Ryley, Peter. "Property and progress: The emergence of anarchist political economy." *Making Another World Possible: Anarchism, Anti-Capitalism and Ecology in Late 19th and Early 20th Century Britain*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. 1–26. Contemporary Anarchist Studies. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501306754.ch-001>>.

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1

Property and progress: The emergence of anarchist political economy

In his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote:

The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying ‘This is mine’, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: ‘Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.’¹

With this deceptively simple statement, Rousseau placed property firmly on the agenda of radical political economy. And in doing so he emphasized that property is not primarily a way of defining how humans interact with material world, it is a social concept that defines how they interact with each other. Rousseau was a pessimist, believing that a peaceful state of nature had been irretrievably corrupted by civilization. Despite the vituperative attacks on him, especially by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and the decisive rejection of his concept of social contract by libertarians, Rousseau’s influence² on anarchism was palpable and spawned a ‘mythic communism’³ that thought that paradise could be regained by creating a world free of private property.

Yet, in the early years of the development of anarchism this was not the main view. Instead, it was dominated by an intellectual tradition, described by Hillel Steiner and Peter Vallentyne as ‘left libertarianism’,⁴ one of a number of distinctive working-class political economies,⁵ which sought

to articulate a radical alternative to conventional notions of property in emergent industrial capitalism and to address the paradox of the existence of poverty and servitude in an era of prosperity and liberty.

There were three key elements to this critique. First there was the idea of just and unjust property, where a combination of Locke's theory of the origin of property and the labour theory of value, as found in classical economics, was used to draw a distinction between different kinds of property or ownership, with some seen as legitimate and others not.

Much else flowed from this basic idea. Obviously, there was a critique of concentrated ownership and property holding, above all, in land and capital. And this, in turn, meant an attack on rent of all kinds and the institution of wage labour. Not only were employment relations seen as economically exploitative, also they were servile and violated the idea of just property in the person. These theorists also rejected many of the mainstays of classical political economy, which was emerging simultaneously from the same intellectual roots. In particular, they refuted ideas associated with Ricardo and, especially, Malthus, about the implications of population growth.

Most importantly for anarchist thinkers, a connection was made between unjust types of property and political power, resulting in a profound anti-statism. This was a common feature of radical thought at the time. For the propagandist of *The Black Book*,⁶ unjust property was a catalogue of outrage, a record of a kleptocratic church and state living off the productive work of others. For the influential French radical liberal Charles Dunoyer, this was the result of an artificial political hierarchy established as an early stage of social development that was destined to give way to industrialism, 'a state where the right (of enriching oneself by the exercise of political domination) would be the privilege of no one, where neither a few men nor many men would be able to make their fortune by pillaging the rest of the population'.⁷

Dunoyer, together with Charles Comte, also point to the second main feature of left libertarianism, a class analysis based on the distinction between the productive and unproductive classes. It was evident that those that did the work did not receive the rewards for it. The wealth that flowed from labour passed into the hands of owners, not workers, and so a device for redistribution and restitution was central to radical political economy. According to David Hart, they argued 'that it was the state and the privileged classes allied to or making up the state ... which were essentially non productive. They also believed that throughout history there had been conflict between these two antagonistic classes which could only be brought to end with the radical separation of peaceful and productive civil society from the inefficiencies and privileges of the state and its favourites'.⁸

Finally, left libertarianism began to question the nature of progress. It was not hostile towards progress as conventionally understood. The nineteenth

century was a time of supreme confidence in science and technology, which, it was thought, would bring in its wake dynamic and limitless human development. At times this could border on the rhapsodical. As the French anarchist Louise Michel wrote:

Science will bring forth harvests in the desert; the energy of the tempests and whirlpools will carve paths through the mountains. Undersea boats will discover lost continents. Electricity will carry ships of the air above the icy poles. The ideas of Liberty, Equality and Justice will finally burst into flame. Each individual will live his integral part within humankind as a whole. Progress being infinite, transformations will be perpetual.⁹

Thus, anarchists tended to adhere to a modified Whig theory of history. History may not be a record of constant improvement, but it could become so. However, despite this faith, they did not accept the conventional narrative that saw progress as a process of unlimited economic growth and a sustained increase in ‘luxury’, as developed by writers such as Bernard Mandeville and Adam Smith. Instead, progress was to come through intellectual development, social evolution and the liberation offered by a new economic order.

Despite the importance for wider economic thought of writers like William Ogilvie,¹⁰ British left libertarianism was predominantly developed by William Godwin and Thomas Hodgskin. It was not solely a native tradition, though; they drew many of their influences from other European thinkers, and it is impossible to complete the picture without proper consideration of a third figure, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Proudhon’s significance and influence is manifest as he expanded on the left libertarian concept of property and took it further by developing a theory of exchange – mutualism. And it was he who made the firm connection between radical ideas about property with a critique of the concept of progress. Whilst Godwin may have hinted at it, Proudhon made it explicit.

Property and class in early British left libertarianism

William Godwin’s great work *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*, first published in 1793 at the onset of the Napoleonic wars, is now seen as one of the founding documents of classical anarchism. Already the published author of several works of non-fiction and three novels, the book brought Godwin fame and a respected place in radical circles. He followed it shortly with

his best-regarded novel, *Caleb Williams*, and shortly after began his relationship with Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), a formidable radical partnership that ended in Wollstonecraft's untimely death in childbirth. Their daughter, Mary, survived and was to find her own fame by eloping with the poet Shelley and writing her celebrated gothic novel, *Frankenstein*. Godwin continued to publish though with small financial reward and ended his days, ironically, living off a government sinecure.

Political Justice is a wide-ranging book, placing political economy within an ethical framework, and provides a foundation for much of the left libertarian writing that followed. In particular, it laid down the parameters for the discussion of property and its central role in classical anarchist thought. Godwin identified three distinct 'degrees' of property. The first clearly relates to his ambiguous attitude to Utilitarianism.¹¹

The first and simplest degree is that of my permanent right in those things the use of which being attributed to me, a greater sum of benefit or pleasure will result than could have arisen from their being otherwise appropriated.¹²

This is a straightforward defence of the right of personal property in the necessities of life (housing, food, clothes etc.) against seizure by others. Such a view is uncontentious, even if the Utilitarian justification is clumsy. It is with his second and third degrees of property that Godwin becomes more explicitly political.

