

ANARCHIST ORGANIZATION: KROPOTKIN'S SCIENTIFIC THEORY

Ruth Kinna D.Phil Thesis 1991



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## CONTENTS

<u>Abstract</u>	page	iv
<u>Introduction</u>	pages	1- 5
- notes		5
<u>Chapter 1</u>	pages	6-54
- orthodox impressions of Kropotkin's anarchism		8-15
- science and mutual aid		16-26
- revolution versus evolution		26-36
- authority		37-45
- science and determinism		46-47
- notes		48-54
<u>Chapter 2</u> Anarchy and the Conditions of Sociability	pages	55-98
- utopianism		56-63
- liberty		63-71
- work		71-76
- community		76-84
- communism		84-90
- anarchy		91-94
- notes		95-98
<u>Chapter 3</u> Morality, the State and the Process of Change	pages	99-144
- morality		100-107
- the state		107-117
- capitalism		117-129
- base and superstructure		129-137
- revolution		138-141
- notes		142-144

<u>Chapter 4</u> Mutual Aid and Ethical Theory	pages 145-190
- war and revolution	147-155
- biological mutual aid	156-174
- ethical mutual aid	174-183
- organisation	184-186
- notes	187-190
<u>Chapter 5</u> Mutual Aid and the Theory of the State	pages 191-228
- mutual aid-justice-morality	192-205
- state and city-state	205-215
- communism and community	215-223
- consciousness	224-225
- notes	226-228
<u>Chapter 6</u> Mutual Aid and the Evolution of Anarchy	pages 229-273
- the natural society	230-242
- evolution and anarchy	242-255
- the direct action of the environment	255-263
- ideology and the force of ideas	263-269
- notes	270-273
<u>Conclusion</u>	pages 274-293
- notes	292-293
<u>Bibliography</u>	pages 294-301

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ABSTRACT

This thesis approaches anarchist organisation in practical and revolutionary terms. Its theme is Kropotkin's conception of the relationship between the end of anarchy and the process of anarchist transformation. The thesis examines this relationship as a continuous theoretical development, questioning the existing interpretations of his thought which identify a revision of his ideas in his formulation of the theory of mutual aid. It finds that these interpretations of his work are mistaken and based on a misunderstanding of his use of Darwinian evolutionary theory. Rejecting the beliefs that Kropotkin's scientific anarchism is based either on a desire to prove the necessity of anarchy or to replace revolution with a process of gradual evolutionary reform, the thesis suggests that questions of strategy have a secondary importance in his work. Kropotkin's anarchism is directed toward securing moral behaviour by restructuring society.

Rejecting the alleged discontinuity of his thought, the thesis acknowledges that there are differences between Kropotkin's early and late writings. In his early work, Kropotkin's understanding of anarchist organisation is based on a commitment to communism and on an expectation of revolution. In the theory of mutual aid Kropotkin subordinates communism to an ideal of community and resolves the problem of change by the force of his scientific ideology. But his commitment to anarchy is affirmed. Formulating the concept of mutual aid, the thesis finds that Kropotkin uses science as a theoretical incentive, promising practical and spiritual well-being, for the masses to hasten the realisation of the anarchist society.

In conclusion the thesis reviews the existing interpretations of Kropotkin's commitment to Victorian positivism and suggests that his adherence to the standards of natural scientific research are compromised by the radicalism of his liberatory desires.

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about Kropotkin's understanding of anarchist organisation and his concept of mutual aid. It considers his understanding of organisation as a practical conception of society and as a process of transformation, and traces the development of the relationship he posits between his ideal of anarchy and idea of revolutionary change from his earliest writings in the late 1870s to his mature thought in the 1890s and beyond.

The subject of this thesis was prompted by readings of Kropotkin's work which suggest a discontinuity in his thought. This discontinuity is expressed usually in terms of a distinction between his early 'revolutionary' and mature 'evolutionary' thought, where the former refers to a concept of uncompromising, radical anarchism and the latter, to peaceful reformism. Symbolically the change in Kropotkin's work is identified by his release from imprisonment in France and his settlement in Britain. In terms of his literary output, the division is signified by the appearance of *Mutual Aid*.

The idea that Kropotkin's career falls into two parts has led authors to interpret his work in one of two ways. On the one hand, Kropotkin's scientific thought is defended on the basis that it rescues anarchism from an out-dated, nineteenth-century idea of revolution.<sup>1</sup> On the other, his later science is criticised for introducing into anarchism an element of theoretical determinism.<sup>2</sup> In both readings, however, Kropotkin's science is considered primarily in terms of its impact on his understanding of anarchist change.

The thesis takes issue with these understandings of Kropotkin's thought and examines his work as a continuous progression. It questions the perceived dichotomy between the means and ends of the revolution,

and suggests that Kropotkin's anarchism contemplates the interdependence of anarchist organisation and change rather than particular questions relating to the mechanics of revolution. Rather than being represented as a separate dimension of his thought, Kropotkin's scientific anarchism is considered to reinforce the first considerations he gives to the relationship between organisation and change. In practical terms Kropotkin's scientific thought is considered to sustain his confidence in the possibility of organising society in decentralised, self-sufficient, federated communes. In human terms anarchist science is represented as an inspirational force, designed to motivate an attempt to institute anarchy by promising the development of an ethical sense which overcomes the necessity for the State. His scientific writing, the thesis suggests, provides a theoretical incentive for the masses to attempt anarchist change, where previously Kropotkin understood that their historical revolutionism was about to explode spontaneously.

Following a brief summary of the standard interpretations of his work, the continuity of Kropotkin's thought is discussed in the first chapter. Examining his understanding of law and authority, this chapter argues that Kropotkin conceives anarchist change as a movement designed to overcome the 'fall' of mankind from the state of nature by providing the environmental support for the development of a new anarchist moral sense. Whilst the concept of mutual aid is represented usually as a theory designed to promote only the raising of moral consciousness, such a demonstration repudiates the distinction that is made between revolution and evolution. The analysis, the chapter argues, thus serves as a valid basis on which to later examine the theory of mutual aid.

Kropotkin's understanding of the organisation of anarchy is considered in the second chapter. The chapter finds that Kropotkin understands that the realisation of anarchy requires the satisfaction of

four conditions: liberty, community, agreeable work and communism. He demands that all these goals are achieved; in conclusion, however, the chapter argues that social harmony is principally dependent on the introduction of communism.

Concluding the examination of Kropotkin's early writings, the third chapter demonstrates the relationship between his model of anarchy and the process of revolutionary change. It begins with a discussion of his concept of anarchist morality and highlights the relationship Kropotkin posits between human ethical progress and the abolition of the State and capitalism. Thereafter the chapter presents an outline of his concept of the State and his understanding of the relationship between State, government and capitalism. It attempts to establish that Kropotkin's rejection of the State is based on two complementary beliefs: that anarchist morality can only be achieved in the absence of the State; and that the abolition of the State provides the practical foundations on which anarchy can be realised. In conclusion, the chapter suggests that Kropotkin's theoretical demonstration of the possibility of anarcho-communism is dependent on his expectation of mass revolutionary action.

The principles of Kropotkin's theory of mutual aid are considered in the fourth chapter. The chapter begins with an examination of his reaction to the disintegration of the revolutionary movement and the spread of social democratic ideas amongst the masses. Admitting his disillusion with the potential for immediate revolution, the chapter contends that Kropotkin remains committed to the eventual victory of the anarchist ideal. The chapter proceeds to outline his understanding of evolutionary development and contends that his theoretical interest in finding an environmental basis for the realisation of anarchist morality is reaffirmed. The fifth chapter considers the extent to which the development of Kropotkin's science alters his concept of the State and

his commitment to communism. Examining his redefinition of morality and his historical analysis of the mediaeval city-state, it suggests that in his later thought Kropotkin reconsiders his organisational priorities to ground the further evolution of mutual aid upon the creation of the community, not communism. The sixth chapter considers the impact that Kropotkin's understanding of evolutionary development has on his concept of anarchist change. It examines two potential theories of spontaneous evolution. In the first instance the chapter reviews the modifications Kropotkin introduces to his understanding of capitalism. In the second place, it assesses the importance of the amendments he makes to his evolutionary theory and his attempt to replace Darwin's concept of natural selection with the Lamarckian notion of the direct influence of the environment. In both cases the chapter concludes that Kropotkin fails to provide his theory with an external dynamic for anarchist change. His perception of the collapse of capitalism, the chapter argues, presents an opportunity for change; the revised theory of evolution promises a better moral world should the masses seize the initiative presented by this opportunity.

The thesis does not attempt to deny that Kropotkin modifies his thought. But placing his science within the framework of his early anarchism, the thesis concludes that the difficulties entailed by Kropotkin's development of the theory of mutual aid are more complicated than the standard classifications of his Victorian positivism admit.

NOTES: INTRODUCTION

1. For this approach to Kropotkin's work see, for example, G. Woodcock & I. Avakumovic: *The Anarchist Prince*, T.V. Boardman & Co., London, (1950); G. Woodcock: *Anarchism*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, (1979); M.A. Miller: *Kropotkin*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, (1976); J.W. Hulse: *Revolutionists in London, A Study of Five Unorthodox Socialists*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1970); G.D.H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought: Marxism and Anarchism, 1850-1890*, Macmillan, London, (1954), P. Avrich: *Anarchist Portraits*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, (1988); C. Harper: *Anarchy: A Graphic Guide*, Camden Press, London, (1987). The process by which traditional anarchist strategies for change have been re-examined is described in D. Stafford: 'Anarchists in Britain Today', J. Joll & D.E. Apter (ed.), *Anarchism Today*, Macmillan, London, (1971).
2. For this understanding of Kropotkin's scientific anarchism see, V. Richards: *Malatesta Life and Ideas*, Freedom Press, London, (1977); D. Miller: 'The Neglected II - Kropotkin', *Government and Opposition*, Vol.18, No.3, (Summer 1983), and *Social Justice*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1979); T. Indic: 'Anarcho-Communism - The Movement and its Morals', *Praxis*, 8, (1972). The extent of Kropotkin's determinism is examined positively by R. DeHaan: 'Kropotkin, Marx and Dewey', *Anarchy* 55, Vol.5, No.9, (September 1965).

## CHAPTER ONE

In his introductory discussion of *The Discourses*, Crick marvels at the number of different interpretations that have been made of Machiavelli's work. So many are the assessments and so great are the contradictions between them that Machiavellianism, he argues, deserves its own separate field of study. Looking at a few of the more notable views that have been expressed, Crick finds that any writer who wishes to present a new analysis of Machiavelli's work must first explain why "one can find and exaggerate, if one chooses, elements of all kinds of things in Machiavelli."<sup>1</sup> In Kropotkin's case the situation is reversed: though his ideas have been approached in a number of different ways, only one interpretation of Kropotkin emerges. Outweighing all other considerations Kropotkin is a scientist and "the most distinctive feature of Kropotkin's anarchism [is] the attempt he [makes] to place anarchist ideas on a scientific foundation..."<sup>2</sup> The consensus is no less interesting than the disunity Crick observes amongst Machiavelli scholars, and similarly requires an explanation.

Kropotkin's scientific career is usually traced back to the geographical expeditions he made between 1862-7 when on detachment with the Amur Cossacks in Siberia.<sup>3</sup> Inspired by his experiences there, it was in the five years following his return to St. Petersburg that Kropotkin accomplished his most important geographical work, formulating new theories of glaciation and recharting the orography of Asia. It was also during this period when, serving as a secretary to the Russian Geographical Society, he undertook to make similar researches in the Arctic and embarked on limited tours of Finland and Sweden. By his own account, Kropotkin's achievements were not insubstantial. Contemporary writers have also emphasised his

geographical accomplishment. Avrich, for example, finds that had Kropotkin "continued his scientific work, one can only surmise what further discoveries he might have made and what honors he might have won."<sup>4</sup> Woodcock advances a similar point, describing Kropotkin's decision not to pursue an academic career as a great sacrifice to a more sublime calling.<sup>5</sup> But for the abnegation of talent that Kropotkin's decision involved, neither Woodcock nor Avrich consider his scientific expertise in well-defined geographical terms. Their point is to trace the influence of his Russian experiences in his later anarchist writings.

The application of the scientific epithet may be considered to confer a special value on Kropotkin's ideas and the great majority of references to Kropotkin's scientific anarchism infer a positive evaluation of 'science'. Consideration of his scientific work is often made as a defensive response to the classic, and arguably critical, understandings of the historical anarchist movement. Beyond the more or less well intentioned attempts to re-assert the importance of anarchist ideas, this chapter argues that the desire to highlight the scientific content of Kropotkin's anarchism has exercised a distorting effect on his thought. The emphasis that has been placed on Kropotkin's attempt to ground anarchism on a scientific foundation has led to a misstatement of his ideas.

The argument of the chapter is presented in three stages. In a review of the existing literature it begins by demonstrating the extent to which Kropotkin's thought has been understood discontinuously. Both critics and defenders of his work, the chapter argues, have considered that his formulation of anarchist science marks a watershed in his career. This discontinuity is demonstrated in a number of ways: in personal, stylistic, and political terms. Taken separately each case

highlights the existence of a historical division in Kropotkin's career between the period he spent as a radical propagandist and, coinciding with the appearance of *Mutual Aid*, as a rational theorist. Taken collectively, however, the chapter finds that these changes have been understood to show that Kropotkin profoundly revises the theoretical assumptions of his earliest anarchist thought. The discontinuity in Kropotkin's work, the chapter finds, is thus expressed in terms of his disavowal of structural change in favour of a movement based on changing mass consciousness. The suggested dichotomy is not only mistaken but misrepresents the nature of the theoretical problem Kropotkin wishes to solve. The final phase of the argument suggests that rather than conceiving anarchist revolution in strategic terms, Kropotkin understands anarchist change as a process requiring both behavioural and environmental reform.

#### 1. ORTHODOX IMPRESSIONS OF KROPOTKIN'S ANARCHISM

One tradition in anarchist thought traces the etymology of anarchism to the Greek *an- arche*.<sup>6</sup> Kropotkin follows this tradition, variously translating the classical root as 'contrary to authority' or 'the No-Government system of Socialism'.<sup>7</sup> For Kropotkin, to highlight the antiquity of anarchist thought is to bestow value upon it. Anarchism, he contends, is neither the invention of academics nor politicians but has "its origin in the same creative, constructive activity of the masses which has worked out in all times past all the social institutions of mankind."<sup>8</sup> The coining of the term by the ancients, he argues, is evidence of that fact.

There is another tradition within anarchism which recognises the negative connotations 'anarchy' carries in everyday language. The

origin of this approach can be traced back to Proudhon's *What Is Property?*. For Proudhon:

*Anarchy*, - the absence of a master, of a sovereign, - such is the form of government to which we are every day approximating, and which our accustomed habit of taking man for our rule, and his will for law, leads us to regard as the height of disorder and the expression of chaos.<sup>9</sup>

Kropotkin finds that the significance of Proudhon's definition lies in his being the "first to use...the name of anarchy with application to the no-government state of society...".<sup>10</sup> In the historiography of anarchist thought the significance of the declaration does not lie in the boldness of Proudhon's claim but in its persuasiveness and negativity. Of the two traditions, it is Proudhon's which has set the standard for any discussion of anarchist thought. Anarchists and those sympathetic to anarchist ideas universally accept the need to define anarchism in relation to every prejudice that has been raised against it. Berkman's introduction to his *A.B.C. of Anarchism* is characteristic of the anarchists' general position.<sup>11</sup> But it seems significant that nearly fifty years after he defined anarchism by a catechistic series of denials, introductory anarchist texts still bear the scars of his siege mentality.<sup>12</sup>

For Proudhon, the most pervasive bias against anarchy stems from the habit of taking the necessity of the State for granted. Modern defenders of anarchism have alternatively found that the most perverse misconceptions of anarchist thought are related to the nature of the development of the historical anarchist movement. Other forms of socialism have suffered a similar fate, and have been judged in relation to the actions of specific personalities who claimed to represent them. For many modern anarchist sympathisers, however, anarchism has not only been evaluated with reference to the activities of the movement it spawned, but understood consistently in terms of the most aggressive and

violent of its actions. In the introduction to his study of anarchism, James Joll, for example, notes that the "sympathy which one type of anarchist doctrine might have won has been lost by the ruthless and senseless violence which was characteristic of another school of anarchist practice."<sup>13</sup> From this perspective, the image anarchism has won is not so much concerned with, for example, the organisational achievements of the C.N.T., or the pioneering educational efforts made by Emma Goldman, but with the conspiratorialism and militancy of the F.A.I., with Ravachol, Vaillant and the other propagandists of the deed who terrorised the European heads of state throughout the 1890s. Woodcock's remarks on the issue are typical.

Anarchism, nihilism, and terrorism are often mistakenly equated, and in most dictionaries will be found at least two definitions of the anarchist. One presents him as a man who believes that government must die before freedom can live. The other dismisses him as a mere promoter of disorder who offers nothing in place of the order he destroys. In popular thought the latter conception is far more widely spread. The stereotype of the anarchist is that of the cold-blooded assassin who attacks with dagger or bomb the symbolic pillars of established society. Anarchy, in popular parlance, is malign chaos.<sup>14</sup>

Cast in active revolutionary roles anarchists are at best considered romantic propagandists. Their writings are designed to inflame and enrage; they are consequently deemed atheoretical and ultimately directionless.<sup>15</sup> Anarchism, the anarchists complain, is not usually considered to possess any positive features. It embraces only the passion for destruction.<sup>16</sup>

The anarchists' complaint is not without foundation but there is a danger that they may have overstated their case. Rather than being universally antagonistic, reactions to anarchism have tended to oscillate between outraged hostility and sympathetic understanding.<sup>17</sup> In recent years, anarchists are as likely to have been ridiculed as ineffectual drop-outs as they are to have been abhorred as uncompromising terrorists.<sup>18</sup> Given this ambivalence, however, in so far

as Kropotkin's work is concerned the reality of the situation is less important than the anarchists' perception of it.

Of all the 'classical' anarchists Kropotkin serves as the best proof of the inaccuracy of what has come to be represented as the popular conception of anarchism. As a personality the contrast he forms with the anarchist caricature is sufficiently strong to make the anarchists' critics seem unreasoned and dogmatic. Even though his work was always recognised as a revolutionary, in his own lifetime Kropotkin enjoyed celebrity not as a potential psychopath but as a romantic hero alternatively adopting the roles of lovable rogue, intrepid explorer, scholar and nobleman of high breeding and gentle manners. In England his known affiliation to anarchism did not burden him with the reputation of being a dangerous terrorist, but with the honour of being 'our most distinguished refugee'.<sup>19</sup> Recalling the last years of Kropotkin's exile, the obituary published in *The Times* gives a typical picture of the impression he made:

In his modest home in London, where he lived for nearly 30 years, a warm welcome was always ready for his many friends. He was always full of enthusiasms, always young; his brain retained an alert freshness that seemed never to diminish. His erudition was enormous. Geology, geography, physics, chemistry, economics, history, sociology, all claimed his attention and were the subjects of his works.<sup>20</sup>

As Walter comments, the conventional Kropotkin is the one described by Wilde as the man "with the soul of a beautiful white Christ..."<sup>21</sup>. Since his death this image has been constantly reinforced. In the writings of contemporaries such as Emma Goldman, fond testimony to Kropotkin's "utter lack of egotism" rebound. Goldman admires the profound humanitarian sensitivities of his written works and his lesser known rich "creative ability"<sup>22</sup>. Kropotkin, she contends, "had...been an artist of unusual quality...he might have achieved as much with his brush as with his pen had he cared to devote himself to it." Musically,

too, "Peter would have excelled. He loved the piano and he could find expression and release in his fine interpretation of the masters."<sup>23</sup> From the scores of similarly effusive tributes collected from other political and literary notaries of the period by Woodcock and Avakumovic,<sup>24</sup> Kropotkin appears as a Renaissance divinity.

Woodcock and Avakumovic are clearly positively predisposed to Kropotkin. But whether the root of the characterisation is founded in reality or merely in a tradition of frequent repetition, the standardisation is equally apparent in the more objective and critical evaluations of Kropotkin's career. Setting aside the bias of *The Anarchist Prince*, few authorities on Kropotkin resist commenting on the exceptional quality of his personality. In the conclusion to his biography, the otherwise impartial Martin Miller alludes to the purity of Kropotkin's personal morality, commenting that he was a "truly compassionate and humane individual".<sup>25</sup> Swan, more succinctly, characterises Kropotkin as "scientist, anarchist, prophet".<sup>26</sup> Rather graphically Van Duyn depicts Kropotkin, "with his luxuriant beard, working away in his garden and admiring the unity of man and nature...", as a "wise gnome...whose message the world still fails to understand".<sup>27</sup> From every perspective Kropotkin is the "antithesis of the wild-eyed bomb throwers who commonly come into mind when anarchism is mentioned in polite company"<sup>28</sup>. Reiterating the judgement passed by Bernard Shaw to Woodcock, Hulse begins his survey of Kropotkin's work with the following passage:

Prince Kropotkin was much like his friend Stepniak in temperament and manner: those who knew him could not regard him as a desperate revolutionary. He was balding, short, and stocky, and he peered at the world through tiny eye-glasses that gave him more the appearance of the quaint continental professor than of Europe's leading theoretical anarchist. Bernard Shaw wrote of him as "amiable to the point of saintliness, and with his full red beard and lovable expression [he] might have been a shepherd from the Delectable Mountains".<sup>29</sup>

Reflected against the background of the standard portrayal,

statements which attest to Kropotkin's human failings possess a curiously refreshing quality. As Colin MacInnes notes, the archetypal image of Kropotkin is too perfect:<sup>30</sup> negative assessments which illuminate the nature of the differences which divided Kropotkin's nascent anarchism from the more traditional populist ideas of the Chaikovsky Circle, which mention his determined political intriguing<sup>31</sup> or observe his awkwardness with women<sup>32</sup> have the effect of making him appear much more human. But as a point of departure, it is assessments which broadly follow the tradition of Wilde which serve as the background against which Kropotkin's anarchist thought is evaluated. And in this respect, however irritating and sycophantic such accounts of Kropotkin's life and manner may appear, they possess a suggestive, circumstantial importance which defies dismissal on the grounds of irrelevance or triviality.

In assessments of Kropotkin's work, the sway that his persona holds is easily detected. Woodcock, for example, finds that:

Kropotkin was most important, even to the libertarian cause, as a personality and a writer; all that was noble, all that was 'sweetness and light' in anarchism seemed to be projected in the manifest goodness of his nature, while in writing he defined the ideal and related it to the scientific knowledge of his age with a simple clarity that even Godwin did not equal.<sup>33</sup>

Conflating personality with content, in a brief summary of *Mutual Aid*, Richard Pipes passes judgement on Kropotkin's "idealism" and "love of life". Kropotkin, he argues, "personified that combination of thought and action which he preached in his writings."<sup>34</sup> Primed with this standard characterisation many writers seem astonished that anarchism can boast Kropotkin as an exponent. Grey finds that the "attractive and engaging" Kropotkin is not at all "anarchic in his presentation", but of all the anarchists, he "gives a reasonably systematic statement of the faith that is in him"<sup>35</sup>. Lancaster similarly sees Kropotkin as "a gifted writer, benevolent, urbane, and

eminently reasonable..." and likewise concludes that his work is the most "comfortable guide" to anarchist theory.<sup>36</sup>

The suggestive strength of Kropotkin's personality emerges again in the contrast that is drawn between his ideas and those of Bakunin. As the "toothless and ill-kempt" rebel characterised by Herzen and popularised by Carr, the latter appears as the living embodiment of the dark side of the anarchist creed.<sup>37</sup> Though for Grey, Kropotkin's anarchism still fails to "make the impracticable appear practicable", he notes nonetheless, "not for him the mouth-foaming of Bakunin; the violence tinged with insanity, of the Nihilists."<sup>38</sup> Conceiving anarchism in utterly different terms, Woodcock reiterates the point. Comparing Kropotkin's "extraordinary mildness of nature and outlook" to his predecessor's "bohemian energy", he argues that Kropotkin "preferred the open forum of discussion to the romantic darkness of conspiracy...". He further comments that the "destructive vision of blood and fire that so luridly illuminated Bakunin's thoughts did not attract him; it was the positive, constructive aspect of anarchism...that appealed to him..."<sup>39</sup> In Lichtheim's view, Kropotkin "dropped the dictatorial approach...Bakunin's anti-Semitism, his Panslavism...his childish fondness for armed banditry and the cult of violence and destruction that went with it."<sup>40</sup> Demonstrating the powerful influence that the secondary literature has exercised, Lichtheim relies heavily on Avrich. In turn Avrich makes full use of Kropotkin's famed personal qualities to drive a theoretical wedge between the two thinkers.

Although Kropotkin embraced some of the principal tenets of the Bakunist creed, from the moment he took up the torch of anarchism it burned with a gentler flame. Kropotkin's nature was singularly mild and benevolent. He lacked completely Bakunin's violent temperament, titanic urge to destroy, and irrepressible will to dominate; nor did he possess Bakunin's anti-Semitic streak or display the hints of derangement that sometimes appeared in Bakunin's works and actions. With his courtly manner and high qualities of character and intellect, Kropotkin was the very picture of reasonableness. His scientific training and optimistic outlook gave to anarchist theory a constructive aspect which stood in sharp contrast with the spirit of blind negation that permeated

Bakunin's works.<sup>41</sup>

Kropotkin's status as a scientist authenticates such assessments. Science, though it is never acknowledged directly, confers value and respectability; and applied to Kropotkin's works, symbolically encapsulates the differences between his anarchism and the discredited propaganda of his contemporaries. Kropotkin, G.D.H. Cole remarks, is "unquestionably the leading figure in the development of Anarchist-Communism as a social doctrine...". By way of explanation, he adds a little later on, "he received a scientific training; and this deeply influenced his thought."<sup>42</sup> Even critics follow this line of reasoning, distinguishing between Kropotkin's carefully researched investigations and what are considered to be the unsubstantiated and intuitive ramblings of mainstream anarchism.<sup>43</sup> Given this, however, the significance of Kropotkin's science does not merely lie in its representational force, or in the corrective it offers to the perceived limitations of anarchist thought.

In common with modern defenders of his thought Kropotkin also accords great value to scientific knowledge and claims insistently that his anarchism be granted scientific status. For Kropotkin the validity of the claim rests on methodological grounds; contemporary writers make the claim on an entirely different basis. Outweighing the importance of Kropotkin's methodology is the political argument that his scientific thought purportedly supports. Before proceeding to see how Kropotkin's scientific credentials have affected the conception of his anarchism, however, the understanding of his science requires clarification.

## 2. SCIENCE AND MUTUAL AID

Kropotkin is unquestioningly positive in his views about science. From the mid-1880s onwards especially, when his interest in placing anarchism on a scientific foundation becomes increasingly apparent, his writings on science impart a sense of intense personal excitement. In one of his most buoyant moments, he declares:

When we cast a glance upon the immense progress realised by all the exact sciences in the course of the nineteenth century...we cannot but feel deeply impressed by the idea that mankind is entering a new era of progress...in the course of the last hundred or hundred-and-twenty years, entirely new branches of knowledge, opening unexpected vistas upon the laws of development of human society, have grown up under the names of anthropology, prehistoric ethnology, the history of religions, the origin of institutions, and so on...the traditional views about the position of man in the universe, the origin of life, and the life of the mind [have been] entirely upset by the development of biology, the reappearance of the theory of evolution, and the growth of physiological psychology...We have to return 2300 years back, to the glorious times of the philosophical revival in ancient Greece, in order to find another period of sudden awakening of the intellect and of sudden bursting forth of knowledge which would be similar to what we have witnessed lately.<sup>44</sup>

In an era accustomed to Sartre's idea of progress being crab-like, Kropotkin's indefatigable faith in the progressiveness of science appears supremely optimistic. But this is not the only contrast that his confidence in science establishes. In relation to traditional anarchism, Kropotkin's belief in the liberating promise of scientific investigation appears unguarded. Unlike Bakunin, for example, Kropotkin sees little threat of elitism in the development of scientific thought.<sup>45</sup> Rarely does he consider that the furtherance of science may lead to the monopolisation of knowledge by a minority of savants. For Kropotkin, the development of scientific thought will allow the barriers dividing mental from manual work to break down. To this extent, the progressiveness of science lies not only in what Kropotkin considers to be its revelatory qualities but in its practical application.

Considering what he believes to be the current misuse of scientific knowledge, he finds:

But modern knowledge has another issue to offer to thinking men. It tells them that in order to be rich they need not take the bread from the mouths of others; but that the more rational outcome would be a society in which men, with the work of their own hands and intelligence, and by the aid of the machinery already invented and to be invented, should themselves create all imaginable riches. Technics and science will not be lagging behind if production takes such a direction. Guided by observation, analysis and experiment, they will answer all possible demands.<sup>46</sup>

If society has failed to understand the potential of technological change before, it is not because science is at fault but because it has been misapplied or misunderstood. Thus, he comments:

Such is the future - already possible, already realisable; such is the present - already condemned and about to disappear. And what prevents us from turning our backs to this present and from marching towards that future, or, at least, making the first steps towards it, is not the "failure of science," but first of all our crass cupidity...and then our laziness of mind - that mental cowardice so carefully nurtured in the past.<sup>47</sup>

Fully convinced of the improving potentiality of science, Kropotkin considers that scientific research must proceed in accordance with a strictly defined methodology. Here, in his conclusions at least, Kropotkin falls back within the mainstream of anarchist thinking. For in the contrast he draws between 'true' science and the 'utopianism' of the pseudo-scientific, Kropotkin frequently fixes his attention on what he considers to be the false prophecies of Marx. At times, the development of Kropotkin's scientific anarchism appears to be motivated solely by a desire to repudiate marxism and correct Marx's earlier derision of anarchism as muddled and 'unscientific'. Reversing the judgement, Kropotkin ridicules the 'dialectic method' as an outmoded superstitious belief. He dismissively compares Marx's 'authoritarian', 'meta-physical' reasoning with his own so-called 'inductive-deductive' method and claims intellectual superiority on the basis of his adherence to the methods of natural science. In *Modern Science and Anarchism*, for example, Kropotkin argues:

We have heard of late very much about the dialectic method, recommended to us by Social Democrats in order to elaborate the Socialist ideal. But we no more admit this method than would natural science. The dialectic method reminds the modern naturalist of something very antiquated that has had its day and is forgotten, happily long since forgotten by science. No discovery of the nineteenth century, in mechanics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, or anthropology, has been made by the dialectic method. All the immense acquisitions of the century are due to the use of the inductive-deductive method - the only scientific method.<sup>48</sup>

Rejecting the belief, clung to by the 'metaphysician', that knowledge develops by the progression from thesis, antithesis and synthesis, Kropotkin represents the method of true, natural science as one which proceeds from the study of observable 'facts' and progresses to the formulation of explanatory deductive hypotheses. In the final stage of research, Kropotkin notes, the natural scientist is allowed to experience "the joy of scientific creation" and test the generalized theory. In his autobiography he describes the process of investigation in relation to his study of glaciation; but for Kropotkin the method remains the same whatever the field of study and irrespective of the subject matter.

And when the generalization is put to a test, by applying it to hundreds of separate facts which seemed to be hopelessly contradictory the moment before, each of them assumes its due position, increasing the impressiveness of the picture, accentuating some characteristic outline, or adding an unsuspected detail full of meaning. The generalization gains in strength and extent; its foundations grow in width and solidity; while in the distance, through the far-off mist on the horizon, the eye detects the outlines of new and still wider generalizations.<sup>49</sup>

Kropotkin's attempt to formulate a science of anarchism according to this procedure has been considered in a number of ways. David Miller, for example, examines his understanding of science in the context of the general confidence and beliefs of Victorian society. Thoroughly imbued with the enthusiasm of the age, Kropotkin, he concludes, was positivist both in terms of the method he adopted and in his understanding of its universal applicability. He "approved whole-heartedly of Comte's and Spencer's attempts to construct synthetic philosophies" and though he

differed from them politically, in his principal identification with them Kropotkin was 'man of his time'. David Miller is not particularly harsh in passing this judgement: he warns, on the contrary, that assessments of Kropotkin's endeavours must "bear in mind the high regard in which the natural sciences were held during this period, in England especially...".<sup>50</sup> His assessment appears a good deal less harsh than most. Notwithstanding the insistence of Kropotkin's own claims, most contemporary writers seriously question the validity of his methodological approach and the test of scientific integrity that he argues it embodies. Beyond Miller's observations, the major complaint is not with the nature of Kropotkin's method but in his imperfect application of it. Baldwin, for example, finds Kropotkin guilty of developing his facts from his theories.<sup>51</sup> Martin Miller similarly concludes that Kropotkin uses his science 'metaphorically'.<sup>52</sup> Again admitting that the results of his scientific investigations owe more to his intuitive preconceptions than to the objective empirical research he undertook, even Woodcock and Avakumovic are willing to concede that Kropotkin's scientific thought admits a certain artistic licence.<sup>53</sup>

Acknowledgement of the methodological flaws in Kropotkin's work is not, however, equivalent to an admission of his failure as a scientist. One of the most striking features of the examinations that have been made of Kropotkin's method is the general indifference they show toward their own conclusions. However positively or negatively Kropotkin's claims are treated, the validity of his assumption of scientific status is never really doubted. Whilst, for example, writers such as Avrich match Kropotkin in the insistency of his claims to have successfully provided anarchism with a scientific foundation, the reservations expressed by Woodcock, Baldwin or Martin Miller are apparently never sufficiently strong for references to his scientific achievements to be

put into abeyance. Rather than questioning Kropotkin's scientific achievements, it seems instead that his latter day defenders seek only to alter the basis on which the claim is presented. Turning the discussion away from the problems of method, Woodcock and Avakumovic, thus free themselves from further consideration of the objectivity of Kropotkin's method and focus on the manner in which he expressed his scientific ideas. David Miller similarly moves quickly from a discussion of Kropotkin's methodology to a consideration of its application. Here, finding that Kropotkin made only the "most rudimentary attempt to relate anarchism to modern physical science", Miller immediately concentrates his attention on Kropotkin's "much more serious...attempt to ground anarchism in biology and sociology...".<sup>54</sup> Typically, he pinpoints the modern locus of anarchist science in the theory of mutual aid. Avrich confirms the centrality of the work:

*Mutual Aid* has become a classic. With the exception of his memoirs, it is Kropotkin's best-known work and is widely regarded as his masterpiece. It has been translated into many languages, Asian as well as European, and has gone through numerous printings. The reasons are not hard to find. *Mutual Aid* is more than a contribution to the theory of evolution. It forms the very cornerstone of Kropotkin's anarchist philosophy...it was his most successful attempt to provide anarchist theory with a scientific foundation.<sup>55</sup>

Originally written in eight parts for serialised publication in *The Nineteenth Century*, *Mutual Aid*, as Avrich indicates, proceeds on the basis of Kropotkin's reading of Darwin's theory of evolution.<sup>56</sup> Kropotkin had read Darwin in Russia; he had also read Spencer, translating with his brother, the *Principles of Biology* in order to learn English.<sup>57</sup> He traces the development of his own research into evolutionary biology, however, from 1883 when he was introduced to the work of the Russian zoologist, Kessler.<sup>58</sup> Following Kessler's lead, in simple terms Kropotkin concludes that the fitness of a species, and therefore the chances of its survival, is increased by the degree to which individuals of a species co-operate with one another. At every

point and in both the form of the argument and his discussion of the process of his discovery, Kropotkin infers a close adherence to Darwin's original exposition of evolution. Referring his own concept of sociability to Darwin's understanding of the 'struggle for existence' at times Kropotkin claims inheritance to Darwin's mantle to the point of suggesting that the concept of mutual aid is not really his, but Darwin's.

Elucidating what he considers to be the main mechanism of natural selection, Kropotkin advances from the strictly defined biological debate into more ideologically determined argument and attempts to repudiate the validity of the Social Darwinian notion of the 'survival of the fittest'. The understanding, Kropotkin argues, is a vulgarisation of Darwin's original concept of the 'struggle' and utterly mistaken in the conclusions it draws about human behaviour. In the opening pages to the work he explains:

it happened with Darwin's theory as it always happens with theories having any bearing upon human relations. Instead of widening it according to his own hints...the numberless followers of Darwin reduced the notion of struggle for existence to its narrowest limits. They came to conceive the animal world as a world of perpetual struggle among half-starved individuals, thirsting for one another's blood. They made modern literature resound with the war-cry of *woe to the vanquished*, as if it were the last word of modern biology. They raised the "pitiless" struggle for personal advantages to the height of a biological principle which man must submit to as well, under the menace of otherwise succumbing in a world based upon mutual extermination.<sup>59</sup>

Kropotkin identifies two problems with the Social Darwinists' case: in the first instance, their portrayal of nature is merely a crude and mistaken reiteration of the Hobbesian notion of the 'war of each against all'; secondly, the Social Darwinists have utilised this image of the natural world in order to idealise a view of society in which individuals are locked in a continuous battle to gain selfish advantage. He concludes that Social Darwinism - and he wrongly targets Huxley's work as an example of his point - is both scientifically baseless and

socially destructive. In opposition to this view Kropotkin endeavours to show that nature is essentially harmonious and that it contains the basis on which all social ethics are founded.

Kropotkin's arguments are inextricably bound together by the Malthusian understanding of competition which, in the first instance, he wishes to disassociate from Darwin and in the second, identify with Social Darwinist thinking in order to discredit it. Divorcing the Malthusian concept of competition from Darwin's hypothesis of natural selection, Darwin, Kropotkin argues, understands the struggle for existence only to regulate relations between species, rather than within them. Not only have the Social Darwinists misunderstood this but they have been led to understand the struggle for existence in a narrow, literal sense, applicable to the fight between individuals for scarce resources. Finally, neglecting the finer metaphorical meaning Darwin assigned to 'struggle', Kropotkin finds that his followers have also ignored the greater extent to which the individuals of a species combine with one another in order to overcome the natural obstacles of the environment and secure their survival.

Kropotkin's attempt to divorce Darwin from Malthus is problematic in biological terms and instantly raises the controversial issue of the extent to which Darwin himself can be held responsible for the Social Darwinist implications of his thesis.<sup>60</sup> In so far as Kropotkin's own status as a scientist is concerned, however, these issues are largely ignored because the evolutionary aspect of the theory of mutual aid is separated entirely both from the biological premises on which he bases his argument and the ethical conclusions he reaches.

The quality of Kropotkin's biological argument is generally treated on a par with the claims he advances for his method. Kropotkin's critics, such as David Miller and Walter, find his attempt to impute

facts about human beings and society from observations of the animal world misguided and fraught with difficulties.<sup>61</sup> Miller not only questions the naturalistic approach Kropotkin adopts, but also demonstrates his inability to show any conclusive evidence of human sociability on this basis.<sup>62</sup> Within this critical atmosphere some attempt has been made to salvage Kropotkin's reputation by reference to his obvious capability of ordering such a mass of data as *Mutual Aid* presents. Even if Kropotkin's work is considered to be less than objective and his empirical information judged to be largely flawed, acknowledgement of his 'scientific' genius is nevertheless granted on the persuasiveness and impressiveness of the argument he presents. This it seems is Baldwin's view. Kropotkin, he notes,

was a propagandist at heart, tending to ignore or brush aside the facts that contradicted his interpretations. He maintained that he was always ready to alter his theories in the light of facts, but like all men of deep convictions he cherished them too profoundly to see opposing facts except to demolish them. While much of his work in the social sciences is really scientific, - especially *Mutual Aid*... - preconceptions color large parts of it, - a fact which, however, does not detract greatly from its value.<sup>63</sup>

Moving a step beyond Baldwin's defence Woodcock argues that "very little that biology or sociology has since discovered about the behaviour of men and animals substantially disproves Kropotkin's conclusions."<sup>64</sup> But as David Miller notes, Woodcock willingly follows Kropotkin in his gross misrepresentation of Huxley:<sup>65</sup> a point which seems to indicate that he does not actively support the evidence Kropotkin presents as pay lip service to the complexity of the debate he enters. Woodcock is also quite sceptical about the validity of the anthropological evidence Kropotkin presents, as are many other anarchists. With few exceptions, most modern authors who have considered Kropotkin's case admit that much of the evidence he offers in support of his contentions is hopelessly romantic, if not mythical in its foundation. In the debates which have ranged about the sociability

of stateless or near stateless primitive communities, the accuracy of Kropotkin's impressions of tribal society have been seriously questioned.<sup>66</sup>

Rather than being founded on the intricacies of Kropotkin's understanding of biological evolution, the central importance of *Mutual Aid* is based on the political argument it is said to support. The distinction between the political and biological aspects of Kropotkin's work was drawn as early as 1912. In an early review of the book, Simkhovitch writes:

Kropotkin has failed in his attempt to give us a scientific work on mutual aid as a factor of evolution, but as he is the first to consider the problem, great credit is due to him...whatever the scientific failings of his work may be, it is certainly so important that its perusal is mandatory upon all who are interested in social science.<sup>67</sup>

From Kropotkin's point of view the political significance of *Mutual Aid* lies in the refutation it provides of the ethical conceptions Social Darwinism supports: contrary to Huxley, he argues that there is a scientific basis on which to expect the development of a human moral sense. For writers such as Woodcock, however, the work supports a weaker point. Describing *Mutual Aid* as a 'classic' and one of his major contributions to anarchist theory, Woodcock identifies the strength of Kropotkin's work not in its striking originality, less in its biological validity, but solely in the confidence of the statement it makes about the anarchist conception of the State. In advancing his case Woodcock comments that Kropotkin makes "no departure in libertarian thought" but provides an exemplary statement of two anarchist 'truths': "that society is a natural phenomenon"; and that "man is naturally adapted to observe its laws without the need for artificial regulations."<sup>68</sup> In Woodcock's interpretation *Mutual Aid* contains no element of progressive development but restates authoritatively the anarchists' classic rejection of the State on the basis of an argument about Hobbes and the capacity of

humanity to achieve natural goodness. Reducing the theory of mutual aid to a discussion concerned with the justification of the State, Woodcock finally validates the scientific status of the work by tracing the roots of the theory to Kropotkin's early career as a geographer. The point is not totally without foundation: Kropotkin does include in *Mutual Aid* references to the youthful impressions he gained on the Amur and on the road from Transbaikalia to Merghen.<sup>69</sup> They are not, however, predominant; and Woodcock's interpretation of them is at least a little exaggerated. But revealing the true significance of the frequent references made to the academic accolades Kropotkin received for his geographical work, Woodcock argues:

His interest in the cooperative aspects of evolution dated from the years of his Siberian explorations. Observing the animal life of the wild regions he traversed, he had discovered less evidence of struggle than of cooperation between individuals of the same species."<sup>70</sup>

The encyclopaedic reference to Kropotkin compiled by Mondolfo makes the same equation between the two periods.

Russian scientist, sociobiologist and anarchist. As an official in Siberia in 1862 Kropotkin made important geographical and anthropological investigations, which led him to conclude that state action was ineffective while mutual aid was of great importance in the struggle for existence. He thus affirmed solidarity as a factor of progressive evolution in contradiction to the Hobbesian thesis of eminent Darwinists, and opposed to the historians' theory of the constructive value of legal compulsion and state power the idea that the work of ignorant masses through spontaneous cooperation was chiefly responsible for production, construction and progress.<sup>71</sup>

If such an understanding of Kropotkin's science is a weak basis on which to rest his credibility, the impact it has had on his anarchism has been nonetheless profound. Referring to Kropotkin's science of *Mutual Aid* in this way focuses attention on what can only be regarded as a small part of his theory of mutual aid; on those arguments which form only the premises of a wider reaching survey of the relationship between ethical behaviour and environmental change. As this argument is allied to a biographical account of the development of his political thought,

the broader relationship is ignored and the theory of mutual aid is translated into a political theory of evolutionary reform which is directed towards realising the 'natural' spirit of co-operation. In this way, references to *Mutual Aid* as science not only provide a basis on which to further separate Kropotkin's work from Bakunin's revolutionary thought, but to divide it against itself.

### 3. REVOLUTION VERSUS EVOLUTION

For Feyerabend, Kropotkin, an otherwise "bold and revolutionary thinker", is a victim of the nineteenth century: he "wants to break up all existing institutions, but he does not touch science."<sup>72</sup> Even if the truth of the statement can be granted in relation to Kropotkin, defenders of his science cannot be categorised quite so simply. In raising their defence of *Mutual Aid* modern authors are not merely concerned to place it at the centre of Kropotkin's anarchism; the force of their claim instead lies in an attempt to free anarchism from what seems to be the impasse of its revolutionary strategy. Where the strength of Kropotkin's personality suggests a more constructive approach to anarchism than is traditionally expected, *Mutual Aid* proves the relevance of his ideas of change in the context of the twentieth century.

The problems that have been identified with the anarchist concept of revolution are closely connected with the cruder notions which equate anarchism with terrorism, violence and social disruption. Using Arendt's terms, anarchist revolution is classically identified as a cataclysmic new beginning rather than an organic improvement.<sup>73</sup> Anarchist revolution attempts deliberately to interrupt the historical process and to attack the existing institutional fabric of society

rather than seeking an accommodation with the process of its 'natural' development. Even if violence is not held up as a revolutionary virtue,<sup>74</sup> it is necessarily implied by the perceived uncompromising aggressiveness of the anarchists' revolutionary demands. The problem of violence is not specific to anarchism but - certainly for Arendt - shared by all modern revolutions and revolutionaries. Given this, however, many anarchists have considered that in anarchism the difficulties presented by the classic revolutionary scenario are compounded by other organisational factors.

The nature of the anarchists' quandary has been identified by Ritter.<sup>75</sup> For Ritter, the roots of the anarchists' strategic failures rest in their inability to coerce the masses to revolution. Holding to such uncompromising ideals of free will, he contends, anarchism must rely on the 'spirit of revolt' to energise the people. When the insurrection fails to materialise anarchism can wait only until the next historic opportunity or, using the example of the Spanish *pistoleros*, disgrace itself by summarily executing those 'traitors' of the working classes who fail to rally to the cause. He concludes that all the evidence

...indicates the need for a considerably more drastic portrayal of the anarchists' strategic plight. It is not only the problem of their relations to unconvinced outsiders that they fail to solve: the problems of how to organise internally and how, united with the masses, to proceed from old to new also baffle them. Nor are these problems whose solutions will...be found in the future. If the last word about them has not been said yet, this must be because there is none.<sup>76</sup>

Discovering that the traditional cataclysmic understanding of revolution threatens to imperil the prospect of reaching anarchy, Ritter also finds that the totality of the anarchist end weakens the possibility of its realisation. The instigation of a movement of immediate reform designed to move society towards an approximation of the anarchist ideal, he argues, is far more inspiring a cause for the

mass of people to enthuse about than the prospect of the future millennium. The 'partial anarchization' of society need not be considered as a compromise of principle. The model of progressive reform is provided by anarchism itself. Ritter quotes Landauer in support of his contention: "The state is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of behaviour; we destroy it by behaving differently."<sup>77</sup> He concludes that anarchism,

used as a guide to the partial reconstruction of society, far from evoking fear...that the possibilities for well-being are going unfulfilled, offers...safety...while keeping the prospects for augmenting human welfare through systematic transformation alive.<sup>78</sup>

Few contemporary anarchists fundamentally disagree with the explanation Ritter provides of the historical failure of the anarchist movement or with the veracity of the corrective solution he proposes.<sup>79</sup> Granting that the political circumstances in which anarchism seeks to operate have radically altered since the nineteenth century, modern anarchists have made strenuous efforts to divorce anarchist theory from the revolutionary practices of the past. Anarchism, it is argued, is no more an historical curiosity than it is chaotic, nihilistic or spitefully concerned with the disruption of the social order. The problem, as Ward argues, lies only in transmitting this message to the wider public. Discussing his editorial aims in *Anarchy* - from which Ritter takes his reference to Landauer - he comments:

In *Anarchy* what I try to do is to find ways of relating a way-out ideology like anarchism to contemporary life...There are problems you see. If you have a revolutionary ideology in a non-revolutionary situation, what exactly do you do?...do you act up to it, or do you lean over backwards to show how normal and practical your ideas are? What I would like anarchism to have is intellectual respectability.<sup>80</sup>

The anxieties felt by writers such as Ward have not merely led to the exaggeration of the normal and acceptable in modern anarchism. Kropotkin's work is also said to illuminate the possibilities of the 'new' anarchist path. In his consideration of Kropotkin, Ward

particularly emphasises the 'pragmatic' element of his thought and contrasts the practical nature of Kropotkin's ideas with the 'utopianism' of the standard anarchist notion of revolution. He invokes Orwell's judgement of his work: "Peter Kropotkin was 'one of the most persuasive of anarchist writers' because of his 'inventive and pragmatic outlook'". Representing his own work as an "updating footnote to Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*" he strongly infers that Kropotkin shared his belief that:

we win over our fellow citizens to anarchist ideas, precisely through drawing upon the common experience of the informal, transient, self-organising networks of relationships that in fact make the human community possible, rather than through the rejection of existing society as a whole in favour of some future society where some different kind of humanity will live in perfect harmony.<sup>81</sup>

Describing the tenets of his own pragmatic anarchism, Read similarly draws attention to Kropotkin's understanding of the immediately realisable and possible. Anarchism, he contends, may need to maintain the myth of revolutionary action but conceiving that "revolutionary methods can only make things worse", he concludes that it is really concerned with constantly changing forms. In Kropotkin's work Read finds that this lesson is expressed clearly: "For Kropotkin...the justification of anarchism is primarily an empirical task"; his "ultimate appeal as a scientific anarchist...is not to what ought to be, but to what is or what is steadily evolving."<sup>82</sup> Finding that the "anarchists who followed...Kropotkin were political and social absolutists...[who] displayed an infinite and consistent contempt for piecemeal reform...", Woodcock similarly considers that Kropotkin rejected both the catastrophic conception of revolution and the crude, uncompromising millenarianism which traditionally accompanied such an understanding.<sup>83</sup> In addition, he associates Kropotkin's acceptance of peaceful, incremental change specifically with the appearance of his science.

To substantiate his view Woodcock examines the apparent changes which occur in the tenor of Kropotkin's writings and the extent of his political activities following his removal from France to Britain. He also relies heavily on Kropotkin's autobiography. This evidence is particularly inconclusive: as Walter notes, there is an obvious lack of balance between the consideration Kropotkin gives to his time in France and the account he gives of his life in Britain.<sup>84</sup> Ignoring these difficulties Woodcock uses the often poignant descriptions Kropotkin provides of his involvement with the workers of the Jura, for example, to support the characterisation of his early career as one of youthful radicalism and takes the sharp curtailment of his record after his release from prison as a demonstration that he entered an era of mature constructive analysis.

Beyond the differences that his memoirs seemingly admit Woodcock and Avakumovic compound the distinction between the two periods of Kropotkin's life by pointing to his creeping old age, failing health and general depression in Britain. Most importantly they point to Kropotkin's increasing disillusion with the possibility of living to see the radical transformation of society. During the earlier period of his life Kropotkin had expected Europe to erupt in revolution. In Britain, Woodcock notes, he became more preoccupied with the possibility that the European states would decline in total war. Thus he argues:

As the 1890s advance, the note of extreme optimism begins to fade from his writings. The revolution, instead of taking place next year, or in ten years, will probably be far ahead, and even when it comes may only give a partial realisation of anarchy. In the meantime, a long work of preparation will be necessary before people become disillusioned with the fallacies of social democracy, before they cease to be led away by patriotic appeals, before they realise that government under any form will be just the same and that they must rely on their own powers to achieve freedom, economic prosperity and social justice.<sup>85</sup>

Beyond any consideration of the applicability or relevance of nineteenth century conceptions of revolution in contemporary times,

Woodcock's interpretation of the change in Kropotkin's work has to have become accepted as standard. Usually, mention of the fissure in Kropotkin's thought appears as a shorthand reference to his 'radical propaganda' and his 'serious research'. Even for writers such as Heiner Becker, who insist on the basic continuity of Kropotkin's ideas, the symbolic contrast is drawn automatically between his 'militant journalism' and his 'constructive science'.<sup>86</sup> Embellishing his biographical account with finer detail, Martin Miller traces the transition in Kropotkin's career to the same locationally specific change in his morale as Woodcock. Not only did his health suffer (particularly during his imprisonment at Lyons and Clairvaux) in addition, Kropotkin's displacement from *Le Révolté* and the emigre circle which had provided him with information on Russian affairs was the cause of especial misery. The modification of Kropotkin's circumstances, Miller concludes, exacerbated his general disenchantment with the prospect of achieving revolutionary anarchist change. In Britain "Kropotkin came to realize that there was no truly radical movement in England which could absorb his energies or justify his hopes."<sup>87</sup> Similarly locating the alteration in Kropotkin's outlook at the end of his stay in France, in the conclusion to his examination of *The Conquest of Bread*, David Miller finds that:

Nearly all of the ideas outlined above were formulated by Kropotkin during his most active period as a revolutionary, first of all with the anarchists of the Jura Federation, and later with the renascent French anarchist movement of the early 1880s. This period came to an abrupt end at the beginning of 1883, when Kropotkin was tried and imprisoned for his involvement with the international... His eventual release in 1886 inaugurated a new era in which he was less concerned to make anarchist propaganda of the most straightforward kind, and more concerned to discover foundations for anarcho-communism in the scientific world-view of the late nineteenth century.<sup>88</sup>

The uniformity of the view is apparent on every level. Whilst, for example, there is no suggestion that the radicalism of his early writings leads Kropotkin into the mire of Bakuninism, the distinction

between the writings he completed in France and the later work he accomplished in England is maintained with firmness. The results are often confusing. Avrich, for example, attempts simultaneously to minimise the 'violent' implications of *The Conquest of Bread* and insist that there is no theoretical connection between the two phases of Kropotkin's work.<sup>89</sup> Cole advances a similar argument. Kropotkin was never a Bakuninist; but the essays he wrote for *Le Révolté* nevertheless differ entirely from his later scientific works:

the reader of Kropotkin's writings is struck again and again by the contrast between the essential reasonableness and even moderation, of what he says about such matters as these [his later works], and the intransigence of his more purely political writings. Even in these, he has little of the bitterness that is characteristic of much Anarchist literature. Even when he was most indignant or furious, he remained an essentially lovable person, and there was in him not the smallest trace of that streak of insanity that is continually showing in Bakunin's work.<sup>90</sup>

In common with Ritter's critique of anarchist methods, characterisations such as these place revolution at the centre of anarchism. Moving beyond the obsessive concern to rid anarchism of the 'black-cape' image, the concept of violent revolution is not only associated with the stereotypical revolutionary personality but considered to be a fundamental tenet of anarchist thought. Except, that is, for the later Kropotkin. As Woodcock makes clear, the transition in Kropotkin's thought, rooted in his personal reassessment of the political situation and the possibility for realising a mass movement of revolt, is identified precisely in his repudiation of violent revolutionary methods.

There are intervals of renewed optimism - the rise of syndicalism and the Russian revolution of 1905 provide examples in later years...indeed, he always remained confident of the *ultimate* triumph of liberty. [But] as he became more uncertain of an immediate realisation of the free society, his thoughts were less pre-occupied with ideas of revolutionary action, less tinged with violence. In compensation, he became more concerned with inquiry with social construction and the scientific and ethical problems aroused by the search for freedom.<sup>91</sup>

To reinforce his point Woodcock presents an analysis of Kropotkin's

work which traces his theoretical 'progression' from his later writings backwards. Embarrassed by the 'spirit of revolt' which pervades them, Woodcock relegates the composite essays for *Le Révolté* - familiarly featuring as "militant journalism", being "concerned mostly with current issues" - to the uncertain theoretical limbo of 'historical interest'.<sup>92</sup> Though Woodcock finds that "*An Appeal to the Young, Revolutionary Government* and *The Spirit of Revolt* retain much of their appeal and are still printed and distributed by anarchist groups in Europe and Latin America", their real importance derives from the form of their later exposition. The essays written for *Le Révolté* are accordingly referred to the mature trio of *Mutual Aid, Fields, Factories and Workshops* and *Ethics* and to the "scientific and philosophic support" they lend them.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, whilst admitting that *The Conquest of Bread* is suffused with the revolutionary optimism that characterised all the essays Kropotkin wrote for *Le Révolté*, Woodcock finds that in it,

Kropotkin brings a more reflective attitude to his presentation of anarchist communism. A corresponding shift in emphasis occurs. The discussion of revolutionary tactics is not absent, but is no longer preponderant, and Kropotkin's attention is diverted largely to a discussion of the scientific and historical reasons that may lead us to accept the possibility of a life of 'well-being for all'.<sup>94</sup>

In common with Ritter's analysis, Woodcock associates Kropotkin's theoretical shift away from the notion of revolution with a concomitant reappraisal of the possibility of achieving change by a process of piecemeal reform. For Woodcock Kropotkin's accommodation with gradualist methods is derived from his identification with the spirit of the later Victorian age.

