



LEFT LIBERTY.

It is the clash of ideas that casts the light



NUMBER 1.



THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS

OF

LIBERTY.



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LeftLiberty:

It is the clash of ideas that casts the light!

"The Unfinished Business of Liberty."

(Issue One.)

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Editor: SHAWN P. WILBUR

A PUBLICATION OF THE
ALLIANCE OF THE LIBERTARIAN LEFT.

Left Liberty: The Unfinished Business of Liberty

It may be well to state at the outset that this journal will be edited to suit its editor, not its readers. He hopes that what suits him will suit them; but, if not, it will make no difference.—BENJAMIN R. TUCKER, 1881.

Alligations

Welcome to the first issue of LEFTLIBERTY. It's a pleasure, after over a year of work and planning, to be able to put a more-or-less finished product in front of the public. I say "more or less" for a variety of reasons, all of which relate to this issue's theme of "unfinished business." It turns out that Liberty (variously defined) has a lot of unfinished business, and that may be a situation we're stuck with, or blessed with, depending on your perspective. LEFTLIBERTY will doubtless have at least its share.

LEFTLIBERTY is a magazine—half serious zine, half one-man journal—dedicated to the broad, deep current of anarchist thought which is sometimes called "left libertarian," and particularly to the anarchist mutualist tradition which traces its roots back to figures such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Josiah Warren, Joshua King Ingalls and William Batchelder Greene. Mutualism is arguably the oldest form of explicitly anarchist thought, taking its name from Proudhon,—the "property is theft" and "I am an anarchist" guy,—but it is hardly the best-known. Fifteen years ago, when I began to study mutualism seriously, I faced two major obstacles: first, many of the texts associated with the tradition were difficult to access, even for someone in academic circles; indeed, many key texts remained untranslated; and, second, I quickly learned that many of the attitudes and unconscious prejudices that I had picked up in the course of becoming an anarchist in the first place were impediments to understanding mutualism, which, in contemporary terms, occupies a kind of complicated middle ground between the mainstream of "social anarchism" and the various forms of "market anarchism" and radical libertarianism.

In the intervening years, I have been active attempting to overcome the first of those obstacles, searching for scarce and hard-to-find material and making it available in a series of online archives, such as the Libertarian

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Labyrinth,¹ and organizing a collaborative translation project, Collective Reason.² To address the second difficulty, it has been necessary to immerse myself in the literature, both to explore that portion of it that relates to mutualism and to revisit the writings of the communists and collectivists. I have been fortunate through those years to have had friends and colleagues working roughly the same territory,—among whom, Kevin Carson, Iain McKay, Roderick Long, Crispin Sartwell and the late Kenneth Gregg deserve special mention,—and to have played some role in the current revival in interest in mutualism. For me, the chief lesson of my "mutualist years" has been that the anarchist and libertarian traditions are much broader, and much stranger, than my early education had led me to believe, and that we are extremely fortunate in that regard. It is a lesson, however, that has been learned under conditions not always conducive to careful, open-minded study: changes in the academy, constant fluctuations in my own employment, sectarian struggle within the anarchist movement, etc.

To be a mutualist in the late 20th century was to be at best a sort of red-headed stepchild of the anarchist tradition, and to face charges of antiquarianism, deviation from well-established movement norms, even collaboration with the traditional enemies of the movement, capitalism and the state. As we celebrate Proudhon's 200th birthday, however, things are a little bit different. If it is still nearly as common to be verbally assaulted by doctrinaire anarchist-communists or pro-capitalist libertarians, fueled by Wikipedia-level characterizations of mutualist doctrine, and if the general state of knowledge about most varieties of anarchist philosophy still hovers somewhere just above dismal, there seem to be a lot more self-identified mutualists out there these days, and, most recently, we've seen a number of those mutualist and mutualist-friendly "odd ducks" start to get organized, with the launch of the Alliance of the Libertarian Left.

LEFTLIBERTY aims to be an organ of that Alliance, one of its published voices, as well as a kind of internal prod to the membership to keep mining our tradition for the gems of libertarian wisdom produced long ago and then largely forgotten. Its chief inspiration is Benjamin R. Tucker's *Liberty*, the longest-running and most influential periodical of the American individualist anarchist tradition, and Tucker's earlier and lesser-known *Radical Review*.

¹ <http://libertarian-labyrinth.org/wiki>

² <http://collectivereason.org>

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Those are big shoes to attempt to fill. Tucker was a magnificent and often contradictory figure, at times the most careful student of the tradition and at others its most sectarian controversialist. I won't try to match his irascibility, and I may not be able to match his brilliance, but I think I can presume, with the aid of historical hindsight, to pick up some dropped threads in Tucker's work, but also in that of his influences, particularly Proudhon, Greene and Warren, as well as explore some aspects of those earlier figures that Tucker did not pursue.

IN THIS ISSUE

Things start off with a new translation of Proudhon's *The Philosophy of Progress*,—bound separately for convenience,—the first of a series of new translations inspired by Tucker's planned PROUDHON LIBRARY, as well as the text of Tucker's original announcement and some notes to the text.

Next up is the first installment of my "Mutualism: The Anarchism of Approximations," which will attempt a synthesis of the various traditions that have shared the name "mutualism."

This issue's selections from the Libertarian Labyrinth archive come from William Batchelder Greene, the early American mutualist who introduced Tucker to Proudhon's writings. "The Blazing Star," originally published in pamphlet form in 1871, was Greene's attempt to address the issues of progress and human perfectibility than he found in the writings of Proudhon and Pierre Leroux. It is preceded by a short essay from his 1849 *Equality*, which illustrates how the synthetic approach to truth advanced by Proudhon in *The Philosophy of Progress*, might be applied to the competing political-economic doctrines of communism, capitalism and socialism.

The Distributive Passions is the title of a work of speculative fiction, based on my researches in radical history and particularly grounded in the works of Charles Fourier, who is one of the least-explored influences on the mutualist tradition. Beginning with the next issue, I'll be including some sections from that work. For this issue, I've had to content myself with a bit of a prose teaser.

Finally, the issue ends with a section ON ALLIANCE, which introduces the Alliance of the Libertarian Left, and explores some of the issues surrounding the kind of broad cooperation between factions which is one of its goals.

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THE NEXT ISSUE will be entitled "A Doctrine of Life and Humanity," and it will focus on the work of Pierre Leroux, one of Proudhon's chief rivals in the years around 1849, but also an influence on both Proudhon and William B. Greene. Greene's early work is as neglected by present-day anarchists as the late work of Proudhon, and, it seems to me, with as little justice. I'll try to explore Proudhon's notion of "collective beings" and "collective force" in the context of Leroux and Greene's treatments of Humanity and the "doctrine of life."

FUTURE ISSUES will be similarly constructed around key reprints or translations, and will appear as the necessary pieces can be assembled. Among the issues in the early stages of construction: "The General Idea of Revolution," including the second issue of Bellegarrigue's *Anarchy, Journal of Order*; "What is Intellectual Property?" featuring Proudhon's *Majorats Litteraire*; "The Science of Universology" and "Anarchist Church, Anarchist State, Anarchist Inquisition?" both collecting work by Stephen Pearl Andrews; and a collection of practical proposals for land banks, mutual banks and equitable stores.

IN EVERY ISSUE I will be attempting the synthesis of elements that may ultimately be too incompatible, too antinomic, to be brought into harmony or even balance. And I'll be striking out into territory where there are very few guides, writing and compiling for an audience that may or may not truly be there. It goes without saying that, like Tucker, I will be compelled to pursue publication for my own reasons. Like him, of course, I hope that my work will find an audience which is interested, entertained, perhaps inspired, and I hope that the material here will be useful for that elusive Revolution which I still hope may be more than a sort of Sorelian myth. In any event, LEFTLIBERTY will be an occasion to continue labors I don't seem to be able to set down. Perhaps that is enough.

— SHAWN.

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LeftLiberty presents:

THE
NEW
PROUDHON LIBRARY

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF

Benjamin Ricketson Tucker
(1854–1939)

Come join us in the translation effort at Collective Reason, a wiki-based collaborative space, dedicated to making available free, publicly accessible translations of works by P.-J. Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, Pierre Leroux, Anselme Bellegarrigue, etc.

collectivereason.org

Announcement Extraordinary!³

After many years' waiting and preparing of the way, I am about to attempt the execution of a purpose which I have had steadily in view ever since I first became an Anarchist,—the translation into English and publication of Proudhon's complete works. In 1873, when, by the kind advice of Colonel William B. Greene, I began an examination of Proudhon's writings, I knew no more about the thought of the great French philosopher and economist than Herbert Spencer knew about it when he made bold to criticise it in his "Social Statics." In fact, I shared with nearly all people in America and England the misinformation regarding him that, having once said that "property is robbery," he was therefore a Communist and a most ferocious one. But, thanks to Colonel Greene, I read Proudhon's discussion with Bastiat on the question of interest, and then the famous "What is Property?" and great indeed was my astonishment at finding in them, but presented in very different terms, the identical ideas which I had already learned from Josiah Warren, and which, evolved by these two men independently, will be as fundamental in whatever social changes henceforth come over the world as has been the law of gravitation in all the revolutions of physical science which have followed its discovery,—I mean, of course, the ideas of Liberty and Equity. Moreover, as I continued in my reading, I found that Proudhon had not, like Warren, confined himself to the bare elucidation of the principles, but had discussed in their revolutionary light nearly every subject touching the welfare of mankind, bringing to this herculean work a mastery of style, a skill of dialectics, and a wealth of learning entirely beyond the limits attainable by the simple and untutored, though wonderfully lucid, mind of Warren.

However it may be with other kinds of wealth, no one will dispute, I think, that the satisfaction derived from the possession of knowledge—especially newly-discovered knowledge—is proportional to the degree in which its owner can make others share it. Naturally, then, my first thought was: "What a pity that these unparalleled researches of Proudhon in the

³ This announcement appeared in Benjamin R. Tucker's *Liberty*, January 1, 1887 (Volume IV, No. 13, Whole No. 91.) In the end, only one volume of the projected fifty appeared, the first volume of the *System of Economical Contradictions*, which Tucker had partially published in his *Radical Review*. I hope to make the circular mentioned in this announcement available in a future issue.

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realm if sociology should remain a sealed letter to the English-speaking race!" And I said to Colonel Greene: "Why don't you translate 'What is Property?'" His answer was: "Why don't you?" A mere boy, the thought of my competency for such a task had never occurred to me. But, the suggestion thus deposited in my mind, I turned it over and over and enlarged upon it, until I reached a determination that I could spend my life in no worthier, more helpful, more congenial pursuit than the enrichment of English literature by embodying in it at least an approximate equivalent of the entire product of a master mind in French literature. "What work nobler," asks the editor of Herr Teufelsdröckh's biographical documents, "than transplanting foreign thought into barren domestic soil; except indeed planting thought of your own, which the fewest are privileged to do?" Not belonging to the privileged few, I enthusiastically took my place in the second rank and published "What is Property?"

It received a great deal of interest from the press, was read, and is read more and more, by thinking people in all classes of society, can now be found in most of the principal libraries and institutions of learning, and has exercised a marked influence upon the minds foremost in the revolutionary movement. Nevertheless, it did not find a market sufficient to justify me in following it with other works. Reluctant to abandon my design, it occurred to me that I might create a market; that, by presenting the basic thought of Proudhon in simpler shape and applying it to the events uppermost in people's minds, I might not only directly spread the truth, but arouse an interest to know it in its (as yet) best estate,—the works of Proudhon.

And I started *Liberty*. It proved to be the very thing, and more. It began directly, not only to accomplish my purpose regarding Proudhon, but to do an invaluable work of its own. Minds here, there, and everywhere were interested, attracted, and won, and the best elements of the progressive schools gradually gathered around it, until now it has, not a very large, but a growing, enthusiastic, earnest, and intelligent body of supporters. These have testified their interest in Anarchistic literature, and have come to try them with the works of Proudhon and to push once more my original design.