The second degree 'is the empire to which every man is entitled over the produce of his own industry.' This is very different from the first degree and marks a departure from Utilitarianism, implying the existence of a natural right to property conferred through labour. Godwin is explicit that this includes 'even that part of it the use of which ought not to be appropriated to himself'.¹³

This, of course, raises a problem. If one person produces the necessities of life who, by right of labour, owns them, how is the right of the rest of the community to these necessities – Godwin's first degree of property – enforced? The obvious answer is some form of equitable exchange, but instead Godwin refines what he means by property by removing the absolute right of disposal.

The producer, according to Godwin, 'has no right of option in the disposal of anything which may fall into his hands ... He is only the steward. But still he is the steward. These things must be trusted to his award.' The community exercises its control over the disposal and distribution of this property through 'censorial power', since 'All men cannot individually be entitled to exercise compulsion on each other, for this would produce universal anarchy. All men cannot collectively be entitled

to exercise unbounded compulsion, for this would produce universal slavery'.¹⁴

The idea of property as a conditional right, held in trust for the whole community and, implicitly, for future generations, is found in much modern Green political thought, but it isn't exclusive to it. If the first degree of property gives rights, the second gives duties. The second qualifies but does not negate the first. The second *is*, however, negated by the third degree, the dominant property relationship of the late eighteenth century, which is '... a system ... by which one man enters into the faculty of disposing of the produce of another man's industry'. He continues:

There is scarcely any species of wealth, expenditure or splendour, existing in any civilized country, that is not, in some way, produced by the express manual labour, and corporeal industry of the inhabitants of that country... Every man may calculate, in every glass of wine he drinks, and every ornament he annexes to his person, how many individuals have been condemned to slavery and sweat, incessant drudgery, unwholesome food, continual hardships, deplorable ignorance, and brutal insensibility, that he may be supplied with these luxuries...

It is clear therefore that the third species of property is in direct contradiction to the second.¹⁵

In other words, this third degree involves servitude, robbery and the expropriation of the right of the labourer to the fruits of their own labour.

Instead of the market, Godwin gives us the idea of a self-regulating community: 'the distribution of wealth in every community must be left to depend upon the sentiments of the individuals of that community'.¹⁶ This is not quite the same as the 'voluntary communism' that Peter Marshall assumes Godwin is advocating,¹⁷ although it doesn't preclude it. However, Godwin's clear assertion of a social right to property provided the basis for the further development of the left libertarian perspective.

Much of the intellectual content for this development was derived from the new 'classical' political economy, refined from the 1820s onwards, and based on the work of writers such as David Ricardo, Thomas Malthus, Nassau William Senior and Robert Torrens. Two essential components were the distinction made between different types of income and a grim view of the position of the labourer. Simultaneously, as Boyd Hilton¹⁸ argues, Evangelical Christianity came to have an influence on political economy through its distinctive interpretation of the long-standing Christian approach to natural law, especially the assertion of economic laws as part of a providential natural order. Benthamite Utilitarians, however, attacked the whole idea of both providentialism and natural law in favour of a social scientific approach based on the psychology of human

happiness, as indicated by Bentham's felicific calculus. All these intellectual movements were critical of traditional economics and instead called for a radical restructuring and reduction of the economic role of government and political power. However, there was also an explicit attack on the idea that there could be a limitation on individual ownership of the kind that Godwin had asserted and an enthusiastic advocacy of unconstrained property rights.

Though radical political economy drew upon these currents of thought, it also rejected many of their conclusions. In some cases, such as with William Cobbett, this could take the form of a radical conservatism, which could appear backward-looking or even reactionary. This was especially so of people like Robert Southey and those associated with *Blackwood's Magazine*. Others, however, viewed themselves as progressive with a vision of a transformed and distinctively 'modern' industrial society. And they, once again, put a radical concept of property at the centre of their ideas.

In Britain, the most prominent of these were the group commonly referred to as the *Ricardian Socialists*. The basis of their ideas lay in truly free exchange and an inalienable right of property in the products of one's own labour. They extended Godwin's ideas by combining them with much of the new economics, to produce a genuinely radical, and anti-statist, political economy. In addition, French class theory, derived from the schools of Jean-Baptiste Say and Henri de Saint-Simon,¹⁹ was influential, with its critique of the parasitic relationship between the unproductive and the productive classes and the resultant social conflict.

It was from this school that Thomas Hodgskin, writing predominantly in the 1820s and 1830s, made the decisive break from Utilitarianism to move towards a consistent libertarian left response to emergent capitalist society. His own intellectual journey had begun in the Royal Navy, where his brushes with authority led to his early departure and his first published work exposing the brutality of naval discipline. He was subsequently part of leading Utilitarian circles before a breach with them, followed by a period of travels, which ended with him beginning a lifelong career as a journalist. Through his political activism for free trade and his connection with *The Economist* magazine, he is also an important link to later radical individualism, especially due to his influence on a young Herbert Spencer.

Though classed as a Ricardian Socialist, Hodgskin, in Halévy's view, 'remained the determined opponent of Ricardo's system'.²⁰ He drew far more radical conclusions from liberal principles. He was also a determined opponent of Malthus, something that was common amongst later anarchists. In a letter to Francis Place on 30 May 1820,²¹ Hodgskin refutes Malthus on the sound empirical basis that the evils of famine and pestilence that are supposed to follow from an increase in population simply do not happen. In Britain, with its rapid population increase, these evils

had, in reality, declined, whilst they persisted in sparsely populated regions. Population growth actually brings important improvements in human conditions and technological progress. Thus:

An increase of population promotes industry, ingenuity, and knowledge, consequently also the means of producing food. The power of the Populating principle may therefore be looked on as the great stimulus to exertion and as the great means of promoting the happiness of the individual and of the Species.²²

Hodgskin was a Deist,²³ believing that God is revealed through nature, and both terms are frequently used interdependently in his writing. It is important to grasp that the Deism of this time was neither obscurantist nor mystical. Much of the Freethought movement at the time were Deist as well as secularist.²⁴ What Hodgskin's religious outlook brought was an optimistic view of human nature, a belief in natural law and a materialist, empirical approach. All three underpin his writing.

