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Contents

socialism or democracy, it shows his opposition to very specific forms of both and, in this, latter anarchists like Bakunin, Kropotkin and Tucker followed him.

Once the extent of Schapiro's bad-faith is understood, then – for all his failings – Proudhon can be seen for what he is: the harbinger of anarchism.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865) is usually considered as the father of anarchism, someone who both raised the main ideas of libertarian socialist thought and named them when he proclaimed "I am an anarchist" in 1840.[1] Yet he is regularly accused of being contradictory and an inspiration for many political ideologies, from anarchism to fascism.

The latter claim is most associated with American professor J. Salwyn Schapiro and an article published in the prestigious *The American Historical Review* entitled "Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Harbinger of Fascism".[2] This was expanded four years later as a chapter in his book *Liberalism and the Challenge of Fascism*.[3] Schapiro rested his case on a series of quotations and references which presented Proudhon as hating democracy and socialism, a supporter of dictatorship, an opponent of the labour movement, a racist who viewed blacks as the lowest of all races, a supporter of the South during the American Civil War, an anti-feminist, an anti-Semite and as a despiser of the "common man."

Schapiro's argument has been supported by many commentators on Proudhon and anarchism. For historian E.H. Carr, it "depicts [Proudhon] with skill and plausibility as the first progenitor of Hitlerism."[4] It was later repeated by Socialist writer George Lichtheim in 1969 and, via Lichtheim, Marxist academic Paul Thomas in 1980.[5] More recently, the

[1] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, "What is Property?", *Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology* (Oakland/Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011), Iain McKay (ed.), 133.

[2] J. Salwyn Schapiro, "Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Harbinger of Fascism", *The American Historical Review* 50: 4 (July 1945).

[3] J. Salwyn Schapiro, *Liberalism and the Challenge of Fascism: Social Forces in England 1815–1870* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1949).

[4] E.H. Carr, "Proudhon: Robinson Crusoe of Socialism", *Studies in Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1950), 40.

[5] George Lichtheim, *The Origins of Socialism* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 86; Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the anarchists* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 186.

introductory material to the Cambridge Texts edition of *What is Property* included Schapiro's book in its list of "most useful studies" of Proudhon (along with six other works which argue the opposite) and suggests his ideas have influenced "all parts of the political spectrum, not excepting fascism". Peter Marshall felt obliged to mention Schapiro's claims, if only in passing, in his well-known history of anarchism.

Within left-wing activist circles, Schapiro's thesis is best known for its use by Marxist Hal Draper who repeated many of his quotations and claims in the influential pamphlet *The Two Souls of Socialism*.[6] Draper's account was restated in the 1980s by Leninist David McNally in his pamphlet *Socialism from Below*[7] which, likewise, repeated many of the quotations Schapiro first used. More recently, Marxist academic Alan Johnson championed Draper as a Marxist scholar who defended real socialism and, to illustrate his case, quoted Proudhon via Schapiro: "Proudhon ('all this democracy disgusts me')."[8] Thus generations of Marxist activists have had Schapiro's claims on Proudhon as part of their ideological education and, via them, repeated to countless anarchists.

Was the thinker who influenced the likes of Alexander Herzen, Joseph Déjacque, Michael Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Emma Goldman, Rudolf Rocker and Daniel Guérin (to name just a few) misunderstood by them and really a proto-fascist?

[6] *The Two Souls of Socialism*, (Berkeley: Independent Socialist Committee, 1966), 10–11. He added his own (non-referenced) quotations into the mix: "For Proudhon, see the chapter in J.S. Schapiro's *Liberalism and the Challenge of Fascism*, and Proudhon's *Carnets*". (27) Much reprinted, this pamphlet was included in a collection of his writings entitled *Socialism From Below* (Alameda: Center for Socialist History, 2001).

[7] David McNally, *Socialism from Below: The History of an Idea* (Chicago: International Socialist Organisation, 1984).

[8] Alan Johnson, "Democratic Marxism: The Legacy of Hal Draper", *Marxism, the Millennium and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), Mark Cowling and Paul Reynolds (eds.), 202.

The best that can be said of Schapiro's work is that it based on an implicit de-contestation of the concepts he is discussing. Words like democracy, socialism, republic, association, and so on, do not have the single (bourgeois) definitions he assumes. For Schapiro democracy is the democratic State and socialism is State socialism and anyone who criticises these is opposed to both democracy and socialism – even if, like Proudhon, they constantly stress that they are both democrats and socialists while defending libertarian forms of these against authoritarian ones. As Proudhon put it in 1863:

> Whoever says republic, says federation, or says nothing;
>
> Whoever says socialism, says federation, or yet again says nothing.[115]

Once this is understood, the confusion that Louis Blanc, for example, felt as regards Proudhon's ideas is understandable for he was a Jacobin who desired a centralised, unitarian, "One and Indivisible" Republic and a Socialist who desired centralised, State owned and controlled non-market economy. Someone like Proudhon who advocated a republic based on socio-economic federalism as well as a socialism based on workers' control within a market economy of peasants, artisans and workers' associations would obviously puzzle him as it went against his assumptions of what Socialist Democracy meant. Likewise, Proudhon pointed out that certain ideas would fail to produce their stated goals. Instead of popular sovereignty, Statist democracy would empower a few politicians and bureaucrats; instead of ending exploitation, Statist socialism would change the exploiter from the boss to the bureaucrat. Rather than show Proudhon's opposition to

[115] Proudhon, "Du Principe Fédératif", 383–4.

the reader. It is Schapiro himself who created the "sinister overtones that haunt his pages of which the present-day reader becomes aware" (336) and Chiaromonte was right to argue that Schapiro had gone beyond "misunderstanding and lack of sympathy" into "being inexcusably devious, and should know much better."[113]

Yet without being championed as Schapiro was by Draper, Chiaromonte's article has been unfortunately forgotten. Indeed, in the 1980s Draper felt able to proclaim that he "basic study of Proudhon's authoritarian ideology was published by the liberal historian J. Salwyn Schapiro [...] After four decades, no one has even tried to refute it."[114] Yet incisive as it was, Chiaromonte did not show the depths that Schapiro went to twisting Proudhon's ideas to fit into his thesis. So the main reason for the subsequent lack of engagement with Schapiro's "basic study" was that no one familiar with Proudhon's ideas would take it seriously and, moreover, would appreciate how much work it would take to systematically debunk its many distortions and inventions.

In short, bad faith and being spectacularly wrong has its advantages – particularly when discussing a thinker's whose ideas are relevantly unknown outwith their native tongue. This does not mean that Proudhon's ideas are somehow above criticism. Draper was, for example, right to critique and mock his repulsive and pathetic defences of patriarchy but he unsurprisingly erred by seeking to portray it as consistent with anarchism rather than – as Joseph Déjacque rightly argued – being in contradiction to it. Given Draper's influence in the Trotskyist-left, this makes debunking Schapiro relevant to all libertarians.

[113] Chiaromonte, 28.

[114] Hal Draper, *Women and Class: Towards A Socialist Feminism* (Alameda: Center for Socialist History, 2011), 181–2.

To ask such a question should answer it but, as noted, Schapiro's claims are repeated to this day. Given this, an evaluation of Schapiro's work is well overdue. While Italian anti-fascist Nicola Chiaromonte[9] provided a succinct critique to his original article at the time, this work is not well-known even though it "is one of the best essays written on Proudhon".[10] One Proudhon scholar simply noted that "to argue that Proudhon was a proto-fascist suggests that one has never looked seriously at Proudhon's writings".[11] Another, based on an extensive analysis of *La guerre et la paix* and its place in Proudhon's thought, likewise dismisses Schapiro's claims: "Proudhon was no fascist".[12]

However, no in-depth analysis of Schapiro's claims has been made by comparing them with the references he provided to support them. This lack has allowed Schapiro's use of quotations and summaries to remain unchallenged and protected by the status of "peer reviewed". Until this is done, any dismissals can themselves be dismissed as it cannot be denied that parts of Schapiro's account are correct, or at least partially so, and this lent credence to the rest. Yet, as will be shown, his case rests on poor scholarship as it is marked by invention, selective quoting, dubious translation and omission.

As Schapiro claims that an "exhaustive examination of his writings convinced the author, reluctantly to be sure, that Proudhon was a harbinger of fascism in its essential outlook and its sinister implications", quoting from these writings

[9] Nicola Chiaromonte, "Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: an uncomfortable thinker", *Politics* (January 1946).

[10] Robert L. Hoffman, *Revolutionary Justice: The Social and Political Theory of P.-J. Proudhon* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 204.

[11] Steven K. Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 234.

[12] Alex Prichard, *Justice, Order and Anarchy: The International Political Theory of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (London: Routledge, 2013), 171.

is unavoidable. (ix)[13] Once done, Schapiro's claims will be exposed as a complete distortion of Proudhon's ideas and, given their use by Marxists in their attacks on anarchism, relevant to anarchists today.

On Democracy and Universal Suffrage

The first, and most repeated, claim that Proudhon was a proto-fascist rests with his views of democracy. Schapiro makes many assertions on these in his original article but provides only three actual quotations. While supplemented by other quotations and claims, these remain the centrepiece of his revised chapter and show his technique at work. The first offered is the most requoted:

> 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 fists!" (350)

The reference given is "*Correspondance* XI: 197" yet Proudhon did not write the text provided for Schapiro combines three separate sentences into one passage without indicating any missing text nor that they appear on different pages. Context is likewise removed as is the fact that Proudhon is referring to different things on the two pages.

[13] Schapiro draws most from Proudhon's correspondence (22 references) followed by *La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'État du 2 décembre* (14 references) and so hardly representative of his writings.

ings (published, unpublished and private) could be read without coming across a single anti-Semitic utterance.