Accordingly I shall issue on January 1, 1887, the first number of a monthly periodical to be called the "Proudhon Library," its purpose being the publication of an English translation, in parts of sixty-four pages, of the entire works of P. J. Proudhon, including his voluminous and very valuable correspondence. A number will be issued on the first day of every month,

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and, as fast as each work is completed, I will bind it, for such subscribers as will return all the numbers, handsomely and at a trifling cost. The bound volumes will be uniform in every respect with "What is Property?" and there will be not far from fifty in all, averaging four or five hundred octavo pages each. The subscription price is fixed at three dollars a year,—a rate which will enable the subscribers to get the complete works, bound, for nearly fifty dollars less than they would have to pay if they would have to pay if they should wait till the completion of each volume before buying it.

The first work to appear will be that wonderful product of the human intellect entitled: "System of Economical Contradictions: or, Philosophy of Misery." It consists of two volumes, which will constitute the fourth and fifth in the series. "What is Property?" is the first, and the second and third will appear later. A descriptive circular, giving further details of the project and the list of the works, has been mailed to all the subscribers of Liberty, and any other person may receive one by applying for it. I confidently expect every reader of Liberty to subscribe for the "Proudhon Library," and all of them who are pecuniarily able, to put their names down for two, three, five, ten, or more copies. If they do this, the enterprise will be an assured success and an immense impetus will be given to the

The publication in English of these fifty volumes, in which the great French Anarchist discusses with a master's mind and pen nearly every vital question now agitating the world, covering the fields of political economy, sociology, religion, metaphysics, history, literature, and art, not only is a great event in literature, but will mark an epoch in the Social Revolution which is now making all things new. Of this Revolution, in fact, Proudhon's works constitute almost an encyclopaedia. "Nothing has escaped the great thinker," said Michelet, in reference to them. Can the people of America—the country in which Proudhon is said to have expected his ideas to be first realized—afford to remain in ignorance of them? What do you think, reader? If you, too, think not, *will you help to make them known?*

BENJ. R. TUCKER.

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NOTES ON

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PROGRESS

READING BACK FROM '58

"L'ANTINOMIE NE SE RÉSOUT PAS : là est le vice fondamental de toute la philosophie hégélienne. Les deux termes dont elle se compose se BALANCENT, soit entre eux, soit avec d'autres termes antinomiques. . ."

In 1851, Proudhon was approached by a critic, Romain Cornut, asking for clarification of certain points where Proudhon seemed to have involved himself in philosophical difficulties. He responded with a pair of letters, outlining his philosophical "profession of faith," which were to have appeared in *La Presse*, had the coup of December 2, 1851 not taken place. Proudhon eventually published the letters in book form from exile in Belgium. Published in 1853 as *Philosophie du Progrès*, *The Philosophy of Progress* was an explicit attempt by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon to outline his philosophy, which he claimed, probably honestly, to have never explicitly formulated before, and to make explicit the links between his various works. In many ways, it served as a preview of the six-volume *Justice in the Revolution and in the Church*, which first appeared in 1858, and which marked the most important evolution in Proudhon's work. The work on *Justice* remains largely untranslated, though work at Collective Reason by Jesse Cohn and myself is slowly but surely remedying that. Fortunately, however, Proudhon's philosophical development took place unevenly, with aspects, for example, of his apparently radical reversal on the question of property explicit in his work long before the Revolution of 1848, and the adjustments necessary to translate the terms of 1851-3 into those of 1858 are fairly simple, so we can use *The Philosophy of Progress* as a gateway to Proudhon's most mature thought, while the work continues on the untranslated texts.

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"The antimony does not resolve itself." It is not resolved. This is the key to Proudhon's later work. In 1840, when he published *What is Property?* he believed in the possibility of a rather vague, more or less Hegelian, "synthesis of communism and property." By 1846, and his *System of Economic Contradictions*, he had developed a general theory within which social manifestations, ideas and institutions, were assumed to have both positive and negative aspects, which resolved somehow through dialectical conflict into a higher synthesis. This was the work of which Marx was so critical, and it is in many ways not really convincing, despite a lot of interesting insights, largely because Proudhon had yet to untangle his analysis of progress, specifically the progress of the Revolution in the realm of Humanity, a collective being, from his dialectical analysis. By the time he wrote *The Philosophy of Progress*, he seems to have advanced a number of steps in that clarifying process. Arguably, it is Fourier, with his serial analysis, who looms largest in the background of that work. The work is full of long series of approximations, none of which are "true," and all of which respond to a developmental "law" which is certainly not portrayed as simply a matter of better and better balances.

There is a developmental analysis, tracing the character of Proudhon's dialectic and serial analysis through a number of works, including the overtly Fourierist *Creation of Order in Mankind*, which it would be premature—for me, at least—to attempt at the moment, but we can certainly mark some key questions here, and we can read *The Philosophy of Progress* with the later developments in mind.

The Foreward

In the opening pages of the essay, Proudhon paints a picture of France as a nation fundamentally at odds with itself, which "profits at this moment only by the very ideas that it has proscribed." "Every era," he says, "is ruled by an idea," however much it may struggle against it, apparently. The state of France, its impasse, he seems to suggest, expresses, if in a somewhat backhanded manner, the idea which ought to free it,—Democracy, or perhaps Progress. This is not the first place where Proudhon gestures towards a "general idea" and then provides us with some options. *What is Property?* suffers, if that is the right word, from similar ambiguities. But this is one of the places where a serial analysis may serve us, though on a

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different axis than that of progressive approximations. All of Proudhon's primary keywords—progress, justice, liberty, democracy, even property and authority—themselves form a series of antinomic manifestations of ECONOMY, and bleed into one another a bit, rather like the apple and pear series in Fourier's "Note A."

Proudhon's ambivalence about developing democracy is evident throughout the essay. But it appears that perhaps democracy, like some many of the ideas Proudhon is concerned with, has its naturally awkward stages. Later in the essay, he will return to the notion that an acceptance of Progress will create, for a time, a sort of generalized confusion. We have to connect the dots for him a bit—there is a good deal that is not quite explicit in his argument—but we seem justified in making this particular connection. Without it, some of the passages on current affairs seem pointless

The "Foreward" ends with a description of the order of the world, presumably something like the thesis of Proudhon's "profession of faith," which seems rather distant from the rather neat dialectics of the earlier works:

Nothing persists, said the ancient sages: everything change, everything flows, everything becomes; consequently, everything remains and everything is connected; by further consequence all is opposition, balance, equilibrium, in the universe. There is nothing, neither outside nor inside, apart from that eternal dance; and the rhythm that commands it, pure form of existences, supreme idea to which any reality can respond, is the highest conception that reason can attain.

How then are things connected and engendered? How are beings produced and how do they disappear? How is society and nature transformed? Such is the sole object of science.

The notion of Progress, carried into all the spheres of consciousness and the understanding, become the base of practical and speculative reason, must renew the entire system of human knowledge, purge the mind of its last prejudices, replace the constitutions and catechisms in social relations, teach to man all that he can legitimately know, do, hope and fear: the value of his ideas, the definition of his rights, the rule of his actions, the purpose of his existence...

On the one hand, this presents us with a world of rather complete flux, and on the other he suggests that this understanding of the world will, in some way, answer all our most important questions.

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First Letter

That which dominates all my studies, its principle and end, its summit and base, in a word, its reason; that which gives the key to all my controversies, all my disquisitions, all my lapses; that which constitutes, finally, my originality as a thinker, if I may claim such, is that I affirm, resolutely and irrevocably, in all and everywhere, *Progress*, and that I deny, no less resolutely, the *Absolute*. p. 10.

The First Letter ultimately covers a lot of ground, being a trial run at much of the material that would be covered at much greater length in the work on *Justice*. Beginning from the idea that motion is the essential characteristic of life and mind, Proudhon is able to oppose Progress, and the party of movement, with the Absolute, and the party of stasis. This opposition is probably a little bit different from that pairing of progressive and conservative elements in the "Toast to the Revolution." In that earlier text, both progress and conservation were presented as aspects of revolutionary change. Absolutism is not simply the impulse to preserve a given set of circumstances, but a kind of will to stasis or death, even if that state is understood as completion or perfection. It is likely that the meaning of progress had shifted a bit for Proudhon since 1848, or, more likely, that he had simply never formalized the terms of his analysis.

Perpetual movement has consequences for truth. On page 13 of the *Left Liberty* edition, note that "truth...is what changes" and everything which presents itself as "fixed, entire, complete, unalterable, unfailing," etc., is false. "Synthesis" has come simply to mean combination.

All ideas are false, that is to say contradictory and irrational, if one takes them in an exclusive and absolute sense, or if one allows oneself to be carried away by that sense; all are true, susceptible to realization and use, if one takes them together with others, or in evolution. p.14

This has some significant consequences. It is the means by which, for example, *property* can be transformed from simply a manifestation of absolutism, "theft," into a tool for liberty. But "all ideas" are true and/or false depending on their use and context. Communism, for example, which Proudhon also identified as absolutist in character, and as "theft," cannot simply be discarded. Our individual starting places are almost entirely

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insignificant, and all that matters is our ability to build on them. This is explicit:

Thus, whether you take for the dominant law of the Republic, either property, like the Romans, or communism, like Lycurgus, or centralization, like Richelieu, or universal suffrage, like Rousseau, – whatever principle you choose, since in your thought it takes precedence over all the others, – your system is erroneous. p. 14

After expressing a potentially troubling faith in the general trend of things to indicate a progressive tendency, Proudhon then attempts to establish a "rule" for all of this:

...there are degrees to existence, to truth and to the good, and that the utmost is nothing other than the march of being, the agreement between the largest number of terms, while pure unity and stasis is equivalent to nothingness;

Looking ahead to the work on *Justice*, it is precisely the "agreement" between large number of terms or elements which creates higher degrees of liberty or free will in the individual, as well as in the various collective beings.

There is a good deal of interesting analysis in the pages that follow, as Proudhon derives a fairly extensive philosophical system from the premise that "movement exists." The dynamic of *existence* leads Proudhon to a number of arguments against the *simplicity* of causes, effects, mind, matter, etc., and thus to an understanding of every individual as always already complex, a *group* organized according to an internal principle or law. Indeed, from his very earliest works, "law" generally meant something of this sort, rather than juridical constructs. "Group," for Proudhon, is synonymous with "series." The two terms are simply applied to different realms. This has a sort of "decentering" effect that is probably familiar to readers of contemporary continental philosophy and cultural theory. There is a "demonarchizing" of the human subject, itself the manifestation or "product" of a lawful group, – really a series of manifestations, – without the necessity abandoning at least a certain kind of free will and active agency.

In order to grapple more effectively with the part of Proudhon's analysis that deal with the production of subjectivity, it's worth skipping ahead to

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the section in the Second Letter where he discusses value in exchange and the establishment of property (pages 60-63). Like the value of the franc, or the price of goods established in exchange, there is something more or less *conventional* about the self. If it cannot be the product of an explicit contract, like a price or a property may be, we already know that it is the result of an "agreement." Play with that one for a while. At the same time, recall that the selves who are parties to those "higher level" contracts rise out of some sort of lower-level balancing and haggling.

On page 31, Proudhon revisits his declaration, "I am an anarchist," and makes a point of saying that it indicated "the insufficiency of the principle of authority." Though authority is only an "analytic idea," there is no longer any question, I think, of doing away with it. Indeed, by the time he was done, Proudhon had pretty well embraced, as inevitabilities, in synthetic combinations and antinomic balances, all of the ideas that he is often portrayed as rejecting tout court. But, as anarchists, we should note that this particular treatment of the term ties is very directly to that heady mix of flux and order, indeterminacy and law, which Proudhon associates with progress.