Kropotkin...was born into the mid nineteenth century and absorbed its many-sided evolutionism into the very fabric of his thought, so that to him the conception of revolution as natural process was inevitably more sympathetic than the Bakuninist conception of revolution as apocalypse.<sup>95</sup>

In the writings of those perhaps less committed to the realisation of

the anarchist ideal than Woodcock, Kropotkin's reconciliation with the notion of slow ameliorative change is represented as a growing accommodation with reformism. In Hulse's work, not only does Kropotkin's anarchism contain the possibility of improving existing conditions in the absence of any revolutionary spirit it also shows the practicality of growing into the new society by expunging the need for revolution. Hulse demonstrates such a change in Kropotkin's thought by removing all traces of radicalism from his programme of change. In his examination of *The Conquest of Bread* he thus conveniently ignores the references Kropotkin makes to expropriation and the need to abolish the 'wage system' and focuses instead on the recommendations he makes to improve agricultural yields by the practice of intensive cultivation. Kropotkin "patiently assembled elaborate statistics and worked out production estimates to demonstrate the possibilities of some types of agriculture."<sup>96</sup> Similarly, passing over Kropotkin's anticipation of the liberation of women from domestic work, Hulse loses his emancipatory desires amid a host of references testifying to the scope of his practical, Wellsian imagination.

Even the drudgery of the housewife will soon disappear under the impact of technology; Kropotkin anticipated the development of such devices as the automatic washing machine, dishwasher, vacuum cleaner, and other labour-saving household equipment.<sup>97</sup>

Even where the reaction to Kropotkin's anarchism is not so extreme as Hulse's, the theoretical modification of his thought is generally considered to follow the innovatory path recommended by Ritter. In virtually all his later writings the importance of the structural aspects of his work are consistently underplayed. *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, for example, often features as an early exposition of environmental reform or a prompt to the Garden City Movement rather than as a text concerned with the abolition of the division of labour,

the system of international exchange and the introduction of a communist system of distribution according to need.<sup>98</sup>

*Mutual Aid* embodies all the identifiable changes in Kropotkin's anarchism: the renunciation of violent revolution, the acceptance of the 'partial anarchization' of society and the concept of gradualism. Its significance derives from Kropotkin's utilisation of Darwin's theory of evolution, both metaphorically and literally. In the first instance the appearance of *Mutual Aid* is invoked to mark his transition from revolutionary to evolutionist in simple political terms. Examining what he believes to be the broader historical development of anarchist thought Reichert makes the broad distinction between the two concepts. Contemplating 'revolution' in precisely the same terms as Ritter, Reichert finds that there was a time

...when anarchists tended to visualize the act of revolution as a cataclysmic event which would sweep away the accumulated corruption of the ages and liberate the mass of working people immediately. But anarchists no longer think in such terms. The social revolution, all now generally agree, will not be something sudden and complete in itself but a long evolutionary process arising in the will of individual persons and spreading to others through the techniques of education and example. Basic to the social revolution is the transformation in attitude which will have to take place in the minds of individuals regarding the phenomenon of power.<sup>99</sup>

Secondly, in terms of the scientific argument it is said to support, Kropotkin's theory of mutual aid underpins the political transition in his ideas by embracing the possibility of achieving change by means of the moral reform of society. Contrasted simply with the Social Darwinian notion of the survival of the fittest the principle of mutual aid becomes the object of anarchist change as opposed to the mechanism of evolutionary development. Assuming this role the theory of mutual aid promises the creation of the new anarchist world by means which do not require recourse to the barricades. Rounding off his appreciation of Kropotkin's work, Avrich, for example, comments:

mutual aid was for Kropotkin the basis of ethical principles. Morality, he argues, has evolved from the instinct of human sociability, the unconscious

recognition of "the close dependency of every one's happiness upon the happiness of all and the sense of justice, or equity, which brings the individual to consider the right of every other individual as equal to his own."<sup>100</sup>

Alluding to the same reference Ritter takes from Landauer but believing the behavioural aspects of anarchism it embodies to be characteristic of Kropotkin's ideas as well, Reichert argues:

We overthrow the state when we withdraw our support from it, refusing any longer to obey its commands...in order to do this, we must...enter into a new social relationship with our fellow men, thereby making the existence of the state superfluous. When men decide to live together in the spirit of mutual aid that Kropotkin described as natural to them, the state, according to the anarchist, will turn to dust and ashes of its own accord and not because men have physically destroyed it.<sup>101</sup>

If, as Reichert contends, such a conception of change endows Kropotkin's anarchism with an enduring relevance, the understanding is historically inaccurate and based on mistaken assumptions about his early revolutionism. Notwithstanding his youthful conviction that Europe stood on the brink of anarchist revolution, Kropotkin's concern with morality and with the building of the moral society predates his interest in the evolutionary theory of mutual aid. Not only is his early thought concerned with the creation of the ethical anarchist society, more importantly, it is based on a concept of revolutionary change which does not balance violent rebellion against peaceful protest. Kropotkin understands revolutionary anarchist change as a total strategy designed to facilitate the expression of consciousness and provide the basis for moral behaviour by the implementation of a programme of institutional reform. In the writings he produced for *Le Révolté* one of the best examples of his formulation of the problem of change is provided by his examination of authority and law.

## 4. AUTHORITY

For Green, "the nature of authority is explained by the fact that it gives some the power to create binding, content-independent reasons for others to act."

Someone *claims* authority when he makes requirements of another which he intends to be taken as binding, content-independent reasons for action; his authority is *recognized* when another so treats the requirements; and, in the standard case, authority *exists* when its claims are generally recognized.<sup>102</sup>

Authority is thus distinguished from advice, promising and the exercise of power. In Taylor's work, on the other hand,

A exercises authority over B when B conforms with A's communication (in the form of advice, instruction, command or whatever) because he *believes* that A *can give convincing reasons in support of it*.<sup>103</sup>

Kropotkin's understanding of authority is closer to that of Green's than to Taylor's. Though he provides little in the way of a concise definition, Kropotkin similarly conceives authority as command requiring obedience and distinguishes authority from advice or what he refers to as free agreement.<sup>104</sup> Given this, the differences between Green's conception of authority and Kropotkin's are more significant than the similarities. Kropotkin's interest in authority is not at all conceptual. Rather than seeking to explain the nature of authority Kropotkin concentrates his attention on the way in which authority operates and on the relation it assumes between subject and superior. Focusing his attention in this way, Kropotkin has less a definition of authority than an image; and this image is one of domination and oppressiveness on one side and of meekness and compliance on the other. In this, Kropotkin provides an understanding of authority which is remarkably similar to Michels'. Where, however, the latter considers that the concept will always, inevitably exist Kropotkin's attitude to authority demonstrates what Michels characterises as a strongly negative

psychological predisposition.<sup>105</sup> In his essay 'La Loi et L'Autorité',

Kropotkin notes:

Nous sommes tous tellement pervertis par une éducation qui dès le bas-âge cherche à tuer en nous l'esprit de révolte et développe celui de soumission à l'autorité; nous sommes tellement pervertis par cette existence sous la férule de la Loi qui régit tout: notre naissance, notre éducation, notre développement, notre amour, nos amitiés, que, si cela continue, nous perdons toute initiative, toute habitude de raisonner par nous-mêmes...

En effet, voilà des milliers d'années que ceux qui nous gouvernent ne font que répéter sur tous les tons: "Répect à la loi, obéissance à l'autorité!" Le père et la mère élèvent les enfants dans ce sentiment. L'école le raffermi; elle en prouve la nécessité en incitant aux enfants des bribes de fausse science, habilement assorties; de l'obéissance à la loi elle fait un culte; elle marie le dieu et la loi des maîtres en une seule et même divinité. Le héros de l'histoire qu'elle a fabriquée, c'est celui qui obéit à la loi, qui la protège contre les révoltés.<sup>106</sup>

Kropotkin equates authority with law. This association provides him with a functional understanding of authority which both explains and complements his imagery. Kropotkin identifies law as the instrument of ruling-class dominance: in response to his own questioning of the law's existence, he finds,

La plus grande partie n'a qu'un but: celui de protéger la propriété individuelle, c'est-à-dire les richesses acquises au moyen de l'exploitation de l'homme par l'homme, d'ouvrir de nouveaux champs d'exploitation au capital, de sanctionner les nouvelles formes que l'exploitation revêt sans cesse à mesure que le capital accapare de nouvelles branches de la vie humaine...Le reste des lois, au fond, a toujours le même but, c'est-à-dire le maintien de la machine gouvernementale qui sert à assurer au capital l'exploitation et l'accaparement des richesses produites. Magistrature, police, armée, instruction publique, finances - tout sert le même dieu: le Capital; tout cela n'a qu'un but: celui de protéger et de faciliter l'exploitation du travailleur par le Capitaliste.<sup>107</sup>

In Green's terms Kropotkin's understanding of authority is primarily sociological.<sup>108</sup> For Kropotkin authority is related to the social structure of the State and to capitalism through its expression in law. Conceiving the concept in this manner, and in accordance with traditional anarchist thinking, Kropotkin not only declares himself to be against authority but to be against the institutions in which it inheres. In the closing passages of 'La Loi et L'Autorité', he appeals to his readers:

Que l'on considère enfin quelle corruption, quelle dépravation de l'esprit est maintenue dans l'humanité par ces idées d'obéissance - essence de

la loi, - de châtement, d'autorité ayant le droit de punir, de juger en dehors de la conscience; par ces fonctions de bourreaux, de gèoliers, de dénonciateurs, - bref, par tout cet immense appareil de la Loi et de l'Autorité.<sup>109</sup>

Kropotkin not only implores the masses to consider the depravity of the system of authority, he also incites them to summarily destroy it. There are, he argues, social advantages to be gained by the institutional demolition of authority.

"Brûlons les guillotines, démolissons les prisons, chassons le juge, le policier, le délateur...traitons en frère celui qui aura été porté par la passion à faire du mal à son semblable; par-dessus tout ôtons aux grands criminels, à ces produits ignobles de l'oisiveté bourgeoise, la possibilité d'étaler leurs vices sous des formes séduisantes; - et soyons sûrs que nous n'aurons plus que très peu des crimes à signaler dans notre société. Ce qui maintient le crime...c'est la Loi et l'Autorité: la loi sur la propriété, la loi sur le gouvernement, la loi sur les peines et délits, et l'Autorité qui se charge de faire les lois et les appliquer."<sup>110</sup>

In recent years the institutional focus of the classical anarchists' complaint against authority has received conceptual backing. Ironically, however, in keeping with the general defensiveness of much of the recent revisionist work on anarchism, the point has been to demonstrate the essential reasonableness of the traditional anarchist stance rather than the strength of its destructive impulse. This, at least, is the stated intention of both Ritter and De George.<sup>111</sup> In their view a society without authority is unimaginable; moreover, in the absence of authority, the anarchist society becomes simply chaotic. Authority is a guarantee of stability and an acknowledgement of its legitimacy becomes the prerequisite for the maintenance of public order. According to De George,

Since these communitarian anarchists are obviously not opposed to social organization, they must accept the conditions necessary for the existence of any society. These include the moral norms common to all societies as well as the public conditions necessary for people to meet and act together. Furthermore they cannot consistently be opposed to those forms or structures of authority necessary for organization.<sup>112</sup>

To a certain extent the truth of the contention depends on the breadth of the definition of authority accepted. Ignoring the attempts

made by classical anarchists to distinguish authority from advice, for example, De George presents his case by using a particularly wide definition of the concept.<sup>113</sup> David Miller similarly supports his contention that "the social order anarcho-communists favour does encompass a form of authority" by reference to the allowance anarchists make for the expulsion from the community of a hypothetical free-loading individual; an exercise of what he otherwise considers to be power, not authority.<sup>114</sup> Given this, in both De George's work and Ritter's the anarchist justification of authority does not hinge on a semantic debate alone but on the nature of the moral complaint anarchists raise against it. The context of the argument is provided by the philosophical anarchism of Robert Paul Wolff.

For Wolff authority is defined in the similarly narrow terms offered by Green. Authority is "the right to command, and correlatively, the right to be obeyed".<sup>115</sup> The test of its illegitimacy lies in its incompatibility with autonomy. Autonomy is subsequently defined as being "not subject to the will of another"; that an individual "may do what another tells him but not because he has been told to do it".<sup>116</sup> For Wolff there is a primary obligation for human beings to be autonomous. This being the case he advances an absolute moral claim against authority on the grounds of its incompatibility: "all authority is equally illegitimate...", he finds; the concept of a *de jure* legitimate state is "vacuous".<sup>117</sup> For the enlightened, "anarchism is the only political doctrine consistent with the virtue of autonomy."<sup>118</sup>

For Ritter and De George classical anarchism does not advance any such absolute claim against authority.<sup>119</sup> Where anarchists have advanced such formal claims - Ritter identifies the goal as a commitment to the concept of 'rational deliberation' - authority has nevertheless intervened as the altar on which they have ultimately sacrificed their

ideals. Realising that none of their ends can be obtained in the absence of social peace, they claim that the anarchists have been willing to compromise their public stance and direct their complaints away from authority and toward the apparently unlimited authoritarianism of the State.

In Kropotkin's work the argument has no force. Kropotkin examines the relationship between stability and authority by tracing the rise of the law. Here, without making any claims about its reality, Kropotkin assumes the existence of a harmonious and self-regulating tribal group. The stability of the community, he argues, is not guaranteed by the existence of law or authority but by relations which develop amongst the inhabitants:

Puisque l'homme ne vit pas solitaire, il s'élabore en lui des sentiments, des habitudes utiles à la conservation de la société et à la propagation de la race. Sans les sentiments sociables, sans les pratiques de solidarité, la vie en commun eût été absolument impossible. Ce n'est pas la loi qui les établit: ils sont antérieurs à toutes lois. Ce n'est pas non plus la religion qui les prescrit: ils sont antérieurs à toute religion, ils se retrouvent chez tous les animaux qui vivent en sociétés. Il se développent d'eux-mêmes, par la force des choses, comme ces habitudes que l'homme a nommé instincts chez les animaux: ils proviennent d'une évolution utile, nécessaire même, maintenant la société dans la lutte pour l'existence qu'elle doit soutenir. Les sauvages finissent par ne plus se manger entre eux, parce qu'ils trouvent qu'il est beaucoup plus avantageux de s'adonner à une culture quelconque, au lieu de se procurer une fois par an le plaisir de se nourrir de la chair d'un vieux parent. Au sein des tribus, absolument indépendantes et ne connaissant ni lois, ni chefs, dont maint voyageur nous a dépeint les moeurs, les membres d'un même clan cessent de se donner des coups de couteau, à chaque dispute, parce que l'habitude de vivre en société a fini par développer en eux un certain sentiment de fraternité et de solidarité.<sup>120</sup>

Beyond his consideration of the primitive tribal grouping, the distinction Kropotkin seeks to make is between the State and society. While authority may appear to be necessary in the conditions provided by the State (as a means to maintain the economic exploitation and social oppression of the masses) mankind is nevertheless perfectly equipped to continue a social life in its absence.<sup>121</sup> In *The Conquest of Bread*, he declares:

Accustomed as we are by hereditary prejudices and our unsound education and training to represent ourselves to beneficial hand of Government, legislation and magistracy everywhere, we have come to believe that man would tear his fellow-man to pieces like a wild beast the day the police took his eye off him; that absolute chaos would come about if authority were overthrown during a revolution. And with our eyes shut we pass by thousands and thousands of human groupings which form themselves freely, without any intervention of the law, and attain results infinitely superior to those achieved under government tutelage.<sup>122</sup>

Repudiating the necessity of authority and any necessary association between it and stability, Kropotkin advances a moral claim against authority which is as uncompromising as Wolff's. For Kropotkin, however, the illegitimacy of authority is not rooted in its contradiction with any other theoretical absolute. Kropotkin rejects authority on the basis of the contradiction he sees between the social community and the legal State; on the sociological grounds that authority seals the corruption of mankind and removes humanity from a mode of free sociability to a condition of exploitation.<sup>123</sup>

To the extent that Kropotkin is led by this investigation to examine the reasons for the 'fall' of mankind from the peace of the self-regulating community to enslavement in the State, his position is comparable to Rousseau's. He considers the transition to modern society in similarly embracing terms, condemning not just the social and economic inequality perpetuated by the State but also the depravity and profligacy of nineteenth century culture. Examining the 'necessity of revolution', he comments:

Ce n'est plus seulement la question du pain qui se pose à ces époques; c'est une question de progrès contre l'immobilité, de développement humain contre l'abrutissement, de vie contre la stagnation fétide du marais.<sup>124</sup>

Tracing the decline of sociability, however, Kropotkin works on assumptions which are entirely different from those of Rousseau. For Kropotkin, individuals find no difficulty in association. The idea of the isolated noble savage discounted in Kropotkin's thought; and as he extends the idea of sociability into the notion of habitual community -

solidarity - he also dismisses the possibility that the natural inequalities of strength, intelligence and so forth, that Rousseau considers to have such a socially disruptive effect are in themselves the cause of competition and the degeneration from the perfect natural state. In addition, whilst Kropotkin considers the tribal community as an unstable balance of instincts, he does not understand the instability to arise psychologically in the transition from nature to society which Rousseau identifies in the perversion of *amour de soi* to *amour propre*. The instinct to dominate, Kropotkin contends, runs parallel to the sociable instinct within the sociable society rather than being contained within individuals themselves. Thus, at the beginning of his study of the tribal society he comments, "Lorsqu'on analyse les coutumes des peuples primitifs, on y remarque deux courants bien distincts."<sup>125</sup>

In accordance with his abolitionist stance, the human corruption Kropotkin identifies in the disintegration of the social community has a strong sociological input. In his discussion of the tribal community the disintegration of the sociability is associated directly with the imposition of the law. In his examination of modern society, Kropotkin continues to consider the decline of the sociable sentiment in purely legal terms. Law, for example, creates crime; prisons create criminals; and punishment causes both wrong-doers and correctioners to become brutal.<sup>126</sup> Drawing on his own memories of prison life, Kropotkin relates the harshness of jail conditions directly to the what he sees as the dehumanisation of the inmates and to the baselessness of the wider society which condemns them to play out their roles. Using Clairvaux as a microcosm of society he concludes that "our penitentiary system fatally brings about such horrible results...as they must be considered a necessary consequence of the system itself".<sup>127</sup>

Kropotkin traces the decline of primitive tribal sociability in 'class' terms. In the course of the community's development, he argues, certain figures - le prêtre, le charlatan, le guerrier - are allowed to assume central positions in social life. They are imbued with an anti-social spirit and are motivated by greed and the desire to dominate neighbouring tribes; in their own communities they seek to carve out a social status for themselves in order to further their material desires. At first, Kropotkin argues, the relative importance they assume in the community remains unquestioned, such is the conservatism and primitive superstitiousness of the masses. In time, however, as the minority seek to consolidate the social advantages they have wrested from the community in economic terms, they use the instrument of law to turn the traditional customs which formally regulated social life to their own advantage. Again such is the indolence and naivety of the masses that they consent to the conditions of their own exploitation.

Mais, si la Loi ne présentait qu'un assemblage de prescriptions avantageuses aux seuls dominateurs, elle aurait de la peine à se faire accepter, à se faire obéir. Eh bien, le législateur confond dans un seul et même code les deux courants des coutumes dont nous venons de parler; les maximes qui représentent les principes de moralité et de solidarité élaborés par la vie en commun, et les ordres qui doivent à jamais consacrer l'inégalité. Les coutumes qui sont absolument nécessaires à l'existence même de la société, sont habilement mêlées dans le Code aux pratiques imposées par les dominateurs, et prétendent au même respect de la foule - "Ne tue pas!" dit le Code et "Paye la dîme au prêtre" s'empresse-t-il d'ajouter. "Ne vole pas" dit le Code et aussitôt après: "Celui qui ne paiera pas l'impôt aura le bras coupé." Voilà la Loi, et ce double caractère, elle l'a conservé jusqu'aujourd'hui.<sup>128</sup>

For Kropotkin the victory of the anti-social minority is the victory of authority and, through its imposition in the law, the victory of the spread of the anti-social instinct amongst the masses. Authority does not create selfishness and is not responsible for the corruption of mankind. For Kropotkin, it sustains a belief in the necessity of law and thus prevents the resurgence of the sociable spirit.

Rejecting authority on the grounds that it exercises an enduring corrupting influence on mankind, Kropotkin does not envisage anarchist change in terms of a choice between revolutionary overthrow and the raising of moral consciousness. Instead, considering the problem of change to be one of restoring sociability to humanity, he assumes that both structural and mental forces must be brought into play. Humanity must understand the superiority of sociability and overcome the prejudice to authority in order to provide the structural conditions which - where they apparently failed in the primitive community - will allow sociability to flourish, protected against the impulses of its more calculating and selfish side. As he argues in the *Appeal to the Young*, the institutions of society must be transformed. But the motivation for the transformation lies in the possibility of realising a better, sociable world. What remains to be done Kropotkin describes as a "vast" but "most enthralling task; a work in which your actions will be in complete harmony with your conscience, an undertaking capable of rousing the noblest and most vigorous natures."

Two courses are open to you: you can either tamper for ever with your conscience and finish one day by saying "Humanity can go to the devil as long as I am enjoying every pleasure to the full and so long as the people are foolish enough to let me do so." Or else you will join the ranks of the socialists and work with them for the complete transformation of society. Such is the necessary result of the analysis we have made; such is the logical conclusion at which every intelligent being must arrive provided he judge impartially the things he sees around him, and disregard the sophisms suggested to him by his middle-class education and the interested views of his friends.<sup>129</sup>

In the same way that Rousseau is drawn to the creation of the Educator, the Legislator or civic religion in order to solve the problems posed by the contradictions of the human psyche, Kropotkin concludes that the structural reorganisation of society will overcome the difficulties presented by the mutability of human nature. The problem which remains to be solved lies in expounding the best societal conditions required for releasing the best social instincts.

## 5. SCIENCE AND DETERMINISM

In acknowledging the distinction between Kropotkin's 'early' and 'late' writings, David Miller reverses the positive assessment of Kropotkin's science by claiming that it leads to a rigid determinism. Concluding his analysis of the theory of mutual aid, he argues:

At first sight the idea that evolution favours...altruistic [forms of co-operation] seems to offer powerful support to the anarchist position. But like all such theories of history, it can generate a kind of fatalism: if society is necessarily evolving in the direction that we favour, what use is there in trying to hurry the process along?<sup>130</sup>

As Miller acknowledges, the critique of Kropotkin's science was offered first by Malatesta. For Malatesta, the idea that anarchism should be considered solely under the cold eye of science was sterile and anathema. The spirit of anarchism lay beyond the purview of the microscope and in the more fluid notions of 'the will'. He saw Kropotkin's science as detracting from the anarchist ideal and as

...a purely mechanical concept; all that has been had to be, all that will be, must be *perforce*, inevitably, in every minute detail of time, place, and degree.

In such a concept, what meaning can the words "will, freedom, responsibility" have? And of what use would education, propaganda, revolt be? One can no more transform the predestined course of human affairs than one can change the course of the stars. What then?

What has anarchy to do with this?<sup>131</sup>

Given the pervasiveness of the evolutionary case, it is possible to consider David Miller's point not as a reaction to Kropotkin's work but to the work of his latter-day defenders. Accepting this possibility and considering that the defence raised by writers such as Woodcock has established its own dynamic for the analysis of Kropotkin's work provides a basis on which to examine his ideas as a continuous progression and to place the theory of mutual aid within the framework presented by his analysis of authority. Read in this light the theory

of mutual aid is not deterministic, but a further study of the inter-relationship between ethical behaviour and environmental change.

It is demonstrably true that Kropotkin not only believes that biological evolution is dependent on environmental change but that the nature of the changes he envisages in his later science are taken from his earliest anarchist convictions. His belief in the possibility of anarchy and his critique of the State are constantly expressed in all his work. With a clear idea of what the outcome of evolution should be Kropotkin develops the theory of mutual aid, not in order to challenge any of the assumptions of his early writings, but to locate the institutional basis of morality more firmly. Kropotkin is not led to suggest that the realisation of anarchy is a natural outcome of the development of history, the crisis of capitalism or the inevitable disintegration of the State. Rather, it is the result of the masses' realising the spirit of mutual aid and taking advantage of what he represents as the institutional crack in the fabric of the State. Kropotkin represents his later work as science. But the theory of mutual aid is less an exposition of certain evolution than an attempt to bring his desired goal into being by convincing the masses of the correspondence between their unconscious desires and their 'natural' sociability.

NOTES: CHAPTER ONE

1. B. Crick: *Introduction to Machiavelli, The Discourses*, Penguin, Harmondsworth Press, England, (1970), p.14.
2. D. Miller: 'The Neglected (II) - Kropotkin', *Government and Opposition*, Vol.18 No.3, (Summer 1983), p.319.
3. Kropotkin provides his own account of these expeditions and his impressions of Siberia in his autobiography, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, ed. C. Ward, The Folio Society, London, (1978), Part Third.
4. P. Avrich: *Anarchist Portraits*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, (1988), p.54.
5. G. Woodcock: *Anarchism*, Penguin, Harmondsworth Press, (1979), pp.77-79.
6. See, for example, E. Malatesta: *Anarchy, Freedom Pamphlet Number 5*, (Fifth Edition), Freedom Press, London, (1909), p.1.
7. P. Kropotkin: 'The Scientific Bases of Anarchy', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXI, No.120, (February 1887), p.238.
8. P. Kropotkin: *Modern Science and Anarchism*, Freedom Press, London, (1912), p.4.
9. P.J. Proudhon: *What Is Property?*, translated by B.R. Tucker, Willian Reeves, London, (1969), p.264.
10. P. Kropotkin: 'Anarchism', in N. Walter (ed.), *Peter Kropotkin Two Essays*, Freedom Press, London, (1987), p.12.
11. A. Berkman: *ABC of Anarchism*, Freedom Press, London, (1980), p.1-2.
12. See, for example, *The Anarchist Media Group: Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Anarchism*, Black Sheep Publications, London, (1988), p.3.
13. J. Joll: *The Anarchists*, (Second Edition), Methuen, London, (1979), p.ix.
14. G. Woodcock: *op.cit.*, pp.7-8.
15. The critique is often raised against Bakunin. For a fair appraisal see Sir I. Berlin: 'Herzen and Bakunin on Individual Liberty' in *Russian Thinkers*, Penguin, Harmondsworth Press, England, (1978), p.106.
16. See also, D. Miller: *Anarchism*, J.M. Dent & Sons, London, (1984), p.2.
17. The most hostile reactions to anarchism have tended to follow perceived anarchist outrages. See, for example, Gen. L. Wallace: 'Prevention of Presidential Assassinations', *North American Review*, 173, No. DXLI, (December 1901), pp.721-6, and His Excellency The Duke of Arcos: 'International Control of Anarchists', *ibid.*, pp.758-767, for reactions following the assassination of President McKinley. Sympathy for anarchism tends to be expressed as a confidence in the freedom of liberal democracy and in terms of a relationship between autocratic repression and anarchist protest. See, for example, P.H. Douglas: 'Proletarian Political Theory', in C.E. Merriam and H.E Barnes (ed.): *A History of Political Theories: Recent Times Essays on Contemporary Developments in Political Theory*, Macmillan, New York, (1932), esp. pp.214-5; E.A Vizetelly: *The Anarchists: Their Faith and Their Record*, John Lane, The Bodley Head, London, (1911), pp.293-300.
18. One recent media report on the activities of 'Class War'

- commented, for example, that "They no longer call themselves anarchists - not because of any anathema the word attracts but because the only people in the country who describe themselves thus, they have discovered, are ineffectual middle-aged men in woolly hats." *The Independent Magazine*, Saturday, 26th May 1990, p.25.
19. E. Sellers: 'Our Most Distinguished Refugee', *Contemporary Review*, Vol.66, (October 1894), pp.537-50.
  20. *The Times*: Obituary, Monday 31st January 1921, p.9.
  21. N. Walter: 'The Scientific Revolutionary', *New Society*, Vol.17, (February 1971), p.280. Wilde also describes Kropotkin as one of the two "most perfect lives I have come accross." O. Wilde: *De Profundis*, in V. Holland *The Complete Works of Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde*, Collins, London, (1985), p.934.
  22. E. Goldman: *Living My Life*, Vol.2, Dover Publications, New York, (1970), p.866.
  23. *ibid.*
  24. G. Woodcock & I. Avakumovic: *The Anarchist Prince*, T.V. Boardman & Co., London, (1950).
  25. M.A. Miller: *Kropotkin*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, (1976), p.255.
  26. T. Swan: *Kropotkin: The Man and his Message*, Freedom Pamphlet, Freedom Press, London, (1909), p.5.
  27. R. Van Duyn: *Message of a Wise Kabouter*, translated by H. Hoskins, Duckworth, London, (1969), p.17.
  28. C. McCarthy: 'Brotherhood, Not Bombs', *Guardian Weekly*, (19th February 1989).
  29. J.W. Hulse: *Revolutionists in London: A Study of Five Unorthodox Socialists*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1970), p.52. Stepniak's own assessment of Kropotkin's tendency to be 'dogmatic' is given in Stepniak (pseud.) S. Kravchinsky: *Underground Russia*, Smith, Elder & Co., London, (1896), p.98.
  30. C. MacInnes: 'Eve's Children', *New Statesman*, Vol.LXIV, no.1643, (September 1962), p.288.
  31. See, for example, J. Quail: *The Slow Burning Fuse: The Lost History of the British Anarchists*, Paladin, Granada Publishing, (1978), pp.52-60.
  32. P. Goodman: 'Kropotkin At This Moment', *Anarchy*, Vol.9, No.5, (May 1969), p.127. Kropotkin's response to the charge is given in reply to a letter from Brandes: *Correspondance de Georg Brandes*, Paul Kruger, (ed.), Vol.II: *L'Angleterre et La Russie*, Rosenkilde Og Bagger, Copenhagen, (1956), pp.151-2.
  33. G. Woodcock: *op.cit.*, p.173.
  34. R. Pipes: 'Kropotkin, Petr.', *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, D. Sills, (ed.), Macmillan and The Free Press, New York, (1968), Vol.8, p.464.
  35. A. Grey: *The Socialist Tradition Moses to Lenin*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, (1946), p.363.
  36. L. W. Lancaster: *Masters of Political Thought*, Vol.3, *Hegel to Dewey*, Harrap, London, (1978), p.247.
  37. E. H. Carr: *Michael Bakunin*, Macmillan, London, (1975), p.227. This image relates to the later Bakunin, after his re-union with Herzen in 1861. Carr describes his youthful appearance as being that of a "handsome young dandy"
  38. A. Grey: *op.cit.*, p.362.

39. G. Woodcock: *op.cit.*, pp.171-3.
40. G. Lichtheim: *A Short History of Socialism*, Fontana, England, (1983), pp.146-7
41. P. Avrich: *The Russian Anarchists*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, (1967), pp.26-7.
42. G.D.H. Cole: *A History of Socialist Thought*, Vol.II, *Marxism and Anarchism 1850-1890*, Macmillan, London, (1954), pp.342-8.
43. See, for example, A. Kelly: *Mikhail Bakunin: A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopianism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1982), p.158.
44. P. Kropotkin: 'The Ethical Needs of the Present Day', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LVI, No.330, (August 1904), p.207.
45. Uncharacteristically, Kropotkin does, however, admit that "Bakounin, in *God and the State*, has beautiful pages on that kind of government. It would be worse than the present." P. Kropotkin: 'Communist-Anarchism', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *Act For Yourself*, Freedom Press, London, (1988), p.98.
46. P. Kropotkin: *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, Thomas Nelson & Sons, London, (1912), p.419-20.
47. *ibid.*, p.418.
48. P. Kropotkin: *Modern Science and Anarchism*, *op.cit.*, p.40.
49. P. Kropotkin: *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, *op.cit.*, p.164.
50. D. Miller: *Social Justice*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1979), p.210.
51. R. N. Baldwin: *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets*, Dover Publications, New York, (1970), p.6.
52. M. Miller: *op.cit.*, p.251.
53. Granting that Kropotkin tended to "shift all the relevant facts with the intention of supporting or modifying his conclusions", they comment, however: "It may perhaps be contented that a true scientist should gather his facts first and then elaborate his theory. But in practice very few research workers have begun without certain preconceptions, and at whatever stage it is reached, a scientific theory requires a certain amount of intuition before the maze of facts begins to assume shape." G. Woodcock & I. Avakumovic, *op.cit.*, pp.325-6.
54. D. Miller: 'The Neglected II - Kropotkin', *op.cit.*, p.329.
55. P. Avrich: *Anarchist Portraits*, *op.cit.*, p.59.
56. The series appeared between September 1890 and June 1896. Kropotkin made further research into evolutionary theory between August 1904 and March 1905 (two articles) and January 1910 and June 1919 (eight essays).
57. Kropotkin: *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, *op.cit.*, p.262.
58. P. Kropotkin: *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, Extending Horizons Books, Boston, Mass., (N.D), p.x. He confirms the point in his autobiography, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, *op.cit.*, p.336.
59. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXVIII, No.163, (September 1890), p.338.
60. The general problem of divorcing Darwin's biological researches from their social and political implications is surveyed by J. Moore: 'Socializing Darwinism: Historiography and the Fortunes of a Phrase', *Science as Politics*, L. Levidow (ed.), Free Association Books, London, (1986), pp.38-80. Darwin's personal influences,

- and their importance to his work are also examined in R. M. Young: 'Darwinism is Social', in D. Kohn (ed.), *The Darwinian Heritage*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, (1985), pp.609-38 and M.J.S. Hodge and D. Kohn: 'The Immediate Origins of Natural Selection', *ibid.*, pp.185-205.
61. N. Walter, 'The Scientific Revolutionary', *op.cit.*, p.280.
  62. D. Miller: 'The Neglected 2 - Kropotkin', *op.cit.*, p.337.
  63. R. N. Baldwin: *op.cit.*, pp.6-7.
  64. G. Woodcock: *op.cit.*, p.201.
  65. D. Miller: *Social Justice*, *op.cit.*, p.216.
  66. Kropotkin has found some defense in A. Montague: *The Nature of Human Aggression*, O.U.P., Oxford, esp. pp.44-45 and J. Hewetson: 'Mutual Aid and Social Evolution', *Anarchy* 55, Vol.5, No.9, (September 1965), pp.257-70. The reprinting of Hewetson's essay, was, however, followed by a general re-evaluation of the importance of tribal societies as models of anarchist organisation. See J. Pilgrim: 'Anarchism and Stateless Societies' *Anarchy* 58, Vol.5, No.12, (December 1965), pp.353-68; K. Maddock: 'A Comment on Anarchy 55', *ibid.*, pp.368-9; and, adopting a softer approach, K. Maddock: 'Primitive Societies and Social Myths', *A Decade of Anarchy*, C. Ward (ed.), Freedom Press, London (1987), pp.59-71.
  67. V.G. Simkhovitch: 'Review of Mutual Aid', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. XVIII, No.4, (December 1903), p.705.
  68. G. Woodcock: *op.cit.*, p.201.
  69. See, for example, Kropotkin's comments on the migrations of deer, *Mutual Aid*, *op.cit.*, pp.48-9.
  70. Woodcock: *op.cit.*, p.199.
  71. R. Mondolfo: 'Kropotkin, Prince Petr Alexeyevich', *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, E.R.A. Seligman (ed.), Macmillan, London, (1930), Vol.VII, p.602-3.
  72. P. Feyerabend: *Science in a Free Society*, Verso Editions, London, (1983), p.75.
  73. H. Arendt: *On Revolution*, Penguin, Harmondsworth Press, (1982), pp.21-59.
  74. On the perceived relationship between violence and the quasi-spiritual 'purity' of anarchism see 'Anarchism: The Idea and the Deed', *Times Literary Supplement*, No. 3278, (December 24 1964), pp.1153-4.
  75. A. Ritter: *Anarchism: A Theoretical Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, London, (1980), pp.152-4.
  76. *ibid.*, p.110.
  77. *ibid.*, p.158.
  78. *ibid.*, p.163.
  79. The classic defensive statement of the anarchists revolutionary strategy is provided by V. Richards: *Lessons of The Spanish Revolution*, Freedom Press, London, (1972). A modern defense of the use of violent methods is also given by S. Christie & A. Meltzer: *The Floodgates of Anarchy*, Kahn & Averill, England, (1984), pp.112-119. The anarchists historical strategic failure is, however, acknowledged by Woodcock, *op.cit.*, pp.446-448; and the validity of Ritter's views to both contemporary and classical anarchism are found in J.P. Clark: 'What is Anarchism', *The Anarchist Moment*, Black Rose Books, Montreal, (1986), pp.130-32. Similar ideas have been reflected in the development of the

- principles of non-violent protest, A. Carter: *Direct Action*, Housmans/Peace News, London, (November 1983), and the rejection of 'traditional terrorist' methods, Anonymous Australian Comrades: *You Can't Blow Up A Social Relationship*, Acrata Press, California, (December 1985).
80. R. Boston: 'Conversations About Anarchism', *A Decade of Anarchy*, op.cit., p.13.
  81. C. Ward: *Anarchy In Action*, (Second Edition), Freedom Press, London, (1982), p.5.
  82. H. Read: 'Pragmatic Anarchism', *Encounter*, No.30, (January 1968), pp.54-61.
  83. G. Woodcock: op.cit., p.447.
  84. N. Walter: 'Kropotkin and his Memoirs', *Anarchy* 109, Vol.10, No.3, (March 1970), pp.84-95.
  85. G. Woodcock & I. Avakumovic: op.cit., p.244.
  86. Becker questions "What, then, are the main characteristics of the work of Kropotkin - the links between his works of social criticism, his works of a more constructive character, and his historical works?". H. Becker: 'Kropotkin as Historian of the French Revolution', *The Raven* 7, Vol.2, No.3, (July 1989), pp.225-232.
  87. M. Miller: op.cit., p.169.
  88. D. Miller: 'The Neglected 2 - Kropotkin', op.cit. pp.327-328.
  89. P. Avrich: *Anarchist Personalities*, op.cit., p.66.
  90. G.D.H. Cole: op.cit., p.351.
  91. G. Woodcock & I. Avakumovic: op.cit., p.245.
  92. G. Woodcock: op.cit., p.186.
  93. *ibid.*
  94. *ibid.*, p.190.
  95. *ibid.*, p.173.
  96. J.W. Hulse: op.cit., p.58.
  97. *ibid.*, p.60. For Kropotkin, overcoming the tediousness of domestic labour was a secondary target to the abolition of the idea of the housewife. See *The Conquest of Bread*, Elephant Editions, London, (1985), p.126.
  98. For the influence Kropotkin's ideas exercised on Ebenezer Howard see L. Mumford: *The City in History*, Pelican, Harmondsworth Press, (1979), p.585. For a general assessment of the contemporary relevance of Kropotkin's thoughts on agricultural organisation, see E. Capouya & K. Tompkins: *The Essential Kropotkin*, Liveright, New York, (1975) pp.x-xi. Capouya and Tompkins do not ignore the political radicalism of Kropotkin's plans for the integrated society but stress what they consider to be his prophetic advocacy of organic farming methods and his statistical genius.
  99. W.O. Reichert: 'Anarchism, Freedom, and Power', *Ethics*, Vol.79, No.2, (January 1969), pp.147-8.
  100. P. Avrich: *Anarchist Personalities*, op.cit., p.59.
  101. W.O. Reichert: 'Towards A New Understanding of Anarchism', *Western Political Quarterly*, No.20, (December 1967), p.865.
  102. L. Green: *The Authority of the State*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1988), p.60.
  103. M. Taylor: *Community, Anarchy & Liberty*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1982), p.22.
  104. For his equation of authority with command see, for example, P. Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, op.cit.,

- pp.82-3. For the distinction between authority and free agreement, see *ibid.*, pp.129-43.
105. R. Michels: 'Authority', E.R. Seligman (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, *op.cit.*, pp.319-321.
106. P. Kropotkin: 'La Loi et L'Autorité', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, Librairie Marpon et Flammarion, Paris, (1885), pp.214-5.
107. P. Kropotkin: *ibid.*, p.233.
108. L. Green: *op.cit.*, p.21. Green describes authority as a "triadic social relationship among a superior, a subject and a range of action." He adds, however, "the fact that it is a triadic relation itself explains nothing..." p.42. For Kropotkin authority relations explain the nature of authority.
109. P. Kropotkin: 'La Loi et L'Autorité', *op.cit.*, p.243.
110. *ibid.*, p.244.
111. A. Ritter: 'The Anarchist Justification of Authority', J.W. Chapman & J.R. Pennock (ed.), *Nomos XIX: Anarchism*, New York University Press, New York, (1978), pp.130-139; R.T. De George: 'Anarchism and Authority', *ibid.*, pp.91-107.
112. *ibid.*, p.97.
113. For a critique of the broadness of De George's concept of anarchist authority see R. Wasserstrom: 'Comments on Anarchism and Authority', J.W. Chapman & J.R. Pennock (ed.), *Nomos XIX: Anarchism*, *op.cit.*, pp.111-14.
114. In his definition of authority, Miller contends that "it is not the same as recognizing power...If I comply with someone's instructions because of the possible consequences of not complying - say he threatens to have me beaten up or thrown into jail - I am acknowledging his power rather than his authority." D. Miller: *Anarchism*, *op.cit.*, p.16. Miller may be right in his contention that it is not "enough to say that everyone will sooner or later find a group that suits his inclinations...", but the threat of expulsion - unless, as Kropotkin considers, the threat is instituted by prior contractual arrangement - does not appear to be any different from a 'non-authoritarian' threat of imprisonment. For Miller's analysis of authority in anarcho-communism see *ibid.*, pp.54-7.
115. R.P. Wolff: *In Defense of Anarchism*, Harper & Row, New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco & London, (1976), p.4.
116. *ibid.*, p.14.
117. *ibid.*, p.19.
118. *ibid.*, p.18.
119. In the introduction to his paper, Ritter argues, "We are in debt to Professor De George for his conclusive demonstration that anarchists endorse authority, despite what they say. Proof of this contention is long overdue, for anyone who reads the anarchists will note the conflict...between their explicit denunciations of authority and their tacit use of it to help make their ideal society cohere." A. Ritter: 'The Anarchist Justification of Authority' *op.cit.*, p.130.
120. P. Kropotkin: 'La Loi et L'Autorité' *op.cit.*, pp.222-3.
121. For a more recent discussion of the distinction see M. Buber: 'Society and the State', *Anarchy* 54 Vol.5, No.8, (August 1965), pp.232-44.
122. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.129.

123. Kropotkin does not consider that humanity has duty to be autonomous, but that the capacity of mankind to act in an autonomous way has been curtailed by the development of authority in the State.
124. P. Kropotkin: 'La Nécessité De La Révolution', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, op.cit., p.18.
125. P. Kropotkin: 'La Loi et L'Autorité', op.cit., p.222.
126. See, P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, op.cit., p.156-7.
127. P. Kropotkin: 'In French Prisons', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XIX, No.109, (March 1886), p.423.
128. P. Kropotkin: 'La Loi et L'Autorité', op.cit., p.226.
129. P. Kropotkin: *An Appeal To The Young*, William Reeves, London, (N.D.), p.10.
130. D. Miller: 'The Neglected 2 - Kropotkin', op.cit., p. 338.
131. V. Richards: *Malatesta: Life and Ideas*, Freedom Press, London, (1977), p.44. See also, T. Indic: 'Anarcho-Communism - The Movement and Its Morals', *Praxis*, 8, (1972), pp.176-7.

## CHAPTER TWO: ANARCHY AND THE CONDITIONS OF SOCIABILITY

In the past defining the nature of anarchism and anarchy has caused difficulties for writers on the subject. Consequently, there is little consensus on what the rejection of the State entails.<sup>1</sup> Deciding what it means to accept the State may be considered to be equally problematic, but ignoring these difficulties introductions to anarchism have considered the problem of definition only in terms of the 'anti-State' impulse.<sup>2</sup> Owing to this confusion anarchism has been understood in a myriad of different theoretical, historical, thematic and personalised frameworks.<sup>3</sup> Anarchy is open to a similarly wide number of interpretations but is normally identified with the achievement of certain overriding goals and particularly with the realisation of liberty.<sup>4</sup>

Considering that Kropotkin's discussion of authority demonstrates that the problem of anarchist organisation lies in solving the relationship between structural change and moral consciousness it is necessary that such definitional problems be overcome. His image of anarchist organisation and the basis of his expectation that anarchy will secure behavioural change need to be clearly delineated. This chapter undertakes such a task.

Kropotkin does not formulate the conditions of the sociable society in any systematic manner. There is no equivalent of the catechisms found in Bakunin's writings in his work.<sup>5</sup> As a result of his concern to solve the logistical problems of the revolution and to pre-empt the objections which anarchy may or may not be expected to entail, Kropotkin's early writings do, however, contain a clear description of anarchist organisation. Using the picture of organisation that he provides this chapter argues that Kropotkin's image of anarchy is not

defined by the attainment of one aim, but by the achievement of several goals. These feature both as ends in themselves and as necessary, inter-dependent requirements.

Kropotkin's understanding that the realisation of anarchy requires the attainment of several different ends threatens to complicate the relationship he posits between the structure of society and the behaviour of the masses. Yet the chapter finds that Kropotkin invents an ordering of priorities within his organisational plan and identifies a particular linchpin for the realisation of anarchy. His preferences are indicated not only within the context of the model he proposes but in relation to what he refers to as the peoples' historically developed 'tendencies'. After outlining Kropotkin's picture of anarchy the chapter concludes by suggesting that the problem which emerges in his thought concerns the extent to which he considers anarchy to be historically determined.

#### 1.UTOPIANISM.

Kropotkin is often regarded as the most refined theorist of anarchist organisation, but it is not the precision of the definition that he gives to his vision of anarchy so much as the ingenuousness of his approach to the question of planning which distinguishes his work from that of his fellow anarchists.<sup>6</sup> Kropotkin is certainly not the only anarchist to have provided an account of anarchy. That anarchism should be thought of as a movement aimed towards the decentralisation of society and the substitution of existing hierarchical power structures for new devolutionary systems in which decisions are made 'from the bottom upwards' stands as testimony to the anarchists' concern with the future, rather than to Kropotkin's vision in particular.<sup>7</sup> But whilst

numerous anarchists have been led to make various pronouncements regarding the organisation of the future anarchist society, most have done so with professed reluctance.<sup>8</sup>

Behind the anarchists' reticence seems to lie a desire to disassociate anarchism from the charge of 'utopianism'. In part the anarchists' eagerness to deny the applicability of the term to their work may be considered to be a reaction to the ridicule Marx heaped upon the followers of so-called utopian socialism and to the success he enjoyed in conflating 'utopianism' with 'unscientific', 'counter-revolutionary' and 'impractical'.<sup>9</sup> In the other part, anarchist anti-utopianism also relates to an independent critique which in the light of Marx's claim to have laid bare the laws of historical development, paradoxically identifies in utopian thinking a dangerous desire to reach an irrefutable 'scientific' truth. Proudhon, most famously, insisted that anarchism should avoid all 'systems' and warned Marx of the dangers of creating a 'new theology'. Moreover, as the occasioner of the fratricidal dispute which finally exploded in the First International, he successfully established the standard for all further discussions of the issue. Notwithstanding the openness of Kropotkin's approach anarchists have accepted Proudhon's rhetoric and accepting the pejorative connotations of 'utopianism' as he defined them, described themselves in reaction to it. Even modern thinkers follow this tradition of thought and suggest that the idea of providing even an outline account of anarchy is anathema to anarchism.<sup>10</sup>

Kropotkin similarly seeks to disclaim the 'utopian' epithet, but he does not apologise for delving into the problems of future organisation. He recognises that his ideas are commonly regarded to be impracticable and he has reason to do so: if there was ever a vision of the future which could be described as utopian, in the sense of its describing an

impossible state of perfection, it is the very fluid ideal which Kropotkin presents. Kropotkin admits the immense scope of his and his cohorts' first ideas of anarchy, recalling in his autobiography, for example, that:

None of us minimized the importance and depth of the change which we looked for. We understood that the current opinions...would not soon give way to higher conceptions of socialized ownership and production. We knew that a tedious propaganda and a long succession of struggles, individual and collective revolts...would have to be lived through...And we understood also that the now current ideas concerning the necessity of authority...would not...be abandoned by civilized mankind all at once. Long years of propaganda and a long succession of partial acts of revolt against authority...would be required before men could perceive that they had been mistaken in attributing to their rulers and their laws what was derived in reality from their own sociable feelings and habits.<sup>11</sup>

Kropotkin refuses, however, to acknowledge that the difficulties of anarchist organisation necessitate confusing the proposed anarchist society with an understanding of utopianism. He does not consider his anarchist model as an imaginary dreamland. Instead he counters the criticisms of his 'utopianism' by alternatively charging the 'practical' thinkers who defend the existing order as preordained or unchangeable with a politically calculated lack of imagination.<sup>12</sup> Nor does Kropotkin think of his ideas satirically. His anarchy does involve a critique of existing society, but the point of his examination of the future is not restricted to highlighting the faults of the State. Anarchy replaces the State, and to this extent he represents himself as a serious planner as well as a revolutionary.

The rational and revolutionary strains of Kropotkin's thought are united by his conviction that late nineteenth century Europe was teetering on the brink of revolution. In the *Paroles d'un Révolté* this conviction appears as an unshakable faith and he writes excitedly of the prospect of European collapse. At one point, for example, he comments "nous arrivons à la conclusion que l'Europe descend sur un plan incliné

vers une commotion révolutionnaire."<sup>13</sup> In another article but in the same vein Kropotkin remarks:

Décidément, nous marchons à grands pas vers la révolution, vers une commotion qui éclatant dans un pays, va se propager, comme en 1848, dans tous les pays voisins, et secouant la société actuelle jusque dans ses entrailles, viendra renouveler les sources de la vie.<sup>14</sup>

To an extent Kropotkin's faith in the prospect of revolution is substantiated by what he considers to be the dire state of the European economy. There is, he argues, a general 'crisis of capitalism':

En étudiant le mode de la production et de l'échange, tels qu'ils se sont organisés entre les mains de la bourgeoisie, nous trouvons un état de choses attaqué par une gangrène irrémédiable;...la guerre industrielle en permanence, le chaos; et nous avons salué l'approche du jour où le cri: *la déchéance de la bourgeoisie!* s'échappera de toutes les lèvres avec cette unanimité qui jadis caractérisait la proclamation de la déchéance de dynasties.<sup>15</sup>

All the nations of Western Europe are characterised by acute economic failure. Social misery consequently ensues:

De grandes industries tuées roide, de grandes villes, comme Sheffield, rendues désertes. Misère en Angleterre, surtout en Angleterre, car c'est là que les "économistes" ont le mieux appliqué leurs principes; misère en Alsace; la faim en Espagne, en Italie. Chômage partout; et avec le chômage, la gêne ou plutôt la misère: les enfants livides, la femme vieille de cinq ans au bout d'un hiver; les maladies fauchant à grands coups dans les rangs ouvriers - voilà où nous en sommes avec leur régime.<sup>16</sup>

Kropotkin does not, however, consider economic failure to be sufficient to unleash revolution; though assuming that capitalist trade is inherently aggressive and that the bourgeois States are preparing for war he remarks incidentally that revolution may occur indirectly in response to the outbreak of European hostilities.<sup>17</sup> The collapse of capitalism creates misery and gives the masses just cause for complaint. But economic discontent is not equivalent to political insurrection. The gap between the two, Kropotkin contends, may be bridged but a long period of preparation is required if the final revolt is to succeed.

In *Paroles d'un Révolte* Kropotkin considers pre-revolutionary preparation in two ways. On the one hand, he discusses the possibility of orchestrating a campaign of propaganda by the deed. The masses must

be inspired to rebel against the conditions of their exploitation by the spontaneous activity of a dedicated revolutionary minority. In 'L'Esprit de Révolte', he asserts, "c'est par l'action que les minorités parviennent à réveiller ce sentiment d'indépendance et ce souffle d'audace, sans lesquels aucune révolution ne saurait s'accomplir."<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, Kropotkin contends that revolution requires careful planning. Preparation for revolution demands that an outline map of the future society be drawn up by the revolutionaries. Expecting that the next revolution is destined to follow the course of previous revolutions, Kropotkin assumes that neither active revolt nor revolutionary enthusiasm will be enough to ensure the peoples' ultimate victory. The historic upheavals of 1789, 1848 and 1871 may have given expression to "ideas that have moved the world...which still stir our hearts, at the interval of more than a century".<sup>19</sup> But with sober reflection, he concludes that the revolution will fail so long as the people remains "starving in the slums". Inspiration alone will not feed the insurrectionary mass. A victorious outcome is instead dependent upon the peoples' ability to win 'the conquest of bread' and satisfy the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. This in turn requires that the people can organise production and efficient distributive systems and, most importantly, co-ordinate activities between urban and rural areas.

Provoking discussion of the contingencies the revolutionary mass will eventually have to face, anarchist planning assumes a strategic importance. In addition, Kropotkin finds that outline designs of the future fulfil an important simulative role. From the point of view of the people in revolt, organisational plans provide a means of testing the extent to which the aspirations of the revolution will be realised. Putting the point negatively, Kropotkin considers that without

possessing a conception of what the future will look like, mass expectations will be in danger of being disappointed.<sup>20</sup>

Kropotkin advances the point with particular aggressiveness against the marxists.<sup>21</sup> The history of the Great French Revolution, he contends, demonstrates just how far the mass movement can be betrayed in the absence of a solidly formed ideal of the future. The far briefer history of the Paris Commune shows even more precisely the extent to which the people may still be betrayed by the self-appointed guardians of the revolution who prey on the vagueness of their ideas in order to institute a revolutionary dictatorship.<sup>22</sup> Unless the masses realise the necessity of formulating their ideals in practical terms, any opportunities they may create for realising their desires will lie in danger of being hijacked by the cynical power-seeking new class who are ever waiting in the wings. Writing in *Freedom* in 1886, and weighing up the dominant motivations for revolutionary action, he comments:

Others like the noise of the streets; they believe in the power of the masses inspired with a longing for liberty or dissatisfied with their present conditions. They believe in more rapid progress; but they dream that on some fine day the people of England will rise up, will send away the rulers who oppose the wishes of the people, and nominate new ones in their places. Then these rulers, who will be quite another race of men from the present ones, will arrange everything for the best. But what will these new rulers do?...Will they have the magic power of improving the position of the workmen, if the workmen do not know what to do for the improvement of their own position? If the workmen themselves have not formulated their wants...If the workmen themselves do not find and point out the ways and means by which the restitution of capital to the producers can be accomplished so as to benefit all classes of the community? Is not this reliance upon new rulers the very same old belief as that in a Saviour who will come some day and settle everything for the benefit of humanity?<sup>23</sup>

Even Bismarck, Kropotkin comments, is a socialist now: and as the ranks of the converts to socialism increase so do the dangers of revolutionary betrayal.<sup>24</sup> He holds the mass movement to be as naive as the primitive sociable tribes. It is equally open to corruption, and if it is to overcome the imagined primitives' mistakes, equally in need of guidance.

For all his outspokenness about the necessity of anarchist planning Kropotkin refuses to believe that his own ideas of anarchy may exercise an undue influence on the thoughts of the people.<sup>25</sup> In Kropotkin's mind the two are as one. He similarly refuses to attach any significance to the numerical weakness of the dedicated anarchist movement. Writing again in *Le Révolté*, he comments:

Peu importe que, comme nombre, nous soyons minorité, la question n'est pas là! Ce qui importe c'est de savoir si les idées du communisme anarchiste sont conformes à l'évolution qui se produit en ce moment dans l'esprit humain, et surtout dans les peuples de race latine? - Mais, à ce sujet, il ne peut pas y avoir de doute...<sup>26</sup>

The point of the planning exercise is not to direct the majority into the realisation of a preconceived ideal. Seeking to divorce himself from what anarchists classically regard as the charge of rigid 'utopianism', Kropotkin invokes Proudhon in support of his case commenting: "'The idea' - the general idea of the Revolution, as Proudhon said - that is what is needed; and not revolutionary recipes."<sup>27</sup> The anarchist plan can only teach the people how to 'act for themselves'. Should his assumptions about their historical 'tendencies' be mistaken, should "the masses continue to cherish the idea that a government can do everything", then nothing is lost except the hope of achieving real reform. Placing his defence of planning within the critical framework of determinism, Kropotkin comments:

The very words Anarchist-Communism show in what direction society, in our opinion, is already going, and on what lines it can get rid of the oppressive powers of Capital and Government; and it would be an easy task for us to draw a sketch of society in accordance with these principles. But what would be the use of such a scheme, if those who listen to it have never doubted the possibility of reorganising everything by homeopathic prescriptions from Westminster; if they have never imagined that they themselves are more powerful than their representatives; and if they are persuaded that everything can and must be settled by a government, most men having only to obey and never to act for themselves?<sup>28</sup>

Adopting this position, Kropotkin considers the peoples' revolution

to be directed towards the realisation of four goals: liberty, agreeable work, community, and communism. Each may be examined in turn.