So any neo-Nazi seeking inspiration in Proudhon's works after reading Schapiro would feel cheated. Even those who pay lip-service to decentralised ethnically pure communities would be horrified by Proudhon's advocacy of racial equality and mixing, his opposition to the expulsion of blacks from America as well as what became known as segregation. His few scattered anti-Semitic remarks would give little comfort.

Conclusions

Articles about Proudhon usually tell us more about the authors and their political drives than about their subject. Rather than take the time to understand Proudhon and the era which shaped his views, commentators have tended to be dismissive of him and proclaim his ideas as contradictory. This, in turn, made it easy to treat any contradictions and inconsistencies in Schapiro's argument about Proudhon's alleged fascist tendencies as if they were Proudhon's instead. Likewise, while some may point to these very different interpretations as showing the much-asserted inherently contradictory nature of his ideas, in reality some interpretations are simply weak or baseless: Proudhon being claimed as both an anarchist and a fascist reflects nothing more than the quality and accuracy of the interpretations the is subject to.

A hostile engagement with a thinker can be productive and shed light on the subject, one also driven by bad-faith is counter-productive and misleading. As shown, Schapiro's account of Proudhon's ideas was such an endeavour, expressed by invention, selective quoting, mistranslation and omission. He was clearly of the opinion that context – whether in terms of wider society, chronology, texts quoted or other relevant works by Proudhon – is a burden to both the writer and

Neither thought this position nullified his other ideas and demanded consistency by applying associationist ideas in the home.

Then there is his anti-Semitism, the other bigotry Schapiro gets correct. Yet this is hardly the proof of fascism which Schapiro claims as it predates fascism by centuries and not all fascist movements or regimes expressed it. While Nazism did, Italian (initially) and Austrian fascism did not (indeed, notable Jewish Italians were senior fascists until the late 1930s). A few passing anti-Semitic comments in private letters and in published works shows how central it was to Proudhon's ideas. Indeed, the reader of his most important works would not realise that Proudhon was anti-Semitic, an awkward fact which Schapiro does his best to hide.

So while it would be possible to go through the thousands of pages of the 26 volumes of Proudhon's *Oeuvres completes* (in the Lacriox edition), the 8 volumes of his *Oeuvres posthumes*, the 14 volumes of correspondence and four volumes of his *Carnets* to extract all anti-Semitic remarks and so create a small pamphlet, it would achieve very little other than save a neo-Nazi some time and effort. Proudhon's anti-Semitism was a personal bigotry, reflective of his culture and time, which played no role in his politics while he regularly raised ideas which rose above it:

> There will no longer be nationality, no longer fatherland, in the political sense of the words: they will mean only places of birth. Whatever a man's race or colour, he is really a native of the universe; he has citizen's rights everywhere.[112]

The best of Proudhon can be used to critique his worst and it should never be forgotten that almost all of Proudhon's writ-

[112] "General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century", *Property is Theft!*, 597.

The first sentence relates to Proudhon bemoaning how others on the left were attacking him as "a false *democrat*, a false friend of progress, a false republican" due to his critical position on Polish independence.[14] Unlike most of the French left, Proudhon opposed the creation of a Polish state as summarised immediately before the words Shapiro quotes:

> What is worse is that M. Élias Regnault [… while] not responding to any of the *impossibilities* of reconstitution which I indicated, none the less persists in demanding the *reestablishment of Poland*, on the pretext that nobilitarian [*nobiliaire*], Catholic, aristocratic Poland, divided into castes, has a life of its own, and that it has the right to live this life *regardless*![15]

Once the context is understood, Proudhon's meaning becomes clear. He is arguing that an independent Poland would *not* be a democracy but rather a regime ruled by a nobility living on the backs of the peasantry. He is mocking those on the left who violate their own stated democratic principles by supporting the creation of a feudal regime as becomes clear from the next paragraph:

> *All this democracy disgusts me.* Reason serves no purpose with it, nor principles, nor facts. It does not matter to it that it contradicts itself with every step. It has its hobby-horses, its tics and its fancies; *it wants to be scratched where the maggots itch, but it will not hear of comb nor scrubbing*; it resembles that beggar saint who, gnawed alive by maggots, put them back into his wounds when

[14] *Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon* (Paris: Lacroix, 1875) XI: 196.
[15] *Correspondance* XI: 197.

they escaped.[16] (*italics* indicates words quoted by Schapiro)

By ignoring the very obvious sarcasm and then removing without indicating most of this paragraph, including the key words that the left "contradicts itself with every step", Schapiro obscures Proudhon's point, namely that these French democrats are contradicting their own claimed principles by supporting the creation of an aristocratic and caste-divided regime. Proudhon makes this point elsewhere:

> May the Polish nobles support the idea of February [i.e., the social and democratic republic], the end of militarism and the constitution of economic right, and, by serving general civilisation, they will serve their country better than by a futile display of nationality.[17]

In 1863, he lamented that "aristocratic Poland […] enjoys greater authority than universal suffrage itself" in the French left, urging the Polish nobles to embrace the emancipation of the serfs and land reform as well as looking forward to "a representative constitution, based on universal suffrage" for both Poland and Russia.[18]

Schapiro does not explain why Proudhon opposed the Polish national movement and, like those he mocked, considered support for it as an example of "liberal nationalism", the "Siamese twin" of democracy. (350) Proudhon's opposition to nationalism is instead portrayed as French nationalist in nature rather than being based on class-analysis.[19]

[16] *Correspondance* XI: 197.

[17] "La Guerre et la paix", *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Rivière, 1927) VI: 506.

[18] "Si les traités de 1815 ont cessé d'exister ? : actes du futur congrès", *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Rivière, 1952) XIII: 417, 412, 426–7.

[19] Also see Prichard's discussion of Proudhon's views on Poland (59–64). Nor does Schapiro explain why a proto-fascist would be opposed to nations will, of course, not agree"[109]). Schapiro attributes Proudhon's anti-feminism to him being a warmonger but as he was no militarist its roots reflect his cultural background. (361) Still, Schapiro quite rightly criticised Proudhon's anti-feminism yet, unlike his earliest critics on this issue like Joseph Déjacque and *André Léo, did not note the very obvious contradiction between this aspect of his ideas and his associationism (perhaps because Schapiro fails to discuss that accurately). These critics used Proudhon's core ideas against him and argued for association within the family as elsewhere.*

Déjacque proclaimed Proudhon "a *liberal* and not a LIBERTARIAN, you want free trade for cotton and candles and you advocate protectionist systems for man against woman in the circulation of human passions; you cry out against the high barons of capital and you wish to rebuild the high barony of the male upon the female vassal". It was "understandable" and "revolutionary to "place the question of the emancipation of woman in line with the question of the emancipation of the proletarian".[110] *Léo*, challenging Proudhon's followers after his death, stressed the obvious contradiction:

> These so-called lovers of liberty, if they cannot all take part in the direction of the State, at least they will be able to have a little kingdom for their personal use, each at home. When we put gunpowder to divine right, it was not for every male (Proudhonian style) to have a piece. Order in the family without hierarchy seems impossible to them. – Well, then, and in the State?[111]

[109] "Ethics: Origin and Development", *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology* (Edinburgh/Oakland/Baltimore: AK Press, 2014), Iain McKay (ed.), 218.

[110] Joseph Déjacque, "De l'être-humain mâle et femelle – Lettre à P.J. Proudhon", *À bas les chefs!*, 119, 118.

[111] André Léo, *La Femme et les Mœurs : monarchie ou liberté* (Paris: au journal Le Droit des *femmes*, 1869), 128.

Yet this appreciation by the right was as selective as Schapiro's own account and, as such, can be dismissed. As Individualist anarchist Benjamin R. Tucker noted with regards to the neo-royalists, "[o]ne of the methods of propagandism practised by these agitators is the attempt to enrol among their apostles all the great dead who, if living, would look with scorn upon their ways and works. Every great writer who has criticised democracy and who, being in his grave, cannot enter protest, is listed as a royalist, a nationalist, and an anti-Dreyfusard." However, "it is not to be inferred that, because Proudhon destroyed Rousseau's theory of the social contract, he did not believe in the advisability of a social contract, or would uphold a monarch in exacting an oath of allegiance. […] All this, however, is carefully concealed" while the group "utterly ignores the affirmative statements of its stolen hero".[107]

That reactionary ideologues (whether *Action française* or Nazis) tried to attract socialists to the right by seeking to appropriate the legacy of socialists long dead comes as no surprise. That self-proclaimed anti-fascists unquestionably repeat their claims and, worse, their techniques does. Yet the fact remains that Proudhon expressed some horrible things at times. Few thinkers are completely consistent, and Proudhon's most blatant inconsistencies were the sexism and anti-Semitism which Schapiro rightly points to.

Yet Proudhon's defence of patriarchy hardly squares with his advocacy of anarchy and his claim "that the social revolution is the negation of all hierarchy, political and economic".[108] In this, sadly, he did not rise above the dominant ideas and attitudes of his time as he did in other areas (Kropotkin dismissed his writings on woman as something "which most modern writ-

[107] Benjamin R. Tucker, "Lego et Penso: Proudhon and Royalism", *The New Freewoman: An Individualist Review*, Vol. 1 No. 8 (10 October 1913), 156–7.

[108] "La Révolution sociale", 283.

The last sentence quoted by Schapiro appears on a different page and by then Proudhon had changed subject. Rather than discussing democracy, Proudhon is referring to "certain *patriots*" who were slandering him as "a conservative, a proprietor, an Orleanist, a bourgeois" and seeking "to stop the sale of my pamphlets" before writing "What would I not give to sail into this mob with my clenched fists!" As can be seen, Schapiro's "this mob" is *not* referring to the people exercising their democratic rights but rather a group opposed to Proudhon's ideas whom he describes as a "hydra" from whose "jaws" he sought to "pull the republican idea from".[20]

In short, his most damning quotation, the one repeated by Marxists ever since, is simply selective quoting which turns Proudhon's arguments *for* democracy – in which he wishes the democrats would be consistently in favour of it – into their opposite.