Hodgskin's understanding of human nature was straightforward. People were fundamentally good; their virtue derived from a divine natural law, in itself a moral order. Every assertion of the basic virtue of humanity has to rationalize the apparent contradiction of the existence of evil, so, walking hand-in-hand with the perfectibility of humankind, comes the idea of corruptibility. And if humans are intrinsically good, then their corruption must be the result of something external – a product of their environment, and this leads Hodgskin to a materialist view of history:

... all man's knowledge, political and other knowledge, and ultimately all man's opinions are corrected by, and therefore modelled on, the facts of the material world. Mind when most enlightened and informed is a correct reflection of external nature. In the long run, therefore, that according to the laws on which man must act to live, will shape and govern all his opinions.²⁵

And that material reality is natural law, itself moral and a reflection of intrinsic good:

The moral laws of nature are as regular and unalterable as her physical laws. He, who has so beautifully constructed our bodies, has not left our conduct, on which our happiness depends, to be regulated by chance. The power that governs the world is not a sanguinary tyrant, who delights, by momentary and unexpected storms, to blight the best hopes of mankind. Regular laws are established in the moral world, and we have the capacity to discover them, and so to regulate our conduct by them, that we may diminish or destroy every species of evil.²⁶

Natural law does not need intense sociological inquiry to reveal itself; all that is required is liberty. In freedom, humans realize their inherent understanding of the moral order and live in harmony with it.

This belief in the existence of a natural law did not survive long into the nineteenth century; metaphysics were to be replaced by evolutionary and ecological science. However, Hodgskin's analysis of the corruption of human society was more influential and lasting. He saw social and political order, established through law, as nothing more than the establishment of an unnatural order by force for the benefit of one class over another.

... Messrs. Bentham and Mill, both being eager to exercise the power of legislation, represent it (law and government) as a beneficent deity which curbs our naturally evil passions and desires ... which checks ambition, sees justice done, and encourages virtue. Delightful characteristics! which have the single fault of being contradicted by every page of history.²⁷

State law is in total contradiction to natural law: 'Perish the people, but let the law live, has ever been the maxim of the masters of mankind.'²⁸

Hodgskin, drawing on Comte and Dunoyer, further insisted that the apparatus of the state is nothing more than an instrument of class rule: 'In fact, the landed aristocracy and the government are one – the latter being nothing more than the organized means of preserving the power and privileges of the former.'²⁹

Both of these views permeate later radical thought and, once again, property takes centre stage in his alternative political economy, supporting individual ownership conferred by labour, but denying any right of appropriation of the product of that labour by others. And it is labour alone that creates wealth: 'There is no other wealth in the world but what is created by labour, and by it continually renewed.'³⁰

Hodgskin uses a radical reading of Locke, ignoring the inconsistencies that have him made the subject of academic debate,³¹ that labour conveys an inalienable right of property. And so property is integral to natural law and is an individual right.

By the operations of nature ... there arises in every individual, unwilling by any lawgiver, a distinct notion of his own individuality and of the individuality of others. By the same operations, we extend this idea, first for ourselves and afterwards for others, to the things we make or create, or have given to us, including the pleasure or pain resulting from our own conduct. Thus the natural idea of property is a mere extension of that individuality; and it embraces all the mental as well as all the physical consequences of muscular exertion. As nature gives to labour whatever it produces – as we extend the idea of personal individuality to what is produced by every individual – not merely is a right of property

established by nature, we see also that she takes means to make known the existence of that right. It is as impossible for men not to have a notion of a right of property, as it is for them to want the idea of personal identity. When either is totally absent man is insane.³²

This natural right of individual ownership is contrasted with an artificial property right, established by law, enforced by the state and based on expropriation of the labour of others. He wrote: 'Nature or God ... commands, and has always commanded, that industry should be followed by wealth, and idleness by destitution.'³³ Unfortunately, even a cursory glance at early Victorian society revealed that wealth lay with the idle, whilst the industrious were rewarded with destitution. The property rights, which should have been conferred by labour, were being appropriated by the immoral, but legal, means of 'revenue, rents, tithes and profit'.³⁴ For Hodgskin this was done by force. Coercion is required to extract both rent and profit, whilst the employment relationship is servile and exploitative, resulting in the transfer of the fruits of labour from worker to employer and owner.

It was not just law that protected this theft; an ideological framework was erected to justify the sanctity of artificial property. Hodgskin saw the dominant cultural, political and ideological life in society to be merely a reflection of naked class interests, whether secular or religious. He is savage with his former Utilitarian associates:

The butcher-wolf has seized a lamb, and is tearing it to pieces; and Mr. Bentham and his followers, the pretended watch-dogs of the flock, bark aloud – to make him desist? NO! but to sanction his proceedings, and encourage him to do his work orderly, decently, and with decorum.³⁵

But it is when he writes on religion that we encounter a trope that runs through some radical thought, often treated with a discrete silence or, at best, a mumbled apologetic – anti-Semitism. It is not consistent, but it is a constant,³⁶ often reappearing, even today, in different guises.³⁷ In the nineteenth century, it mainly took the form of an association between Jews, finance and usury, often borrowing the language of race and ethnicity. Here the undertones in Hodgskin's writing are palpable:

The God of our priests is not the God of nature – not that great Being who fills and sustains all, who spreads life and happiness throughout creation – but a malicious and revengeful being, born of the barbarous fancies of a cruel and barbarous people.³⁸

So, how then is this artificial society going to unravel? Ultimately, Hodgskin's materialism leads him to a form of technological determinism and a faith in progress. That progress is moral as well as material:

Though we may not be able to foresee the moral effects of the splendid mechanical inventions of modern times, yet we may be sure that they are harbingers of a more extensive change in the moral condition of society, than was ever effected by political institutions.³⁹

A new society will be ushered in by social and technological rather than political action. It will be inevitable, as the law of nature cannot be negated; it is immanent in all humanity.

The natural right, existing at all times, gradually supersedes the law of the land, and effectually secures those new rights belonging to individuals, which, as men multiply, are continually created.⁴⁰

The agent for these changes is an economic class but, as the natural right of property is pre-eminent, Hodgskin asserts that the owner/producer will usher in the new society, not the propertyless and oppressed working classes. An ardent anti-capitalist, as well as individualist, Hodgskin saw industrial owners as the allies of the landed aristocracy in the expropriation of the fruits of the labour of others. Rather, it was the growing number of economically independent producers, whose interests are bound together through the division of labour in mutual dependence, that Hodgskin saw as the basis for a harmonious society based on natural law. Produced by the changes in technology, these people 'are at once labourers and capitalists'⁴¹ and the growth of this class 'must gradually extinguish both the mere slave-labourer and the mere idle slothful dolts, who live on the rent of land or the interest of money'.⁴² It is to Hodgskin, rather than to Proudhon, that Marx should have directed his cruel jibe that his theory was 'an out-and-out petty-bourgeois fantasy',⁴³ for it was he who saw this class as being the embodiment of the future.

