even the coining of money, are to be handled locally. The militia is to be decentralized, courts are to belong to city, town or at most, province (2).

The federative principle does not lose its value when it is applied internationally as well as nationally. For, just as each group within the state is a force which must be ordered in a just, reciprocal relationship with other groups, so must the force of states themselves be equilibrated. Proudhon often defends the peace settlement of 1815 as a first approximation of a peaceful international balance (3).

L'idée des traités de 1815, c'est d'abord, l'équilibre entre les puissances, tel que toute suprématie politique, tout protectorat, conséquemment toute guerre d'ambition et de conquête, soient rendus impossibles, en second lieu, et comme garantie de cet équilibre, l'établissement dans tous les Etats du régime constitutionnel . . . Quand à l'application, il est certain qu'elle laissait à désirer. (4)

But a real equilibrium requires more than the 1815 Treaties specified.

The first condition must be "former des groupes médiocres" (5), for, "une confédération entre grandes monarchies, à plus forte raison entre démocraties impériales, est chose impossible." (6) Thus, instead of the national unification which Italians, Poles, Hungarians, et al, were demanding, what is necessary "comme la premier pas à faire dans le réforme du droit public européen, (est) le rétablissement des confédérations

(1) Ibid., p. 117.

(2) Ibid., p. 117 & 119.

(3) See Si les traités de 1815 ont cessé d'exister, LaCroix, Paris, 1863 by Proudhon for a full treatment by the author. See also Madeleine Amoudruz, op.cit., pp. 94-100.

(4) La Guerre et la Paix, pp. 500 & 501.

(5) Du Principe Fédératif, p. 121.

(6) Ibid., p. 109.

italienne, grecque, batave, scandinave, et danubienne, prélude de la décentralisation des grands Etats, et par suite, du désarmement général." (1) Every state is affected by the actions of its neighbours "le mal des petits Etats, à l'heure où nous sommes, c'est le désordre qui règne dans les grands" (2); all would be helped if "cette manie de centralization" (3) was transformed into enthusiasm for the just order of federalism, for "une confédération demeure sans force pour la conquête",<sup>(4)</sup> "un équilibre générale des Etats . . . est la PAIX" (5). Although, to Proudhon, political nationalism is "dementi, nié. . . par l'histoire," (6) "le produit de la politique bien plus que de la nature . . ." (7), it is worth noting in passing that real patriotism is another matter entirely, "son absence (est) une monstruosité." (8)

. . . . .

Thus, far, evidence has been presented which shows social change to be the result of a realignment - an ordering, when the change is an improvement - of certain economic and political forces, which are antinomial in nature. In the economy, these forces are the result of, or rather the essential features of, the process by which man adds to his material well-being. The nature of the economic process necessarily involves the clash of forces of division of labour, competition, property, etc., each of which has a dual nature, each of which, when unbalanced by another force, its antinomy, is productive of as much misery as well-

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- (1) Ibid., p. 130.  
 (2) Correspondance, vol.X, Letter to Delarageaz, 15 March, 1861, p.328.  
 (3) Ibid., Letter to Charles Beslay, 5 April, 1861, p. 334.  
 (4) Du Principe Fédératif, p. 128.  
 (5) La Guerre et Paix, p. 498.  
 (6) Correspondance, vol.XI, Letter to Alexandre Herzen, 21 April, 1861, p.22.  
 (7) Du Principe Fédératif, p. 188.  
 (8) Capacité Politique, p. 90.



being. In politics, similar forces arise inevitably from man's relation with his fellows, other than the purely economic connection. They include the principles of authority, liberty, and association. But, with the study of Proudhon's ideas on "collective force", another important aspect of the complex social forces becomes clearer. In addition to the general forces inherent in all politics and economics, the particular forces which result from each human grouping must be taken into account, ordered, equilibrated. It has been shown that between these particular forces the same tensions exist, they are part of the same pattern.

Two questions now must be answered which are of the utmost importance. First, who are the agents of social change? Second, does the realignment of social forces demand violent means, or can it be achieved peaceably? The answers to each require the introduction of little new material; they are already at least partially answered by the foregoing pages. But, as the brief review of past and present opinions on Proudhon indicated, much of the dissention in interpretation revolves around these points; and the case which has been made against Proudhon by those who see him as a forerunner of Fascism relates directly to them. Professor Schapiro believes that there is sufficient evidence in the writings of Proudhon to conclude that:

1. Proudhon sees an elite and/or "great man" or hero as the primary agent of social change. He is violently anti-democratic.
2. Proudhon's attitude to the workers is one of basic antipathy, and, especially as he opposes Trade Union organization and strikes, he denies them a real share in determining the nature of society.
3. Proudhon classes certain races as either inferior or pernicious,

and therefore excludes them from a role in society comparable to that of superior races.

4. Proudhon's "hysterical praise of war . . . was an integral part of his social philosophy." (1)

Having outlined Proudhon's attitude towards the principle of authority, having noted the source of "force collective" and "raison collective", it seems unnecessary and incongruous to spend time examining the change that Proudhon's theory of social change rests on a faith in elites or heroes. And indeed, the continued exposition and logical connection of the ideas of Proudhon which have been thus far dealt with are the best evidence that Professor Schapiro's emphasis is one-sided. There is, however, other evidence available.

Professor Schapiro is disturbed while reading Proudhon by certain "sinister overtones that haunt his pages" (2), and, indeed, when these "overtones" are detached from the many thousands of other pages written by Proudhon, they are likely to disturb many others. It was remarked early, that the period from 1848-1852 was the one in which Proudhon's criticisms of democracy were strongest, and this fact was linked with the discouragement and disillusionment which the author felt after the disaster which resulted from the February revolution. Almost all of the citations by which Professor Schapiro acquaints us with Proudhon's ideas on democracy are taken from letters and other writings during this period. For example, he summarizes as follows:

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(1) J. Salwyn Schapiro, "Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Harbinger of Fascism", *American Historical Review*, vol. 50 (July 1945).  
 (2) Schapiro, J.S., *loc.cit.*, p.718.

All true progress, according to Proudhon, was accomplished, not directly by the masses, but by des esprits d'élite who, openly or secretly drove them in the right direction. The masses were pre-disposed to autocratic rule, not to self government. They needed a ruler as they needed a God. (1)

As the source of this summary, Professor Schapiro refers us to a letter to M. Boutteville, written October 8th, 1852.<sup>(2)</sup> Proudhon's disillusionment here is most evident, and he warns that the democratic utopia of Rousseau is an absurdity, which demands that slaves lead the way to liberty. The masses are incapable of taking the initiative themselves. They must as always be guided by their own leaders, by "des esprits d'élites formés dans leur sein." (3) But although the "utopie démocratique" is a myth at present, it must be the future ideal for any right-thinking man. Proudhon strongly affirms that education will lead to a free society in which labour and capital are equal, and the subordination of the worker will cease. Finally he warns M. Boutteville to be careful that he does not imply that monarchy or other such forms of governmental authority are any substitute for democracy; this type of tyranny is far worse than the ineffective rule of the mass. A more complete perusal of the letter Professor Schapiro cites, then, rather contradicts than supports the idea which he seems to have found there, that the "masses needed a ruler as they needed a God."

The elite theory which this letter does embody, however, is more interesting, for although it seems by no means the key to Proudhon's thought on the agency of social change, the idea nevertheless occurs

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(1) Schapiro, J.S., Liberalism and the Challenge of Fascism, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1949, p. 351.

(2) See Appendix.

(3) My italics.

more than once in his writings. It crops up again in another letter to Boutteville, seven years later, "La Révolution sera l'oeuvre de la nécessité des choses, représentée par une élite d'hommes de toute langue et de tout pays." (1) and again, in another of his fits of depression and disillusionment in a letter to M. Mathey, "mais cette révolution, toute intellectuelle et morale, n'atteint pas, en ce moment, l'établissement politique; elle laisse indifférente la majorité, et se renferme dans une élite de citoyens. . ." (2). The similarity between this notion of Proudhon's and Marx's concept of the leadership of the class-conscious proletariat will be at once apparent, but it is the opinion of this writer that it occupies a far less important place in the thought of the former than the latter.