Much the same can be said of the second quotation. Schapiro does not ponder why, if Proudhon included "popular sovereignty" in the "political poverties" upon which he "unleashed a furious, almost obscene assault", he criticised universal suffrage for resulting in "the strangling of the public conscience, the suicide of popular sovereignty, and the apostasy of the Revolution"? (349) Moreover, the reference for this quotation does not actually provide this passage although it does mention its actual source.[21] It is worth quoting:

> Q — What is your opinion on universal suffrage?

tionalism nor why one would seek to federalise all nations, including France (Prichard, 57–8).

[20] *Correspondance* XI: 198.

[21] Arthur Desjardins, *P.-J. Proudhon: sa vie, ses œuvres, sa doctrine* (Paris: Perrin, 1896). It should be noted that in the pages Schapiro references (II: 214ff), Desjardins had no doubt that Proudhon was an anarchist and links his ideas on federalism to later anarchists like Bakunin, Reclus and Kropotkin as well as the Paris Commune.

> A — As all constitutions have established it since ’89, universal suffrage is the strangulation of the public conscience, the suicide of popular sovereignty, the apostasy of the Revolution. Such a system of votes can well, on the occasion, and despite all the precautions taken against it, give a negative vote to power, as did the last Parisian vote (1857): it is unable to produce an idea. To make the vote for all intelligent, moral, democratic, it is necessary, for having organised the balance of services and having ensured, by free discussion, the independence of the votes, to make the citizens vote by categories of functions, in accordance with the principle of the collective force which forms the basis of society and the State.[22]

Proudhon’s arguments that centralised, unitarian democracy is fundamentally undemocratic and in favour of a decentralised, federalist, functional democracy are turned by Schapiro into opposition to democracy as such.

The third quotation, Schapiro suggests, showed that for Proudhon “[u]niversal suffrage created the worst of all governments because it was ‘the idea of the state infinitely extended’”. (349) This is referenced to *Les Confessions d’un révolutionnaire* yet Schapiro fails to mention that Proudhon was *not* referring to universal suffrage as such but rather “governmental democracy” and how he had “proved” it was “only an inverted monarchy.” An anarchist denouncing Statist universal suffrage is not the same as opposing democracy. Likewise, Schapiro fails to note that Proudhon continued by arguing that such a centralised system “is the union of all

[22] “Justice in the Revolution and in the Church”, *Property is Theft!*, 676–7. It should also be noted that immediately before this, Proudhon dismissed dictatorship out of hand (676).

sources to labour for themselves, they were cast as Proudhon feared into the proletariat. This, as one contemporary Black newspaper rightly argued, meant the “slaves were made serfs and chained to the soil… Such was the boasted freedom acquired by the coloured man at the hands of the Yankees.”[104] The failure after the war to provide a solid economic footing for the freed slaves is now considered a cause of the failure of Reconstruction and W.E.B. DuBois captured that failure well in 1935: “The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery”.[105]

Rather than favour the South, Proudhon opposed both sides as they were “fighting only over the type of servitude” and so should “be declared equally blasphemers and renegades of the federative principle, and shunned by [other] nations”.[106] While Proudhon’s positions on black slavery, race, and the American Civil War all have their issues and can, and should, be critiqued, Schapiro preferred method of invention and omission should play no part in it.

On Legacies

Proudhon during his lifetime was, rightly, considered a man of the left and demonised by the right. This changed, as Schapiro recounts, around 50 years after his death thanks to the activities of French neo-royalists before the First World War, when sections of the right celebrated certain aspects of Proudhon’s ideas. From there to fascism, with Schapiro noting that three fascists claimed Proudhon as an intellectual precursor. (363–4, 368–9)

[104] Quoted by Zinn, 196–7.

[105] W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2013), 26.

[106] “Du Principe Fédératif”, 541.

> sides in the war, it is because the federative principle is incompatible with inequality, whether the agrarian variety of master and slave or the modern version of capital and labour […]
>
> Proudhon didn't really believe that the Union side would emancipate the Negro, but would fix on deportation as the solution to the problem. The union could be saved only by the liberation of the Negroes, granting them full citizenship, and by a determination to stop the growth of the proletariat. For what is gained for the former slaves, if emancipation means that they will become members of the proletariat? He notes that the situation in Russia after the emancipation of the serfs (1861) is analogous. Liberated serfs without land would be helpless. Economic guarantees must be developed alongside political ones.[101]

This opposition to both sides is a far cry from Schapiro's account. Yet it can be criticised for "Proudhon suggests that nothing will have been gained if the blacks were freed only to become wage earners, as if the condition of the wage-earner were not closer to the realization of personal autonomy than the condition of a well-treated slave."[102] While undoubtedly downplaying the specific horrors of slavery, Proudhon (given his opposition to violence and war) had little option for he could not call for slave revolts as did his contemporary Joseph Déjacque who pointed to the example of abolitionist John Brown.[103]

Yet Proudhon's analysis was astute, given the fate of the newly liberated slaves. Rather than being provided with the re-

[101] Ralph Nelson, "The Federal Idea in French Political Thought", *Publius* (Summer 1975) 5: 3, 41

[102] Nelson, 43.

[103] Joseph Déjacque, "La Guerre Servile", *À bas les chefs! Écrits libertaires (1847–1863)* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2016), 186–191.

agricultural holdings into a single agricultural holding; of all industrial enterprises into a single industrial enterprise", in other words combining economic power as well as political power into the hands of those at the top of the State.[23]

Moreover, Proudhon was quoting an earlier work, *La Démocratie*, issued days after the February Revolution in which he had argued that the democracy favoured by the Left – a centralised, unitarian one – denied the sovereignty of the People. It is worth discussing this pamphlet as it summarises Proudhon's argument that bourgeois democracy is, in fact, not that democratic as it empowers the handful of politicians who make up the government rather than the people they claim to represent. Thus, "[a]ccording to democratic theory, due to ignorance or impotence, the People cannot govern themselves: after declaring the principle of the People's sovereignty, democracy, like monarchy, ends up declaring *the incapacity of the People*!" Such a regime is based on "inequality of wealth, delegation of sovereignty and government by influential people. Instead of saying, as M. Thiers did, that *the King reigns and does not govern*, democracy says that *the People reigns and does not govern*, which is to deny the Revolution." He contrasts democracy to a republic (which he calls a "positive anarchy") in which all citizens "reign and govern"[24] based on (male) universal suffrage bolstered by measures to make it more than just electing masters:

> In the end, we are all voters; we can choose the most worthy.
>
> We can do more; we can follow them step-by-step in their legislative acts and their votes; we will make them transmit our arguments and our

[23] "Les confessions d'un révolutionnaire pour servir à l'histoire de la révolution de février", *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Rivière, 1929) VII: 185.

[24] "Solution to the Social Problem", *Property is Theft!*, 278, 267, 280.

> documents; we will suggest our will to them, and when we are discontented, we will recall and dismiss them.
>
> The choice of talents, the imperative mandate, and permanent revocability are the most immediate and incontestable consequences of the electoral principle. It is the inevitable programme of all democracy.
>
> No more than constitutional monarchy, however, does democracy agree to such a deduction from its principle.[25]

In other words, democracy – considered as a centralised, unitarian representative regime – cannot achieve its stated goals of popular self-government and participation, meaning that Proudhon's argument which sought to show why governmental democracy was not democratic is turned, again, into an opposition to democracy as such. As Proudhon repeatedly argues, only a decentralised, federal and functional system could achieve a meaningful democracy by applying universal suffrage in every grouping within society (bar the family) whether political or economic:

> What then is universal suffrage, considered no longer in its [current] material operations, but in its life, in its idea?… It is the social power or collective force of the nation in its initiating form and now in the activity of its functions, that is to say in the full exercise of its sovereignty. […] In universal suffrage, in a word, we possess, but on a limited basis, or to put it better in an embryonic

[25] "Solution to the Social Problem", 273; Also see, "Election Manifesto of *Le Peuple*", *Property is Theft!*, 379.

of conditions, 3) that of ever more approached, although never achieved, equality of fortunes".[98] In short:

> Two things would have been necessary, by common accord and energetic will, to save the Union: 1) free the blacks and give them citizenship, which the States in the North only half granted and which those of the South did not want at all; 2) energetically fight the growth of proletariat, which did not enter the views of anyone.[99]

If this were not done, then "it is clear that black servitude will only change its form" as they would now join the White proletariat at the mercy of the capitalist class. Proudhon mocked the liberalism which "applauds the conversion of the slavery of the Blacks into the proletariat" as it "does not support slavery, of course!… but accommodates itself wonderfully to the most brazen exploitation". It cannot see the Northern ruling class was fighting for economic interests rooted in "the cold calculation" that "it is more to the advantage of the capitalist" to "use *free* workers, who support themselves with their wages, than enslaved workers who give more trouble than wage-workers and produce proportionally less profit regardless of [the costs of] their subsistence".[100]

While this falls foul of the perfectionist fallacy, it rests on an analysis which Schapiro denies Proudhon had, an opposition to the social relations within production under capitalism:

> But it would be naive to think that it is just the peculiar institution of slavery that Proudhon detests. He finds in the North also the principle of inequality and class distinction. If he is critical of both

[98] "Du Principe Fédératif ", 538, 539–40, 542.
[99] "Du Principe Fédératif", 535.
[100] "Du Principe Fédératif", 536, 539–40.