## 2. LIBERTY

In so far as any meaningful distinction between 'positive' and 'negative' liberty can be maintained, Kropotkin's understanding of the term veers toward the latter conception.<sup>29</sup> He does not, for example, consider liberty to be an absolute value through which individuals can realise their 'higher' selves; least of all when others appoint themselves guardians of what 'true' liberty is. He quotes Fourier on the subject:

Individual liberty! 'Take pebbles,' said Fourier, 'put them into a box and shake them, and they will arrange themselves in a mosaic that you could never get by entrusting anyone the work of arranging them harmoniously'.<sup>30</sup>

There is, however, a world of difference between Kropotkin's idea of what it is to be constrained and the classical English liberal notion. Rather than considering infringements of liberty to arise from human relations, Kropotkin defines constraint in precisely those terms that liberal thought rejects: namely in terms of what he considers to be the unjust social and economic arrangements of existing society. To be constrained is not to be subject to the interference of another but to be subject to the existence of the State. Though it may claim to safeguard liberty, Kropotkin finds that all the State really guarantees is the domination of the ruling class.<sup>31</sup> For Kropotkin, there can be no liberty in the State because the State is inevitably organised in such a way that the mass of the people are continually coerced by a ruling minority. Liberty exists only for those who exercise the power to coerce. Rights, he argues, must be considered in the same way. Rights

exist only for those who enjoy sufficient economic and social power to enforce them. For the majority they are meaningless.

En effet, qu'est-ce qu'un droit politique, si il n'est pas un instrument pour sauvegarder l'indépendance, la dignité, la liberté de ceux qui n'ont pas encore la force d'imposer aux autres le respect de ce droit? Quelle en est l'utilité s'il n'est pas un instrument d'affranchissement pour ceux qui ont besoin d'être affranchis? Les Gambetta, les Bismarck, les Gladstone n'ont besoin ni de la liberté de la presse, ni de la liberté de réunion, puisqu'ils écrivent ce qu'ils veulent, se réunissent avec qui bon leur semble, professent les idées qu'ils leur plaît: ils sont déjà affranchis, ils sont libres. S'il faut garantir à quelqu'un la liberté de parler et d'écrire, la liberté de se grouper, c'est précisément à ceux qui ne sont pas assez puissants pour imposer leur volonté. Telle a été même l'origine de tous les droits politiques.<sup>32</sup>

Kropotkin finds the truth of his contention in history and in what he considers to be the degeneration of the classic revolutionary goals of 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' in the modern age. In this he separates himself from Bakunin for whom 'liberty' featured as the watchword of the revolution and - however vaguely or ill-defined - the overriding aim of the anarchist society.<sup>33</sup> Kropotkin rarely raises the defence of the movement from the State to anarchy in these terms. Though he sometimes evokes the spirit of the eighteenth century and call the masses to realise the established romantic standards of the revolutionary past, he is usually scathingly negative about the genuine importance of the cry. Liberty itself is not to be denigrated, nor can even the paltry rights that the people have won be ignored as irrelevant. But the precondition for liberty lies in the achievement of economic equality. In the event of the next revolution each unit of the new society will therefore

abolish the distinction between the sons of the ex-outcast and the ex-millionaire. Both will work in the same workshop; both will cultivate the same garden, run the same tramway. They will be equal economically and politically. And then they will be *free*.<sup>34</sup>

Previous revolutionaries, Kropotkin finds, ignored this necessity and depriving liberty of any solid foundation, they also deprived the concept of any real meaning:

Ainsi, la déclaration des Droits de l'Homme, quel que fût son rôle dans l'histoire, n'est plus qu'un document historique, et ces beaux mots de *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* resteront à l'état de rêve ou de message inscrits sur les

murs des églises et des prisons, tant que la liberté et l'égalité ne deviendront pas la base des relations économiques...dans une société basée sur le servage, que le despotisme dans une société qui aurait pour base ce que l'on nomme la liberté des transactions et qui est plutôt la liberté de l'exploitation.<sup>35</sup>

Looking to the organisation of the future society Kropotkin reverses his conditions of unfreedom and claims the necessary existence of liberty in the absence of the State. His view is unquestioningly optimistic about the possibility of achieving an harmonious coexistence between the private and public realms in the anarchist society. Kropotkin does not anticipate any difficulty in accommodating individual and social demands in the future once equality has been realised, and he rarely discusses the possibility that the freedom of one individual may be restricted by the wider society or by the actions of another individual. The opposite tends to be true: the only possible encroachments Kropotkin considers are those which operate against the society, not the individual; and in these instances, whilst he grants to society the provision to expel individuals who upset the harmonious balance Kropotkin continually reasserts his certainty in the self-regulating equilibrium of the anarchist society by denying that it will ever need to resort to such methods. In his examination of 'idleness' he concludes that "[w]e very much doubt that we need fear this contingency in a society really based on the entire freedom of the individual".<sup>36</sup> He treats the non-incidence of crime with a similar certainty.<sup>37</sup> Kropotkin even has faith that individual and community interests are merging in existing society:

there is a tendency, though still a feeble one, to consider the needs of the individual, irrespective of his past or possible services to the community. We are beginning to think of society as a whole, each part of which is so intimately bound up with the others that a service rendered to one is a service rendered to all.<sup>38</sup>

The feebleness of Kropotkin's understanding of anarchist freedom has often been criticised. The weakness of his conception may be explained,

however, by the focus of his own interests. Beyond the general assurance he has in the ability of society to maintain a sphere of individual freedom, Kropotkin is not primarily interested in liberty. In most of his discussions he instead concentrates on the means by which the sphere of individual self-expression may be increased. As he explains in *The Conquest of Bread*, his primary concern lies not with freedom but with the problem of individuality.

If we wish for a Social Revolution, it is no doubt, first of all, to give bread to everyone; to transform this execrable society, in which we can every day see capable workmen dangling their arms for want of an employer who will exploit them...It is to put an end to these iniquities that we rebel. But we expect more from the Revolution. We see that the worker, compelled to struggle painfully for bare existence, is reduced to ignore the higher delights, the highest within man's reach...It is in order to obtain for all of us the joys that are now reserved to a few; in order to give leisure and the possibility of developing everyone's intellectual capacities, that the social revolution must guarantee daily bread to all. After bread has been secured, leisure is the supreme aim.<sup>39</sup>

In accordance with the bleak division he draws between existing society and the new world - between the sociable and legal communities - Kropotkin discusses individuality comparatively, in terms of a critique demonstrating the corrective road to the future. But whilst drawing this distinction between individuality in the State and in anarchy, Kropotkin examines the possibility for self-expression consistently as a potential for the enjoyment of 'luxury'.

In the State Kropotkin considers the equation between individuality and luxury both in relation to the strata who are able to indulge their desires and in terms of the product of their 'indulgence'. In the first instance, Kropotkin finds that whilst the desire for self-expression exists in all people,

in our present, poor capitalistic society, the man who has artistic needs cannot satisfy them unless he is heir to a large fortune, or by dint of hard work appropriates to himself an intellectual capital which will enable him to take up a liberal profession.<sup>40</sup>

The ability such individuals have in pursuing their interests,

Kropotkin argues, undoubtedly places them in a better position than the majority of workers who can hope only to follow their desires "at night when worn out by ten hours' labour in the workshop."<sup>41</sup> The minority who are free to develop themselves are nevertheless constrained for, in the second place, Kropotkin argues that the strict division between the workers and intellectuals has caused the products of the latter's endeavours to be valued as rarities for the exclusive enjoyment of the rich. Money has become the guide to individuality. Inspiration has consequently been lost and the creative expression of individuality has decayed. Looking at the plight of the artist Kropotkin notes:

And what about art? From all sides we hear lamentations about the decadence of art. We are, indeed, far behind the great masters of the Renaissance. The technicalities of art have recently made great progress; thousands of people gifted with a certain amount of talent cultivate every branch, but art seems to fly from civilization! Technicalities make headway, but inspiration frequents artists' studios less than ever.

Where, indeed, should it come from? Only a grand idea can inspire art. Art is in our ideal synonymous with creation, it must look ahead; but save a few rare, very rare exceptions, the professional artist remains too philistine to perceive new horizons.<sup>42</sup>

Repudiating the idea that anarchy "means grey uniformity and the end of everything beautiful in life and art";<sup>43</sup> the suppression of "the possibility of obtaining anything besides the bread and meat which the commune can offer to all, and the drab linen in which all your lady citizens will be dressed",<sup>44</sup> Kropotkin continues to consider individuality as a luxury in anarchy. The difference between the State and anarchy, he asserts, does not lie in the existence and denial of luxury but in the redefinition of the term. In anarchy luxury is no longer an expensive, pleasurable pastime designed to produce costly dainties for the 'idle rich'. Rather it refers to any non-necessary activity; to the provision of any item and the involvement in any pursuit which is not designed to contribute to the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter.

In anarchy, Kropotkin contends, the luxury of self-expression and creation will be available to all. Here, Kropotkin takes his cue for the future from socialist experimentation in literature.

They show the road of liberty. In future, when a man will have something useful to say...he will not have to look for an editor who might advance the necessary capital...

Literature and journalism will cease to be a means of money-making and living at the cost of others. But is there any one who knows literature and journalism from within, and who does not ardently desire that literature should at last be able to free itself from those who formerly protected it, and who now exploit it, and from the multitude which, with rare exceptions, pays for it in proportion to its mediocrity, or to the ease with which it adapts itself to the bad taste of the greater number?

Letters and science will only take their proper place in the work of human development when, freed from all mercenary bondage, they will be exclusively cultivated by those who love them, and for those who love them.<sup>45</sup>

Consequently, the quality of work and of the goods work produces will reach new heights of perfection. As the potential for self-expression becomes freed from the constraints of the market and posited purely on the basis of the satisfaction of the soul, the products of individual self-interest attain an ever increasing degree of excellence. Looking again at the situation of the artist, Kropotkin comments:

Besides, the works of future artists who will have lived the life of the people, like the great artists of the past, will not be destined for sale. They will be an integral part of a living whole that would not be complete without them, any more than they would be complete without it. Men will go to the artist's own city to gaze at his work, and the spirited and serene beauty of such creations will produce its beneficial effect on heart and mind.<sup>46</sup>

Emphasising the importance of satisfying the individual's inner passions, Kropotkin does not discount the desires some have for purely material things. Examining the condition of the poverty-stricken masses in contemporary society he observes "men and women denying themselves necessities to acquire mere trifles, to obtain some particular gratification, or some intellectual or material enjoyment."<sup>47</sup> Their endeavours cannot be discredited. Anarchists, he claims, are not ascetics, and they understand that "it is precisely these trifles that break the monotony of existence and make it agreeable".<sup>48</sup> Given this,

the equation Kropotkin makes between individuality and luxury together with his aim of diffusing the luxuries enjoyed by the few in bourgeois society amongst the masses, leaves a trace of elitism on his ideas. The material 'trifles' he imagines the people will want in the new society are quite rarified. He talks, for example, of desires for grand pianos, telescopes and other astronomical equipment. Similarly he assumes that the interests individuals will want to pursue in developing their individuality will be essentially creative, participant activities which follow established high culture. For Kropotkin, individuals are less footballers and card-players than painters, sculptors, architects, musicians, astrologers and authors. Generalising his own interests, he places particular emphasis on the joys the citizens of anarchy will experience in furthering scientific investigation. But less preferentially he finds that 'true' individuality lies in universalising those spheres of activity which present society apparently reserves exclusively for the monied classes: in the search for learning and knowledge.

Yet tempering Kropotkin's elitist preferences is an understanding of the usefulness of individual self-expression. Considering that the masses will not wish to express their uniqueness in non-creative, spectator activities Kropotkin represents the development of individuality amongst the masses as an exercise which furthers the happiness, welfare and understanding of society. To enable individuals to explore their potential is to provide a general social good, improving the collective quality of life and above all, stimulating the development of new ideas and new means by which the necessities of life may be ever more securely guaranteed. In the future, Kropotkin anticipates:

we shall have vast institutes supplied with motor-power and tools of all sorts, immense industrial laboratories open to all inquirers, where men will be

able to work out their dreams...machinery palaces where they will spend their five or six hours of leisure; where they will make their experiments; where they will find other comrades, experts in other branches of industry, likewise coming to study some difficult problem, and therefore able to help and enlighten each other - the encounter of their ideas and experience causing the longed-for solution to be found.<sup>49</sup>

Kropotkin finds that there is a link between the enjoyment of individuality and the organisation of society. Making the association Kropotkin again provides a negative explanation of the conditions in which the freedom of self-expression is denied - returning, in the pattern of his critique of liberty, to a polemic against the 'philistine' State. Ignoring the extent to which creativity and individuality may thrive in obviously repressive conditions, Kropotkin is thus not only led to assert that individuals can develop to their full potential in the stateless society but to claim that individuality will follow inevitably in the wake of the State's destruction. Certain of what he refers to as the civilising aspects of anarchy he shows no anxiety about the possibility that the interests of the individual may be threatened in the future, but argues:

Man is not a being whose exclusive purpose in life is eating, drinking, and providing a shelter for himself. As soon as his material wants are satisfied, other needs, which, generally speaking may be described as of an artistic character, will thrust themselves forward. These needs are of the greatest variety; they vary with each and every individual; and the more society is civilized, the more will individuality be developed, and the more will desires be varied.<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, examining the springs of human invention, he finds:

What is needed to promote the spirit of invention is, first of all, the awakening of thought, the boldness of conception, which our entire education causes to languish...it is faith that humanity is going to take a step forward, because it is enthusiasm, the hope of doing good, that has inspired all the great inventors. The Social Revolution alone can give this impulse to thought, this boldness, this knowledge, this conviction...<sup>51</sup>

Beyond his simple expectation of the progressiveness of the Revolution, Kropotkin admits that individuality requires the fulfilment of certain other conditions if it is to be fully realised. The first

requirement lies in re-balancing the time spent between necessary labour and leisure and, in the process, in making work agreeable.

### 3.WORK

Kropotkin's view of anarchy is not based on work in the sense that he considers the 'dignity of labour' or the 'right to work' to be priorities in its organisation. He mocks the latter as an out-dated slogan "with which the people were misled in 1848, and which [is] still resorted to with the hope of misleading them."<sup>52</sup> What people want is not a right to work but the satisfaction of needs: not only because every person equally requires food and shelter but because it is only by providing for needs that the varied desires for self-expression can be attained.

No doubt, nowadays, when hundreds and thousands of human beings are in need of bread, coal, clothing and shelter, luxury is a crime; to satisfy it, the worker's child must go without bread! But in a society in which all have the necessary food and shelter, the needs which we consider luxuries today will be the more keenly felt. And as all men do not and cannot resemble one another (the variety of tastes and needs is the chief guarantee of human progress) there will always be, and it is desirable that there should always be, men and women whose desire will go beyond those of ordinary individuals in some particular direction.<sup>53</sup>

If the enjoyment of such luxury is to become a reality, Kropotkin argues, work is a necessary part of social life. It is on this basis that it features in his anarchy. But in advancing the point Kropotkin recognises the extent to which work is commonly disliked and avoided.

Nowadays, whoever can load on others his share of labour indispensable to existence, does so, and it is believed that it will always be so. Now, work indispensable to existence is essentially manual. We may be artists or scientists; but none of us can do without things obtained by manual work...And, moreover, however highly artistic or however subtly metaphysical our pleasures, they all depend on manual labour. And it is precisely this labour - the basis of life - that everyone tries to avoid.<sup>54</sup>

Anarchy improves on this situation in a number of ways. Without forcing people to work - save the ultimate threat of expulsion he allows

workmen to use against unrepentant idlers - work becomes agreeable. Tedious tasks become mechanised and time-consuming work benefits from the introduction of labour-saving devices. Gas-fired central heating, for example, will put an end to the need to clean fire grates and chimneys. Electricity and the development of electrical appliances will save time and energy in cleaning and washing and in the preparation of food. Kropotkin does not restrict his sights to the revolutionising of domestic chores. Heavy industry also benefits from the application of science. In anarchy, he argues, factories will not be the damp, dark, dangerous places they appear destined to be under capitalism. Even the most difficult labour areas can be drastically improved. In Kropotkin's view:

if there is still work which is really disagreeable in itself, it is only because our scientific men have never cared to consider the means for rendering it less so: they always knew that there were plenty of starving men who would do it for a few pence a day.<sup>55</sup>

The faith Kropotkin exhibits in the transformational qualities of science and technology is, at times, almost childlike. Impressed by the depressing imagery of Zola's *Germinal*, he notes, for example:

We all know what mines are like nowadays...But the mine of the future will be well ventilated, with a temperature as easily regulated as that of a library; there will be no horses doomed to die below the earth: underground traction will be carried on by means of an automatic cable put in motion at the pit's mouth. Ventilators will be always working, and there will never be explosions. This is no dream.<sup>56</sup>

Improving the conditions of employment will not only overcome the problems of absenteeism but more importantly, Kropotkin contends, increase worker productivity and, therefore, the time available for leisure. Expecting that individuals will have to perform necessary labour for only four or five hours a day, he notes:

This question, has, however, been so frequently discussed in Socialist newspapers that public opinion should already be educated on this point. Factory, forge and mine can be as healthy and magnificent as the finest laboratories in modern universities, and the better the organization the more will man's labour produce.<sup>57</sup>

Efficiency is not Kropotkin's only motivation in making work more agreeable. In relation to the possibility of reducing domestic toil, for example, he raises an independent desire to facilitate the liberation of women.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, he argues, it is important for purely humanitarian reasons that society provides the "hygienic conditions of air, food, etc., which permit [workers] to do their business without too much fatigue."<sup>59</sup> Whilst criticising Morris for his "hatred of machines", Kropotkin supports the artistic and environmental desires expressed in *News From Nowhere*: improving the condition of the work place will not only stimulate production but also the development of art.

Art, in order to develop, must be bound up with industry by a thousand intermediate degrees, blended, so to say, as Ruskin and the great Socialist poet Morris have proved so often and so well. Everything that surrounds man, in the street, in the interior and exterior of public monuments, must be of a pure artistic form.<sup>60</sup>

Identifying efficiency and the reduction of labour time as his primary goal, however, Kropotkin finds that improving the conditions of necessary labour does not merely rely on altering the work environment, reducing the need to perform mechanical, repetitive tasks and mechanising areas of labour-intensive toil. The most radical and important change in work and the one which will reduce labour-time to a minimum, lies in introducing a system of integrated education and in abolishing the distinction between mental and manual labour.

Kropotkin's discussion of the policy appears in an attack on the theory of the division of labour. Adam Smith is the chief subject of his critique, though Kropotkin spends little time analysing the force of his ideas. Identifying Smith as the "father of Political Economy", he instead launches an assault on economists collectively. The focus of his attack rests on the principle of specialisation which, he believes, is entailed by the division of labour. Kropotkin proceeds his analysis

by deploring the extent to which occupations appear to be predetermined by society on the basis of an individual's social background. From this point, however, he further observes that the problems created by the predesignation of occupational roles are compounded by forcing the largest, manual section of the labouring population to confine their productive capacity to making the 'eighteenth part of a pin'.

When i see writers who boast that they are workers, and write that the manual workers are an inferior race of lazy and improvident fellows, i am inclined to ask them, Who, then, has made all you see round about you: the houses you live in, the chairs, the carpets, the streets you enjoy, the clothes you wear? Who built the universities where you were taught, and who provided you with food during your school years? And what would become of your readiness to 'work,' if you were compelled to work...all your life on a pin's head? No doubt, anyhow you would be reported as a lazy fellow!¶1

Assuming that the division of labour requires such an intense degree of specialisation, Kropotkin finds that the acceptance of the theory has both caused the workforce to be exploited and to become intellectually stunted. Labour represents potentially the most important resource available to society. But, Kropotkin claims, suffering the imposition of the theory of the division of labour, this potential has been entirely laid to waste.

In institutional terms Kropotkin finds that the education system provides the most important support to the division of labour and practice of specialisation. In existing society education is less an exercise in expanding the interests and mental capacities of the individual than training the masses to fulfil a functional role. This process of training is in turn based on the expectation that the mass of the population will eventually assume a mindless productive activity in the economy. With this expectation, Kropotkin asserts, society fails to provide the majority with adequate instruction. Any learning difficulties individuals suffer are ignored. So are individual preferences. In *The Conquest of Bread*, he notes:

Whoever observes with an intelligent eye, sees well enough that the child reputed lazy at school is often the one which simply does not understand, because he is being badly taught. Very often, too, it is suffering from cerebral anaemia, caused by poverty and an anti-hygienic education. A boy who is lazy at Greek or Latin would work admirably were he taught science, especially if he were taught with the aid of manual labour...And a workman, lazy in the workshop, cultivates his garden at dawn, while gazing at the rising sun, and will be at work again at nightfall, when all nature goes to its rest. Somebody has said that dust is matter in the wrong place. The same definition applies to nine tenths of those called lazy. They are people gone astray in a direction that does not answer to their temperament nor to their capacities. In reading the biography of great men, we are struck with the number of 'idlers' among them...Darwin, Stephenson, and many others belonged to this category of idlers.<sup>62</sup>

Characteristically seeking to reverse the identified causes of corruption, Kropotkin is led by his analysis of specialisation and the division of labour to suggest some of his most radical organisational reforms. In the anarchist society education will be organised to allow individuals the greatest possible freedom in developing their own interests and tastes. Students will be introduced to tools and machinery as well as books and theories. Education will spread from schools into society so that the principles of learning and knowledge will be understood by practical observation. Again, looking to suppress the causes of idleness, Kropotkin argues:

When it is a case...of simple bloodlessness, then before stuffing the brain of a child with science, nourish his system so as to produce blood, strengthen him, and, that he shall not waste his time, take him to the country or to the seaside; there, teach him in the open air, not in books - geometry, by measuring the distance to a spire, or the height of a tree; natural sciences, while picking flowers and fishing in the sea; physical science, while building the boat he will go to fish in.<sup>63</sup>

Instruction will develop in concert with the development of the individual pupil rather than at the predetermined speed of the teacher and the schools. It will also, he imagines, remain ungraded:

here is a child which has neither order nor regular habits. Let the children first inculcate order among themselves, and later on, the laboratory, the workshop, the work that will have to be done in a limited space, with many tools about, under the guidance of an intelligent teacher, will teach them method. But do not make disorderly beings out of them by your school, whose only order is the symmetry of its benches, and which - true image of the chaos in its teachings - will never inspire anybody with the love of harmony, of consistency, and method in work.<sup>64</sup>

Building upon this foundation, Kropotkin argues, society can revolutionise work practices completely. In terms of the ability individuals have to vary their tasks and pursue any number of occupations there will be essentially no difference between leisure time and necessary work. Here, Kropotkin advances his case in terms of a call to change. It is clear, however, that in anarchy, labour will be distinguished by boundless diversity.

Give the workman who cannot condemn himself to make all his life a minute particle of some object, who is stifled at his little tapping machine, which he ends up by loathing, give him the chance of tilling the soil, of felling trees in the forest, sailing the seas in the teeth of a storm, dashing through space on an engine, but do not make an idler of him by forcing him all his life to attend to a small machine, to plough the head of a screw, or to drill the eye of a needle.<sup>65</sup>

Kropotkin finds that the basis for the realisation of agreeable work rests in the organisation of the communal federation.

#### 4.COMMUNITY

Kropotkin identifies the principal inspiration for the social and political organisation of anarchy in history; in the example presented by the city-states of mediaeval Europe. The mediaeval cities assume an equally central importance in Kropotkin's later work. There are, however, important differences between his two accounts. To a great extent, Kropotkin's earliest considerations of the city-state - though perhaps not the conclusions he draws from them - are far more honest than the subsequent, more highly romanticised portrayal he provides in *Mutual Aid*. He is, for example, far more open about the differences between the mediaeval organisations and his own notions of anarchy in his initial investigations than he is in his later work. The cities appear as imperfect models of equivalence in his early writings rather than failed prototypes of anarchist organisation. The city-states also

feature less in his early writings than in his later work. The city is mentioned rather than discussed. Whilst Kropotkin does locate the mediaeval city in history, discussing the gloriousness of its existence between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, the city-state appears primarily as an idea rather than as the rigid construction of his later thought.

Reversing the situational position of his study of the tribal community, Kropotkin describes the city-states primarily in terms of development rather than of decline. The mediaeval cities are introduced as islands of freedom carved from an otherwise repressive landscape of feudalism. Though the independence they enjoyed was granted by Royal decree, he finds that the cities consciously sought to free themselves "from the rule of their lay and ecclesiastical lords and of the Crown".<sup>66</sup> They rejected the rigidity of the feudal rules and in place of the established system of duty and obligation instituted a form of free union. At the heart of this new organisation was the guild. For Kropotkin, it was the desire of the guilds to pursue their trades which provided the original impetus for the cities' claims for independence from the lords and Crown. However, extending the area of their concerns beyond their simple economic interests, the guilds, he finds, "were not like the trades unions of our time..."

but were independent corporations, having their own laws, their own forms for the administration of justice, their own arrangements for self-defence, etc. in short, they were political organisations as well as trades organisations. The cities conquered their independence, and maintained it by producing a new kind of political organisation.<sup>67</sup>

Locating the guilds at the heart of the cities, Kropotkin identifies the new form of political union they created as federalism. The identification in turn forms the central point of his analysis of the mediaeval city. Reflecting his wider interests in anarchist change, he

concentrates on two points in particular: the institutional structure and the conduct of social relations.

In organisational terms, Kropotkin's understanding of federalism does not extend much beyond his examination of guild organisation. In the course of the cities' development, the guilds came to be socially complemented and politically dissected by the rise of similarly organised, geographically-based, civic groups. For Kropotkin, however, the federal principle is identified less by the occupations of the participants than by the number and inter-relationship of the groups that were formed. Federalism, in this sense, implies a multifarious layering of essentially autonomous interests and organisations whose concerns simultaneously intersect and cut across each other.

Au sein de la société féodale se produit un grand mouvement libertaire. Les villes s'affranchissent des seigneurs. Leurs habitants "jurent" la défense mutuelle; ils se constituent indépendants à l'abri de leurs murailles; ils s'organisent pour la production et l'échange, pour l'industrie et le commerce; ils créent ces cités qui pendant trois ou quatre siècles serviront de refuge au travail libre, aux arts, aux sciences, aux idées, - qui jetteront les fondements de cette civilisation dont nous nous glorifions aujourd'hui.<sup>68</sup>

Kropotkin finds proof of the real independence of the cities in the establishment of their own forms of government and systems of justice. In this respect, he seeks to draw a contrast between the principle of government by active participatory consent, as he contends it was practised in the city-states, and the duplicitous application he considers it receives in the modern notion representative rule.

Dans la Commune, surtout aux débuts, - point de traces encore de gouvernement représentatif. La rue, la section, toute la corporation, toute la cité en bloc, prennent les décisions, - non pas à coups de majorité, mais en discutant jusqu'à ce que les partisans d'une des deux opinions en présence finissent par accepter de plein gré, ne serait-ce que comme essai, l'opinion qui rallie le grand nombre.<sup>69</sup>

The relationship between the cities' political structure and the social relations the inhabitants enjoyed, Kropotkin describes in both motivational and progressive terms: the cities were both inspired by and

designed to sustain an ideal of community. Quite explicitly and from the very start, the cities were crafted as intentional communal societies. There existed a sense of social equality which rather than being enshrined in a constitution (or pasted on prison walls), received expression in a concept of citizenship and the sharing of wealth by all:

As soon as the communes of the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries had succeeded in emancipating themselves from their lords, ecclesiastical or lay, their communal labour and communal consumption began to extend and develop rapidly. The township - and not private persons - freighted ships and equipped expeditions, for the export of their manufacture, and the benefit arising from the foreign trade did not accrue to individuals, but was shared by all. At the outset, the townships also bought provisions for all their citizens. Traces of these institutions have lingered on into the nineteenth century, and the people piously cherish the memory of them in their legends.<sup>70</sup>

The freedom and rough equality that the political institutions embodied, Kropotkin contends, encouraged and perpetuated this ideal. Consequently, he finds, the relatively brief period of the city-states' existence was characterised by an as yet unrivalled explosion of creative energy. The development of the arts and scientific knowledge, the expression of literary genius and the incredible architectural achievements of the period serve to illustrate the inspiration individuals gleaned from their societies, the pride they felt in their cities and their social happiness. Ignoring the extent to which the arts were dependent on ecclesiastical and royal patronage, Kropotkin reconsiders the nature of self-expression in the context of the Middle Ages:

...inspiration cannot come from books; it must be drawn from life, and present society cannot arouse it.

Raphael and Murillo painted at a time when the search of a new ideal could be pursued while retaining the old religious traditions. They painted to decorate churches which themselves represented the pious work of several generations of a given city. The basilic...was connected with the life itself of the city, and could inspire a painter. He worked for a popular movement; he spoke to his fellow citizens, and in return he received inspiration; he appealed to the multitude in the same way as did the nave, the pillars, the stained windows, the statues and the carved doors. Nowadays the greatest honour a painter can aspire to is to see his canvas...hung in a museum, a sort of old curiosity shop...Poor Velasquez and poor Murillo! Poor Greek statues which *lived* in the Acropolis of their cities, and are now stifled beneath the red cloth hangings of

the Louvre!<sup>71</sup>

In every-day life, Kropotkin argues, communality was expressed through 'free agreement'. Relations both within and between the federated units of the guilds and the civic organisations were based on reaching mutual understanding and consent. Agreements were reached spontaneously as the need for them arose and altered as circumstances changed. There was an interest and willingness to harmonise relations peacefully. In *The Conquest of Bread* Kropotkin illustrates his point with reference to the agreements the guilds and syndicates came to in order to regulate the Dutch canals.

The right of way for the boats was adjusted by the order of inscription in a navigation register; they had to follow one another in turn. Nobody was allowed to get ahead of the others under pain of being excluded from the guild. None could station more than a certain number of days along the quay; and if the owner found no goods to carry during that time, so much the worse for him; he had to depart with his empty barge to leave room for newcomers. Obstruction was thus avoided, even though the competition between the private owners of the boats continued to exist.<sup>72</sup>

Arising from the communal spirit of the age, free agreement and "the prodigious work accomplished every day by spontaneous groups of men", provided "the mechanism of that immense commerce that was carried on between Hanseatic cities". Free agreement was similarly responsible for the building of Rouen cathedral.<sup>73</sup> Pointing to numerous other accomplishments of the period, Kropotkin concludes that the mediaeval cities required neither outside government nor Kings, to sanction their decisions. On the contrary, it was only when the Crown reneged on the agreements it made with the cities and interfered with their internal affairs that dissension arose within the city walls and the ideals of community collapsed.<sup>74</sup>

Notwithstanding their ultimate decline, Kropotkin finds that the organisation of the city-states presents the best model for the future anarchy. Believing this, he is not crudely archaic in his ideas: in

planning the new society Kropotkin aims to resurrect the ideals of the city-states against a drastically altered historical situation rather than mimic the organisational structures which once enshrined those ideals. In this respect the city-state, in common with the original primitive sociable society, becomes in the end a failed model of organisation. Like the sociable community, and in spite of the nobility of its original principles, the city-state falls victim to anti-social currents of thought. In his early writings Kropotkin does not endeavour to place the reasons for city-states' decline under close analysis. But identifying the collapse of the mediaeval communities specifically with the rise of the State, he does present a model which appears to be designed as a corrective solution to the problem of maintaining community. He extracts from the city-state an understanding of the relationship that the concept of community bore to the decentralised federalist structure and argues that future society must be similarly decentralised. In *Freedom* he notes:

A new departure must be made in a new direction. Monarchy has centralised all the life of the nation in its hands, and Parliament has merely continued what monarchy has begun. We must decentralise. Thousands of cities and villages have their own interests, and they are the best judges of those interests. As to the nation, it can be nothing but the free union of those independent units.<sup>75</sup>

Once the future decentralised society has brought individuals into sufficiently close contact with one another, the selfishness which undermined both the sociable society and the city-states and has since come to be institutionalised in the State, may be eradicated forever.

In his essay 'The Coming Anarchy', he notes:

if men lived in closer contact with one another, and had continually to come into contact on those public affairs which now are invested in the few; and if, in consequence of a closer contact, we were brought to take as lively an interest in our neighbours' difficulties and pains as we formerly took in those of our kinsfolk - then we should not resort to policemen and judges, to prisons and executions. The anti-social deeds would be prevented in bud, not punished; the few contests which would arise would be easily settled by arbitrators; and no more force would be necessary to impose their decisions than is required now for enforcing the decisions of the family tribunals

of China, or of the Valencia water-courts.<sup>76</sup>

Attempting to place the ideals of the mediaeval society on a firmer foundation and overcome the difficulties which left the cities open to royal interference and abuse, Kropotkin adapts the organisation of the city-state in important ways. Though in common with the mediaeval cities the anarchist society is a composition of a diffuse and infinite number of groups, Kropotkin envisages the structure of anarchy to be in far greater flux than that he describes in the middle ages. His idea of federalism is consequently refined. In anarchy there can be no doubt that society is truly federal as opposed to confederal, as the mediaeval city-state sometimes appears to be. There is no formality in the arrangements between communes. Anarchist communes will not claim independence within a territory as the city-states did. Rather, Kropotkin considers that the anarchist society will proceed - as he believes Paris attempted to do in 1871 - by "proclaiming independent Communes which...will endeavour to accomplish...transformation within...their respective surroundings."<sup>77</sup> Unlike the city-states the anarchist groupings have no certain geographical definition.

Contrasting his ideal with that of the past, he comments:

Pour le bourgeois du moyen âge la Commune était un État isolé, nettement séparé des autres par ses frontières. Pour nous, "Commune" n'est plus une agglomération territoriale; c'est plutôt un nom générique, un synonyme de groupement d'égaux, ne connaissant ni frontières ni murailles. La Commune sociale cessera bien vite d'être un tout nettement défini. Chaque groupe de la Commune sera nécessairement attiré vers d'autres groupes similaires des autres Communes; il se groupera, se fédérera avec eux par des liens tout au moins aussi solides que ceux qui le rattachent à ses concitadins, constituera une Commune d'intérêts dont les membres sont disséminés dans mille cités et villages. Tel individu ne trouvera la satisfaction de ses besoins qu'en se groupant avec d'autres individus ayant les mêmes goûts et habitant cent autres communes.<sup>78</sup>

Defending the commune as "la tendance, le trait distinctif de la deuxième moitié du dix-neuvième siècle", he continues to describe its creation in a similarly other-worldly vein.

C'est par libres groupements que s'organisera la Commune Sociale, et ces groupements mêmes bouleverseront les murailles, les frontières. Ce seront des

millions de communes non plus territoriales, mais se tendant la main à travers les fleuves, les chaînes de montagnes, les océans, unissant les individus disséminés aux quatre coins du globe et les peuples en une seule et même famille d'égaux.<sup>79</sup>

Within this very liquid arrangement social relations, Kropotkin contends, will not be necessarily communal. Conflating the physical structure of the older socialist commune with the type of relations he considers it necessitated, anarchy, he argues, is not a phalanstery. Unlike the phalanstery anarchy accords individuals the freedom to be alone.

A phalanstery, which is in fact nothing but an immense hotel, can please some, and even all at a certain period of their life, but the great mass prefers family life (family life of the future, be it understood). They prefer isolated apartments...in which the family, or an agglomeration of friends, can live apart. Sometimes a phalanstery is a necessity, but it would be hateful, were it the general rule. Isolation, alternating with time spent in society, is the normal desire of human nature. This is why one of the greatest tortures in prison is the impossibility of isolation, much as solitary confinement becomes torture in its turn, when not alternated with hours of social life.<sup>80</sup>

Whilst individuals and the new extended families are not compelled to mix with one another in anarchy, Kropotkin envisages many tasks being accomplished communally. Not only, for example, does he consider necessary labour and leisure activities to be arranged communally he also talks of communal dining, cooking, washing, cleaning and even boot-blackening.

In this communal environment societal relations will once again be guided by free agreement. The tendency of society is already directed towards achieving this end. Using the examples of the Red Cross, the Lifeboat Association and the public library system - examples which reappear with boring regularity in his later writings - to demonstrate the 'naturalness' of the principle, Kropotkin identifies free agreement, like individuality, as an end in itself. Allowing individuals to cooperate and make decisions freely is, moreover, the most efficient way of achieving any aim.<sup>81</sup> But notwithstanding the benefits of community

Kropotkin also assumes that the anarchist society will be organised on communist lines.

## 5. COMMUNISM

In the early years of his career Kropotkin's espousal of communism is directed as much toward the anarchists as it is toward critics of anarchism. As he comments in his autobiography, until the Jura Federation "boldly declared itself anarchist-communist" at its congress of 1880, anarchists were generally "hostile to communism, and within the International Workingmen's Association 'collectivism' was preached instead."<sup>82</sup> Collectivism, he moves on to define,

meant the possession of the instruments of production in common, each separate group having, however, to settle for itself whether the consumption of produce should be on individualistic or communistic lines.<sup>83</sup>

For Kropotkin, the latter distinction between individualism and communism is based on the acceptance of the principles of distribution according to work, on one hand, and to need, on the other. Armed with this definition Kropotkin contends that anarchism was never averse to communism as such. It always accepted the need for communal ownership of the means of production. Tracing the development of anarchist thought, he further insists that the anarchists' eventual acceptance of the communist distributive principle demonstrated the continuity of anarchist thinking.

Kropotkin experiences some difficulty sustaining this view. His attempt to minimise the difference between his own communist position and Bakunin's collectivism, for example, leads him to gloss over the latter's scepticism about the possibility of realising communism and the sometimes strong indications he gave of his preference for the principle of distribution according to work.<sup>84</sup> But in spite of the difficulty of

his position, Kropotkin's assumption of continuity nevertheless forms the basis of the arguments he presents to the Jura Federation in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Tainting the economic principles of collectivism with the charge of 'Manchester thinking', in these discussions Kropotkin argues that the anarchists' historic identification with collectivism was never a firm refutation of the principle of distribution according to need. Their repudiation of the term emerged simply from the desire to distinguish anarchism from 'authoritarian' socialism and particularly from the marxists who had coined the communist label for themselves. The anarchists' 'anti-communism' can be dated, he concludes, from the political disputes which raged during the years of the First International. Arriving at this conclusion, Kropotkin attempts to drive a wedge between the anarchists' classic conception of collectivism and the inegalitarian and counter-revolutionary ideas he believes the modern concept embodies:

Lorsque ce mot fut introduit dans l'Internationale, on lui connaît une signification tout autre que celle qu'on cherche à lui donner aujourd'hui. Ménageant les préjugés existant alors en France contre le communisme, par lequel l'on sous-entendait un ordre monastique enfermé un couvent ou dans une caserne, l'Internationale accepta le mot de collectivisme. Elle disait ainsi qu'elle voulait la mise en commun du capital social, et la liberté complète des groupes d'introduire telle répartition des produits du travail qu'ils trouveraient la mieux appropriée aux circonstances. Aujourd'hui, l'on cherche à faire comprendre que le mot de collectivisme signifie autre chose: il signifierait, selon les évolutionnistes, non la mise en commun des instruments de travail, mais la jouissance individuelle des produits... il serait temps de mettre fin à ce malentendu et pour cela il n'y a qu'un moyen: c'est celui d'abandonner le mot collectivisme et de se déclarer entre notre conception du communisme anarchiste...<sup>85</sup>

In a critique which for its violence of expression matches his assault on the State, Kropotkin defends communism against collectivism on four grounds. In the first place, communism recognises that all the products of the earth - industry, agriculture and knowledge - have been made by collective labour. "All accumulated wealth", he argues, "is the product of the labour of all - of all present and of all preceding

generations."<sup>86</sup> Secondly, communism embodies the concept of equality. Under collectivism labour is differentiated such that a division of labour is introduced on the basis of the work performed. Collectivists - and here he includes Marx - "desire that a distinction should be made between *qualified* or professional work and *simple* work."<sup>87</sup> They re-introduce, therefore, a division of labour and social inequality. Moreover, such a system is impractical. Whether workers are to be paid according to time or in labour cheques, the principle fails to recognise that every product is the result of any number of necessary labourers whose input into the productive process is impossible to evaluate distinctly. Kropotkin's third complaint is related to both equality and administration. Communism, he argues, requires no State. Individuals simply take what they need from the common store. Collectivism, on the other hand, requires a central administrative body not only to make the relevant pay awards to workers but to ensure that the unfit and unable have their needs taken care of. It fails to challenge what Kropotkin considers to be the reactionary bourgeois mentality of giving charity. Thus, he concludes that communism is in greater accord with true community.

in a wider sphere, in the true sphere of life, with all its joys, its sufferings, and its accidents, cannot each one of us recall someone who has rendered him so great a service that we should be indignant if its equivalent in coin were mentioned? The service may have been but a word, nothing but a word spoken at the right time, or else it may have been months and years of devotion, and are we going to appraise these 'incalculable' services in 'labour-notes'??<sup>88</sup>

Not all Kropotkin's contentions are totally convincing.<sup>89</sup> Within the context of his decentralised structure it is, for example, as possible to imagine locally-organised pay boards as it is locally-organised distributive bodies. If he believes that marxism is anyway committed to the maintenance of a workers State, the collectivist principle is nonetheless equally potentially workable. More importantly, in terms of

his proselytising to the anarchist movement, the critiques of collectivism are almost peripheral. Over and above his demonstration of the incompatibility of collectivism with anarchist organisation is the necessity to prove the compatibility of communism with the anarchist principle of decentralisation. In this respect, identifying the problem of communism (or the anarchists' problem) to rest entirely on a question of political organisation, Kropotkin confronts the problem of anarchist planning primarily from the point of view of making the distributive principle consistent with the anarchist concept of free federation. In this he does not ignore the importance of the weaker principle of common ownership. Rather it forms the foundation for the justification of his ideal of distribution according to need.

Kropotkin discusses the principle of common ownership in two contexts. On the one hand, he is keen to point out the fraternal and efficient nature of those societies in which property and the means of production are owned and worked collectively:

Take for example a commune in the canton of Vaud, in the winter time, when all the men of the village go to fell wood in the forest, which belongs to them all. It is precisely during these festivals of labour that the greatest ardour for work and the most considerable display of human energy are apparent. No salaried labour, no effort of a private owner can bear comparison with it. Or let us take a Russian village, when all its inhabitants mow a field belonging to the commune, or farmed by it...comrades vie with one another in cutting the widest swathe, women bestir themselves in their wake so as not to be distanced by the mowers. It is a festival of labour, in which a hundred people accomplish in a few hours a work that would not have been finished in a few days had they worked separately. What a miserable contrast compared to them is offered by the work of the isolated owner.<sup>90</sup>

On the other hand, and as the prerequisite for the realisation of the communist distributive principle, Kropotkin raises the idea of collective ownership in terms of an unrelenting demand for immediate 'expropriation'. The force of his cry lies in his belief that the abolition of private property and privately owned capital will liberate the masses from the problem of scarcity. This monumental assumption

forms the central point of the analysis he presents in *The Conquest of Bread*.

No, plenty for all is not a dream - though it was a dream indeed in those days when man, for all his pains, could hardly win a few bushels of wheat from an acre of land, and had to fashion by hand all the implements he used in agriculture and industry. Now it is no longer a dream, because man has invented the motor which, with a little iron and a few sacks of coal, gives him the mastery of a creature strong and docile as a horse, and capable of setting the most complicated machinery in motion.

But, if plenty for all is to become a reality, this immense capital - cities, houses, pastures, arable lands, factories, highways, education - must cease to be regarded as private property, for the monopolist to dispose of at his pleasure.

This rich endowment, painfully won, builded, fashioned, or invented by our ancestors, must become common property, so that the collective interests of men may gain from it the greatest good for all.

There must be EXPROPRIATION. The well-being of all - the end; expropriation - the means.<sup>91</sup>

Kropotkin sees little difficulty in accomplishing the dream. In the heat of the Revolution - and without having to wait for the revolutionary committees to appear on the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville with their decrees and nominations - the people will automatically form themselves into local units and simply take control of the resources in each town and city.<sup>92</sup> After expounding the general principle Kropotkin, in *The Conquest of Bread*, describes the process of action in each 'necessary' area: food, housing and clothing. In the short term all available resources are immediately distributed. In the first weeks and months of the revolution new supplies are guaranteed by the success of the original liberation: clothes, for example, are provided by converting what he considers to be the frippery of bourgeois fashion and interior furnishing into useful, wearable items. Food is more difficult, relying not only on the conversion of under utilised kitchens into communal dining rooms but on the provision of staple food stuffs from the rural areas. Housing is relatively simple: assuming sufficient stock to exist Kropotkin envisages that the homeless and poverty-

stricken who previously dwelt in squalor will just move into the large, empty houses and palaces reserved for the bourgeoisie.

Showering his commentary with barbed gibes at the notion of revolutionary government (directed essentially at the marxists) Kropotkin believes his scenario to be entirely realistic. Again in *The Conquest of Bread* he comments:

We have already mentioned that should the Revolution break out tomorrow in Paris, Lyon, or any other city - should the workers lay hands on factories, houses and banks, present production would be completely revolutionized by this simple fact.

international commerce will come to a standstill; so also will the importation of foreign bread-stuffs; the circulation of commodities and of provisions will be paralysed. And then, the city or territory in revolt will be compelled to provide for itself, and to reorganize its production, so as to satisfy its own needs. If it fails to do so, it is death. If it succeeds, it will revolutionize the economic life of the country.<sup>93</sup>

The urgency of Kropotkin's claims are heightened by his assumption that the period of the revolutionary struggle will be a matter of four or five years: an assumption he makes on the basis of his analysis of 1789. The subtlety of the picture Kropotkin paints rests on the organic development he further envisages the towns and villages will experience. Just as he claims there to be an intellectual continuity in the development of anarchist thought, he considers that there is a revolutionary continuity in the development of collective ownership to free distribution.

Building on the necessary measures taken during revolutionary upheaval, Kropotkin sees each communal unit extending and improving its ability to be self-sufficient. Every available space in the urban area becomes cultivated. In existing rural areas small industries and workshops are introduced. Agriculture and industry become completely meshed.

A great number of the inhabitants of the cities will have to become agriculturalists. Not in the same manner as the present peasants who wear themselves out, ploughing for a wage that barely provides them with sufficient food for the year, but by following the principles of the intensive agriculture, of the market gardeners, applied on a large scale by means of the best

machinery that man has invented or can invent.<sup>94</sup>

Trade between units, from the communal to the international level, is abolished. Both necessary and non-necessary goods, Kropotkin argues, can be produced in the locality.

Of course, they will not only cultivate wheat and oats - they will also produce those things which they formerly used to order from foreign parts...The revolted city will be compelled to do without these 'foreigners', and why not? France invented beet-root sugar when sugar-cane ran short during the continental blockade. Parisians discovered saltpetre in their cellars when they no longer received any from abroad. Shall we be inferior to our grandfathers, who hardly lisped the first words of science?<sup>95</sup>

The leap Kropotkin makes from common ownership to distribution according to need is suggestive. Showing that by practising economic autarky communism can be made consistent with federalism and, therefore, that it is practical, Kropotkin contemplates the introduction of the communist distributive system by focusing on the notion of 'needs'. All needs, he claims, can be satisfied; society naturally guides its productive energy towards the satisfaction of needs. Thus, he concludes, the principle of distribution according to need is a spontaneous development. Imagine,

that one of our great cities, so egotistic in ordinary times, were visited tomorrow by some calamity - a siege, for instance - that same selfish city would decide that the first needs to satisfy were those of the children and the aged. Without asking what services they had rendered, or were likely to render to society, it would first of all feed them. Then the combatants would be cared for, irrespective of the courage or the intelligence which each had displayed, and thousands of men and women would outvie each other in unselfish devotion to the wounded.

This tendency exists, and is felt as soon as the most pressing needs of each are satisfied, and in proportion as the productive power of the race increases. It becomes an active force every time a great idea comes to oust the mean preoccupations of everyday life.

How can we doubt, then, that when the instruments of production are placed at the service of all, when business is conducted on Communist principles, when labour, having recovered its place of honour in society, produces much more than is necessary to all - how can we doubt that this force (already so powerful) will enlarge its sphere of action till it becomes the ruling principle of social life?<sup>96</sup>

## 6. ANARCHY

To a great extent the realisation of individuality, agreeable work, community and communism are contingent upon one another. Individuality, for example, requires that work-time be reduced; agreeable work, in turn, necessitates an increase of efficiency by means of the abolition of the division of labour and the introduction of communism; and finally, the implementation of communist principles requires the decentralisation of society and the organisation of the federal commune in order to guarantee the freedom of the individual. Similarly, expecting a cultural revival to challenge the Renaissance, Kropotkin finds that individual self-expression is directly dependent on free agreement and community. Community values provide the basis on which society will feel compelled to improve working conditions and be able to organise safely the principle of distribution according to need. Of all his goals communism is both the most vociferously demanded and important condition for anarchy to be realised. Communism, Kropotkin argues, is consistent with the anarchist principle of federal organisation. In addition, in so far as it allows the problem of scarcity to be overcome and provides the basis for the integration of agriculture and industry, communism is a condition for decentralisation. For Kropotkin, communism is the only system in which the division between mental and manual labour can be eradicated and therefore the only guarantee against the creation of the State. In *The Conquest of Bread* Kropotkin acknowledges the interdependence of the first three goals and also the relative pressure they exert towards the realisation of full communism. The guarantee of free distribution - 'well-being for all' - is simply an outcome of the realisation of his other demands:

After studying all these facts together, we may arrive, then, at the following conclusion: imagine a society, comprising a few million inhabitants, engaged in

agriculture and a great variety of industries - Paris, for example, with the Department of Seine-et-Oise. Suppose that in this society all children learn to work with their hands as well as with their brains. Admit that all adults, save women, engaged in the education of their children, bind themselves to work *five hours a day* from the age of twenty or twenty-two to forty-five or fifty, and that they follow occupations they have chosen for themselves in any one of those branches of human work which in this city are considered *necessary*. Such a society could in return guarantee well-being to all its members, a well-being more substantial than that enjoyed today by the middle classes. And, moreover, each worker belonging to this society would have at his disposal at least five hours a day which he could devote to science, art, and individual needs which do not come under the category of *necessities*, but will probably do so later on, when man's productivity will have augmented, and those objects will no longer appear luxurious or inaccessible.<sup>97</sup>

The importance that Kropotkin attaches to common ownership and the principle of distribution according to need can be demonstrated in relation to the problem his anarchy poses for the freedom of the individual. Notwithstanding the emphasis he places on the value of individuality, the inadequacy of Kropotkin's consideration of the relationship between the individual and the community has been considered to be the fundamental flaw of his concept of organisation. Woodcock is particularly suspicious of his anarchist design and finds that Kropotkin:

does not acknowledge the tyrannies of custom and habit as [he] does those of government and regulation. Once again, Kropotkin shows that he is willing to accept moral compulsion, whether it is the rule of custom in a primitive tribe or that of public opinion in an anarchist society, without admitting how far this force also negates the freedom of the individual. A taboo-ridden native of the primitive Congo had in reality far less freedom of action than a citizen of the England in which Kropotkin himself lived with such slight interference. A stateless society, in other words, may be very far from a free society so far as the personal lives of its members are concerned. This possibility Kropotkin was never willing to consider seriously.<sup>98</sup>

Beyond the general problem Woodcock identifies the closeness of the community Kropotkin foresees may be thought to compound the individual's difficulties. There appears to be no greater guarantee in Kropotkin's anarchy that individuals will venture forth from their places of birth and experience the potential freedom of the wider society than there is of free-range chickens venturing beyond open barn doors. They may be equally fearful and equally ignorant of the outside world. In addition,

though free from the negative constraints Kropotkin identifies in the State, they may as Woodcock suspects, become subject to any number of local prejudices and taboos.

Whilst Kropotkin cannot guarantee that the freedom of the individual will be enhanced by his anarchy, contrary to Woodcock, he does consider the ways in which relations between the individual and the community will be regulated. Kropotkin does not identify the problem of anarchist organisation to be one of securing the well-being of the individual in relation to the wider society. Instead, he considers the problem to be one of ensuring the harmoniousness of social relations. By securing social peace liberty will follow.

Kropotkin's confidence in the ability of the anarchist organisation to provide lasting social peace is based on the assessments he makes of post-revolutionary consciousness. In the Revolution as "always during such times of spiritual revival", the spirit of human self-sacrifice is an important force in bringing about real changes. But,

We do not wish to exaggerate the part played by such noble passions, nor is it upon them that we would found our ideal of society...We cannot hope that our daily life will be continuously inspired by such exalted enthusiasms...

it is just to wash to the earth clean, to sweep away the shards and refuse, accumulated by centuries of slavery and oppression, that the new anarchist society will have need of this wave of brotherly love. Later on it can exist without appealing to the spirit of self-sacrifice, because it will have eliminated oppression, and thus created a new world instinct with all the feelings of solidarity.<sup>99</sup>

Kropotkin identifies the spirit which is responsible for guiding human relations and ensuring the needs of each individual are accorded paramount importance as morality. The development of morality, in turn, is posited on the existence of communism.

Kropotkin's identification of communism as the guarantor of morality stems from two inter-related assumptions. In the first place the principle of distribution according to need embodies a moral precept.

It is this understanding which fuels some of his most bitter tirades against collectivism.

After all, the Collectivists know this themselves. They vaguely understand that a society could not exist if it carried out the principle of 'Each according to his deeds.' They have a notion that *necessaries* - we do not speak of whims - the needs of the individual, do not always correspond to his *works*. Thus De Paepe tells us: 'The principle - the eminently individualist principle - would, however, be *tempered* by social intervention for the education of children and young persons (including maintenance and lodging), and by the social organization for assisting the infirm and the sick, for retreats for aged workers, etc.'<sup>100</sup>

The implementation of communism fosters the development of a new moral sense: but it does so because it springs from the 'tendencies' of the people. Communism, in this sense, is a natural impulse. As Kropotkin explains:

Our friend Cafiero has once pointed out that in the family which shares in common the produce of the work of all its members, the sharing according to needs is the rule. When bread and meat are in plenty, then everybody consumes just as much as he likes. But when there is scarcity, then the best piece is given...to the feeblest...  
And this principle is so natural that, as soon as men are brought by stress of circumstances to do something in common, forgetting *mine* and *thine*, they immediately resort to *needs* as the measure of each one's share.<sup>101</sup>

Communism is also an historical impulse. It received limited expression in the city-states and, notwithstanding the development of the State, seeks full expression in anarchy. Regretting the disappearance of the mediaeval communes, Kropotkin comments:

All that has disappeared. But the rural township still struggles to preserve the last traces of this Communism, and it succeeds - except when the State throws its heavy sword into the balance.  
Meanwhile new organizations, based on the same principle - *to every man according to his needs* - spring up under a thousand different forms; for without a certain leaven of Communism the present societies could not exist. In spite of the narrowly egoistic turn given to men's minds by the commercial system, the tendency towards Communism is constantly appearing, and it influences our activities in a variety of ways.

The extent to which Kropotkin considers the further development of anarchist morality to be an inevitable development of history forms the subject of the next chapter.