The "hero" theory in Proudhon is largely confined to one work La Révolution sociale démontrée par le Coup d'Etat (1852), in which Proudhon, still politically naive, allowed himself to believe that Louis Napoléon could be the instrument whereby the Revolution would be achieved. As Professor Schapiro himself points out (3), this was a phase quickly passed. Other instances of the great importance of the hero, such as in the Idée Générale, where Alexander, Julius Caesar and Clévis are seen as important revolutionary figures (4), in La Guerre et la Paix where glorification of the hero warrior in all times is noted, do not greatly add to the strength of this strand in Proudhon's thought, especially when they are taken in conjunction with the contrary assertions which can be

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- (1) Correspondance, vol. IX, Letter to M. Boutteville, 20 November, 1859, p. 244.  
 (2) Correspondance, vol. X, Letter to M. Mathey, 10 April, 1861, p. 345.  
 (3) Schapiro, J.S. op.cit., p. 354.  
 (4) Idée Générale, p. 15.

culled from every work. In one of his earliest works he announces his intention to convince the people "that in the bosom of liberty there are neither heroes nor great men" (1), and he tells his fellows to "let equality bring us together", for "Benevolence degenerates into tyranny and admiration into servility. . . May I die without knowing to whom among you I owe the most esteem." (2) Similarly, towards the end of his life he proclaims that "la Révolution a fait la conscience publique seul interprète du droit, seul juge du temporel et seul souverain, ce qui constitue la vrai démocratie." (3)

Before examining Proudhon's attitude towards the working class, one last point must be made. Although Professor Schapiro explains, with great justice, that "Proudhon's diatribes against democracy arose from his repudiation of what he called "political" government, whether absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy, or democratic republic" (4), this does not entirely nullify his comment of the previous page. There he says,

Proudhon's contempt and hatred of democracy overflowed all decent bounds, and he descended to a degree of disgusting vilification reached only by the fascists of our day. "All this democracy disgusts me," he wrote. "It wishes to be scratched where vermin causes itching, but it does not at all wish to be combed or to be deloused. What would I not give to sail into this mob with my clenched fist!" (5)

It would be pedantic to insist that the usual indication should have been given that the last sentence quoted from Proudhon's letter is separated from the first by a full page, and that it thus occurs in a slightly different context. And indeed, this is not a source of important distor-

- (1) First Memoir on Property, p. 288.
- (2) Ibid., p. 241.
- (3) La Guerre et la Paix, p. 508.
- (4) Schapiro, op.cit., p. 351.
- (5) Ibid., p. 350.

tion. That two sentences are omitted between the first and second quoted, again without indication, is perhaps more misleading, but both lapses are almost certainly due to an unfortunate typographical error.

The letter in question (1) is a typically violent refutation of certain of Proudhon's detractors who have accused him of being "un faux démocrate, un faux ami du progrès, un faux républicain. . ." due to his attitude towards Polish nationalism. It is the kind of democrat who calls him a counter-revolutionary when he attacks one of the current nationalist prejudices which arouses the scornful disgust of Proudhon.

In context, the aptness of Professor Schapiro's quotation seems questionable, the "overtones" are muted. Unless the word "democracy" is always to be entangled with every sort of nationalism, Proudhon cannot be said to express anti-democratic ideas here.

. . . . .

Proudhon's estimation of the importance of the working class as an agent of social change does not remain constant throughout his writings. From the discussion on universal suffrage, as well as in the evaluation of elite theory in Proudhon, it will be seen that he regards the workers in the mass with grave apprehension. Given their past and contemporary cultural, economic and educational standards, they constitute a grave danger to free society, ". . . toujours prêt à se laisser entraîner par ses tribuns et à remplacer les mœurs de la légalité par celles de l'omnipotence." (2) As an inchoate mob, they are as dangerous as any despotic clique: "Le seul ennemi contre lequel la Liberté ait à se tenir

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(1) Correspondance, vol. 9, Letter to M. Buzon, 18 September 1861, p. 197. See (Appendix.)  
 (2) Du Principe Fédératif, p. 141.

en garde, . . . c'est la Liberté elle-même, liberté du prince, liberté des grands, liberté des multitudes. . ."(1).

"Je ne veux pas plus de l'Hercule plébéien que de l'Hercule gouvernemental. . . .(2). He dreads communism, which is simply ". . .l'exploitation aristocratique et le despotisme appliqué au profit de la plèbe. . ."(3). But, the day of the workers' freedom, the day when they must attain a worthy status in society has arrived. "I preach emancipation to the proletarian, association to the labourers; equality to the wealthy" (4). The selfish opposition of the bourgeoisie to the workers' just claims has changed their roles: "ce n'est pas celle-ci qu'il faut appeler la masse, la multitude, la vile multitude; ce serait plutôt celle-la" (5). There is no point in denying the existence of a real class distinction in contemporary society - the economic and social facts speak for themselves - and to do so, "ce serait nier l'indépendance industrielle, politique et civile de l'ouvrier, seule compensation qu'il ait obtenue. . ."(6). To realize this emancipation of the working class, "Il faut avant tout qu'elle sorte de tutelle, et que . . . elle agisse désormais et exclusivement par elle-même et pour elle-même. Etre une puissance ou rien, telle est l'alternative." (7) But this split from the rest of society, though an immediate necessity, should not and will not be extended indefinitely.

Bourgeois and worker

doivent s'absorber réciproquement dans une conscience supérieure; et le jour où la plèbe, constituée en majorité, aura saisi le pouvoir

- (1) Ibid., p. 61.
- (2) La Guerre et la Paix, p. 22.
- (3) De la Capacité Politique, p. 116.
- (4) Second Memoir on Property, p. 457.
- (5) De la Capacité Politique, p. 231.
- (6) Ibid., pp. 94, 95.
- (7) Ibid., p. 244.

et proclamé, selon ses aspirations du droit nouveau et les formules de la science, la réforme économique et sociale, sera le jour de la fusion définitive. (1)

Fusion, however, is perhaps not the best word, and Proudhon expresses himself more typically when he refers to the desirability of "ramenant les deux classes nouvelles à une seule, parfaitement de niveau et en équilibre." (2)

The emancipation of the workers is not only in their own interest, but also in the interests of every other class in society, For, "Que la bourgeoisie le sache ou l'ignore, son rôle est fini . . . c'est une minorité qui trafique, qui spécule, qui agiote, une cohue . . . et elle ne peut pas renaître." (3)

"L'humanité travailleuse est seule capable d'en finir avec la guerre, en créant l'équilibre économique, ce qui suppose une révolution radicale dans les idées et dans les moeurs." (4)

Armed then, with the "idea" of their class, which is the mutualist-federalist form of society, led, perhaps, by such an elite-group as the authors of the Manifeste des Soixante who inspired Proudhon's great work on the working classes, aided by the classe moyenne (5), the workers must create the revolution by translating idea into fact.

The institutions whereby the workers rise would take place did not include, however, the trade union, the collective bargaining technique, or the strike. They were to be solely the production and exchange groupings described in his mutualist solution to the economic problem. "Coalitions ouvrières" were a negative form of organization, which tended, like the combinations of capitalist producers, to distort prices which

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(1) Ibid., p. 101.

(2) Ibid., p. 96.

(3) Ibid., pp. 100, 101.

(4) La Guerre et la Paix, p. 487.

(5) Capacité Politique, pp. 230, 236, etc.



would otherwise be determined by "libre concurrence".

Or, quel est le but des coalitions? Précisément de détruire la  
 • liberté commerciale, d'anéantir la concurrence, et de lui sub-  
 • stituer, quoi? la contrainte (1).

. . .il n'y a pas plus de droit de coalition qu'il n'y a un  
 droit du chantage, de l'escroquerie et du vol, pas plus qu'il  
 n'y a un droit de l'inceste ou de l'adultère. (2)

Further, the attempts of the workers through their unions to raise wages are doomed to failure: "Pour que la coalition soit efficace, il importe qu'elle soit unanime; . . .Espérez-vous, ouvriers, maintenir contre l'intérêt privé, contre la corruption, contre la misère, cette unanimité héroïque?"(3) But, even if one group of workers is successful the rest are likely to suffer. "Pendant qu'on exagère le revenu des uns. . . un bien plus grand nombre voit réduire presque à rien ses salaires et sa nourriture. . ."(4). It is pathetic "de voir les malheureux ouvriers. . . s'imaginer qu'en se coalisant. . . ils préviendront la réduction du salaire." (5) A wage-fund theory such as that held by Proudhon makes union activity worse than useless. And, unlike John Stuart Mill, Proudhon was never led to admit the weakness of the analysis.

Proudhon is not at his best in his discussion of trade-unions. Combined with shoddy economics, there is an insistence on strict legalism which verges on the ridiculous.

L'autorité qui fit fusiller les mineurs de Rive-de-Gier fut bien malheureuse. Mais elle agit comme l'ancien Brutus, placé entre son amour de père et son devoir de consul: il fallait sacrifier

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(1) Ibid., p. 387.

(2) Ibid., p. 386.

(3) Ibid., p. 397.

(4) Ibid., p. 144.

(5) Contradictions économiques, vol. I, p. 267.

ses enfants pour sauver la République. Brutus n'hésita pas, et la postérité n'a pas osé le condamner. (1)

Nevertheless, it is difficult to agree with Professor Schapiro that "There was a menacing tone of bitterness in his vitriolic denunciation of these movements, not present in his attacks on capitalism." (2) The quotation from the Contradictions économiques on page 25 of this essay is only one of many instances where the reverse seems rather the case. It must be remembered, too, that the alternative forms of organization which Proudhon proposes are always ones in which the workers have the central role.

