

Alex Prichard. *Justice, Order and Anarchy: The International Political Theory of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*. London & New York: Routledge, 2013. ISBN: 978-04-15-59688-6. Pp. xiii, 226. Hardcover: £85.00/ \$140.00; paperback: £28.00/ \$49.95.

The discipline of International Relations (IR) remains highly British and American centred. In 1985, Kal Holsti arrived to the conclusion that IR's output was primarily American, and secondarily British.¹ Almost two decades after that, Steve Smith reaffirmed that the field was still dominated firstly by the theoretical contributions coming from the United States, and secondly by British output.² Thus, not surprisingly, only two out of the fifty key IR thinkers of Martin Griffiths well known book were not part of the British or American academia.³ Alex's Prichard's *Justice, Order and Anarchy* provides an outstanding effort to combat the Anglo parochialism of the discipline by retrieving the international thought of the French anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

While there have been considerable contributions to highlight the value of Proudhon's insights in political theory,⁴ besides Prichard's work, there is to my knowledge virtually no other lengthy effort in English to provide an understanding of Proudhon's international thought.⁵ In this sense, *Justice,*

Order and Anarchy's main contribution is to the discipline of IR, in particular by providing peculiar insights on the concept of anarchy. As Prichard rightly stresses in the book, a rich understanding of the notion of anarchy is essential in the discipline given that it has been perhaps the core avenue of research in the field (p. 2). Therefore, the writings of the first self-proclaimed anarchist should not be ignored in IR (p. 4).

The book is compounded of eight chapters. The first chapter serves as a general introduction. It presents the book objectives, and it provides a useful brief biographical section of Proudhon's life. Prichard's principal aim is '...to show that IR, updated and fleshed out with the benefit of anarchist theory, is uniquely positioned to help us understand the processes and means through which order and justice are possible in anarchy' (p. 5). Chapter two exposes the different understandings that IR theories have on the concept of anarchy. For Prichard, there are four different perspectives of anarchy in the discipline. The first group is integrated by those who stress some of the virtues of the international system as anarchical. According to Prichard, the balanced of power stressed by realists is an example of this perception of anarchy. The second group, to which theorists such as Robert Keohane belong, stresses the possibility of 'taming' the anarchical system. In the third cluster, Prichard groups theoretical perspectives such as idealism, which argue that the eradication of anarchy is possible. The final group is reserved to those who, like Noam Chomsky, have plainly promoted the advance of anarchy in the international level (pp. 22-35).

¹ K.J. Holsti, *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory* (Winchester, MA: Allen and Unwin, 1985), p. 103.

² Steve Smith, 'The Discipline of International Relations: Still and American Social Science?', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2002), p. 374.

³ The exceptions are the French Raymond Aaron and the Russian Vladimir Lenin. Martin Griffiths, *Fifty Key Thinkers of International Relations* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁴ For two important efforts see Allen Ritter, *The Political Thought of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969) and K. Steven Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* (Oxford, New York, etc: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁵ In his latest book, Lucian Ashworth provides a brief section on Proudhon's IR thinking. See, Lucian Ashworth, *A History of International Thought: From the Origins of the Modern State to Academic International Relations* (London & New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 85-89. Proudhon's international thought has not been neglected

in other languages, with French studies around the theme being -not surprisingly- particularly frequent. See for example, Madeleine Rebérioux, *Proudhon et l'Europe; Les Idées de Proudhon en pPolitique Étrangère* (Paris: Domat Montchrestien, 1945).

The third and fourth chapters contextualise Proudhon's understandings of anarchy. This is an important part of the book because it helps the reader to make sense of part of the reasoning behind Proudhon's thinking. Historically, Proudhon's thought was partly a result of the genesis of national self-determination movements during the XIX century. The French theorist perceived the strengthening of the state as a phenomenon that would produce greater militarisation, which in turn would particularly destabilise the balance of power in Europe (pp. 42, 65). Intellectually, Proudhon's thinking developed as a critique to the republicanism preached by Kant, Rousseau and Comte. Prichard rightly shows that for these thinkers anarchy was a malady to be solved by the republicanisation of the nation-state. By contrast, Proudhon argued that the unification and strengthening of the nation-state produced greater risks internationally (pp. 67, 90).