NOTES: CHAPTER TWO

1. See, for example, G.F. Gaus & J.W. Chapman: 'Anarchism and Political Philosophy: An Introduction', in J.R. Pennock & J.W. Chapman (ed.), *Nomos XIX: Anarchism*, New York University Press, New York, (1978), pp. xvii-iii.
2. See, for example, R.B. Fowler: 'The Anarchist Tradition of Political Thought', *Western Political Quarterly*, Vol.25, (December 1972), p.739.
3. For three such different approaches, see, for example, D. Guérin: *Anarchism*, Monthly Review Press, New York & London, (1971); I. Horowitz: *The Anarchists*, Dell Publishing, New York, (1964); P. Eltzbacher: *Anarchism: Exponents of the Anarchist Philosophy*, Libertarian Book Club, New York, (1960).
4. The validity of this idea has, however, been questioned by A. Ritter: 'Anarchism and Liberal Theory in the Nineteenth Century', *Bucknell Review*, Vol.XIX, No.2, (Autumn 1971), pp.37-40.
5. See, for example, the 'Revolutionary Catechism', S. Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchism*, Black Rose Books, Montreal, (1980), pp.76-97.
6. Malatesta, for example, describes Kropotkin as "one of the most active and eloquent anarchist propagandists of the communist idea...". V. Richards (ed.), *Malatesta: Life and Ideas*, Freedom Press, London, (1977), p.35.
7. The anarchist 'utopia' is often identified with the image of society described by Morris in *News From Nowhere*. See G. Woodcock: *Anarchism*, Pelican, Harmondsworth Press, (1979), p.21; F.E. & F.P. Manuel: *Utopian Thought In The Western World*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, (1979), p.737.
8. See, for example, J. Guillaume: 'On Building The New Social Order', S. Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchism*, op.cit, pp.356-79 or P.& P. Goodman: *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life*, Random House, New York, (1960).
9. One defence against the marxist charge is presented in M. Buber: *Paths In Utopia*, Routledge, & Kegan Paul, London, (1949), ch.1.
10. The dangers of 'authoritarian utopianism' are investigated by M.L. Berneri: *Journey Through Utopia*, Freedom Press, London, (1982).
11. P. Kropotkin: *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, Folio Society, London, (1978), p.274. Kropotkin is referring to the ideas formulated by the Jura Federation in the late 1870s.
12. See P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, Elephant Editions, London, (1985), pp.68-9.
13. P. Kropotkin: *La Prochaine Révolution*, La Brochure Mensuelle, No.174, (June 1937), p.3
14. P. Kropotkin: 'La Situation', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, Librairie Marpon et Flammarion, Paris, (1885), p.1.
15. P. Kropotkin: 'La Prochaine Révolution', op.cit., p.3
16. P. Kropotkin: 'La Situation', op.cit., pp.5-6.
17. P. Kropotkin: 'L'Expropriation', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, op.cit., p.316.
18. P. Kropotkin: 'L'Esprit de Révolte', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, op.cit., p.285.
19. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, op.cit., p.66.
20. See Kropotkin's Preface to Pataud & Pouget *The Co-operative*

- Commonwealth*, translated by C. & F. Charles, New International Publishing Co., Oxford, (1913), p.vii.
21. Some of the problems encountered by anarchist discussions of marxism have been discussed in D. Guérin: 'Anarchism and Marxism', in D. Goodway (ed.): *For Anarchism: History, Theory and Practice*, Routledge, London, (1989), pp.109-127. Kropotkin is not concerned with the theoretical disputes within marxism, or with the evolution of Marx's and Engels' thought. His references to marxism and marxists are purely pejorative.
  22. P. Kropotkin: *The Commune of Paris*, Freedom Pamphlets, Freedom Press, London, (N.D), p.4. See also *The Conquest of Bread*, op.cit., pp.39-44 for Kropotkin's discussion of the point in relation to the events of 1789.
  23. P. Kropotkin: 'What Must We Do?', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *Act For Yourself*, Freedom Press, London, (1988), pp.29-30.
  24. *ibid.*, p.31.
  25. A point refuted by Michels who finds that in common with other "sincere and high-minded" anarchists, Kropotkin utilises the means of "the apostle and the orator: the flaming power of thought, greatness of self-sacrifice, profundity and conviction" in order to exercise dominance. R. Michels: *Political Parties*, Free Press, New York & London, (1968), p.326.
  26. P. Kropotkin: 'Les Minorités Révolutionnaires', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, op.cit., p.88.
  27. P. Kropotkin: Preface to Pataud & Pouget, op.cit., p.vii.
  28. P. Kropotkin: 'Act For Yourself', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *Act For Yourself*, op.cit., p.32.
  29. This distinction and that between individual freedom and individuality is taken from I. Berlin: 'Two Concepts of Liberty', *Four Essays On Liberty*, O.U.P., Oxford, (1984), pp.118-72.
  30. P. Kropotkin: *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution: An Address Delivered in Paris*, translated by H. Glasse, William Reeves, London, (1886), p.12.
  31. P. Kropotkin: 'Communism and Anarchy', *Freedom*, Vol.XV, No.159, (August 1901).
  32. P. Kropotkin: 'Les Droits Politiques', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, op.cit., p.35.
  33. *ibid.*, p.33.
  34. P. Kropotkin: 'A General View', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.): *Act For Yourself*, pp.79-80.
  35. P. Kropotkin: 'Le Gouvernement Représentatif', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, op.cit., p.170.
  36. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, op.cit., p.154.
  37. *ibid.*, p.157.
  38. *ibid.*, p.48.
  39. *ibid.*, p.108.
  40. *ibid.*, p.109.
  41. *ibid.*, p.117.
  42. *ibid.*
  43. *ibid.*, p.100.
  44. *ibid.*, p.109.
  45. *ibid.*, p.114.
  46. *ibid.*, p.119.
  47. *ibid.*, p.108.

48. *ibid.*
49. *ibid.*, p.117.
50. *ibid.*, p.108.
51. *ibid.*, pp.116-7.
52. *ibid.*, p.43.
53. *ibid.*, p.109.
54. *ibid.*, p.147.
55. P. Kropotkin: 'The Coming Anarchy', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXII, No.126, (August 1887), p.160.
56. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, pp.122-3.
57. *ibid.*, p.123.
58. *ibid.*, pp.124-5.
59. *ibid.*, p.155.
60. *ibid.*, p.119.
61. P. Kropotkin: 'The Coming Anarchy', *op.cit.*, pp.159-60.
62. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.156.
63. *ibid.*, p.157.
64. *ibid.*, pp.157-8.
65. *ibid.*, p.158.
66. P. Kropotkin: 'Parliamentary Rule', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *Act For Yourselves*, *op.cit.*, p.38.
67. *ibid.*, pp.38-9.
68. P. Kropotkin: 'Le Gouvernement Représentatif', *op.cit.*, p.202.
69. *ibid.*, p.204.
70. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.47.
71. *ibid.*, p.118.
72. *ibid.*, pp.135-6.
73. *ibid.*, p.130.
74. P. Kropotkin: 'A General View', *op.cit.*, p.76.
75. *ibid.*, pp.78-9.
76. P. Kropotkin: 'The Coming Anarchy', *op.cit.*, p.161.
77. P. Kropotkin: 'Local Action', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *Act For Yourselves*, *op.cit.*, p.43.
78. P. Kropotkin: 'La Commune', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, *op.cit.*, p.117.
79. *ibid.*, p.118.
80. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.124.
81. See *ibid.*, pp.137-8.
82. P. Kropotkin: *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, C. Ward (ed.), The Folio Society, London, (1978), p.303.
83. *ibid.*
84. See his discussion of Bakunin's collectivism in *Modern Science and Anarchism*, Freedom Press, London, (1912), pp.62-63.
85. P. Kropotkin: 'Association Internationale Des Travailleurs: Congrès de la Fédération Jurassienne (1880)', D. Guérin, *Ni Dieu, Ni Maître*, La Cité Editeur, Lausanne, (1969), p.339.
86. P. Kropotkin: 'The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution', *op.cit.*, p.5.
87. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.164.
88. *ibid.*, pp.170-1
89. The extent to which State's functions can successfully be transferred to the local community, for example, has been questioned in A. Gorz: *Farewell To The Working Class*, Pluto Press, London, (1982), pp.107-114.
90. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.146.

91. *ibid.*, pp.38-9.
92. P. Kropotkin: 'Théorie et Pratique', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, pp.312-3.
93. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, pp.190-1.
94. *ibid.*, p.191.
95. *ibid.*, p.192.
96. *ibid.*, p.49.
97. *ibid.*, p.107.
98. G. Woodcock: *op.cit.*, p.202. He makes the point specifically with reference to *Mutual Aid*.
99. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.99.
100. *ibid.*, p.171.
101. P. Kropotkin: 'Communism and the Wage System', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *Act For Yourselves*, *op.cit.*, p.111.
102. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.47.

CHAPTER THREE: MORALITY, THE STATE AND THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

For Kropotkin, anarchy requires that individuals be brought in close contact with one another; that they be encouraged to perform productive tasks; and that they be allowed to develop their individuality equally and freely. He imagines anarchy as a decentralised, economically efficient and culturally expansive communal society. Most importantly Kropotkin considers the future anarchist society to be communist. Communism, he argues, is consistent with his other conditions of organisation and provides a socially stabilising factor in the creation of morality.

Notwithstanding the detail of Kropotkin's description of the anarchist society, his image of organisation leaves a number of questions unsolved. The precise nature of the political arrangements of anarchy, for example, remains unclear. He implies, both in his discussion of the mediaeval commune and his examination of collectivism, that the State must be abolished: he does not, however, expand on the meaning of this demand. Kropotkin's confidence in the ability of society to become anarchist is largely unexplained. His belief that the problem of scarcity can be overcome is particularly problematic. Finally, whilst Kropotkin associates the creation of anarchist morality with the implementation of the communist principle of distribution according to need, his image of anarchy provides no explanation of the process of anarchist change.

Kropotkin does not tackle any of these problems directly. Answers to them emerge within the framework of his critique of the State and capitalism. This chapter does not, however, begin with an exposition of Kropotkin's understanding of the State but by enlarging on his concept of morality.

## 1. MORALITY

Kropotkin approaches the question of morality from a defensive point of view. For some radical groups, he recognises, discussions of morality are considered unfashionable and sometimes reactionary and in nihilist circles the claims of moralists have been largely discredited. Kropotkin has some sympathy with this view.<sup>1</sup> In existing society, he argues, morality has received perverted expression. The corruption is most apparent in those religious institutions which claim actively to uphold the force of moral commands. Morality, Kropotkin contends, has developed in the same duplicitous manner as law.

Our principles of morality say: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'; but let a child follow this principle and take off his coat to give it to the shivering pauper, and see his mother will tell him that he must never understand the moral principles in their right sense. If he lives according to them, he will go barefoot, without alleviating the misery round about him! Morality is good on the lips, not in deeds. Our preachers say, 'Who works, prays,' and everybody endeavours to make others work for himself. They say, 'Never lie!' and politics is a big lie. And we accustom ourselves and our children to live under this double-faced morality, which is hypocrisy, and to conciliate our double-facedness by sophistry. Hypocrisy and sophistry become the very basis of our life.<sup>2</sup>

Kropotkin is not, however, uncritical of the amoral stance. On the contrary, he maintains the necessity of morality to society. In so far as the existing situation is concerned "society cannot live under such a morality. It cannot last so: it must, it will, be changed."<sup>3</sup> But, he continues,

when we throw religions overboard or store them among our public records as historical curiosities, shall we also relegate to museums the moral principles which they contain? This has sometimes been done, and we have seen people declare that as they no longer believed in the various religions so they despised morality and boldly proclaimed the maxim of bourgeois selfishness, "Everyone for himself." But a Society, human or animal, cannot exist without certain rules and moral habits springing up within it; religion may go, morality remains.<sup>4</sup>

Morality is not only necessary to society; a society without morality is inconceivable. It is in this sense that Kropotkin describes morality

as natural. Morality provides the harmonising element for society to cohere. Writing in 1887, he notes:

No society is possible without certain principles of morality generally recognised. If everybody grew accustomed to deceive his fellow-men; if we never could rely on each other's promise and words; if everybody treated his like as an enemy, against whom every means of warfare is justifiable - no society could exist. And we see, in fact, that notwithstanding the decay of religious beliefs, the principles of morality remain unshaken. We even see irreligious people trying to raise the current standard of morality. The fact is that moral principles are independent of religious beliefs: they are anterior to them. The primitive Tchuktchis have no religion: they have only superstitions and fear of the hostile forces of nature; and nevertheless we find with them the very same principles of morality which are taught by Christians and Buddhists, Musselmans and Hebrews.<sup>5</sup>

Contrary to Ritter and De George, it is in morality rather than authority that Kropotkin finds the source of social stability. In *The Conquest of Bread* the contrast is made in his discussions of 'free agreement'. Supplementing his consideration of the creative capacity of mankind, he finds that the principle not only supports the development of human intelligence and initiative but that in the absence of the "authoritarian individualism which stifles us" humanity develops ethically.<sup>6</sup> The existence of the Red Cross and Lifeboat Association thus testify not only to the masses' ability to organise practically but to the existence of a natural moral sentiment. Even whilst looking back to a period of wrecking and piracy "when it was a custom among inhabitants of the coasts to attract vessels on to reefs, in order to plunder their cargoes..." Kropotkin finds that:

Seeing a ship in distress, they launched their boats and went to the rescue of shipwrecked sailors, only too often finding a watery grave themselves. Every namiet along the sea shore has its legends of heroism, displayed by woman as well as by man, to save crews in distress.

No doubt the State and men of science have done something to diminish the number of casualties. Lighthouses, signals, charts, meteorological warnings have diminished them greatly, but there remains a thousand ship and several thousand lives to be saved every year.

To this end a few men of goodwill put their shoulders to the wheel. Being good sailors and navigators themselves, they invented a lifeboat that could weather a storm without being torn to pieces or capsizing, and they set to work to interest the public in their venture, to collect the necessary funds for constructing boats, and for stationing them along the coasts, whenever they could be of use.<sup>7</sup>

Arguing that morality must have an existence in all societies, Kropotkin describes future anarchist morality by way of a parable.<sup>8</sup> A child thrashes helplessly in a river, obviously in fear of drowning. Four men - a bourgeois, a Christian, a utilitarian and an individual who "has been brought up from his childhood to feel himself one with the rest of humanity" - stand on the side of the bank. Dismissing all further discussion of the first individual on the basis that "he is a partisan of 'Each one for himself,' the maxim of the commercial middle-class...a brute", Kropotkin proceeds to examine the motives the remaining three have to jump in and help the child. The Christian and the utilitarian are both shrewd calculators; the one expecting reward from Heaven, the other anticipating pleasure from saving the life of another. The fourth, who has "always regarded men as possessing interests in common...has accustomed himself to suffer when his neighbours suffer, and to feel happy when everyone around him is happy", reacts not "through reflection but by instinct". On returning the child to its mother the rescuer begs reasons for the mother's expressions of gratitude: "'What have I done to deserve thanks, my good woman? I am happy to see you happy; I have acted from natural impulse and could not do otherwise!'". Kropotkin continues:

The whole anarchist morality is represented in this example...a morality without compulsion or authority, a morality of habit. Let us create circumstances in which man shall not be led to deceive nor exploit others, and then by the very force of things the moral level of humanity will rise to a height hitherto unknown. Men are certainly not to be moralised by teaching them a moral catechism: tribunals and prisons do not diminish vice; they pour it over society in floods. Men are to be moralised only by placing them in a position which shall contribute to develop in them those habits which are social, and to weaken those which are not so. A morality which has become instinctive is the true morality, the only morality which endures while religious systems of philosophy pass away.<sup>9</sup>

In *The Conquest of Bread* Kropotkin similarly defines anarchist morality as an instinctive principle of 'giving without wanting to receive'.<sup>10</sup> With a romanticism rivalling that apparent in his portrayal

of the shipwreckers, he describes the principle as the spirit of self-sacrifice which - even unto death - regulates relations between mothers and their children and without which the "race would soon become extinct." Expressing the same precept in terms of a critique of bourgeois culture, he notes:

If middle-class society is decaying, if we have got into a blind alley from which we cannot emerge without attacking past institutions with torch and hatchet, it is precisely because we have given too much to counting. It is because we have led ourselves to be influenced into *giving* only to *receive*. It is because we have aimed at turning society into a commercial company based on *debit* and *credit*.<sup>11</sup>

Representing morality as a natural instinct and as an impulse necessary to society, Kropotkin does not consider moral codes to be unchanging. His understanding of morality is an extension of his concept of sociability and instead of believing that the expression of the moral 'instinct' is determined by purely human forces he finds that morality is influenced by external factors. In the same way as he considers the decline of primitive society to result from the conflict between two currents of thought and behaviour, Kropotkin paradoxically discusses the influences on morality to be reliant on a sense of divided humanity.

Reversing the condition of humanity as he portrays it in the natural tribal state Kropotkin discusses the development of moral attitudes by questioning whether humanity is good enough to live in the anarchist clime. He rejects the idea that humanity is naturally 'good', though prone to temptation and under threat of falling from the perfect state, and asserts that humanity exists in a corrupt condition. Turning his gaze on modern society, he reasons, for example:

if men were gallant, self-respecting, and less egotistic, even a bad capitalist would not be a danger; the workers would have soon reduced him to the role of a simple comrade-manager. Even a King would not be dangerous, because the people would merely consider him as a fellow unable to do better work, and therefore entrusted with signing some stupid papers sent out to other cranks calling themselves Kings.<sup>12</sup>

Individuals are not "those free-minded, independent, provident, loving and compassionate fellows which we should like to see them".<sup>13</sup> They are instead characterised by unfettered rapaciousness.

Identifying the anti-social individualistic spirit to be predominant in modern society Kropotkin extends the behavioural association he hints at in his examination of authority and law to assert a definite link between the organisation of society and human attitudes. At the centre of his understanding is a belief in human perfectibility. Contrasting the 'moral' and 'immoral' sides of human nature Kropotkin expresses the idea in both negative and positive terms. In the former instance, he finds that it is because humanity has been perverted by society that the existing institutions must be reformed.

We are told we are too slavish, too snobbish, to be placed under free institutions; but we say that because we are indeed so slavish we ought not to remain any longer under the present institutions, which favour the development of slavishness.<sup>14</sup>

In the latter positive sense, Kropotkin finds proof of the link between human perfectibility and environmental reform in the results of the liberation of the Negro cotton slaves.<sup>15</sup> Identifying himself in opposition to the 'practical thinkers' who consider human nature to be unchangeable, Kropotkin finds similar evidence of human development in the metamorphosis of the Russian peasantry following Alexander II's emancipation of the serfs in 1861.

These slaves who were reputed improvident, selfish brutes, and so on, displayed such good sense, such an organising capacity as to surpass the expectations of even the most unpractical Utopists; and in three years after the Emancipation the general physiognomy of the villages had completely changed. The slaves were becoming Men!<sup>16</sup>

In whichever way he chooses to express the point Kropotkin understands morality as a progressive force. This understanding complements his view that the tendency of mankind is toward anarchy: the history of mankind attests to a natural process of moral

progression. Anticipating the outbreak of revolutionary hostilities in *Le Révolté*, Kropotkin gives a hint of this expectation.

A chaque grand événement de l'histoire correspond une certaine évolution dans la morale humaine. Certes la morale des égaux n'est pas la même que celle du riche charitable et du pauvre reconnaissant. A un nouveau monde il faut une nouvelle foi, et c'est bien un monde nouveau qui s'annonce. Nos adversaires eux-mêmes ne le répètent-ils pas sans cesse? "Les dieux s'en vont! Les rois s'en vont! Le prestige de l'autorité disparaît." Et qui remplacera les dieux, les rois, les prêtres, si ce n'est l'individu libre, confiant dans sa force? La foi naïve s'en va. Place à la science! Le bon plaisir et la charité disparaissent. Place à la justice!!

Because the masses will want to implement every detail of his anarchist plan and finally free themselves from the fetters of law and authority, they will also be able to express their true moral desires and live in perfect harmony. Yet the process of transition to the moral world is more complex than this simple statement of faith implies.

Kropotkin traces the development of anarchist morality historically and immediately through the rise of individualism. At first his argument appears quite contradictory. In every other instance Kropotkin talks of individualism and morality as antithetical: it is our "foolish individualism" which hinders the full expression of 'free agreement' and gives many of the existing and newly formed private organisations an "often...mean, if not execrable aim."<sup>18</sup> Individualism is the ideology of the commercial middle classes; it pervades existing society and perverts its publicly declared moral standards.

The nature of the paradox he presents in his discussion of moral change may be explained, however, by the ends to which Kropotkin directs his anarchist society. His examination of the question of expropriation, illustrates the general point:

it is in much the same fashion that the shrewd heads among the middle classes reason when they say, 'Ah, Expropriation! I know what that means. You take all the overcoats and lay them in a heap, and every one is free to help himself and fight for the best,'

But such jests are irrelevant as well as flippant. What we want is not a redistribution of overcoats...Nor do we want to divide up the wealth of the Rothschilds. What we do want is so to arrange things that every human being born into the world shall be ensured the opportunity, in the first instance of

learning some useful occupation, and of becoming skilled in it; and next, that he shall be free to work at his trade without asking leave of master or owner, and without handing over to landlord or capitalist the lion's share of what he produces. As to the wealth held by the Rothschilds or the Vanderbilts, it will serve us to organize our system of communal production.<sup>19</sup>

Kropotkin's anarchist society is designed only to extend the benefits that individualists acquire by means of money in existing society to the mass of the people who are otherwise excluded by their poverty from enjoying any advantage. The aim appears initially very limited. For Kropotkin, however, the development of morality from individualism mirrors his earlier consideration of luxury: in the same way that anarchy enshrines individuality by expanding the field of luxury to all citizens, anarchist morality promises that the benefits secured by individualistic behaviour can be extended to all. The concept of morality like the nature of luxury, changes in the process of this extension. Similarly, the simple redistribution of overcoats gives way to an entirely different conception of ownership.

Kropotkin argues that individualism was originally - though imperfectly - developed with such anarchistic aims in view. Notwithstanding his critique of individualism he finds that:

the development of individualism during the last three centuries is explained by the efforts of the individual to protect himself from the tyranny of Capital and of the State. For a long time he imagined, and those who expressed his thought for him declared, that he could free himself from the State and from society. 'By means of money,' he said, 'I can buy all that I need.' But the individual was on a wrong track, and modern history has taught him to recognize that, without the help of all, he can do nothing, although his strong-boxes are full of gold.<sup>20</sup>

Contrasting the egotistical and communal moral behaviours Kropotkin does not foresee the latter replacing the former but developing from it. Humanity does not have to be made 'good'; society has to be altered to facilitate its latent perfectibility. In this case the means by which the structural guarantee of the moral spirit - communism - is to be realised has yet to be discovered. The problem has both a practical and

transformational aspect. But the first stage in discussing either, lies in determining what Kropotkin means by the abolition of the State.

## 2.THE STATE

Kropotkin considers the State in entirely negative terms. Just as he denies that law can fulfil any protective function he refuses to consider that the State can serve any socially useful purpose. So strong is his conviction in the State's redundancy that he rarely deigns to discuss those theories which suggest it may have a positive value; and in accordance with his dismissal of liberal rights Kropotkin does not delve into the intricacies of any of the justificatory arguments. Instead, he matches Bakunin's muddled attempts to analyse State theory with a similarly confusing tendency to consider all proponents of the State under a single banner. Kropotkin talks of authoritarians, jacobins and parliamentarians; of Napoleon, Gladstone or Robespierre and of the 'men of science' - from Smith to Marx - who he finds lend new heavyweight support to the State ideal. Rarely does he distinguish between different thinkers or theories. For Kropotkin, the struggle is between the State and anarchy; and considering few gradations to exist in between he offers less of a theory of the State than a denunciatory critique of its existence.

Kropotkin's initial discussions of the State are often framed as vitriolic denigrations of French and British Victorian society. Demonstrating, as Cole observes, a determined political intransigence toward the world he observes around him Kropotkin assaults the values and habits of the bourgeoisie, raging against their 'puffery', their cultural decadence and their apparent concern with superficial and irrelevant luxury. He points to the outrageous waste involved in the

maintenance of society life: "in keeping up the stables, the kennels and the retinue of the rich...in pandering to the caprices of society and the depraved tastes of the fashionable mob...".<sup>21</sup> At once, the contrast Kropotkin draws is between the real and the conjectured society, where the modern world features as a noxious counter to the simple tastes and desires of the post-revolutionary community. The gulf separating the two worlds is symbolised in the comparison he makes between the genteel hostess and the forward-looking, crop-haired nihilistic woman. The latter demonstrates fiery independence by repudiating the dictates of *haute couture* and the manners of the fashionable society balls. Refusing to bow to the patriarchal commands of Church and family which identify marriage as the universally acknowledged truth to which womankind aspires, these new women are Kropotkin's role models for the future.<sup>22</sup> The former are marginal, pathetic examples of vanity, vulnerability and corruption. Discussing the necessity of achieving revolutionary change, he comments:

Quant à la fille, la bourgeoisie la corrompt dès bas âge. Lectures absurdes, poupées habillées comme des camélias, costumes et exemples édifiants de la mère, propos de boudoir...Et cette enfant sème déjà la gangrène autour d'elle: les enfants ouvriers ne regardent-ils pas avec envie cette fille bien parée, aux allures élégantes, courtisane à douze ans?<sup>23</sup>

Making such sweeping and sometimes self-righteous condemnations of Victorian culture, Kropotkin often fails to trace the root of the observed corruption. Considering the conspicuous consumption of the middle classes, for example, he does not distinguish between the pressure imposed by market fetishism and the demonstration effect induced by the requirements of court and the desire to maintain social status. His observations of women are marked by a similar vagueness; Kropotkin fails to identify whether the female offspring of the bourgeoisie are reduced to such a culturally impoverished existence by

the economic forces of capitalist society or by the political oppression of their menfolk.<sup>24</sup>

Kropotkin's neglect in these cases is not explained by a temporary offhandedness. His early writings on the State are characterised by a failure to distinguish between his terms. When he speaks of the State he is equally likely to be referring to government, parliamentary government, capitalism or capitalists - the total political and economic edifice of the nation. Exacerbating the problem of determining what he means by the State and of unravelling the nature of the relationship he posits between the political and economic arrangements of society, Kropotkin tends to define his terms identically. In *Le Révolté* Kropotkin writes, for example:

"La mission de l'État, - nous a-t-on dit pour mieux nous aveugler - c'est de protéger le faible contre le fort, le pauvre contre le riche, les classes laborieuses contre les classes privilégiées." Nous savons comment les gouvernements se sont acquittés de cette mission: ils l'ont comprise à rebours.<sup>25</sup>

Within this confusion Kropotkin presents two parallel critiques of the State. The first is based on the assumptions he makes about its function; in the second he considers the nature of the State's organisation.

In the first instance Kropotkin describes the State as the protector of dominant economic interests. Often he phrases his argument as a revelation rather than an explanation. Writing as a propagandist, he endeavours to enlighten the masses of the slyness of the State's protagonists and in order to demonstrate the need for its destruction and the abolition of the inequalities he believes it sustains.<sup>26</sup> In furtherance of this end Kropotkin repeatedly contrasts the promises made by the State with the quality of life the people endure. Whilst, for example, he finds that the statist loudly proclaim the State's strongly paternal impulses he also observes that "they do not tell us to what

extent the State itself has contributed towards the existing order by creating proletarians and delivering them up to exploiters."<sup>27</sup>

Examining the development of the private railway networks of Europe he continues to stress the extent to which the State acts to further the interests of the dominant exploitative minority:

...have we not said and repeated over and over again, that as long as there are capitalists...abuses of power will be perpetuated. It is precisely the State, the would-be benefactor, that has given to the companies that monopoly and those rights...which they possess today. Has it not created concessions, guarantees? Has it not sent its soldiers against railwaymen on strike? And during the first trials...has it not extended the privilege of the railway magnates as far as to forbid the Press to mention railway accidents, so as not to depreciate the shares it guaranteed? Has it not favoured the monopoly which has anointed the Vanderbilts and the Polyakoffs... 'the kings of our days'?<sup>28</sup>

Kropotkin explores the function of the State primarily through a critique of European parliamentary government; but his account of the democratic systems is venomous rather than informative of the State's role. As the political expression of dominant capitalist interests the representative regimes are instruments of class domination. Finding that they discharge their duties to the property owning minority with immeasurable hostility, Kropotkin complains:

...s'il s'agit de protéger les intérêts du capitaliste, menacés par l'insurrection ou même par l'agitation, - on alors, le gouvernement représentatif, organe de domination du capital devient féroce. Il frappe, et il le fait avec plus de sûreté, plus de lâcheté que n'importe quel despote...jamais Catherine II après la Jacquerie de Pougachoff, ni Louis XVI après la guerre des farines, ne firent preuve d'autant de férocité que des deux "Assemblées nationales" de 1848, et de 1871, dont les memores criaient: *Tuez les loups, les louves et le louveteaux!* et à l'unanimité, moins une voix, félicitaient de leurs massacres les soldats ivres de sang!<sup>29</sup>

Parliamentary government, Kropotkin argues, fatally compromises the principles it claims to uphold.<sup>30</sup> The people should not become complacent for they are in no better position under parliament than they were under monarchy. Appealing to the masses not to be deluded by the promises and self-publicising claims government makes, Kropotkin reiterates the nature of the determining influence of the economic

structure whilst observing the manner in which the parliamentary democracies confer benefits preferentially:

Fidèle à son origine, le gouvernement a toujours été le protecteur du privilège contre ceux qui cherchaient à s'en affranchir. Le gouvernement représentatif en particulier a organisé la défense, avec la connivence du peuple, de tous les privilèges de la bourgeoisie commerçante et industrielle contre l'aristocratie d'une part, contre les exploités de l'autre, - modeste, poite, bien élevée envers les uns, féroce contre les autres.<sup>31</sup>

Kropotkin is not completely neglectful of the historical development of government or of the differences between various forms of government. He admits, for example, that the modern regimes which people have fought for and won represent an improvement on the autocracies of old - even if they exhibit the same murderous tendencies. Acknowledging this, however, Kropotkin often makes the point quite facetiously and remains always more interested in demonstrating the continuity between different forms of government.<sup>32</sup> Usually, Kropotkin asserts this continuity by highlighting the similarities between the more popularly discredited monarchical systems and the generally well-regarded parliamentary successors. If the two forms of government differ in any real sense, he argues, it is only because modern parliamentarianism has exaggerated the operational features devised by the monarchs and autocrats and used them to its own effect. In every other respect representative government is as regressive as the *ancien régime* which the masses despatched so imperfectly.

Ce qui nous importe, hommes de la fin du dix-neuvième siècle, c'est de savoir si les vices du gouvernement représentatif ne sont pas aussi criants, aussi insupportables que l'étaient ceux du pouvoir absolu? Si les obstacles qu'il oppose au développement ultérieur des sociétés ne sont pas, pour notre siècle, aussi gênants que l'étaient les obstacles opposés par la monarchie au siècle passé? Enfin, si un simple replâtrage représentatif peut suffire pour la nouvelle phase économique dont nous entrevoyons l'avènement? Voilà ce qu'il s'agit d'étudier, au lieu de discuter à perte de vue sur le rôle historique du régime politique de la bourgeoisie.<sup>33</sup>

Pointing to what he believes to be the inevitable fraudulence of the political structure Kropotkin admits the attractiveness of the

parliamentary principle. But recognising the particular strength that modern government derives from the claim to be representative, causes him only to redouble his efforts to disenchant the masses with the parliamentary system. The introduction of the vote, he insists, has a mere cosmetic significance. With characteristic cynicism, he comments on manhood suffrage:

Après s'y être longtemps opposée, la bourgeoisie a fini par comprendre qu'il ne compromettrait nullement sa domination, et elle s'est décidée à l'accepter.<sup>34</sup>

Kropotkin fights a particularly hard verbal battle with the recalcitrant British socialist movement, in a similar attempt to convince the working masses of the hopelessness of organising their own political parties. Issuing constant warnings of the dangers of pursuing such a strategy Kropotkin typically returns to the nature of the determining influence that class interests have on government. But widening his consideration of the State and government he suggests that government also has a 'political aspect'. In *Freedom*, he comments:

One of the most mischievous prejudices we have to get rid of in order to begin the new life of Socialism, is the belief in parliamentary rule. Parliament has in this country rendered so many services in the struggle against the rule of the Court, and the nation has been so much accustomed to connect with Parliament its reminiscences of struggle for political liberties, that even among Socialists some vague belief in Parliament still lingers; a fancy that it may in future become an instrument for ridding the nation of the rule of Capital.

Not that such a belief is always held consciously. Much has happened, on the contrary, during the last twenty years to weaken to some extent the old faith in Parliament. The intelligent workman already often asks himself whether Parliament, which has been so powerful an instrument in substituting the rule of the middle classes for that of the aristocracy, can possibly be utilised as an instrument for demolishing the rule of those very classes. Nevertheless, many Socialists, directing their chief attention to the economic aspect of the Social Question, overlook its political aspects.<sup>35</sup>

Kropotkin's analysis of organisation or the 'political aspect' of government, is again designed to incite the masses to abandon their affection for the State and rebel against it. In pursuing his attack, Kropotkin isolates two defining characteristics of State organisation. In the first instance the State and government are essentially violent

institutions. His second critique concerns the tendency of the State towards centralisation.

Considering the violence of the State Kropotkin refers not to the nature of inter-class hostilities but to inter-State or inter-government relations. He looks therefore, at the conduct of international politics, portraying world affairs to be essentially aggressive. Europe, by virtue of the refinement of the governmental systems it supports, exists in constant readiness for war. In *Le Révolté*, he warns: "Qui dit 'État' nécessairement dit 'guerre'".<sup>36</sup>

In the modern world international conflicts, Kropotkin admits, always result from a desire to secure new markets -

Ouvrir de nouveaux marchés, imposer ses marchandises, bonnes ou mauvaises, - voilà le fond de toute la politique actuelle, européenne et continentale, - la vraie cause des guerres du dix-neuvième siècle.<sup>37</sup>

- but it is the State rather than the economic forces which determine the inherent aggressiveness of international relations. The establishment of the State or of government is a concentric act, necessarily involving competition and conflict with other States or areas yet to be brought under the influence of governmental control. Whilst the feuds of nineteenth century Europe, he notes, are fought largely over the control of new colonies, monarchical relations were conducted on personal rather than economic lines.<sup>38</sup> For Kropotkin, it is not the market but the State which is inherently combative.<sup>39</sup>

Kropotkin's thoughts about centralisation bring his conception of government close to Proudhon's famous formulation: in not so many words to be governed is to have every aspect of public life regulated and controlled. Kropotkin's understanding of government centralisation is not, as Proudhon's definition implies, unchanging. Government, Kropotkin finds, contains an impetus to growth and may be observed to be constantly increasing the area of its responsibility. Government

develops organically, continually appropriating the peoples' power of decision to itself and placing the administration of everyday life within its own purview. In accordance with his view of the functional role of government and State Kropotkin tends to use parliamentary government to illustrate this expansive propensity. Whatever claims are made to the contrary constitutional government is both an example, and a natural result of the principle of growth rather than an exception to the general rule: "Monarchy has centralised all the life of the nation in its hands, and Parliament has merely continued what monarchy has begun",<sup>40</sup> he comments at one point. Thus, although the so-called democracies may seek to characterise themselves as being representative of the peoples' will, all they really represent is an unacceptable intrusion into the peoples' lives.

Semblable en cela aux despotes, le gouvernement représentatif, - qu'il s'appelle Parlement, Convention, Conseil de la Commune... cherchera toujours à étendre sa législation, à renforcer toujours le pouvoir en s'ingérant dans toute chose, en tuant l'initiative de l'individu et de groupe pour les supplanter par la loi. Sa tendance, naturelle, inévitable, sera de prendre l'individu dès son enfance, et de le mener de loi en loi, de menace en punition, de berceau au tombeau, sans jamais affranchir cette proie de sa haute surveillance. A-t-on jamais vu une assemblée élue se déclarer incompétente sur n'importe quoi? Plus elle est révolutionnaire, et plus elle s'empare de tout ce qui n'est pas de sa compétence. Légiférer sur toutes les manifestations de l'activité humaine, s'immiscer jusque dans les moindres détails de la vie de "ses sujets", - c'est l'essence même de l'État, du gouvernement. Créer un gouvernement, constitutionnel ou non, c'est constituer une force qui fatalement cherchera à s'emparer de tout, à réglementer toutes les fonctions de la société, sans reconnaître d'autre frein que celui que nous pourrons lui opposer de temps en temps par l'agitation ou l'insurrection. Le gouvernement parlementaire, - il l'a assez prouvé, - ne fait pas exception à la règle.<sup>41</sup>

The process of centralisation he observes in the relationship between the State or government and society is also at work within government. As it expands its role in society, government also delimits responsibility to the smallest possible minority within its own decision-making machinery:

...tout gouvernement a une tendance à devenir personnel; c'est son origine; c'est son essence... Tant que nous confierons à un petit groupe toutes ces attributions économiques, politiques, militaires, financières, industrielles, etc., etc., dont nous l'armons aujourd'hui, ce petit groupe tendra

nécessairement, comme un détachement de soldats en campagne, à se soumettre à chef unique.<sup>42</sup>

Though fastening onto the nature of French politics, Kropotkin's observation of this tendency stretches beyond a consideration of Bonapartism. For Kropotkin, the leadership principle is one which is universal to all government systems. As if to reinforce the point Kropotkin himself tends to personalise European government, talking not of the German Reichstag but of Bismarck and less of the British Parliament than of Gladstone and Disraeli. Moreover, he finds that the State's micro and macrocosmic tendencies toward centralisation are self-sustaining. As the State expands, crushing individual initiative and depriving the masses of undertaking any free enterprises of their own, it makes itself increasingly indispensable. In the course of their expansion State and government establish a pattern of social relations based on a distinction between ruler and ruled. This relational quality is the same as that which he observes to be active within authority and law; and he argues similarly that the imposition of government and State establishes a 'prejudice' which provides the conditions for its continued existence. Here Kropotkin advances the point in relation to representative government:

Règle générale. "Voulez-vous étudier avec fruit? Commencez par imposer un à un les mille préjugés qui vous furent enseignés!" - Ces paroles, par lesquelles un astronome célèbre commençait ses cours, s'appliquent également à toutes les branches de connaissances humaines: beaucoup plus encore aux sciences sociales qu'aux sciences physiques; parce que, dès les premiers pas dans le domaine de celle-ci, nous nous trouvons en présence d'une masse de préjugés hérités des temps passés, d'idées absolument fausses, lancées pour mieux tromper le peuple, de sophismes minutieusement élaborés pour fausser le jugement populaire...  
...parmi ces préjugés il y en a un qui mérite surtout notre attention...c'est celui qui consiste à mettre sa foi en un *gouvernement représentatif*, en un *gouvernement par procuration*<sup>43</sup>

Extending the identification of terms Kropotkin makes the same observation about the State.<sup>44</sup> Government and State cause the masses to believe that they should submit themselves to the judgement of an

external force and to relinquish their own forms of governance in preference to those of the centralised authority.<sup>45</sup> At no time since the State's genesis has this prejudice been challenged. On the contrary, he argues, each successive generation of leaders has in turn exploited the State prejudice to justify its own particular form of domination. Whilst over time the masses progressively lose the habit of making decisions for themselves, government takes control of such vast areas of the public domain that its supremacy anyway becomes unassailable. Tracing the development of parliamentary government from its monarchical roots, Kropotkin comments:

The Parliament begins with the fairest promises. Again, there will be no taxes but those freely agreed to by the nation. Like the King in the first days of monarchy, the middle-class representatives begin by promising peace, security of life, freedom. They will listen to the voice of the nation, and never legislate otherwise than in accordance with that voice. The interests of the labourer and workman will be their supreme rule. 'Only obey the Parliament better than you have obeyed the King, and all will be right'. They have seen that force alone will not do, and they try to establish their reign on persuasion. They surround Parliament with a kind of sacredness; by their books, their schools, their press, they try to convince the nation of the benefits of parliamentary rule. University and pulpit unite in supporting Parliament. The political powers are more and more concentrated, and the political machinery becomes so intricate as to make people believe that only men of superior intelligence, guided by a Peel, a Palmerston, a Beaconsfield, or a Gladstone, are capable of holding the rudder of the nation amidst 'the tempests'. All must be centralised in the hands of these saviours of the people.<sup>46</sup>

In Kropotkin's mind there is no more justification for the centralisation of the political life of the community than there is for its naked exploitation and he incites the masses to react with equal verve against the incursions of the State machine as against the economic inequalities it serves to protect. He advances the point both against liberals and in order to denigrate the marxists. Marxism, Kropotkin complains, does not promise to liberate society. Rather, focusing narrowly on the question of economic transformation, marxist socialism promises only to further the process of centralisation to the greatest possible limits:

What do they indicate as the goal of our endeavours beyond the parliamentary rule of a Democratic Republic; that is, the same sort of political institution which has so admirably favoured the growth of Capital rule in the United States and Switzerland, and so admirably adapts itself to capitalist exploitation, capitalist wars, and capitalist oppression in France? They argue, of course, that in a society where there will be no individual owners of land and capital, parliamentary rule will be no longer a failure: that it will not check the free development of a free society of workers without capitalists or middlemen. But in the meantime Life is taking another direction...which will be as different from parliamentary rule as parliamentary rule is different from Absolute Monarchy.<sup>47</sup>

For Kropotkin, society is taking a different path, without government or State. The 'tendency' of society is towards the building of the decentralised agglomerated community. His analysis of capitalism both substantiates this view and provides the economic conditions for its realisation.

### 3. CAPITALISM

Paralleling the implicit comparison he draws between the corrupt decadence of nineteenth century bourgeois society and the simplicity of anarchist life in his discussions of the State, Kropotkin considers capitalism in terms of the contrast it forms with the work practices and conditions of the future. Under capitalism work is neither pleasant nor balanced by time available for leisure activity. Conditions are squalid, even dangerous; little effort is made to improve the workplace or to introduce mechanisation. Workers are committed to labouring at least ten hours a day. To this extent Kropotkin understands the evils of capitalism to be bound up with the process of industrialisation and urban development. Here his observations are framed in the context of a discussion of skilled and unskilled labour:

in comparison with the feeble minority of workers who enjoy a certain comfort, how many millions of human beings live from hand to mouth, without a secure wage, ready to go wherever they are wanted; how many peasants work fourteen hours a day for a poor pittance! Capital depopulates the country, exploits the colonies and the countries where industries are but little developed, dooms the immense majority of workmen to remain without technical education, to remain

mediocre even in their own trade.

This is not merely accidental, it is a necessity of the capitalist system. In order well to remunerate certain classes of workmen, peasants *must* become the beasts of burden of society; the country *must* be deserted for the town; small trades must agglomerate in the foul suburbs of large cities, and manufacture a thousand little things for next to nothing, so as to bring the goods of the greater industries within reach of buyers with small salaries.<sup>48</sup>

The uniqueness of Kropotkin's understanding of capitalism does not lie in the association he makes with industrialisation, however, but in the analysis he presents of capitalist development. Rather than considering capitalism as a development of the market or, as in marxism, the economic system in which "the market has become the universal regulator of the economy and market relations have extended over the entire society",<sup>49</sup> Kropotkin considers capitalism primarily in terms of the evolution of economic thought. Capitalism, he argues, has been created by generations of 'expert' economists who have placed the notion of production at the centre of their thought.

If you open the works of any economist you will find that he begins with PRODUCTION, i.e., by the analysis of the means employed nowadays for the creation of wealth: division of labour, the factory, its machinery, the accumulation of capital. From Adam Smith to Marx, all have proceeded along these lines. Only in the latter parts of their books do they treat of CONSUMPTION, that is to say, of the means resorted to in our present society to satisfy the needs of the individuals; and even there they confine themselves to explaining how riches are divided among those who vie with one another for their possession.<sup>50</sup>

Of course, he continues, it is logical to produce. Needs cannot be satisfied unless society creates "the wherewithal to satisfy them". But

before producing anything, must you not feel the need of it?...is it not not the study of needs that should govern production? To say the least, it would therefore be quite as logical to begin by considering the needs, and afterwards to discuss how production is, and ought to be, organized, in order to satisfy these needs.<sup>51</sup>

Kropotkin hardly distinguishes capitalist economics by the concern it shows with production: Marx, he finds, fails to question the basic tenets of modern economic thinking and his ideas remain fixed to the desire to manipulate the productive forces in society.<sup>52</sup> His understanding of the way in which ideas of production have developed

nevertheless serves as the background for his examination of capitalism; and the expression capitalism has given to this wider ideology provides the basis of his particular critique.

Understanding capitalism as a theory of production Kropotkin traces its development historically. Capitalism, he argues, is the most modern manifestation of a set of ideas which has received expression from generations stretching back to the feudal era and beyond. The emphasis capitalism places on the need to produce has its origins in the period when "men fashioned their rude implements of flint and lived on the precarious spoils of hunting" and had necessarily to concentrate on production in order "fight for their wretched existence."<sup>53</sup> In order to secure the basic means of life, Kropotkin argues, individuals had to become producers. They were forced by the primitive conditions of the time to use the resources around them and take care of their immediate needs: "Was it not necessity that first drove man to hunt, to raise cattle, to cultivate land, to make implements, and later on to invent machinery?"<sup>54</sup>

As humanity developed, populations became more concentrated and within the developing communities, resources became relatively less scarce. Production was made easier and more efficient. Previously forested areas of land were cleared for cultivation, marshes drained, tools developed, new industries pursued and transport and communications improved. Ideas about the importance of production changed in turn. Though the need to produce still occupied individuals in society the relative efficiency of production and the ease with which basic needs were provided for gave rise to the development of the idea of directing production towards the realisation of collective goals. Part of the economy, at least, was organised collectively:

Time was when a peasant family could consider the corn it sowed and reaped, or the woollen garments woven in the cottage as the products of its own soil. But

even then this way of looking at things was not quite correct. There were the roads and the bridges made in common, the swamps drained by common toil, the communal pastures enclosed by hedges which were kept in repair by each and all. If the looms for weaving or the dyes for colouring or the fabrics were improved by somebody, all profited; and even in those days a peasant family could not live alone, but was dependent in a thousand ways on the village or the commune.<sup>55</sup>

As the economy was being transformed, Kropotkin finds that society failed to take full advantage of the potential offered by developing the collective ideal to its fullest extent. Peoples became increasingly polarised between the ancient and new ways of thinking: in spite of the huge economic strides that had been made since primitive times the old ideas of individual production lingered on. In the longer term these older ideas proved stronger than the collective principles which were concerned with providing for the needs of the community. Not only did production continue to feature as the chief end of society but as the needs of the consuming masses were being obviously ignored, the intention of production was totally transformed. By the later middle ages, Kropotkin finds, production had become indissolubly linked with property ownership. Extending the instinct of self-preservation and the principle of individual ownership in the product of one's labour, a minority appropriated vast tracts of land in order to derive exclusive ownership from the labour of others.

A feudal baron seizes on a fertile valley. But as long as the fertile valley is empty of folk our baron is not rich. His land brings him in nothing; he might as well possess a property in the moon. What does our baron do to enrich himself? He looks out for peasants - for poor peasants!<sup>56</sup>

Developed from a feudal root, capitalism, Kropotkin contends, is based on the same division between owners and producers but has extended the inequalities of feudal property ownership and widened the distinction between the 'haves' and 'have nots' in society. Kropotkin notes how capitalists artificially restrict production in times of glut in order to maintain their profit margins and how, as a consequence,

whole armies of workers, periodically thrown into unemployment, are prevented from accumulating savings. He also observes how the owning classes invest profits in speculative projects instead of creative enterprises and how, by increasing the return on their money they further widen the gap between themselves and the non-owning wage labourers they employ.<sup>57</sup> Capitalism operates on the same principles as feudalism and capitalist wealth is amassed by the same deliberate "knavery". Where formerly the baron attracted the peasant to the land by promising rent-free accommodation and providing superior tools, the capitalist, however, entices labour by the promise of factory employment. In doing so, the capitalist does not extend any paternal goodwill to the working masses. On the contrary, as the system of property ownership has been developed to the exclusion of the majority, the capitalist operates with the knowledge that "the towns and villages swarm with workers who have not the wherewithal to live for a month..." and that the offer of work will not be refused.<sup>58</sup> Barely concealing his bitterness toward the capitalist class Kropotkin charges "our worthy citizen" who starts the factory with deliberately entrapping the labourers whose production he subsequently commands:

Unhappily...the poor quarters of our towns and the neighbouring villages are full of needy wretches, whose children clamour for bread. So, before the factory is well finished, the workers hasten to offer themselves. Where a hundred are required three hundred besiege the doors...  
 ...[The owner] is thus able to lay by a snug fortune; and if he chooses a lucrative trade, and has 'business talents', he will soon increase his income by doubling the number of men he exploits.<sup>59</sup>

Presenting this analysis of capitalist development Kropotkin does not avoid publicising his differences with Marx. Denying the validity of marxist economics, nor does he attempt to use marxist terminology to advance his own position. Kropotkin's thought eschews marxist categories altogether. His conception of 'capital', for example, is clearly far wider than Marx's. Kropotkin does not consider its

creation in terms of the development of labour as a commodity or in relation to the extraction of surplus value any more than he considers capitalism as an historical development of the market. For Kropotkin, 'capital' covers all assets capable of generating a flow of income; except in so far as he tends to associate capital with industry, it is not historically specific. This belief hardly makes him a 'vulgar economist': Kropotkin is not led by his analysis of production to defend or rationalise the laissez-faire system of supply and demand. The unregulated economy, he finds, obscures the nature of the social relations it creates. But in addition, the evil of capitalism lies beyond a consideration of the relations between the exploiters and exploited already in existence. In the emphasis capitalism places on endless production and by virtue of the particularly squalid industrial processes it involves, it prevents a 'return' to the condition of collective consumption and to relations which have not yet been brought into being. In *The Conquest of Bread*, he explains:

The evil of the present system is therefore not that the 'surplus value' of production goes to the capitalist, as Rodbertus and Marx said, thus narrowing the Socialist conception and the general view of the capitalist system; the surplus value itself is but a consequence of deeper causes. The evil lies in *the possibility of surplus value existing*, for, that a surplus value should exist, means that men, women and children are compelled by hunger to sell their labour for a small part of what this labour produces, and still more so, of what their labour is capable of producing...As long as men are compelled to pay a heavy tribute to property holders for the right of cultivating land or putting machinery into action, and the owners of the land and the machine are free to produce what bids fair to bring them in the largest profits - rather than the greatest amount of useful commodities - well-being can only be temporarily guaranteed to a very few...It is not sufficient to distribute the profits realized by trade in equal parts, if at the same time thousands of other workers are exploited. It is a case of PRODUCING THE GREATEST AMOUNT OF GOODS NECESSARY TO THE WELL-BEING OF ALL, WITH THE LEAST POSSIBLE WASTE OF HUMAN ENERGY.<sup>60</sup>

For Kropotkin the capacity to re-organise the economy in order that needs be considered above the requirement to produce lies within the modification of the capitalist system. In part, Kropotkin's conclusion is a truism based on his characterisation of capitalism as the most

modern form of economic exploitation. In addition it is derived from the uniqueness he identifies in the operation of capitalism. Developing the idea of production to the furthest possible limits capitalism operates on the basis of a needless division of labour and principle of specialisation.

In keeping with his general analysis of the historical development of capitalism, Kropotkin represents the principles of specialisation and the division of labour as academic inventions of economists rather than as the spontaneous developments of social or market relations. Adam Smith "the father of modern Political Economy" is the main object of Kropotkin's contempt but as he considers all economists to have blindly followed Smith in his findings, he also manages to make use of his critique of the division of labour to further to vilify Marx.

In common with his examination of the State, Kropotkin begins his discussion of specialisation and the division of labour critically and as though to provide reasons for its abolition. The problem with the theory lies in two areas. In the first instance, Kropotkin examines the effect it has upon the individual. Here, he notes that the theory builds upon the existing divisions between possessing and non-possessing classes to establish a distinction between 'mental' and 'manual' labour and cast it in stone. Under Smith's tutelage the principle has been continually refined such that forge workers, for example, become "smiths who only know how to make heads or points of nails".<sup>61</sup>

We know the consequence of the division of labour full well. It is evident that, first of all, we are divided into two classes: on the one hand, producers, who consume very little and are exempt from thinking because they only do physical work, and who work badly because their brains remain inactive; and on the other hand, the consumers, who, producing little or hardly anything, have the privilege of thinking for the others, and who think very badly because the whole world of those who toil with their hands is unknown to them...The division of labour means labelling and stamping men for life - some to splice ropes in factories, some to be foremen in a business, others to shove huge coal-baskets in a particular part of a mine; but none of them to have any idea of machinery as a whole, nor of business, nor of mines. And thereby they destroy the love of work and the capacity for invention that, at the beginning of modern industry,

created the machinery on which we pride ourselves so much.<sup>62</sup>

The greater part of Kropotkin's complaints are concentrated on the effects the theory has on the majority of the labouring classes. Nevertheless he recognises that all workers including those in the middle classes are victims of the system. Even if they are relatively privileged and do not have to suffer the indignities thrust upon the mass working movement, bourgeois workers are obliged to confine their activities and train their minds onto specific and dull tasks:

it must also be said that if, thanks to their privileged position, rich people often perform absolutely useless or even harmful work in society, nevertheless the Ministers, Heads of Departments, factory owners, traders, bankers, etc., subject themselves for a number of hours every day to work which they find more or less tiresome, all preferring their hours of leisure...<sup>63</sup>

The stultification that specialisation implies for the individual is similarly signified on an international plain. Mockingly, Kropotkin remarks:

What they have done for individuals, they also wanted to do for nations. Humanity was to be divided into national workshops, having each its speciality. Russia, we were taught, was destined by nature to grow corn; England to spin cotton; Belgium to weave cloth; while Switzerland was to train nurses and governesses. Moreover, each separate city was to establish a speciality. Lyon was to weave silk, Auvergne to make lace, and Paris fancy articles. In this way, economists said, an immense field was opened for production and consumption, and in this way an era of limitless wealth for mankind was at hand.<sup>64</sup>

Kropotkin's incredulity that anyone could accept the feasibility of the idea is based on his critique of its practical realisation. Pursuing this argument Kropotkin begins by remarking on the imperialistic arrogance which inspired the theory. As the first industrial nation England introduced the concept of the division of labour without a thought for the foreign economies it was ruining. English manufacturers simply conceived all other nations as suppliers of raw materials and consumers of finished industrial goods. India, he comments, existed only to export

raw material - cotton fibre, unwashed wool, spices, etc., to the mother-land. And the mother-land, under pretence of sending them manufactured wares,

gets rid of her damaged stuffs, her machine scrap-iron and everything which she no longer has any use for. It costs her little or nothing, and none the less the articles are sold at exorbitant prices.<sup>65</sup>

Rather than attempting to satisfy the needs of the home communities - or even flood the domestic markets with useless goods - the nation turned the force of its economic effort outwards in order to extend production and increase profits. England began willingly to exploit the outside world as it already exploited its domestic workforce. Of more practical importance, however, Kropotkin finds that the development of this productive system created new and more dangerous problems for the exploited. Whilst the workshop of the world initiated the process of economic colonisation, other European nations entered upon a similar plan of foreign expansion and sought out their own tributaries. Germany and France, Kropotkin finds, embarked on policies of naked colonial exploitation and similarly externalising the effort of their national economic forces became equally guilty of imperialism.

The damaging repercussions of the European nations' aggressiveness, Kropotkin argues, are apparent in both national and international spheres. For as long as the owners of capital continue to divert resources away from the satisfaction of home needs and engage in a futile search for new foreign markets home workers will forever experience artificial shortages and long-term restrictions on production created by a failure to invest. In addition, for as long as industrialists find it attractive to make "Egyptian fellahs, Italian emigrants and Chinese coolies their wage-slaves"<sup>66</sup> domestic workers will be condemned to unemployment and all workers will be forced to sell their labour for paltry and insufficient wages. International trade is by its nature unstable; and the uncertainties created by problems of transport, of climate, or by the reluctance of colonial peoples to surrender to the demands of the theory of specialisation creates such

instability and recession at home that the work force is subject to periodic economic crises and impoverishment.

But not only is home production artificially restricted by collapses of the trading cycle. International trade, Kropotkin argues, involves enormous administrative costs. Colonial expansion involves the creation of new bureaucracies, new armies and the construction of supporting infrastructures. All have to be paid for, further diverting resources. Kropotkin concludes:

The result of this state of things is that all our production tends in a wrong direction. Enterprise takes no thought for the needs of the community...Hence the constant fluctuations of trade, the periodical industrial crises, each of which throws scores of thousands of workers on the streets.

The working people cannot purchase with their wages the wealth which they have produced, and industry seeks foreign markets among the monied classes of other nations. In the East, in Africa, everywhere, in Egypt, Tonkin or the Congo, the European is thus bound to promote the growth of serfdom. And so he does. But soon he finds that everywhere there are similar competitors. All the nations evolve on the same lines, and wars, perpetual wars, break out for the right of precedence in the market. Wars for the possession of the East, wars for the empire of the sea, wars to impose duties on imports and to dictate conditions to neighbouring states; wars against those 'blacks' who revolt! The roar of the cannon never ceases in the world, whole races are massacred, the states of Europe spend a third of their budgets in armaments; and we know how heavily these taxes fall on the workers.<sup>67</sup>

Having advanced this assault upon the theory of specialisation and division of labour Kropotkin does not just argue that Smith's thesis was in error in the sense that he believes all theories of production to be. The real problem with the division of labour, Kropotkin finds, rests in the observed process of its disintegration. Paradoxically he locates both the supreme injustice of the capitalist system and the means for its correction not in the introduction of the theory of the division of labour but in its operational failure. Capitalism is not to be abolished so much as to be taken advantage of.