Actuellement, les classes ouvrières . . . ont conçu l'idée d'une garantie qui doit les affranchir tout à la fois et du risque d'avilissement des prix et salaires, et du remède funeste des coalitions. Cette garantie consiste, d'une part, dans le principe d'association par lequel ils se préparent, sur toute la face de l'Europe, à se constituer légalement en compagnie de travailleurs, concurremment avec les entreprises bourgeoises; et d'une autre côté, dans le principe plus général encore et plus puissant de la MUTUALITE, par lequel la Démocratie ouvrière, consacrant dès à présent la solidarité de ses groupes, prélude à la reconstitution politique et économique de la société. C'est là, dans l'énergie combinée de ces deux principes, l'association et la mutualité, sur lesquels nous n'avons pas à insister davantage, que se trouve le système de garanties morales et matérielles aux quelles la civilisation aspire. (3)

With mutualism, instead of making negative attempts against trade competition, as "les auxiliaires de l'aristocratie capitaliste contre la petite industrie, le petit commerce et la petite propriété" (4), the workers will accept as their natural allies, the classe moyenne.

Professor Schapiro sees as important in the thought of Proudhon a belief in "racialism, with its division of mankind into creative and

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- (1) Ibid., Chap. VI, quoted by Proudhon in Capacité Politique, p. 380.  
 (2) Schapiro, op.cit., p. 347.  
 (3) Capacité Politique, p. 396.  
 (4) Ibid., p. 399.

sterile races." (1) If this is the case, it must necessarily be a factor in any analysis of the author's theory of social change. If, while discarding other types of social hierarchy, Proudhon wishes to emphasize one on the basis of race, this must be taken into account.

Of Proudhon's anti-Semitism there can be no doubt. Jews seem to have been inextricably linked in his thinking with the worst features of capitalist speculation and the distortion of true values; with the whole system of economic exploitation. It has been shown that the monetary and financial aspects of capitalism were the chief target of Proudhon's economic critique, and in more than one instance the word "Jew" is used as a synonym for international financier. "Ce sont les juifs usuriers, des saint-simoniennes, directeurs de femmes libres, des soudards brutaux, des pédants méprisés qui mement le pays. . ." (2). The importance of this disagreeable trait of Proudhon's can, however, be exaggerated. If we are to agree with Professor Schapiro that scattered derogatory references to Jews are the "acid test of racialism" (3) then Karl Marx and many others must be classed as 'racist' thinkers with Proudhon. It seems wiser, on the whole, to determine just what connection there is between Proudhon's angry and unpleasant classing of Jews with other elements he disliked - "jacobins, doctrinaires, jésuites" (4) and his concrete proposals and more rational judgements. This writer knows of only one instance where Proudhon singles out Jews for special treatment. Following the completion of his book La Guerre et la Paix, Proudhon, in exile in Belgium,

(1) Schapiro, op. cit., p. 359.

(2) Correspondance, vol. XII, Letter to Defontaine, 12 April, 1862, p. 55.

(3) Schapiro, op. cit., p. 359.

(4) Correspondance, XI Letter to Mathey, 29 Jan. 1862, p. 354.

found himself faced with a long and trying series of disappointments in his attempts to have the work published in France. One publisher after another first accepted, then rejected it, "par peur du parquet." Among those who let him down was the firm of Levy brothers, and, in a fit of disappointed rage, Proudhon writes, "Ces gens-là sont encore plus juifs que les Garniers (another publishing house) ne sont Normands, indigne d'exercer la profession de libraires et de jouir des privilèges de citoyens français." (1) The importance of this judgment, expressed in his private correspondance, must be weighed against the many others which occur throughout his works. In a letter to Dulieu, Proudhon firmly refuses "à admettre parmi les peuples des prédestinés et des élus." (2) In La Guerre et la Paix he recognizes with no hint of antipathy "cette pénétration mutuelles des peuples, . . . ces anastomoses, . . . des mélanges de races . . ." (3). He affirms that "L'humanité est progressive dans toutes ses générations et dans toutes ses races. . ." (4), he damns as "aussi étranger à la conscience qu'impénétrable à la raison: Dogme, Fiction, Drapeau, Symbole de secte, de parti, d'église ou de race. . ." (5) and he includes, as part of the nature of the Revolution, "the free and universal commingling of races" (6). There is no hint here of second-class citizens, of uncreative peoples.

Nevertheless, the picture presented thus far must be modified in one important respect. Given present conditions, Proudhon believes, it is incorrect to think of "des noirs comme s'ils étaient nos pairs" (7)

- (1) Correspondance, vol. XI, Letter to Châudoy, 10 May, 1861, p. 60.
- (2) Correspondance, Vol. X, Letter to Dulieu, 30 Dec., 1860, p. 273.
- (3) La Guerre et la Paix, p. 503.
- (4) Du Principe Fédératif, p. 123.
- (5) Capacité Politique, p. 201.
- (6) Idée Générale, p. 281.
- (7) La Guerre et la Paix, p. 177.

and in the case of the Negroes of the Southern States, it would be criminal "sous prétexte de les émanciper . . . à en faire une boue prolétarienne plus immonde cent fois que celle de nos capitales." (1) The state of inferiority of Negroes will perhaps not be permanent, for "Toute race doit s'améliorer, se moraliser et s'instruire." (2), but for the present at least, Proudhon believes that "le Caucasien se distingue entre tous . . . par la supériorité de la force physique, intellectuelle et morale." (3) We must conclude then, that the taint of racialism in Proudhon is undeniable, in spite of the foregoing indications to the contrary. Yet it still can be said that its importance in the whole body of his thought is almost negligible. The instances when race considerations are either completely ignored or specifically denied overwhelmingly outnumber and outweigh examples to the contrary. To the biographer who attempts to give a complete picture of the complex, contradictory character of Proudhon, the author's views on this score are relevant, but to the social scientist who wishes to isolate the major tenets of his political doctrine, their significance is slight.

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With a clearer answer to the first question proposed, "Who are the agents of social change?", it is possible now to seek an answer to the second, "Does the realignment of social forces demand violent means?" and to examine Professor Schapiro's contention that Proudhon's "hysterical praise of war . . . was an integral part of his social philosophy." which will lead directly to a full understanding of his concept of

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(1) Ibid., p. 178.

(2) Ibid., p. 179.

(3) Ibid., p. 177.

Justice. In an excellent article on "Proudhon et la Guerre", M.J.L. Puech mentions some of the varied interpretations of Proudhon's work which have, not altogether surprisingly, been made. Even Edouard Droz, a most sympathetic biographer, could explain the book only by the fact that "Proudhon était gravement malade quand il l'écrivait" (1). Edouard Dolléans reports that "Parmi les amis de Proudhon, il y eut ceux qui se fâchèrent sans retour et ne comprirent pas. Il y eut ceux qui s'étonnèrent et se scandalisent, tout d'abord, puis revinrent sur leur premier jugement. . ." Among this last group was M. Rolland, an old friend of Proudhon.

Cet ami avait écrit à Proudhon qu'il avait tremblé à la lecture des deux premiers livres dans lesquels il a cru voir une justification du Césarisme; puis, comme il s'était résigné à poursuivre, il avait commencé à 'respirer un peu au livre III.' (2)

The reason for these reactions is not hard to discover; for it is quite true that the book begins with what is aptly described by Professor Schapiro as "a hymn to war, intoned in a more passionate key than anything produced by the fascists of our time." (3) In a similar light appears, in the Contradictions économiques, the justification of monopoly, which precedes the revelation of the other aspect of that force. Proudhon's use of the antinomy does not make him any easier to understand. But it is not hard to grant him this weakness for "des paradoxes en haine du bon sens vulgaire" (4), for La Guerre et la Paix is certainly never dull.

It has been shown already that, for Proudhon, "le monde de la

- 
- (1) Edouard Droz - Letter to Georges Guy Grand, quoted by J.L. Puech in Proudhon et notre temps, p. 205.  
 (2) Edouard Dolléans, op.cit., p. 383.  
 (3) Schapiro, op. cit., p. 360.  
 (4) J.L. Puech, loc.cit., p. 205.

société, de même que le monde de la nature, est établi sur des forces."(1)  
 In La Guerre et la Paix, Proudhon tries to define exactly the meaning of the word force itself, to study it as a phenomenon in society, to determine precisely its role. He maintains that there is a right of force which is basic to all other human rights. In the past, men "n'ont compris de la force que la violence et l'abus" (2) while, in reality, it is "la première en date des facultés humaines." It has "son droit comme toute autre (faculté), et comme toute autre, elle peut être appelée à faire la loi." (3) Democrats should be the last ones to deny the right of force, for "par l'avènement de la démocratie, il (le principe de la force) en devient droit du nombre ou de la majorité"(4), "le principe parlementaire des majorités; n'est-ce pas encore, et toujours, la raison de la force?" (5) Historically, then, the right of war must be recognized if the right of force is admitted, for war is simply

La revendication et la démonstration par les armes du droit de la force(6).