I will retain, with the common folk, these three words: *religion, government, property*, for reasons of which I am not the master, which partake of the general theory of Progress, and for that reason seem to me decisive: first, it is not my place to create new words for new things and I am forced to speak the language of everyone; second, there is no progress without tradition, and the new order having for its immediate antecedents religion, government and property, it is convenient, for the very guarantee of that evolution, to preserve for the new institutions their patronymic names, in the phases of civilization, because there are never well-defined lines, and to want to accomplish the revolution by a jump, that would be beyond our means. p. 34

In a real tactical reversal, Proudhon opted here to maintain a continuity of labels, in order to better mark and aid the transition from authoritarian to libertarian forms (roughly speaking.) The denial of "revolution by a jump" seems to contradict his steeplechase metaphor in the "Toast to the Revolution," but his point is probably not that sudden changes cannot occur, particularly when we are inattentive to building contradictions, but that we can't count on or control them when they do. This would seem to be an

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argument against certain insurrectionary tendencies, at least in certain contexts. There are very few blanket dismissals possible here.

The discussion of the externalization of ideals, the meaning of religion, the true meaning of immortality, and the superiority of what he will later call "immanent justice" as an ideal is a nice example of how Proudhon approached "universal history," which preoccupied so many of the radicals of the early 19th century. The Greek-derived system of education resembles some of the proposals of Pierre Leroux, Proudhon's old rival, who seems to have been increasingly an influence on him in the 1850s.

The idea of progress is so universal, so flexible, so fecund, that he who has taken it for a compass almost no longer needs to know if his propositions form a body of doctrine or not: the agreement between them, the system, exists by the mere fact that they are in progress. Show me a philosophy where a similar security is to be found!... I never reread my works, and those that I wrote first I have forgotten. What does it matter, if I moved for twelve years, and if today I still advance? What could some lapses, some false steps, do to the rectitude of my faith, to the kindness of my cause?... You will please me, sir, to learn for yourself what road I have traveled, and how many times I have fallen along the way. Far from blushing at so many spills, I would be tempted to boast of them, and to measure my valor by the number of my contusions. p. 54

One might say that this passage cuts in a number of directions, but it is a particularly nice example of Proudhon in a humorous, somewhat self-deprecating mood.

Second Letter

Most of the Second Letter is occupied with an argument against the notion of a "criterion" applicable to individual cases. Truth, Proudhon makes clear, is in the series, not in the individual cases. It is a matter of laws, which are not simply accessible through any particular sense impression.

I'm going to save the passage on the division, or lack of division, between the *me* and the *not-me* for discussion in the next issue.

—SHAWN

Mutualism: The Anarchism of Approximations

Inheriting Mutualism

“Well,” [Joseph Warden] said, the smile still lingering in the corners of his mouth, “we are in one sense, my friend, a poverty-stricken people. We haven’t any institutions to speak of. All we can boast are certain outgrowths of our needs, which, for the most part, have taken care of themselves. We have, perhaps, an unwritten law, or general understanding, though no one to my knowledge has tried to state it. We all seem to know it when we meet it, and, as yet, have had no dispute about it. It may be said in a general way, however, as a matter of observation, that we are believers in liberty, in justice, in equality, in fraternity, in peace, progress, and in a state of happiness here on earth for one and all. What we mean by all this defines itself as we go along. It is a practical, working belief, we have. When we find an idea won’t work, we don’t decide against it; we let it rest; perhaps, later on, it will work all right. I don’t know as there is much more to say.”

The man was evidently disappointed. Warden’s talk all seemed trivial to him. It gave him the impression, he said, that the people had not taken hold of the great problem of life in a serious and scientific manner.

Warden replied that, if the gentleman would define what he meant by the terms serious and scientific, they would be better able to determine the matter. If he meant by serious anything sorrowful or agonizing, they would plead guilty; in that sense, they were not serious. If their life was declared not scientific in the sense that it was not cut and dried, planned, laid out in iron grooves, put into constitutions, established in set forms and ceremonies, he was right. They had neither seriousness nor science after those patterns. “But we have,” he said, “a stability of purpose born of our mutual attractions and necessities, and a scientific adjustment, we think, of all our difficulties as well as of our varied enterprises. Always respecting each other’s individuality, we apply common sense to every situation, so far as we are able.”⁴

⁴ H [Sidney H. Morse]. “Liberty and Wealth, V.” *Liberty*, 2, 21 (July 26, 1884), 5. Morse’s story was serialized in eight parts in *Liberty*, between May 31 and September 6, 1884.

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What is Mutualism? It is a question that even self-proclaimed mutualists may hesitate to answer. Since 1826, when the term *mutualist* first appeared in print, there have, in fact, been only a handful of attempts to present mutualism in systematic form. The most important of these, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's *De la capacité politique des classes ouvrières* (1865), has yet to be translated into English. The most accessible, Clarence L. Swartz' *What Is Mutualism?* (1927), dates from a period when mutualism had, by most accounts, waned almost to insignificance as a political force.

Proudhon's mutualism is still enshrined in the histories as "the original anarchism," though Proudhon, and other key figures commonly associated with the tradition (or traditions)—John Gray, Josiah Warren, the Mutualist of 1826, William Batchelder Greene, Joshua King Ingalls, Stephen Pearl Andrews, Benjamin R. Tucker, Alfred B. Westrup, Dyer Lum, Edward H. Fulton, Clarence L. Swartz, etc.—remain virtually unread.⁵ The majority of Proudhon's work remains untranslated and, until recently, when the creation of digital archives of various sorts changed the equation, nearly all the major works have been unavailable to most readers.

Still, there *are* mutualists, and lately there seem to be a lot more of us. Mutualism has persisted as "the other anarchism," drawing those unsatisfied with conventional divisions within anarchism. While nearly all anarchists, whatever their label of choice, have embraced some mixture of individualism with social solidarity and reciprocity, compromise in the economic realm has been tougher sledding. Particularly since the emergence of Rothbardian "anarcho-capitalism," struggles over the place of market economics in anarchism have been fierce, and polarizing. This has created an increased interest in the historical figures associated with mutualism, but it has not necessarily made it any more acceptable to espouse their ideas. When confronted with, for example, with Proudhon's lengthy and complex engagement with the notion of "property," social anarchists tend to emphasize the claim that "Property is theft!" Anarcho-capitalists point to the later association of property with liberty—and, as often as not, treat it as a progressive move, claiming that Proudhon "got over" his initial analysis of property (and the rest of us ought to as well.) Mutualists have tried to work within the space created by the two, apparently contradictory

⁵ The question of whether all of these figures should be considered part of the mutualist tradition, or whether there have been, in fact, multiple traditions, is one we must face.

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statements. (This attempt, as much as anything, is probably what defines mutualism within the broader realm of anarchism.) Recent formulations, such as the “free-market anti-capitalism” of Kevin Carson, foreground the apparent contradictions, trying to signal that there is really something to be clarified there.

The current interest in mutualism has largely been driven by concerns that were not initially mutualist, and the mutualist and neo-mutualist positions that have emerged have been grounded very loosely in most instances in the historical tradition. While mutualism has never entirely died off as a tendency, there has been very little continuing structure by which specific mutualist doctrines could be passed along. That means that among those who currently call themselves mutualists, there is very little orthodoxy, and more than a bit of inconsistency.

That’s probably entirely consistent with the mutualist tradition as a whole—and, ultimately, I think we can talk about “the tradition” as something like a coherent “whole.” Mutualists have tended to reject systemization, and to value experiment. In “Liberty and Wealth,” one of the true “lost classics” of the broad mutualist tradition, Sidney H. Morse engaged in a bit of alternate history, telling how the Owenite colony at New Harmony, Indiana was saved, after an initial failure, by hard work and common sense. Joseph Warden was obviously meant to invoke Josiah Warren, but the philosophy expressed was probably meant in large part as a counter to the various factions who, in the 1880s, questioned whether something more programmatic or specific than a commitment to liberty and reciprocity was necessary for radicals. It may, in fact, have been aimed in part at Benjamin R. Tucker, with whom Morse engaged in a series of friendly arguments. Tucker is perhaps better known for his *not-so-friendly* controversies, for the odd mix of generosity and intolerance with which he interacted with other radicals, and for the “plumb-line,” which led him, despite himself and his own best counsels, at times, towards inflexibility.

Now, everything we could say in this regard about Tucker could, with equal justice, be said of Proudhon, or Greene, or Warren. Whatever our reputation as “neither fish nor flesh,” as the school of compromise within anarchism, controversy has been our heritage nearly as often as conciliation. Morse’s New Harmonists capture one aspect of mutualism, the experimental, “tactical” approach which contemporary critics fail to recognize in “classical” anarchisms. But we should hope that mutualists will

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continue to send “fine hard shafts among friend and foe” alike. The question remains, though, what is our particular heritage?

Attempting to summarize over one hundred and eighty years of rather disparate history is unquestionably a daunting task. There is no present advantage to downplaying the diversity of the movement. Contemporary mutualists consider themselves such because they found some portion of our rather obscure tradition compelling, whether through direct contact with the original texts, through the earlier historical work done by James J. Martin, Enid Schuster, Joe Peacott and others, through Kevin Carson’s recent work, the commentary in *An Anarchist FAQ*, or historical spadework such as my own. Anarchist mutualists of the present day hardly need the sanction of an earlier tradition to engage in present-day activism, to carry on our own controversies and make our own alliances. Still, to the extent that we can claim to be part of a modern mutualist movement, or current, much of what has brought mutualists together has been a shared concern with recovering mutualist history.

It’s in this particular, and presentist, context that I offer a series of examinations of the mutualist tradition, summaries and syntheses that I hope do some justice to both past diversities and present needs. Because, like most present-day anarchists, we are inheritors of a tradition which we really know only in part, there are likely to be surprises—not all of them necessarily welcome—in what follows. I have attempted to be very open to such surprises, as I’ve struggled through Proudhon and Pierre Leroux in French, or through the metaphysical concerns of Greene. I’ve tried not to force-fit any of these earlier writers to any present-day model. That doesn’t mean I haven’t been looking for connections to my own concerns, to those of my comrades in the Alliance of the Libertarian Left, or to those of my friends in other anarchist currents. Fortunately, very little fudging of the historical facts, as far as I can ascertain them, has been necessary. It seems that mutualism has always had a basic core of values, and that those values may serve contemporary anarchism well.

Mutualism: The Anarchism of Approximates

Philosophical Observations

Consider the following set of statements—and consider them as tentative and overlapping, subject to elaboration, expansion, etc.

Mutualism is approximate. It rejects absolutism, fundamentalism, and the promotion of supposedly foolproof blueprints for society. What it seeks to *approximate*, however, is the fullest sort of human freedom.

Mutualism values justice, in the form of reciprocity, perhaps even over liberty.

Mutualism is dialectical. (Or “trialectical.” Or serial.)

Mutualism is individualism—and it is socialism—or it is neither.

Mutualism recognizes positive power, and looks for liberty in the counterpoise of powers, not in power’s abolition.

Mutualism is progressive and conservative, in Proudhon’s sense.

Mutualism’s notion of progress is not an acceptance of any fatality or inevitability.

Mutualism is—in the broadest sense of the term—market anarchism.

Taken as a bundle, which may be a strong dose for many, these statements should give a fairly good indication of the kind of dialectical, *antinomian* dynamic which is at work at the heart of mutualism. But it may not be immediately clear that that heart, the very core of mutualist thought and practice is *reciprocity*—relations of justice between individuals. In any event, all of this seems rather uncertain. Vague concerns like “justice” don’t exactly separate you from the political pack.