to Africa.[96] Indeed, in late 1861 Lincoln took steps to initiate a formal colonisation programme and the following year saw Congress passing legislation providing funding for this under the direct guidance of the White House.[97]

Readers of Schapiro's work would be surprised to discover Proudhon criticised all this. Both races were equal ("psychology sees no difference between the constitution of the negro conscience and that of the white, no more than between the comprehension of one and the other") and any attempt to deport blacks was "a crime equal to that of the slavers" for "by a century of servitude" they have "acquired the right of use and of habitation on American soil". He urged Whites in both the North and the South to "receive [blacks] in comradeship and welcome them as fellow citizens, equals and brothers" as well as "granting to blacks hitherto kept in servitude, along with freedmen, equal political rights". However, to ensure "they do not fall into a worse servitude than whence they came", reforms were needed that "also bestows upon them land and ownership" and "providing possessions for the wage-workers [of both races] and organising, alongside political guarantees, a system of economic guarantees". This was because "the principle of equality before the law must have as a corollary, 1) the principle of equality of races, 2) the principle of equality

[96] Howard Zinn, Chapter 9, *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present* (New York: HarperCollins Books, 2003). This is reflected in Proudhon's letters in which he noted "the care taken by the North not to speak of slaves, and thereby to retain a part of the southern States" while the South demanded "separation" in order to "maintain the slavery without which they pretend not to be able to live". (*Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon* [Paris: Lacroix, 1875] XII: 17, 80) If the South were "brazen slavers", the North are "hypocritical exploiters" and both share a "horror" of different races expressed in the former "who exploit blacks" and the latter "who exterminate the Redskins". (*Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon* [Paris: Lacroix, 1875] XIV: 277, 77–8)

[97] Phillip W. Magness and Sebastian N. Page, *Colonization after Emancipation: Lincoln and the Movement for Black Resettlement* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011).

> state, the entire system of future society. To reduce it to the nomination by the people of a few hundred deputies without initiative […] is to make social sovereignty a fiction, to stifle the Revolution in its very principle.[26]

A centralised, unitarian republic would not secure democracy in the sense of active participation of the people in managing their common affairs for, as he put it in 1846, "from the moment that the essential conditions of power — that is, authority, property, hierarchy — are preserved, the suffrage of the people is nothing but the consent of the people to their oppression."[27] Hence the need for socio-economic federalism to make universal suffrage meaningful as "the division of the country into its natural groups, provinces or regions, departments, cantons, communes, trade associations [*corporations*], etc." would ensure that "[u]niversal suffrage, with its rational constituencies, is […] the Revolution, not only political, but economic".[28] The creation of citizens "can only be achieved through decentralisation" otherwise the people would "enjoy only a fictitious sovereignty".[29]

Schapiro laments that in *Du Principe federative* Proudhon makes it "difficult, very difficult, to get a clear idea of the scheme of economic government that Proudhon called 'mutualism'." While Proudhon makes no mention of "two national federations, one of producers and another of consumers" in this work, he does mention a council "chosen by the various associations" to "regulate their common affairs" but Schapiro does not indicate how Proudhon thought these would be

[26] "Les démocrates assermentés et les réfractaires", *Oeuvres complètes* XIII: 84.

[27] *Système des contradictions économiques ou Philosophie de la misère* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1846) I: 357.

[28] "Les démocrates assermentés", 86.

[29] "La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'État du 2 décembre", *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Rivière, 1936) IX: 135.

chosen. (353) Yet that work is clear on the internal processes within the various associations, arguing that there would be "democratic equality and its legitimate expression, universal suffrage" and so "equality before the law and universal suffrage form the basis" of "groups that make up the Confederation" which would be "governing, judging and administering themselves in full sovereignty according to their own laws". This ensured that "[i]n the federative system, the social contract is more than a fiction, it is a positive, effective pact which has really been proposed, discussed, voted, adopted and which is regularly modified according to the will of the contractors. Between the federative contract and Rousseau's and '93, there is the whole distance from reality to hypothesis."[30]

As this would refute his case, these – like so many other passages – go unmentioned by Schapiro. As Aaron Norland later summarised, "Proudhon sought to make certain that the sovereignty of the people, which Rousseau held could never be alienated, would indeed never be alienated" and the "surprising thing, particularly in view of the vituperation which Proudhon heaped upon Rousseau, is the extent to which the thought of Proudhon parallels that of Rousseau on many fundamental points."[31] Schapiro does mention Proudhon's critique of Rousseau's democracy that "it was 'disguised aristocracy,' because government was controlled by a few men, called 'representatives'" and used "the state to dominate the people" and "against the disinherited proletariat in the interest of the propertied class". (349–350) Yet rather than pursue this class analysis which is the basis of Proudhon's critique of (bourgeois) democracy, Schapiro hastily moves on.

[30] "Du Principe Fédératif et de la nécessité de reconstituer le parti de la révolution", *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Rivière, 1959) XV: 544, 545–6, 318. Also see, "The Political Capacity of the Working Classes", *Property is Theft!*, 760–1.

[31] Aaron Noland, "Proudhon and Rousseau", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (January-March 1967), 51, 54.

> time, the emancipated Blacks their political rights. However we see that Washington, Madison and the other founders of the Union did not agree; they admitted States with slaves into the federal pact. It is also true that we now see this unnatural pact tearing itself apart, and the Southern States, to maintain their exploitation, tend towards an unitarist constitution, whilst the Northern ones, to maintain the union, decree the deportation of the slaves [to Africa].[94]

For Proudhon, "a better application of the principles of the [Federative] pact" would include "progressively raising the Black peoples' condition to the level of the Whites" but "Lincoln's message leaves no doubt on the matter. The North cares no more than the South about a true emancipation, which renders the difficulty insoluble even by war and threatens to destroy the confederation."[95] He expanded on these comments in a subsequent chapter ("Slavery and the Proletariat").

It must be remembered that while the war has long been portrayed by the winners as a crusade against slavery, in reality while maintaining slavery was undoubtedly one of the main driving forces for the secession of the Southern States, its ending was not a factor for the North: not only did slave States fight for it, Northern politicians also explicitly argued that it was waging war solely over maintaining the Union. Ending slavery came to the fore as a war measure with the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862 which applied only to the rebel States, so freeing those slaves it could not reach and keeping those it could liberate in chains. Lincoln himself personally opposed slavery but did not view black people as equals, aiming to free the slaves but then deport them

[94] "The Principle of Federation", *Property is Theft!*, 698–9.

[95] "The Principle of Federation", 699.

Schapiro ignores all this but, by limiting his comments to these two positions, Proudhon failed to articulate his own stance and effectively discusses what was possible in America under the prevailing circumstances. This is suggested by Proudhon failing to ponder why the American ruling class – who, at best, wished to cast blacks into "the desolation of the proletariat" or, at worse, were slavers – would allow the placing of slavery "under the supervision of governments" for the benefit of anyone other than themselves. He was well aware that the law is hardly "the protector of the weak" nor the proletariat of the so-called superior races.[93]

During the war Proudhon raised a libertarian alternative to these two forms of exploitation and oppression which rejects the pathetic suggestion in *La Guerre et la paix* of regulating slavery to reform it away. Given that this book argued that war could only be ended by socio-economic transformation, a work expressing his ideas on this is far more reflective of his views on race and slavery than the deliberate exaggerations of its first volume. He did so in an important book which *did* appear during the conflict, namely 1863's *Du Principe federative*, which Schapiro references but ignores its discussion of these issues, undoubtedly because to do so would refute his claims.

Proudhon first raises these issues in a footnote:

> The federative public law raises several difficult questions. For example, can a State with slaves belong to a confederation? It seems not, no more than an absolutist State: the enslaving of one part of the nation is the very negation of the federative principle. In this respect, the Southern States of the United States would be even more justified to ask for separation since the Northern States do not intend to grant, at least for quite some

[93] "La Guerre et la paix", 179–80.

Space precludes discussing his other claims beyond noting that his evidence for Proudhon's "hatred" of democracy turn out to be baseless, at best simply a product of selective quoting. It comes as no surprise, then, to discover Proudhon proclaiming that "I am a democrat: my explanations, constantly repeated, of what I mean by *an-archy* testify to that."[32]

On Revolution and Louis-Napoleon

Part of Schapiro's wider argument is that Louis-Napoleon was a proto-fascist Statesman. Given this, he is keen to show that Proudhon supported Louis-Napoleon's transformation of the Presidency into the position of Emperor and the Second Republic into the Second Empire:

> Forcefully and repeatedly Proudhon [*La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'État du 2 décembre*] drove home the idea that a social revolution could be accomplished only through the dictatorship of one man. Because of party divisions the revolution, so necessary to France, could not come from the deliberations of a popular assembly but from the dictatorship of one man, supported by the people […] The "anarchist" Proudhon […] now welcomed the constitution of the Second Empire that established the dictatorship of Louis Napoleon. (355–6)

There are numerous issues with this.