Kropotkin's assumption of the decline of capitalist production is contained in the attack he launches on the inherent wastefulness and aggressiveness of international trade. Those nations which were

encouraged by the concept to concentrate on the production of raw materials for export to the industrialised nations have refused to be specialised. Instead they have developed a range of home industries and exploited their natural resources to the full. Whatever the theory intended individual nations have rejected the idea that they were in some way destined by nature to grow or produce only certain goods and have eroded the system by the development of their home economies. The process, Kropotkin argues, has affected Britain particularly badly:

Scotland no longer refines sugar for Russia: refined Russian sugar is imported into England. Italy, although neither possessing coal nor iron, makes her own iron-clads and engines for her steamers. Chemical industry is no longer an English monopoly; sulphuric acid and soda are made even in the Uraï. Steam-engines made at Winterthur have acquired everywhere a wide reputation, and at the present moment, Switzerland, which has neither coal nor iron, and no seaports to import them - nothing but excellent technical schools - makes machinery better and cheaper than England. So ends the theory of Exchange.<sup>68</sup>

Identifying this failure in the division of labour Kropotkin finally concludes that the possibility of realising universal 'well-being' has been demonstrated. The refusal of nations to be specialised has proved the capacity of each country, or area, or even city, to establish the wherewithal to satisfy its own needs. New machinery and new industry have proved to be adaptable to all environments; all land receptive to new ways of cultivation and fertilisation. Were trading to stop - which he believes it should do, and would do in the event of a revolution - countries could not only produce their own manufactures they could even amply feed themselves. Scarcity, he contends, has been overcome: capitalism conceals this fact because of the exaggerated emphasis it continues to place on the need to produce, to market and to make profit when there is no longer any human reason to do so. Needs may be satisfied and communities are potentially free to redirect their attention away from production and towards the local demands of consumption. Not only is it possible to take advantage of the

disintegration of the system of specialisation, the collapse of the division of labour indicates that the natural tendency of society lies in following this path of development. "The tendency of trade, as for all else, its toward decentralization", he argues in *The Conquest of Bread*:

Every nation finds it advantageous to combine agriculture with the greatest possible variety of factories. The specialization of which economists spoke so highly certainly has enriched a number of capitalists, but is now no longer of any use. On the contrary, it is to the advantage of every region, every nation, to grow their own wheat, their own vegetables, and to manufacture at home most of the produce they consume. This diversity is the surest pledge of the complete development of production by mutual cooperation, and the moving cause of progress, while specialization is now a hindrance to progress. Agriculture can only prosper in proximity to factories. And no sooner does a single factory appear than an infinite variety of other factories *must* spring up around, so that, mutually supporting and stimulating one another by their inventions, they increase their productivity.<sup>69</sup>

According to Marx's formulation in the *Manifesto*, Kropotkin's understanding of capitalism identifies him as a 'petty-bourgeois' socialist.<sup>70</sup> According to this characterisation his critique is backward-looking and demonstrative of a desire to return a condition of society apparently 'exploded' by the historical development of those forces he attacks. Whatever other relevance the characterisation may have, Kropotkin cannot be accused of wanting to return to any past system of property relations - not even to his romanticised version of them. On the contrary, by advocating and revealing how society may step back from the principle of unregulated production, how it may free itself from the principle of specialisation and the division of labour and thereby return to the undeveloped principle of collective consumption, Kropotkin argues that property and property relations can and should be abolished altogether. The way to rid society of capitalism and instigate the process of decentralisation lies in expropriating the owners of land and capital. This process, he argues, in turn both necessitates and brings about the abolition of the State.

The nature of the relationship between these two movements is examined in the next section.

#### 4. BASE AND SUPERSTRUCTURE

Kropotkin's critiques of the State and capitalism contribute to his understanding of anarchy in different ways. His analysis of the pressures inherent in the organisation of the State and government clarifies the extent to which the anarchist federation is 'without government' by imposing on the communal units a profound decentralisation of political responsibility. Kropotkin's understanding of capitalism provides the conditions on which economic autarky may be satisfied and an indication why he is so confident that society can effectively overcome the problem of scarcity. His attacks on the State and capitalism provide separate reasons for the masses to undertake the reformation of society. The function that government and State assume and the way in which capitalism operates, Kropotkin contends, represent sufficient grounds for instigating anarchist change.

The various critiques Kropotkin raises against the State and capitalism demonstrate the desirability and importance of realising communism and, through the implementation of the principle of distribution according to need, the possibility of releasing humanity's best instincts. The critiques do not, however, indicate the extent to which the creation of anarchist morality is encompassed by anarchist change or how change is to be brought about. Solving these problems requires a clarification of Kropotkin's understanding of the relationship between the State and capitalism.

Anarchist thought tends to consider the relationship between the State and capitalism in terms of a dispute with marxism.

Notwithstanding the various pronouncements made by marxists, and particularly Lenin, on the supposed 'withering away of the State', anarchists have always been keen to stress their differences with the marxist conception of the State.<sup>71</sup> For the anarchists, the root of the dispute is usually identified to lie in Marx's concept of 'political power'. In marxism, the anarchists argue, this concept is mistakenly confused with the notion of the 'State'.<sup>72</sup> Their argument falls into three parts: (i) defining 'political power' in the *Manifesto* as "the organized power of one class for the suppression of another",<sup>73</sup> (but holding to similar definitions elsewhere), Marx is said to posit the concept on his presumption of class antagonism or, more specifically, the antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat; (ii) being thus dependent upon the existence of class struggle, 'political power', the anarchists contend, is said to be an expression of the ownership or non-ownership of the means of production and, therefore, ultimately of the 'economic base'; (iii) in the resolution of the class struggle, when the bourgeoisie ceases to exist as a class and capitalism is abolished, Marx, the anarchists continue, also considers that 'political power' ceases to exist. But, the anarchists charge, whilst the State may be denied its 'class-political' status, it continues to have a definite existence.

As the anarchists perceive it, the 'State' and the 'political power' of the State are separate ideas and relate to the economic 'sub-structure' in different ways. The abolition of capitalism will be expected to bring about an adjustment in the political organisation or the government of society, but it will not necessarily result in the abolition of the State. The anarchist conception of the Social Revolution thus involves a two-tier attack: first, against capitalism or, more vaguely 'economic exploitation'; secondly, against the State.

In all of his discussions of the State Kropotkin follows the classic anarchist line of thought and distinguishes between the anarchist and marxist understandings. Quite often his antipathy to the marxist position is indicated on a personal level. Following Bakunin's lead, Kropotkin illustrates what he sees as the duplicity of the marxists' declared aim of achieving the stateless society by holding Marx personally guilty of harbouring dictatorial intentions. His German origin, Kropotkin bluntly argues, adequately proves the contention. In whatever other ways he differs from Bismarck, Metternich or the Kaiser, his cultural background, Kropotkin contends, leads Marx to share what he considers to be the Germanic notion that history progresses through the development of the State; that the political State is the most advanced form of social community to which mankind can aspire; and that there needs to be high degree of social, political and economic centralisation in order to harmonise otherwise discordant interests. Filtered downwards by a tradition of strong disciplinarian leadership, these ideas are apparent at every level of German society. Considering what he believes, or at least represents, to be the general disillusion of the European working people with the concept of parliamentary rule, he comments, for example, that "Germany alone seems to be an exception to the rule. Its Radicals and Socialists seem still to see their ideal in Robespierre's Jacobinism, i.e., in a Republic strongly centralised."<sup>74</sup> Similarly, anticipating the nature of the national differences which will distinguish the more highly developed revolutionary Latin mass from the conservative Teutonic peoples, he notes:

we must be prepared to see these [revolutionary] outbreaks taking very different characters in different countries. Germany most probably will try to overthrow the Monarchy and to introduce a Republican form of Government; and it is most probable that attempts at substituting the present private ownership of land and great industrial concerns by State ownership will be made in the same country. But State ownership and State help to associations of workmen would not find much echo in this country, [Britain] and still less in France, or in Spain. In France, the revolution will almost undoubtedly proceed by proclaiming

independent Communes...<sup>15</sup>

Always elevating the 'Latin' peoples to the position of the revolutionary vanguard, Kropotkin also discusses his differences with the marxist concept of the State in terms of the division between revolutionary 'theorists' and 'practitioners'. In a brief examination of the progress of the revolutionary spirit from 1793 to 1848 and 1871 - all three being crucial dates in Kropotkin's historical calendar - he finds that the ideals of the masses have been betrayed consistently by the theorists of revolution. He comments:

Le jour de la révolution, le collectiviste-étatiste courra s'installer à l'Hôtel-de-Ville de Paris, d'où il lancera ses décrets sur le régime de la propriété; il cherchera à se constituer en gouvernement formidable, fourrant son nez partout, jusqu'à statistiquer et décréter nombre de poules élevées à Fouilly-les-Oies... Tandis que le communiste-anarchiste ira prendre possession sur-le-champ, des ateliers, des maisons, des greniers à pié, bref de toute la richesse sociale, et cherchera à organiser dans chaque commune, dans chaque groupe, la production et la consommation en commun, afin de pourvoir à tous les besoins des communes et des groupes fédérés.<sup>16</sup>

Beyond his cruder denunciations of Marx and the equally vulgar culturally stereotypical observations he makes of the Teutonic personality, Kropotkin's theoretical reasoning appears, however, to be less certainly distinct from the despised authoritarianism of the State socialists. His enthusiastic espousal of communism and his passionate appeals to the anarchists to rescind their affiliation with collectivist ideas provides a superficial sense of similarity (in spite of his attempts to associate Marx with collectivism). More importantly, Kropotkin extends this image of shared beliefs to an acknowledgement of the relationship Marx posits between the political 'super-structure' and the economic 'base'.

Lorsque nous observons les sociétés humaines dans leurs traits essentiels, en faisant abstraction des manifestations secondaires et temporaires, nous constatons que le régime *politique* auquel elles sont soumises est toujours l'expression du régime *économique* qui existe au sein de la société.<sup>17</sup>

In *Freedom*, he enlarges on the nature of the historical relationship.

"Throughout our history", Kropotkin contends,

we may see that a new form of political organisation has corresponded to each new form of economic organisation. When the peasants were reduced to economic, if not to personal serfdom; when the city workman was a factor of no importance; when the richest and most powerful class were the landed aristocracy, - then Absolute Monarchy was the corresponding form of government. But as soon as trade and commerce began to enrich the middle classes, they refused to be ruled by a few courtiers taken from the aristocracy. They revolted - from the middle of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth in this country, in 1789-1793 in France, in 1848 in Germany. And, by cunningly taking advantage of the support they found amongst the peasants and workman, they reduced the monarch and his courtiers to obedience, and substituted the rule of Parliament.<sup>78</sup>

Bakunin presented a similar line of thought and reluctantly gave Marx credit for clearly elucidating the relationship between the political and economic structures of society. This admission did not, however, prevent him from insisting that the State had a relative autonomy. A similar tension is apparent in Kropotkin's thought. There is a difficulty in his tendency to use government and State interchangeably, a tendency which implies that the 'political organisation' of society refers to both concepts and that ultimately both the State and government exist strictly within the determining orbit of the economic 'base'. Yet Kropotkin also considers that the function and the organisation of the State and government create separate problems. Less conclusively he examines capitalism in obviously non-marxist terms. In all other respects Kropotkin outwardly demands that the State be abolished and that the destruction of capitalism requires that it be so. But the existence of any doubt about his concept of the State and its relation to the economic base casts suspicion on the strength of his acceptance of the marxist position - or, at least, the anarchists representation of it - and confuses the basis on which moral consciousness may be located.

The root to his solution to these problems is provided by his analysis of the State's rise. The argument Kropotkin presents follows the pattern of disintegration he identifies in the sociable tribal communities, though the setting is transposed to the European city-states of the late Middle Ages. Again Kropotkin identifies two currents of thought: one sociable, communal current within the city walls, and one anti-social, self-aggrandising current outside them. Modifying his examination of the tribal community Kropotkin acknowledges that the decline of mediaeval sociability was inevitable. Though there was a symbolic struggle between two contending sets of ideas the city-states never existed in a non-transient state of nature. From the outset the communal experiment was dependent on the grace of the Crown; and when the Crown no longer deigned to support the experiment, the city-states were doomed to failure. Gradually whilst witnessing "wealth grow, trades develop, [and] arts flourish"<sup>79</sup> within the confines of the free communes, the Crown proved itself incapable of resisting the temptation of monopolising an additional source of revenue. By and by, Kropotkin comments, the Crown interferes and conquers the cities.

The cities are unable to repel the royal assault. Like the barons before it, the Crown has superior arms and is specialised in warfare. In distinction to the disintegration of the tribal society, however, the extension of royal power finds immediate support within the city. Not only in common with the sociable tribes are the cities tricked into accepting the Crown's authority, but even before questions of legitimacy arise some of the citizenry actively work in the Crown's interests. Emphasising the manner in which the citizens of the cities are divided against themselves, Kropotkin relates:

...la Commune du moyen âge devait périr. Deux ennemis l'attaquaient en même temps: celui du dedans, celui du dehors.

Le commerce, les guerres, la domination égoïste sur les campagnes,

... les ennemis de la Commune à séparer les

uns, à enrichir les autres...La cité se divisa en riches et pauvres, en "blancs" et "noirs"; la lutte des classes fit son apparition, et avec elle l'état au sein de la commune.<sup>80</sup>

The 'anti-social' instinct arises within the previously communal citizenry as well as residing in the more determinedly hostile Crown. As time goes on the institutions of the State develop in turn:

A mesure que les pauvres s'appauvrissaient, asservis de plus en plus aux riches par l'usure, la représentation municipale, le gouvernement par procuration, c'est-à-dire le gouvernement des riches, prenait pied dans la commune. Elle se constituait en État représentatif, avec caisse municipale, milice louée, condottieri armés, services publics, fonctionnaires. État elle-même, mais État en petit, ne devait-elle pas devenir bientôt la proie de l'État en grand qui se constituait sous les auspices de la royauté? Minée déjà à l'intérieur, elle fut en effet engloutie par l'ennemi extérieur, - le roi.<sup>81</sup>

Kropotkin's account of the decline of the mediaeval city clarifies his understanding of the State in two ways. In the first instance it provides a basis on which to distinguish less tentatively between 'government' and 'State'. As Kropotkin traces its development from the city-state, the State appears as a primary assertion of authority within a defined territory. Government, in so far as it changes its character from popular self-government to the government of the Crown, appears on the other hand, as the instrument through which State authority is discharged. Regardless of the size of the territory it commands<sup>82</sup> the State in common with government, inhibits that sense of free agreement which Kropotkin sees in the city-states and anticipates under anarchy; it threatens to crush the individual and communal initiatives he understands voluntary agreement fosters. But in spite of their shared characteristics it is the imposition of the State over society which sets the train of centralisation in motion.

In the second place, again in common with the situation he portrays in his examination of the decline of sociability, Kropotkin locates the motivation for the creation of the State in greed and the desire to exploit. In the Crown's case (as previously, in relation to the witch-

doctors, soldiers and tribal priests) this selfishness, he admits, had a purely economic root: the Crown was simply jealous of the development of the cities' trade and industry. In the city-states, however, Kropotkin complicates the cause of decline. In accordance with the distinction he draws between the State and government, Kropotkin finds that the previously well-intentioned sociable citizens are not led astray simply by the promise of personal gain but that they seek to maximise their own position in society once the communal institutions have begun to fall into decline. In this instance there is an interaction of political and economic forces.

Kropotkin confirms the point in the more general historical analyses he presents of the development of government, the State and capitalism. Economic and political forces, he contends, progress in turn. The development of economic forces prompts the rise of a new political class and determines who that class will be. Thus the rise of parliamentarianism developed in accordance with the growth of trade and commerce by the march of the industrial revolution and the redistribution of wealth away from the land to the new industrial manufacturing centres. But for capitalist, or any economic interests to be secured, the rising political class is required to make use of the existing machinery of the State which hitherto is directed towards securing the ends of the disintegrating economic forces. Whilst the forces of nascent capitalism were responsible for the substitution of monarchical government for parliamentary rule he finds equally that, "Parliament was the instrument with which they succeeded in accomplishing this revolution and rendering it permanent in its effects."<sup>83</sup> The next revolution, he argues, must take the nature of this interchange into account. For if the sources of economic

exploitation are to be abolished, the conditions for its existence must also be destroyed:

Mais, à cause même de la liaison intime qui existe entre le régime politique et le régime économique, il est évident qu'une révolution dans le mode de production et de répartition des produits ne pourrait s'opérer si elle ne se faisait de pair avec une modification profonde de ces institutions qu'on désigne généralement sous le nom d'institutions politiques. L'abolition de la propriété individuelle et de l'exploitation qui en est la conséquence, l'établissement du régime collectiviste ou communiste seraient impossibles si nous voulions conserver nos parlements ou nos rois. Un nouveau régime économique exige un nouveau régime politique, et cette vérité est si bien comprise de tout le monde, qu'en effet, le travail intellectuel qui s'opère aujourd'hui dans les masses populaires s'attache indistinctement aux deux côtés de la question à résoudre. En raisonnant sur l'avenir économique, il étudie aussi l'avenir politique, et à côté des mots *Collectivisme* et *Communisme*, nous entendons prononcer ces mots: *État Ouvrier, Commune libre, Anarchie*, ou bien encore: *Communisme autoritaire ou anarchiste, Commune collectiviste*.<sup>84</sup>

Kropotkin's analysis serves two purposes. On the one hand, the distinction it causes him to make between the State and the government of the mediaeval city confirms his allegiance to the anarchist interpretation of the relationship between substructural and superstructural forces. On the other, his understanding of the decline of the city-states further confirms the necessity of communism: in the mediaeval cities the communal spirit which inspired their creation proved insufficiently strong to withstand economic temptation. The carefully crafted political community organisation proved incapable of resisting the pressures of the citizens' more selfish nature.

Kropotkin's analysis does not, however, fully solve the problem of moral change. For whilst morality develops from communism, Kropotkin does not provide an independent dynamic in his analysis of either the State or capitalism for its spontaneous creation. The creation of anarchist morality appears to rest on the strength of Kropotkin's personal conviction in the practicality and desirability of the anarcho-communist programme.

## 5. REVOLUTION

Kropotkin describes morality as a natural instinct; he also concedes that the nature of its expression is guided by the political and economic arrangements of society. Looking at the condition of the masses in existing society Kropotkin describes contemporary political and economic institutions in thoroughly negative terms. The State acts as a constraint crushing individual initiative and exercising a divisive effect on human relations. Capitalism is both wasteful and unjust. In addition, the abolition of the State and capitalism make the realisation of his anarchist plan viable. In presenting his critique of the State Kropotkin thus demonstrates both the desirability of communism as it leads to the development of 'true' anarchist morality and the practicality of anarchism through the disintegration of capitalism and the division of labour.

It is quite possible that Kropotkin himself believed these claims. That, for example, he considered that the abolition of the division of labour and specialisation would enable anarchist communal units to achieve economic self-sufficiency and that the development of individualism represented a general historical progression towards anarchist morality. In the latter instance, in *The Conquest of Bread*, he argues that "Communism is not only desirable, but that existing societies, founded on individualism, are inevitably impelled in the direction of Communism."<sup>85</sup> At the same time Kropotkin seems to be aware of the tenuousness of such proclamations. Again in *The Conquest of Bread* he claims the inevitability of moral development almost in spite of the evidence he produces in support of the claim:

nowadays, in the present state of industry, when everything is interdependent, when each branch of production is knit up with all the rest, the attempt to claim an individualist origin for the products of industry is absolutely untenable. The astonishing perfection attained by the textile or

mining industries in civilized countries is due to the simultaneous development of a thousand other industries, great and small, to the extension of the railroad system, to inter-oceanic navigation, to the manual skill of thousands of workers, to a certain standard of culture reached by the working classes as a whole - to the labours, in short, of men in every corner of the globe.<sup>86</sup>

More discernable doubts about the future appear in Kropotkin's considerations of 'free agreement'. It is not certain, he admits, that the free agreement responsible for the construction of society will function in the future; but by comparison to the State the alternative is worth trying:

When we endeavour to prove by examples that even today, in spite of the iniquitous organization of society as a whole, men, provided their interests be not diametrically opposed, agree without the intervention of authority, we do not ignore the objections that will be put forth. All such examples have their defective side, because it is impossible to quote a single organization exempt from the exploitation of the weak by the strong, the poor by the rich. This is why the Statists will not fail to tell us with their wonted logic: 'You see that the intervention of the State is necessary to put an end to this exploitation!'<sup>87</sup>

Even without expressing such doubts, Kropotkin fails to demonstrate the existence of any independent motivation for moral consciousness to develop either within his critique of the State or of capitalism. Individualism, he claims, reveals the extent to which the development of moral consciousness is naturally inclined towards the expression of the communist moral precept of 'giving without wanting to receive'. Unfortunately, however, Kropotkin fails to demonstrate how, in the event of the mistaken development he believes consciousness has undergone, the masses are to overcome the forces of authority which he otherwise believes have dominated them for so long. The terminal decline he identifies in capitalism similarly provides only the potential to realise communism. It does not guarantee its implementation: there is no 'crisis of capitalism' or process of inexorable collapse, certainly not one which is leading to the creation of anarchy. For Kropotkin, there are only 'opportunities'. In *Freedom*, he notes:

earnest Socialists are precisely those who consider that an attempt at bringing their principles into life *must* be made at the next opportunity, and they

prepare this opportunity itself.

if it is meant in earnest that the next movement in Europe must be an attempt towards restoring the land, the machinery, and the capital to the producers, it is high time to consider also the means of realising this immense change.<sup>88</sup>

Kropotkin also fails to identify a spontaneous movement supporting the destruction of the State. In the interplay he identifies between the economic and political forces of society he shows how society is corrupted by the creation of the State; he further identifies the train of political and economic change within the framework that the State provides. Ultimately, the interpretation he gives of the relationship between the 'base' and 'superstructure' only supports his contention that the revolution must attack the political framework in order to secure lasting economic change. The abolition of the State follows only from the desire to destroy capitalism:

But this economical reorganisation means also the recasting of all those institutions which we are now accustomed to call the political organisation of a country. A new economical organisation necessarily calls for a new political organisation. Feudal rights accommodated themselves perfectly to absolute monarchy; free exploitation by the middle classes has prospered under representative government. But new forms of economical life will require also new forms of political life; and these new forms cannot be a reinforcement of the power of the State by giving up in its hands the production and distribution of wealth, and its exchange.<sup>89</sup>

In Kropotkin's early thought his understanding of anarchist change is derived from his faith that the revolution is about to erupt; from the strength of his conviction that the masses share his enthusiasm for anarcho-communism - or can be persuaded to risk taking his advice and implement the necessary measures outlined in his anarchist plan. In *Freedom*, he comments:

We, a handful of men who see the gale coming, and warn the careless, and are pelted with stones for that warning, - we are as unable to prevent the storm as to accelerate its arrival. Its first coming will depend on causes greater than those we take hold of. But we may, and must, show its real causes. We must endeavour to discover and to enunciate in plain words the hopes, the faint, indistinct ideal which sets the masses in motion. The better understood, the more warmly taken to heart, the greater will be the results achieved, and the less numerous the useless victims. These hopes are the hopes of getting rid of capitalist oppression, of abolishing the rule of man by man, of Equality, of Freedom, of Anarchy. And those who fight for these tendencies - deeply rooted in, and cherished by, Humanity - will win in the struggle! Without these

principles no society is possible.<sup>90</sup>

Kropotkin's understanding of anarchist change and the development of moral consciousness is best considered as a promise rather than as a unshakable theoretical commitment. Often phrasing his demonstrations of the practicality of anarchism in deliberately provocative terms, his aim is to incite revolutionary action. In *Freedom*, he argues:

The wants of the workman must be formulated with more precision. But to do so we must first make short work of many a prejudice that has grown up in our minds: the prejudice of Authority, of Law, of Representative Government and Majority Rule, of the rights of Capital - in short, of all those 'great words' which are so many stumbling-stones in the path of Humanity towards emancipation.<sup>91</sup>

Anarchist morality and the practicality of the anarchist society are not proven in Kropotkin's thought; they are incentives for his readers to rise in revolt. Anarchy exists as a revealed truth which will impel the masses to take advantage of the uncertain political climate and implement anarchist revolutionary reform.

*Mutual Aid* transforms his ideas in important ways: following his development of the theory of mutual aid Kropotkin radically alters the relationship between anarchist morality and communism and redefines 'morality'. He also loses his faith in the immediacy of revolution. There are, however, similarities between his concept of anarchist science and his early thought. A demonstration of these similarities depends first on an examination of the links between the biological and ethical factors of his theory of evolution.

NOTES: CHAPTER THREE

1. Kropotkin demonstrates a general sympathy for the nihilists and defends the moral integrity of the movement against, for example, the idea that nihilism implies terrorism; an idea which he believes is current in Western Europe. P. Kropotkin: *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, C. Ward, (ed.), Folio Society, London, (1978), pp.208-11.
2. P. Kropotkin: 'The Scientific Bases of Anarchy', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXI, No.120, (February 1887), p.251.
3. *ibid.*
4. P. Kropotkin: *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution: An Address Delivered in Paris*, translated by H. Glasse, William Reeves, London, (1886), p.12.
5. P. Kropotkin: 'The Coming Anarchy', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXII, No.126, (August 1887), p.162.
6. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, Elephant Editions, London, (1985), p.130.
7. *ibid.*, p.137.
8. P. Kropotkin: *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution...*, *op.cit.*, p.13.
9. *ibid.*, p.14.
10. It is in this sense that he associates morality with the principle of distribution according to need.
11. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.171.
12. P. Kropotkin: 'Are We Good Enough?', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *Act For Yourself*, Freedom Press, London, (1988), p.82.
13. *ibid.*
14. *ibid.*
15. *ibid.*, p.84.
16. *ibid.*
17. P. Kropotkin: 'L'Expropriation', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, Librairie Marpon et Flammarion, Paris, (1885), p.342.
18. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.130.
19. *ibid.*, p.55.
20. *ibid.*, pp.46-7. He repeats the point in 'The Coming Anarchy', *op.cit.*, p.151.
21. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.38.
22. For his appreciation of nihilist women see *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, *op.cit.*, pp.185-6.
23. P. Kropotkin: 'La Nécessité De La Révolution', E. Reclus, (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, *op.cit.*, p.23-4.
24. Though criticising attitudes prevalent in parts of the socialist movement Kropotkin implies that responsibility for the oppression of women rests with men. See *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, pp.124-5.
25. P. Kropotkin: 'Le Gouvernement Représentatif', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, *op.cit.*, p.182.
26. Kropotkin discusses his editorial aims in *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, *op.cit.*, p.193-4, and p.286.
27. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.132.
28. *ibid.*, p.133.
29. P. Kropotkin: 'Le Gouvernement Représentatif', *op.cit.*, p.184.
30. Kropotkin uses this point and most of his other critiques of the State, as much to attack non-anarchist socialism as he does to discredit the established parliamentary parties. See, for example, his discussion in 'The End Set Before Us', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *Act For Yourself*, *op.cit.*, pp.47-51.

31. P. Kropotkin: 'Le Gouvernement Représentatif', *op.cit.*, pp.182-3.
32. Kropotkin highlights the value of the political liberties the masses have won in France, for example, by noting that the French peasantry are no longer subject to indiscriminant beatings of kind still suffered by their autocratically governed Russian counter-parts. P. Kropotkin: 'Les Droits Politiques', E. Reclus, (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, *op.cit.*, p.33.
33. P. Kropotkin: 'Le Gouvernement Représentatif', *op.cit.*, p.180.
34. *ibid.*, p.176.
35. P. Kropotkin: 'Parliamentary Rule', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *Act For Yourself*, *op.cit.*, p.37.
36. P. Kropotkin: 'La Décomposition Des États', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolé*, *op.cit.*, p.13.
37. P. Kropotkin: 'La Guerre', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, *op.cit.*, p.81.
38. *ibid.*, p.79.
39. P. Kropotkin: 'A General View', in N. Walter & H. Becker, (ed.), *Act For Yourself*, *op.cit.*, p.75.
40. *ibid.*, pp.78-9.
41. P. Kropotkin: 'Le Gouvernement Représentatif', *op.cit.*, pp.181-2.
42. *ibid.*, pp.186-7.
43. *ibid.*, pp.171-2
44. See, for example, P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.51.
45. For his comments on the similarity between parliamentary and monarchical government, see P. Kropotkin: 'A General View', *op.cit.* p.77.
46. *ibid.*
47. P. Kropotkin: 'Parliamentary Rule', *op.cit.*, p.38.
48. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.102.
49. R. Selucky: *Marxism, Socialism, Freedom*, Macmillan, London, pp.6-7.
50. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.174.
51. *ibid.*
52. See, for example, his remarks *ibid.*, p.46.
53. *ibid.*, p.25.
54. *ibid.*, p.174.
55. *ibid.*, p.45.
56. *ibid.*, p.56.
57. See his discussion, *ibid.*, pp.36-8.
58. *ibid.*, p.58.
59. *ibid.*
60. *ibid.*, p.103.
61. *ibid.*, p.181.
62. *ibid.*, p.182.
63. *ibid.*, p.155.
64. *ibid.*, p.183.
65. *ibid.*, p.187.
66. *ibid.*, p.37.
67. *ibid.*, p.32.
68. *ibid.*, p.189.
69. *ibid.*
70. K. Marx & F. Engels: *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp.58-9.
71. The differences between the bolshevik and anarchist conceptions of revolution are examined in Voline (pseud.

- V.M. Eichenbaum): *The Unknown Revolution*, Black Rose Books, Montreal, (1975), pp.173-229.
72. Alternative versions of this interpretation are given in S.F. Bloom: 'The Withering Away of the State', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol.VII, No.1, (January 1946), pp.113-21; and R. Adamiak: 'The Withering Away of the State: A Reconsideration', *Journal of Politics*, Vol.32, (1970), pp.13-18.
73. K. Marx & F. Engels: *op.cit.*, p.54.
74. P. Kropotkin: 'Parliamentary Rule', *op.cit.*, p.40.
75. P. Kropotkin: 'Local Action', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *Act For Yourselves*, *op.cit.*, p.43.
76. P. Kropotkin: 'Théorie et Pratique', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, *op.cit.*, pp.321-3.
77. P. Kropotkin: 'Le Gouvernement Représentatif', *op.cit.*, p.169.
78. P. Kropotkin: 'Parliamentary Rule', *op.cit.*, p.38.
79. P. Kropotkin: 'A General View' *op.cit.*, p.76.
80. P. Kropotkin: 'Le Gouvernement Représentatif', *op.cit.*, p.204.
81. *ibid.*, pp.205-6.
82. Whilst he approves of the internal organisation of the Cantons, Kropotkin finds that Switzerland, for example, has repeated on a smaller scale the errors of the big centralised kingdoms...", 'A General View', *op.cit.*, p.79.
83. P. Kropotkin: 'Parliamentary Rule', *op.cit.*, p.38.
84. P. Kropotkin: 'Le Gouvernement Représentatif', *op.cit.*, p.171.
85. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, *op.cit.*, p.46.
86. *ibid.*, p.45.
87. *ibid.*, p.132.
88. P. Kropotkin: 'Practical Questions', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *Act For Yourselves*, *op.cit.*, p.53.
89. P. Kropotkin: 'What Revolution Means', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.26-7.
90. P. Kropotkin: 'The Coming Revolution', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.22-3.
91. P. Kropotkin: 'What Must We Do', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.31.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: MUTUAL AID AND ETHICAL THEORY

Kropotkin's early thought cannot be considered as a treatise concerned with moral development; nor can his writings be categorised simply as revolutionary tracts. Combining these two elements Kropotkin's work is a celebration of revolution, embodying an attempt to direct the energies of the masses toward anarchy; and an exploration of the boundaries of sociable behaviour set within a critical framework formed by his understanding of existing society. His writings embrace a call for the creation of the anarchist society based on the attractiveness of its practical proposals and, to the extent to which these proposals are implemented, the promise of realising moral perfection. Rather than considering the association between the 'means' and the 'ends' of the revolution strategically, Kropotkin's early thought assumes an identity between anarchist theory and practice. Anarchy is both the impetus for, and the goal of revolutionary change.

Beyond this symmetry of his ideas the most striking feature of Kropotkin's early thought is the cohesive role that his personal expectation of revolution plays: there is no theoretical dynamic to explain anarchist change. Kropotkin does refer to the masses' 'natural' anarchistic tendencies; but the 'naturalness' of these tendencies is complemented by his fear of influence of marxism on the minds of the masses and supplemented by the emphasis he places on the necessity of planning for anarchy.

This chapter argues that Kropotkin's theory of mutual aid alters the details of his early thought but does not upset the framework he establishes for his discussions. Following the publication of *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin does not repudiate the identity between the means and ends of the revolution. The relationship between organisation and

action is posited on an understanding of the evolution toward anarchy rather than on the appeal of an anarchist model. But by introducing the concept of evolution into his anarchism, Kropotkin does not deny the idea of revolution or the revolutionary implications of anarchist change; nor does he reduce the process of change to a spontaneous action of history or nature. Before any of these points can be demonstrated, however, the theory of mutual aid needs to be examined.

In the first chapter it was argued that the appearance of *Mutual Aid* has been identified as the watershed in Kropotkin's career. From the time of its publication Kropotkin seemingly gives up his youthful hope in European revolution and showing greater political maturity identifies himself with a programme of evolutionary reform. Evidence for this view is found first in Kropotkin's political commentaries and his personal attitude; and second, in his development of an evolutionary theory on the Darwinian model. Though the arguments may be taken separately - and are often presented in this way - the first case very much establishes the interpretative context for the second.

This chapter briefly examines the conclusiveness of the evidence purporting to show the motivation for Kropotkin's revision of his early thought. Following this discussion it considers Kropotkin's understanding of mutual aid and evolutionary theory. In conclusion it argues that the evolutionary aspect of mutual aid refers not to the issue of political action but to a concept of environmental and behavioural change. Thus Kropotkin's theory of mutual aid is placed within the framework of his early discussions of sociability.

## 1. WAR AND REVOLUTION

There is nothing in Kropotkin's writings to suggest that he ever considered the significance of revolution to rest in the revolutionary battle or in the glory of violent struggle.<sup>1</sup> The association Kropotkin makes between revolution and violence is one of necessity: the ruling classes, he contends, will not give up their position voluntarily but will resist the incursions of the masses with all the military force at their disposal. This understanding of revolution and violence is not one which is supported by Woodcock and Avakumovic. For them revolution implies a theoretical commitment to violent methods. In spite of Kropotkin's commentaries on violent struggle, their observations of the change in his commitment to revolution cannot be dismissed on the basis of this association, for even granting that Kropotkin gave only secondary consideration to the details of revolutionary events it may still be argued that his move from 'turbulent' France to 'tolerant' Britain heralded a concomitant change in his political perspective.<sup>2</sup> This section examines the extent of this change and argues that Kropotkin's reassessment of the political situation did not affect his adherence to his early anarchist ideals.

Assuming that Woodcock and Avakumovic are correct in their interpretation of Kropotkin's thought, the 'liberalisation' of his ideas must be acknowledged to have proceeded at a slow pace. In terms of his public commitment to the goal of achieving revolution, the transition between his 'early' and 'late' writings is a gradual one. Even eight years after the appearance of the first article in the series which comprised *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin continues to talk passionately about the desirability of revolution. In his commemorative essay for the Paris Commune in 1898, for example, he reiterates the views he first expressed

in the 1870s and 1880s. Reconsidering the uneven development of revolutionary Europe he comments:

Henceforward, revolution will not be kept back by frontiers. In each country, of course, they will take their own character, but they will be European - not local. At the next revolutionary outburst, Germany, which is now in the state that France was fifty years ago, will probably make its revolution of 1848; she will try State Socialism in a unitarian, centralised republic. Russia may make her revolution of 1789; but France owing to the beacon that was planted by the Commune of Paris in 1871, and to the subsequent growth of Communalist ideas, will try something better than State Socialism: her revolution will bear traces of Anarchist ideas; Spain, and also possibly Italy, will follow her more or less in that new phase of human development.<sup>3</sup>

For the symbolic importance attached to the revival of his interest in science, in the years immediately before and after the turn of the century, Kropotkin is reluctant to relinquish the hope of achieving revolutionary change. He is similarly reticent to detach himself from the activities of the anarchist movement. Whilst in the 1890s he loosens his personal entanglements with British anarchists, he certainly does not seek to separate himself from the actions of other anarchist comrades. On the contrary, he complements his often acknowledged 'saintliness' with strong verbal defences of the notorious propagandists of the deed. In common with other leading anarchist writers Kropotkin does not condone individual assassinations, but he does not condemn them either. In his commentary on the universally reviled stabbing of Elizabeth of Austria, for example, Kropotkin finds the assailant Luccheni apparently less guilty of murder than he holds society responsible for creating the criminal. He blames Luccheni only for misplacing power in the concept of the historic individual.<sup>4</sup>

In some respects Kropotkin's revolutionary fervour becomes more developed during the latter part of his career. His discussions of Russia, for example, are distinguished by a developing enthusiasm for revolution. In his early writings Kropotkin finds few encouraging signs of change: whilst he makes strenuous efforts to acquaint the British

public with the most positive features of the reform movement and defended the justness of its cause, his articles tend to reveal a despair with the depth of Russian political backwardness.<sup>5</sup> He complains of the condition of the peasantry, the inefficiency of the administration, the inadequacy of the schooling system and the repression within the universities. Highlighting the success of the State's oppressiveness Kropotkin writes contemptuously of the power of the Holy Synod and of the obstructive policies adopted by governing ministries. In order to give some indication of the nature of tsarist rule, he reserves special attention for the Procurator of the Synod, Pobiedonosteff, characterising him "a narrow-minded fanatic of the State religion, who - if it were only in his power - would have burned at the stake all protestants against Orthodoxy and Catholicism."<sup>6</sup>

Even at the turn of the century Kropotkin's confidence in the capacity of the Russian people to overcome the repressiveness of the absolutist regime remains relatively weak. He anticipates developments in the constitutional movement, not an explosion of revolutionary energy; though hoping to see radical change he comments "[i]f I speak of a coming Constitution, it is not because I see in it a panacea. My personal ideals go far beyond that."<sup>7</sup>

Kropotkin's hopes are excited by the agitation of 1905.<sup>8</sup> Observing events in Britain between 1905 and 1906, he becomes immersed in the possibility of achieving thoroughgoing radical change. Writing to Brandes in 1904, he notes:

Il faut vous dire que le mouvement en Russie marchait admirablement. Les deux éléments qui font chaque révolution, semblaient être là: un profond mouvement de mécontentement et d'actes isolés au sein des paysans et des ouvriers des villes - et, au sein des classes aisées, un vent de révolte, comme on n'en avait jamais vu depuis 1859.<sup>9</sup>

Kropotkin's reaction to 1905 is not merely one of his "intervals of

renewed optimism". His faith in the revolutionary capacity of the Russian peoples continues uninterrupted until 1917.<sup>10</sup>

During his settlement in Britain there is, however, a definite change in Kropotkin's perspective. As Woodcock and Avakumovic point out the most important modification of his ideas concerns his understanding of the relationship between revolution and war. In the latter part of his career, Kropotkin no longer expects Europe to explode in revolution; he anticipates international conflict.

Kropotkin's premonition of war in Europe does not necessarily contradict the idea of revolution. In his early thought his belief that war results from the existence of the State gives him a continuing interest in the concept of revolutionary action, if not also a basis on which to expect revolution will be brought about. For Woodcock and Avakumovic, however, the incompatibility of war and revolution is not based on any theoretical considerations but on Kropotkin's personal political indifference. Already disillusioned by the decline of the anarchist movement in Britain Kropotkin, they argue, became so sensitive about the danger of war that his hopes for revolution expired.

The reasons for this new attitude are not obscure. The betrayal in the labour movement of the fine hopes of 1889-91, the steady progress of Continental reaction, the gathering threat of war, all helped to remove, for a man of Kropotkin's mental calibre, the basis on which any social revolutionary change might operate in the near future. He might [have responded by 'going to the people' and propagandising, but]...he showed himself aware that anarchism had become a current against the general trend of the left towards parliamentarianism. It was perhaps for this reason that he retired more and more into the intellectual world where his ideas might play a useful preparatory role.<sup>11</sup>

None of the specific facts of the case they present can be denied. Though the process of Kropotkin's disillusion is slower than he admits, Woodcock is correct to point out that the hopes he entertained in Russia after 1905 were not typical of his general outlook. As the century progresses Kropotkin writings show an increasingly despondent attitude

about the potential for revolution in the rest of Europe. In 1907 he admits the failure of British anarchism to win wide public support: "The last twenty-one years were years of a general triumph of middle-class ideals and policy over the Socialist ideals".<sup>12</sup> With hindsight it was clear that the anarchists could never have hoped to secure the victory of anarchy. Working as a rearguard, not a vanguard movement, they could only

keep high the banner of Anarchism; to spread as widely as possible the ideals of a free, no-government organisation of Communism; and to counter-balance as much as we could the centralistic, bureaucratic ambitions of Social Democracy.<sup>13</sup>

Kropotkin voices his disillusion with the potential for the European working masses to realise what he formerly represented as their 'natural' revolutionary desires prior to the start of the new century. He even admits defeat in France, being particularly appalled by the court martial of Dreyfus in 1899. Writing to Brandes, he comments:

Nous avons été si heureux de savoir que vous avez pu aller vous reposer un peu en France. Malheureusement la France en ce moment, est triste à voir. Vous ne sauriez imaginer la mauvaise impression produite ici par le verdict de Rennes. Samedi, à 7 heures je suis allé à la gare chercher les journaux. Le verdict venait d'arriver. "Acquitté?" je demande au vendeur de journaux. - "Non, dix ans! Les gredins!" Et comme ça partout. Tout Bromley en parlait dans les rues avec fureur. Et notre ville est bien conservatrice! Aux théâtres, aux music halls, on a sifflé toute allusion aux militaires français. Dans les églises - shocking! - on a applaudi les pasteurs qui ont flétri le verdict avec fureur...<sup>14</sup>

In Britain Kropotkin also notices the spread of a growing imperialistic malaise. Notwithstanding the good impression he gives of Bromley during the Dreyfus affair, the commentary he provides of the political attitudes expressed in his own locality illustrates what he considers to be the wider degeneration of liberal values in English society. Observing as many depressing signs of chauvinism, militarism and jingoistic intolerance in Britain as he does in France, he again shares with Brandes his views on the effect of the nation's involvement in the Boer War:

ici - comme partout, d'ailleurs, en temps de guerre - le jingoisme fait ravage. On vient de forcer Marssingham et d'autres, plus ou moins de nos amis, de quitter la *Daily Chronicle*, parce qu'elle a osé "insulter l'armée" en publiant les récits véridiques des tueries à Elandslaagje. Je connais personnellement le correspondant, - très "patriote", mais aussi homme de coeur. C'est le triomphe, le déchaînement des instincts inférieurs, la domination de la partie la moins sympathique de la nation - la moins anglaise partie de l'Angleterre; car le chauvinisme, qu'y a-t-il de plus international? Tout change en ces moments, jusqu'au langage, qui devient abject.<sup>15</sup>

Woodcock is equally right to point out the growing fatalistic edge which Kropotkin's political despondency assumes. Though examining the Moroccan crisis in 1905, for example, he is convinced that the existence of an Anglo-French alliance will prevent the immediate outbreak of a European war, Kropotkin remains certain that hostilities will ensue at some time in the future.<sup>16</sup>

There is, however, a difficulty with the immediacy of Woodcock's assumption that Kropotkin's reassessment of the political situation and his personal commitments are identical. It is possible that his disappointment in the potential for revolution was compatible with a continuing commitment to its realisation. In 1914 Kropotkin notoriously rejects the idea of turning the European conflict into an international revolutionary war; but distinguishing between his political accommodation with the altered conditions of the twentieth century and his personal anarchist ideals explains why he was both reluctant to relinquish the hope of European upheaval and eager to espouse the revolutionary cause. It also explains the nature of his fears of war and his peculiarly 'un-anarchist' attitude towards the belligerents in 1914.

Contrary to the distinction Woodcock draws between his earlier revolutionary hopes and his later expectations of European war, Kropotkin's continuing commitment to radical anarchism and the purity of revolutionary principles increases as he braces himself for the outbreak of hostilities. His analysis of the First Moroccan Crisis illustrates

his reasoning. In 1905 Kropotkin's confidence in the postponement of hostilities is based on his belief that German designs on France were tempered by a fear of engaging British forces through the Entente Cordiale. His conclusion is hardly contentious; but the force of his analysis lies in his suspicion of imminent combat rather than in his conclusion. Kropotkin does not arrive at his understanding of the Crisis by dispassionately scrutinising international relations. Instead, he calls on the reserves of his continuing Germanophobia. In the light of his youthful tendency to resort to crude cultural stereotypes in order to explain political beliefs and behaviours and his proneness to describe Europe as a battleground between the Teutonic and Latin spirits - between 'German' marxism and 'French' anarchism - Kropotkin's recourse to such an analysis does not appear novel. In his later writings, however, he understands the political, ideological and cultural forces of Europe to be more perfectly matched and extends his prejudice to cover the difference between marxist parliamentary reformism and anarchist revolutionism.

Though always negative in his attitude towards the marxists, until the 1880s Kropotkin continues to discuss the differences between marxists and anarchists in fairly rational terms. Ideologically he represents the gap between the two to be unbridgable; but he also considers the marxists to be misguided and open to persuasion rather than irreconcilably estranged from anarchist ideas. Writing in 1880, in one of his most blistering attacks on revolutionary government Kropotkin comments:

We know...that this idea of dictatorship is never anything more than a sickly product of governmental fetish-worship, which, like religious fetish-worship, has always served to perpetuate slavery.

But we do not now address ourselves to Anarchists. We speak to those governmental Revolutionists who, led astray by the prejudices of their education, honestly deceive themselves, and ask nothing better than to discuss the question. We therefore speak to them from their own point of view. To begin with one general observation: those who preach dictatorship do not

in general perceive that in sustaining this prejudice they only prepare the way for those who later on will cut their throats.<sup>17</sup>

As ideas of parliamentary socialism become more popular - as they do early on in Britain - Kropotkin's cultural comparisons become accordingly more polarised. Writing in 1899 he notes that:

We are convinced that the triumph of Germany in 1870 has retarded the social revolution for many years, in two ways. The triumph of Germany was the triumph of militarism in Europe, of military and political despotism; and at the same time the worship of the State, of authority and of State Socialism, which is reality nothing but State capitalism, triumphed in the ideas of a whole generation. If these ideas crib and confine the European mind at present, and even the minds of revolutionists, we owe it in a great measure to the triumph of the military German Empire. On the other hand, if France is inclined to slide down the slope of Caesarism instead of being the vanguard of the Communist Communalist movement towards which her evolution tended, it is also in consequence of the disaster of 1870.<sup>18</sup>

As Woodcock contends, Kropotkin's culturally based understanding of militarism and parliamentarianism together with his premonition of international war, convinces him that the ideological pendulum has swung against the revolutionary tide and in the foreseeable future denied the possibility of its revival. There is, however, no corresponding disavowal of revolutionary change in Kropotkin's writings. The opposite is the case. Kropotkin does not put his hopes for the Social Revolution into abeyance. Rather, as he sees the popularity of 'German' marxist-socialism increase, his insistence on the importance of avoiding political compromise becomes hysterical. In an essay later advertised as being "very useful in counteracting the Ballot-box mania" Kropotkin declares:

To speak now of the Social Revolution is considered by the "scientific" Socialist a crime. Vote and wait! Don't trouble about the revolution; revolutions are mere inventions of idle spirits! Only criminal Anarchists talk of them now. Be quiet, and vote as you are told to. Don't believe these criminals who tell you that owing to the facilities of exploitation of the backward races all over the world, the numbers of capitalists who climb on the necks of the European working man are steadily growing. Trust to the Neo Socialists, who have proved that the middle classes are going to destroy themselves, in virtue of a law of "self-annihilation", discovered by their great thinkers. Vote! Greater men than you will tell you the moment when the self-annihilation of capital has been accomplished. They will then expropriate the few usurpers left, who will own everything, and you will be

freed without ever having taken any more trouble than that of writing on a bit of paper the name of the man whom the heads of your faction of the party told you to vote for!

To such shameful nonsense the politician Socialists have tried to reduce the Great Revolution which calls for the energies of all the lovers of freedom and equality.<sup>19</sup>

The same note of desperation is apparent in his 1898 Commune commemorative article. Here, though the defensiveness of his language appears as an admission of revolutionary defeat, the statement is also one of great defiance:

*Another unsuccessful revolution!* the wise-acres say...

But there is no such thing as an unsuccessful revolution! We were told all sorts of nonsense about that revolution. But here we are now, several hundred thousand in Europe and America, commemorating today that revolution, inspiring us with ideas, with its heroism, and how many hundreds of young ones amongst us will take to-night the silent oath *to live for it, and to die for it.*<sup>20</sup>

The contrast between Kropotkin's later expectations of war and his earlier confidence in the collapse of the European capitalist States is quite striking. The more Kropotkin's culturally determined views are taken into account, the more exaggerated and extreme the differences become. The contrast is not, however, indicative of a complete retreat. Nor is *Mutual Aid* the theoretical expression of defeat. Whilst adjusting to the changed political condition of Europe and aiming only to keep the banner of anarchism flying, in *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin reasserts many of his earlier ideas. Instead of retracting any of his earlier objections he clarifies his theory of the State's development and posits the necessity of its destruction on the grounds that it impedes the expression of the co-operative spirit by encouraging an ethic of destructive individualism.

## 2. BIOLOGICAL MUTUAL AID

In a review of *Mutual Aid* David Miller considers that Kropotkin "produced a wide array of evidence" but that "he was able to do so partly because he left unspecified the hypothesis which each piece of evidence was designed to refute or confirm."<sup>21</sup> The discussion that Kropotkin presents in *Mutual Aid* is densely argued; but this section of the chapter suggests the difficulties of Kropotkin's work are not derived from his failure to identify the targets of attack. They stem instead from the problems Kropotkin encounters in sustaining his theory. In *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin attempts to assert the validity of his anarchist beliefs with reference to an interpretation of Darwinian evolution which denies the mechanism for the operation of natural selection. Kropotkin's endeavour is motivated by a desire to repudiate the thought of Huxley and to show, contrary to Huxley's understanding, that nature is not about 'struggle' and that, therefore, the natural world provides a basis for moral development.

In chapter one it was argued that the understanding of the discontinuity of Kropotkin's thought is based on a representation of his refutation of the Social Darwinist notion of the 'survival of the fittest'. As a demonstration of the scientific baselessness of the Social Darwinians' case Kropotkin's argument is defended in terms of the contribution it makes to Darwinian evolutionary theory; considered primarily as a statement of the anarchist view of human nature, *Mutual Aid* is presented as a rejoinder to the Darwinist image of competitive struggle and a rebuttal of the notion of the Hobbesian war of each against all.

In presenting his view of Kropotkin's work Woodcock emphasises the biological details of the case, paying particular attention to the

'scientific' proofs he gives of the practice of mutual aid in animal societies. Woodcock's point is to argue that Kropotkin believed that the capacity to practice mutual aid was equally strong in human and animal societies. On this basis he considers that the theory of mutual aid supports a view of human nature which is designed only to prove humanity's potential to live in the absence of the State. Recently Marshall has advanced a similar interpretation of Kropotkin's work:

According to Kropotkin, evolutionary theory, if properly understood, will demonstrate the possibility of anarchism rather than justify the capitalist system. Anarchism as a social philosophy is therefore not against but in keeping with evolving human nature.<sup>22</sup>

Such interpretations of *Mutual Aid* tend to identify the importance of Kropotkin's work in the ideological stance it is said to defend rather than the validity of his argument. For Woodcock the importance of the work lies in the theoretical shift it conceals: the biological consideration Kropotkin gives to the Hobbesian idea of the state of nature reveals a realignment of his thought away from the radical critique of the State's existence and towards an analysis of its theoretical justification. The extremism of Hobbes' view of the state of nature makes him an unusual candidate for such an examination; and a refutation of the validity of perpetual combat in the state of nature is far removed from a demonstration of the possibility of anarchy. In his later works Kropotkin is nonetheless assumed both to adopt Hobbes as the standard for liberal state theory and to modify his earlier concern with structural reform by attempting to demonstrate the propensity for natural human goodness. Kropotkin's consideration of the relationship between behaviour and environment is denied and the shift in his ideas is automatically translated in strategic terms.

In Woodcock's assessment, the conclusion of Kropotkin's work remains the same and his anarchist credentials are secured: Kropotkin rejects

the need for the State. However, his hostility toward the State, his calls for its abolition and his concern with demonstrating the practicality of the anarchist alternative become tempered by the emphasis that is placed on his understanding of the evolution of mutual aid and the potential harmony of the natural world. Represented in this manner, Kropotkin's concept of mutual aid is considered to lead to one of two outcomes: either, as Woodcock and Reichert argue, individuals must be encouraged to adopt alternative forms of living by means of educational programmes designed to alter consciousness, or, as David Miller contends, to a political apathy based on a rigid theoretical determinism which fails to prove the superiority of the anarchist way of life and subjectively makes its achievement unattractive. Disapproving of what he sees as the deterministic implications of the argument David Miller sets out the broad framework of the discussion.

At the beginning of his book on *Mutual Aid* he claimed...that he was... trying to draw attention to one factor of evolution, a factor that had been lost from sight because of the post-Darwinian celebration of the 'struggle for existence' between individuals of each species...His overall target was certainly not Darwin, but what one might call a Hobbesian interpretation of Darwin projected back onto animals and earlier forms of human society. This view...maintained that the natural condition of both animals and men was one of isolation and competitive struggle for the means of existence, a struggle which in the human case had been overcome only by the establishment of political authority. All of Kropotkin's evidence is indeed relevant to a target as crude as this.<sup>23</sup>

Kropotkin's writings give some credence to this interpretation. In the 1902 *Introduction to Mutual Aid* he emphasises the biological validity of his work by recounting the positive response his interpretation of Darwinism engendered from James Knowles, the editor of his work.<sup>24</sup> Substantiating the temperamental changes Woodcock observes in the revival of his youthful academic scientific interests, Kropotkin also stresses the Russian origin of his biological research.

Two aspects of animal life impressed me most during the journeys which I made in my youth in Eastern Siberia and Northern Manchuria. One of them was the extreme severity of the struggle for existence which most species of animals have to carry on against an inclement Nature; the enormous destruction of life

which periodically results from natural agencies; and the consequent paucity of life over the vast territory which fell under my observation. And the other was, that even in those few spots where animal life teemed in abundance, I failed to find - although I was eagerly looking for it - that bitter struggle for the means for existence, among animals belonging to the same species, which was considered by most Darwinists (though not always by Darwin himself) as the dominant characteristic of struggle for life, and the main factor of evolution.<sup>25</sup>

It is also true that Kropotkin was interested primarily in the concept of the 'survival of the fittest'. For Kropotkin the notion underpinned the sabre-rattling mentality of the late Victorian age; by 1914 he associated the intellectual popularity of the idea directly with the outbreak of the Great War.<sup>26</sup> In concentrating his attention on the 'survival of the fittest', Huxley, as David Miller notes, is clearly the subject of Kropotkin's most concerted attacks. This information is frequently used to support the 'Hobbesian' interpretation of *Mutual Aid*; but Kropotkin's treatment of Huxley's work also forms the starting point for the alternative reading of his work.