For Hodgskin, Marxism would have been yet another violation of natural right, as ownership must be individual and based on labour, and not collective and vested in the state. Expropriation by the state, or even by the most numerous class, would be identical to expropriation by the current ruling class. Hodgskin's alternative to oppression was consistently individualist and anti-statist. Indeed, state organisations can only impede the development of society. He wrote:

When conceited politicians ask me what I would substitute for their systems, my answer is, that I propose no substitute. My argument is, that individual man does not make society, and that man cannot organize it. Society is the offspring of the instincts of the human animal, not of his will, and it cannot be modelled by an individual as he makes a watch or a steam engine ... I trust to that great power, call it Nature, or call it

God, which has brought society forth out of the wilderness, to provide for its future welfare.⁴⁴

Government is no more than the institution of injustice; economic disorder is the result. Surpluses bring impoverishment not wealth, property becomes an instrument of robbery; hatred, fear and oppression are the result. Mutual trust, the glue that holds societies together, breaks down completely. Hodgskin wrote:

As long as we cherish the mistrust of each other avowed by legislation, though contrary to the mutual reliance continually taught and continually extended by nature, as division of labour is extended, and all the families of mankind are knit by the common bond of commerce into one, so long shall we be the victims of those vices and crimes which pollute all our domestic relations, arming man against man, and nation against nation, till the face of the whole earth is stained with the blood of private assassinations and public murders. As long as we, thus mistrusting each other, are guilty of these atrocities, so long will the greed and the ambition of the priesthood be fattened by our apprehensions and remorse, and so long will they, for the sake of base lucre, invest our benevolent God with their own vile characteristics, filling the mind with horrid phantoms by their furious denunciations, turning religion, from being a consolation, into a plague and a curse, and by corrupting thought at its source, make all mankind feel as if the barb of death were ever rankling in their hearts. We like to go far about to seek the causes of our misery, but they may all be found in those unholy political institutions, which, originally founded by the sword have since been maintained by the sword, breathing nothing but hatred, discord, and bloodshed.⁴⁵

It is a complete statement of anarchism. Government should be removed, not seized or reformed.

There is a glaring weakness in Hodgskin's thought: agency. How is this new world to be brought about? Who will make this change? His *laissez-faire* approach of simply waiting for technological progress to produce moral reform, based on an inherent understanding of natural law, offers up a vision of permanent complaint accompanied by inaction. The poor and the exploited needed change now. Hodgskin offered them nothing. Hardly surprising then that others were to take the ideas of both British and European thinkers in a radical new direction – most notably, Marx and Proudhon. Whereas Marx accepted much of the libertarian analysis of class and exploitation, he departed from nearly all its conclusions. It was Pierre-Joseph Proudhon who remained closest to this individualist strand of thought and developed it to give a more sophisticated theory of history and change, and, most importantly, developed a theory of exchange to augment

that of ownership. In doing so he laid down the foundations of anarchist ideas for a future generation.

Proudhon and mutualism

Although this book is about anarchism in Britain, it is impossible to write about it without discussing Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Born in Besançon in Eastern France in 1809, the son of a small brewer and becoming a printer by trade, his self-education and rise to fame through an essay competition marks him out as an intellectual who had his roots in the artisan class. Although his life as a writer and activist was confined to France, his influence was ubiquitous, not least in coining the name ‘anarchism’ – using it in its classical sense of ‘without rule’ rather than the pejorative one of chaos. Importantly too, he was writing firmly in the same tradition of radical thought as Hodgskin, but his works are considerably more sophisticated.

Proudhon’s thought is not unproblematic. His anti-Semitism is overt and unpleasant, whilst in contrast to British libertarians who were influenced by the work of, and friendship with, women intellectuals, Proudhon is consistently, and unattractively, anti-feminist. This has led some of the subsequent historiography to see him as a contradictory figure combining ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ qualities, the clichéd ‘man of paradox’, whilst some have gone as far as to label him as a nostalgic, an outright reactionary or, in one thoroughly misjudged article, a ‘harbinger of fascism’.⁴⁶

Whilst his prejudices are indefensible, they can sometimes be at odds with his writings, are often contradictory, and they are certainly not essential to his ideology. They have also been a factor in the persistent misreading of his thought, with Marxists being the most hostile of all.⁴⁷ This isn’t the right place to deal with these misrepresentations. If you want to read more, Iain McKay disposes of many of them neatly in the introductory essay to his anthology of Proudhon’s writings, *Property is Theft!*.⁴⁸ Instead, I want to try and look at how Proudhon developed the left libertarian tradition and laid the foundations for some of the later ideas that were to permeate late Victorian Britain.

The starting point once again, just as it was for Proudhon’s career, is property. His memoir *What is Property?*, first published in 1840, established him as a significant radical writer. The tract begins with the following resounding and much-misquoted statement:

If I were asked to answer the following question: What is slavery? and I should answer in one word, It is murder, my meaning would be understood at once. No extended argument would be required to show that

the power to take from a man his thought, his will, his personality, is a power of life and death; and that to enslave a man is to kill him. Why, then, to this other question: What is property? may I not likewise answer, It is robbery, without the certainty of being misunderstood; the second proposition being no other than a transformation of the first?⁴⁹

‘Property is theft’, the ultimate communist slogan, is the phrase most frequently associated with Proudhon. But Proudhon did not mean it as such. Proudhon’s essay is, in fact, a sustained attack on Rousseau’s advocacy of a propertyless state of nature. Referring directly to Rousseau’s declaration from the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, with which this chapter begins, he wrote:

... the man who takes possession of a field, and says, ‘this field is mine’, will not be unjust so long as everyone else has an equal right of possession; nor will he be unjust, if wishing to change his location, he exchanges this field for an equivalent. But if, putting another in his place, he says to him, ‘work for me while I rest’, he then becomes unjust, unassociated, unequal. He is a proprietor.⁵⁰

Proudhon was making a vital distinction between what he called property and possession. It is very close to Hodgskin’s distinction between the natural and artificial right to property. Property is the device by which the rights of ownership are appropriated by others and used to extort the value of labour from the workers. It is an unconditional, perpetual and legal right. Possession is the conditional right of ownership for use without giving the ultimate right of disposal. It ensures that the products of labour directly belong to the labourer. Possession transforms society from one based on hierarchy to another founded in equality; it is in essence revolutionary. Proudhon elaborates:

There are different kinds of property: 1. Property pure and simple, the dominant and seigniorial power over a thing; or, as they term it, naked property. 2. Possession. ‘Possession’, says Duranton, ‘is a matter of fact, not of right.’ Touiller: ‘Property is a right, a legal power; possession is a fact.’ The tenant, the farmer, the commandit, the usufructuary, are possessors; the owner who lets and lends for use, the heir who is to come into possession on the death of a usufructuary, are proprietors. If I may venture the comparison: a lover is a possessor, a husband is a proprietor.⁵¹

In a later work, in his efforts to stress the value of individual possession, Proudhon used this metaphor in reverse: ‘The peasant loves the land without limit; as Michelet poetically says: he does not want a tenancy,

a concubinage; he wants a marriage.⁵² Despite this literary confusion, Proudhon's meaning is clear. Property denies the right of possession. Possession for use is both the aspiration and right of all. Justice demands that this right to possession is inalienable: 'A railroad, a mine, a factory, a ship, are to the workers who use them what a hive is to the bees, at once their tool and their home, their country, their territory, their property.'⁵³

Proudhon attacked both communists and socialists for believing that possession could be exercised indirectly, whether through the state, communes or 'phalansteries', and still result in justice. Not only that, any such collectivization ran contrary to the wishes of the people themselves.

The people, even those who are Socialists, whatever they may say, want to be owners; and ... I find the feelings of the masses on this point stronger and more resistant than on any other question ... And one thing is to be noted which shows how far, in the minds of the people, individual sovereignty is identified with collective sovereignty, that the more ground the principles of democracy have gained, the more I have seen the working classes, both in the city and country, interpret these principles favourably to individual ownership.⁵⁴

If this was the case – and one of Proudhon's strengths was his perceptiveness – the only way in which property could be collectivized was by coercion.

There are three main elements to Proudhon's attack on conventional private property. The first is familiar from Hodgskin: property is exploitative. Property ownership is absolute; it gives the owner the ultimate right of disposal regardless of the common interest. This enables the proprietor to deny use to those who may need it. This power also means that they can dictate the terms by which others both produce and consume the products of their own labour. In this way, property owners extract the majority of the value of the labour of the propertyless, by rent, interest, and through wages that may ensure the workers' subsistence, but are paid below the full value of their labour.

Secondly, as a consequence of this exploitation, economic prosperity is blighted by inequality. Proudhon draws on the radical liberal, Charles Sismondi,⁵⁵ to argue that the impoverishment of the workers leads to under-consumption. In berating an English manufacturer who saw modern technology as freeing him from the costs and demands of his workers, Proudhon wrote:

What a system is that which leads a business man to think with delight that society will soon be able to dispense with men! Machinery has delivered capital from the oppression of labor! That is exactly as if the cabinet should undertake to deliver the treasury from the oppression of the taxpayers. Fool! Though the workmen cost you something, they are your customers:

what will you do with your products, when, driven away by you, they shall consume them no longer? Thus machinery, after crushing the workmen, is not slow in dealing employers a counter blow; for, if production excludes consumption, it is soon obliged to stop itself...⁵⁶

Thirdly, Proudhon asserted that private property corrupts the moral order of society. He did not separate ethics from political economy and ethics are at the heart of his critique of the mainstream notion of progress. Once again, it has to be made clear that his objection was not to technological progress. Instead, he was an enthusiast:

With the introduction of machinery into economy, wings are given to liberty. The machine is the symbol of human liberty, the sign of our domination over nature, the attribute of our power, the expression of our right, the emblem of our personality.⁵⁷

Technology and modern industry are not in themselves the problem. The issue is the social organization of economic life.⁵⁸ Instead, the philosophical objection he has is to what the late American historian Christopher Lasch has called 'The moral rehabilitation of desire':

Its (the modern idea of progress) original appeal and its continuing plausibility derived from the more specific assumption that insatiable appetites, formerly condemned as a source of social instability and personal unhappiness, could drive the economic machine – just as man's insatiable curiosity drove the scientific project – and thus ensure a never-ending expansion of productive forces.⁵⁹

This, the central assumption behind Adam Smith's 'invisible hand', is what Proudhon is challenging in conjunction with his attack on the nature of property.

So how is a moral order based on possession to be established? Certainly not from above:

Any revolution from above is inevitably ... revolution which takes place through a prince's good pleasure, a minister's whim, the gropings of an assembly or the violence of a club. It is revolution by dictatorship and despotism...⁶⁰

Nor would the replacement of property by communism do anything other than intensify oppression:

Communism is oppression and slavery ... Communism is essentially opposed to the free exercise of our faculties, to our noblest desires our

deepest feelings ... communism violates the sovereignty of the conscience and equality: the first, by restricting spontaneity of mind and heart, and freedom of thought and action; the second, by placing labour and laziness, skill and stupidity, and even vice and virtue on an equality in point of comfort.⁶¹

Instead, Proudhon offered us his main organizing principle, liberty.⁶² And the embodiment of liberty is mutualism.

Mutualism is a method of direct action, the construction of systems of production and exchange by possessors, which sees both as instruments of collaboration. Production is inevitably social:

The isolated man can supply but a very small portion of his wants; all his power lies in association, and in the intelligent combination of universal effort. The division and co-operation of labour multiply the quantity and the variety of products; the individuality of functions improve their quality.

There is not a man, then, but lives on the products of several thousand different industries; not a labourer but receives from society at large the things which he consumes, and, with these, the power to reproduce. Who indeed would venture the assertion, 'I produce, by my own effort all that I consume; I need the aid of no one else ...'⁶³

Several things follow from this. First, in complex societies that become ever more productive through the division of labour, the individual ownership of the worker can only be assured by association, creating what we would now call co-operatives. Secondly, if workers are to realize the full value of their labour, then it is not enough alone for them to be free from the theft of that value by a class of property owners, it must also mean that the exchange of goods has to be equitable. Proudhon's vehement advocacy of the virtues of competition and his abhorrence of monopoly could sound like an embrace of market liberalism. Instead, he offers us something else.

Proudhon argued that free trade and the free market could not exist in capitalist society. Exploitation means that the market operates only in favour of the proprietors, whilst law and the state, even in the minimal form advocated by classic liberals, only exist to enforce their interests. A process of exchange between free, equal and independent people is not the same as a capitalist market economy; it is what Proudhon referred to as 'commerce':

Every transaction ending in an exchange of products or services may be designated as a commercial operation.

Whoever says commerce, says exchange of equal values; for if values

are not equal, and the injured party perceives it, he will not consent to the exchange and there will be no commerce.