First, Schapiro does not explain how Proudhon could have "hailed the dictatorial Second Empire as the long awaited, passionately hoped for, historical event that would usher in *le*

[32] "Mélanges: Articles de Journaux 1848–1852 III", *Œuvres complètes de P.-J. Proudhon* (Paris: Lacroix, 1871) XIX: 32.

troisième monde" in a book published in July 1852 when the Second Empire was created in December 1852. (354–5) When the book was published, Louis-Napoleon was still the democratically elected President of the Second Republic, albeit one who had disbanded the National Assembly in the name of universal (male) suffrage, rewrote the constitution to expand the powers of his position and had this ratified by 7,600,000 votes in a plebiscite. It could be argued that the differences between the Presidential regime of 1852 and the Second Empire are slight but the fact remains that Proudhon could not have commented upon an Empire that did not exist. Regardless, he had not "welcomed" the coup of December 1851, writing that "I accept the fait accompli – just as the astronomer, fallen into a cistern, would accept his accident".[33]

Second, in spite of Proudhon allegedly "repeatedly" proclaiming the need for dictatorship, Schapiro provides a single page as a reference. On that page Proudhon had this to say:

> I have already said how dictatorship, so familiar to the Romans, the abuse of which eventually engendered Caesarean autocracy, disgusted me. I consider it a theocratic and barbaric institution, in every case a threat to freedom; I reject it even more so when the delegation that it supposes is indefinite in its object and unlimited in its duration. Dictatorship then is for me nothing more than tyranny: I do not discuss it, I hate it, and if the opportunity arises, I assassinate it…[34]

Proudhon then *describes* ("It were as if [Louis-Napoleon] had said to the country") the regime created in December 1851 along the lines Schapiro summarises. It should go without saying that describing does not indicate agreement. Elsewhere, he

[33] "La Révolution sociale", 112.

[34] "La Révolution sociale", 215.

advocate and, as such, these comments cannot be taken as completely reflective of his views. As is clear from the text, Proudhon is commenting upon the debates in America in the period immediately *before* the outbreak of the Civil War. He did not think that White Americans wanted to wage war to free their compatriots and limited his comments to the two positions articulated in respectable debate: retain slavery or turn the slaves into proletarians. As he put immediately before the words quoted by Schapiro, the latter "knowingly or unknowingly, it matters not, seriously consider making [the former slaves] perish in the desolation of the proletariat"[91]. Thus:

> Do we forget that, since abolition of the feudal system, in our industrialist society liberty is, for individuals weak in body and mind, whose family has not been able to guaranteed an income, something worse than slavery – the proletariat? Force requires it to be so, as long as it remains the dominant law of society; and I say that the right which still dominates us today is not the right of labour, which is still not recognised, […] it is still, whatever we say, the pure right of force.
>
> Certainly, I have no intention of renouncing here my own thesis and combating precisely what I intend to rehabilitate, when I stand, on behalf of the blacks, against the hypocritical thought that, under the pretext of emancipating them, tends to do nothing less than cast them under the pure regime of force, and turn them into a proletarian sludge a hundred times more hideous than that of our capitals.[92]

[91] "La Guerre et la paix", 179.

[92] "La Guerre et la paix", 178.

Mill a "Pioneer of Democratic Liberalism" (256)[87] but more recent commentators do.[88]

Regardless of what Schapiro implied, Proudhon – like Marx, Engels and Mill – did not view existing inequalities between races as fixed. He argued that "the human person remains sacred, and that all that we have to do ourselves, as a superior race, with regard to the inferior ones, is to raise them up to our level, that is to attempt to improve, fortify, instruct and ennoble them."[89] Paternalistically racist, to be sure, but hardly the biological deterministic racism Schapiro suggests and rather than being proto-Nazi were similar to almost all the progressive liberal and socialist thinkers of his time.

Third, Proudhon submitted his manuscript at the end of October 1860 and it was finally published, by a different company, on 21 May the following year, a few weeks after the War broke out on the 12 April. As such, his comments cannot be considered as "favor[ing] the South" during a war which had not yet started as Schapiro must have been aware of, as these dates are mentioned in the introduction to the edition he quotes from. Likewise, it is clear from the text of the book itself that war had not yet erupted and that in this chapter he is "putting forward is not so much my own opinion as forecasts regarding disputes that may possibly be settled by force of arms."[90]

Fourth, Proudhon's "defense of Negro slavery" must be placed in context. (359) The first volume of *La Guerre et la paix*, as noted above, is marked by a desire to play devil's

[87] Schapiro dispassionately recounts Mill expressing views which are heatedly denounced as proto-fascist when Proudhon utters them. Why similar notions provoke different responses when written in French rather than English is not explained.

[88] Don Habibi, "The Moral Dimensions of J. S. Mill's Colonialism", *Journal of Social Philosophy* 30: 1 (Spring 1999); Beate Jahn, "Barbarian Thoughts: Imperialism in the Philosophy of John Stuart Mill", *Review of International Studies* 31: 3 (July 2005).

[89] "La Guerre et la paix", 179.

[90] "La Guerre et la paix", 167.

notes that "I am opposed to dictatorship, and any kind of coup d'État" and as "Government is impossible" then "Personal, or despotic, government is impossible".[35]

Third, Schapiro makes no attempt to explain Proudhon's ideas on revolution and social progress. Unless this is understood then his claim that Proudhon "hailed the overthrow of the Second Republic as a great step of progress" can have a superficial appearance of validity. (335) However, once they are then its weakness becomes clear. For Proudhon, social and economic developments were moving in a progressive direction regardless of the political regime or politicians in office:

> Proudhon looked upon [revolution] as a slow evolutionary movement according to natural law, continuing in spite of changes in constitutions and forms of government. The laws of social economy he held to be independent of the will of man and of the legislator. The Revolution will be accomplished because there is a *tendency* in the masses toward well-being and virtue. Society always advances. For these reasons Proudhon could write that the Revolution was furthered by the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon, December 2, 1851. His friends could scarcely comprehend the meaning of his book, *La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'État du 2 décembre*. More exactly, it might have been entitled "The Revolution in spite of the *coup d'état* of December 2, 1851" for in reality that is the thesis sustained. […] The Revolution moves on irresistibly because it is a deep undercurrent undisturbed by winds which ruffle the surface.[36]

[35] "La Révolution sociale", 202, 287.

[36] William H. George, "Proudhon and Economic Federalism", *Journal of Political Economy* 30: 4 (August 1922), 537.

Thus "Revolution, both *democratic* and *social* [...] is now for France, for Europe, a compulsory condition, almost a fait acompli".[37] The political regime could act to encourage or hinder this progress and the various Assemblies and Governments of the Second Republic had very much hindered it (for example, the destruction of the clubs after the July Days of 1848 and the restrictions on universal suffrage passed in July 1850, both of which Proudhon denounced[38]). So not only was socio-economic progress being hindered, the possibility of any reform was stymied. Proudhon argued that such a situation could not be maintained, something had to give. This proved to be the events of December 1851, subsequently ratified by a large majority of the (male) electorate (for Marx, Louis-Napoleon was "the "chosen man of the peasantry", the "most numerous class of French society" and so "the mass of the French people"[39]). The newly self-empowered President then launched a series of reforms without the conservative National Assembly there to block them or be dismissed as impossible by liberal economists.

Thus the Second of December "demonstrated" the social revolution because it removed what was hindering social progress. However, it had not "demonstrated" the social revolution in its specific policies nor in the regime created. Louis-Napoleon, like all the previous post-February governments, had the choice of encouraging or hindering the progress of the Social Revolution. Although recognising the President's support in the bourgeoisie, Proudhon urged him to use the mandate of the plebiscite to implement economic

[37] "La Révolution sociale", 266.

[38] As regards the former, the "organisation of popular societies was the pivot of democracy, the cornerstone of republican order" for "[u]nder the name of clubs, or any other you please to use, it is a matter of the organisation of universal suffrage in all its forms, of the very structure of Democracy itself." ("Confessions of a Revolutionary", *Property is Theft!*, 407, 461).

[39] "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", *Marx-Engels Collected Works* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979) XI: 187.

and "[f]or present-day standards, the racism displayed by Marx and Engels was outrageous and even extreme. For nineteenth-century standards, though, it was not."[82] The latter's public comments on Slavs and other peoples he deemed "non-historic" and so suitable for being, at best, civilised by their superiors or, if needed, wiped out down to their very names is a notable example of these views.[83]

Similarly with John Stuart Mill, who took it for granted that there were "superior" peoples ("from difference of race, more civilized origin, or other peculiarities of circumstance") and those who are an "inferior and more backward portion of the human race".[84] Liberty, however, "is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties" and so "we may leave out of consideration those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered as in its nonage." "Despotism," Mill stressed, "is a legitimate mode of government in dealing" with such peoples, "provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end."[85] Moreover, war to bring civilization to such inferior races was justified as it will "be for their benefit that they should be conquered and held in subjection by foreigners."[86] Schapiro fails to mention this when proclaiming

[82] Erik van Ree, "Marx and Engels's theory of history: making sense of the race factor", *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 24 no. 1, 66, 67.

[83] Roman Rosdolsky, "Engels and the 'Nonhistoric' Peoples: The National Question in the Revolution of 1848", *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory* 18/19 (1986). This provides an excellent overview, although Rosdolsky tries to downplay the ethnic cleansing aspects of Engels' articles.

[84] John Stuart Mill, "Considerations on Representative Government", *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977) XIX: 418–9, 549.

[85] "On Liberty", *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977) XVIII: 224.

[86] John Stuart Mill, "A Few Words on Non-Intervention," *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984) XXI: 118.

On Slavery and Race

Schapiro is correct to note Proudhon's anti-Semitism and uses it as means to generalise about his views on race:

> Anti-Semitism, always and everywhere, the acid test of racialism, with its division of mankind into creative and sterile races, led Proudhon to regard the Negro as the lowest in the racial hierarchy. During the American Civil War he favored the South, which, he insisted, was not entirely wrong in maintaining slavery. The Negroes, according to Proudhon, were an inferior race, an example of the existence of inequality among the races of mankind. Not those who desired to emancipate them were the true friends of the Negroes but those "who wish to keep them in servitude, yea to exploit them, but nevertheless to assure them of a livelihood, to raise their standard gradually through labor, and to increase their numbers through marriage." (359)

Schapiro references a single page in *La Guerre et la paix* and there are numerous issues with this summation.