Perhaps, however, a return to that general dynamic of mutualism may help us out of this other morass. Our problem is that notions like “reciprocity” and “justice” don’t just mean one thing, which is clear to everyone. “No,” says the mutualist dialectician, “they don’t. They mean multiple, often contradictory things. Sometimes competing meanings are diametrically opposed. You have to grasp the bundle, and try to untangle it a bit.” The dialectician lives in a messy world, where every untangling reveals another snarl. But, honestly, isn’t that pretty much how our world

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works anyway? Discourse, all language use, from the most scholarly and specialized to the loosest and most general, is part of a gigantic commerce in meaning. We know how value fluctuates in other markets, how dependent it is on factors extrinsic to the nature of the thing exchanged or external to the normal operations of the market. Changes in markets effectually change the "meaning" of goods—think of corn before and after the ethanol explosion. There's no point in pushing the analogy at this point, but consider the sort of "heavy trading" that a notion like "liberty" or "justice" undergoes, and ask whether perhaps we ask a lot when we expect these notions to function—specifically in the realms of the social, the economic and the political—as if they were safely ensconced in the realm of the forms.

OK. Concepts turn on themselves, splinter, mutate, disseminate themselves, go to war, form strange alliances—in short, behave much like the human organizations they inspire. These days we might call this *deconstruction*. Proudhon called it contradiction—*antinomy*—by which he meant not simply logical inconsistency, but a productive, pressurized dynamic. The antinomy is interesting because none of its individual expressions are entirely satisfactory. They may, in fact, be individually rather odious. But the whole package offers more. Simple contradiction involves a situation where both A and B cannot be simultaneously true, and our logical next step, after recognizing that, is to separate the true statement from the false. In the antinomy, A and B together look pretty good, despite the fact that neither of them alone seem to offer much. The difference is important, in part because it forces to focus on a rather different conceptual horizon than we might otherwise. It is not nearly sufficient, from this philosophical perspective, to try to discover truth by gallivanting about slaying falsehoods. At a minimum, we have to be willing to poke around in the entrails of the dragons we bring down. More than likely, though, we're going to need some of those suckers alive, at least for awhile.

[to be continued in Issue Two...]

"COMMUNISM—CAPITALISM—SOCIALISM."⁶

BY

WILLIAM BATCHELDER GREENE

The three partial philosophical systems which manifest themselves in every age of the world, have been defined as follows:—

"Transcendentalism is that form of Philosophy which sinks God and Nature in man. Let us explain. God,—man (the laborer)—and nature (capital)—in their relations (if indeed the absolute God may be said ever to be in relations) are the objects of all philosophy; but, in different theories, greater or less prominence is given to one or the other of these three, and thus systems are formed. Pantheism sinks man and nature in God; Materialism sinks God and man in the universe; Transcendentalism sinks God and nature in man. In other words, some, in philosophising, take their point of departure in God alone, and are inevitably conducted to Pantheism;—others take their point of departure in nature alone, and are led to Materialism; others start with man alone, and end in Transcendentalism."

Transcendentalism—Communism.

The Transcendentalist believes that the outward world has no real existence other than that he gives to it. He believes he creates it by his intellectual labor; not only so, he believes he creates it out of himself,

⁶ This essay, from the second section of *Equality* (1849) translates the terms of Greene's "Transcendentalism" into a discussion of political economy. It was not among those selected for inclusion in *The Radical Deficiency Of The Existing Circulating Medium* (1857) or any of the later mutual bank writings. Notice that Greene neither advocates nor rejects any of these systems totally. Mutualism is the "union and harmony" of all three.

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without working upon any capital distinct from himself We agree with the reader that this system is absurd; but we invite him to make allowances for the aberrations of powerful men who are intoxicated by the consciousness of their own genius. Shelly furnishes the following transcendental statement, in his drama of Hellas:—

"Earth and ocean,
Space, and the isles of life and light that gem
The sapphire floods of interstellar air,
This firmament pavilioned upon chaos,
Whose outwall, bastioned impregnably
Against the escape of boldest thoughts, repels them
As Calpe the Atlantic clouds—this whole
Of suns, and worlds, and men, and beasts, and flowers,
With all the silent or tempestuous workings
By which they have been, are, or cease to be,
Is BUT A VISION;—all that it inherits
Are motes Or a sick eye, bubbles, and dreams;
THOUGHT IS ITS CRADLE AND ITS GRAVE."

Fichte teaches that the soul, by its native divine power, creates the universe. Ralph Waldo Emerson, than whom no more remarkable thinker has been furnished to this country by the present generation, maintains the same doctrine. Mr. Emerson's thoughts radiate always in right lines, and though he can see an object that is directly before his intellectual vision, even if it be at an infinite distance, yet he seems incapable of grasping some things in their relations:—but our questions are of labor. The man who denies the rights of capital, is a transcendentalist in political economy.

For what is capital? It is that outward object with which man is related, which man labors upon, which man transforms. Transcendentalism is the denial in the most unqualified terms of the very existence of capital, that is of things which are not man, and with which man is related: and communism is an application of transcendentalism in a more limited sphere of science.

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Materialism—Capitalism—Plutocracy.⁷

The Materialist, on the other hand, denies the existence of the soul, that is, of the actor, the beginner and originator of motion and change, in short of the laborer. According to him, man is the result of organization, is fatally impelled to act as he does act by outward impulses, and the mind is the operation of the electric fluid in the brain. Materialism teaches that the word soul is a word without a meaning. If the transcendentalist talks absurdly when he says nothing really exists but soul, and that matter is merely an appearance which the soul creates, the materialist talks equally absurdly when he says that matter is the only real existence, and that the soul is an appearance resulting from the modification of matter. The transcendentalist denies the existence of capital, and therefore denies its rights; the materialist affirms the existence of capital, and denies the existence of the laborer, and therefore denies the rights of the laborer. The transcendentalist is a fanatical radical; the materialist is a bigoted conservative. We are of course speaking of these systems as they appear when rigidly carried out to their ultimate logical conclusions.

Pantheism—Socialism.

The Pantheist denies the real existence of the subject and object, of the laborer and of capital. For him nothing exists but God; and both man and nature are appearances. Hyper-Calvinism gives us a good example of pantheism. The high Calvinist denies man's free will, that is, man's personality,—and, of course, man himself; for what is man if not a person? He teaches that all evil acts performed by man are the results, not of his own free action but of some depravity we have inherited from Adam, this depravity assisted in its operations by the instigations of Satan; he teaches

⁷ A PLUTOCRACY is a government administered by, and for the advantage of, the more wealthy class of the community. In socialism, the government administers the wealth of the state; in a Plutocracy, the wealth administers the government. PLUTO was the god and king of hell. His name signifies, in Greek, the Giver of Wealth: the Latins called him Dis, that is, dives, that is, again, rich. Under the name PLUTUS, he is, especially, the god of Wealth. Diamonds, gold, and iron—in general, all hard and precious substances, were the materials of which the infernal palace was built. In the beginning, Plutus was not blind; but, as he granted his gifts only to virtuous men, Jupiter deprived him of sight, in order that he might thenceforth distribute them without distinction among the worthy, and the unworthy. Plutus is represented as an infirm man, having his eyes bandaged, and holding a purse in his hand.

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moreover that no man can perform any good act, except by the infusion of a new spirit by irresistible grace, except by the implanting of a new principle—a new spring and source of action—in the heart. It is evident that this system does not allow that man does anything whatever. Again, the high calvinist, by his theory of Providence, continual miracles, &c., denies the real existence of outward nature. Man does nothing, nature does nothing, God does all. Ask the transcendentalist what is a man's right to property? and he answers—"Labor." Ask the materialist the same question, and he answers,—"Previous occupancy." Ask the Pantheist, and you will find him incapable of comprehending the rights of either labor or capital, for he will answer—"Property ought to be distributed according to the views of Providence, according to some theory of Divine Order."

The transcendentalist is often a violent despot, because the force of his will impels him to arbitrary measures, but he always respects liberty in theory, for he founds his whole right on this principle. The pantheist is often a despot in like manner, but his despotism comes from a different source; it comes from the fact of his being unable to conceive of liberty—and this because he does not believe in the existence of the human will. Where can you find a more arbitrary interference of the social power with private rights that was practised by our calvinistic fathers of Connecticut and Massachusetts? The materialist is a hard master, but he understands equality (though he violates it every day) for he holds his property by right of occupancy, and will tolerate no special privilege which might enable any individual to outflank his right. The pantheist knows nothing of occupancy; he understands a supposed Divine Order only, and therefore the principle of equality cannot be recognized by him. Political economy interpreted from a pantheistic point of view, gives us Socialism; that is, the intervention of society in all the private affairs of life, and the distribution of property according to the arbitrary laws of the State, according to some so called Divine Order. "The earth belongs to the Lord, and what belong to the Lord, belong to his saints."⁸

⁸ Socialism is a novel fact in modern history; but it shone in full splendor in the early ages of almost all (if not all) the ancient oriental nations. Socialism manifests itself at the origin and at the dissolution of great civilizations: it is the first and the second childhood of the great empires. When it is imposed on the people by a scientific caste, by a Theocracy, it is the sign of rising national strength; when it proceeds from the contact of popular supremacy with the organization of society which results from the long prevalence of special privileges, it is the disease of which nations die. It was by Socialism that Chaldea rose high among the empires; it was by Socialism—by the African grain

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Transcendentalism is the philosophy of the right of the strongest, and therefore destroys equality. Materialism is the philosophy of the existing fact, and the opposition to all change, and therefore is destructive to liberty. Socialism is the philosophy of a Theocracy, and is destructive to both liberty and equality.

All these systems are true; and, again, they are all false. They are false as partial, exclusive systems; but they are true in their mutual relations. Man exists as a beginner of motion or change, as a living soul; and therefore transcendentalism is true, therefore liberty is a holy principle. Outward nature exists in fact, and man may occupy it,⁹ and the rights of first occupancy are valid; therefore materialism is true, therefore equality is a holy principle; and all special privileges, all violence, ought to be reprobated. There is a Divine Order, for God governs all, and has created all things according to his Eternal Logos or Wisdom; therefore pantheism is true:—when men understand this, they will see that fraternity is also a holy principle. All these systems limit, modify and correct each other; and it is in their union and harmony that the truth is to be found.

which was furnished to the people, at the expense of the State, that the gates of Rome were thrown open to the barbarians. Socialism is already partly organised in France (though the edict decreeing the purchase of the rail roads has been repealed;) and this, as seems to be always the case on occasions of national decline, through the fault of the conservative party who, having ears, hear not, and having eyes, see not. The signs have appeared in the heavens; but we cannot bring ourselves to believe that Providence will ever permit any Christian nation to die out. Cataline, if he had succeeded, would have saved Rome; when Julius Caesar attempted to accomplish the work of Cataline, the day of grace had gone by, for Cicero, an imbecile, had held power in the interval. There is a man, at present in the dungeons of the Republic, who may yet save France. Let him have firm faith in that God whose instrument he is, but against whom (though not like Jonah) he now rebels!

Communism and Socialism are the opposites of each other. The communistic doctrines tend to anarchy; the socialistic doctrines tend to excess of organization. Socialism sacrifices the individual to the State; Communism sacrifices the State to the individual.

⁹ The reader must bear in mind that there is a difference between occupation and mere appropriation.

THE BLAZING STAR

BY

WILLIAM BATCHELDER GREENE

(1871)

Some men—not all men—see always before them an ideal, a mental picture if you will, of what they ought to be, and are not. Whoso seeks to follow this ideal revealed to the mental vision, whoso seeks to attain to conformity with it will find it enlarge itself, and remove from him. He that follows it will improve his own moral character; but the ideal will remain always above him and before him, prompting him to new exertions. What is the natural conscience if it be not a condemnation of ourselves as we are, mean, pitiful, weak, and a comparison of ourselves with what we ought to be, wise, powerful, holy?