La Guerre, comme le temps et l'espace, comme le beau, le juste et l'utile, est une forme de notre raison, une loi de notre âme, une condition de notre existence. (7)

C'est la forme première que revêt en nous l'antagonisme, loi de l'humanité aussi bien que de la nature, indispensable au mouvement social. (8)

But this is only half the picture; only one pole of the antinomy has been revealed. For while

- (1) La Guerre et la Paix, p. 477.
- (2) Ibid., p. 133.
- (3) Ibid., p. 134.
- (4) Ibid., p. 186.
- (5) Ibid., p. 40.
- (6) Ibid., p. 142.
- (7) Ibid., p. 28.
- (8) Ibid., p. 496.

Conçue comme jugement de la force, la guerre est sublime; . . .  
Ramenée à sa cause première, il n'est pas d'iniquité dont elle  
ne soit souillée: Semblable de visage à l'archange elle porte écrit  
sur son bouclier le nom de Dieu; elle a les pieds et la queue du  
dragon. (1)

The "cause première" of war is poverty; war is debased and brutalized  
when it is seen as mere search for loot. It becomes an evasion of the  
primary economic problem. Thus, in exactly the same way that competition  
under laissez-faire capitalism is the abuse of a basically good, necessary  
idea, so is war - which will submit itself to no rules, which plunders,  
demands retribution, assassins - simply the perversion of the right  
of force, which is an incontestably just and lawful principle. Thus  
"jusqu'à la constitution du droit économique, . . . la guerre n'a plus  
rien à faire sur le globe." (2) But to do away with war completely would  
be fatal, for war

est entièrement à l'humanité et doit durer autant qu'elle . . .  
Les mêmes causes organiques et animiques qui créent entre nous la  
contradiction et l'antagonisme veulent que cet antagonisme soit  
éternel. . . . (3)

. . . la société, pour se conserver digne, morale, pure, généreuse,  
voire même laborieuse, devait, avant tout, se tenir à l'état antagon-  
ique, à l'état de guerre. . . (4)

The solution is "non point. . . une abolition, mais . . . une transforma-  
tion de la guerre" (5). War transformed can co-exist with peace, to-  
gether they "se complètent et se soutiennent, comme les termes inverses,  
mais adéquats et inséparables, d'une antinomie." (6) The gain will be  
great, for the new form of antagonism

- (1) Ibid., p. 441.
- (2) Ibid., p. 465.
- (3) Ibid., p. 55.
- (4) Ibid., p. 46.
- (5) Ibid., p. 50.
- (6) Ibid., p. 64.



n'a pas pour but une destruction pure et simple, une consommation improductive, l'extermination pour l'extermination; il a pour but la production d'un ordre supérieur, d'un perfectionnement sans fin. Sous ce rapport, il faut reconnaître que le travail offre à l'antagonisme un champ d'opérations bien autrement vaste et fécond que la guerre. (1)

Antagonism is to be removed from a military sphere, and will become the source of creative growth in society. War must mean "la lutte des forces, non leur destruction; la lutte des hommes, non leur extermination." (2)

It is not strange, then, that Proudhon denies having counselled either "le révolte ou la resignation. Loin de moi . . . tout ferment de haine et de guerre civile. . ." (3) Towards the revolution "la transition peut être aussi insensible que l'on voudra," (4) but if it is too slow, there is danger.

To add to grievances and . . . to bottle up revolutionary force by repression, is to condemn oneself to clearing in one bound the distance that prudence counsels us to pass over gradually, and to substitute progress by leaps and jerks for a continuous advance. (5)

War, the struggle of force against force, is no bloody battle of the streets. The word, for Proudhon, has a much more profound significance:

La guerre, en effet. . . est la réunion en une seule nature de ces trois radicaux: la force, principe de mouvement et de vie. . . ; l'antagonisme, action, réaction, loi universelle du monde . . . ; la justice, faculté souveraine de l'âme, principe de notre raison pratique, et qui se manifeste dans la nature par l'équilibre. (6)

The entire discussion of war and peace is primarily "une belle application . . . de ma théorie de la Justice." (7)

To complete an understanding of the system through which antagonistic

(1) Ibid., p. 483.

(2) Ibid., p. 482.

(3) Capacité Politique, p. 237.

(4) Du Principe Fédératif, p. 176.

(5) Idée Générale, p. 14.

(6) La Guerre et la Paix, pp. 489, 490.

(7) Correspondance, vol. XI, 23 April, 1861, p. 26.

social forces interact, Justice must be studied and defined. From the outset of his literary career, Proudhon's preoccupation with this concept is revealed. As with the rest of his thought, there is growth and development here. And even at the end of his life, Justice remains a complex, many-sided notion. To Justice, Proudhon consecrated the six volumes of De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Eglise, and it is largely from these pages that the developed idea must be derived.

One aspect of Justice depends on Proudhon's conception of human nature. Each individual, we have seen, is a source of force, and in society, the totality of individual forces interact with tense antagonism. If Proudhon had stopped there, the analogy with Hobbes' state of nature would be close, but, "La théorie de Hobbes est fausse". For man is endowed not only with his force as an individual with its propensity for antagonistic self-assertion, but also with another overriding faculty - Justice; "notre mobile suprême n'est pas l'égoïsme: ce n'est pas le conservation de notre corps . . . ce n'est pas notre intérêt bien ou mal entendu." (1) Justice "la faculté prépondérante de l'âme" (2) enables man "de sentir sa dignité dans la personne de son semblable comme dans sa propre personne". (3). Justice, "inné à l'humanité" (4) ". . . est le respect, spontanément éprouvé et réciproquement garanti, de la dignité humain. . ." (5) It is by reason of this attribute that man "discerne nettement le bien du mal, et que ce discernement est la plus certaine de ses connaissances." (6)

- (1) La Guerre et la Paix, p. 491.
- (2) De la Justice, vol. 3, p. 141.
- (3) Ibid., vol. I, p. 224.
- (4) Ibid., vol. I, p. 227.
- (5) Ibid., vol. I, p. 225.
- (6) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 141.

While, justice is a faculty of each individual, part of his personal make-up, it is immediately evident that its expression relates entirely to the social nature of man's existence: "L'individu est immergé dans la société" (1). Thus Justice can be seen also as the social effect of this part of the individual's nature which orders and regulates egoistic force. In this sense, Justice is social equilibrium. But it has been shown, that the individual's rapprochement with society is not always, or even usually, qua individual. For each man's personal force may be merged in a "force collective" superior to the sum of the individual forces. Again, Justice describes the ordered relationship of these collective forces. The interaction of groups, in creative antagonism is the basis of a just society. In this sense, Justice can be seen in its relation to law. "Justice is not the work of the law; on the contrary the law is only a declaration and application of justice in all circumstances where men are liable to come into contact." (2)

The expression of Justice in the era after Revolution must be, then, "le droit. . . définitivement constitué, universalisé et réalisé . . . la reconnaissance du droit économique. . ." (3) The war of social forces under law, and with the reciprocal recognition of rights, results in equilibrium, which is justice.

But the concept can be even further extended - extended to the point where it simply becomes a synonym for the ideal ordering of any aspect of nature as well as society. In the realm of the universal as well as in the world of man

- (1) Ibid., vol. 2, p. 10.
- (2) First Memoir on Property, p. 27.
- (3) La Guerre et la Paix, p. 492.

. . . le centre s'appelle Justice, harmonie, équilibre, balance, égalité. . . Peu importe que nous prenions notre point de départ sous tel méridien ou tel parallèle, à l'équateur ou au pôle; que nous commençons par l'économie politique plutôt que par la logique, par l'esthétique et la morale, plutôt que par la numération et la grammaire. . . C'est toujours la raison supérieure des choses que nous cherchons, c'est à dire le rapport direct de chaque chose avec la Justice. . . (1).

La Justice, . . . sous des noms divers, gouverne le monde, nature et humanité, science et conscience, logique et moral, économie politique, politique, histoire, littérature et art. (2).

It is to this last extension of the concept of Justice, where it becomes the "idée princesse" (3) of the universe, that such writers as Georges Gurvitch (4) object, and Henri de Lubac, S.J. (5) adhere with emphasis. For Justice in this sense can no longer be said to be "immanent . . . au coeur de l'homme." (6) It is rather an absolute, seemingly transcendent value, an ideal to which "tout se subordonne. . . , tout . . . sert, tout se fait à son commandement." (7) M. Gurvitch believes that the idea of Justice should be reserved, as it frequently is in Proudhon, to legal and social relations among men, that its extension to a universal plane eliminates the basis of immanence which he regards as all-important. M. de Lubac, on the other hand, has assembled weighty internal evidence which prohibits a summary ruling out of "ultra-physical transcendancy".