First, Proudhon made no reference to Negroes being "the lowest in the racial hierarchy" nor the "division of mankind into creative and sterile races" and so these are an invention by Schapiro.

Second, in terms of "inferior" and "superior" races, the position expressed by Proudhon was commonplace at the time as was its rationale, namely the conquest of other races by whites. Given how prevalent this perspective was, it would have been noteworthy if Proudhon had not subscribed to it in some form.

To take a pertinent example, "Marx and Engels were endowing 'races' with inferior and superior qualities all the time"

and political reforms. The choice was either "Anarchy or Caesarism [...] you will never escape from this [...] you are caught between the *Emperor* and the *Social* [Revolution]!"[40] As such, to accuse him of supporting Caesarism is staggering.

Moreover, Proudhon recognised that an autocratic regime while perhaps at best suitable to destroy what hindered social progress was unsuited to encourage it. This was why he urged democratic reforms on the President, arguing that he himself had "defended universal suffrage, as a constitutional right and a law of the state; and since it exists, I am not asking that it be suppressed, but that it be enlightened, that it be organised and that it live." The regime should "affirm, without restriction or equivocation, the social revolution" and this required "that it calls to itself, instead of a body of mutes, a true representation of the middle class and the proletariat":

> the affairs of individuals prosper only as long as they have confidence in the government; that the only way to give them this confidence is to make them themselves active members of the sovereign; that to exclude them from government is as much as to oust them from their industries and properties; and that a working nation like ours, governed without the perpetual control of the podium, the press and the [political] club, is a bankrupt nation.[41]

In this Proudhon was simply repeating arguments he had made before 1851 and would repeat afterwards. So, for example, ten years later we find him arguing that civilisation "only advances through the influence that political groups wield upon one another, in the fullness of their sovereignty and their independence. Set a higher power over them all, to judge and

[40] "La Révolution sociale", 294.

[41] "La Révolution sociale", 170–1, 269, 258, 274.

constrain them and the great organisation grinds to a halt. Life and thought are no more."[42]

Similarly with Schapiro's claim that Proudhon thought it "was possible and desirable [...] that one party should swallow all the other parties", a party of the working classes (proletarians, artisans and peasants), "had a sinister significance." (356) He fails to mention that Proudhon also stated that "[t]o impose silence upon [parties] by means of the police" was "impossible" and that "that ideas can only be fought by ideas". Parties, like the State, reflected the fact that the "vices of th[e] economic regime produce inequality of fortunes, and consequently class distinction; class distinction calls for political centralisation to defend itself; political centralisation gives rise to parties, with which power is necessarily unstable and peace impossible. Only radical economic reform can pull us out of this circle".[43] It is hardly "sinister" to suggest that elimination of classes would produce the end of parties and the State.

Schapiro, likewise, fails to mention that Proudhon had earlier raised both the hope of seeing the end of parties while also proudly proclaiming that he "belong[ed] to the Party of Labour" for there were "but two parties in France: the party of labour and the party of capital".[44] As such, his use of the term party indicated a tendency which could include a diversity of views and groupings while the latter would disappear naturally along with the classes they reflect.

Rather than support dictatorship, Proudhon in fact argued that the President introduce democratic reforms alongside economic ones for "representative government" was "a necessary transition to industrial democracy" and "industrial freedom and political freedom are interdependent; that any restriction

[42] "La Guerre et la paix", 293. This work also sees Proudhon counting himself amongst the "republicans and socialists of 1848" and describing himself "as a democrat". (6, 10)

[43] "La Révolution sociale", 268, 266.

[44] *Property is Theft!*, 397, 475, 381.

porary review in the *New York Times* correctly summarised it:

> According to him, there exists one cause [...] which tarnishes war [...] which will long hinder its perfection: it is the rupture of the economic equilibrium [...] This is the origin of most wars. The vice is chronic, incurable, and sullies forever the divine ideal [...] But in the very midst of this despairing doctrine a ray of light appears – namely, Peace. For we must not mistake him – he, like the rest of us, wishes to attain that. He does not pretend to do away with war [...] but he hopes to transform it, to bring it into a second state, purer and more perfect than the first, and this state is simply — Peace. [...] He deifies war and recommends peace. The process is curious and the result instructive.[79]

Likewise, anarcho-pacifist Bart de Ligt correctly summarised Proudhon's conclusion that "it was therefore necessary [...] to change the military society into an industrial society as swiftly as possible.[80] Significantly, the structure and aim of *La Guerre et la paix* are noted by every other commentator on it.[81] The introduction to the edition Schapiro uses also indicated this so perhaps this explains why he rewrote his argument and admitted that "Proudhon comes to the paradoxical conclusion" that war's "primal cause is poverty, and only when poverty is abolished will war disappear", making a mockery of his earlier claim that Proudhon did not think war could be eradicated nor wished it to.

[79] *New York Times*, 2 September 1861.

[80] Bart de Ligt, *The conquest of violence: an essay on war and revolution* (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1937), 76.

[81] Prichard; 132–3; George Woodcock, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: A Biography* (Montreal: Black Rose: 1987), 233–5; Hoffman, 262–6; Ehrenberg, 143–5.

of peace [...] We need PEACE today; the world does not understand and no longer wants anything else."[75]

War could now be ended because "the Revolution has made the public conscience the sole interpreter of right, the sole judge of the temporal and the sole sovereign, which constitutes true democracy and marks the end of priesthood and militarism." Thus, in a mutualist society, "war no longer has the slightest reason to be waged" as it would ensure "the abolition of the military regime and the subordination of political right to economic right." This was because "nationality, no more than war, serves no purpose. Nationalities have to be increasingly erased by the economic constitution, the decentralisation of states, the mixing of races and the permeability of continents." Unsurprisingly, the work's final sentence is "HUMANITY DOES NOT WANT ANY MORE WAR."[76]

Parts of the first volume can make uncomfortable reading because Proudhon is describing the world as it is, the world where might indeed made right regardless of the fine words used to justify reasons of State. He plays the part of devil's advocate to better convince his critics when, in the second volume, he shows how the instincts and forces which create conflict can be transformed to create peace. Likewise, Schapiro fails to mention that Proudhon's anti-militarism is reflected in other works. In 1851, it was the case that "[i]n place of standing armies, we will put industrial associations"[77] while in 1863 he noted that a "confederated people would be a people organised for peace; what would they do with armies?"[78]

Schapiro, then, shamelessly distorts Proudhon's ideas. These were hardly difficult to grasp. For example, a contem-

[75] "La Guerre et la paix", 477, 485, 498, 487.
[76] "La Guerre et la paix", 508, 507, 503, 506, 540.
[77] "General Idea of the Revolution", *Property is Theft!*, 592.
[78] "The Federative Principle", *Property is Theft!*, 719.

on the latter is an obstacle for the former".[45] Louis-Napoleon, as he constantly stressed, had a choice of promoting the Social Revolution (which was defined as a "social and democratic" movement) or pursuing his own agenda and promoting reaction – the "Anarchy or Caesarism" of the title of the book's final chapter. As the former option meant eliminating the powers that he had just seized, unsurprisingly Proudhon's call fell on deaf ears. By December 1852, over five months after Proudhon's work was published, Louis-Napoleon gave his answer to the question it raised: he chose *Emperor* rather than weaken his power by the democratic political and economic reforms Proudhon called for.

All this makes attempts to portray Proudhon as advocating dictatorship misleading. However, he did not make himself as clear as he should have:

> Hence, despite the caricatures, Proudhon was no sycophantic admirer of the Prince President, willing to go to any lengths to curry favor. On the contrary, the dictator would have to go extraordinarily far in Proudhon's direction to enlist his support. He would have to reform the constitution by making it more democratic [...] Bonaparte would have to carry out social and economic, as well as political, reform. [...] No doubt the book, strictly interpreted, does rule out collaboration. So exacting are the conditions set for collaboration that they could not possibly be met. Such a strict interpretation is too subtle, however, because it overlooks the book's impact on its audience. The rather casuistic argument of the *Révolution sociale* was sure to go over the public's head [...] Hence the book was bound to strengthen the new regime, rather than

[45] "La Révolution sociale", 258, 274.

the cause of freedom, whatever its author's intention.[46]

Moreover, knowing the President well (he was, after all, in prison when the coup of December 1851 occurred for publicly attacking him as a demagogue seeking to become Emperor), the book at times flattered Louis-Napoleon and tempted him to reforms by indicating that it would secure him a place in the history books. Such passages when quoted out of context make a flawed work look worse than it actually is.

Which raises an obvious question: why did Proudhon pursue such a work, particularly given the reservations he expressed in letters while writing it? Simply put, he viewed the regime as secure due to its popular support and the lack of any possibility of a successful revolt against it. As Leninist John Ehrenberg suggests, "Proudhon did not really support the coup" and "his hope was not to apologise for Louis-Napoleon but to salvage some good out of what initially seemed a hopeless situation".[47] Rather than express support for dictatorship as Schapiro claims, the reality is much more banal: "I ask nothing better than to see the [government] I am paying for make some changes and proceed according to my principles".[48]

Fourth, Louis-Napoleon's police understood Proudhon's argument and refused to allow its publication. Proudhon then appealed to the President himself and presumably amused and flattered that his old enemy had written what appeared to be a supportive book about him, ensured its publication. Suffice to say, the authorities did not make the same mistake again

[46] Alan Ritter, *The Political Thought of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 188–9.

[47] John Ehrenberg, *Proudhon and His Age* (Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 1996), 129.