Commerce only exists between free men. Transactions may be effected between other people by violence or fraud, but there is no commerce ... So, in every exchange, there is a moral obligation that neither of the contracting parties shall gain at the expense of the other; that is, that, to be legitimate and true, commerce must be exempt from all inequality. This is the first condition of commerce. Its second condition is, that it be voluntary; that is, that the parties act freely and openly.

I define, then, commerce or exchange as an act of society ...⁶⁴

Equality has to be at the heart of mutualism. Yet, as always with Proudhon, the detail is more important than the rhetoric. Proudhon's equality is highly specific. It is based on commutative rather than distributive justice and a labour theory of value. It refers to equality of access to resources, even if differential use of those resources produces inequality of income. Proudhon accepted some level of economic inequality. However, that inequality is in itself both moral, based on justice, and is limited by the capacity of an individual's own productive effort and the necessity to collaborate with others, rather than being unlimited through the monopolization of resources. Work and work alone is the only justification for differences in wealth. Whilst Proudhon recognizes that there are differences in talent and abilities, he does not see these as a moral basis for inequality; instead he seeks the maximum diversity of production to ensure that all talents are used and all are rewarded according to their productive labour. Diversity renders such inequality impossible.

Two associated questions then arise. First, how is that access to be secured; how do people become possessors? And, second, in what medium is exchange conducted in a complex society? His answer is two-fold: universally available credit through a Bank of the People and free currencies.

To own and to invest one needs credit. But debt and usury have not only been used as one of the main methods of expropriating the labour of others, they have also been, as David Graeber points out,⁶⁵ one of the ways in which a free agreement between apparent equals recreates the relationship between them as hierarchical. The debtor falls under the control of the creditor and the equality between the parties disappears. What seems like a reciprocal arrangement is nothing of the sort. It is a power relationship masked by the language of mutual obligation.⁶⁶

Proudhon was aware of this and so tried to find a solution in the reform of currency. Rather than being tied to 'bullion' or 'immovable property' that causes 'a miserable oscillation between usury and bankruptcy', Proudhon argued that currency should be based on 'products'.⁶⁷ In this way, 'instead of borrowing capital bearing interest, the workers mutually pledge each other their respective products, on the sole condition of equality in exchange'.⁶⁸

These issues of credit, currency and exchange were to reverberate through the discussions of the subsequent years.

Mutualism is central to Proudhon's thought and he envisaged it developing through local action into a global phenomenon through voluntary federation.⁶⁹ However, it was not the sole challenge he mounted to the idea of progress. He was nothing if not a moral philosopher and to understand the intertwining of his economics and ethics we have to consider his sociology and theory of history.

Proudhon employed a dialectical method, but one that was very different to Marx's, to the latter's considerable annoyance. Proudhon's dialectic is based on what he saw as the essential dualism of human social life, two conflicting realities that exist side-by-side. Proudhon called these contradictions, using Kant's term, antinomies. 'An antinomy is made up of two terms, necessary to each other, but always opposed, and tending to mutual destruction.'⁷⁰

An existential dilemma cannot be resolved in favour of one side or another, nor can it be transcended by a new stage in human history or removed altogether by a radical social transformation. Instead, Proudhon argued that antinomies are a constant in human society and that the dilemmas they produce can only be resolved by reaching a state of equilibrium.⁷¹ This does not mean compromise; it means recognition of the existence of these conflicts and the need to manage them.

In discussing the legacy of Proudhon's ideas there is some debate as to whether Proudhon, the opponent of monopoly, the defender of possession and the supporter of exchange, is best seen as an individualist, or whether his promotion of worker associations and federalism makes him essentially a collectivist. The answer is that he was both. Individualism and collectivism are antinomies that cannot be resolved. Proudhon was exploring a point of equilibrium between the two.

None of this was based on some utopian plan; Proudhon carefully avoided such potentially totalitarian temptations. Instead of being static, equilibrium is, in fact, a dynamic state with no fixed, preconceived end. This state of equilibrium is obtained through justice, realized through equality and liberty, and can only be reached through a particular version of human progress. This progress is not material; it is intellectual. Intellectual progress is intertwined with the social, economic and moral development of society: 'Social destiny, the solution of the human enigma, is found, then, in these words: EDUCATION, PROGRESS.'⁷² This intellectual advance is not the result of abstract theorizing. It is the product of action and the real experiences of people in their everyday lives. Yet, there were constraints. Whilst Proudhon was typical of many in the nineteenth century in exalting humanity's triumph over nature, he did not feel that victory ended natural limits. Societies were still bound by 'laws as abstract and immutable as those of numbers',⁷³ and thus it was not possible to escape those restrictions, merely

to live in harmony with them. In other words, he advocated sustainability. And this is precisely where political economy and ethics intertwine. The new society he ushered in is very far from utopian dreams of abundance or the progressives' never-ending and accelerating consumption. He rejected this vision for two reasons.

First, Proudhon felt that a state of material abundance would destroy the very progress that it is supposed to bring about by being morally corrupting. Proudhon did not share the optimism of Hodgskin about humanity. He saw human nature as unchanging and *malfait* rather than *malfaisant*.⁷⁴ As a result, in order to avoid anarchy in its pejorative sense, he saw the need to place restraints on human behaviour. To be consistent with his libertarianism, such restraint must always be voluntary. Thus, he advocated the replacement of law, an imposition based on the will of others, with contract, reliant on self-interest.

Proudhon's idea of self-interest is not a crude notion of petty desires; it is a spur to self-regulation in accordance with social reality. External regulation through the exercise of state power as a form of social contract, regardless of whether it is the absolutism of a Hobbes or the minimalism of a Mill, will always produce oppression and distort progress. Government inevitably reflects the interests of the governors and is an instrument for the imposition of the worst aspects of their human nature. Ultimately, self-regulation works because a breach of a voluntary contract is economic and social suicide. There are no gains, only losses. Compliance is rational as well as ethical.

Yet, contract is as nothing compared to constructive labour. It is work that realizes the full potential of human personality. Proudhon felt that work is a necessity, not merely as an act of production but also of moral education. Thus, the actions of individuals are not only restrained through contractual arrangements but are also shaped by the establishment of a natural moral order. The removal of work lets loose the inherent evil of humanity and destroys the self-restraint and communal interconnectedness that labour inculcates in those who are neither exploited nor exploiters. For Proudhon, those who view human nature as being shaped by the environment and as mutable into something better through a change in that environment are indulging in utopian speculation. Practical experience would suggest otherwise. Human nature does not change, but human behaviour can if both constrained and encouraged by a just, free and moral society.