It is this Ideal of what we ought to be, and are not, that, is symbolically pictured in the Blazing Star.

The abject slave on an East-African rice plantation, brutal, ignorant, and a devil-worshipper, sees this Day-Star rising, in his heart, and straightway he becomes intellectually of age. For it is the soul, not the body, that attains to the age of discretion. They who see this Star, have attained to their majority: all other persons are minors. Before the rays of this Star, voodooism and devil-worship, whether in refined societies, or among barbarous peoples, vanish into night; for immersion into the rays of this Star, is the beginning of the baptism of repentance and penance for the remission of sin—and of the penalties of sin.

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Whoso beholds this Star acquires FAITH. Faith is conviction born from the consciousness of aspiration. Faith is the active principle of intellectual progress.

The Blazing Star is the transfigured image of man—the Ideal that removes farther and farther, making always higher and higher claims, until, at the last, it becomes lost in infinity; and faith affirms that this same Blazing Star may be, *perhaps*, the shadowy, imperfect, and inadequate image of some unknown and invisible God.

Now, if it be true that God and man are in one image or likeness (and the affirmation that they are so is not implausible) then it is the duty of man to bring out into its full splendor that Divine Image which is latent, on one side, in the complexity of his own nature. This conclusion confirms itself.

You say you will never believe in God until the fact of his existence is proved to you! Then you will never believe in him at all; for, in the face of positive knowledge, faith is no longer possible. Faith affirms in the presence of the unknown. If science should ever demonstrate the existence of God (which it never can) faith would become lost in sight, and men would no longer believe, but know. The reason why science is intrinsically incompetent to either prove or disprove the existence of God, is simply this, that the subject matter transcends the reach of scientific instruments and processes. The dispute is, therefore, not between faith and science, but between faith and unbelief. Unbelief is a disease, not of the human understanding, but of the human will, and is susceptible of cure.

Saint Paul says, "We walk by faith, and not by sight"; again, "We see through a glass darkly"; and again, "We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope." Do what we will, we are under the necessity of walking, much more than half our time, not by sight, but by faith. The better half of our life upon the earth, and the happier half, is the part that is spent in advance of positive knowledge.

Science is constantly encroaching on the domains of faith, by showing that postulates of faith are demonstrably correct. But whenever any postulate of faith is proved, and thus becomes a truth of science, and no longer a truth of faith, faith immediately passes again to the front, with the affirmation of a new, and a higher, postulate. Faith keeps always well in advance of science.

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Legitimate science never arrays itself in a hostile attitude against genuine faith. Science, it is true, often successfully refutes dogmas that are alleged to be of faith; but, in such cases, it is always found, upon due observation and inquiry, that the dogmas so refuted were born, not at all of faith, but of political or clerical ambition, or of fear, or of self-interest, or of the presumption of ignorance, or of some other human passion—or, perhaps, of sheer stupidity. Superstition, fanaticism and bigotry are signs and marks showing that the soul is not yet intellectually of age. They never result from convictions born of the consciousness of aspiration, and are, therefore, never of faith.

Faith does not say, Is there a God? It is doubt that says that. Faith says, Why should there not be a God? Absolute perfection is no natural obstacle to existence, but the contrary. Faith says, Figure to yourself, if you can, that there is no God! You cannot do it.

Faith is the affirmation respecting things unknown, that is implied in the practical recognition of known absurdity as such. Faith is reason denying absurdity in the face of the unknown.

An admissible definition of God must be in the form of a negative pregnant—an affirmation of God as that unknown Absolute and Infinite, which is the reason of the existence of the known finite and relative that we ourselves are.

Faith is from within; it is the outbreking of human spontaneity; it is force of soul, grandeur of sentiment, magnanimity, generosity, courage. Its formulas are naturally unintelligible in their literal tenor; for, otherwise, they would represent that which is scientifically known, and would not be the mere provisional clothing of that which is not objectively given, but subjectively¹⁰ projected from the inmost depth of the soul. Man, having an ideal before him of that which he ought to be, and is not, and acting as though he possessed the character he ought to have, but has not, comes, by the very virtue of his aspiration, to possess the character he imagines. Thus the world is leavened. Materialism, the spiritual death which is consequent upon the subordination of the subject to the object in thought, is the very soil from which faith springs; for every thing that stands by itself alone, makes way, through the necessity of the principle of contradictions, for its

¹⁰ That is *subject* which calls itself *Ego, I*. That is *object* which the *I* contradistinguishes from itself, calling it *non-Ego*. That is *subjective* which belongs to the subject; and that *objective* which belongs to the object.

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correlative opposite. Stoicism has always its birth in Sybaritic cities, and among over-civilized and effete peoples. Men learn, through faith, to do always the very thing they are afraid to do, and thus come to fear no longer. Unbelief naturally gives emptiness of heart; and emptiness of heart surprises itself with spontaneity of worship; and spontaneous worship gives the worshipper something of the high nature of that which is worshipped; and, in this way, unbelief transfigures itself, and loses itself in faith. Faith may always be acquired. Whoso is devoid of faith, and desires to have it, may acquire it by living for a few days (sometimes for a few hours only) as though he already possessed it. It is by practical, not theoretical, religion, that men transform their lives. By the practice of faith, man grows strong in faith. The moral coward becomes a moral hero as soon as he acquires faith. Weak women, among the early martyrs, learned by faith to face the wild beasts. When they were thrown to the lions, the lions trembled; for the women were more lion-like than the lions; and the lions knew it.

Man has a threefold nature. He is, therefore, symbolically represented under the similitude of a triangle. Saint Paul says that man is body, soul, and spirit; and Saint Augustin says that he is will, understanding, memory. One philosopher says that man is intelligence, activity, and sensibility; another says that he is sensation, sentiment, cognition; and other philosophers give other formulas. But there exists no extant denial (at the least, none such exists to our knowledge) of the essential triplicity of man's nature.

The Ideal is the invisible Sun which is always on the meridian of the soul. As the ever-revolving earth rises and sets upon the sun, which is steadfast, and not the sun on the earth, so the soul rises or sets on the Ideal; which is what it is whether man behold it or not, and is itself unaffected by man's attitude in respect to it, since it is the fixed centre, and the Day-Star of spiritual existences. It was for this reason that the temples were always opened in the ancient times, for purposes of initiation, at what was mystically called "high noon," although, in point of practical fact, that same "high noon" often occurred at the dead of night. This Day-Star was known in the temples as *Bel-samen*, the Lord of Heaven—as *Mithras* also, or

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as *Osiris*, or *Apollo*, or, more mystically, as *Abrasax*, and by a thousand other names. In the public worship, it was recognized as the visible sun; but in the esoteric work, after the avenues of the temples were duly guarded against cowans and eavesdroppers, as the Ideal-Man, and as the Star of souls.

The five-rayed Blazing Star—the Pentacle—ABRAK—is the special star of the great Aryan (or Indo-Germanic, or Japhetic¹¹) race. [The Shemite knows it not.] This Star—ABRAK—is a disguised image or likeness of man. The superior ray represents the head; the horizontal rays, the two arms; and the inferior rays, the two legs. This Star, being unsymmetrical, is capable of being turned upside down. It is our intention to explain, at some future time, the terrible meaning that is presented by the five-rayed Star, when its point is turned downward. Let it suffice to say, here, in passing, that this detestable sign (the inverted Star) execrated by the more intelligent adepts themselves in perverted mysteries, and excluded from their midnight orgies, is the head of the famous goat that plays so important a part in the ceremony of obscene initiations. The two ascending rays are the goat's horns, the horizontal rays are his two ears, and the descending ray is his beard.¹²

The Shemitic race, the equal of the Aryan, and in some respects its superior, knows not ABRAK: it sees not that inner light which the Aryan sees, and of which we have all along been speaking. But, instead, the Shemite hears inwardly—as the Aryan does not—mysterious and unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. To the Shemite, conscience is not at all a comparison, as it is to the Aryan, of what man makes real in himself, with the ideal always before him of what he ought to so make real, but is, on the contrary, the actual voice of God speaking

¹¹ "These are *the generations* of Noah: Noah was a just man, *and perfect in his generations*, and Noah walked with the Elohim. And Noah begat three sons, *Shem, Ham, and Japhet*."—*Gen.* vi. 9-10.

¹² The human hand, with the thumb and fingers, is the five-rayed Star; but with the three larger fingers closed, and the thumb and little finger protruding (the common counter-charm to the evil-eye) it is that Star inverted, or the goat's head. The hand with the three larger fingers closed, is the negation of the ternary, and the affirmation of the antagonistic natural forces only. The thumb represents generative power, and the little finger denotes insinuating tact: the hand, therefore, that shows the thumb and little finger only, denotes passion united with address. The thumb is the synthesis of the whole hand. A morally strong man has always a strong thumb; and a weak man, a weak thumb. A long thumb denotes obstinacy. Blessings are conferred with two of the larger fingers, or with all three of them. The thumb and little finger are used in cursing.

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inwardly to the soul. The Aryan objectivizes all things. He forms conceptions tangible to the imagination; and what he is incompetent to clearly conceive, he discards as unreal. He naturally gives form and expression, through symbolic art, to his inward thought; and, until his thought is expressed in form, it is, to him, as though it existed not. To the Shemite, on the contrary, all visible symbols, whether discernible to the outward or to the inward eye, are worse than worthless. The poetry of the Aryans is objective and descriptive; that of the Shemites is sometimes didactic, sometimes lyrical, but never objective. The Shemite has no plastic and no pictorial art. The religion of the Aryan is that of the revealed Ideal; the religion of the Shemite is that of the revealed Word. The conscience is the essential religious faculty of man; and it is in the divergent natures of the Aryan and Shemitic consciences, that the root of the divergencies of the Aryan and Shemitic religions is to be sought and found. The spirit of the Shemite continually groans and travails within itself, waiting for the utterance of unspoken words; and it revels in the consciousness of that which it knows to be at once real and inconceivable. When the great wind rent the mountains, and broke the rocks in pieces before Elijah (a Hebrew Shemite) the prophet could not see God in the wind. Neither could he see God in the earthquake that followed the wind, or in the fire that followed the earthquake. But, after the fire, there came "a still small voice"; and, when Elijah *heard that*, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went to the mouth of the cave, and stood up before Jehovah. It was the "word" of the Lord that came to the greater Hebrew prophets; and it was only by prophets of lesser note that "visions" were seen in deep sleep, when they were upon their beds. The greater prophets *heard* in ecstatic trances; but they seldom saw clairvoyantly. It would seem that God is nearer to the Shemite than he is to the Aryan. When the Aryan, bewildered in his reasonings, turns round and says, "There is no God!" the Shemite, hearing him, answers, "God exists. I know him personally. I have talked with him, and he has talked with me." And the Shemitic affirmation of faith has always carried the day against the Aryan suggestion of doubt. For whenever, in the great march of mankind—humanity—the collective Adam¹³—from the mystical Eastern gate of Eden,

¹³ Saint Paul, that great Kabbalist, shows clearly (*Romans* v. 12-19; and 1 *Corinthians* xiv. 22), that by the word "Adam" is to be understood the original *Collective Man*. The Collective Man may very well have once existed in a single person, or, rather, in a single couple; and, in fact, tradition informs us that it has twice so existed—once in Adam and Eve, and once in Noah and his wife.

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an Aryan religion has come in contact with a Shemitic religion, the Aryan religion has at once gone to the wall, waned pale, wilted, and subsided.

In the year 606 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, the Shemitic King of Shemitic-Hamitic Babylon, utterly and definitively defeated Joachim, the Shemitic king of Shemitic Jerusalem, and transplanted the mass of the Jewish people, as captives, to the neighborhood of Babylon.