Yet there is a way of looking at the problem which permits the retention of the idea of immanence even on the universal plane. In nature there exist absolute laws, which describe the necessary modes of

- (1) De la Justice, vol. I, p. 49.
- (2) Ibid., vol. I, p. 44.
- (3) Ibid., vol. I, p. 33.
- (4) Georges Gurvitch, op.cit., pp. 371-373.
- (5) Henri de Lubac, op.cit., pp. 278.
- (6) De la Justice, vol. I, p. 42.
- (7) Ibid., vol. 2, p. 104.

interaction of natural forces. Just as the existence of these forces is eternal, as they are part of the very nature of reality, so are the forms of complex movements which relate them. These laws are immanent in reality, just as the laws of society are immanent in man's social existence. Thus, Proudhon can say, "Le peuple aspire à. . . des lois absolues, immanentes, comme celles que la science découvre tous les jours dans l'univers. La science, la vérité, positive, objective, juridique, en tout et par tout est son idéal." (1) The existence of absolutes in terms of laws of motion, then, necessarily means that there exists an absolutely ideal pattern for their operation together. Justice, seen as the ideal ordering of natural forces, is immanent in Nature. Justice, seen as the ideal ordering of human relations is at the same time immanent in society and an ideal to which men strive through the study of the forces which must be ordered for its realization. Certainly no idea of Providential intervention, whether continuous or simply initial seems required to bolster Proudhon's concept, and it is the author's expressed intention to provide a substitute for Grace. Nor need there be real inconsistency between the idea of absolute forces and laws and a belief in continual "becoming"; an idea of incessant creation in which the role of humanity is of paramount importance.

But Proudhon's theory of progress must be examined before we can obtain a precise idea of his position.

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(1) Ibid., vol. 2, p. 86.

## CHAPTER V - THE THEORY OF PROGRESS

The economist frequently looks at change from a number of different points of view. He may, for instance, construct a model which is essentially timeless. In this type of static equilibrium analysis, he is able to observe the market situation free of certain frictions, changes in technique and other phenomena of a dynamic nature. The market is taken out of time, into a realm where action and reaction take place instantly and effortlessly. This type of analysis is a logical tool which enables him to abstract from the "causal sequence in time", an essential attribute of reality, and determine an equilibrium position by means of a priori argument from certain limited assumptions. (1)

The analysis of change in this sense has proved most revealing for certain problems of the short period, as it gives a picture, highly abstract of necessity, of the interplay of economic forces according to the laws deemed proper to them. The idea of cause in the temporal sense can be ignored - the forces given, they will work themselves out into a pattern of equilibrium. That is all the information which this type of analysis attempts to provide.

For a satisfactory long-run theory of economic development, however, the "causal sequence in time" cannot be avoided. The economist must isolate from a complex of forces those which are essential to the truly temporal process. In a dynamic model such as this, time is defined in terms of the flow of events resulting from a given phenomenon, which is isolated as cause. The causal element selected may vary

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(1) See B.S. Keirstead - The Theory of Economic Change, The MacMillan Company of Canada, Limited, Toronto, 1948, Chapters 3 & 6, especially.

according to the viewpoint of the particular economist - innovations, population change, war, have all had their proponents. The process of change, too, may be seen in many ways - as progressive, cyclical, retrogressive, or simply irregular.

Midway between static and dynamic analysis, however, there is another way of dealing with economic change, which has been termed "comparative statics." In a series of like models, slight changes are made in the parameters and the changes in the equilibrium position which result are noted. The nature of the time process which would be involved in a real movement from one equilibrium point to another, however, is ignored.

A study of the theory of social change in Proudhon seemed to demand analysis in a manner analogous to all three types of economic model. Proudhon's system was described by the author himself as an attempt to apply the laws of economics to society as a whole, and he adopted the analytical tools which were being developed at the same time by economists. There is at least a superficial resemblance between the General Equilibrium of Walras, to whom Proudhon occasionally refers, and the latter's view of the static interaction of economic and political phenomena.

Regardless of the degree of sophistication in regard to the time factor attained by Proudhon himself, however, the classifications of static analysis, comparative statics, and dynamic analysis may be useful in an attempt to isolate his different ideas on social change. Up to this point, the ideas presented are best seen as belonging to the

first two categories. The social group and particularly the workers' production and exchange associations have a role in the Proudhonian social model analogous to that of the firm in a purely economic one. Proudhon is concerned with a general equilibrium in which the forces engendered by the groups themselves and by their relationships to one another are balanced. The laws of interaction are described in the ideas of the antinomy, of antagonism and of contractual reciprocity, and equilibrium is postulated as the result of a just, lawful ordering. When a change from one situation to another has been described, the economic analogy is "comparative statics." Thus the historical balance between authority and liberty, which Proudhon describes in Du Principe Fédératif (noted briefly above, pp.30 and 31 ) is seen as being disturbed at different periods, and consequently, a new equilibrium position adopted. In this manner, the transition from a patriarchal to a monarchical system is marked by a new equilibrium in which authority cedes ground to liberty because the prince "se fait assister par des conseillers, officiers ou ministres choisis par lui, et qui agissent en son lieu et place . . ." (1). There is a change in a parameter, - the increase in the number of subjects over which the prince must rule - which leads to a shift in the balance of political forces, but it would be stretching the significance which Proudhon attaches to a change in population here to deem it a true temporal cause of any importance.

Proudhon does describe, however, a really dynamic pattern of social

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(1) Du Principe Fédératif, p. 62.



change and, with an understanding of it, it may seem convenient to regard his suggestions of economic determinism, of monetary causation, etc., as exercises in comparative statics rather than features of a theory of social change in time, a theory of progress.

. . . . .

Proudhon's theory of the progress of society sees in man the basic dynamic force. Man's will, freely operating within the framework of social forces, and his sense of justice and its growth, are the causal element in the movement of civilizations. The specification of a human agency rather than a material or transcendent one is not surprising, considering the definition of human justice as immanent in society. Père de Lubac, recognizing that such citations as "La Justice est humaine, tout humaine, rien qu'humaine: . . . La Justice a son siège dans l'humanité, elle est progressive et indefectible dans l'humanité, parce qu'elle est de l'humanité." (1) are strong evidence against transcendentalism nevertheless believes that "A text such as that, however, does not suppress all the others in which Proudhon expressly refused to hold humanity as adorable, whereas he states that he adores Justice." (2) While it is quite true that the adoration of humanity as it exists is repugnant to Proudhon, there are instances enough where he considers that all that is worthy of adoration has a human source. "Ainsi, ce que nous affirmons, cherchons, adorons comme Dieu, n'est autre chose que l'essence pure de l'humanité, la nature sociale et la nature individuelle indivisiblement unies. . . ." (3).

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(1) De la Justice, vol. I, p. 142.

(2) de Lubac, op.cit., p. 284.

(3) Philosophie du Progrès, p. 72.

Admittedly, ". . . l'Humanité, essentiellement perfectible, jamais parfaite, restant constamment au-dessous de sa propre idée, reste par conséquent toujours au-dessous de l'adoration. . ." (1); but the conclusion is that man must replace the "culte de l'Etre prétendu suprême par la culture de l'Humanité." (2) The difference between ideal Justice, and the approximation of it which is actually realized at any time, is great - but, as we shall see, the source of the ideal is still human.

Actually, Proudhon's definition of Justice requires of him a theory of progress. For, if man has within him a faculty which enables him to perceive right from wrong in his dealings with his fellow men, why is the social order not immediately perfected? If the idea of Justice is to replace the God of a transcendent system, there is as much need for a secular theodicy as there was for one in religious terms. An explanation, first of the necessity for a lapse of time before the attainment of ideal Justice, and, second, of the existence of sin and thus of historical transitions between progress and decadence, is required of Proudhon if his social theory is to be self-consistent.

There are other necessary consequences of the position thus far adopted. If Justice, essentially human, is the supreme dynamic in the Proudhonian theory of temporal change, man's freedom of action, the effectiveness of his will, must be great. Prior to the writing of De la Justice the role of human will was narrower than that assigned to it in the works of the mature period. He says of liberty, that its

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(1) Ibid., p. 73.

(2) Ibid., p. 74.

destination . . . est de procurer, dans une certaine sphère, l'accomplissement de la fatalité. . . (1)

L'homme, doué d'activité et d'intelligence, a le pouvoir de troubler l'ordre du monde, dont il fait partie. Mais tous ses écarts ont été prévus, et s'accomplissent dans certaines limites qui, après un certain nombre d'allées et venues, ramènent l'homme à l'ordre. C'est d'après ces oscillations de la liberté que l'on peut déterminer le rôle de l'humanité dans le monde. . . (2).