Proudhon's second objection to radical conventional wisdom is more material. He thought that a state of abundance is a physical impossibility. His general view of 'the parsimony of nature' and the need to work to overcome it leads him to reject the notion of the, even technologically induced, possibility of abundance. Proudhon did not feel that the problem of production could be solved. Instead, he was an early advocate of the

limits to growth. This was not on ecological grounds, but on the view that the power of production could never match the power of consumption. This is because the possibility of consumption is almost infinite, whilst that of production is not and can never be so. Therefore, it is necessary to live with voluntary constraints on consumption if people are to exist in relative equality. Abundance is a chimera; he concluded: 'Man's condition on earth is work and poverty; his vocation learning and justice; the first of his virtues temperance.'⁷⁵

This is often quoted as a way of claiming that Proudhon was an austere ascetic, an advocate of the simple life.⁷⁶ In fact, this is based on a misunderstanding of the term 'poverty'. Like 'property', Proudhon used the term in a distinct, idiosyncratic way. Poverty in everyday usage means relative or absolute deprivation. This Proudhon called 'pauperism', a state of near-destitution caused by the expropriation of the value of the labour of the many by the few. In contrast, Proudhon's concept of poverty means relative equality and a voluntary restraint on consumption. It mirrors Gandhi's often-quoted statement that there is enough in this world for every man's need but not for every man's greed. Proudhon did not merely advocate poverty in this sense; he celebrated it.

Poverty is an inevitable law of nature. It is wealth that is a distortion of nature. Wealth is based on undeserved expropriation. Poverty is the product of honest labour and equitable exchange...

Poverty is seemly ... Its dwelling is clean, healthy and in good repair ... and it is neither pale nor starving ...

Poverty is not ease. For the worker this would be a form of corruption. It is no good for a man to live in ease. He must, on the contrary feel the pricks of need ... poverty has its own joys, its innocent festivities and homely luxuries ...

It is clear that it would be misplaced to dream of escaping from the inevitable poverty that is the law of our nature and of society. Poverty is good, and we must think of it as being the source of all our joys. Reason demands that we should live with it – frugally, modifying our pleasures, labouring assiduously and subordinating all our appetites to justice.⁷⁷

Proudhon felt that nature could not provide abundance after humanity had passed through the 'primitive' stage. The deliverance from eternal scarcity that industrialization promised was a fantasy. Technology could help people work but could not replace work itself. Abundance and leisure was possible but only for some and always because of the exploitation of others. As the global justice movement points out, the affluence of the developed world is founded on the sweatshops of the poorest corners of the globe. Remove that exploitation, produce equality, return technology to its rightful place as servant and not master, and the reality of the continuing need for work

is revealed. Work is its own justice and equitable exchange is the path to establishing that justice and realizing an immanent natural order.

Proudhon's writings built on the traditions that had been established through the work of left libertarians in both Britain and France, but he took them much further into a more sophisticated vision of revolutionary change from below through mutual self-organization and direct action and, by questioning the orthodoxies of his day, laid the foundations for an alternative vision of progress. His views on exchange, currency and credit inspired a later generation of individualist writers to develop Proudhonian ideas in the context of a fast-growing industrial society. Much of his political economy intrigues in the light of the financial crises of present-day capitalism. He remains a challenging writer though, not least in his moral philosophy, and later theorists jettisoned his social conservatism in favour of libertarian alternatives. But the cornerstones remained firmly in place: a rejection of what we now call consumerism, the importance of popular education and, particularly in the light of ecological concerns, the importance of limits on consumption. These could hardly be timelier. Yet, having established a coherent anarchist position, divisions were about to open again by the re-emergence of his reviled communism as an anti-statist doctrine. Anarcho-communism opened up new vistas for anarchism, ones that took root in late Victorian Britain thanks to the work of the Russian exile, Peter Kropotkin.

Notes

- 1 Jean-Jaques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. and introduced by G. D. H. Cole, rev. and augmented by J. H. Brumfitt and John C. Hall (J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd: London, 1973), p.76.
- 2 See for example George Crowder, *Classical Anarchism: The Political Thought of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1991), pp.16–29.
- 3 David Graeber, *Debt*, Kindle location 1930 (Chapter Five). Graeber argues that 'mythic' or 'epic' communism has 'inspired millions; but it has also done enormous damage to humanity'. Instead, he argues for an everyday communism that is 'a principle of morality rather than just a question of property ownership'. Kindle location 2077 (Chapter Five).
- 4 Peter Vallentyne and Hillel Steiner, *The Origins of Left Libertarianism* (Palgrave: Basingstoke and New York, 2000). Also Peter Vallentyne and Hillel Steiner, *Left Libertarianism and its Critics: The Contemporary Debate* (Palgrave: Basingstoke and New York, 2000).
- 5 See Noel Thompson, *The Real Rights of Man: Political Economies for the Working Class, 1775–1850* (Pluto Press: London and Sterling, VI, 1998).

- 6 John Wade, *The Black Book: An Exposition of Abuses in Church and State, Courts of Law, Municipal Corporations and Public Companies; with a Précis of the House of Commons, Past, Present, and to Come* (Effingham Wilson: London, 1835).
- 7 In David Hart, *The Radical Liberalism of Charles Comte and Charles Dunoyer*, PhD Thesis (King's College, Cambridge, 1984) <http://www.davidmhart.com/Papers/CCCD-PhD/index.html> (accessed 4 July 2012), HTML version. Chapter 4 part VI.
- 8 Ibid Chapter 2 C.
- 9 In Edith Thomas, *Louise Michel*, trans. Penelope Williams (Black Rose Books: Montreal, 1980), p.267.
- 10 William Ogilvie, 'Of the Right of Property in Land as Derived from the Law of Nature', in Vallentyne and Steiner (eds), *The Origins of Left Libertarianism*, pp.49–64.
- 11 For a discussion of Godwin's relationship to Utilitarianism, see Noel Thompson, *The Market and its Critics: Socialist Political Economy in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Routledge: London and New York, 1988), pp.40–4.
- 12 William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness*, introduced by Isaac Kramnick (Penguin Books: Harmondsworth, 1985), p.710.
- 13 Ibid p.710.
- 14 Ibid p.711.
- 15 Ibid pp.711–12.
- 16 Ibid p.715.
- 17 Peter Marshall (ed.), *The Anarchist Writings of William Godwin* (Freedom Press: London, 1986), p.38.
- 18 Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795–1865* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1988).
- 19 See Élie Halévy, *The Era of Tyrannies: Essays on Socialism and War*, trans. by R. K. Webb with a note by Fritz Stern (Allen Lane, Penguin Press: London, 1967), pp.17–81.
- 20 Élie Halévy, *Thomas Hodgskin* (ed.), in trans. with an introduction by A. J. Taylor (Ernest Benn Ltd: London, 1956), p.135.
- 21 Ibid pp.61–2.
- 22 Ibid p.62.
- 23 Noel Thompson sees this as a result of the influence of William Paley and a particular reading of Adam Smith. See Noel Thompson, *The Real Rights of Man: Political Economies for the Working Class 1775–1850* (Pluto Press: London and Sterling, VI, 1998), p.54.
- 24 See J. M. Robertson, *A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century* (Thoemmes Press: Bristol and Sterling, VI, 2001).