During their captivity, the chiefs of the Jews, already initiated into the profound mysteries of the Hebrew religion, were further initiated into the occult science of the Chaldeans—a science of Hamitic origin, akin to that of Tyre and Sidon, and to that which had its mysterious colleges on Mount Gebal.

About seventy years after the fall of Jerusalem, Cyrus, king of the Turanian and Aryan Medes, and of the Aryan Persians, having first turned the Euphrates aside, took Babylon by storm, on the night of a drunken and frantic Chaldean festival. He entered the city by the way of the empty river-bed, bringing with him, as official chaplains of his army, the more illustrious of the Median Magi, and the Aryan chief-priests of Ormuzd.

The captive Jews, who had been all along conspirators in Babylon, and secret allies of the Persians, furnished guides, spies and scouts to the invading Aryan army. After the taking of the city, Cyrus rewarded the Jews with his personal friendship, and sent them back to their own country, with instructions to rebuild Jerusalem; which latter city remained, after its restoration, for several generations, as much from gratitude as policy, a Persian stronghold.

At the solemn conferences that took place in the East of Babylon, near the great Tower, at the time of the Persian conquest, between the Median Magi, the Chaldean soothsayers, the Aryan priests of Ormuzd, and the Hebrew Prophets, the facts were clearly verified, that, on one side, man aspires towards God, and, on the other, that the Supreme condescends to take up his abode, and to utter his oracles, in the secret temple of the human heart. These facts had, it is true, been well known for centuries to the generality of simple and pious men and women in private station, and also to prophets¹⁴ and inspired poets; but they had never before been so

¹⁴ "This commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us,

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verified to the conviction of kings and statesmen, in the presence of concurring and confessing sacerdotal corporations.

At these conferences, the three constituent elements of the universal consciousness of the collective Adam, were severally and respectively represented. The Aryan priests of Ormuz maintained the claims of the *object* in thought. The Hamitic-Chaldean soothsayers (Hamitic Egypt had no delegate at the synod) maintained the claims of the human *subject*. And the Hebrew Prophets from the Holy Land maintained the claims of the *relation* which subsists between the subject and the object in thought. For, where the Aryan sees inwardly, and affirms the reality of the *object*, and the Shemite *hears* inwardly, and affirms the reality of the *relation* between the subject and the object, the Hamite *feels* inwardly, but very darkly, and affirms the reality of the human *subject*.¹⁵

In these conferences were also verified the foundations of that sublime and universal science, which, six centuries afterwards, was published among adepts, as the Holy Kabbalah, and which had been known, but fragmentarily only, and in its essential principles, long before, to men of the stamp of Abraham, Zoroaster, Moses, Solomon king of Jerusalem, and Hiram king of Tyre.

The Orient of Babylon was not intellectually competent to coordinate the principles of the Kabbalah, and to present the completed synthetic doctrine in a definitive form. There was a necessity that the materials should remain unsystematized until the human intellect could have an opportunity to become sharpened by the practice of Greek metaphysical dialectics. Many Greek words occur in the *Zohar*, or Book of Splendor; and it is difficult to believe that certain essential passages of the *Idra Suta* (the third tract in the collection of the lesser *Zohar*) could have been written by any one unacquainted with Aristotle's treatise of *Metaphysics*.¹⁶ Careful

that we may hear it, and do it. Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it. But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."—*Deut. xxx. 11-14.*

¹⁵ Of course, the synod took no cognizance of the metaphysical distinction of the subject, the object and the relation, in thought, under its modern abstract form. What we now call the *object*, was then darkly cognized as the Japhetic characteristic, tendency, and inspiring natural principle; what we call the *subject*, as the Hamitic characteristic, tendency, and inspiring natural principle; and what we call the *relation*, as the Shemitic, &c.

¹⁶ "The thought which is most, is thought concerning that which is most: and mind knows itself through the perception of that which is intelligible; and mind becomes intelligible to itself through reflection and thought: so that intelligence itself becomes intelligible. . . . Thus God possesses in

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investigators have decided, from what they regard as internal evidence, that the definitive compilation of the Kabbalah dates from some period between the year 200 B. C.. and the year 150 of the Christian era. It is the internal form of the Kabbalah, however, its substance only, that is systematic: its exposition in words has been left, apparently with deliberate intention, in an exceedingly chaotic state. To the majority of readers, the Kabbalah is, as it ought to be, completely unintelligible.

At an unknown and remote epoch, it was affirmed, probably by some Hamite, as a postulate of faith, that God and man are in the same likeness or image. It was also affirmed, as a logical consequence of this fundamental affirmation, (1) that, since man is triune, the Supreme is also triune, and (2) that, since man may be denoted by an ascending triangle, the Supreme may be denoted by a descending triangle. The figure in the margin is not at all idolatrous; for it is not, as ABRAK is, a disguised image or likeness. It is a reminder only—a sign or symbol—not a resemblance. It is a pictorial *word*, suggesting a thought—such as were in common and necessary use before the alphabet was invented.

It was also affirmed, perhaps at the same unknown epoch, that the interlacing of the Divine triangle with the human triangle, in the six-rayed Blazing Star, is the authentic symbol of the revelation of God to man, and of the abode of the Supreme in the human heart, as well as of the aspiration of man towards God. Jacob Behmen asserts that the junction of these two triangles is the most significant and mystical figure in nature. The reality denoted by this symbol is neither God nor man: it is distinct from man, before him, and above him, as the human Ideal; and it is apart from God, as one of the Revelations of Himself that the

The action of intelligence is life; and God is that action."—*Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Book xii.

Supreme sees fit to make to man—as one of the NAMES of Him who, in his own essence, is NAMELESS.

Sometimes the six-rayed Blazing Star is portrayed as a mystic Rose with six leaves. But the ordinary form is that of the two interlacing triangles, with the Divine NAME inscribed in the middle of the figure. The

perfection what we possess for a time only. He possesses more than we have stated; for he possesses, in addition, life.

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interlacing triangles are often indicated by a junction of the square and compasses: to which, sometimes, the plumb and the level are added, forming a cross in the centre, and giving a ten-rayed Star, with four of the rays (those formed by the extremities of the plumb and level) occulted. This is the *prophetic* Star; and the ten rays stand for the ten Kabbalistic Sephiroth. Without a preliminary understanding of the ten Sephiroth, the Kabbalah, as a Philosophy of History, and consequently as a Practical Art for the forecasting of future events, cannot be appreciated.

We will do our best at some future time, if occasion offers, to explain these ten rays, ray by ray, from the Kabbalistic point of view.

The ordinary, every-day man or woman, that is to say, the man or woman who has not yet reached perfection—and who is there that has reached perfection?—may be symbolically represented, if he or she be morally of age, by an equilateral triangle with one angle pointing upward to the Blazing Star. Whoso recognizes the virtue of that Star, at once acknowledges the Divine Law in its threefold applications, and strives after conformity with the Ideal, not according to the spirit only, but also according to the soul and the body.

Man's duty to himself and to his fellow-man, under the rays of the Blazing Star, is threefold: (1) the achievement of his own Liberty; (2) the definitive establishment of relations of Equality between himself and other men; and (3) the fusion of himself, in the solidarity of Brotherhood, with all human beings who, like himself, recognize the Blazing Star.

LIBERTY is the power which every human being ought to possess of acting according to the dictates of his own private conscience, under the rays of that Blazing Star which is seen by him, secretly, from the centre of his individual heart.

EQUALITY is the condition that obtains in every society where no special or artificial privilege is granted to any one, or to any set, of its members.

BROTHERHOOD is that strict solidarity between the members of a social body, which causes, under the rays of the Blazing Star, the welfare of each to be seen as involved in that of every other, and of all, and that of all in that of each.

Liberty is the right of each member against every other member, and against all the members. Equality is the right of every other member, and of

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all the members, against each member. Liberty and Equality find their harmony in the synthetic principle of Fraternity. LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY: this is the mystical triangle that ought to be inscribed on the banners of every truly-constituted social organism.

Liberty alone may lead to anarchy, or to the tyranny of individuals over the mass; but the dangers from Liberty vanish in the presence of Equality. Equality alone may lead to the tyranny of the general mass over individuals or over minorities; but the dangers from Equality vanish in the presence of Liberty. Fraternity is never alone; for it is, in its essence; the synthesis of Liberty and Equality.

What is it to be a SLAVE? It is to have the inward knowledge of that which is great and holy, and to be constrained to do things that are small and base. It is to be a person consciously capable of self-government, and to be, at the same time, subject to the will of another person. It is to be a full-grown person whose actual rights are those of a child only. It is to see the Blazing Star, and not be permitted to follow it.

Slavery is a factitious and arbitrarily-imposed prolongation of the term of moral minority. Paternal government, actual or constructive, is just and legitimate when exercised over persons who are morally under age; but, to such as know the Blazing Star, it is, when exercised to the confiscation of their initiative, the most infernal of all tyrannies. Paternal government, exercised by the natural father over his own minor children, is tempered by affection, and justifies itself; but paternal government, exercised by usurpers over their natural equals and superiors, is an oppressive wrong, and the most intolerable of all outrages—at the least, it is so in the estimation of such as have seen the Blazing Star.

It is neither the experience of physical want and privation, nor the fact of subordination to legitimate authority, that makes a man to be a slave; for saints and soldiers suffer hardships, and obey their superiors, and are not slaves. On the contrary, it is by the token of the conscious moral penury which a soul feels when it finds itself helpless and hopeless under the domination of an alien soul—it is by the sentiment of a confiscated individuality, by the consciousness of being annexed, as a base appendage, to another soul—it is by the consciousness of being sacrificed to a foreign personality—it is by the darkening of the moral firmament, and by the

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occultation of the Blazing Star, through the intervention of an extraneous usurping will—that a man comes to know that he is a slave. And it is, on the other hand, the insolent, lying hypocrisy, the false professions of morality, the transparently-spurious philanthropy, the limitless and blinding arrogance of self-conceit, under which the usurper half-conceals, half-reveals, his unnatural lust to wipe out human souls, and to obliterate every individuality except his own—that gives energy to slaves, and renders conspiracies, risings, strikes, and revolutions, deadly and chronic.

The fundamental right of a man is the right to be himself; and this right is his sovereignty. No man has a right to confiscate the sovereignty of any other man. No man can delegate to another man, or to society, any right which he does not himself possess. A man may wickedly forfeit his sovereignty by the commission of crime; he may perversely turn his back upon the Blazing Star, and abdicate his individuality and his manhood. But no man can rightfully abdicate his sovereignty. It is the duty of every man of sane mind, who supports himself, and is not convicted of crime, to vindicate his essential dignity as rightful sovereign of himself and of every thing that pertains to his individuality. Every able-bodied man has a natural right, and a natural duty, to forcibly repel, and to combine with others to forcibly repel, any and all wrongful invasions of his sovereignty. Society exists for the individual, and not the individual for society. Institutions are made for man, and not man for institutions.

The French Free Masons claim, in their Constitutions, that the formula LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY, has been, from the beginning, the device of their order.

The writer of these pages is, and has been for many years, a member of one of the Masonic Lodges (we are told there were a hundred and twenty of them) that recently planted their banners, under the fire of the Versailles troops, upon the ramparts in front of Paris. He knows not by what authority the demonstration was made. He supposes, however, that it was made by the authority of the Paris Lodges only, and that the consent of the Grand Orient of France was neither requested nor deemed necessary.

It is easy, at this moment, to apply abusive epithets, either to the Commune or to its enemies. The Great Architect of the Universe will, at the proper time, judge both parties.