In the very first pages of *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin misleadingly portrays Huxley as a vulgariser of Darwin's writings and a modern incarnation of Hobbes. Huxley is accused of fictionalising nature and Kropotkin compares what he considers to be the simplicity of Huxley's work with Rousseau's declared imaginary account: the only difference between the two, he finds, is that Huxley deprives Rousseau's savage of its nobility.<sup>27</sup> This view of nature allows Huxley to justify the necessity of "the intervention of some authority" in society in order to keep the competitive impulses of humanity in check. Drawing the Hobbesian comparison, Kropotkin argues:

True, that science has made some progress since Hobbes's time, and that we have safer ground to stand upon than the speculations of Hobbes or Rousseau. But the Hobbesian philosophy has plenty of admirers still; and we have had of late quite a school of writers who, taking possession of Darwin's terminology rather than his leading ideas, made of it an argument in favour of Hobbes's views upon primitive man, and even succeeded in giving them a scientific appearance. Mr. Huxley, as is known, took the lead in that school...<sup>28</sup>

Most contemporary defenders of Kropotkin's work have, as David Miller points out, not only followed him in his characterisation of Huxley's work but exaggerated the misrepresentation. The fault, as David Miller again points out, arises from the repeated failure to mention the nature of the conclusions Huxley reaches from his assumption of the struggle. Though, unlike Kropotkin, Huxley accepts the accuracy of the idea of struggle, his point is not to advocate that individuals look to the natural process of evolution "to help them towards perfection." On the contrary, it is to show that "the ape and tiger methods of the struggle for existence are not reconcilable with sound ethical principles."<sup>29</sup> In both the celebrated Romanes Lecture of 1893 and his earlier article for the *Nineteenth Century*<sup>30</sup> (from which Kropotkin takes up his challenge) Huxley emphasises the contrast that exists between the ethical process operating in humanity and the cosmic process operating in nature generally. In the former article, quoted by Kropotkin, he writes:

in the strict sense of the word, 'nature' denotes the sum of the phenomenal world, of that which has been, and is, and will be; and society, like art, is therefore a part of nature. But it is convenient to distinguish those parts of nature in which man plays the part of immediate cause, as something apart; and, therefore, society, like art, is usefully to be considered as distinct from nature. It is the more...desirable, and even necessary, to make this distinction, since society differs from nature in having a definite moral object; whence it comes about that the course shaped by the ethical man - the member of society or citizen - necessarily runs counter to that which the non-ethical man - the primitive savage, or man as a mere member of the animal kingdom - tends to adopt. The latter fights out the struggle for existence to the bitter end, like any other animal; the former devotes his best energies to the object of setting limits to the struggle.<sup>31</sup>

The parameters of Huxley's debate were well understood at the time of his writing. Following the delivery of the Romanes Lecture, a *Guardian* report of 1893 sets the context of the discussion in the following terms:

Whatever Professor Huxley does, he is sure to fix attention by a surprise; and on this occasion we have the astonishing spectacle of seeing him figure as the champion of virtue against nature. The advocates of evolution have tried hard to bring man's moral sentiments under the sway of the universal law. Darwin and Herbert Spencer have both endeavoured to build up speech and reason, justice, benevolence, and truth out of the blind striving of gregarious animals

towards the preservation and welfare of the herd. But Professor Huxley, tells us now that this is all a mistake. Man has developed his moral sentiments in direct opposition to the law of cosmic evolution. The survival of the fittest has been attained by the ruthless extermination of the unfit. Selfishness, unredeemed and un pitying, that sends the weakest to the wall, has been the prime factor in the process. The benevolence that represses selfishness and helps the weaker neighbour on his course is simply an interfering and thwarting motive. Goodness or virtue demands a course of conduct entirely opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence.<sup>32</sup>

Even given the public nature of the debate, it is possible, as David Miller implies, that Kropotkin was initially blind to Huxley's conclusions and was simply careless in his representation of his adversary's work. It is more plausible, however, that Kropotkin did not mistake the force of Huxley's argument, but strongly disagreed with it. In this sense his treatment of Huxley's work does not, as both David Miller and Woodcock contend, stand as testimony to the limited nature of his aims; to his concern to refute only the validity of Huxley's understanding of the natural world. Rather, his dismissal of Huxley as a Hobbesian, though unfair, may be considered as the necessary preliminary to his demonstration of the compatibility between natural evolution and moral development.

On the basis of his early writings, Kropotkin's motive for disproving Huxley's wider case is based on the threat it represents to his own vision of human perfectibility and the natural sociability of the communal group. The claim is not easy to make, since in his early writings Kropotkin never asserts the existence of a natural process of moral development unresponsive to external forces, and it is exactly this natural progression which Huxley claims to be impossible. From Kropotkin's point of view, however, the idea that individuals are naturally aggressive and forever at war with one another, both in the conditions provided by the State and in nature, not only provides the theoretical basis for the justification of the State it also denies the progression to anarchy by means of structural reorganisation. Huxley's

contention that morality may be grounded only on ethical rather than cosmic forces thus conceals a 'truth' about nature which contradicts all of Kropotkin's early assumptions. His anarchism is shown to be entirely inconsistent with existing scientific knowledge.

That Kropotkin still held to these assumptions, maintained his ideal of achieving the naturally harmonious society and approached *Mutual Aid* from the point of view of reasserting the potential for the creation of the moral society is indicated by his correspondence with Brandes. Writing in 1896, Kropotkin first passes comment on the faith he has in the good sense of existing communal groups:

Vous dites que vous êtes frappé de ma foi absolue dans la sagesse du peuple. Absolue est peut-être trop fort; mais il y a deux choses qui m'ont frappé dans mes études et dans ma vie... j'ai toujours été frappé du bon sens moral des décisions populaires (dans le village, dans un groupe etc.) quand ces hommes ont à répondre à des questions qu'ils comprennent. Et enfin, quand on va bien au fond de ce que les plus grands penseurs ont écrit, on retrouve qu'au fond ils n'ont (dans ce qu'ils ont fait de meilleur) qu'exprimé les idées, les aspirations, l'idéal qui existait sous une forme vague chez le peuple.<sup>33</sup>

In the same letter, Kropotkin continues:

J'ai tout appris chez le peuple, tout appris chez de simples ouvriers qui savaient à peine écrire, tout appris chez de simples paysans russes... je ne saurais le décrire, ce n'est pas camaraderie, ni égalité, mais simplicité, peut-être, - à chaque pas de sa vie on est frappé de ce bon sens. Il y a dans les masses un esprit et l'exprimer, l'analyser, est peut-être le plus grand service que l'on puisse rendre à l'humanité. Jamais je n'ai bien exprimé cela dans mes écrits. Mais mon meilleur travail dans cette direction est la série d'articles *Mutual Aid*...<sup>34</sup>

Kropotkin's broader interest in refuting Huxley and re-examining the nature of the relationship between morality and the environment in the context of evolutionary theory is also signified by his awakening to Darwinian theory through Kessler. In so far as he represents mainstream Russian opinion, Kessler binds Kropotkin to an interpretative tradition which always stressed the importance of the symbiotic aspects of evolutionary theory and the moral and political implications of Darwin's work.<sup>35</sup> Less speculatively Kropotkin's intention of questioning the

conclusions Huxley draws from his understanding of nature emerges in the triadic relationship he posits between his own work, Darwin's original theory of evolution and Social Darwinism.

Kropotkin presents his analysis of Darwin's work on two levels. In the first instance, couching his discussion in purely biological terms, he identifies himself as a Darwinian. He concentrates particularly on Darwin's original concepts of 'competition' and the 'struggle for existence', claiming exact correspondence with his own understanding of mutual aid. In the second instance, Kropotkin claims an equally strong identification with Darwin, but presents an implicitly political interpretation of evolutionary theory. Supporting this second case only by assuming the validity of the first, Kropotkin attempts to show that the evolution of species is based not on the notion of 'struggle' but on the co-operation of species and the ability to overcome the constraints of the natural environment.

In Darwin's *The Origin of Species* the idea of competition serves as the mechanism for natural selection, thus explaining variability. There is, Darwin argues, a struggle for life in which all species are engaged and on which the development or failure of specific features of different genera (and the life of species) is based. For Darwin, the struggle is one in which only the 'fittest' survive.

Owing to this struggle, variations, however slight and from whatever cause proceeding, if they be in any degree profitable to the individuals of a species, in their infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to their physical conditions of life, will tend to the preservation of such individuals, and will generally be inherited by the offspring. The offspring also, will thus have a better chance of surviving, for, of the many individuals of any species which are periodically born, but a small number can survive. . . . I have called this principle, by which each slight variation, if useful, is preserved, by the term Natural Selection, in order to mark its relation to man's power of selection. <sup>36</sup>

In Kropotkin's work neither 'competition' nor 'struggle' are denied. His thought is more subtle: rather than questioning the extent to which

species are forced to struggle Kropotkin merely queries what 'struggle' means. In *Mutual Aid* he argues:

no naturalist will doubt that the idea of a struggle for life carried on through organic nature is the greatest generalization of our century. Life is struggle; and in that struggle the fittest survive. But the answers to the questions, "By which arms is this struggle chiefly carried on?" and "Who are the fittest in the struggle?" will widely differ according to the importance given to the two different aspects of the struggle: the direct one, for food and safety among separate individuals, and the struggle which Darwin described as "metaphorical"...<sup>37</sup>

Always careful to stress his intellectual credibility by referring to Darwin's original work, Kropotkin's reference to the 'metaphorical' struggle is again taken from the *The Origin of Species*. Here, Darwin explains:

I should premise that I use this term in a large and metaphorical sense including dependence of one being on another, and including (which is more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny. Two canine animals, in a time of dearth, may be truly said to struggle with each other which shall get food and live. But a plant on the edge of a desert is said to struggle for life against the drought, though more properly it should be said to be dependent on the moisture. A plant which annually produces a thousand seeds, of which only one of an average come to maturity, may be more truly said to struggle with the plants of the same and other kinds which already clothe the ground. The mistletoe is dependent on the apple and a few other trees, but can only in a far-fetched sense be said to struggle with these trees, for, if too many of these parasites grow on the same tree, it languishes and dies. But several seedling mistletoes, growing close together on the same branch, may more truly be said to struggle with each other. As the mistletoe is disseminated by birds, its existence depends on them; and it may methodically be said to struggle with other fruit-bearing plants, in tempting the birds to devour and thus disseminate its seeds. In these several senses, which pass into each other, I use for convenience' sake the general term of Struggle for Existence.<sup>38</sup>

Understanding the struggle for existence metaphorically, Kropotkin explains the principle of mutual aid as a theory of dependence. He describes three main areas of dependency: rearing progeny, procuring food and raising defence against danger. Kropotkin illustrates the incidence of mutual aid with prodigious examples drawn mainly from studies of insect and bird life. He relies heavily on secondary sources but also applies his personal skills of observation. Thus following a

visit to the Brighton Aquarium he discusses the capacity of the "clumsy" Molucca crabs to bestow mutual assistance on a needy "comrade":

One of them had fallen upon its back in a corner of a tank, and its heavy saucepan-like carapace prevented it from returning to its natural position, the more so as there was in the corner an iron bar which rendered the task still more difficult. Its comrades came to the rescue, and for one hour's time I watched how they endeavoured to help their fellow-prisoner...After many attempts, one of the helpers would go in the depth of the tank and bring two other crabs, which would begin with fresh forces the...pushing and lifting of their helpless comrade.<sup>39</sup>

Elsewhere Kropotkin speaks of the sophistication of the co-operative enterprises dung-beetles undertake in order to secure food for their future offspring. Discussing their practices with a fondness he displays for all animal life, Kropotkin notes:

As a rule, they live an isolated life, but when one of them has discovered the corpse of a mouse or of a bird, which it could hardly manage to bury itself, it calls four, six, or ten other beetles to perform the operation with united efforts; if necessary they transport the corpse to a suitable soft ground; and they bury it in a very considerate way, without quarrelling as to which of them will enjoy the privilege of laying its eggs in the buried corpse.<sup>40</sup>

The impression in all the examples Kropotkin provides is the same: only in the metaphorical sense can struggle and competition be considered to regulate relations between species. The spirit of mutual aid governs inter-species relations.

Moving a step beyond the Darwinian concept of 'struggle' Kropotkin uses this observation to argue that as a principle of evolution, the practice of mutual aid is collective. Dependence demands that it must be so; for Kropotkin, however, the principal idea is stretched beyond a consideration of necessary co-operation to embrace activities which are undertaken from a preference for the collectivity. Explaining this aspect of the principle, Kropotkin finds that mutual aid operates on a group rather than an individual or family basis. Though examining the habits of ants, for instance, Kropotkin does not quite extend the practice of mutual aid to cover species-wide relations indiscriminately, he nonetheless finds that:

If we take an ants' nest we not only see that every description of work... is performed according to the principles of voluntary mutual aid; we must also recognise...that the chief, the fundamental feature of the life of many species of ants is the fact and the obligation for every ant of sharing its food, already swallowed and partly digested, with every member of the community which may apply for it. Two ants belonging to two different species or to two hostile nests, when they occasionally meet together, will avoid each other. But two ants belonging to the same nest or to the same colony of nests will approach each other, exchange a few movements with the antennae, and 'if one of them is hungry or thirsty, and especially if the other has its crop full...it immediately asks for food. The individual thus requested never refuses...'<sup>41</sup>

In the rare instances that Kropotkin does acknowledge inter-species competition his anecdotes are always counteracted with another example of co-operation. Whilst, for instance, he talks of the tendency of some birds to rob others by forcing them to disgorge their food, he describes the frequency with which other different groups of birds both nest and hunt together. He discusses competition between species with greater ease and mentions, for example, the capacity of the martial eagle to "carry away a hare or a young antelope in its claws".<sup>42</sup> But Kropotkin's intention is never to describe the nature of the predatory kill. There is little death in Kropotkin's biology and species eat one another less often than they use one another protectively. Glossing over the uglier details of the struggle Kropotkin's illustrations of inter-species competition are always used to co-operative effect or, with a similar romanticism, to emphasise the advantage of the natural underdog. Thus the "little, but extremely swift lapwings...boldly attack the birds of prey."<sup>43</sup> Similarly where he admits one creature's 'meanness', Kropotkin always finds a positive natural balance in some other individual. Turning his attention to the bird life of the Arctic archipelagoes he finds:

Each of such 'bird-mountains' is a living illustration of mutual aid, as well as of the infinite variety of characters, individual and specific, resulting from social life. The oyster-catcher is renowned for its readiness to attack birds of prey. The barge is known for its watchfulness, and it easily becomes the leader of more placid birds. The turnstone, when surrounded by comrades belonging to more energetic species, is rather a timorous bird; but it undertakes keeping watch for the security of the commonwealth when surrounded by smaller birds. Here you have the dominative swans; there, the extremely

sociable kittiwake-gulls, among whom quarrels are rare and short; the pre-possessing polar guillemots, which continually caress each other; the egoist she-goose, who has repudiated the orphans of a killed comrade; and, by her side, another female who adopts anyone's orphans, and now paddles surrounded by fifty or sixty youngsters, whom she conducts and cares for as if they all were her own breed.<sup>44</sup>

Relying on the accuracy of his interpretation of Darwin's metaphorical understanding Kropotkin contrasts the principle of mutual aid to what he believes is the cruder notion of 'struggle' expounded by Huxley. It is in this sense that he first claims mutual aid to be a factor of evolution. Openly declaring the assertion, he argues:

As soon as we study animals...in the forest and the prairie, in the steppe and the mountains - we at once perceive that though there is an immense amount of warfare and extermination going on amidst various species...there is, at the same time, as much, or perhaps even more, of mutual support, mutual aid, and mutual defence amidst animals belonging to the same species or, at least, to the same society. Sociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle...if we resort to an indirect test, and ask Nature 'Who are the fittest: those who are continually at war with each other, or those who support one another?' we at once see that those animals which acquire habits of mutual aid are undoubtedly the fittest...mutual aid is as much a law of animal life as mutual struggle, but...as a factor of evolution, it most probably has a far greater importance...<sup>45</sup>

Though not unattractive, as a theory of biological evolution Kropotkin's description of the principle of mutual aid is fraught with difficulties. Not all are unique to his work: his discussion of the 'friendly' relations of the comrade crabs, for example, is more indicative of the anthropomorphic fashions of the period rather than of his personal tendency to impute human characteristics to non-human species.<sup>46</sup> Other difficulties are more specific and more damaging. His interpretation of the behaviour of the dung-beetle was famously challenged by Fabre's observations during Kropotkin's own lifetime.<sup>47</sup> There is also a difficulty in reconciling Kropotkin's virtual denial of inter-species competition with Darwin's own version of the struggle.

Even taking account of Darwin's widest understanding of the term, the picture he imparts of nature is very different from Kropotkin's. Set against the accepted truth which Huxley expounds, many of the

examples Kropotkin uses to illustrate mutual aid implicitly acknowledge this difference. But Kropotkin explicitly admits the divergence between his own and Darwin's representation of 'struggle', commenting that the idea "which permeates Darwin's work is certainly one of real competition going on within each animal group...".<sup>48</sup>

The looseness of Kropotkin's interpretation of Darwin's work may be explained by his stated intention of correcting the view of nature imparted by Huxley and the Social Darwinists. As Kropotkin's argument progresses it becomes clear, however, that the insignificance he attaches to the 'struggle for existence' is not based simply on his desire to 'rescue' Darwin's thought from the 'perversion' it has received by Huxley's hand. Notwithstanding the identification he makes with Darwin's 'metaphorical' understanding, Kropotkin actually denies that struggle - in the sense that it refers to the competition between species for limited resources - exists. Moving to the second part of his analysis Kropotkin directs his attention towards the malthusian assumptions of Darwin's work.

Kropotkin makes his dislike of Malthus clear in *The Conquest of Bread*. In economic terms the implications of Malthus' argument hopelessly undermine the assumptions he makes about the possibility of realising 'well-being for all'. Logically deriding the potential of increasing productivity to the point of overcoming the problem of scarcity, Malthus is consequently derided in Kropotkin's work as a faithless and biased "oracle of middle-class economics".<sup>49</sup>

Kropotkin similarly repudiates the validity of Malthus' work in *Mutual Aid*. Advancing his argument Kropotkin does not deny the role that Malthus' thought assumes in Darwin's work, but acknowledges that it was on the basis of his reading of Malthusian economics and the theory of geometric increase that Darwin derived the inspiration for his

explanation of the mechanism of species variability.<sup>50</sup> Recognising this, however, Kropotkin insists that Malthus' importance to Darwin is purely instrumental: Darwin had recourse to Malthus only for reasons of theoretical necessity and he was too much of a political innocent, too engrossed in scientific discovery to realise the full implications of the foundation on which he chose to ground his hypothesis of natural selection. Kropotkin argues:

it may be that Darwin himself was not fully aware at the outset of the generality of the factor which he first invoked for explaining one series only of facts relative to the accumulation of individual variations in incipient species.<sup>51</sup>

Darwin did not understand the extent to which the Malthusian concept of competition would cause his ideas to be vulgarised. Notwithstanding the recognition Darwin himself gives to the aptness of Spencer's characterisation of natural selection as the 'survival of the fittest',<sup>52</sup> it is by his association with Malthus, Kropotkin continues, that his conception of 'struggle' has been reduced to the very lowest level:

While he himself was chiefly using the term in its narrow sense for his own special purpose, he warned his followers against committing the error (which he seems once to have committed himself) of overrating its narrow meaning. In the *Descent of Man* he gave some powerful pages to illustrate its proper, wide sense...He intimated that...the fittest are not the physically strongest, nor the cunningest, but those who learn to combine so as mutually to support each other, strong and weak alike, for the welfare of the community. 'Those communities,' he wrote, 'which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring'...The term, which originated from the narrow Malthusian conception of competition between each and all, thus lost its narrowness in the mind of one who knew nature.<sup>53</sup>

Intermittently, Kropotkin holds Darwin partially responsible for the exaggerated influence Malthus' ideas have exercised on evolutionary theory. Darwin was at least negligently culpable for the denigration of his ideas and having provided the world with a 'metaphorical' conception of 'struggle' he never properly developed his work. In order to secure the principles of evolutionary theory Darwin emphasised the

simple narrow conception of 'survival' and died before restoring the balance of the wider definition to his theory. Thus Kropotkin comments:

Unhappily, these remarks, which might have become the basis of most fruitful researches, were overshadowed by the masses of facts gathered for the purpose of illustrating the consequences of a real competition for life. Besides, Darwin never attempted to submit to a closer investigation the relative importance of the two aspects under which the struggle for existence appears in the animal world, and he never wrote the work he proposed to write upon the natural checks to over-multiplication, although that work would have been the crucial test for appreciating the real purport of individual struggle. Nay, on the very pages just mentioned, [in the *Descent of Man*] amidst data disproving the narrow Malthusian conception of struggle, the old Malthusian heaven reappeared...<sup>54</sup>

Whether Kropotkin discusses the 'corruption' of Darwin's work from an aggressive or a conciliatory point of view he consistently divorces Malthus from 'genuine' Darwinian theory. To the extent that he does this, and successfully represents *Mutual Aid* as the embodiment of Darwinian thought, Kropotkin considerably strengthens his claims against Huxley. According to Kropotkin, Huxley not only accepts a mistaken interpretation of nature he does so on the basis of an argument which not only justifies but celebrates a wholly unpleasant picture of human behaviour. The distinction Huxley draws between the natural or 'cosmic' and the 'ethical' world is irrelevant: the force of his argument rests in the accepted truth of his premises and, therefore, the seeming validity of the Social Darwinian case. Moving, however, beyond his derision of the biological war of all against all and the alternative moral conclusions that he believes Huxley's ill-considered assumptions support Kropotkin uses his analysis of Malthus to suggest that the struggle for existence is determined by the struggle of species against the environment.

There are two parts to Kropotkin's argument. In the first instance he examines the sense in which creatures have to 'struggle' against the physical ravages of nature. The second part of his discussion considers how species overcome this struggle.

Examining the hazards facing the horses and cattle grazing in the steppes of Transbaikalia Kropotkin finds that the numerical increase and decrease of species is directly related to the incidence of early spring frost and snow. Similar conditions keep the numbers of "all free grass-eating animals and many rodents in Asia and America" in check.<sup>55</sup> There is never a real shortage of food: food is always available to the creatures, but is periodically non-accessible. The population is thus controlled not by competition with predators or between members of the same species, but by natural disasters which restrict access to resources and affect the whole group. Elucidating the general principle, Kropotkin finds:

The importance of natural checks to over-multiplication, and especially their bearing upon the competition hypothesis, seems never to have been taken into due account. The checks, or rather some of them, are mentioned, but their action is seldom studied in detail. However, if we compare the action of the natural checks with that of competition, we must recognise at once that the latter sustains no comparison whatever with the other checks. Thus, Mr. Bates mentions the really astounding numbers of winged ants which are destroyed during their exodus. The dead or half-dead bodies of the *formica de fuego*... which had been blown into the river during a gale 'were heaped in a line an inch or two in height and breadth, the line continuing without interruption for miles at the edge of the water.' Myriads of ants are thus destroyed amidst a nature which might support a hundred times as many ants as are actually living.<sup>56</sup>

In the second place Kropotkin finds that by practising mutual aid species can successfully overcome the struggle against the environment and increase their fitness. Using the same example, he argues that the world could support five or ten times as many Transbaikalian horses and cattle than survive under existing conditions and that it could still continue to support such numbers if the natural checks on the population were themselves to be overcome. The argument bears a strong relation to his analysis of the division of labour, not only in its seeming contradictoriness but in the conclusions it reaches about the possibility for 'well-being'. In addition, in *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin not only asserts the possibility of all creatures to realise 'well-being' in

nature but a relation between this capacity and a disavowal of competition:

Happily enough, competition is not the rule either in the animal world or in mankind. It is limited among animals to exceptional periods, and natural selection finds better fields for its activity. Better conditions are created by the elimination of competition by means of mutual aid and mutual support. In the great struggle for life - for the greatest possible fullness and intensity of life with the least waste of energy - natural selection continually seeks out the ways precisely for avoiding competition as much as possible. The ants combine in nests and nations; they pile up their stores, they rear their cattle...birds slowly move southwards as the winter comes... Many rodents fall asleep...while other rodents store food for the winter...The reindeer, when the lichens are dry in the interior of the continent, migrate towards the sea...And when animals can neither fall asleep, nor migrate, nor lay in stores...they do what the titmouse does...they resort to new kinds of food...

Don't compete! - competition is always injurious to the species, and you have plenty of resources to avoid it! That is the tendency of nature, not always realised in full, but always present.<sup>57</sup>

In Darwin's work the emphasis Kropotkin places on the importance of the environmental struggle may be explained by the influence of his Russian researches. In northern climes competition between species is minimal: there are fewer species of all kinds and climate acts directly to control population. In Arctic regions Darwin notes that "the struggle for life is almost exclusively with the elements";<sup>58</sup> and it is in Russia that Kropotkin claims to have observed the impact of the physical force of nature to its full effect.<sup>59</sup>

The importance that Kropotkin's work in Siberia bears to his later formulation of mutual aid is easily overestimated; and that he developed his theory with deliberate intention is implied by the increasing certainty with which he expresses his ideas. Kropotkin's enthusiasm to separate Darwin from Malthus, for example, increases as his work progresses. In the the period between his writing the articles for *Mutual Aid* and the publication of the book Kropotkin formulates a new area of distinction in the 'extermination of transitional forms'.<sup>60</sup> Kropotkin's conviction that the struggle for existence is characterised by the struggle of species against the environment is similarly more

developed in the published book than it is in the original essays which comprise *Mutual Aid*. In the latter Kropotkin not only expands his consideration of the natural checks to over-multiplication<sup>61</sup> in addition, though not convincingly, he discusses the extent to which animals have become adapted specifically to avoid competition.<sup>62</sup>

Kropotkin's analysis of the relationship between Darwin and Malthus compounds the difficulties of his evolutionary theory. Kropotkin recognises the scientific problem: Darwin "often speaks of regions being stocked with animal life to their full capacity, and from that overstocking he infers the necessity of competition."<sup>63</sup> Denying the Malthusian influence, Kropotkin also denies the premises on which the operation of natural selection is based. But whilst his breach of biological orthodoxy casts doubt on the scientific status of his work it also provides the basis on which he can proceed to examine the nature of the relationship between the practice of mutual aid and social organisation. Arguing that species learn how to compete against the environment through the practice of biological mutual aid, the second step in Kropotkin's analysis is marked by his discussion of the processes by which they consciously commit themselves to follow such practices. Here, he not only discusses the nature of 'environmentally efficient' social organisation, returning to the themes he explored previously in *The Conquest of Bread*, he also relates the structure of society to the level of its ethical development. Kropotkin thus counters Huxley by asserting a natural transformation between cosmic and human ethical evolution or, in Kropotkin's terms, between biological and ethical mutual aid. Confirming the importance of the division, Kropotkin comments:

Sociability in animals has a double significance, and therefore has to be considered under a double aspect. It is the weapon to which the group resorts

in its struggle for existence, and as such it interests the naturalist. And it is the stock from which the ethical feelings of man have sprung, and as such it offers the deepest interest for the ethical philosopher.<sup>64</sup>

### 3. ETHICAL MUTUAL AID

In an essay *From Animals to Men* J.B.S. Haldane examines the legitimacy of imputing facts about humanity on the basis of observations made of the animal world.<sup>65</sup> He considers the debate from several angles but concentrates mainly on the relevance such arguments have to physical and cultural anthropology. There is, he concludes, a complex interrelationship between the two realms; some facets of human behaviour can be illuminated from data collected in animal research. In Kropotkin's work the relationship appears to be far simpler. Taking another opportunity to deride the value of marxist methodology, in *Modern Science and Anarchism*, he comments:

As man is a part of nature, as his personal and social life a natural phenomenon, just as the growth of a flower, or the evolution of life in societies of ants or bees - there is no reason why we should, when we pass from the flower to man, from a village of beavers to a human city, abandon the method which till then has been so useful, and to look for another method in the realms of metaphysics.<sup>66</sup>

To some extent, Kropotkin's discussion of methodology is misleading. In developing the theory of mutual aid he not only proceeds his investigation of human and animal worlds with the same method, he argues that human sociability and the practice of biological mutual aid can be assumed simply on the basis of its observed existence in animals.

Writing in 1891:

We saw how few are the animal species which live an isolated life... We also saw that...peace and mutual support are the rule...among species; and that those species which best know how to combine, and avoid competition, have the best chances of survival and of a further progressive development. They prosper, while the unsociable species decay. It is evident that it would be quite contrary to all that we know of nature if men were an exception to so general a rule: if a creature so defenceless as a man was at his beginnings should have found his protection and his way to progress, not in mutual support, like other animals, but in a reckless

competition for personal advantages, with no regard to the interests of the species.<sup>67</sup>

Since Kropotkin represents the practice of mutual aid as a principle of evolution, the transposition he makes from the animal to the human world is not so contentious: the contentiousness of his argument lies in the claim he makes to represent Darwin. The greater difficulty arises from the crude anthropomorphism of his biological studies, in his tendency to talk about 'comrade' crabs, for example. Suggesting that humanity practices the same principles of mutual aid as animal species, Kropotkin also implicitly attributes the placid behaviours he finds in non-animal species - on the basis of their imputed human characteristics - back in to mankind. This may not have been his intention, but Kropotkin does not retract anything from his picture of natural tranquillity in the animal world in his discussion of human mutual aid. On the contrary, the temper of his observations of human and animal behaviours bear a great deal in common. The contexts he chooses in order to give examples of particular behaviours are shared in his discussions; in some cases, the similarity extends to the point of identicalness.

Offering a direct comparison between the animal and human worlds in his discussion of biological mutual aid Kropotkin extends his understanding to a consideration of the ethical principle of evolution in two ways. In his first discussion, the transformation in the animal world is transposed to cover the human realm with the same simplicity as his analysis of the biological principle. The second discussion is more complex and introduces an historical element into his analysis.

Kropotkin's 'simple' discussion of the transition of mutual aid extends his idea of communal practice and builds on his concept of the struggle against the environment. Returning to consider the communal

aspect of mutual aid, Kropotkin posits the development of moral codes on the basis of the sociable group's existence and finds that ethical sentiments grow naturally as a result of living in a society. Animals do not just aim to avoid isolation or restrict their co-operation to the necessary minimum. Pointing to the playfulness of hares, and even sheep, he argues that species positively seek companionship. As camaraderie develops species consciously develop formal patterns of living, social hierarchies and rules of behaviour.<sup>68</sup> Kropotkin gives numerous examples of the process; though his assumption that society is impossible without a shared sense of morality plays a more important role in deciding the issue. Summarising the discussion, he comments:

it is evident that life in societies would be utterly impossible without a corresponding development of social feelings, and, especially, of a certain collective sense of justice growing to become a habit. If every individual were constantly abusing its personal advantages without the others interfering in favour of the wronged, no society-life would be possible. And feelings of justice develop, more or less, with all gregarious animals. Whatever the distance from which the swallows or the cranes come, each one returns to the nest it has built or repaired last year. If a lazy sparrow intends appropriating the nest which a comrade is building; or even steals from it a few sprays of straw, the group interferes against the lazy comrade; and it is evident that without such interference being the rule, no nesting associations of birds could exist.<sup>69</sup>

The development of sociability and of moral rules is not dependent on, or an extension of parental or instinctual feelings of love. It arises quite separately from a desire to be part of the whole community. Kropotkin is keen to emphasise the point and expounding the view he again takes support from Darwin:

[Darwin] pointed out that the social instinct must be a separate instinct in itself, different from the others - an instinct which had been developed by natural selection for its own sake, as it was useful for the well-being and the preservation of the species. It is so fundamental that when it runs against another instinct, even one so strong as the attachment of the parents to their offspring, it often takes the upper hand. Birds, when the time has come for their autumn migration, will leave behind their tender young, not yet old enough for a prolonged flight, and follow their comrades.<sup>70</sup>

The social instinct is developed prior to the parental instinct. Arguing the point with specific reference to human society, Kropotkin

finds that the closer family relation arises within the community structure and is a development of the practice of the ethical principle: "As to the family", he remarks "its first germs appeared amidst the clan group."<sup>71</sup> Thus the practice of ethical mutual aid is related to the complexity of the social unit. The rule applies even to those species which live in relatively closed numbers and which continue to display 'anti-social' habits. The seeming contradictoriness of the rule rests on Kropotkin's assumption that the existing isolation of some species in family groups and the sometimes violent tendencies they display are characteristics which are imposed by the aggressiveness of mankind rather than by nature:

The villages of the prairie-dogs in America are one of the loveliest sights. As far as the eye can embrace the prairie, it sees neaps of earth, and on each of them a prairie-dog stands, engaged in a lively conversation with its neighbours by means of short barkings. As soon as the approach of man is signalled, all plunge in a moment into their dwellings...But if the danger is over, the little creatures soon reappear. Whole families come out of their galleries and indulge in play...They go visiting one another, and the beaten footpaths which connect all their neaps testify of the frequency of the visitations...And yet...[t]hey have maintained their fighting instincts, and these instincts reappear in captivity. But in the big associations, in the face of free Nature, the unsociable instincts have no opportunity to develop, and the general result is peace and harmony.<sup>72</sup>

As a principle of communal association ethical mutual aid develops in relation to the environment. Kropotkin explains that the extent to which species practise ethical mutual aid increases their general fitness, enabling them to transform their surroundings and thereby further improve their chances of survival. It does so in two ways. On the one hand, by solidifying the instinctual links of the species into consciously engaged social relations, mutual aid increases the efficiency of the biological behaviours necessary for the progress of life:

Life in societies enables the feeblest insects, the feeblest birds, and the feeblest mammals to resist, or to protect themselves from, the most terrible birds and beasts of prey; it permits longevity; it enables the species to rear progeny with the least waste of energy and to maintain its numbers albeit a very slow birth-rate; it enables the gregarious animals to migrate in search of

new abodes...while fully admitting that force, swiftness, protective colours, cunningness, and endurance to hunger and cold...are so many qualities making the individual, or the species, the fittest under certain circumstances, we maintain that under any circumstances sociability is the greatest advantage in the struggle for life.<sup>73</sup>

On the other hand, ethical mutual aid encourages the development of intelligence. In society species formulate means of communication, learn arts of imitation and accumulate experience. In the growth of intelligence the biological necessities of procuring food and securing protection are again enhanced. Thus, Kropotkin continues:

As to the intellectual faculty, while every Darwinist will agree with Darwin that it is the most powerful arm in the struggle for life, and the most powerful factor of further evolution, he also will admit that intelligence is an eminently social faculty...The fittest are thus the most sociable animals, and sociability appears as the chief factor of evolution, both directly, by securing the well-being of species while diminishing the waste of energy, and indirectly, by favouring the growth of intelligence.<sup>74</sup>

In mankind the transformation from the strict biological principle to the practice of ethical mutual aid follows the pattern of change apparent in the animal world. Like animals, Kropotkin contends, humans naturally cohere in societies and their natural sociability leads spontaneously to the development of certain moral codes. Kropotkin presents the detailed discussion of the process in his anthropological studies of 'savages' and 'barbarians' - respectively the third and fourth articles in his original series.

Changing disciplines adds various embellishments to Kropotkin's accounts of animal life. Kropotkin discusses the closeness of primitive forms of organisation, tracing its development from the small clans to the larger tribes and the first village communities. In each he illustrates the high degree of organisation the primitives attained, repeatedly claiming that their progress was inhibited only by the development of the 'modern' nuclear or patriarchal family association. Thus extending his initial observations about the origins of the family, Kropotkin comments that the "appearance of a separate family amidst the

clan necessarily disturbs the established unity."<sup>75</sup> He describes the complexity of clan and tribal relations paying particular attention to the formality of marriage contracts. He also discusses the ritualism of 'primitive' society, relating what appear to the 'civilised' mind to be the more barbaric behaviours of cannibalism, patricide and infanticide to practical considerations and strongly-held communal beliefs.<sup>76</sup>

Kropotkin's discussions of primitive organisation contain no more sense of balance than his image of nature. He does not deny the violence of tribal organisation or the animosity of inter-tribal relations; nor does he give approval to the moral rules that the 'savages' maintain. Nevertheless he finds that:

absurd or not, the savage obeys the prescriptions of the common law, however inconvenient they may be. He obeys them even more blindly than the civilised man obeys the prescriptions of the written law. His common law is his religion; it is his very habit of living. The idea of the clan is always present to his mind, and self-restriction and self-sacrifice in the interest of the clan are of daily occurrence.<sup>77</sup>

Such sociability, Kropotkin continues, bestows the same benefits of fitness on humanity as it does on the remainder of the natural world.

Introducing his study of the 'barbarians', he comments:

Traces of human societies are found in the relics of both the oldest and the later stone-age; and, when we come to observe the savages whose manners of life are still those of neolithic man, we find them closely bound together by an extremely ancient clan organisation which enables them to combine their individually weak forces, to enjoy life in common, and to progress. Man is no exception in nature. He also is subject to the great principle of Mutual Aid which grants the best chances of survival to those who best support each other in the struggle for life.<sup>78</sup>

There are, however, important differences between Kropotkin's understanding of mutual aid in the animal and human spheres. In his discussion of the ethical principle amongst animals Kropotkin assumes a fixed evolutionary scale. The complexity of the beehive or the ants nest does not reflect a more highly developed ethical sense than the looser nesting associations of parrots. In general Kropotkin finds

sociability and ethical development increases in accordance with the biological development of species groups:

But, in proportion as we ascend the scale of evolution, we see association growing more conscious. It loses its purely physical character, it ceases to be simply instinctive, it becomes reasoned. With the higher vertebrates it is periodical, or is resorted to for the satisfaction of a given want - propagation of the species, migration, hunting, or mutual defence. It even becomes occasional, when birds associate against a robber, or mammals combine ...to emigrate...it also takes higher forms, guaranteeing more independence to the individual without depriving it of the benefits of social life. With most rodents the individual has its own dwelling, which it can retire to when it prefers being left alone; but the dwellings are laid out in villages and cities, so as to guarantee to all inhabitants the benefits and joys of social life. And finally, in several species, such as rats, marmots, hares, &c., sociable life is maintained notwithstanding the quarrelsome or otherwise egotistical inclinations of the isolated individual. Thus it is not imposed... it is cultivated for the benefits of mutual aid, or for the sake of its pleasure. And this, of course, appears with all possible gradations and with the greatest variety of individual and specific characters - the very variety of aspects taken by social life being a consequence, and for us a further proof, of its generality.<sup>79</sup>

In his discussion of the ethical principle in mankind Kropotkin releases himself from consideration of the wider evolutionary scale and looks specifically at the human development of mutual aid. He complicates the process of transformation by distinguishing mankind from the rest of the animal world on the basis of its reflective skills or conscience. Calling once more on Darwin's work Kropotkin remarks on the process of reflective development:

Darwin shows how the primary promptings of such a conscience, which always 'looks backward, and serves as a guide for the future,' may take the aspect of shame, regret, repentance, or even violent remorse, if the feelings be supported by reflection about the judgement of those with whom man feels in sympathy. Later on, habit will necessarily increase the power of this conscience upon man's actions, while at the same time it will tend to harmonize more and more the desires and passions of the individual with his social sympathies and instincts.<sup>80</sup>

Standing at the apex of the evolutionary scale, humanity has the greatest ability to overcome the constraints of nature and the widest freedom of action to choose and develop preferred forms of social organisation. Mankind may experiment with different systems of organisation in a way which other animal species may not. The human

race may be a part of nature, but correcting the simple comparison he makes between human development the growth of a flower or the evolution of ants and bees, Kropotkin argues:

if we compare insects with mammals, we must never forget that the lines of their development have diverged at a very early period of animal evolution. The consequence was that a deep physiological differentiation between separate portions of the same species took place with the ants, the bees, the wasps, etc., corresponding to a permanent physiological division of labour between their females, their males, and their workers - a division of which there is no trace among mammals.<sup>81</sup>

Humanity can adapt to existing forms of organisation and imitate the best features of the animal world. Kropotkin recommends mimicking some aspects of insect life in particular: "Their devotion to the group is certainly not surpassed by ours...",<sup>82</sup> he comments. He also finds historical examples of the use humanity has made of the animal world in the structuring of its own communities. Primitive tribes took their learning specifically from the animal world they inhabited, studiously learning and copying the behaviours they witnessed the creatures perform around them:

Our primitive ancestors lived *with* the animals, in the midst of them. And as soon as they began to bring some order into their observations of nature, and to transmit them to posterity, the animals and their life supplied them with the chief materials for their unwritten encyclopaedia of knowledge, as well as for their wisdom which they first expressed in proverbs and sayings. Animal psychology was the first psychology which man was aware of...and animal life, closely interwoven with that of man, was the subject of the very first rudiments of art, inspiring the first engravers and sculptors, and entering into the composition of the most ancient epical traditions and cosmogonic myths.<sup>83</sup>

Approving and developing the habits of the animal communities that surrounded them primitive peoples did not organise their societies by chance but by conscious deliberation. Notwithstanding the disintegration of the communal group in modern society, which he traces to the distortion of the natural world, Kropotkin continues:

The first thing which our children learn in natural history is something about the beasts of prey - the lions and the tigers. But the first thing which primitive savages must have learned about nature was that it represents a vast agglomeration of animal clans and tribes: the ape tribe, so nearly related to man, the ever-prowling wolf tribe, the knowing, chattering bird tribe, the

ever-busy insect tribe, and so on. For them the animals were an extension of their own kin - only so much wiser than themselves. And the first vague generalisation which men must have made about nature...was that the living being and his clan or tribe are inseparable. We can separate them - they could not; and it seems even doubtful whether they could think of life otherwise than within a clan or a tribe.<sup>84</sup>

It was also from the animal world that mankind first developed a sense of 'right' and 'wrong'. In accordance with the general principle of developing intelligence, Kropotkin argues, primitive peoples were able to formulate definite moral codes from the naturally ethical behaviours they observed in the animal world.

The idea of 'justice,' conceived at its origin as revenge, is thus connected with observations made on animals. But it appears extremely probable that the idea of reward for 'just' and 'unjust' treatment must also have originated, with primitive mankind, for the idea that animals take revenge if they have not been properly treated by man, and repay kindness by kindness.<sup>85</sup>

In accordance with the peaceful picture of the natural world that he provides, Kropotkin finds that primitive peoples always learnt 'good' lessons from the natural world. The individual who witnessed "an attack of wild dogs, or dholes, upon the biggest beasts of prey" did not divine lessons of warfare from the experience but "realised, once and for ever, the irresistible force of the tribal unions, and the confidence and courage with which they inspire every individual".<sup>86</sup> Such observations contrast strongly with the remarks he makes about the education children are given on the basis of biological study in existing society. From the point of view of his wider theory, however, the difficulties of the contrast and the reasonableness of Kropotkin's suggestion are less important than the element of choice he introduces into the concept of evolutionary human morality.

In his discussions of the animal world ethical mutual aid is a spontaneous and naturally progressive process. In the human world the practice of biological mutual aid not only leads to the development of the ethical principle but to the formulation of moral codes defined in

relation to its active furtherance. To the extent that these codes reflect the principles of mutual aid - group sociability and fitness in the struggle against the environment - they heighten the standard of society and the well-being of the individuals who comprise it. But the capacity for reflection, the area available for the exercise of will and the possibility of choice also introduce the possibility of 'immorality'. According to Kropotkin the natural process of evolution leads humanity to develop those forms of organisation (and corresponding moral codes) which best enhance its fitness in the battle against the environment. At the same time, however, mankind is equally able to upset the natural process and impede both its own and other species' chances of survival. In the same way, for example, that humankind can destroy the natural sociability of bison and wolves by forcing them into isolated packs by means of ruthless aggression it can also place its own development on a regressive path. Mankind, he argues, cannot deny the fundamental law of evolutionary development but it can prevent its full and higher expression.

With this contention Kropotkin finds the means finally to repudiate Huxley's understanding. What he sees as the mad individualism of the modern world is explained not as a consequence of natural aggression but as a temporary rejection of nature and an upset of progressive mutual aid. The corrective solution to the problem lies in reorganisation.

## 4. ORGANISATION

Distinguishing human ethical evolution from the general natural process of development renders the moral and cosmic processes interdependent rather than conflicting. As the most developed species mankind has the capacity to work with nature in concert with other species and to hinder and ultimately destroy the evolutionary process. In so far as the increase and decrease of the animal population is concerned Kropotkin does not emphasise this human destructive capability as much as he does the natural checks on overpopulation. Nonetheless, in his commentaries on 'savage' and 'barbarian' life the contrast between the peacefulness of the former 'natural' world and the aggressiveness of modern 'civilised' society under the State is quite pronounced.

The fact is that every life is respected by a savage, or rather it was before he came in contact with Europeans. If he kills an animal, it is for food or for clothing; but he does not destroy life, as the whites do, for the mere excitement of the slaughter. True, the Red Indians have done that with the buffaloes; but it was after they had been for a long time in contact with the whites, and had got from them the rifle and the quick-firing revolver.<sup>86</sup>

Looking at the quality of human life Kropotkin leaves no room to doubt the severity of the contrast between 'primitive' and 'civilised' existence. But not only does he look at the distinctions between the primitive and modern worlds as they relate to animal life and the natural environment, Kropotkin also discusses the quality of life in relation to the differences that exist between the mutual aid society and the State. The modern State, he finds, no longer furthers the practice of mutual aid and shows no interest in developing forms of sociability or in discovering the means by which the difficulties presented by the environment - scarcity - may be overcome. Instead of

furthering the principle of mutual aid and securing well-being for all, Kropotkin finds that in the State:

the theory which maintains that men can, and must, seek their own happiness in a disregard of other people's wants is now triumphant all round - in law, in science, in religion. It is the religion of the day, and to doubt of its efficacy means to be a dangerous Utopian. Science loudly proclaims that the struggle of each against all is the leading principle of nature, and of human societies as well. To that struggle Biology ascribes the progressive evolution of the animal world. History takes the same line of argument; and political economists, in their naive ignorance, trace all progress of modern industry and machinery to the 'wonderful' effects of the same principle. The very religion of the pulpit is a religion of individualism, slightly mitigated by more or less charitable relations to one's neighbours, chiefly on Sundays. 'Practical' men and theorists, men of science and religious preachers, lawyers and politicians, all agree upon one thing - that individualism may be more or less softened in its harshest effects by charity, but that it is the only secure basis for the maintenance of society and its ulterior progress.<sup>87</sup>

Explaining what he considers to be the denigration of human life from its primitive state, Kropotkin devises a specifically human scale of ethical progress to run parallel to the basic evolutionary scale. The scale is historically based, running from the original 'savage' clans to the village communities and ending depressingly, he finds, in the rise of the small family group in the centralised State.<sup>88</sup> This scale incorporates the unevenness of historical development: "the evolution of mankind" he finds, "has not had the character of one unbroken series"<sup>89</sup>. Human progress is consequently arranged categorically on the basis of the level of social organisation a society has attained.

We must certainly abandon the idea of representing human history as an uninterrupted chain of development from the pre-historic Stone Age to the present time. Just as in the evolution of the animal series we consider the insects, the birds, the fishes, the mammals, as separate lines of development, so also in human history we must admit that evolution was started several times anew - in India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, and finally in Western Europe, beginning each time with the primitive tribe and the village community. But if we consider each of these lines separately, we certainly find in each of them, and especially in the development of Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire, a continual widening of the conception of mutual support and mutual protection, from the clan to the tribe, the nation, and finally to the international union of nations.<sup>90</sup>

The existence of an historical or organisational chart of human development within the evolutionary scale allows Kropotkin to argue that

humanity has the capacity to choose the manner in which it wants to live. His conclusion reverses the condition of his earliest studies of tribal society; rather than showing that the State is the normal but unnatural condition of society, the theory of mutual aid represents the State as an aberration in the process of evolutionary development. Kropotkin maintains the equation between moral and environmental change and argues that society will again develop ethically once it is organised to cater for the needs of the community rather than for the desires of the individual. But in so far as the reversal stems from Kropotkin's analysis of the progressive evolution of sociable forms of organisation, the theory of mutual aid causes the details of his concept of change to be altered. The most significant of these alterations concerns the relative importance he places on the concepts of community and communism. The nature of this modification and an examination of the difference it makes to the strength of Kropotkin's objection to the State and capitalism is examined in the following chapter.

NOTES: CHAPTER FOUR

1. See, for example, Kropotkin's comments in *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, C. Ward (ed.), Folio Society, London, (1978), p.204; or 'The Great French Revolution and Its Lessons', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXV, No.148, (June 1889), p.839. Expecting that the revolution will result in violence, Kropotkin warns that anarchist change does not simply relate to the massacre of <sup>the</sup> bourgeoisie: for his comments on 'terror', see *L'Action Anarchiste dans la Revolution*, Pamphlet no.72, Temps Nouveaux, Paris, (1914).
2. G. Woodcock & I. Avakumovic: *The Anarchist Prince*, T.V Boardman & Co., London, (1950), pp.243-260.
3. P. Kropotkin: '1848-1871: Speech Delivered at the Commune Celebration', *Freedom*, Vol.XXII, No.125, (April 1898).
4. Kropotkin expresses this view in a letter to Brandes, (22 September, 1898): *Correspondance de Georg Brandes*, Vol.II: *L'Angleterre et La Russie*, P. Kruger, (ed.), Rosenkilde Og Bagger, Copenhagen, (1956), pp.129-132.
5. See, for example, 'Letters on Russia', a series of five letters examining the attitudes of nihilists and liberals, the condition of the Russian peasantry and the administration, published between 12 October 1881 and 9 February 1882 in the *Newcastle Chronicle*; or 'The Russian Revolutionary Party', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol.XXXI, New Series, (January-June 1882), pp.654-671.
6. P. Kropotkin: 'The Present Crisis in Russia', *North American Review*, Vol.172, No.DXXXIV, (May 1901), p.716.
7. P. Kropotkin: 'Russian Schools and The Holy Synod', *North American Review*, Vol.174, No.DXLV, (April 1902), p.527.
8. P. Kropotkin: 'The Constitutional Agitation in Russia', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LVII, No.335, (January 1905), pp.27-45.
9. Letter from Kropotkin to Brandes (31 March 1904): *Correspondance de Georg Brandes*, op.cit., p.183.
10. Kropotkin's disillusion with what he considers to be Bolsheviks' corruption of the revolution is apparent, however, by 1920. See his 'Warning to British Workers', *The Times*, (10 June 1920).
11. G. Woodcock & I. Avakumovic: op.cit., p.245.
12. P. Kropotkin: '1886-1907 Glimpses into the Labour Movement in This Country', N. Walter & H. Becker (ed.), *Act For Yourself*, Freedom Press, London, (1988), p.120.
13. *ibid.*
14. Kropotkin to Brandes (17 September 1899): *Correspondance de Georg Brandes*, op.cit., p.155.
15. Kropotkin to Brandes (2 December 1899), *ibid.*, p.394.
16. Kropotkin to Brandes (27 December 1905), *ibid.*, p.198.
17. P. Kropotkin: *Revolutionary Government*, Freedom Press, (1941), p.14.
18. P. Kropotkin: 'Caesarism', *Freedom*, Vol.XIII, No.139, (June 1899)
19. P. Kropotkin: 'Politics and Socialism', *Freedom*, Vol.XVII, No.175, (April 1903).
20. P. Kropotkin: '1848-1871: Speech Delivered at the Commune Celebration', op.cit.
21. D. Miller: 'The Neglected II - Kropotkin', *Government and Opposition*, Vol.18, No.3, (Summer 1983), p.330.
22. P. Marshall: 'Human Nature and Anarchism', D. Goodway (ed.), *For Anarchism: History, Theory and Practice*, Routledge, London,

- (1989), p.136. Marshall does consider the moral aspect of Kropotkin's theory of mutual aid, but does so within the context of his understanding of human nature. Thus, he concludes that Kropotkin believed that mankind was naturally moral.
23. D. Miller: 'The Neglected II - Kropotkin', *op.cit.*, pp.329-30.
  24. P. Kropotkin: *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, Extending Horizons Books, Boston, (N.D), pp.xiv.  
Kropotkin recounts the same conversation with Knowles in *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, *op.cit.*, p.336.
  25. *ibid.*, p.vii.
  26. See his discussion in the *Preface* to the 1914 Edition of *Mutual Aid*, reprinted *op.cit.*
  27. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXVIII, No. 163, (September 1890), p.339.
  28. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Savages', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXIX, No.170, (April 1891), p.539.
  29. T.H. Huxley: *Evolution and Ethics: The Romanes Lecture*, 1893, MacMillan & Co., London, (1893), p.7.
  30. T.H. Huxley: 'The Struggle for Existence: A Programme', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXIII No.132, (February 1888), pp.161-180.
  31. *ibid.*, p.165.
  32. 'Ethics and Evolution', *The Guardian*, (May 24, 1893).
  33. Kropotkin to Brandes, (29 May 1896), *Correspondance de Georg Brandes*, *op.cit.*, p.118.
  34. *ibid.*, p.119.
  35. On the Russian response to Darwin see, for example, J.A. Rogers: 'The Russian Populists' Response to Darwin', *Slavic Review*, Vol.22, (1963), pp.456-468; J.A Rogers: 'Darwinism in Russia', *Isis*, Vol.64, No.224, (December 1973), pp.484-504.
  36. C. Darwin: *The Origin of Species*, The Modern Library, New York, (N.D.) pp.51-2.
  37. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals' part II, *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXVIII, No.165, (November 1890), pp.712-3.
  38. C. Darwin: *op.cit.*, pp.52-3.
  39. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals', (September 1890), *op.cit.*, p.343.
  40. *ibid.*, p.342.
  41. *ibid.*, pp.343-4.
  42. *ibid.*, p.350.
  43. *ibid.*, p.351.
  44. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals' (November 1890), *op.cit.*, p.700.
  45. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals' (September 1890), *op.cit.*, p.339-340.
  46. See, for example, S.J. Gould: 'Nonmoral Nature', M. Gardner (ed.), *The Sacred Beetle*, O.U.P., (1985), p.37. Gould observes the tendency amongst both nineteenth and twentieth century biologists to describe the activities of the ichneumon fly in the terms of human warfare.
  47. J.H. Fabre: 'The Sacred Beetle', *ibid.*, pp.72-95.
  48. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals', (November 1890), *op.cit.*, p.713.
  49. P. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*, Elephant Editions, London, (1985), p.35.
  50. P. Kropotkin: 'The Theory of Evolution and Mutual Aid',

- The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LXVII, No.395, (January 1910), p.87.
51. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals', (September 1890), *op.cit.*, p.337.
  52. C. Darwin: *op.cit.*, p.52.
  53. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals', (September 1890), *op.cit.*, pp.337-8.
  54. *ibid.*, p.338.
  55. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals', (November 1890), *op.cit.*, p.716.
  56. *ibid.*
  57. *ibid.*, p.718.
  58. C. Darwin: *op.cit.*, p.56.
  59. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals' (September 1890), *op.cit.*, p.341.
  60. P. Kropotkin: *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, *op.cit.*, pp.64-68.
  61. *ibid.*, p.73.
  62. See Kropotkin's discussion 'Adaptations to Avoid Competition' in the appendix to *Mutual Aid*, *ibid.*, pp.310-12.
  63. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals' (November 1890), *op.cit.*, p.713.
  64. P. Kropotkin: 'The Morality of Nature', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LVII, No.337, (March 1905), p.418.
  65. J.B.S. Haldane: 'From Animals To Men: Of Its Validity For Anthropology', A. Montague (ed.), *Culture and The Evolution of Man*, O.U.P., New York, (1972), p.65-83.
  66. P. Kropotkin: *Modern Science and Anarchism*, Freedom Press, London, (1912), p.40.
  67. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Savages', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXIX, No.170, (April 1891), p.538.
  68. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals', (November 1890), *op.cit.*, p.706.
  69. *ibid.*, p.711.
  70. P. Kropotkin: 'The Morality of Nature', *op.cit.*, pp.410-11.
  71. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Savages', *op.cit.*, p.543.
  72. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals' (November 1890), *op.cit.*, p.705.
  73. *ibid.*, p.711.
  74. *ibid.*
  75. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Savages', *op.cit.*, p.559.
  76. See his discussion, *ibid.*, pp.554-5.
  77. *ibid.*, p.558.
  78. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among The Barbarians', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXXI, No.179., (January 1892), p.101.
  79. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Animals', (November 1890), *op.cit.*, p.710.
  80. P. Kropotkin: 'The Morality of Nature', *op.cit.*, p.413.
  81. *ibid.*, p.410.
  82. *ibid.*
  83. *ibid.*, p.419.
  84. *ibid.*, p.425.
  85. *ibid.*, p.421.
  86. *ibid.*, p.425.
  87. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Amongst Modern Men', *The*

- Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXXIX, No.227, (January 1896), p.68.
88. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Amongst Ourselves', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXXIX., No.232, (June 1896), pp.932-33.
89. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among The Barbarians', *op.cit.*, p.101.
90. P. Kropotkin: 'Ethical Need of the Present Day', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LVI, No.330, pp.217-8.

## CHAPTER FIVE: MUTUAL AID AND THE THEORY OF THE STATE

It was claimed at the beginning of the last chapter that Kropotkin's theory of mutual aid alters the content rather than the form of his earlier work. This chapter examines the changes the theory introduces in detail.

Kropotkin's concept of mutual aid is both an historical and a biological theory. It traces the development of 'natural' sociability by relating the ethical progress of mankind to various forms of organisation. Kropotkin identifies two different guides to social organisation. In so far as he relates the concept of ethical mutual aid to a biological principle of survival, the first is a desire to live in a society. As he alternatively considers survival to be a struggle against the environment, the second guide is the desire to ensure collective well-being. In simple terms these guides may be considered to be directing mankind toward the goals of community and communism.

In the conclusion to the last chapter it was suggested that the first organisational end plays the sustaining role for ethical progress: mutual aid describes the desire to associate for the purpose of survival; considerations of well-being emerge as society progresses. This premise forms the basis of the following examination. It begins with a consideration of Kropotkin's concept of morality and follows the implications of this discussion through to his reconsideration of the State and capitalism.