- 25 Élie Halévy, *Thomas Hodgskin*, pp.134–5.
- 26 Ibid p.51.
- 27 Thomas Hodgskin, *The Natural and Artificial Right of Property Contrasted* (B. Steil, London, 1832, reprinted by Augustus M. Kelley: New Jersey, 1973), p.19.
- 28 Ibid pp.44–5.
- 29 Thomas Hodgskin, *The Natural and Artificial Right of Property Contrasted*, p.51.
- 30 Ibid p.36.
- 31 Amongst the sections that suggest that Locke did think that the right to property is restricted are the following: ‘Thus the grass my horse has bit, the turfs *my servant has cut* (my emphasis) and the ore I have digged in any place, where I have a right to them in common with others, become my property without the assignation or consent of anybody. The labour that was mine, removing them out of that common state they were in, hath fixed my property in them.’ And ‘God gave the world ... to the use of the industrious and rational ... not to the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious.’ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Civil Government* (Everyman Edition, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd: London, 1970), pp.130–3.
- 32 Thomas Hodgskin, *The Natural and Artificial Right of Property Contrasted*, pp.29–30.
- 33 Ibid p.57.
- 34 Ibid p.149.
- 35 Ibid p.131.
- 36 One example is Edward Carpenter. Sheila Rowbotham, in her magisterial biography, points out his frequent anti-Semitic outbursts. Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A life of Liberty and Love* (Verso: London and Brooklyn, 2009), see for example p.138 and pp.304–5. For a Trotskyite critique of left anti-Semitism, though with some historical weaknesses when discussing this period, see Steve Cohen, *That’s Funny You Don’t Look Anti-Semitic: An anti-racist analysis of left anti-semitism* (1984), available online at: <http://www.engageonline.org.uk/ressources/funny/contents.html> (last accessed 10 November 2010).
- 37 See for example, Paul Berman, *Power and the Idealists: The Passion of Joschka Fischer and its Aftermath* (W. W. Norton: New York and London, 2007), for a discussion of the role of anti-Semitic discourses in the modern left.
- 38 He continues: ‘...while the priest holds up the idol-god of a foreign and *despised race* (my emphasis), to terrify the vulgar, he makes searching demands on our pockets.’ Thomas Hodgskin, *The Natural and Artificial Right of Property Contrasted*, p.15. The association of Judaism and finance capital made racism acceptable amongst some on the left as well as the right.
- 39 Ibid p.91.

- 40 Ibid p.102.
- 41 Ibid p.180.
- 42 Ibid p.181.
- 43 Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the 'Philosophy of Poverty' by M. Proudhon* (Foreign Languages Press: Peking, 1978), p.221.
- 44 Thomas Hodgskin, *The Natural and Artificial Right of Property Contrasted*, pp.178–9.
- 45 Ibid pp.161–2.
- 46 J. Salwyn Schapiro, 'Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Harbinger of Fascism', *The American History Review* (Vol. 50, No. 4, July 1945), pp.714–37.
- 47 Starting with Karl Marx himself in his sustained attack, *The Poverty of Philosophy*.
- 48 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*, (ed.) Iain MacKay (AK Press: Edinburgh and Oakland, 2011).
- 49 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *What is Property? An Inquiry into the Principle of Right and of Government*, trans. from the French by Benj. R. Tucker (William Reeves: London, 1898, repr. 1969), p.37.
- 50 Ibid p.227.
- 51 Ibid p.65.
- 52 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. from the French by John Beverley Robinson, new Introduction by Robert Graham (Pluto Press: London, 1989), p.209.
- 53 Ibid p.216. The word 'property' in this context in the later works is used to denote 'possession'.
- 54 Ibid p.210.
- 55 See Elié Halévy, *The Era of Tyrannies*, pp.1–16.
- 56 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *What is Property?*, pp.189–90.
- 57 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *System of Economical Contradictions or The Philosophy of Misery*, Volume One, trans. by Benjamin R. Tucker (Benj. R. Tucker: Boston, MA. 1888, repr. Arno Press: New York, 1972), p.178.
- 58 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution*, p.50.
- 59 Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics* (W. W. Norton: New York and London, 1991), p.52.
- 60 In Stewart Edwards (ed.), *Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, with introduction by Stewart Edwards, trans. by Elizabeth Fraser (Macmillan: London, 1970), p.156.
- 61 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *What is Property?*, p.251.
- 62 Ibid p.270.
- 63 Ibid pp.154–5.
- 64 Ibid pp.141–2.

- 65 See for example, David Graeber, *Debt* (Chapter Four), Kindle location 1773–81.
- 66 Ibid (Chapter Five), Kindle location 2241.
- 67 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Organisation of Credit and Circulation and the Solution of the Social Problem*, in Iain MacKay, *Property is Theft!*, p.284.
- 68 Ibid p.290.
- 69 See Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *The Principle of Federation*, trans. and introduced by Richard Vernon (University of Toronto Press: Toronto, Buffalo and London, 1979).
- 70 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Theory of Economical Contradictions*, p.85.
- 71 Ibid p.51.
- 72 Ibid p.434.
- 73 Ibid p.146.
- 74 Ibid p.434. Tucker awkwardly translates this as ‘ill done’ not ‘ill-doing’, and thus fails to convey the full strength of the original.
- 75 Edward Hyams, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: His Revolutionary Life, Mind and Works* (John Murray: London, 1979), pp.243–4.
- 76 For an example of a complete misreading of Proudhon you can’t do better, or worse, than the chapter on him in James Joll, *The Anarchists*, (Methuen: London, 1979). See particularly p.60 where he referred to Proudhon as envisaging ‘... men living an extremely austere life with few needs ... However much he may have realized that “the workshop is the basis of the new society”, it was a workshop in rural surroundings, and the artisans were small holders at heart.’
- 77 In Stewart Edwards (ed.), *Selected Writings*, pp.259–60.