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The French word *commune* is the equivalent of our English word *town*. The word *communiste* may denote, in French, either (1) an advocate of the doctrine that women and property ought to be held in common, or (2) an upholder of the principle of municipal self government. The Commune of Paris fought, in its recent great fight, not for a community of women and goods, but for municipal self-government. It was well known, both at Paris and at Versailles, while the fighting was going on, that M. Thiers could have made peace with the insurgents, at any moment, by simply guaranteeing to the city of Paris an amount of municipal liberty equal to that which has always been enjoyed by the city of Boston. This fact, which cannot with any plausibility be denied, and which probably will not be denied, suffices, of itself alone, to put the merits of the dispute between the Commune of Paris and the Versailles government, in its true light, and to fully expose the calumnious misrepresentations of the Versailles party.

We are of the opinion, that, taking fighting as it rises, the Commune made a passably good fight. We are especially proud of the heroic women with whom the honor of arms has definitively rested.

We, nevertheless, take the liberty to recommend the Commune to be more circumspect, hereafter, in the matter of summary executions. Better things were expected of the Commune than of the Versailles government; for the Commune represents advancing civilization, while the Versailles government represents the commercial, industrial, and financial feudalism of the present and the past. It will never do for men who have seen the Blazing Star, to follow evil examples, and meet murder with murder. The execution of spies and traitors, and the use of petroleum for incendiary purposes,¹⁷ are perfectly justifiable under the laws of war; but the civilized world does not look with approval, and ought not to look with approval, upon the military execution of priests and other non-combatants. We know (or, at the least, we have been informed) that the Commune offered to exchange the Archbishop of Paris for Blanqui, and that the offer was not accepted. This fact (if it be a fact) consigns the memory of M. Thiers to the execration of posterity; but it does not excuse the Commune.

The existing French Assembly was elected, not at all to govern France, but to consult on the possibilities of a reconciliation between France and

¹⁷ We should like to know whether the Union Army, acting under orders, did, or did not, ever set fire to any thing in the valley of the Shenandoah; and whether shells loaded with incendiary composition were, or were not, thrown from our ships and batteries into the city of Charleston.

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Prussia, and also, if advisable, to conclude and authenticate a treaty of peace. The Assembly has, therefore, no lawful governmental powers. When the treaty of peace between France and Prussia was signed, the mandate of the Assembly expired. The government of M. Thiers is a government of usurpers. It has belligerent rights, and it has no other rights. Consequently, every disarmed prisoner of war, male or female, shot in cold blood after a combat, in pursuance of M. Thiers's policy, whether sentenced or not sentenced by court-martial, is—from a legal point of view— simply a person assassinated. And the moral aspect of the question is coincident with the legal aspect. If the Communists committed excesses (and it seems they were human), they did so in defending themselves, their families, and their homes, against thieves and usurpers. Thiers fought to confiscate the liberties and control the money of the people of Paris; and Paris fought in defense of the natural rights of its own people.

Three times the heroic people of Paris have been cheated out of their Republic: once in the great revolution; afterwards in 1830; and, again, in 1848. To-day the scales are still oscillating, and the result is yet undetermined. In the next great fight, or in the fight after the next, the Republic will prevail. The Blazing Star as Paris sees it, now struggling with obscurantism and secular wrong, tinges the whole horizon of the East with the glories of the coming day. The Kabbalistic synthesis is nearer than it was!

The Shemitic principle and the Japhetic principle are to-day represented in human civilization—the first by the Israelitish Church, and the second by the Christian Church. Both of these Churches are true Churches, and therefore neither of them is capable of erring in things essential. The Blazing Star burns in both of them: the junction of the two triangles, one Divine and the other human—the regeneration of the individual soul—takes effect in both of them. Yet these two Churches excommunicate each other! Why? Because these Churches are two Churches only, and not three. Because one whole side of the mystical triangle is lacking in modern civilization. Because the Hamitic principle is to-day occulted. Because the Hamitic Church is nowhere visibly organized, and speaking with authority, among men. Because Man, the natural

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mediator between heaven and earth, is officially absent from the religious organizations of the period.

Now there are three holy cities—not two of them only: JERUSALEM, ROME, PARIS. But the holiness of Paris is virtual merely as yet. The religion of Humanity reaches higher than the Commune and the International Labor Union seem to think, Paris is *Bar-Isis, Parisis, Paris*. It is the sacred boat of Isis that bears to-day the destinies of the world.

BROOKLINE, MASS., July, 1871.

The next issue of *LeftLiberty*, "A Doctrine of Life and Humanity," will focus on the thought of Pierre Leroux, and on his influence on William B. Greene, P.-J. Proudhon, Orestes Brownson and William Henry Channing. Greene's *The Doctrine of Life* and a newly-translated collection of *Aphorisms* based on Leroux's philosophy will be among the historical texts.

Issue Two will also feature the beginning of *The Distributive Passions*, a work of Fourierist speculative fiction, as well as some excerpts from the writings of Fourier.

The Distributive Passions: A Chronicle of the First Harmonian Revolution is the history of an alternate Earth, one where, at various key moments, liberty got just a bit more play than in our own world, with a range of results, not all of them positive. The curtain rises on 2005, on the verge of that year's Intergalactic Encuentro, a meeting of radical and alternative organizations in the Marshall Islands, and the pressing issues are in many ways familiar: rising sea levels, a war on terrorism, sectional and factional conflicts within many nation states, concerns about energy supplies and the sustainability of the global economy. The players are, of course, not entirely those we might expect. It was the Fourierists, not the Marxists, who led the Russian Revolution. The American Civil War led to greater decentralization in the Federated States and Territories of America. Etlertech, the offspring of 19th century utopian socialist experiments, has functioned as something of a joker in the technological deck.

And the seas are turning to lemonade, or something like it, in partial fulfillment and partial defiance of a number of Fourierist predictions. Things are getting strange...

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THE DISTRIBUTIVE PASSIONS: A CHRONICLE OF THE LAST DAYS OF THE FIRST HARMONIAN REVOLUTION

Ascending Wing

A child saw a blue butterfly resting on a blade of grass; the butterfly was benumbed by the north wind. The child picked the blade of grass, and the living flower at the end of it, still benumbed, could not fly away. The child returned, holding up its chance prize. A sunbeam touched the wing of the butterfly, and suddenly, revived and gay, the living blossom flew away towards the light. We all, seekers and workers—we are like the butterfly: our strength is made only of a ray of light; nay, only of the hope of a ray of light. We must, therefore, know how to hope; hope is the force which bears us upward and forward. But it is an illusion! How do we know that? Must we not move a step, for fear that some day the earth will disappear from under our feet? It is not sufficient to look far into the future, or into the past; we must look into ourselves. We must note there the vital forces which demand to be spent; and we must act.

Marc Guyau, *A Sketch of Morality Independent of Obligation or Sanction*

Editor's Note: X+1, Era of Harmony¹⁸

The Axis passed, it is perhaps natural that many of us turn our attention to the past, not merely from nostalgia, but from some sense that the road up to the crest may provide so signposts for the road down. This is a false logic, unquestionably. We would not expect one side of a mountain to too closely resemble the other. One can make too much of Symmetry and Analogy. In the Old Creation, the land was in places sharply divided by ranges of mountains, rising as high above the plains and deserts on either side as the crest of Harmony has risen above the eras of Civilization and Barbarism. These barrier ranges were responsible, together with the more extreme weather patterns of those earlier eras, for extreme divisions in weather and climate, extreme alternations in heat and cold, moisture and aridity. Air masses which passed over deserts without giving the slightest relief might, on crossing the mountains, deliver torrents. The first freezing winds of winter, pushing across the range, might become the last scorching

¹⁸ (Approx.; 30,423 Old Reckoning)

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breath of summer, fanning wildfires. We expect no such sudden transitions, but it may yet be that the dry breath of the past may let loose a gentle rain on our future.

We feel that we face a temperate decline. All the more reason that our Butterfly gravitates to the intemperate, heroic eras of the past, the desert behind us. Thus the vogue for the deep past—the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries—the time of the First Harmonian Revolution, from the first discovery of the new science of society to the high tide of Soviet state associationism, and on through the reign of the Free and the era of the False Crown. Even so primitive an age has its heroines and heroes, not least those who first put to the practical test the system discovered and the doctrine elaborated by Fourier, only to find it impracticable in so primitive a form. History and Harmony have validated their faith, two allied forces moving together towards that consummation which we still experience in nearly full measure. But the same doctrine tells us that a separation is in the works. History must move on, but Harmony will gradually be left behind.

Even with ages to contemplate this pivotal disconnection, we find ourselves ill prepared to face it—not that those of us alive to day will face it to any great degree in our lifetimes. But it is strange, unprecedented, to feel so blind in some regards, we who have attained sight in every degree, for whom the arrays of radical atoms and aromas present no mystery. It is as if we stood on the mountaintop, but with a view only at the terrain behind, and, worse yet, with the promise of worsening vision as we descend.

So we look back, hoping to in some manner illuminate the future. And we find that, in that direction as well, much is obscure, particularly as we reach so far back. What follows then is no true historical parcours, but rather a Papillon flitting through history, a series of incidents, with, at the centers of its ascending and descending wings, some rather more substantial narratives of a time, like our own, characterized by decline, but, unlike ours, uncharacterized by anything like gentleness.

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The ALLIANCE OF THE LIBERTARIAN LEFT is a decentralized alliance of radical individualists, left libertarians, agorists, market anarchists, mutualists, voluntary socialists, and others on the libertarian left. We're organizing local activist groups to fight for individual freedom, peace, and social solidarity in our communities, using the tools of education, nonviolent direct action, and cooperative counter-institutions—not petitions, party politics, or symbolic protests.

We're not a party-line organization. We have come together in part to clarify our differences, as a necessary step to moving beyond them. We share, though to varying degrees, a dissatisfaction with the nature of the current division within the anarchist and libertarian movements. For more information, please visit the following sites:

<http://all-left.net/>

<http://libertarianleft.org/>



On ALLiance

A MISCELLANY:

The Lesson of the Pear Growers' Series

Given the reputation of "classical" anarchists these days, it might be too much to ask anarchists to consider the lessons of those "utopian" socialists who came before. But I want to do just that. It is generally acknowledged that Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was influenced by Charles Fourier, whose *Le Nouveau Monde Industriel et Sociétaire* Proudhon helped to print in 1829. Fourier's Theory of Four Movements found an echo in the theory of "four movements" which ends Proudhon's *De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité*, and less specialized versions of Fourier's analysis of series remained an important aspect of Proudhon's work throughout his career. I think it is likely, as well, that Proudhon absorbed some of Fourier's relentlessly positive understanding of social forces. Reformers, Fourier complained, always try to locate the source of social problems in human passions, and move to restrain or suppress those passions they determine are antisocial or destructive. This is impractical, irreligious, illogical, simplistic, etc., Fourier said. We find ourselves in the position of attempting to adapt human beings to some ideal model, derived from something other than demonstrable human passions. We should instead look at who people actually seem to want, and to enjoy, and try to imagine the society in which not produce the "subversive" manifestations that they do in our own, clearly imperfect societies. This is pretty much the same move Proudhon makes when he distinguishes between the existing relations of "property" and state-based "governmentalism," and the "aims" which seem to drive them. Individual do not value property primarily, he reasons, because it allows them to be unjust. They value it as a tool of justice, though it is, he argues, a very flawed one. Proudhon's antinomies are essentially the conflicts between the progressive and subversive manifestations of given social situations. Fourier takes it for granted that there will be such conflicts until the dawning of the Era of Harmony. Proudhon, jettisoning the

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specific timeline, still sees such conflicts as a natural part of the progress towards justice, reciprocity and equality.

As a result, there is very little that is black and white in Proudhon. The "manichæan" approach so often attributed to "classical anarchism" is largely absent there. Instead, there is a much more nuanced understanding of the interaction of social forces, of the play of individual intentions within complex social fields. This leads Proudhon to his theory of "approximations," experimental steps and temporary summings-up, each an attempt to advance from the last, and each setting the terms for the next stage. This is the process that William B. Greene described in his essay on "The Blazing Star," a road that always beckons, once we start down it. Proudhon's *Philosophie du progrès*, which lays out some of the key principles here, is a really fascinating work, which deserves a full translation. I'll try to post some sections of it soon. Let it suffice to say, for now, that Proudhon, who was always summing up "the whole of his thought" in one way or another, there summed it up in a very proto-postmodern opposition to The Absolute.