Kropotkin's development of the theory of mutual aid has been considered to alter the balance of his critique of the State such that the realisation of anarchy is identified to rest primarily in converting mass attitudes. Tracing the repercussions of the theory from the impact it makes on Kropotkin's concept of morality and the moral end of

society, this chapter suggests that argument is exaggerated though not entirely without foundation. By his development of the theory of mutual aid Kropotkin places greater emphasis on the role of ideas; and in structural terms he asserts the importance of the community over communism and authority over capitalism. He does not renounce any of his earlier principles but as his protagonists argue, the re-emphasis of his commitment to communitarianism, consequent on his consideration of moral evolution, has an important longer-term bearing on his strategic thought.

#### 1. MUTUAL AID - JUSTICE - MORALITY

Following the publication of *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin continues to expound the principles of evolutionary development.<sup>1</sup> The major tenets of the theory remain unchanged, but building on his original description of the development of the ethical principle, Kropotkin formulates the evolution of the principle more precisely in a triadic relation of mutual aid, justice and morality. He first explains the development of morals according to this schema in 1904.<sup>2</sup> The fullest description of the pattern of evolution emerges in the posthumously published *Ethics*.

Here, he argues:

in proportion as mutual aid becomes as established custom in a human community, and so to say instinctive, it leads to a parallel development of the sense of *justice*, with its necessary accompaniment of the sense of *equity* and equalitarian self-restraint...A certain degree of identification of the individual with the interests of the group to which it belongs has necessarily existed since the very beginning of social life, and it manifests itself even among the lowest animals. But in proportion as relations of equity and justice are solidly established in the human community, the ground is prepared for the further and more general development of more refined relations...These unselfish feelings and habits, usually called by the somewhat inaccurate names of *altruism* and *self-sacrifice*, alone deserve, in my opinion, the name of morality, properly speaking...<sup>3</sup>

The significance of Kropotkin's understanding may be gauged in

relation to the contrast it forms with his early thought. In common with his early thinking Kropotkin identifies morality to constitute the end of human development. In distinction to his first considerations, however, morality develops on a grounding of 'justice' and 'equity'. Kropotkin does not accord the latter concept any detailed explanation. The contrary is more true and beyond his wider understanding of the development of the co-operative spirit of mutual aid he gives no indication of what the laws of nature are, or of the "unassailable" individual rights that are founded upon them.<sup>4</sup> As he uses 'equity' synonymously with 'justice' Kropotkin tends to use the term to advance an insistent demand for social equality. In *Modern Science and Anarchism* he comments:

The greatest obstacle to the maintenance of a certain moral level in our present societies lies in the absence of social equality. Without real equality, the sense of justice can never be universally developed, because *Justice implies the recognition of Equality*; while in a society in which the principles of justice would not be contradicted at every step by the existing inequalities of rights and possibilities of development, they would be bound to spread and to enter into the habits of the people.<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding Kropotkin's confusion of 'equity' with 'equality', his inclusion of the concept nevertheless distinguishes his later conception of morality from his earlier idea. 'Equity', Kropotkin argues, is a condition for liberty. Whilst he continues to define liberty in terms of individuality,<sup>6</sup> his association of freedom and 'equity' symbolises his desire to fully reconcile his concept of anarchist morality with what he considers to be mainstream liberal thought. In practical terms Kropotkin's consideration of 'equity' as an evolutionary 'guarantee' of the individual's freedom within the community is a useless amendment to his work. His attempt to synthesise anarchism with liberalism is nonetheless important, for in attempting to fuse the ideas Kropotkin modifies his early thought by defining

anarchist morality as an individual and collective good in a way which undermines its material basis in communism.

The context of Kropotkin's re-examination of morality lies in his questioning the validity of the theory of mutual aid. He does not revise his personal commitment to the theory: mutual aid, he contends, remains the most important factor of evolution. Kropotkin does, however, query the force his contention carries in the public mind. Whilst he believes that the analyses Huxley and Spencer present of the natural world (and the conclusions they draw about the potential for further evolution) are mistaken, he is nevertheless haunted by the veracity of the image of nature they portray. There is, he recognises, a conflict between his own account of nature and the fact of the State's 'evolution'; the theory of mutual aid and the 'Hobbesian' portrayal of the natural world; and his concept of natural ethical development and Huxley's conception of 'cosmic' progress. Kropotkin's concern to find a continuity within these positions is not uppermost in his mind during the writing of the original articles for *Mutual Aid*. In the years immediately after the publication of the work his concerns become more pronounced and he voices his irritation with the strength of his refutation of Social Darwinism. Writing in 1904 he responds to the contradiction between his portrayal of nature and the Social Darwinists' image:

Nature was represented by the Darwinists as an immense battlefield upon which one sees nothing but an incessant struggle for life and an extermination of the weak ones by the strongest, the swiftest, and the cunningest: evil was the only lesson which man could get from Nature. These ideas...became very widely spread. But if they are true the evolutionist philosopher has to solve a deep contradiction, which he himself has introduced into his philosophy. He cannot deny that man is possessed of a higher conception of 'good,' and that a faith in the gradual triumph of the good principle is deeply seated in human nature, and that he has to explain this conception and this faith. He cannot be lulled into indifference by the Epicurean hope, expressed by Tennyson - that 'somehow good will be the final goal of ill.' Nor can he represent to himself Nature, 'red in tooth and claw,' at strife everywhere with the good principle - the very negation of it in every living being - and yet this good principle

triumphant in the long run. He must explain this contradiction.<sup>7</sup>

The additional 'proof' Kropotkin offers to show the validity of the theory of mutual aid does not extend beyond an aggressive restatement of his ideas. The brashness of his approach is particularly obvious in his treatment of the much belaboured Huxley. In *Ethics*, Kropotkin argues:

in reality, however, things do not stand so badly as that, for the theory of evolution does not at all lead to the contradictions such as those to which Huxley was driven, because the study of nature does not in the least confirm the above-mentioned pessimistic view of its course, as Darwin himself indicated ...The conceptions of Tennyson and Huxley are incomplete, one-sided, and consequently wrong.<sup>8</sup>

With equal imperiousness Kropotkin notes that "Nature does not give us a lesson of a-moralism, which need be corrected by some extra-natural influence..."<sup>9</sup> Again Kropotkin fails to meet this claim with any demonstration of its accuracy in the present world. On the contrary, having raised the difficulty of reconciling his vision of nature with the accepted Darwinist account Kropotkin simply places the burden of proof on his chosen adversaries. For Kropotkin, the inconsistency of Huxley's account of nature with his own demonstrates the erroneousness of the Darwinists' case.

Kropotkin's greater demonstration of the validity of mutual aid emerges in his attempt to reconcile the contradiction between his understanding of naturally developing morality and the existence of the State. His discussion has much in common with his early thought. In the aptly titled essay *Anarchist Morality* Kropotkin finds that existing morality is characterised by a sense of unfettered individualism and degenerate hypocrisy in pursuit of the 'survival of the fittest'. Abstractly tracing the development of the State to the perversion of thought by religious teachers and the consequent submissiveness of the victimised majority, he comments:

During these slumbrous interludes, morals are rarely discussed. Religious practices and judicial hypocrisy take their place. Folks do not criticise, they let themselves be drawn by habit, or indifference. They do not put

themselves out for or against the established morality. They do their best to make their actions appear to accord with their *professions*. And the moral level of society sinks lower and lower. Folks reach the morals of Rome in the Decadence, of the *Ancien Régime*, of the end of the supremacy of the middle-classes.

All that was good, great, generous or independent in man, little by little becomes moss-grown: rusts like a disused knife. A lie becomes a virtue, a platitude a duty. To enrich oneself, to seize one's opportunities, to exhaust one's intelligence, zeal and energy, no matter how, become the watchwords of the comfortable classes, as well as of the crowd of poor folk whose ideal is to appear bourgeois.<sup>10</sup>

The most obvious similarity between his two accounts of morality emerges in the defence Kropotkin raises of nihilism. In his later work he continues to sympathise with the nihilist position, both understanding the rationale behind the nihilists' desire to escape all moral teachings and explaining their apparent failure to achieve this end by reference to their formulation of a new system of morality "infinitely superior to aught that their fathers had practised...".<sup>11</sup> Again distinguishing his position from the nihilists', Kropotkin insists that the existence of morality in society is not only inescapable but that the observed mis-expression it receives under the State cannot be taken as an indication of its redundancy.

Kropotkin's defence of morality again causes him to identify 'true' morality specifically with anarchy. The identification has three aspects. Firstly, Kropotkin argues that anarchist morality is 'natural'; it is the "morality which emerges from the observation of the whole animal kingdom".

Besides, this principle of treating others as one wishes to be treated oneself, what is it but the...fundamental principle of Anarchism? And how can any one manage to believe himself an Anarchist unless he practises it?<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, Kropotkin identifies evolutionary and anarchist morality as voluntary principles. In nature the standard of morality is accompanied by the addendum:

"Take note that this is merely a piece of advice; but this advice is the fruit of the long experience of animals in society. And amongst the great mass of social animals, man included, it has become *habitual* to act on this

principle.<sup>13</sup>

Anarchist morality equally avoids issuing commands. Remaining true to his rejection of authority, Kropotkin declares:

All we can do is to give advice; and again, whilst giving it, we add:

"This advice will be valueless if your own experience and observation do not lead you to recognise that it is worth following."

When we see a youth stooping and so contracting his chest and lungs, we advise him to straiten himself, hold up his head and open his chest. We advise him to fill his lungs and take long breaths, because this will be his best safeguard against consumption. But at the same time we teach him physiology that he may understand the functions of the lungs, and himself choose the posture he knows to be the best.

And this is all we can do in the case of morals. We have only a right to give advice, to which we add: "Follow it, if it seems good to you."<sup>14</sup>

Finally, natural morality and anarchy share the same political ends.

In *Ethics*, he comments:

A morality, for example, which preaches "charity," out of compassion and pity, necessarily contains a deadly contradiction. It starts with the assertion of full equity and justice, or of full brotherhood, but then it hastens to add that we need not worry our minds with either. The one is unattainable. As to the brotherhood of men, which is the fundamental principle of all religions, it must not be taken literally; that was a mere poetical phrase of enthusiastic preachers. "Inequality is the rule of Nature," we are told by religious preachers, who in this can call Nature to their aid...

Such a morality may certainly be prevalent in a society for a time, or even a long time...But the moment man begins to consider the prescriptions of religion with a critical eye...an inner contradiction of this sort cannot be retained much longer. It must be abandoned - the sooner the better.<sup>15</sup>

The identification of natural morality with anarchy necessarily renders the former a fiction in the real world; but Kropotkin salvages the 'naturalness' of his concept of evolutionary development and demonstrates the consistency between mutual aid and the reality of the State's existence by proving the theoretical necessity of the longer-term victory of the moral or anarchist ideal. Anarchist morality is thus synthesised with egoistic individualism.

Kropotkin's original discussion of biological mutual aid emphasises the importance of the communal and co-operative aspects of struggle over the incidence of isolation and selfishness. The existence of competition is not denied but is effectively contradicted. Asserting

the harmony of the natural world, in his analysis of ethical mutual aid Kropotkin nevertheless allows for the possibility of anti-social behaviour. Following from this possibility, Kropotkin in his examination of the contrast between mutual aid and individualism, returns to consider the question of divided humanity.

The chief demand which is addressed now to ethics is to do its best to find in philosophy...a synthesis - not a compromise - between the two sets of feelings which exist in man: those which induce him to subdue other men, in order to utilise them for his individual ends, and those which induce human beings to unite and to combine for attaining common ends by common effort: the first answering to that fundamental need of human nature - struggle, and the second representing another equally fundamental tendency - the desire of union and sympathy. Such a synthesis is of absolute necessity, because the civilised man of to-day, having no settled conviction on this point, is paralysed in his powers of action. He cannot admit that a struggle to the knife for supremacy, carried on between individuals and nations, should be the last word of science; he does not believe, at the same time, in the solution of brotherhood and resigned self-abnegation which Christianity has offered us for so many centuries, but upon which it has failed to establish a commonwealth. To settle, then, these doubts, and to aid mankind in finding the synthesis between the two leading tendencies of human nature, is the chief duty of ethics.<sup>16</sup>

In his early thought Kropotkin examines the springs to human action both positively and negatively and concludes that the transition between the individualism of the existing State and the morality of anarchist society is founded on the awakening of revolutionary thought and the activation of the 'natural' tendencies of the working mass. He assumes that whilst the middle classes responsible for the development of individualism have inadvertently strengthened the bonds of authority and repression in the wider society, the individualist ethic is based on a desire to be released from the fetters of State control. Individualism is to give way to anarchism but, for Kropotkin, the two ideals are nevertheless contrasted sharply. In comparison to this line of thinking, Kropotkin's later attempt to synthesise the individualist ethic with anarchist morality establishes a stronger continuity between the two systems of thought. Symbolically the change is reflected in the different definition he provides of the term. In his later writings

Kropotkin supplements his earlier definition of morality - 'giving without wanting to receive' - with a precept adapted from Christianity: 'Do to others what you would have them do to you in the same circumstances.'<sup>17</sup> The change is also demonstrated by Kropotkin's increasingly willingness to defend the ideas of those who, in his parable of the drowning child, he previously criticises for their calculating motives:

It is easy to understand the astonishment of our great grandfathers when the English philosophers...began to affirm...that all acts of man, good or bad, useful or baneful, arise from a single motive: the lust for pleasure. The whole religious confraternity, and, above all, the numerous sects of pharisees shouted, "Immorality." They covered the thinkers with insult, they excommunicated them. And when later on, in the course of this century, the same ideas were again taken up by Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Tchernischevsky, and a host of others, and when these thinkers began to affirm and prove that Egoism, or the lust for pleasure, is the true motive of all our actions, the maledictions redoubled. The books were banned by a conspiracy of silence; the authors were treated as dunces.<sup>18</sup>

Nothing "can be more true than the assertion they made...".<sup>19</sup> All actions, Kropotkin contends, spring from the same egoistic motive. The individual who passes a starving child a piece of bread and the other who deprives the same child of the meal act in the same way:

whatever a man's actions and line of conduct may be, he does what he does in obedience to a craving of his nature. The most repulsive action, no less than actions which are indifferent or most attractive, are all equally dictated by a need of the individual who performs them. Let him act as he may, the individual acts as he does because he finds a pleasure in it, or avoids, or thinks he avoids, a pain. Here we have a well established fact. Here we have the essence of what has been called the Egoistic theory.<sup>20</sup>

The development of Kropotkin's thinking appears surprising not only in terms of his early writings but also in relation to much of his later thought. Kropotkin remains, for example, generally critical of individualist schools of thought and particularly hostile toward anarchist individualism.<sup>21</sup> He dismisses the individualism of Stirner and, in spite of the "beautiful poetic form" of his writings, Nietzsche.<sup>22</sup> There is also an obvious paradox in the defence he raises

of egoistic individualism and his refutation of Huxley's understanding of nature. Even Kropotkin recognises the difficulty. Returning to the problem of interpreting the implications of Darwinian theory, he comments:

Nearly all ethical writers have hitherto started with the unproved postulate that the strongest of all the instincts of man, and the more so of animals, is the *self-preservation instinct*, which, owing to a certain looseness of their terminology, they have identified, in man, with self-assertion, or egoism properly speaking.<sup>23</sup>

Kropotkin is not unaware that his attempt to reconcile the theory of mutual aid with those concepts which "are current about animal and human nature"<sup>24</sup> risks compromising the spirit of his work. In order to overcome the problem he thus traces the theoretical continuity between egoistic theory and anarchist morality by introducing a mediating notion of 'moral courage'. In *Ethics* he describes the conception historically:

Is it not time to rise in defence of the rights of the real man, full of vigour, who is worth being loved and who is capable of really loving what is worth being loved and hating what deserves hatred, - the man who is always ready to fight for an ideal which ennobles his love and justifies his antipathies? From the times of the philosophers of antiquity there was a tendency to represent "virtue" as a sort of "wisdom" which induces man to "cultivate the beauty of his soul," rather than to join "the unwise" in their struggles against the evils of the day. Later on that virtue became "non-resistance to evil,"...the result being the culture of a monastic indifference to social good and evil, and the elaboration of an argumentation in defence of "virtuous individualism." Fortunately, a reaction against such egoistic virtue is already under way, and the question is asked whether a passive attitude in the presence of evil does not merely mean moral cowardice, - whether, as was taught by the Zend-Avesta, an active struggle against the evil Ahriman is not the first condition of virtue? We need moral progress, but without moral courage no moral progress is possible.<sup>25</sup>

Kropotkin investigates the same concept in *Anarchist Morality* and again discusses moral action in terms of 'love' and 'hate'. He considers, for example, a Polish victim of rabies who rather than risking "the madness of hydrophobia" and the possibility of infecting his friends with the illness calls for the immediate administration of strychnine.<sup>26</sup> The illustration is perhaps not the best and certainly not the happiest Kropotkin could choose. Though he attempts to heighten

the sacrificial element of his account by describing the victim's intellectual talents, youth and ideological purity, in the absence of Pasteur's curative the inevitability of his death significantly weakens the moral point of the tale. There are good reasons to suppose that the Pole wanted only to avoid a painful death. Undeterred by this weakness Kropotkin represents the Pole as an example of the "man of the heart [who] would rather die than become a cause of evil to others." Moreover, he continues "this is why he will feel conscious of having done well, and why the approval of those he esteems will follow him, when he kills a viper or a tyrant."<sup>27</sup> In accordance with this view Kropotkin considers Sofia Perovskaya, co-conspirator in the assassination of the Tsar in 1881, to be another great example of a 'lover' of society.<sup>28</sup> Louise Michel receives the same accolade: "'She had the right to rob'", he comments with warm regard for an anonymous consensual source.<sup>29</sup>

As an additional explanation of anarchist morality the concept of moral courage seems at first to create more problems for Kropotkin's thought than it solves. The complexities are highlighted by the association he makes between moral courage and 'love' and 'hate'. These sentiments, Kropotkin recognises, are largely contradictory. As if to illustrate the contention he examines his own attitude towards Jack the Ripper, arguing,

To-day, when we see a Jack the Ripper murder, one after another, some of the poorest and most miserable of women, morally superior probably to numbers of wealthy ladies, our first feeling is one of hatred.<sup>30</sup>

On meeting him "we should have put a bullet through his head".

Kropotkin continues, however:

when we recall to mind all the infamies which have brought him to this; when we think of the darkness in which he prowls, haunted by the images drawn from indecent books, or thought suggested by stupid books, our feeling is divided. And if some day we hear that Jack is in the hands of some judge, who has slain in cold blood a far greater number of men, women [sic] and children than all the Jacks together; if we see him in the hands of one of those deliberate

maniacs...then all our hatred of a Jack the Ripper will vanish. It will be transferred; transformed into hatred of a cowardly and hypocritical society and its recognised representatives. All the infamies of a Ripper disappear before that long series of infamies committed in the name of the Law. It is these we hate.<sup>31</sup>

Here Kropotkin considers the 'love-hate' dichotomy in terms of his understanding of the influence of society: Jack the Ripper is an evil man but the evil in him has been created by society. In common with Luccheni he is excused his immorality on the grounds that he has been perverted by the environment. Kropotkin's defence is consistent with his general understanding of the criminality of the State and with the contrast he wishes to draw between the State and anarchy; but rather than solving the difficulties contained within his understanding of moral courage his plea reveals only the extent to which his consideration of the conception is based on a subjective account of what 'loving' or 'hating' society really means. Kropotkin turns his 'hatred' of the Ripper against society in the same way that Perovskaya turns her's against the Tsar and automatically assumes that both societies deserve to be hated. Blaming liberal society for creating the murderer and repressive society for punishing the sensitive revolutionary, in his understanding moral courage Kropotkin puts himself in the uncertain position of justifying means by ends.

In the light of his anarchist ideal of non-compulsive morality Kropotkin is almost bound to ignore the problems that his conception creates. But seemingly confirming the point he comments:

whilst leaving to each the right to act as he thinks best; whilst utterly denying the right of society to punish any one, in any way, for any anti-social act he may have committed, we do not forego our own capacity to love what seems to us good and to hate what seems to us bad. Love and hate; for only those who know how to hate know how to love. We keep this capacity; and as this alone serves to maintain and develop the moral sentiments in every animal society, so much the more will it be enough for the human race.<sup>32</sup>

Beyond the confidence he expresses here, however, Kropotkin invents a theoretical escape to rescue him from justifying complete licence.

Moral courage, he argues, is related to the anarchist precept of 'doing unto others as one would have done to oneself'. If this provides little consolation for the victims of assassins who willingly martyr themselves, Kropotkin nevertheless finds that:

The ant, the bird, the marmot, the Tchoukone savage have read neither Kant nor the Fathers of the Church nor even Moses. And yet all have the same idea of good and evil. And if you reflect for a moment on what lies at the bottom of this idea, you will see directly that what is considered as good amongst ants, marmots, and Christian or Atheist moralists is that which is useful for the preservation of the race; and that which is considered evil is that which is hurtful for race preservation. Not for the individual, as Bentham and Mill put it, but fair and good for the whole race.<sup>33</sup>

Relating the notion of moral courage to nature and to what is considered 'good' or 'hurtful' to the society does not solve the problems involved in justifying individual political actions. But Kropotkin's assertion that moral courage is grounded in nature is not designed to merely extricate himself from the difficulties the concept involves. Relating 'love' and 'hate' to what is 'good' and 'bad' in nature, Kropotkin attempts finally to complete the transition from individualism to morality. Relying on the acceptability of his concept of biological mutual aid and the descriptions of nature it supports, his reconciliation of the concepts is only a matter of wordplay. The egoistic springs which motivate all human actions are the same as those which define the boundaries of 'love' and 'hate'. Selfish actions are not, therefore, those which further the interests of the individual but those which further the interests the individual has in the wider society. In *Anarchist Morality* he remarks:

The idea of good and evil exists within humanity itself. Man, whatever degree of intellectual development he may have attained, however his ideas may be obscured by prejudices and personal interest, considers in general as good that which is useful to the society wherein he lives, and as evil that which is hurtful to it.<sup>34</sup>

What is considered 'good' or 'hurtful' to society, Kropotkin admits, is always changeable. But it is so only within the development of the

ethical principle and the boundaries of the organisation of society.

Kropotkin notes:

Primitive man may have thought it very right, *i.e.*, useful to the race, to eat his aged parents, when they became a charge upon the community - a very heavy charge in the main. He may have also thought it right, *i.e.*, useful to the community as before, to kill his new born children, and only keep two or three in each family, so that the mother could suckle them until they were three years old and lavish more of her tenderness upon them. In our days ideas have changed, but the means of subsistence are no longer what they were in the Stone Age.<sup>35</sup>

Kropotkin never considers that relative values ever exist outside the organisational framework which, according to the theory of mutual aid, is itself guided by the progression of the ethical principle. There is only one sense of 'good' and 'evil' and this depends on a recognition of the correctness of anarchist morality.

Kropotkin's understanding that 'pleasure' and 'pain' are senses relating to the species rather than to the individual provides him with an understanding of anarchist morality which relates more specifically to the notion of community than (as his earlier formulation of 'giving without wanting to receive') to communism and the principle of distribution according to need. In the progression of mutual aid, justice and morality and the realisation of precept of reciprocal behaviour the implications of the earlier principle are not lost, but the emphasis of evolutionary moral development rests primarily in the transformation of egoism to the ideal of community. Retracing the development of ethical sociability, in an article written in 1905, he confirms the view:

All other beings in nature are sociable, and human thought runs in this channel. Sociable life - that is, *we*, not *I* - is, in the eyes of primitive man, the normal form of life. *It is life itself...* And not even 'we,' which is still too personal, because it represents a multiplication of the '*I*'s,' but rather such expressions as 'the men of the beaver tribe,' 'the kangaroo men,' or 'the turtles.' This was the primitive form of thinking, which nature impressed upon the mind of man. Here, in that identification, or, we might even say, in this absorption of the '*I*' by the tribe, lies the root of all ethical thought. The self-asserting '*individual*' came much later on.<sup>36</sup>

The pattern of moral evolution is not only discernable as a principle of nature; it is revealed more generally, in science. A year earlier, he declares:

Modern science has...achieved a double aim. On the one side it has given to man a great lesson of modesty. It has taught him to consider himself as but an infinitesimally small particle of that immense whole - the universe. It has driven him out of his narrow egoistical seclusion, and has dissipated the self-conceit under which he considered himself the centre of the universe and the object of special attention in it. It has taught him that without the whole the 'ego' is nothing: that our 'I' cannot even come to a self-definition without the 'Thou.' But at the same time science has taught man how powerful mankind is in its progressive march; and it has given him the means to enlist in his service the unlimited energies of Nature.<sup>37</sup>

It is in this light that Kropotkin re-examines the theory of the State.

## 2. STATE AND CITY-STATE

Kropotkin's reconsideration of the State follows the pattern of his early critique. In common with his first analysis Kropotkin traces the rise of the State from the mediaeval city and to the reassertion of baronial and royal authority. In *The State: Its Historic Role*, he argues:

The nobles demoralised the towns by their munificence, their intrigues, their great style of living, their education received at the bishop's or the king's court. They made the citizens espouse their family struggles. And the citizen ended by imitating the lord, and became a lord in his turn, enriching himself by the labour of serfs encamped in the villages outside the city walls. Thereafter, the peasant lent assistance to the rising Kings, Emperors, Tsars and Popes, when they began to build their kingdoms and to bring the town under subjection. When not marching by their orders, the peasant left them free to act.

in the country, in fortified castles, situated in the midst of rural populations, royalty was slowly constituted.<sup>38</sup>

The State is an instrument of economic exploitation and the modern State serves the interests of the ruling capitalist minority.

Explaining, in 1905, the principles of anarchism, Kropotkin notes:

As to their economical conceptions, the Anarchists, in common with all Socialists, of whom they constitute the left wing, maintain that the now prevailing system of private ownership in land, and our capitalist production

for the sake of profits, represent a monopoly which runs against both the principles of justice and the dictates of utility. They are the main obstacle which prevents the successes of modern technics from being brought to the service of all, so as to produce general well-being. The Anarchists consider the wage system and capitalist production altogether as an obstacle to progress. But they point out also that the State was, and continues to be, the chief instrument for permitting the few to monopolise the land, and the capitalists to appropriate for themselves a quite disproportionate share of the yearly accumulated surplus of production. Consequently, while combating the present monopolisation of land, and capitalism altogether, the Anarchists combat with the same energy the State, as the main support of that system.<sup>39</sup>

Whilst presenting this interactionist theory of State-capitalist relations Kropotkin also continues to maintain the overall importance of the authority of the State in determining the nature of society. Accepting that "modern States are specially constituted in order to establish privileges in favour of the rich at the expense of the poor"<sup>40</sup> and admitting that "the state of economical forces brought into action is determined by the technical development of diverse nations at a certain time in their history"<sup>41</sup> Kropotkin further finds:

*the use that will be made of these forces depends entirely on the degree of servitude towards their Government to which populations have allowed themselves to be reduced. The economical forces which could produce harmony and well-being...these forces, being directed by the State...these same forces become an instrument of oppression...and endless wars.*<sup>42</sup>

Against Marx, Kropotkin continues to reject the direct relationship between consciousness and the economic base. His analysis of the State traces the impact of productive forces to economic relations and to the particular political and legal structures of the State machine, but examines consciousness in relation to the autonomy created by the State's authority. In his later writings Kropotkin clarifies this understanding. His early criticisms of State-capitalist relations tend to be confused by his rejection of representative government. In his later writings Kropotkin specifically divorces the notion of 'government' from the State and distinguishes firmly between the State and the governmental machinery it utilises in the discharge of its exploitative duty. Whilst he gives no greater approval to the idea of

government as a consequence of this distinction, the importance of the division is implied in the attack Kropotkin advances of the 'German school':

the State has...been confused with government. As there can be no State without government, it has been sometimes said that it is the absence of government, and not the abolition of the State, that should be the aim. It seems to me, however, that State and government represent two ideas of a different kind. The State not only includes the existence of a power placed above society, but also a *territorial concentration and a concentration of many or even all functions of the life in the society in the hands of a few.* It implies new relations among the members of society.<sup>43</sup>

After formulating mutual aid theory, Kropotkin's attention is directed primarily towards a demonstration of the 'hatefulness' of the State. Kropotkin considers the State not merely from the point of view of its function or in terms of its influence on society, he examines it in relation to the evolutionary scale of development and with regard to the impact it has wrought on mankind's moral progression.

In theory Kropotkin explains the State's rise by two factors. First he posits the existence of a separate organisational evolutionary scale in the development of human societies beside the standard biological chart; second he makes provision for mankind to create societies either in accord with or in opposition to the struggle against the environment. In a practical sense, however, the circumstances of humanity's decision to create the State remain unexplored. Remedying the situation, Kropotkin returns to discuss the relationship between the State and the city-state.

In his later examination Kropotkin retracts nothing from his early consideration of the mediaeval city. He describes the structure of the city as a networked federation of "householders united into small territorial unions...and of individuals united by oath into guilds according to their professions...".<sup>44</sup> He similarly highlights the independence the city enjoyed in the administration of its own affairs

in matters of "war and peace, of federation and alliance with its neighbours"<sup>45</sup> and the democratic nature of its political institutions.

In *The State: Its Historic Role* he describes:

The street or parish, represents a territorial unit, corresponding to the ancient village community. Each street or parish has its popular assembly, its forum, its popular tribunal, its elected priest, militia, banner, and often its seal as a symbol of sovereignty. It is federated with other streets, but nevertheless keeps its independence.

The professional unit, which often corresponds, or nearly so, with the district, is the guild...This union also retains its saints, its assembly, its forum, its judges...

And lastly the city is the union of districts, streets, parishes and guilds, and it has its plenary assembly of all inhabitants in the large forum, its great belfry, its elected judges, its banner for rallying the militia of the guilds and districts. It negotiates as a sovereign with other cities, federates with whom it likes, concludes national and foreign alliances.<sup>46</sup>

For Kropotkin history provides no equivalent demonstration of the "powers of the popular masses" than "when the fortified villages...began to free themselves" from their overlords and began to elaborate the form of the "future city organisation."<sup>47</sup> The obvious excitement he feels in describing the movement and the development of the federal unit is mirrored by the great esteem he accords later mediaeval culture and learning. Reappraising the cities' achievements in science, literature, the arts and in architecture, Kropotkin finds:

Mediaeval architecture attained its grandeur...because it was borne out of a grand idea. Like Greek art, it sprang out of a conception of brotherhood and unity fostered by the city...A cathedral of a communal house symbolised the grandeur of an organism of which every mason and stonecutter was the builder...The lofty bell tower rose upon a structure, grand in itself, in which the life of the city was throbbing - not upon a meaningless scaffold like the Paris iron tower, not as a sham structure in stone intended to conceal the ugliness of an iron frame, as has been done in the Tower Bridge. Like the Acropolis of Athens, the cathedral of a mediaeval city was intended to glorify the grandeur of the victorious city, to express the union of its crafts, to express the glory of each citizen in a city of his own creation.<sup>48</sup>

The community spirit and the guild system are the main subjects of Kropotkin's attention. In common with his original findings, the guilds embodied the spirit of co-operation and fraternity in the cities; it was the guilds that were primarily responsible for wonderful social,

political and cultural strides the cities made. Moreover, it is in the guilds that Kropotkin identifies the historical extension of mutual aid. Examining the transformation from the village-community to the city-state, he notes:

another element, besides the village-community principle, was required to give to these growing centres of liberty and enlightenment the unity of thought and action, and the powers of initiative, which made their force in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. With the growing diversity of occupations, crafts and arts, and with the growing commerce in distant lands, some new form of union was required, and this necessary new element was supplied by the *guilds*.<sup>49</sup>

In time "as life took an always greater variety of pursuits" guilds developed in every sphere of life. Extending from the original craft and merchant fellowships "we also see guilds of priests, teachers... guilds for performing the passion play...for...the 'mystery' of a given school of art or craft, or for a special recreation..." developing.<sup>50</sup> Each guild was founded on the same inspirational ideal of brotherhood, fraternity and mutual aid. Unashamed to exaggerate the point, Kropotkin notes:

Like organisations came into existence whenever a group of men...came together for a common pursuit. Thus, there was on board ship the naval authority of the captain; but, for the very success of the common enterprise, all men on board, rich and poor, masters and crew, captain and sailors, agreed to be equals in their mutual relations, to be simply men, bound to aid each other and to settle their possible disputes before judges elected by all of them. So also when a number of craftsmen...came together for building, say, a cathedral, they all belonged to a city which had its political organisation, and each of them belonged moreover to his own craft; but they were united besides by their common enterprise, which they knew better than anyone else, and they joined into a body united by closer, although temporary, bonds; they founded the guild for the building of the cathedral.<sup>51</sup>

It is from the very favourable account he provides of the guilds that Kropotkin's understanding of the intentionality of the mediaeval community emerges. Eagerly describing the guilds as the 'new' form of organisation embodying the higher development of ethical mutual aid, he argues:

the more we begin to know the mediaeval city the more we see that it was not simply a political organisation for the protection of certain political liberties. It was an attempt at organising, on a much grander scale than in the village community, a close union for mutual aid and support. for

consumption and production, and for social life altogether, without imposing upon men the fetters of the State, but giving full liberty of expression to the creative genius of each separate group of individuals in art, craft, science, commerce, and political organisation.<sup>52</sup>

Notwithstanding the similarity of the two accounts of the city-states Kropotkin provides, there are significant differences between his early and late analyses. In his later study Kropotkin leaves no doubt as to the city's real historical existence. In his earlier account and in spite of his fixing the incidence of the city-states between the tenth and fifteenth centuries, the mediaeval commune fulfils an essentially weaker role. Though it features as an intentional society, Kropotkin's earlier city demonstrates in a limited manner what he believes to be the purposelessness of the State and serves as an imperfect organisational model for the future anarchist society. The reconsidered city-state assumes the same theoretical functions. In addition the later mediaeval city appears as a comparative model and (notwithstanding the qualifications Kropotkin makes to his formulation of the chart of ethical progress) as the most perfect example of a mutual aid society in world history. The later city-state represents not just an historical but a biological truth.

Ironically, the greater importance the city-state assumes in Kropotkin's mature examination weakens the force of his historical account. Although he writes both histories with the same enthusiasm, the significantly greater detail Kropotkin adds to his later version highlights the obvious romanticism of his work. Not only does he choose his historical material selectively; the one-sidedness of his account is exaggerated as a corollary of his view of the natural world, and in the same way that Kropotkin mitigates the incidence of 'struggle' in nature, he also denies the importance of the disputes which plagued the city-states. Whilst, for example, he claims not to forget

the conflicts, the internal struggles of which the history of these communes is full; the street tumults, the ferocious battles sustained against the landlords; the insurrections of "young arts" against the "ancient arts"; the blood that was shed and the reprisals which took place in these struggles.<sup>53</sup>

Kropotkin's memory fails to stretch much beyond this passing mention. He prefers to see the founding of a cathedral as the expression of community spirit rather than the celebration of a massacre of some countless number of 'heretics' and he reads the lesson of mediaeval violence as a representational "guarantee of free life in a free city."<sup>54</sup> Focusing on the superb organisation of the markets or on the human warmth of the guilds, Kropotkin fails to mention the plight of those not organised in the guild system; the poverty of the large numbers of unemployed; the importance of charity; and the outcast leper communities which often existed on the outskirts of the towns.<sup>55</sup> Not until the last pages of his account - and then in an understated way - does he consider the social and economic inequality which existed in the cities, the fortunes amassed by trade and the general privilege enjoyed by the few. He considers the slave trades which flourished in Venice and the Scandinavian countries only in a footnote.<sup>56</sup>

Raising doubts about the validity of his account, such omissions also betray the change of emphasis in Kropotkin's thinking and the greater importance he accords to the community. Although Kropotkin gives much attention to the concept of community in his original account, his observations are generally framed in relation to the political structure of the city-states. Community is associated with the federal principle and the decentralisation of the mediaeval commune. Whilst he argues that the merchants and guilds consciously fought to establish their freedom from the Crown and the barons, he finds that feelings of brotherhood and fraternity and the idea of 'free agreement' which characterised the city sprang from the organisational base. In his

later account the relationship between organisation and ideology is hardly repudiated. But tracing the development of the federal communes from the village communities, Kropotkin asserts that it was the spirit of mutual aid which first inspired the creation of the fraternal units.

The same modification is apparent in the analysis Kropotkin presents of the cities' decline. Expanding his original analysis he gives three reasons for the cities' collapse.

(a) The cities were few in number and always isolated. They failed to extend into the surrounding rural areas and remained ever dependent on the acquiescence of the Kings or barons who either granted their liberty or created their being. In the long term, Kropotkin maintains, their freedom could never be secured.

(b) The weaknesses of the cities' internal organisation left them subject to internal division. Conflating these two points, Kropotkin comments:

The...growing autocracies found support in the divisions which had grown within the cities themselves. The fundamental idea of the mediaeval city was grand, but it was not wide enough. Mutual aid and support cannot be limited to a small association, they must spread to its surroundings, or else the surroundings will absorb the association...instead of looking upon the peasants and artisans who gathered under the protection of his walls as upon so many brothers who would contribute their part to the making of the city...a sharp division was traced between the 'families' of old burghers and the new-comers. For the former, all benefits from communal trade and communal lands were reserved, and nothing was left for the latter but the right of freely using the skill of their own hands. The city thus became divided into 'the burghers' or 'the commonalty,' and 'the inhabitants'. The trade, which was formerly communal, now became the privilege of the merchant and artisan 'families,' and the next step - that of becoming individual, or the privilege of oppressive trusts - was unavoidable.<sup>37</sup>

(c) The citizens repudiated the ideas which had inspired the founding of their communities. Although Kropotkin continues to contend that the "greatest and most fatal error of most cities was to base their wealth upon commerce and industry, to the neglect of agriculture", he thus also finds that:

there is yet another cause of the decay of communal institutions, which stands higher and lies deeper than all the above. The history of the mediaeval cities

offers one of the most striking illustrations of the power of ideas and principles upon the destinies of mankind, and of the quite opposed results which are obtained when a deep modification of leading ideas has taken place. Self-reliance and federalism, the sovereignty of each group, and the construction of the political body from the simple to the composite, were the leading ideas in the eleventh century. But since that time the conceptions had entirely changed. The students of Roman law and the prelates of the Church, closely bound together since the time of Innocent the Third, had succeeded in paralysing the idea - the antique Greek idea - which presided at the foundation of the cities.<sup>58</sup>

The causes Kropotkin identifies in the cities' disintegration are cumulative in both his early and late accounts. In his first exploration of the problem, however, the fatal blow to the commune is dealt by the citizens' inability to maintain their allegiance to the communal ideal in the face of the developing market economy. This, allied with their isolation and failure to unite with the feudal peasantry allows royalty to gain supremacy in the cities and pervert their thinking by the dissemination of authority and authoritarian ideas. In this account, Kropotkin considers the element of consciousness separately and identifies the perversion of the citizens' ideas as the most important cause of the cities' collapse. The communitarian ideal, he concludes, was the most significant stabilising factor during the limited period of the city-states' existence.

Kropotkin's view of the State accommodates the altered emphasis of his mediaeval study. Instead of featuring primarily as the instrument of class exploitation the State appears most often as the destroyer of community. Recognising that the existence of the State has served only to "tighten the screw on the worker, depopulate the land, sow misery in the towns and reduce thousands of beings to the state of starvelings and impose industrial slavery",<sup>59</sup> in the conclusion to *The State: Its Historic Role* Kropotkin clearly indicates the reordering of his priorities:

If you look still deeper into all the facts which I have touched upon, if you see the State as it was in history and as it is in essence to-day, and if you consider moreover that a social institution cannot serve all aims

indiscriminately, because, like every other organ, it is developed for a certain purpose, and not for all purposes, you will understand why we desire the abolition of the State.

We see in it an institution developed in the history of human societies to hinder union among men, to obstruct the development of local initiative, to crush existing liberties and prevent their restoration.<sup>60</sup>

Considering the State to be the impediment of the community spirit Kropotkin concentrates on two aspects of its existence. Firstly he reiterates his complaint against centralisation and the enormity of the State machine:

the State, by its very essence, cannot tolerate free federation because the latter represents that nightmare of the legislator: "The State within the State." The State does not [sic] recognize a freely adopted union working within itself. It only deals with *subjects*. The State and its prop, the Church, arrogate to themselves alone the right of being the connecting link between men. Consequently the State must perforce annihilate cities based on direct union between citizens. It *must* abolish all union within the city, abolish the city itself, abolish all direct union between cities. To the federative principle it must substitute the principle of submission and discipline. Submission is its substance. Without this principle it leaves off being *the State*; it becomes a federation.<sup>61</sup>

As the State expands the area of its control and creates more complex layers of bureaucracy Kropotkin finds that the principle of centralisation is extended to ridiculous degrees. In France, he mocks:

when the wind blows down a tree on the National highway, or a peasant prefers giving a stonebreaker two or three francs to the unpleasant task of repairing the communal road himself, it is necessary for twelve or fifteen employees of the Home Office and Treasury to be put in motion, and for more than fifty documents to be exchanged between these austere functionaries, before a tree can be sold, or the peasant receives permission to deposit two or three francs into the communal treasury.<sup>62</sup>

Such pettiness, Kropotkin contends, does more than hamper initiative. Secondly, he argues, the existence of the State inhibits the masses' community spirit. Following his observations of the operation of the French bureaucracy, he remarks:

But there is worse beneath all this, for the *principle* kills everything. The peasants of a village have a thousand interests in common: interests of economy, neighbourhood and constant intercourse. They must unite for a thousand diverse things. But the State cannot allow them to unite! It gives them a school and priest, police and judge; these must suffice, and should other interests arise, they must apply in the regular way to Church and State.<sup>63</sup>

Whereas in mediaeval times "two 'brothers' were bound to watch in turns a brother who had fallen ill", in the modern world and by virtue of the "absorption of all social functions by the State", it is "sufficient...to give one's neighbour the address of the next paupers' hospital".<sup>64</sup> In the final article of his original series *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin laments:

Under the present social system, all bonds of union among the inhabitants of the same street or neighbourhood have been dissolved. In the better parts of the large towns, people live without knowing who are their next-door neighbours. But in the crowded lanes people know each other perfectly, and are continually brought into mutual contact.<sup>65</sup>

Defining the State with reference to its impulse against the community, identifying this impulse as the most destructive aspect of the State's existence and the chief subject of society's justifiable hatred, alters Kropotkin's conception of future anarchist organisation. His re-evaluation of community has an important impact on his advocacy of communism.

### 3.COMMUNISM AND COMMUNITY

In spite of the rather poetic and otherworldly title he chooses to give it, Kropotkin's *Fields, Factories and Workshops* is often represented as a dry exercise in statistical planning. Admittedly, in comparison to the earlier articles collected from *Le Révolté* the book is not very exciting. Kropotkin changes the context of his study and looks at the question of industrial reorganisation in relation to what he sees as the facts of West European economic development rather than in terms of the strategic plight of the city engaged in armed revolt. Yet there is a continuity between the works.

In the *Preface to Fields, Factories and Workshops* Kropotkin explicitly reaffirms his commitment to the formulation of an economic

theory based on the "economy of energy required for the satisfaction of human needs."<sup>66</sup> He does not emphasise the importance of production to the capitalist mind with quite the same ferocity as he does in his earlier writings, but he continues to decry what he considers to be the narrow principles of capitalist economics. In a relatively dispassionate style, Kropotkin comments:

Under the name of profits, rent, interest upon capital, surplus value, and the like, economists have eagerly discussed the benefits which the owners of land or capital, or some privileged nations can derive, either from the under-paid work of the wage-labourer, or from the inferior position of one class of the community towards another class, or from the inferior economical development of one nation towards another nation.<sup>67</sup>

Following the pattern of his earlier thought Kropotkin re-asserts his opposition to the division of labour and reformulates his critique of international trade and specialisation. With data and research sources which in their profuseness are matched only by the materials he accumulates in *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin demonstrates again how all modern societies can decentralise, integrate their industrial and agricultural resources and re-organise their production on a self-sufficient basis in industrial garden towns. Removed from the arguments presented in standard economics texts, his conclusion collates this information in a vision of future society:

Have the factory and the workshop at the gates of your fields and gardens, and work in them. Not those large establishments, of course, in which huge masses of metals have to be dealt with and which are better placed at certain spots indicated by Nature, but the countless variety of workshops and factories which are required to satisfy the infinite diversity of tastes among civilised men. Not those factories in which children lose all the appearance of children in the atmosphere of an industrial hell, but those airy and hygienic, and consequently economical factories in which human life is of more account than machinery and the making of extra profits...factories and workshops into which men, women and children will not be driven by hunger, but will be attracted by the desire of finding an activity suited to their tastes, and where, aided by the motor and the machine, they will choose the branch of activity which best suits their inclination.<sup>68</sup>

As before, efficiency will be increased by decentralisation, by the introduction of integrated education and by the abolition of the

distinction between mental and manual work. Kropotkin makes the point by comparing what he considers to be the possible with the existing organisation of the economy. Examining the economic inefficiency of existing methods of agricultural production, Kropotkin notes:

In industrially developed countries, a couple of months' work, or even much less than that, would be sufficient to produce for a family rich and varied vegetable and animal food. But...the workman's family has to spend one full half of its yearly earnings...to provide food. And what food! Is not bread and dripping the staple food of more than one-half of English children?

In the passage following, Kropotkin continues to discuss the educational roots of the problem of efficiency:

We all know that the child ought, at least, to be familiarised with the forces of Nature which some day he will have to utilise...that he ought to study science and learn a trade...but what do we do?...we sent the child to push a coal-cart in a mine...we compel the girl...to work as a "woman" at the weaving-loom...As to those who have the relatively rare luck of receiving some more education, we crush their minds by useless overtime...and under an educational system of which the motive is "profits," and the means "specialisation," we simply work to death the women teachers who take their educational duties in earnest. What floods of useless sufferings deluge every so-called civilised land in the world!<sup>69</sup>

In none of these heartfelt analyses does Kropotkin clearly reiterate his commitment to communism. Even when he talks of the ability of society to reorganise itself, provide its own means of existence and humanise the living and working environment he fails to add the formerly defining economic character. The same seeming indifference toward communism is apparent in his discussions of scarcity. Kropotkin argues consistently that providing the means of life is no longer a "burden" or "curse" and he finds that if "you make yourselves the soil, and partly the temperature and the moisture which each crop requires, you will see that to grow the yearly food for a family...might almost be done as a mere change from other pursuits".<sup>70</sup> But whilst continuing to provide the theoretical conditions for the creation of the communist society, Kropotkin is less vociferous in advocating its realisation.

Kropotkin's reticence to identify his writings specifically with the communist cause is certainly not a sign of his rejection of the ideal. His understanding of the evolution of mutual aid and the renewal of his attack on Malthus provides him with good reasons to continue to support the introduction of communism; moreover in a discussion celebrating the scientific progress of mankind he implicitly reaffirms the validity of his earlier position. Looking forward to the realisation of 'well-being for all' he argues:

For the first time in the history of civilisation, mankind has reached a point where the means of satisfying its needs are in excess of the needs themselves. To impose, therefore, as has hitherto been done, the curse of misery and degradation upon vast divisions of mankind, in order to secure well-being for the few, is needed no more: well-being can be secured for all, without overwork for any. We are thus placed in a position entirely to remodel the very bases and contents of our civilisation - provided the civilised nations find in their midst the constructive capacities and the powers of creation required for utilising the conquests of the human intellect for the interests of all.<sup>71</sup>

In his essay 'Anarchism' Kropotkin declares that the "great bulk of the Anarchist working men prefer the Anarchist-Communist ideas which have gradually evolved out of the Anarchist Collectivism of the International Working Men's Association".<sup>72</sup> He also identifies his own anarchism with the majoritarian view:

As one of the Anarchist-Communist direction, the present writer for many years endeavoured to...show the intimate, logical connection which exists between the modern philosophy of natural sciences and Anarchism...As regards the substance of Anarchism itself, it was Kropotkin's aim to prove that Communism - at least partial - has more chances of being established than Collectivism, especially in communes taking the lead, and that Free, or Anarchist, Communism is the only form of Communism that has any chance of being accepted in civilised societies; Communism and Anarchy are therefore two terms of evolution which complete each other, the one rendering the other possible and acceptable. He has tried, moreover, to indicate how, during a revolutionary period, a large city...could organise itself on the lines of Free Communism; the city guaranteeing to every inhabitant dwelling, food and clothing...in exchange for a half-day's or a five-hours' work...<sup>73</sup>

Without the addition of such personal touches Kropotkin in *Modern Science and Anarchism* again signals both his preference for communism, and his disapproval of systems reliant on the remuneration of labour. Inspired by the rapid growth of the syndicalist movement - if not

completely approving of its aims<sup>74</sup> - he claims that the anarcho-communist alternative "wins more and more ground nowadays among the working men who try to get a clear conception as to the forthcoming revolutionary action."<sup>75</sup> He indicates the same preference in *Mutual Aid*, highlighting the extent to which communism was practised in the mutual aid societies which preceded the creation of the State and bemoaning the extent to which the interference of the State has upset traditional communistic practices. In a study of the village communities of the Mongol Buryates, for example, Kropotkin regrets what he considers to be the disruptive and inegalitarian influence of the Russian State but nevertheless commends the vestiges of communism which remain.

Altogether, the Russian conquerors of Siberia were so much struck by the communistic practices of the Buryates, that they gave them the name of *Bratskiye* - 'the Brotherly Ones' - and reported to Moscow: 'With them everything is in common; whatever they have is shared in common.' Even now, when the Lena Buryates sell their wheat, or send some of their cattle to be sold to a Russian butcher, the families of the *ouious*, or the tribe, put their wheat and cattle together, and sell it as a whole. Each *ouious* has, moreover, its grain store for loans in case of need, its communal baking oven...and its blacksmith, who...being a member of the community, is never paid for his work within the community...Selling and buying cannot take place within the community, and the rule is so severe that when a richer family hires a labourer the labourer must be taken from another clan or from among the Russians. This habit is evidently not specific to the Buryates; it is so widely spread among the modern barbarians...that it must have been universal among our ancestors.<sup>76</sup>

But in whichever manner Kropotkin chooses to express his approval of communism, the later commitments he makes to anarcho-communism do not compare with his earliest calls to the Jura Federation to abandon their 'collectivist' identity and accept the principle of distribution according to need. Notwithstanding his hopes for the revival of anarchism in view of syndicalist advance, Kropotkin defends the communist goal in an undeniably sober fashion.

For Woodcock, the apparent dullness of Kropotkin's approach is evidence of his mature political constructiveness. The diminishing of

his zeal may also be explained in terms of his growing antipathy to marxism. His experiences of the Russian Revolution, for example, leave him torn between supporting communist experimentation and divorcing himself from the Bolsheviks who had for so long advanced the idea. But even prior to his return from exile Kropotkin's perception of the marxist advance cause him to reconsider the nature of communism and to analyse its introduction as being potentially problematic. He expresses his wariness of 'monastic' communism in his earliest writings. In his later thought, however, he not only emphasises what he considers to be the inherent difficulties of the 'authoritarian' communist stance, but approaches the question with a view to examining the extent to which his own advocacy of communism can be successfully reconciled with the notion of anarchist freedom. In an article entitled 'Communism and Anarchy' appearing in *Freedom* in July 1901, he comments:

The importance of this [relation] need hardly be insisted upon. Many Anarchists and thinkers in general, whilst recognising the immense advantages which Communism may offer to society, yet consider this form of social organisation a danger to the liberty and the free development of the individual. This danger is also recognised by many Communists, and, taken as a whole, the question is merged in that other vast problem which our century has laid bare to its fullest extent: the relationship between the individual to Society.<sup>77</sup>

In the following month Kropotkin similarly declares:

The Communist State is an Utopia given up already by its own adherents and it is time to proceed further. A far more important question to be examined, indeed, is this: Whether Anarchist or Free Communism does not also imply a diminution of individual freedom?<sup>78</sup>

Kropotkin's discussion of the relationship between communism and liberty operates on two levels. In the first instance, and paralleling his synthesis of individualism and anarchist morality, Kropotkin shows how liberty requires anarchy. In the second instance he utilises his understanding of anarchist freedom to demonstrate the subordination of communism to the ideal of community.

The strength of Kropotkin's argument is based on the force of his definition of individual freedom: "the possibility of action without being influenced in those actions by the fear of punishment by society (bodily constraint, the threat of hunger or even censure, except when it comes from a friend)."79 The definition serves two purposes. On the one hand, demonstrating the continuing importance he attaches to the institutional constraints of the State, it enables him to dismiss the value of traditional liberalism. Liberal thought, he argues, may promise the enjoyment of perfect negative freedom. But applied in practice, the work of even the "most advanced moralists, like Mill" creates constraint in the law. On the other hand, the choice of his adversaries and the form of his argument - in common with his consideration of 'equity' in morality - increases the closeness of his identification with classic liberal theory and enables Kropotkin to claim the existence of freedom in anarchy in quasi-liberal terms.

For Kropotkin, the possibility for realising the conditions of freedom clearly exists: "humanity can and *must* free itself from the fear of punishment...it can constitute an Anarchist society in which the fear of punishment and even unwillingness to be blamed shall disappear". In creating the free society, however, humanity must recognise the extent to which it functions collectively. Just as pleasure and pain are based on what is 'good' and 'bad' in nature - in the interests of the whole community - Kropotkin argues:

But we know we can free ourselves neither from our habit of loyalty...nor from our sympathies...in this last respect man is *never free*. Crusoe on his island, was not free. The moment he began to construct his ship, to cultivate his garden or to lay in provision for the winter, he was already captured, absorbed by his work...The moment he had the company of a dog, of two or three goats and, above all, after he had met with Friday, he was no longer *absolutely free*...He had *obligations*, he had to think of the *interests of others*, he was no longer the *perfect individualist* whom we are sometimes expected to see in him. The moment he has a wife or children, educated by himself or confided to others (society), the moment he has a domestic animal, or even only an orchard which requires to be watered at certain hours - from that moment he is no longer the "care-for-nothing," the "egoist," the

"individualist" who is sometimes represented as the type of a free man. Neither on Crusoe's island, far less in society of whatever kind it be, does this type exist. Man takes, and *will always* take into consideration the interests of other men...<sup>80</sup>

In accordance with his classification of 'natural' anarchist morality, Kropotkin concludes with the liberal view that freedom requires responsibility and a recognition of the freedom of others. In keeping with his anarchist beliefs he finds that liberty also requires association in society.

Kropotkin's conception of individual freedom solves the problem of communist organisation by making communism dependent upon community. Communism can either inhibit, "even annihilate" or "enhance this liberty to its utmost limits."<sup>81</sup> In the direction communism takes Kropotkin notes:

All depends on the *fundamental ideas* on which the association is based. It is not the form of association which involves slavery; it is the ideas of individual liberty which we bring with us to an association. This applies to all forms of association.<sup>82</sup>

The freedom of the individual and the well-being of the community depends on the strength of the society's communitarian ethic founded on the development of the spirit of mutual aid. Kropotkin clarifies the point in the anthropological studies he presents in *Mutual Aid*. Turning his attention to the 'barbarian' village communities he stresses the extent to which the "feeling of union within the confederation is kept alive by the common interests of the tribes, their folkmoths, and the festivities which are usually kept in connection with the folkmoths."<sup>83</sup> Elsewhere he finds that the outstanding feature of the village community "is the gradual extension of the circle of men embraced by the feelings of solidarity."<sup>84</sup>

In his earlier work the introduction of communism is defended on two grounds: firstly, in relation to capitalism which is unfair and inefficient, communism is possible and desirable and represents a means

by which the State may be abolished; secondly, in relation to anarchism, communism embodies the morality of 'giving without wanting to receive' preventing the future community from degenerating into the mire of the State. Whilst in his later writings Kropotkin does not retract his first defence of introduction of communism, he finds that it cannot be defended on the grounds of its relationship to morality. Communism is dependent on communitarianism. He clarifies the point in his anthropological studies. In Eskimo communities Kropotkin finds that the stability of society is maintained in spite of the decline of communism.