[48] "La Révolution sociale", 113. Lest we forget, he had made the same demand of the National Assembly in 1848 and received a similar response.

nations and governments, but by the fulfilment of its mandate.[73]

Thus the somewhat abstract discussion of "the right of war" and how it generated other rights (including political, social and economic ones) lays the ground for the denunciation of warfare as barbaric (particularly in an age where indiscriminate killing was becoming the norm as war was increasingly industrialised) and how to end it. The contrast between the ideal and the practice was due to the "primary, universal and ever constant cause of warfare, however ignited and whatever prompts it" being "the BREAKDOWN OF ECONOMIC EQUILIBRIUM". Thus "war, even between the most honourable nations, and whatever the officially professed motives, henceforth does not appear to be anything other than a war for exploitation and property, a social war. Suffice to say that, until such time as economic rights are secured, both between nations and between individuals, war can do nothing else on the globe."[74]

If war is primarily driven by economic forces, then "peace cannot be established permanently, other than by means of the abolition of the very cause of war". A new economic regime in which labour governs "must replace the political or war regime" and "universal disarmament will take place" only when "war has found its successor." Under mutualism, struggle would exist "but not a bloody, armed struggle, but rather a struggle involving labour and industry". In short, "[o]nly working humanity is capable of putting an end to war, by creating economic balance, which presupposes a radical revolution in ideas and morals." The "constitution of right in humanity is the very abolition of war; it is the organisation

[73] *Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon* (Paris: Lacroix, 1875) XI: 118–9.

[74] "La Guerre et la paix", 326, 465.

Schapiro clearly assumes his reader's ignorance of Proudhon work for this summary is a complete distortion of its argument. Likewise, he does not seek to explain how his admission that Proudhon "repudiated violent methods" and advocated a "peaceful revolution" can be reconciled with this portrayal of Proudhon as a warmonger and precursor of the violent methods of fascism. (341)

This summary fails to mention that while the first volume of *La Guerre et la paix* does indeed extol "the right of war", the second volume discusses how war becomes corrupted (so generating numerous social evils) and how to end it by understanding its root cause.[71] This may lead the impatient reader to draw the wrong conclusion: indeed, in Book One, Proudhon, as if he is aware that he may be tempting the patience of his reader, notes that "I shall conclude by opposing the war-mongering *status quo*, opposing the institutions of militarism"[72] As he put it in a letter:

> How could you have supposed that I wanted, by a sort of panegyric or apotheosis of war, to perpetuate the military regime? [...] my thesis: *War is finished, society no longer wants it.* [...] I will confine myself to pointing out to you, so that you may understand me with less difficulty, that in order to put an end to war, it was not a question of declaring against it as *the friends of peace* do; it was necessary to begin by recognising [...] its principle, its role, its mission, its purpose; this done, it was proved then, and only then, that the goal being reached or on the eve of being reached, war was finished, and finished not by the good pleasure of

[71] For good introductions to this book and its major themes, see Prichard (2013).

[72] "La Guerre et la paix", 49.

and Proudhon was unable to publish under his own name for a number of years and then only on economic matters. With the publication of his first political work (*De la justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église*) in 1858, Proudhon soon found himself charged with corrupting public morals and went into exile in Belgium where he could publish freely. Schapiro's summary of this period leaves much to be desired, writing that "[d]uring the period of the Second Empire, Proudhon was actively engaged in writing. Book after book and pamphlet after pamphlet poured from his busy pen" before noting his "arrest was ordered but he fled to Brussels". (335) The implied cosiness with the regime did not exist and while Schapiro wants to portray Proudhon as a Bonapartist, the Bonapartists themselves were very aware of his politics and acted accordingly.

Fifth, Schapiro fails to mention Proudhon's arguments against having a President in the first place and his articles warning that Louis-Napoleon had eyes on becoming Emperor are summarised as Proudhon being "arrested on the charge of writing violent articles against President Louis Napoleon and sentenced to prison for three years." (335) Nor does he mention Proudhon's writings (published from prison) defending the Constitution and universal suffrage against the attacks upon both by the reactionary National Assembly. This is understandable, given that it would be difficult to portray him as an advocate of dictatorship by the head of the State when he opposed having such a position considering it, amongst other things, "royalty", "the violation of revolutionary principles", and "counter-revolution".[49] If Proudhon had been listened to, then Louis-Napoleon would never have become Emperor.

[49] "The Constitution and the Presidency", *Property is Theft!*, 370.

On Capitalism and Socialism

As well as being a "passionate hater of democracy", Schapiro claims that Proudhon viewed "socialism" in the same light. (362) He warms to this theme:

> In discussing the social and political issues of his day Proudhon did not at all apply his anarchist views. They seemed to form no part of his vigorous attacks on the ideas of his opponents, whether left or right. His hatred of socialism, which Proudhon regarded as the worst of all social poisons, drove him to advocate anarchy as its very opposite. What he really saw in anarchy was not a solution of social problems but an antidote to socialism. (363)

He contrasts Proudhon to socialists who "directed their attacks on the capitalistic system of production; hence they sought to substitute socialization for private ownership – the Utopians, through cooperative societies, and the Marxists, through government ownership." Proudhon's "anticapitalism was not the same as that of the socialists [...] Not the system of production, but the system of exchange was the root of evil of capitalism." (342)

This is a key aspect of his case, with Schapiro quoting Marxist Franz Neumann that "[i]n singling out predatory capital, National Socialism treads in the footsteps of Proudhon who, in his *Idée générale de la Révolution au 19e siècle* demanded the liquidation of the Banque de France and its transformation into an institution of public utility". (366–7) Schapiro fails to mention that Naumann is explicitly repeating Marx on Proudhon and stresses that "National Socialist anti-capitalism has always exempted productive capital, that is, industrial capital, from its

ing it into the hands of the State, would not abolish the ruling class but simply create a new one – the bureaucracy.

On War and Peace

The next charge against Proudhon is that he was a warmonger and militarist. This is his argument from the original article:

> What astounded Proudhon's contemporaries [...] was his glorification of war. Hatred of war and longing for universal peace has been an almost universal characteristic of all modern revolutionary thinkers [...] The contradictions between the revolutionist Proudhon and the revolutionary thought of his day became even more puzzling, even more strange, when Proudhon appeared as a glorifier of war for its own sake. His book *La Guerre et la paix*, which appeared in 1861, was a hymn to war, intoned in a more passionate key than anything produced by the fascists of our time. [...] War was the revelation of religion, of justice, and of the ideal in human relations. [...]
>
> In the view of Proudhon war was not a social evil that would be eradicated in the course of human progress. He was convinced that war was an instinct inherent in the very nature of man and was itself the prime source of human progress. Therefore it would last as long as man existed and as long as moral and social values prevailed in human society [...] Almost every page of *La Guerre et la paix* contains a glorification of war as an ideal and as an institution. ("Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Harbinger of Fascism", 729–30)

Revolution "was an important turning point for Proudhon" and "anarchism emerged as central to his thought".[68] Decades later, Peter Kropotkin pointed to these debates and noted their continued relevance to libertarians: "Many admirable pages can be found there on the State and Anarchy which it would be very useful to reproduce for a wide audience."[69]

More could be written on this subject, such as Schapiro's conflation of opposing strikes with opposing the labour movement and, in one quotation, his wilful mistranslation of *ouvrières associations* as "trade unions" rather than co-operatives, his insertion of the word "hostile" and the failure to indicate that this was discussing Proudhon's views on a specific form of workers' association (those advocated by the Louis Blanc influenced Luxembourg Commission of 1848–9). (347–8) However, enough has been discussed to show that Proudhon attacked capitalism as system of production *and* exchange, denounced industrial capital *and* banking capital, combining his call for the transformation of the Banque de France with the replacement of capitalist firms with democratically-run workers' associations (indeed his analysis of how exploitation occurred within production was the basis of his vision of socialism rooted in transforming production[70]).

Socialism, as Schapiro rightly suggested, "aimed to destroy the bourgeois ruling class in the only way that it could be destroyed as a class, namely by abolishing property altogether". (338) Proudhon agreed but the current regime of property and classes can be abolished in many ways. It was to the Frenchman's credit that he predicted that nationalising property, plac-

Present Utility and Future Possibility of the State," *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 66 (Winter 2016).

[68] Ehrenberg, 116.

[69] Peter Kropotkin, *Modern Science and Anarchy* (Chico/Edinburgh: AK Press, 2018), 205; Also see, 227.

[70] Iain McKay, "Proudhon's Constituted Value and the Myth of Labour Notes," *Anarchist Studies* 25: 1 (Summer 2017).

denunciations and solely concentrated on 'predatory' (that is, banking) capital".[50]

Proudhon, then, is a proto-fascist because he focused exclusively on finance capital, exempted productive capital, rejected socialisation of the means of production and co-operatives societies. Yet unlike his claims on democracy, Schapiro provides few references: the reader is given passing comments about Proudhon's *Système des contradictions économiques*, his opposition to the "right to work" at the start of the 1848 Revolution and his conflicts with the likes of Louis Blanc. (334) This lack of evidence is understandable as every single link in the chain of reasoning to reach his conclusion is wrong.