Although he can say that "La machine est le symbole de la liberté humaine, l'insigne de notre domination sur la nature. . ." (3), he hastens to insist that "il faut conclure que la liberté est d'autant plus parfaite qu'elle se détermine plus conformément aux lois de la raison, qui sont celles des choses." (4) His attitude has not changed from that expressed in the Création de l'Ordre where "le progrès . . . obéit à des lois différentes, données par la nature même des choses." (5) The influence of human will as a creative force is almost negligible. The universe, human society included, is in a state of growth and development to which man can only conform, as his understanding of the process increases. Proudhon's later repudiation of this evolutionary view is made in no uncertain terms: "J'avoue que j'ai été autre fois dupe de ce bilboquet physiologico-politique", which makes out that "le civilization ne fait que continuer l'échelle des êtres, que la Nature a conçus et organisés selon une série ascendante: . . ." (6). He sees this former idea of his as inconsistent with the continuous process of creation:

"la création est virtuellement infinie, dans son étendue, dans sa

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- (1) Contradictions économiques, vol. I, p. 387.
  - (2) Ibid., pp. 387-388.
  - (3) Ibid., p. 174.
  - (4) Ibid., p. 178, my italics.
  - (5) Création de l'Ordre, p. 299.
  - (6) De la Justice, Vol. III, p. 255.

durée et dans ses formes. (1)

Rien ne subsiste, disaient les anciens sages: tout change, tout coule, tout devient; par conséquent encore tout est opposition, balancement, équilibre dans l'univers. . . (2).

Il n'y a de fixe et d'éternel que les lois même du mouvement. . . (3).

Thus

indépendamment des évolutions organiques constatées, et qui toutes relèvent des nécessités de la nature, de notre constitution intellectuelle et sociale, il y a lieu de croire qu'il existe dans l'humanité un mouvement plus profond, qui embrasse tous les autres et les modifie: ce mouvement est celui de la liberté et de la Justice. (4)

Neither the idea of free will nor that of necessity alone is sufficient.

Liberty,

comme la nécessité elle-même. . . est frappé d'antinomie, ce qui veut dire que seul il ne suffit non plus à l'explication de l'homme et de la nature. . . Ainsi la nécessité et la liberté, antithétiquement unies, sont. . . la condition essentielle de toute existence, de tout mouvement. . . (5).

To be consistent, then, with both human liberty and the paramount importance of Justice, the essential element in social dynamics must be "un phénomène de l'ordre moral, dont le mouvement s'irradie ensuite, soit pour le bien, soit pour le mal, sur toutes les facultés de l'être humain, collectif et individuel." (6)

In summary, we can do no better than refer to the conditions which Proudhon himself sets for "une théorie du progrès. . . complète et vrai."

This theory must:

a. Prendre son point de départ dans la liberté et la Justice, et s'étendre de là à toutes les facultés de l'homme collectif et individuel: . . .

(1) Ibid., vol. I, p. 51.

(2) Philosophie du Progrès, p. 42.

(3) Ibid., p. 49.

(4) De la Justice, vol. 3, p. 270.

(5) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 239.

(6) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 271.

b. Montrer le progrès affranchi de toute fatalité, comme le libre arbitre et la Justice;

c. Présenter un développement accéléré, non un mouvement évolutif, parabolique ou concentrique: ce qui, impliquant une influence extérieure, ferait toujours du progrès un pur fatalisme;

d. Enfin, donner l'explication du péché, et par suite de toutes les décadences et rétrogradations sociales. (1)

The only considerations which Proudhon neglects to list above, he has already posed and answered in a previous volume. The problem, which we have already seen, is the reconciliation of the three different factors: the absolute ideal of justice, justice as immanent in society, and continuous movement. It would seem, that

si le centre ou pivot de la philosophie, à savoir la Justice, est, comme cela doit être, invariable et fixe, le système des choses, qui, en fait et en droit, repose sur ce centre, doit être aussi défini en lui-même, par conséquent fixe dans son ensemble et tendant à l'immutabilité. (2)

We have already noted that in nature, all is movement and creation save only the laws and forces of movement themselves, and it is this that enables Proudhon to ask "Pourquoi y aurait-il un commencement au monde? pourquoi une fin? La raison n'en voit pas la nécessité, elle y répugne." (3) Justice in this extended sense is compatible with eternal motion. But in the human sphere, Justice is again an absolute, yet its source is humanity - a humanity which has certainly not achieved true Justice. The solution has already been indicated.

Le PROGRES reste. . . la loi de notre âme, non pas en ce sens seulement que par le perfectionnement de nous-mêmes, nous devons approcher sans cesse de l'absolue Justice et de l'idéal; mais en ce sens que l'Humanité se renouvelant et se développant sans fin, comme la création elle-même, l'idéal de Justice . . . que nous avons

(1) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 245.

(2) De la Justice, vol. I, p. 49.

(3) Ibid., vol. I, p. 52.

à réaliser change et s'agrandit toujours. (1)

Justice, then, always a difficult word with Proudhon, can have three separate meanings, even in its limited sense, as social Justice. It can refer to (i) an absolute ideal, unknown and unknowable in full, but its existence deducible from the nature of humanity, from man seen teleologically, (ii) the ideal of justice, an approximation of the absolute, towards which men strive at any given period, (iii) the realization of justice in the actual relations of men at any given period.

The degree of realization of justice, "a pour mesure le nombre des lois qui s'observent. . ."; when "le bien s'ajoutant au bien en raison du nombre des personnes comprises dans le pacte, et de la multiplicité des intérêts régis par le pacte, le règne de la Justice s'étendant sans cesse, il y a nécessairement progrès." (2) The progress of Justice is seen in the extension of "la pacte de la liberté" (3). Justice in this dynamic sense relates at once to what we have learned of the concept previously. It involves as always the understanding and equilibrating of social forces in antagonistic tension, but its movement consists in conscious decisions to bring ever wider areas of human interaction into the ordered, guaranteed, mutualist regime.

The vision which spurs men to the realization of higher and higher degrees of Justice is the ideal which he holds within him of Justice, and there is continual interaction between the real and the ideal. Given a certain set of social conditions, man sees in them the possibility

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(1) Ibid., vol. I, p. 51.  
 (2) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 273.  
 (3) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 272.

of improvement, and sets about its realization. As reality begins to resemble more and more the ideal, however, the latter itself changes; it expands and approaches closer to the unattainable absolute.

The importance of the "ideal" or the "idea" in Proudhon cannot be overemphasized, especially in his latter works. The fact that the future lies with the workers is explained in these terms almost entirely.

Toute société se forme, se réforme, ou se transforme à l'aide d'une idée. (1)

Le principe . . . de la nécessité pour une collectivité humaine, caste, corporation ou race, d'avoir conscience, soit pour se constituer en Etat, soit pour participer au gouvernement de la société dont elle fait partie et s'élever à la vie politique, peut être considéré comme un loi générale . . . (2).

But "ce qui constitue la capacité politique n'est pas seulement la conscience, c'est aussi l'Idee. . ." (3). While "la bourgeoisie . . . avait commencé à perdre le sentiment d'elle-même," and while "son idée est épuisée" (4), the workers are just beginning to become clearly conscious of their role. They are beginning to seize their Idea, and

Le jour où les masses travailleuses auront acquis la notion claire du principe qui dans ce moment les agite, où la conscience s'en sera pénétrée, où elles en auront fait hautement profession, toute abrogation du régime institué par elles deviendra impossible: ce serait une contradiction. La mutualité . . . est la Justice. (5)

The link between real and ideal remains close, however:

Tout ce que fait émerger successivement dans la société la loi du Progrès a ses racines dans la nature même. La civilisation marche enveloppée de ses principes, précédée et suivie de son cortège d'idées, qui font incessamment le ronde autour d'elle. (6)

(1) Capacité Politique, p. 127.

(2) Ibid., p. 97 & 98.

(3) Ibid., p. 223.

(4) Ibid., p. 223.

(5) Ibid., p. 195.

(6) Du Principe Fédératif, p. 124.