Anyway, it's Fourier that I want to talk about right now, but it's worth mentioning again (and again and again) that Proudhon was not exactly what modern commentators tend to reduce him to. If he was not the sort to predict lemonade seas, or wax eloquent about the virtues of the quagga, he still holds some surprises for us. And Fourier is not simply reducible to his wilder rapsodies.

"Note A," in *The Theory of Four Movements* (available online in French, and in English in the Cambridge University Press edition) discusses the "series" of workers growing pears in Fourier's phalanstery. The serial method of analysis really involves little more than a separation or spreading out of like elements, according to their differences. Thus, pear-growers are united by a passion for pears, but separate into sub-groups according to their pear-preferences, and those subgroups can be arranged (in "ascending and descending wings," around a "pivot," in Fourier's scheme) according to their relation to closely related elements (apple-growing, in this example, which places the quince-growers at a transitional "wing-tip" between series.)

There are plenty of discussions of the structure of the series, but what is interesting about "Note A" is that it focuses on the practical question of how the series will influence the production of pears (and apples, etc.) What

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Fourier suggests is that encouraging individuals to focus on pursuing their passions—their desire for pears of their favorite sort, in this example—instead of focusing on either individual profit or common goods in some abstract sense, will produce a lot of pears, probably more than a more calculating approach, in proportions pretty well suited to demand. Reading this stuff in the context of internal anarchist debate, I'm both charmed by the simple elegance of the approach and depressed at how far anarchists of any stripe seem to be from this "follow your bliss" model of business—a model that seems to me in some ways quite compelling. Fourier, of course, thinks the model will work because people are naturally competitive, that, given a little organizational incentive, they'll plow labor into pear-growing for the sake of the honor of their favorite fruit, with an ardor we generally save for college football or sectarian debate. That faith in competition is going to be a problem for some of the comrades who are, at least in theory, opposed to any such thing. Of course, those opponents of competition are often among the quickest to pile on to "squash the opposition," when, say, market anarchist heresy rears its ugly head. Maybe the de facto competition of the anti-competitive might be sufficient, if we turned our task from growing pears to growing anarchism. In any event, what Fourier really believed would make the series work was a combination of factors, of "distributive passions," including the competitive, analytic "cabalist," the synthetic "composite," and the restless "papillon" or "butterfly passion." Compete when we feel competitive, make up when we feel the urge, conspire or create schism, change our strategies when we grow bored.

So. What if we thought in Fourierist terms about the question of expanding the anarchist movement? If anything at all seems clear, it is that those who are committed to particular schools, are not likely to be moved by the sort of sectarian squabbling that currently goes on. Mutualists aren't likely to decide communism is their favorite fruit, no matter how many times you call them petit bourgeois. Communists are unlikely to change their minds about markets. Or, perhaps, we'll all change our minds a bit as the questions become more practical, the possibilities more real to us—down the road a piece. It's like we're all standing around arguing about what pear tastes best, when what is wanted is pears, preferably some variety, as long as they fill the bill.

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What is wanted, it seems to me, is anarchism, of some variety, please, as long as it fills that bill. Is it possible to focus on that, rather than on details that may be, in the end, just details?

Happy 200th, P—J!

I've been celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon by tidying up my files of material relating to him, archiving some of my scattered translations at Collective Reason, and taking some time to gather my thoughts on Proudhon's importance for the anarchist movements of the present and the future.

I came to grapple with Proudhon's work rather reluctantly, which seems to be the norm, among those of us who come to grapple with it at all. I deeply regret that reluctance, as there has probably never been another figure in the anarchist tradition who has pursued as far, and as doggedly, the answers to some of the movement's most basic questions: What is freedom? How are order and liberty related? What are society and the state? What is property? What is the self, and what are its objects? What, if it exists, is progress? These are not just anarchist questions. They are the sort of questions which must be answered by anyone, or any society, which hopes to establish itself in a lasting fashion, and to provide justice for its members.

Curiously, notoriously, the world, and the anarchist movement itself, remembers Proudhon primarily for that provocative *bon mot*, "Property, it is theft." There is no denying the importance of What is Property? Nor is there any denying that that work of 1840 was not Proudhon's last word on any of the subjects he tackled in it. From an emphasis on simple syntheses of existing ideas, Proudhon gradually developed his theory of the antinomies, basic conflicts in the realm of ideas, surrounding all the questions and concepts worth pursuing, which ultimately were characterized as much by their perpetually unresolved and unresolvable character as by more specific or local characteristics. Proudhon has been accused of retreating from his early anarchism, but such a charge is hard to justify. There was at first, after all, only a vague, synthetic notion of liberty as the reconciliation of "property" and "communism," a "third form

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of society" which, frankly, hasn't panned out, and which, if it did, would hardly satisfy, with its synthetic character, a large number, perhaps the majority, of those who consider themselves the partisans of anarchism now.

Proudhon's mutualism started as an "oil and water" anarchism, and gradually came to embrace what it had been from the start. The result was a resolutely anti-utopian approach, which, if it denied the possibility of a stable, self-sustaining, finally fully-realized free society, also denied the legitimacy of any patent-office panacea that anyone might be tempted to impose, because the best of all presently possible arrangements in the only world we have would only be a stepping stone to something else. He hoped to dethrone religion as a passive adoration of the absolute, but the vacuum left by God was, for him, only one more thing to draw human beings up and onward. Taking his cues from the gradual internalization of moral justification accomplished by successive manifestations of Christianity, he sought to completely secularize and de-"pneumatize" judgment and responsibility. In the process, of course, he placed the heavy weight of self-justification squarely on the shoulders of "Humanity."

A highly individualistic thinker, insisting at times on the complete individualization of interests, "complete insolidarity," he was not afraid to pursue his individualist course when it confronted him with something other than a social atomism. Without ever reducing the role he assigned to individual humans as responsible actors, he recognized the high levels of interdependence which characterize so much of human reality. So he was not averse to references to Humanity, or to society as a collective being, even to the State as a collective entity with a role to play even in an anarchist society. His theory of collective force drove his theory of property, from the beginning of his career through the end of his life. As much as the idea of "collective persons" may shock our delicate anarchist or libertarian sensibilities, the social science he was pursuing remains a compelling and useful approach, providing rather direct suggestions for solutions, particularly in the realm of property theory. Far more than his peers, Pierre Leroux and William B. Greene, Proudhon was able to grasp both the philosophical niceties and the practical consequences of the "doctrine of life" of revolutionary neo-christianity, and his appropriation of Fourier's serial method, and appreciation of the positivity of the passions, was, if somewhat less colorful and enthusiastic in his hands, arguably more profound than anything produced by Fourier's direct disciples. Proudhon, at

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first a rather relentless competitor in the struggles over socialism and the direction of the revolution after 1848, quietly became a rather brilliant synthesizer of others' ideas, though ultimately always capable of making them his own.

We know Proudhon's faults: His ideas about gender and the role of the family blinded him to the importance of the movement for women's political equality. He considered himself a defender of women's rights, and was never, as is charged, a misogynist, but the best we can say about his "Catechism of Marriage" is that it is a clever argument from extremely bad data. The anti-Semitic comments in his notebooks are undoubtedly of the much the same character. The inability to distinguish "Jew" from "banker" plagued lots of people, and not a few anarchists, for a long time after Proudhon's death. The importance assumed by those faults among anarchists suggests a couple of things: 1) that, as a movement, we have not got to know our founding figures well enough to recognize the rather significant faults that nearly all of them had; 2) that we don't know enough to see how those faults are far outnumbered by spectacular achievements, precisely in the realm of respect for individual rights, in thinking through the problems of racism and nationalism, etc.; and 3) that we are all a little too easily carried along by the current of small-f fundamentalism and the eye-on-the-media purity campaigns which rule popular politics.

In this anniversary year, in the midst of an economic dip which threatens to deepen into a real crisis, we should really just get over it, get on with it, spend some time getting to know the figures who first built this movement of ours, and perhaps particularly today's birthday boy, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Proudhon was, *par excellence*, the anti-fundamentalist thinker, if by fundamentalism we mean the opportunistic tendency to substitute convenient answers for the hard but necessary work of understanding who, how, and why we are, here and now, together. (And that, whatever other definitions there may be out there, seems to be our zeitgeist. Add our unbelievably atrophied organs of tolerance and forgiveness to the picture, and many, many things may be explained.) As such, he is one of the thinkers at least potentially most useful to us, here and now, together.

Anselme Bellegarrigue described the beginnings of the 1848 French revolution as if someone had pressed that infamous "make the government go away" button that libertarians talk about, as if the revolution was, at the

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moment of the abdication of the king, accomplished. The problems came from the failure of the provisional government, and its successors, to understand that another kind of work was necessary. It's an intriguing thought, though it is equally tempting to valorize the early days of the transition that followed, when public debate on the form of government burst out in so many forms. Proudhon, of course, dismissed the French '48 as a revolution "without an idea," and set himself to establish just what the "general idea of the revolution" might be. He never stopped writing about the possibilities: justice, equality, liberty, mutualism, reciprocity, agro-industrial federation. The Revolution, he said, was both conservative and progressive. All of this is of real importance, and we neglect any of these concepts and principles at our peril. But we have seen all these glorious words captured by various approximations, or attached to various shams, so often that it is hard to see how any of them, or all of them taken together, if we do not remember arguably the most important thing that Proudhon said: The antinomy does not resolve itself. It is not resolved.

Let's call that the Spirit of '58 (the year of Proudhon's Justice), which was also William B. Greene's Blazing Star, and let's reunite with it one of Proudhon's other best observations, which we might see as a necessary corollary: "L'humanité procède par des approximations," that is, Humanity proceeds by approximations. From the various lessons we might draw from that combination, let's start with a certain restlessness and relentlessness, particularly when faced with panaceas, political and economic saviors, "bail-outs" and the like, a skepticism towards claims about what "just won't work," what ideas "can't go together," and a recollection that "it is the clash of ideas that casts the light." In practice, let's try to marry all of that to a more and more habitual experimentalism, a DIY sensibility that springs from our understanding that it never gets done in any way we, as anarchists and libertarians, as full and free human beings, could live with, until we do it ourselves.

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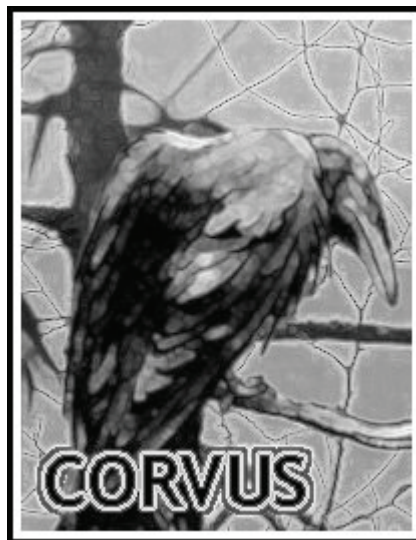
LEFTLIBERTY is a zine/journal dedicated to the exploration of mutualism, "the anarchism of approximations" pioneered by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, William Batchelder Greene, Josiah Warren, Joshua King Ingalls, and others, and an attempt to pick up some of the threads dropped by Benjamin R. Tucker in *Liberty*. Each issue will contain historical texts from the tradition, commentary, and new mutualist theory.

This issue focuses on the philosophical underpinnings of mutualism, and contains notes and texts relating to the newly-translated English-language edition of Proudhon's THE PHILOSOPHY OF PROGRESS, also available from Corvus Distribution and Invisible Molotov.

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