First, while Proudhon did seek "to find a solution of the social problem other than that presented by the socialists or by the classical economists" in 1846, (334) Schapiro forgets that while the latter mostly agree on what they advocated, the former are marked by a series of schools. This was the case in 1846 and the number of schools has been added to since then, not least by Marxism (itself hopelessly subdivided) and revolutionary anarchism (collectivist, communist and syndicalist). It is perfectly feasible to criticise certain forms of socialism and still be a socialist:

> As a critic, having had to proceed to the search for social laws by the negation of property, I belong to the socialist protest: in this respect I have nothing to disavow of my first assertions, and I am, thank God, true to my background. As a man of achievement and progress, I repudiate with all my might socialism, empty of ideas, powerless, immoral, capable only of producing dupes and crooks […] and here is, in a few words, my profession of faith and

[50] Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: the structure and practice of national socialism 1933–1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), 320–1.

my criterion on all past, present and future organisational utopias:

> *Whoever calls upon power and capital to organise labour is lying,*
>
> *Because the organisation of labour must be the downfall of capital and power.*[51]

Thus Blanc "is never tired of appealing to authority", "places power above society" and "makes social life descend from above" while "socialism loudly declares itself anarchistic" and "maintains that [social life] springs up and grows from below".[52] A few years later, Proudhon reiterated that "Blanc represents governmental socialism, revolution by power, as I represent democratic socialism, revolution by the people. An abyss exists between us".[53] He rejected Blanc's "system of organisation by the State" because it was "still the same negation of freedom, equality and fraternity" as under capitalism for "the only change is the shareholders and the managers" with "not the slightest difference in the situation of the workers".[54]

Second, like many commentators, Schapiro does not appreciate that Proudhon separated ownership and use, arguing that while the former must be "undivided", the latter must be "divided". If this were not ensured, then the liberty promised by socialism would become the tyranny of community.[55] Thus

[51] *Système des contradictions économiques* II: 396.

[52] "System of Economic Contradictions", *Property is Theft!*, 205. Proudon's returned to the "from below" and "from above" perspectives, which Draper utilised without acknowledgment, in *Confessions of a Revolutionary* (*Property is Theft!*, 398–9).

[53] *Les Confessions*, 200.

[54] "Mélanges: Articles de Journaux 1848–1852 III", *Œuvres complètes de P.-J. Proudhon* (Paris: Lacroix, 1871) XIX: 118.

[55] "The members of a community, it is true, have no private property; but the community is proprietor, and proprietor not only of the goods, but of the persons and wills." (Proudhon, "What is Property?", *Property is Theft!*, 131)

finance capital. Presumably Schapiro hoped his readers would forget this or consider it Proudhon's rather than his contradiction.

Third, Schapiro fails to place Proudhon's ideas on credit within his wider ideas. He rightly notes that Proudhon sought to "universalize bills of exchange" as a circulating medium (rather than "labour notes", as falsely asserted by Marx) but contrasts Proudhon's *révolution par le credit* with socialism. (342–3) Yet this was seen not as an end in itself but rather as the means to a wider economic transformation, namely the replacement of wage-labour by association. As Proudhon put it, thanks to its "over-arching mandate, the Exchange Bank is the organisation of labour's greatest asset" for it allows "the new form of society to be defined and created among the workers" in which "all the workshops are owned by the nation, even though they remain and must always remain free."[66]

Recognising the difficulties inherent in State control, for Proudhon labour had to organise itself. To do this working people needed the means of production in their hands and there are two ways to secure this: by seizing it or by buying it. As he opposed the former, only the latter remained. That later anarchists argued for revolutionary expropriation rather than reforming the credit system should not obscure the similar reasoning behind each.

Fourth, anarchism played a key part in his critique of State socialism as can be seen, for example, in his polemic with Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux between November 1849 and January 1850[67] which fed directly into *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*. These works reflected how the 1848

[66] "Letter to Louis Blanc", *Property is Theft!*, 296–7.

[67] These articles are included in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Rivière, 1923) II along with "Idée générale de la Révolution au dix-neuvième siècle". A few of these articles are contained in *Property is Theft!* ("Resistance to the Revolution," "Letter to Pierre Leroux," and "In Connection with Louis Blanc") while another has been published elsewhere: "Regarding Louis Blanc: The

with collective production by workers' associations all united within socio-economic federalism:

> Proudhon and Bakunin were "collectivists," which is to say they declared themselves without equivocation in favour of the common exploitation, not by the State but by associated workers of the large-scale means of production and of the public services. Proudhon has been quite wrongly presented as an exclusive enthusiast of private property.[64]

Proudhon, in short, was not against common ownership but rather State control. As he summarised during the 1848 Revolution, "under universal association, ownership of the land and of the instruments of labour is *social* ownership" with "democratically organised workers' associations" forming "that vast federation of companies and societies woven into the common cloth of the democratic and social Republic."[65] Proudhon, then, advocated workers' co-operatives because his opposition to capitalism included a critique of industrial capital as the wage-labour it created produced both exploitation and oppression.

Schapiro, ironically, admits as much in passing when, referencing *Idée générale*, he correctly summarised its analysis that "[b]y its perversion of the principle of the division of labour, capitalism made the worker more productive and more dependent at the same time. As a consequence, all the advantages under the new industrial system went to capital, not labour." (340) By noting this aspect of Proudhon's ideas, he not only refutes his own claims but Neumann's which he used as supporting evidence that Proudhon – like fascists – focused exclusively on

[64] Daniel Guérin, "From Proudhon to Bakunin", *The Radical Papers* (Montréal: Black Rose, 1987), Dimitrios I. Roussopoulos (ed.), 32; Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York/London: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 44–9.

[65] "Election Manifesto of *Le Peuple*", *Property is Theft!*, 377–8.

we find Schapiro quoting Proudhon arguing that mutualism would be created "without confiscation, without bankruptcy, without an agrarian law, without common ownership, without state intervention, and without the abolition of inheritance." (344) However, looking at the source (Proudhon's famous speech to the Constituent National Assembly in which he also proudly proclaimed that "Socialism made the February Revolution") the term Proudhon actually uses is "community" (*communauté*) and this cannot be translated as "common ownership" without seriously distorting what Proudhon meant by the term, why he opposed it and what he advocated in its stead.[56]

C*ommunauté* is often rendered as "communism" in English translations of Proudhon's work which, while closer to what was meant (particularly given the characteristics of the Stalinist regime in the USSR), is not quite correct. Regardless, capitalism was marked by divided use and divided ownership while "Community" was based on undivided use and undivided ownership. Both, as a result, were exploitative and oppressive and had to be replaced by what, in 1840, Proudhon referred to as a "third form of society, the synthesis of community and property" which he then termed liberty. Invoking the well-known philosophical triad, community was "the first term of social development" ("the *thesis*") while "property, the reverse of community, is the second term" ("the *antithesis*") and "[w]hen we have discovered the third term, the synthesis, we shall have the required solution."[57] This "third social form" would be based on divided use and undivided ownership. The former is needed to secure workers' freedom to control both their labour and its product, the latter is needed to end master-servant relations (wage-labour) within the workplace by making every new re-

[56] "Address to the Constituent National Assembly", *Property is Theft!*, 349, 345.

[57] "What is Property?", *Property is Theft!*, 136, 130 (although "community" is translated as "communism").

cruit automatically involved in its management (and so control their labour and its product).[58]

Shapiro ignores this but proclaims that this "new system would inaugurate what Proudhon called *le troisième monde*" yet the page Schapiro references does not contain the term, which is unsurprising as Proudhon never used it.[59] (353) Proudhon did indicate that he opposed private and State ownership in favour of "universal association" (the 1840s) or "agricultural industrial federation" (the 1860s). As he put it in 1846:

> Either competition, — that is, monopoly and what follows; or exploitation by the State [...]; or else, in short, a solution based upon equality, — in other words, the organisation of labour, which involves the negation of political economy and the end of property.[60]

Rather than State control or planning, Proudhon argued that each association would control its own affairs and decide what to produce, for whom, when and at what price. Schapiro recognises this when he wrote "[p]rivate enterprise would remain, and competition, the vital force that animated all society, would continue to regulate market prices". (344) However, he contradicts himself by stating that "[u]nder mutualism there would be organized, in each industry, voluntary autonomous associations of producers with the object of exchanging commodities. Production was to be individual, not collective. Proudhon was an anticollectivist." (352)

It is not explained how production organised by associations can be individual rather than collective. Proudhon,

[58] Iain McKay, "Proudhon, Property and Possession," *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 66 (Winter 2016), 26–29.

[59] Nor does Proudhon use the term *troisième forme de société* on the page Schapiro references. It cannot be a coincidence that "Third Reich" could be, with sufficient perseverance, translated as *troisième monde*.

[60] "System of Economic Contradictions", *Property is Theft!*, 202.

however, is clear and advocated workers' associations to achieve what in the 1850s he termed "industrial democracy" but which he had raised repeatedly throughout his quarter century of writing. That Schapiro ignores this core aspect of Proudhon's economic vision is telling in spite of mentioning works – *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* (1840), *Système des contradictions économiques* (1846), *Idée générale de la Révolution au dix-neuvième siècle* (1851), *Manuel du Spéculateur à la Bourse* (1857) and *Du Principe fédératif* (1863) and *De la Capacité politique des classes ouvrières* (1865) – where this is advocated.[61]

Indeed, workers' control is such an obviously core aspect of any genuine form of socialism that even Leninists pay lip-service to it. Significantly, while Schapiro notes that Proudhon "denounced capitalism as *féodalité industrielle*" (industrial feudalism) he did not indicate where. (340) This is understandable for Proudhon argued that "industrial democracy must follow industrial feudalism",[62] which is hard to square with Schapiro's claim that Proudhon hated democracy in "its ideals, its methods, and its organization." (349)

Yet economic democracy can take many forms. Rather than one giant all-embracing centralised Association advocated by many of his contemporaries, Proudhon advocated associations united by federal and contractual links. As such, he should be considered one of the first market socialists as well as, as Steven K. Vincent has persuasively shown, a leading thinker of the associationist socialism of mid-nineteenth century France.[63] He did, as Schapiro notes, aim to universalise property but this does not mean opposing socialisation. Recognising the nature of the economy of his time, Proudhon's theory of "possession" allowed both artisan and peasant production to co-exist

[61] Extracts from all these works, including relevant sections on workers' associations, are included in *Property is Theft!*.

[62] "Stock Exchange Speculator's Manual", *Property is Theft!*, 610.

[63] Vincent, 140–165.