The ideal has its source "au plus profond de l'âme" and "il se développe par l'action de la liberté" (1); "l'homme; en vertu de sa liberté, produit son idéal. . ." (2). With this capacity to create an ideal, he transforms reality. "Ce que nous aimons dans les objets de notre affections, dans nos jouissances, dans les personnes qui sont chères, c'est l'idéal que nous savons y mettre ou plutôt que notre imagination y découvre." (3) This ability to idealize reaches its highest when the ideal of Justice itself is formed:

La Justice n'est pas un objet d'idéalisation comme un autre; elle est le pivot de tout poésie et de tout art, autour duquel les autres créations de l'idéal apparaissent comme des manifestations secondaires, subordonnées à la Justice, comme des moyens à leur fin. (4)

The very ideal of Justice itself, however, cannot be formed in

vacuo:

Pour que la Justice occupe constamment la première place dans notre estime, pour qu'elle soit toujours le commencement et la fin de nos affections, in principio laetitiae nostrae, il y a une condition à remplir: c'est que nous recherchions continuellement la règle du droit, ce qui ne peut se faire que par un effort assidu de notre intelligence et de notre volonté. En effet . . . d'une côté le mouvement social nous offre sans cesse de nouveaux rapports juridiques à déterminer; de l'autre, si le libre arbitre dépasse la nature, il ne la crée pas, il le suppose; il ne produit son idéal que sur le fondement d'une réalité certaine. Sans une matière donnée, la liberté reste vide, inactive, insignifiante ou se jette dans la frivolité et l'utopie. L'idéal, bien qu'il dépasse la raison des choses, n'existe pas sans cette raison; bien plus, il lui est proportionnel. (5)

The theory of progress seems clear up to this point, but there still remains the problem of sin, the problem of trends towards decadence.

(1) De la Justice, vol. 3, p. 283.

(2) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 285.

(3) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 282.

(4) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 285.

(5) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 286. Proudhon is very close, here, to his position in Contradictions économiques where he denies being either a realist or an idealist, rather seeing a "développement parallèle de la réalité et de l'idée". vol. I. p. 169.



Just as man's progress depends on his freedom from fatality, so his periodic falls are a result of his liberty. "La seule puissance capable de faire échec à la Justice est la liberté. . ."(1). Trouble occurs when the reality which man attempts to mould in the shape of his ideal proves stubborn. When results do not fulfill his expectations,

D'abord par suite du mouvement politique, économique et social, et de l'inévitable imperfection de la loi, la Justice . . . est nécessairement fautive, et bientôt en retard; d'où il résulte, que l'Etat, . . . est un faux type, un vain simulacre . . . la foi détruite, au respect succède donc le mépris . . . alors, c'est fait de la société: elle tourne à la décadence, et ne peut se relever que par une révolution. (2)

Lack of faith in Justice leads to lack of faith in society, and man's ideal becomes selfish and egoistic, rather than human and social.

"L'idée d'une pure Justice . . . rest au fond de l'âme comme une illusion perdue . . ."(3), and in its place men set up the rule of self-interest.

Proudhon saw the 19th Century as such an era of decadence, but

déjà les idées ont repris l'essor; le droit de l'homme et du citoyen s'affirme avec une intelligence qui n'eut jamais d'égale, et cette grande crise du dix-neuvième siècle passée, nous pouvons espérer de voir la Justice suivre son cours, sans éprouver aucune éclipse, pendant le reste des siècles. (4)

It is worth emphasizing that this vision of the reign of Justice is quite different from the apocalyptic visions of most socialists. It must be remembered that Justice involves legalized struggles, multiplication of tense relationships, stern morality. It will mean that "le travail. . . est . . . glorifié à l'égal de la vertu . . ."(5), but there is hard work nevertheless. "Labour, along with love, is the most secret, the

(1) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 277.

(2) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 289-90.

(3) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 292.

(4) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 296.

(5) La Guerre et la Paix, p. 485.

most sacred, function of man. . ."(1). And, justice ruling or not, it must never be forgotten that incessant changes and movement are necessary and inevitable.

Actually, in the earlier Philosophie du Progrès, Proudhon was a little less optimistic about the possibilities of eliminating the "eclipses" of justice which tend to take place. Rather, he saw a likelihood that the amplitude of the oscillation between just and unjust on the path towards the ideal, the realization of man's capacities in their fullest, would decrease (2).

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(1) Idée Générale, p. 88.

(2) Philosophie du Progrès, p. 85.

## CHAPTER VI - CONCLUSIONS

Did Proudhon develop a consistent theory of social change? The preceding pages have given evidence of a thinker whose mind was never at rest, who gloried in paradoxes, who tended to express every idea with the same incisive vigour. By no flight of the imagination could anyone reconcile all the contradictions, intended or accidental, in Proudhon's thought, and certainly no such attempt will be made here. Yet it is still possible that beneath the confused, choppy surface of his thinking there is a moving tide with both strength and direction. A review of some of the major difficulties, however, must precede the endeavour to discover an underlying consistency.

Basic to any theory of social change must be a clearly defined role for human will. Here Proudhon leaves something to be desired, in that there was a noticeable transition from his early ideas in the Création de l'Ordre, through Contradictions économiques and the Philosophie du Progrès, until de la Justice. But this is not surprising and cannot be regarded as a serious weakness - rather the opposite. What is significant is that the final position is adequate to the rest of his thought and in itself consistent. Proudhon, with negligible exceptions, does not lapse again into the rejected idea of organic growth, little influenced by man's intentions. Although economic and political forces will always have to be taken into account before any decision can be realized, they are not the determining factors.

Actually it can safely be said that Proudhon was at no time an economic determinist or any other kind of determinist. The human factor

is always far too important; there is little of the automatic even in the ordering of forces in the static sense. Human will is limited in its scope by the nature of social forces and by their laws of motion, but conscious decision is nevertheless necessary at every stage. The will is far more effective when it is equipped with a thorough understanding of nature and society, but understanding can never lead to quiescence; it results rather in better-directed action. In the dynamic sense, it is man who must reveal the new pattern which is immanent in society, by forming from it an ideal towards which he can strive. Even the absolute ideal which Proudhon postulates does not transcend man in society, but is simply a necessary consequence of social existence. Nor does this apply only to the later ideas of Proudhon. Even in the memoirs on property from which the evidence in support of economic determinism is largely culled, the tenor of the book as a whole necessitates the inclusion of the human, moral factor as of primary importance. Isolated quotations from as forceful and dramatic a writer as Proudhon mean even less than usual.

For these reasons, then, it has been considered justifiable to isolate human will as the real causal dynamic in the developed Proudhonian system of social change and it was perhaps permissible to draw the analogy with "comparative statics" in economics when this significant variable could not be discerned in some of his discussions of change.

More serious difficulties arise, however, when we try to find the precise means by which human will is exerted. It is the contention of this thesis that the interaction of independent social groups, sources of

collective reason and force, operating in the milieu described as federalism and mutualism, is the key concept in this connection.

But it must be recognized that the social group is by no means the only agency by which human will is deemed expressible by Proudhon, nor is the free interaction of these groups the only means for its assertion. Proudhon tends to vitiate the concept in three ways. First, by emphasizing other social agents; secondly, by postulating patterns other than free, mutual group interplay for the action of the will; and thirdly, by not infrequent attacks on the idea of the group or association itself.

On the first point, we have noted the idea of the great men or the hero as an agent of change. Proudhon's respect for law and for a just order led him sometimes to admire men who were instrumental in bringing them about. And up until 1852 he seemed to think that a leader might, almost unwittingly, create the conditions which were required for the emergence of a new social order. At the time of writing the Révolution démontrée par le Coup d'Etat, however, the note of desperate optimism rather than rational thought predominates quite clearly. This marks the end of the period where concentration on the nature of the forces of society themselves tended occasionally to give rise to inconsistencies as to the *précise* means by which they might be ordered. Certainly Proudhon is no less consistent than those of his contemporaries whose stands he reversed. While they began with opposition and soon were reconciled, Proudhon, typically enough, chose the opposite course.

The importance of elite groups is greater. The mass, as an undiff-

erentiated whole, he never regarded as creative. And, at any rate, until society was differently organized, he believed that only a few people would be able to form the ideal, to grasp the "idea", which a changed society must realize. But this elite does not drag along unwilling mobs, it rather crystallizes their aspirations. It explains, inspires, leads, but as a part of society, not as a select group above it.

Though perhaps not as much at variance with other elements of Proudhonian thought as some writers have made them out to be, the hero and elite ideas cannot be said to fit happily into a consistent theory. Inevitably, they smack of the idea of authority, which Proudhon elsewhere takes such pains to destroy. The influence of Christian thought is here profound. Much of his hatred and dread of state authority is derived from the Augustinian explanation of political power as a necessary result of man's innate sinfulness. By his rejection of the state's right to supreme power, Proudhon denies this explanation of the nature of man, yet the idea has been planted so firmly that it crops up again in other forms. Free interaction may not always be effective, groups of men may not be capable of forming their ideal - they may have to be forced, by a leader or an elite, into a state where they will be free and creative. Authority is linked with sin, and when Proudhon's confidence in mankind is at an ebb, then the role of authority is at flood. This basic lack of assuredness in Proudhon cannot be resolved by an abstract balancing of authority and liberty, as Proudhon attempts to do in Du Principe Fédératif. And indeed, this is not a particularly satisfying section in his writings.