In chapters five, six and seven Prichard does a major service to IR by presenting Proudhon's international theory, something that to my understanding has not been previously done in the discipline. Ontologically, Proudhon's thinking is pluralist. The state is only one association among many. Municipalities, businesses, and families are examples of other groups which are part of the global society (pp. 133, 146, 148). Epistemologically, Proudhon believed that 'truth' is socially constructed. Agents acquire knowledge through reasoning, observation and interactions (pp. 95-96). Normatively, Proudhon aimed to highlight the virtues of anarchy. He claimed that anarchy should be established domestically and internationally for the fulfilment of greater order and justice worldwide (p. 91).

One of the virtues of *Justice, Order and Anarchy's* account of Proudhon's thought is that the author does not blindly present the theory as immaculate. This is evident, for example, through the book's critique of 'Proudhon's sexist approach'. For the French thinker, the father was the natural leader of a family. The male's principal role, according to Proudhon, was legitimised by the greater natural strength men had in comparison to women. Thus, for Proudhon the role of females within marriage

supports the realisation of men in the public sphere given that the latter are liberated from the domestic toil. While Prichard presents some contextual explanations behind Proudhon's thinking, the author clearly rejects the French thinker on this, arguing that Proudhon's understandings of sex are in contradiction to his own theory of justice in which hierarchies are despised (pp. 106-110). Thus, a plus in Prichard's piece of work is that it is not completely biased in favour of Proudhon's theoretical insights. The final chapter recaptures the main issues raised throughout the book and it proposes anarchism as the best alternative for the future of international relations.

While *Justice, Order and Anarchy* makes clearly an important contribution to IR by revealing Proudhon's neglected international thought, the main argument of the book is overstated. Prichard claims that the anarchist visualisation of anarchy, as a positive characteristic of the international realm, provides IR with a unique approach to understand this concept. According to him, 'contemporary IR has very limited understanding of anarchy, derived mainly from realist and Hobbesian assumptions about the chaos of egoistic individuals (...). If the modern global order is becoming radically pluralised (...) IR is threatened with becoming redundant unless IR theorists can show the value of our central concept for theorising the possibility of the good life in an anarchic world order. I will suggest that by rethinking anarchy along anarchist lines, IR has much to tell (...) about how order and justice can be constituted without an orderer' (p. 14).

While in the second chapter the book does give credit to Kenneth Waltz and Hedley Bull for highlighting the virtues of international anarchy, Prichard discards these 'realist' approaches for being state-centric notwithstanding the increasing plurality of actors in the international realm nowadays. However, Prichard does not take into consideration the vast literature in IR that has been produced on the issue of global governance since the 1990s. This body of literature has highlighted that cooperation activities take place daily between global actors

without an international government.⁶ In a pluralist world, justice and order are thus possible even in the lack of a central authority. Similarly, Headley Bull, as a representative of the English School in IR, has claimed that anarchy is not as unbridled as realists argue. Instead, morality, norms and institutions, provide considerable order in the international level.⁷ While Bull's conception of an anarchical society was certainly state-centric, subsequent theorisations of the English School have promoted the desirability of a greater plurality of global actors. For instance, even though John Williams still recognises the importance of states, he has favoured a transition 'from an international society of states to a world society' in which 'the political activity is principally focused upon individuals'.⁸ Thus, Anarchism is not alone in IR in having positive understandings of the concept of anarchy in a world of diverse global actors.

Yet, despite the book's overestimation of the potentiality of Anarchism for enriching IR understandings on the issues of anarchy and order, Proudhon's theory on these aspects certainly provides alternative insights to other approaches in the field. The book no doubt does a great service to IR in retrieving the neglected international thought of one of the greatest theorists of the nineteenth century. Additionally, by presenting Anarchism as a possible route to achieve a more just and orderly world, the book can be added to that literature of the new left that provides a substitute to orthodox Marxian proposals whose reputation was considerably diminished with the Soviet Union.⁹ *Justice, Order and Anarchy*

⁶ Lawrence S. Finkelstein, 'What is Global Governance?', *Global Governance*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1995), pp. 367-369.

⁷ Andrew Linklater, 'The English School', in Scott Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations* (London & New York: Palgrave, 2005), p. 110.

⁸ John Williams, 'Pluralism, Solidarity and the Emergence of World Society in English School Theory', *International Relations*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (June 2010), pp. 19-20.

⁹ A recent important leftist contribution that departs from orthodox Marxist proposals is Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). The book aims to present a democracy of the 'multitude' (i.e. those subjugated under the global institutions of 'Empire') as a normative alternative to neoliberal and 'socialist' statist

discourses, which have supposedly wrongly either privatised or nationalised the 'commons' of mankind.

Ricardo Villanueva
University of Glasgow