The third difficulty - the attacks on association - has been dealt

with more fully in the body of this thesis. Proudhon never finally reached an effective compromise between his strong petit-bourgeois individualism and his realization of the necessity for collective action. Both extreme individualism and a liking for the small community are traditional values of the rural Frenchman. In Proudhon, however, they were at war until the end.

With the recognition of these deviations from the pattern which we have singled out for emphasis, some justification must be given for regarding them as of lesser importance. This justification can only be that they are far less compatible with certain other essential elements in Proudhonian thought that the idea of groups in tense equilibrium which has been deemed most significant. Thus we must now attempt to trace these threads of real consistency which run throughout his writings.

The first of these is the analysis of social forces. The antinomy concept was retained from his early works to the end of his life. From it developed the idea of multiple equilibrium. The relationship between forces was expanded into the idea of creative antagonism in La Guerre et la Paix. Any force acting unchecked results in as much harm as good. Each must be balanced by another for the creation of order.

Again, the idea that the creation of order in Society is the essential problem continues throughout his work. Order involves law, which must be crystallized consciously from the society in which it is immanent.

The truly ordered society is the just society, and in the concept of Justice, which begins its development with Proudhon's first writing,

is summed up all that is basic to his social thinking. The capacity for justice, the faculty of justice, is innate in each human being. It is expressed in society by the balancing of social forces, by the free working out under law of an equilibrium position. The idea of balance necessarily implies equality, but an equality which is never identity - whether of function or remuneration. It simply means that each individual and each grouping of individuals is of equal importance and has the same weight in determining the nature of the whole.

If these are the most consistent elements in the Proudhonian pattern, it is the idea of the autonomous competing group, as the chief social unit, which fits best to them and makes it possible to regard the whole as a fairly coherent theory. The isolated individual cannot cope with, cannot be reconciled effectively with, the strong pressures of social forces; his helplessness in the anarchy of laissez-faire is all too evident. Similarly, the leader and the elite are not compatible with the equality, the law, and the freedom of Justice. That this theory involves selection and rejection from the mass of Proudhonian ideas will be readily admitted, but it does seem arguable that it follows the main lines of Proudhon's thinking. Notwithstanding contradictory indications, then, it seems possible to say that there is a theory of social change in the writings of Proudhon.

Having stated this point, however, it must again be made clear that Proudhon did not, in any work, propound such a theory in an integrated, rounded form. De la Justice comes closest to such a precise statement, and, indeed, it must unquestionably be regarded as his greatest work.



Yet it does much more than outline the elements of a theory of social change. Combined in it are studies in economics, politics, philosophy and sociology, and the whole is incongruously stated in the form of an anti-clerical polemic. Nor, as usual, is it free from overstatement, confusion and contradiction. All that can be safely maintained, then, is that within the wide-ranging works which were the sources for this thesis, the theory of social change which has been described is an important and recurrent subject, and one which is not unamenable to coherent presentation.

In conclusion, the relevance of Proudhon's thought for contemporary society deserves a word. It was stated in the first chapter that a study of Proudhon might well shed light on the problems of the petit-bourgeois. Their place in society is certainly one of his main concerns and his proposals never ignore their interests. The pluralistic society of Proudhon replaces class differentiation with functional or regional differentiation. Society will be made up of equals. Within the equal and autonomous groups of society, then, the interests of petit-bourgeois and worker will no longer be separate. The middle-class ideal of independence and recognized status can merge effectively with proletarian desire for group integration. The group is the important unit, and stratification either within it, or outside of it, will be unnecessary and impossible.

His ideas on Federalism, which point out quite specifically the difficulties which the size and internal organization of national states represent, need little elaboration. The almost insuperable problems involved in federating highly centralized countries are evident enough. In Proudhon's day, the tendency towards large-scale production, and integrated

management was only beginning to become discernable. Marx may have exaggerated the concentration of ownership which would accompany it, but his predictions were certainly much truer than Proudhon's. Yet that does not mean that the problems which Proudhon singled out are any the less important - rather the opposite. Contemporary socialists are finding more and more that the pressing problems centre around the local unit. Nobody today needs to be told by Proudhon or anyone else that nationalization is not the panacea which early enthusiasts hoped it would be. The Proudhonian emphasis on the small grouping and its relationship to the whole must be the future focus.

Finally, it must be admitted that in a certain sense, Professor Schapiro cannot be gainsaid when he links Proudhon with Fascism. There is ample evidence of his appeal to any creed which directs its propaganda to the lower middle class, as Fascism has done. And, indeed, there is much of Proudhon in theoretical corporatism or in the social ideal formulated by such conservative ex-Nazis as Hermann Rauschning (1). European conservatism has always been linked with regionalism, and its support of contemporary federalism is no deviation. For a movement which tries to act as a revolutionary middle class creed and as a last stronghold of conservatism - twin aspects of Fascism - certain features of Proudhon are bound to be attractive, but the whole of his thought certainly cannot be. The Proudhon who rejects coercion and suppression by even a vast majority as a method of dealing with any social force, and

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(1) See Herman Rauschning, The Conservative Revolution, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1941, especially Chapter III.

who sees justice as emerging from the free interplay of equal, reciprocating groups, is more important to democratic constitutional theory than to Fascism.

### Appendix

Note:- Due to the length of the following two citations, and also to the fact that much of their content is only relevant as the context of Professor Schapiro's excerpts, they have been included in this appendix rather than in the body of the thesis.

Correspondance, vol. 7, Letter to M. Boutteville (in part), 8 October 1852, pp. 57, 58, 59.

"Guidez-vous toujours par ce principe générale, hélas! trop vrai, que l'utopie démocratique formulée dans son idéal, par Rousseau, est diamétralement contraire à la notion, à la loi de progrès; qu'il est absurde de vouloir faire marcher une société dans les voies de la liberté en prenant les esclaves pour chefs, la classe élevée, éduquée, pour instrument. . . ."

The masses "dans ce qu'elles ont accompli de passable, ont toujours été poussées, sollicitées, ostensiblement ou secrètement, par des esprits d'élites formés dans leur sein, . . . ."

"Ce qui fait ici la contradiction et qui détermine tous les mouvements démocratiques c'est que la démocratie indique l'égalité, et que les classes régnantes, concluant du passé à l'avenir, nient l'égalité, et comme Aristote et Malthus, affirment la servitude perpétuelle des masses. Nous affirmons, au contraire, la possibilité de leur éducation, c'est-à-dire la possibilité d'une liberté générale et d'une égalité devant le travail et le capital comme devant la loi; nous ne nous arrêtons que devant le partage des produits, qui est le communisme. Pour arriver à cette

liberté et égalité générales, que je définis en ce moment, nous n'admettons point avec Rousseau et la Constitution de 93 l'initiative directe du peuple; nous croyons qu'il suffit, après avoir posé nettement l'idée, de former un parti qui la représente, et qui, par la discussion se multipliant et s'élevant au pouvoir, termine enfin la série du despotisme et de la démagogie, en organisant le travail et l'échange. "D'après cela, vous devez, dans votre travail, en même temps que vous ferez ressortir l'impossibilité de la thèse démocratique, ne pas ménager les gouvernements monarchiques et autres qui, de tous temps, se sont prévalus de l'incapacité des masses pour asseoir leur tyrannie et exercer leurs spoliations. . ."

Correspondance, Vol. IX, Letter to M. Buzon (in part). 18 September, 1861, p. 197.

Proudhon cites a number of "errors" in a work by M. Elias Régnault, then continues:

"Ce qu'il y a de pis, c'est que M. Elias Régnault se plaçant sur le même terrain que M. de Montalembert, soutient sa cause par les mêmes arguments, et, après avoir abandonné le principe de nationalité, comme futile; après avoir admis le principe d'équilibre européen, (la loi suprême des forces, par parenthèse), ne réponde rien aux impossibilités de reconstitution que je signale, n'en persiste pas moins à demander le rétablissement de la Pologne, sous prétexte que la Pologne nobiliaire, catholique, aristocratique, divisée en castes, a une vie à part, et qu'elle a le droit de vivre de cette vie quand même!

"Toute cette démocratie me dégoûte. La raison ne sert de rien avec celle,

ni les principes, ni les faits. Peu lui importe de se contredire à chaque pas. Elle a ses dadas, ses tics, et ses chics; elle veut qu'on la gratte là où la vermine la démange, mais elle n'entend pas qu'on la peigne, ni qu'on la décrasse; elle ressemble à ce gueux canonisé, qui, rongé tout vivant par les vers, les remettait dans les plaies lorsqu'ils s'échappaient.

"Attaquer un préjugé de la démocratie, c'est de la contre - révolution!"

Quelles brutes!

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