Eskimo life is based upon communism. What is obtained by hunting and fishing belongs to the clan. But in several tribes, especially in the West under the influence of the Danes, private property penetrates into their institutions. However, they have an original means for obviating the inconveniences arising from a personal accumulation of wealth which would soon destroy their personal tribal unity. When a man has grown rich, he convokes the folk of his clan into a great festival, and, after much eating, distributes among them all his fortune...in my opinion these distributions reveal a very old institution, contemporaneous with the first apparition of personal wealth; they must have been a means for re-establishing equality among the members of the clan, after it had been disturbed by the enrichment of the few.<sup>85</sup>

Kropotkin's reversal of the relationship between communism and community is consistent with the later analysis he makes of the city-state. The ideal of community, he contends, sustained the cities and the repudiation of the ideal was ultimately responsible for the cities' downfall. As if to confirm the point, in conclusion to his analysis of the relationship between liberty and communism, he comments:

Cohabitation of two individuals under the same roof may lead to the enslavement of one by the will of the other, as it may also lead to the liberty of both. The same applies to the family or to the co-operation of two persons in gardening or in bringing out a paper. The same with regard to large or small associations...Thus in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries, we find communes of equals, men equally free - and four centuries later we see the commune calling for the dictatorship of a priest.<sup>86</sup>

## 4. CONSCIOUSNESS

Irrespective of the modifications he introduces into his later thought, Kropotkin's re-examination of morality and the State is informed by a belief that the spirit of mutual aid continues to exist. The decline of mediaeval civilisation did not destroy the principle, but with the development of the State further progress has been impeded. Concluding his account of the city-states, he argues:

the current of mutual aid and support did not die out in the masses, it continued to flow even after that defeat. It rose up again with formidable force in answer to the communist appeals of the first propagandists of the reform, and it continued to exist even after the masses, having failed to realise the life which they hope to inaugurate under the inspiration of a reformed religion, fell under the dominations of an autocratic power. It flows still even now, and it seeks its way to find out a new expression which would not be the State, nor the mediaeval city, nor the village community of the barbarians, nor the savage clan, but would proceed from all of them, and yet be superior to them in its wider and more deeply humane conceptions.<sup>87</sup>

As a principle of evolution biological mutual aid must always have an existence in society. In the observations Kropotkin makes of existing society under the State he refers not to the primary desire to associate, but to the lingering sentiments of ethical mutual aid; and in terms of the development he charts from mutual aid to justice and morality he considers that evolutionary history has reached the penultimate level of development. Even given the existence of the State and the destructive influence it exerts on the development of mutual aid humanity, he argues, stands on the brink of realising morality. In the concluding essay of his original series, Kropotkin contends:

The higher conception of no revenge for wrongs, and of freely giving more than one expects to receive from his neighbours, is proclaimed as being the real principle of morality - a principle superior to mere equivalence, equity, or justice, and more conducive to happiness. And man is appealed to to be guided in his acts, not merely by love, which is always personal, or at best tribal, but by the perception of his oneness with each human being. In the practice of mutual aid...we...find the positive and undoubted origin of our ethical conceptions; and we can affirm that in the ethical progress of man, mutual support...has had the leading part. In its wide extension, even at the present time, we also see the best guarantee of a still loftier evolution of

our race.<sup>88</sup>

Though the capacity to realise morality exists, Kropotkin acknowledges the impediment that the State represents to its full expression. In all of his studies of mutual aid - in the attempt he makes to synthesise anarchist morality with individualism or to negate the impact of 'struggle' in nature and in history - he acknowledges the point implicitly. But examining the development of the trade union movement, he explicitly confirms that the altruistic impulses of humanity have been compromised by less refined ideas.<sup>89</sup> In 'Co-operation: A Reply to Herbert Spencer' Kropotkin advances the same point in relation to the co-operative societies:

so long as...monopolies exist, all efforts of the co-operators are bound to remain extremely limited in scope. More than that. All their attempts are bound to remain *imbued with a narrow egotistic spirit which stands in direct contradiction to the spirit which Co-operation is intended to develop*. Started to counteract the narrow egotistic feeling of capitalism, brought to life with no other purpose but to break down and to crush out of existence that capitalistic spirit - Co-operation, under the present system of monopolies, becomes itself imbued with that same spirit of capitalist monopoly which it pretends to combat.<sup>90</sup>

In spite of his analysis of egotism and morality Kropotkin is convinced that mutual aid will always be compromised by the existence of the State. Unlike communism which "may be authoritarian...or... Anarchist" the State "is authoritarian or it ceases to be the State".<sup>91</sup> This finding reinforces his wish to achieve its abolition. There is a problem, however, in discovering a means to accomplish the task.

The emphasis that the theory of mutual aid places on the importance of the community spirit implies that a change in the consciousness of the masses is necessary for the creation of the moral anarchist society. But in the absence of any expectation of revolution Kropotkin does not explain how this is to be brought about: he explains only how the spirit of mutual aid has disintegrated. The next chapter considers Kropotkin's response to the problem of change.

NOTES: CHAPTER FIVE

1. See, for example, Kropotkin's discussion in *Ethics*, translated by L.S. Friedland & J.R Piroshnikoff, Benjamin Blom, New York and London, (1968), pp.32-34.
2. P. Kropotkin: 'The Ethical Need of the Present Day', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LVI, No.330, (August 1904), pp.225-6.
3. P. Kropotkin: *Ethics*, *op.cit.*, pp.30-1
4. The confusion in Kropotkin's use of terms is noted by D. Miller: *Social Justice*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1979), pp.220-21.
5. P. Kropotkin: *Modern Science and Anarchism*, Freedom Press, London, (1912), pp.65-6.
6. *ibid.*, p.168.
7. P. Kropotkin: 'The Ethical Need of the Present Day' *op.cit.*, pp.214-5.
8. P. Kropotkin: *Ethics*, *op.cit.*, p.13.
9. P. Kropotkin: 'The Ethical Need of the Present Day', *op.cit.*, p.217.
10. P. Kropotkin: *Anarchist Morality*, (Eighth Edition), Freedom Pamphlets No.6, Freedom Press, London, (N.D), p.2.
11. *ibid.*, p.4.
12. *ibid.*, p.20.
13. *ibid.*, p.15.
14. *ibid.*, pp.24-5.
15. P. Kropotkin: *Ethics*, *op.cit.*, pp.26-7.
16. P. Kropotkin: 'The Ethical Need of the Present Day', *op.cit.*, p.220.
17. P. Kropotkin: *Anarchist Morality*, *op.cit.*, p.15.
18. *ibid.*, pp.5-6.
19. *ibid.*, p.6.
20. *ibid.*, p.8.
21. P. Kropotkin: *Modern Science and Anarchism*, *op.cit.*, p.69.
22. *ibid.*
23. P. Kropotkin: *Ethics*, *op.cit.*, p.42.
24. Kropotkin again draws the contrast between Darwin's conception of moral development (as he understands it) and Social Darwinian beliefs, *ibid.*, pp.41-2.
25. *ibid.*, p.29.
26. P. Kropotkin: *Anarchist Morality*, *op.cit.*, p.22.
27. *ibid.*
28. *ibid.*
29. *ibid.*
30. *ibid.*, p.25.
31. *ibid.*
32. *ibid.*
33. *ibid.*, p.13.
34. *ibid.*, p.15.
35. *ibid.*, p.14
36. P. Kropotkin: 'The Morality of Nature', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LVII, No.337, (March 1905), p.426.
37. P. Kropotkin: 'The Ethical Need of the Present Day', *op.cit.*, p.209.
38. P. Kropotkin: *The State: Its Historic Role*, Freedom Press, London, (1943), p.26.
39. P. Kropotkin: 'Anarchism', N. Walter (ed.), *Peter Kropotkin: Two Essays*, Freedom Press, London, (1987), pp.8-9.
40. P. Kropotkin: *Wars and Capitalism*, Freedom Pamphlet, Freedom Press, London, (1914), p.19.

41. *ibid.*, pp.19-20.
42. *ibid.*, p.20.
43. P. Kropotkin: *The State: Its Historic Role*, *op.cit.*, p.10.
44. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid in the Mediaeval City', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXXVI, No.210, (August 1894), p.199.
45. *ibid.*, p.198.
46. P. Kropotkin: *The State: Its Historic Role*, *op.cit.*, p.21.
47. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid in the Mediaeval City', *op.cit.*, p.190.
48. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid in the Mediaeval City II', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXXVI, No.211, (September 1894), p.411.
49. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid in the Mediaeval City', (August 1894), *op.cit.*, p.192.
50. *ibid.*, p.195.
51. *ibid.*, p.193.
52. *ibid.*, p.202.
53. P. Kropotkin: *The State: Its Historic Role*, *op.cit.*, p.24.
54. *ibid.*
55. The drawbacks as well as the benefits of life in the mediaeval city are ~~are~~ examined in C. Platt: *The English Medieval Town*, Secker & Warburg, London, (1986); and H. Pirenne: *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, (1978).
56. P. Kropotkin: *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, Extending Horizons Books, Boston, (N.D.), p.219.
57. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid in the Mediaeval City II', (September 1894), *op.cit.*, p.415.
58. *ibid.*, p.416.
59. P. Kropotkin: *The State: Its Historic Role*, *op.cit.*, p.38.
60. *ibid.*, p.41.
61. *ibid.*, p.31.
62. *ibid.*, p.36.
63. *ibid.*
64. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Amongst Modern Men', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXXIX, No.227, (January 1896), p.67.
65. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Amongst Ourselves', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXIX, No.232, (June 1896), p.927.
66. P. Kropotkin: *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, Thomas Nelson & Son, London, (1912?), p.x.
67. *ibid.*, p.ix.
68. *ibid.*, p.417.
69. *ibid.*, pp.414-6.
70. *ibid.*, p.416.
71. P. Kropotkin: 'The Ethical Need of the Present Day', *op.cit.*, pp.207-8.
72. P. Kropotkin: 'Anarchism', *op.cit.*, p.19.
73. *ibid.*, pp.19-20.
74. See his comments in the Preface to Pataud & Pouget: *The Co-operative Commonwealth*, translated by C. & F. Charles, New International Publishing Co., Oxford, (1913).
75. P. Kropotkin: *Modern Science and Anarchism*, *op.cit.*, p.71.
76. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among the Barbarians', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXXI, No.179, (January 1892), p.115.
77. P. Kropotkin: 'Communism and Anarchy: Paris Congress Report, 1900', *Freedom*, Vol.XV, No.158, (July 1901).
78. P. Kropotkin: 'Communism and Anarchy: Paris Congress Report, 1900', *Freedom*, Vol.XV, No.159, (August 1901).

79. *ibid.*
80. *ibid.*
81. *ibid.*
82. *ibid.*
83. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among the Barbarians', *op.cit.*, pp.115-16.
84. *ibid.*, p.113.
85. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among Savages', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXIX, No.170, (April 1891), p.550.
86. P. Kropotkin: 'Communism and Anarchy: Paris Congress Report, 1900', (August 1901), *op.cit.*
87. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid in the Mediaeval City, II' (September 1894), *op.cit.*, pp.417-8.
88. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Amongst Ourselves', *op.cit.*, p.936.
89. P. Kropotkin: *ibid.*, pp.918-9.
90. P. Kropotkin: 'Co-operation: A Reply to Herbert Spencer, II', *Freedom*, Vol.XI, No.112, (January 1897).
91. P. Kropotkin: 'Communism and Anarchy: Paris Congress Report, 1900', (August 1901), *op.cit.*

## CHAPTER SIX: MUTUAL AID AND THE EVOLUTION OF ANARCHY

The previous chapter examined the extent to which the theory of mutual aid modifies Kropotkin's early thought. This chapter attempts to show the consistency that exists between the two phases of his career by examining Kropotkin's conception of change.

Kropotkin confronts the question of anarchist change directly in his *Reply to Herbert Spencer*.<sup>1</sup> In this essay he argues that the problem of securing the reform of existing society lies in overcoming the destructive 'egotistic spirit' of the State. Kropotkin's conclusion gives some credence to writers such as Reichert who consider his evolutionary theory as a concept of gradual change, reliant upon altering the consciousness of the masses. The first section of this chapter attempts, however, to demonstrate the narrowness of this view by reconsidering Kropotkin's image of the future anarchist society and demonstrating the continuing importance he places on the need to achieve structural reform.

The remainder of the chapter deals with the alternative understanding of Kropotkin's conception of change: the view, advanced by writers such as David Miller, that the theory of mutual aid is deterministic. From the point of view of the continuity of Kropotkin's ideas this critique is potentially the most powerful demonstration of the reformulation of his thought. Even granting that Kropotkin still expected that the creation of the anarchist society would be prefaced by violent struggle, the suggestion that he considered the revolution to be a natural outcome of evolution clearly demarcates the theory of mutual aid from his earlier writings in *Le Révolté*.

## 1. THE NATURAL SOCIETY

Kropotkin reconsiders the organisation of anarchy in the essay 'Anarchism'. In this article anarchy is defined as being "contrary to authority" and described as a society without government. In anarchy social peace is obtained "by free agreements concluded between...various groups...freely constituted...".<sup>2</sup> He continues:

in a society developed on these lines, the voluntary associations which already now begin to cover all the fields of human activity would take a still greater extension so as to substitute themselves for the State in all its functions. They would represent an interwoven network, composed of an infinite variety of groups and federations of all sizes and degrees, local, regional, national, and international - temporary or more or less permanent - for all possible purposes: production, consumption and exchange, communications, sanitary arrangements, education, mutual protection, defence of the territory, and so on; and, on the other side, for the satisfaction of an ever-increasing number of scientific, artistic, literary and sociable needs.<sup>3</sup>

The differences between this image of anarchy and the vision Kropotkin imparts in *Paroles d'un Révolté* concern the style rather than the content of his ideas. Though he does not describe the development of the anarchist community in terms of traversing oceans and mountains, for example, he continues to represent the 'units' of the anarchist society to be as variable as the 'agglomerations' of his youthful imagination. Following the pattern of his early analysis, Kropotkin finds that the anarchist community "would represent nothing immutable" but:

as is seen in organic life at large - harmony would...result from an ever-changing adjustment and readjustment of equilibrium between the multitudes of forces and influences, and this adjustment would be easier to obtain as none of the forces would enjoy a special protection from the State.<sup>4</sup>

The account of anarchy Kropotkin provides in 'Anarchism' is typical of his later writings. Yet the continuity between his early and later ideas of organisation should not be overemphasised. The introduction of the theory of mutual aid does cause Kropotkin to modify his work; in particular, it introduces a strongly rural element to his thought.

Kropotkin's interest in the rural community may be traced to his anthropological studies of the 'barbarian' villages. In these writings Kropotkin examines all manner of non-barbaric behaviours and, in accordance with the wider concept of mutual aid, the institutional supports which were designed to foster them. Extending from the organisation of the tribal clans, the village communities were designed as unions

for common culture, for mutual support in all possible forms, for protection from violence, and for a further development of knowledge, national bonds, and moral conceptions; and every change in the judicial, military, educational, or economical manners had to be decided at the folkmoths of the village, the tribe, or the confederation...it was the *universitas*, the *mir* - a world in itself.<sup>5</sup>

Kropotkin is keen to emphasise the extent to which village life was organised communally and to which work and produce was considered to be the property of the community as a whole.<sup>6</sup> Reflecting his redefinition of the relationship between communism and community, however, he admits that private property was recognised as usual and desirable in the village communities and that common cultivation did not "imply by necessity communal consumption". Socially the village was sub-divided into 'long houses' comprised of smaller clannish units.<sup>7</sup> Such arrangements, he finds, did not impede the expression of mutual aid in the village. Even where cultivation was undertaken privately, the organisation of the village community prevented a decline to crude individualistic selfishness.<sup>8</sup>

Kropotkin's analysis of the barbarian village is intended to prove the erroneousness of Huxley's understanding of primitive society. Early civilisation, he argues, was not nasty, cold, brutish or short.<sup>9</sup> In this role, the 'barbarian' communities feature only as the second most important example of the mutual aid principle in history. For Kropotkin, however, the example of the 'barbarian' villages endures; and

notwithstanding the development of the city-states, the villages assume an organisational importance by virtue of their historical survival.

In common with the mediaeval cities, Kropotkin finds that the traditional villages fell victim to the aggression of the State during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The timing of the assault was not coincidental: owing to the city-states' failure to include the rural areas in their organisational experiments, he argues, the villages' decline was inevitably linked to that of the cities'. Kropotkin characteristically describes this process of rural disintegration in the most violent terms: "to speak of the natural death of the village communities" he comments "is as grim a joke as to speak of the natural death of soldiers slaughtered on a battle field".<sup>10</sup> The villagers attempted to resist the State's encroachments; communal lands were consequently confiscated with great brutality. The historical development of individually cultivated small-holdings, he contends, thus resulted from an artificially created division between the mass of the peasantry and the class of State-inspired *kulaks*. Kropotkin's account of the behaviour of the French peasantry during the Revolution, provides a good example of his general point:

it must be noted that the idea of dividing the communal lands between the inhabitants of each commune, which was often brought forward by the village bourgeoisie, was not at all favoured by the great mass of the peasants, no more that it is favoured in our own day by Russians, Bulgarians, Servians, Arabs, Kabyles, Hindus, or any other peasantry among whom the village community still persists. We know, in fact, that whenever a voice is raised in a country where communal property exists, demanding the division of lands belonging to the village community, it is raised in [sic] behalf of the village middle-class people, who have grown rich by some small business, and hope to appropriate the poor man's acre, as soon as the land is divided.<sup>11</sup>

Tracing the villages' decline, Kropotkin finds that the success the State enjoyed in enforcing individualistic principles in the old communities was not geographically uniform. Whereas the free institutions of the city-state were all destroyed, in some rural areas

the development of mutual aid in the community remained relatively unbroken. The institutions of the community, he argues,

so well respond to the needs and conceptions of the tillers of the soil that, in spite of all, Europe is up to this date covered with *living* survivals of the village communities, and European village life is permeated with customs and habits dating from the village-community period. Even in this country, notwithstanding all the drastic measures taken against the old order of things, it prevailed as late as the beginning of this century...And, communal institutions having persisted so late as that, a great number of mutual-aid habits and customs would undoubtedly be discovered in English villages if the writers of this country only paid attention to village life.<sup>12</sup>

Kropotkin concludes that the rural peasant communities serve as prime illustrations of the "standing institutions of mutual support".<sup>13</sup> They assume a double importance for Kropotkin's image of anarchy, serving as organisational and cultural models of mutual support.

Kropotkin evaluates the organisation of village life by examining a range of existing rural communities in Switzerland, Germany, Spain, and France. His most detailed and praiseworthy considerations are, however, made in relation to settlements in Russia and Eastern Europe. Charting the development of these modern settlements from their 'barbarian' roots, Kropotkin rejects entirely the 'backwardness' of rural organisation. The principle of village life, he argues, possesses a dynamic force; and recognising that his estimations of the peasant communities run "badly against the current economical theories"<sup>14</sup> Kropotkin actively encourages the 'regression' of society by the reconstitution of traditional forms. His recommendation is again founded on his understanding of social relations and the principles of ownership that the villages embrace. Examining the further developments that have been made to the modern rural communities since 'barbarian' times Kropotkin finds that both aspects of village life have been extended positively. Using Russia to illustrate his contention, he finds that the peasants have spontaneously implemented principles of shared labour and common ownership<sup>15</sup> and enhanced the ethical

conceptions of the society. In spite of the limitedness of the economic changes the communities have introduced, Kropotkin notes:

From the point of view of social economics all these efforts of the peasants certainly are of little importance. They cannot substantially, and still less permanently, alleviate the misery to which the tillers of the soil are doomed all over Europe. But from the ethical point of view, which we are now considering, their importance cannot be overrated. They prove that even under the system of reckless individualism which now prevails the agricultural masses piously maintain their mutual-support inheritance; and as soon as the States relax the iron laws by means of which they have broken all bonds between men, these bonds are at once reconstituted, notwithstanding the difficulties, political, economical, and social, which are many, and in such forms as best answer to the modern requirements of production. They indicate in which direction and in which form further progress must be expected.<sup>16</sup>

The most outstanding feature of Kropotkin's portrayal of the cultural life of the village is his romantic estimation of the simplicity of country life. His appreciation of the simple life is discernable in his earliest work; in his consideration of 'luxury', it is quite pronounced. The simplicity of nihilist culture strikes him equally deeply and nihilism continues to make a strong impression on Kropotkin's later thought. The nihilists do not, however, serve as an isolated example of Russian 'simplicity'. In the latter part of his career Kropotkin places his discussion within a peculiarly Russian tradition. He identifies his views with those of his literary heroes - especially Turgenev and the later Tolstoy - and often advances his point in terms of a contrast between aristocratic 'idleness' and rural 'purity'. Making a neo-populist contribution to the interpretation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* Kropotkin notes:

How many thousands of young Russian women have later on repeated these same verses, and said to themselves: "I would gladly give up all these rags and all this masquerade of luxurious life for a small shelf of books, for life in the country, amidst the peasants, and for the grave of my old nurse in our village." How many have done it! And we shall see how this same type of Russian girl was developed still further in the novels of Turguéneff - and in Russian life. Was not Púshkin a great poet to have foreseen and predicted it?<sup>17</sup>

Kropotkin similarly examines the "wonderfully rich and full" traditions of the rural communities, highlighting the importance of the

singing bards "going about the villages with their primitive string instruments...reciting poems of a very ancient origin" and the richness of peasant folk-lore.<sup>18</sup> Tracing the continuity of village life from mediaeval times Kropotkin finds:

a variety of very old songs are sung still by the village folk themselves. Every annual holiday - Christmas, Easter, Midsummer Day - has its own cycle of songs, which have been preserved, with their melodies, even from pagan times. At each marriage, which is accompanied by a very complicated ceremonial, and at each burial, similarly old songs are sung by the peasant women.<sup>19</sup>

For Kropotkin, the importance of such folk traditions cannot be underestimated. Just as he believes that the legends of King Arthur, the Brehon commentaries and the epic poetry and triads of the Welsh<sup>20</sup> illustrate the high moral principles of the 'barbarian' tribes, he considers that the myths and stories of the Russian rural community demonstrate perfectly the sympathy and oneness the peasantry feel amongst themselves. Reflecting on the adaptations Russian villagers have made of ancient Arabian tales, he comments:

Russian folk-lore did not simply change the dress of the Persian prince, Rustem, into that of a Russian peasant, Iliya. The Russian sagas, in their style, in the poetical images they resort to, and partly in the characteristics of their heroes, were new creations. Their heroes are thoroughly Russian: for instance, they never seek for blood-vengeance, as Scandinavian heroes would do; their actions, especially those of "the elder heroes," are not dictated by personal aims, but are imbued with a communal spirit, which is characteristic of Russian popular life.<sup>21</sup>

Kropotkin also finds that the poverty of the literary or folk tradition in existing cities testifies to the relative moral dissoluteness of their inhabitants. At the end of *Mutual Aid*, he argues:

Man is a result of both his inherited instincts and his education. Among the miners and the seamen, their common occupations and their every-day contact with one another create a feeling of solidarity, while the surrounding dangers maintain courage and pluck. In the cities, on the contrary, the absence of common interest nurtures indifference...Moreover, the tradition of the hero of the mine and the sea lives in the miners' and fishermen's villages, adorned with a poetical halo. But what are the traditions of a motley London crowd? The only tradition they might have in common ought to be created by literature, but a literature which would correspond to the village epics hardly exists.<sup>22</sup>

The lyrical quality of Kropotkin's later appreciations of the Russian village community contrast strongly with his earlier appraisals. Writing in 1882, for example, Kropotkin contrasts the federalism, informality and communality of Russian peasant life to the State's legal rigidity, its embrace of centralisation and personal property;<sup>23</sup> but he also passes comment on the basic harshness of rural life. Discussing his own efforts to 'go to the people', he notes the rudeness of the Russian peasant's habit to regard "the man who wears broadcloth, and neither ploughs nor hews, neither hammers nor digs, side by side with him, as an enemy."<sup>24</sup> Equally, he remarks on the poverty of the peasant's diet, the decrepitude of communal living conditions and the misanthropy with which the peasant is treated: "the vilest official can beat and ill-use him with impunity", Kropotkin observes.<sup>25</sup>

After the appearance of *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin ignores these unsavoury features of community life. Not only does he pass over the brutalising aspects of the rural village he also fails to consider the constraints of the Russian village and the threat that the closeness of the community issues to his understanding of individual self-expression. Emphasising the solidarity of communal relations he rarely considers the homogeneity of peasant culture or the uniformity of communal dress. He passes over the intimacy of communal life, the knowledge of individuals by nicknames, the authority exercised by the elders and the conservatism of the patriarchal tradition.<sup>26</sup> When Kropotkin does consider the disadvantages of village life, he focuses on the impact that the State has made in the villages rather than on the village structure itself. Comparing the villages of Little Russia to the Great Russian communities, he comments:

The more genial climate, the warm nights, the musical language, the beauty of the race...the picturesque dress and the lyrical songs - all render Little Russia especially attractive for the Great Russian. Besides, life in Little-Russian villages is more poetical than it is in the villages of Great Russia.

There is more freedom in the relations between young the men and the young girls, who freely meet before marriage; the stamp of seclusion of the women which has been impressed by Byzantine habits upon Moscow does not exist in Little Russia...<sup>27</sup>

For Kropotkin, village life expands the area of individual freedom. Looking back to the creation of the city-states he concedes that "the market has played an important part in the early development of all mediaeval cities, contributing to increase the wealth of the citizens, and giving them ideas of independence."<sup>28</sup> But he is nevertheless reluctant to admit the conformity of rural life and adamantly concludes that the village tradition donated as much to the expansion of individual choice as the development of the market.

Kropotkin's uncritical attitude toward rural life may in part be explained by the manner in which he adapts the model of the village community within his own anarchist plan. Kropotkin's later work is notable for the consideration it gives to the difficulties involved in successfully marrying individual and community values. Rather than considering the problem of individual freedom in terms of privacy, straightforwardly denying the charge of phalansterism as he does *The Conquest of Bread*, he recognises that there is a danger that the individual may be swamped by the community and prevented from meaningful self-expression.<sup>29</sup> There is, Kropotkin concludes, a need to realise anarchy over as wide a geographical area as possible. In order to avoid compromising the expression of individuality, anarchists cannot look forward to the establishment of isolated 'Icarias'. On the contrary, finding that the failure of Owen's well-intentioned 'New Harmony' was "chiefly due to the suppression of individuality and the lack of initiative and responsibility", Kropotkin repudiates the practicality of small scale experimentation. To survive in the anarchist commune the individual must have access to a large population: the communal units

themselves should contain a reasonable number of inhabitants; but more importantly, they must also be part of a far wider federal community. With characteristic optimism, Kropotkin does not doubt that anarchy can fulfil these conditions of organisation. The imposition of the conditions rather encourages him to think of the realisation of the anarchist federation, stretching from the local to the international body, not as a dream, but a necessity:

a small community cannot live long; "brethren and sisters" forced to meet continuously, amid a scarcity of new impressions, end by detesting each other. And if two persons through becoming rivals or simply not liking each other are able by their disagreement to bring about the dissolution of the community, the prolonged life of such communities would be a strange thing...it is a foregone conclusion that a close association of 10, 20, or 100 persons cannot last longer than three or four years. It would even be regrettable if it lasted longer; because this would only prove either that all were brought under the influence of a single individual or that all lost their individuality. Well, since it is certain that in three, four, or five years part of the members of a community would wish to leave, there ought to exist at least a dozen or more federated communities in order that those who, for one reason or other, wish to leave a community may enter another community, being replaced by new comers from other places. Otherwise the Communist beehive must necessarily perish.<sup>30</sup>

Kropotkin's certainty that there will be no social coercion within the pluralist federation may also be explained by his understanding of the compatibility between morality and individual freedom. Theoretically he accepts that the merging of the individualistic 'I' with the savage 'we' is compatible with an acknowledgement of the precept of 'doing unto others...'. Communal morality is therefore compatible with a sense of individual responsibility and a recognition of the equal rights of all to express their individuality. For Kropotkin, there can be no threat to freedom in the village community. On the contrary, and in comparison to his earlier work where the moral sense of brotherly love is posited on the transformation of revolutionary fervour and the implementation of communism, the community enhances the certainty of attaining real liberty.

But there is yet another factor explaining Kropotkin's confidence in the rural community: the village community lives in harmony with nature, in a relationship with the natural world which brings humanity in direct contact with the scientific 'truth' of its ethical development. In such a natural environment, he argues, humanity discovers the best indicator of morality and is constantly reminded of the power of mutual aid. In *Ethics*, he argues:

There is still less foundation for another continually repeated reproach to empirical thought, - namely, that the study of Nature can only lead us to knowledge of some cold and mathematical truth, but that such truths have little effect upon our actions. The study of Nature, we are told, can at best inspire us with the love of truth; but the inspiration for higher emotions, such as that of "infinite goodness," can be given only by religion. It can be easily shown that this contention is not based on any facts and is, therefore, utterly fallacious. To begin with, love of truth is already one half - the better half of all ethical teaching. Intelligent religious people understand this very well. As to the conception of "good" and striving for it, the "truth" which we have just mentioned, i.e., the recognition of mutual aid as the fundamental feature of life, is certainly an inspiring truth, which surely will some day find its expression in the poetry of Nature, for it imparts to our conception an additional humanitarian touch.<sup>31</sup>

Just as the first primitives learnt a sense of justice from the behaviours of the animals they saw around them, the rural setting of the village community provides an insight into the higher morality of nature. At the end of his analysis of the savages' sense of justice, he comments:

Extended from a few animals to all of them, it soon embodied the whole of nature - the trees and the forests, the rivers and the seas, the rocks and the mountains, which are all living. Gradually it grew to be a conception of the great whole, bound together by certain links of mutual support, which watches all the actions of living beings, and, owing to the solidarity in the universe, undertakes the revenge of wrong deeds. It became the conception of the Eumenides and the Moirai of the Greeks, the Parcae of the Romans, and especially the Karma of the Hindoos. The Greek legend of the cranes of Iphikus, which links together man and birds, and countless Eastern legends are poetical embodiments of the same conception. This is what primitive man saw in nature and learned from it. With our scholastic education, which has systematically ignored nature and has tried to explain its most common facts by metaphysical subtleties, we began to forget that lesson.<sup>32</sup>

Within the urban structure of the anarchist commune the rural village thus serves as a corrective to the imperfectly realised communality of

the city-states. In its oneness with nature it maintains the spirit of mutual aid and the balance of the community's objectives without denying the plurality or the interaction of the multifarious federal units of the anarchist commune. As a secular guide to the communitarian ideal, the natural society provides an atmosphere for further ethical and individual development. Contrasting what he considers to be the superiority of anarchy to both the State the marxist ideal of the Workers' State Kropotkin notes:

if, it is contended, society were organised on these principles, man would not be limited in the free exercise of his powers in productive work by a capitalist monopoly, maintained by the State; nor would he be limited in the exercise of his will by a fear of punishment, or by obedience towards individuals or metaphysical entities, which both lead to depression of initiative and servility of mind. He would be guided in his actions by his own understanding, which necessarily would bear the impression of a free action and reaction between his own self and the ethical conceptions of his surroundings. Man would thus be enabled to obtain the full development of his all his faculties, intellectual, artistic, and moral...and the reach full *individualisation*, which is not possible either under the present system of *individualism*, or under any system of State Socialism in the so-called *Volksstaat*...<sup>33</sup>

Kropotkin's reflections on the rural village are less explicable in terms of an atavistic attachment to rural life than a pastoral commitment to the traditional community and he is more guilty of being unreasonably optimistic about the potential for the village to realise further ethical development than he is wholly uncritical of rural organisation. In the course of his analysis of mutual aid Kropotkin excuses all manner of social practices; but the illustrations he gives of the enforcement of rules in, for example, the 'savage' clans do not constitute recommendations for modern society to admit infanticide, cannibalism or polygamy into its codes of social behaviour. Kropotkin expects anarchy to be a development of the existing rural village within the natural setting. In anarchy, the peasant commune is transformed just as the 'barbarian' villages were previously modified by their historical development in modern times.

In accordance with evolutionary theory Kropotkin necessarily discusses the process of anarchist modification in structural terms. In the *Reply to Herbert Spencer*, he comments:

if Spencer knew man, we could take his words relative to the "higher type of institutions" which are "possible only with the best men" as highly complimentary of the Russian nation. But the fact is that the Russian... worker and the peasant are imbued with that spirit and carry on the *artel* principle into every nook of their lives - not because they are the best men. They do so simply because the village-community has not yet been wrecked by the State, and they carry on into industrial life the spirit of the institution which makes the essence of the agricultural life of the nation.<sup>34</sup>

Kropotkin's concern in changing the rural communities lies primarily in solving the 'land question'. By this, he refers to what he sees as the still imperfect process of rural socialisation. In spite of the ability of Eskimo and other 'savage' and 'barbarian' peoples to withstand private ownership within the existing community structures, Kropotkin finds that until the monopoly of land ownership is broken down, the insidious individualistic ethic of the State will continue to operate against the true expression of mutual aid. Large estates need to be placed in the hands of the people; and this process, Kropotkin expects, will lead to the implementation of a more far reaching programme of communalisation. He formulates the argument as an unsolved problem of history. The French Revolution, he contends, considered placing the land in the hands of the masses. Subsequent revolutions have continued to realise the same plan. But looking forward to the next attempt at change Kropotkin comments:

Which of the nations will take upon herself the terrible but glorious task of the next great revolution? One may have thought for a time that it would be Russia. But if she should push her revolution further than the mere limitation of the imperial power; if she touches the land question in a revolutionary spirit - how far will she go? Will she know how to avoid the mistake made by the French Assemblies, and will she socialise the land and give it only to those who want to cultivate it with their own hands? We know not: any answer to this question would belong to the domain of prophecy.<sup>35</sup>

Kropotkin advances the point more clearly in his response to Spencer.

Considering the problem of co-operation and the failure of the co-operative movement in the State, he notes:

if that...capacity for sharing is so immensely developed in Russia, or in some French villages, it is only because those Russian or French peasants are - to some extent at least - freed from one of those monopolies, land monopoly. They own the land in common and this alone is sufficient to develop among them the co-operative spirit which Spencer longs for...<sup>36</sup>

Kropotkin's image of the resulting anarchist 'industrial village' is no easier to reconcile with existing society than the city-state or the peasant commune. In his further examinations of the possibility of integrating agriculture with industry even Kropotkin admits the difficulty of demonstrating the compatibility of heavy industry with the communal unit. New technology may have facilitated the realisation of Kropotkin's decentralised plan, but if Bookchin's analysis of the ecological society is considered to be in the spirit of his ideal, major economic and ideological problems remain unsolved, if not unsolvable.<sup>37</sup> Offering a solution to the practical problems of anarchist community organisation, Kropotkin attempts to show the existence of a natural evolutionary pattern of change.

## 2.EVOLUTION AND ANARCHY

In so far as the theory of mutual aid describes the transition from State to anarchy in peaceful terms Reichert's understanding of Kropotkin's preference for gradual evolutionary, as opposed to violent revolutionary change seems theoretically sustainable, if unlikely in practical terms. As Rocker notes, revolution is necessary because Kropotkin's evolutionary process makes it so.<sup>38</sup> But whether Kropotkin considers that the process of change will require combat or not is less relevant than the extent to which he considers the progression to anarchy to be inevitable.

Kropotkin considers the process of change in two ways: as an outcome of the development of mutual aid and as result of historical change. In so far as the former process is concerned with the evolution of consciousness and the latter with structural reform, the concepts are complementary. Kropotkin's explanation of structurally led change in his response to Spencer implies, moreover, that the concepts are necessarily entwined. Each may, however, be considered in turn.

Kropotkin's conception of mutual aid provides tremendous hope in the ultimate victory of anarcho-communism and he publicly bases his conviction that the State will dissolve into anarchy on an understanding of its continuing evolution. Concluding his observations on the freedom of the anarchist society, Kropotkin identifies the spirit of mutual aid as the 'tendency' of modern society:

The Anarchist writers consider, moreover, that their conception is not a Utopia, constructed on the a priori method, after a few desiderata have been taken as postulates. It is derived, they maintain, from an *analysis of tendencies* that are at work already, even though State Socialism may find a temporary favour with the reformers.<sup>39</sup>

The strength of Kropotkin's case rests on his identification of anarchist morality with the evolutionary morality of ethical mutual aid. For as long as the State does not succeed in bringing about the wholesale destruction of the species in an international war, this identification ensures the eventual success of the anarchist moral sense. Tracing the progression of mutual aid from justice to morality, Kropotkin argues:

Mutual Aid-Justice-Morality are thus the consecutive steps of an ascending series, revealed to us by the study of the animal world and man. It is not something imposed from outside; it is an organic necessity which carries in itself its own justification, confirmed and illustrated by the whole of the evolution of the animal kingdom, beginning with its earliest colony-stages, and gradually rising to our civilised human communities. Speaking an imagined language, it is a general law of organic evolution, and this is why the senses of Mutual Aid, Justice and Morality are rooted in man's mind with all the force of an inborn instinct - the first evidently the strongest, and the third, which is the latest, being the least imperative of the three. Like the need of food, shelter, or sleep, these instincts are self-preservation.

instincts.<sup>40</sup>

In *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin endeavours to prove the strength of the anarchist tendency by analysing the extent of the common sociability which binds peoples together. Much of his evidence is anecdotal and based on showing the friendliness which individuals continue to demonstrate in existing society. He quotes a string of warnings passed between children about the hazards of the environment, for example, to highlight the communitarianism of modern neighbourhoods.<sup>41</sup> The willingness of local women to aid pregnant or nursing mothers similarly bears witness to the existence of an "alliance of mothers" and the natural adoptive tendency of women to "bestow their care upon children that are not their own."<sup>42</sup> Many of Kropotkin's examples tend to be unnecessarily sentimental. He habitually places women - particularly nihilists and mothers - on pedestals of purity and virtue. But returning to the children, he comments:

And when a fair Jack has made a slip into the unprotected ditch at the back of the milkman's yard, or a cherry-cheeked Lizzie has, after all, tumbled down into the canal, the young brood raises such cries that all the neighbourhood is on the alert and rushes to the rescue.<sup>43</sup>

Beyond the melodramatic proofs of the "extremely wide world of mutual aid and support" that he provides, Kropotkin's analysis of the tendency toward mutual aid focuses on the developing patterns of communal organisation and the reduction of State authority. Advancing his examination of the rural communities' resistance to the State's encroachments, Kropotkin concentrates particularly on the urban movement toward spontaneous federation.

In a fairly dispassionate discussion, Kropotkin demonstrates mutual aid not only by pointing to his favourite examples of the Lifeboat Association and Red Cross but to the growth of associations ranging from trade unions to cycling clubs, sports teams and musical societies. Some

of these groups, he admits, are developed for the joy of their particular pursuit or activity. Within the "formidable development" of cycling associations, for example, members "have nothing in common but the love of cycling".<sup>44</sup> Thus, he contends, some clubs serve more a significant function than others. The Swiss and German Alpine Clubs of "hunters, educated foresters, zoologists, and simple lovers of Nature" have accomplished a great amount of useful work in charting "maps, refuge huts, mountain roads" and contributing to the knowledge of "animal life, of noxious insects, of migrations of birds, and so on."<sup>45</sup> In physically isolated regions such as Siberia literary and scientific associations exercise a similarly powerful educational influence, successfully surpassing that of the centrally organised academies.<sup>46</sup>

However great an impact the group's particular concerns have on society, Kropotkin finds that all associations further the widest possible interests of humanity. Even in the cycling groups "there is already among them a sort of freemasonry for mutual help...";<sup>47</sup> considering the "informal brotherhood of paddlers in France, the yacht clubs, and so on", Kropotkin concludes that the associations,

certainly do not alter the economical stratification of society, but, especially in the small towns, they contribute to smooth social distinctions, and as they all tend to join in large national and international federations, they certainly aid the growth of personal friendly intercourse between all sorts of men scattered in different parts of the globe.<sup>48</sup>

In *Modern Science and Anarchism* Kropotkin extends the same idea. The development of 'free' mutual aid organisations necessarily inhibits the further growth of the State and leads to the establishment of anarchy.

I have shown...elsewhere (in *The Conquest of Bread* and in *Mutual Aid*) how strong at the present time is the tendency to constitute freely, *outside the State and the churches*, thousands upon thousands of free organizations for all sorts of needs...What formerly belonged without a shadow of a doubt to the functions of the State, or the church, enters now into the domain of free organization.

This tendency develops with a striking rapidity under our very eyes. It was sufficient that a breath of emancipation should have slightly limited the powers of church and State in their never satisfied tendency towards further extension...And we may be sure that every new limitation that may be imposed

upon State and church - the two inveterate enemies of freedom - will still further widen the sphere of action of the free organizations. Future progress lies in this direction, and anarchism works precisely that way.<sup>49</sup>

Notwithstanding the modern enthusiasm to establish mutual aid societies outside the boundaries of the State, the ultimate victory of anarchy requires wholesale structural reform. Kropotkin develops this aspect of change historically.

Kropotkin considers the pattern of historical development in the conclusion to his study *The Great French Revolution*. He presents history as a trajectory guided by revolutionary upheavals and consequent periods of reaction. With each new revolution a new historical trajectory is drawn such that the same process of development is observed to take place, but "on a very much higher level" and over an increasingly truncated period.<sup>50</sup> Succeeding generations gain confidence from the revolutionary experiences of their elders and become consequently less patient with the prevailing order. Enthusiastically launching themselves into action the new revolutionaries inherit the elder generation's ideas, but seek to provide them with more perfect expression. The character of each new revolution is thus influenced by the preceding upheaval which marks the beginning of the current historical period. In Kropotkin's view:

All that this last [revolution] could not yet put into practice, all the great thoughts which were thrown into circulation during the turmoil, and which the revolution either could not or did not know how to apply, all the attempts at sociological reconstruction, which were born during the revolution, will go to make up the substance of evolution during the epoch that follows the revolution, which the addition of those new ideas to which this evolution will give birth, when trying to put into practice the programme marked out by the last upheaval. Then, a new revolution will be brought about in some other nation, and this nation in its turn will set the problems for the following century. Such has hitherto been the trend of history.<sup>51</sup>

In spite of the enthusiasm he demonstrates in his early work for the Paris Commune, Kropotkin finds that the trajectory of the current historical period is still directed toward realising the ideas developed

between 1789-1793. This finding leaves him generally depressed. The French Revolution accomplished two tasks: "the abolition of serfdom and the abolition of absolutism". In achieving these aims the Revolution also raised the possibility of communism:

France...turned her chief attention to the land question, and in striking a mortal blow at the feudal system she struck also at the great fortunes, and sent forth into the world the idea of nationalising the soil, and of socialising commerce and the chief industries.<sup>52</sup>

Kropotkin finds that much of the socialist thought of the current generation "has added absolutely nothing to the ideas which...it was tried to put into practice in the Year II. of the Republic." Socialists have only "systematised those ideas" by "turning against the middle-class economists certain of their own definitions" or "generalising certain facts noticed in the development of industrial capitalism, in the course of the nineteenth century."<sup>53</sup> Solace may, however, be found in the ideas of the *sans-culottes*, the *Enragés* and the communism of Marat.<sup>54</sup> In addition Kropotkin finds:

I permit myself to maintain also that, however vague it may have been, however little support it endeavoured to draw from arguments dressed in a scientific garb, and however little use it made of the pseudo-scientific slang of the middle-class economists, the popular communism of the first two years of the Republic saw clearer, and went much deeper in its analyses, than modern socialism.<sup>55</sup>

Whilst considering marxism to have captured the imagination of the mass of the working class and believing that revolution can no longer be expected to occur in the immediate future, Kropotkin nevertheless understands historical progress to be directed towards the realisation of his own anarchist plan. In order to demonstrate the truth of this contention he returns to consider the nature of capitalist development and the division of labour.

Kropotkin's reassessment of the division of labour and principle of specialisation remains consistent with his earlier analysis. The division of labour sets out to "divide humanity into castes which are

almost as firmly established as those of old India." The theory separates people politically into classes of "little-producing consumers" and "little-consuming producers", classifying whole sections of the population as intellectual or manual workers "sharply separated from one another, to the detriment of both." In addition, it introduces a rigid distinction between agricultural labourers and urban manufacturers.<sup>56</sup>

Kropotkin again directs much of his critique of the division of labour against the process of industrialisation. Thus the concept not only determines that an individual should be confined to "making all day long and for a whole life the same infinitesimal part of something" it also denies the possibility of agreeable work in the name of progress: even "the agricultural labourer who formerly used to find a relief from the hardships of his life in...his love of the field, and in a keen intercourse with nature...has been doomed to disappear...".<sup>57</sup>

Within his critique, Kropotkin admits the appeal of the economic theory. There can be no denying "the high pitch of production which may be attained by specialisation."<sup>58</sup> He also recognises the unfashionableness of the critical attitude he adopts towards industrialisation. But repudiating all views of the 'idiocy' of rural life, he makes his 'backwardness' into a virtue. In some socialist circles the "crushing down of the skilled artisans and the spreading of large factories, in which men, and especially women and children, were submitted to overwork under the most abominable conditions" became a powerful argument for socialism.<sup>59</sup> Industrialisation, a "favourite theme" of the Fourierists and the Saint-Simonists, he continues, also served as the watchword of the marxists:

Engels and Marx, continued to develop the same idea, exaggerating its importance and representing it as a 'universal law of historical development.' Finally, they declared that the small industries are a true obstacle to industrial, technical, and social progress, as well as to the increase of man's

powers upon Nature - an obstacle which, to use Marx's words, 'must be annihilated, and is annihilated.' When this annihilation is accomplished, then the great capitalists will naturally devour each other, so as to leave but 'a few usurpers,' whom it will be easy to expropriate.<sup>60</sup>

Neither the profitability of the theory of specialisation to the capitalists, nor the importance of industrialisation to socialist thinking convince Kropotkin of the unsuitability of his own ideals. Against the marxists, he argues:

Similar far-reaching generalisations, constructed upon a narrow basis, are not unfrequent in German science, and only illustrate a tendency of speculatively trained minds to formulate generalisations before the necessary facts have been accumulated and sifted through.<sup>61</sup>

Kropotkin's hostility toward the 'German school' is typical. But temporarily forsaking an opportunity to attack marxism Kropotkin raises an additional critique against the capitalist claim of efficiency. At one point he comments:

The narrow conception of life which consisted in thinking that profits are the only leading motive of human society; and the stubborn view which supposes that what has existed yesterday would last for ever, proved in disaccordance with the tendencies of human life...precisely in proportion as the work required from the individual in modern production becomes simpler and easier to be learned, and, therefore, also more monotonous and wearisome - the requirements of the individual for varying his work, for exercising all his capacities, become more and more prominent. Humanity perceives that there is no advantage for the community in riveting a human being for all his life to a given spot, in a workshop or a mine, and depriving him of such work as would bring him into free intercourse with nature, make of him a conscious part of the grand whole, a partner in the highest enjoyments of science and art, of free work and creation.<sup>62</sup>

Kropotkin returns to the attack by showing the erroneousness of practical application of the theory of the division of labour. He begins by rehearsing his earlier argument: neither humanity nor nation states have willingly bowed to specialisation and division; nations have actively resisted being divided and have applied current technical knowledge in order to exploit their natural resources to their fullest extent. Industrial production has spread both East and South from Britain such that the "new manufactures of Germany begin where Manchester arrived after a century of experiments and gropings; and

Russia begins where Manchester and Saxony have now reached."<sup>63</sup> Britain can thus no longer claim a monopoly in the cotton trade nor Belgium in wool nor France in silk. Examining the decline of the Lyons silk industry in detail, Kropotkin remarks:

The French manufacturers...will never regain the position they occupied before. Italy, Switzerland, Germany, the United States, and Russia have their own silk-manufactories...And [the Lyons weavers] do starve. The misery at Lyons was so great in 1884, that the poorly fed soldiers of the Lyons garrison shared their food with the weavers, and spared their coppers in order to alleviate the misery. But neither charities nor public works...will help. The trade has irremediably gone away; it has been decentralised; and Lyons will never become again the centre for silk trade it was thirty years ago.<sup>64</sup>

Countless other industries suffer a similar fate as each nation becomes "her own agriculturist and manufacturer". For Kropotkin, the world of industrial capitalism and international trade is consequently in as great a state of turmoil as the political authority:

the present industrial system, based upon a permanent specialisation of functions, already bears in itself the germs of its proper ruin. The industrial crises, which grow more acute and protracted, and are rendered still worse and still more acute by the armaments and wars implied by the present system, are rendering its maintenance more and more difficult.<sup>65</sup>

The gloom of Kropotkin's prognosis is tempered by the nature of the changes he observes in the international capitalist world. Altering the emphasis of his early work he no longer simply considers that the European economic market has established the conditions for the realisation of communal, decentralised and communist self-sufficiency - though he does still believe this is true - but that the progressive tendency of the world market is towards the integration of agriculture and industry and the rebuilding of the industrial base on a communal scale. His conclusion remains the same; but rather than devoting his energy towards a demonstration of how the system can work, Kropotkin shows instead how it is already working. In doing so he demonstrates both the benefits of evolutionary development and the limitations of the evolutionary process.

Kropotkin finds proof of the progressive disintegration of industrial production in the development of 'petty trades'. In advancing his case he considers the endurance of the traditional artisan crafts. Though threatened by industrial development and by the international diversification of production (of which he approves) Kropotkin finds that the old industries and workshops have managed to survive the dangers of specialisation and successfully adapted themselves to the new conditions of local manufacturing. He draws fondly on the example set by the Swiss watchmakers and, revealing some of the difficulties of his analysis, the Lyons silkweavers. Explaining the collapse of silk weaving by the failure of nations to specialise, Kropotkin paradoxically asserts the continuing vitality of the industry in the face of growing competition:

During the crisis which I witnessed in 1877 amidst the Swiss watchmakers, the impossibility of a recovery of the trade in the face of the competition of machine-made watches was a current topic in the press. The same was said in 1882 with regard to the silk-trade of Lyons, and, in fact, wherever a crisis has broken out in the petty trades. And yet, notwithstanding the gloomy predictions, and the still gloomier prospects of the workers, that form of industry does not disappear. Nay, we find it endowed with an astonishing vitality. It undergoes various modifications, it adapts itself to new conditions, it struggles without altogether losing hope of better times to come. Anyhow, it has not the characteristics of a decaying institution.<sup>66</sup>

The contradictions of Kropotkin's observations can only be explained by his own longing to see the re-establishment of the traditional artisan trades; a longing which is associated perhaps as much with the impressions he gained of the workers in the Jura as it is by his historical analysis of the city-state. From whichever source he derives his inspiration, Kropotkin continues to illustrate the decline of modern industrial practices by examining the development of new petty trades.<sup>67</sup> He finds some of the best illustrations of the process of industrial decline in areas of domestic production, discussing, for example, German toy making; British carpentry, basket-weaving, bookbinding and knitting;

and the development of home-based finishing trades, such as those based on the fashioning of leather goods or embroidery. But focusing on the disintegration of capitalist industry in Britain, Kropotkin discovers the same pattern of petty trade development in mechanised manufacturing. Sheffield, for example, boasts a enormous number of cutlery workshops; Birmingham exhibits a similar tendency to decentralise its armaments industry. These small industries play a important supporting role for the existing large factories, furnishing them with machine parts or finishing accessories, and they are inevitably created wherever a large factory or industry is based. In heavy industry the same process of decentralisation is apparent. Gas works, iron foundaries, and chemical processing plants all show a tendency towards the principle of small scale organisation.<sup>68</sup>

The statistical information Kropotkin uses to support his contention does not perhaps enhance the persuasiveness of his argument, but it provides his claims with the same superficial credibility that his biological data lends to the theory of mutual aid; his discussion is impressive if not totally convincing. Precision is undoubtedly important to Kropotkin and he uses official sources of information where he can.<sup>69</sup>

Yet Kropotkin does not claim to reconcile the progress of the development he observes in the petty trades with his vision of anarchy. In common with the analysis he presents in *The Conquest of Bread*, the apparent decline of capitalism only presents an opportunity for change not a guarantee of progress. For Kropotkin, there is an enormous gulf between his vision of industrial evolution and the success of the existing tendency towards decentralisation. Describing the former, he writes:

The territory occupied by each nation is again a most varied texture of soils and climates, of hills and valleys, of siopes leading to a still greater

variety of territories and races. Variety is the distinctive feature, both of the territory and its inhabitants; and that variety implies a variety of occupations. Agriculture calls manufacturers into existence, and manufactures support agriculture. Both are inseparable; and the combination, the integration of both brings about the grandest results. In proportion as technical knowledge becomes everybody's virtual domain...each nation acquires the possibility of applying the whole variety of her energies to the whole variety of industrial and agricultural pursuits...and the present tendency of Humanity is to have the greatest possible variety of industries gathered in each country, in each separate region, side by side with agriculture. The needs of human agglomerations correspond thus to the needs of the individual; ...the permanent division is doomed to disappear, and to be substituted by a variety of pursuits - intellectual, industrial, and agricultural - corresponding to the different capacities of the individual, as well as to the variety of capacities within every human aggregate.<sup>70</sup>

In some areas Kropotkin finds that the development of the petty trades has been an unqualified success. In Russia, for example:

far from damaging agriculture, the domestic trades, on the contrary are the best means for improving it, and this is the more, as for several months a year the Russian peasant has nothing to do in the fields. There are regions where agriculture has been totally abandoned for the industries; but...as soon as the allotments are reasonable and the peasants are less overtaxed they continue to cultivate the land; their fields are kept in better order, and the average number of livestock are higher where agriculture goes on hand in hand with the domestic trades. Even those peasants whose allotments are small find the means of renting more land if they earn some money from their industrial work. As to the relative welfare, I need hardly add that it always stands on the side of those villagers which combine both kinds of work. Vorsma and Paviovo - two cutlery villages, one of which is purely industrial, and the other continues to till the soil - could be quoted as a striking instance for such a comparison.<sup>71</sup>

Elsewhere, however, Kropotkin recognises the extent to which existing societies fall short of achieving the anarchist goal. In the majority of places where industry has been introduced into the countryside it has not been integrated, but imposed. The quality of life has not been improved, rather the peace of the rural community has been destroyed. In France where "new factories have been built chiefly in the villages...we can see how they ruin the peasantry." The peasantry are mobilised for labour; "overburdened as they are with taxes and mortgages," they are "compelled to seek additional income in industry" to leave their relatively isolated homes and be billeted in stark factory barracks.<sup>72</sup>

In other areas the process of small-scale workshop development has not even breached the division between town and country. In these cases, the growth of the urban petty trades has been fatally limited. Illustrating the importance of the small workshops in the East End of London by using data collected by Booth, Kropotkin acknowledges the appalling conditions, the low wages and the long working hours of the workshop workers. Petty trades are aptly described as 'sweated' and in summary, he notes, that they are characterised by "a long record of overwork, exploitation of children's labour, and misery."<sup>73</sup>

Whilst there is a forceful tendency towards community on an individual and an international scale Kropotkin concludes that the 'natural' evolution of the petty trades is ultimately compromised by the strength of the existing capitalist system. Thus he remarks:

Of course as long as society remains organised so as to permit the owners of the land and capital to appropriate for themselves, under the protection of the State and historical rights, the yearly surplus of human production, no such change can be thoroughly accomplished.<sup>74</sup>

This conclusion frustratingly brings Kropotkin back to the analysis of affairs he presents in response to Spencer: once the structural boundaries to the development of the anarchist alternative have been removed the spirit of mutual aid will receive full expression; but until these hindrances can be removed society must completely revise its existing ideological commitments. Whilst capitalism has unleashed an unfettered programme of industrialisation, at best Kropotkin finds that society can only question whether such progress "is not a mere nightmare? Is it necessary is it advantageous for humanity? At what cost has it been obtained, and how long will it last?"<sup>75</sup> Rather than being dependent on the natural process of evolution, decentralisation and the relocation of industry requires imagination, practical application and a reassessment of priorities:

But the question arises, why should not the cottons, the woollen cloth, and the silks, now woven by hand in the villages be woven by machinery in the same villages, without ceasing to remain connected with work in the fields? Why should not hundreds of domestic industries, now carried on entirely by hand, resort to labour-saving machines, as they already do in the knitting trade? There is no reason why the small motor should not be of much more general use than now, wherever there is no need to have a factory; and there is no reason why the village should not always have its factory wherever work is useful... It is evident that now, under the capitalist system, the factory is the curse of the village... But under a more rational social organisation the factory would find no such obstacles: it would be a boon to the village.<sup>76</sup>

Kropotkin launches his final attempt to make the conceptions of the masses consistent with his own critique of economic orthodoxy and to guide their actions towards the furtherance of the anarchist goal in an examination of evolutionary consciousness.

### 3. THE DIRECT ACTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT.

Kropotkin's later analysis of community and his examination of capitalist development is hampered by his failure to match perfectly what he considers to be the 'tendency' of society towards mutual aid with the fact of the State's existence. Whilst his concept of mutual aid can explain the reasons for the State's creation and, through his understanding of mutual aid-justice-morality, even chart a progression of further development to anarchy his evolutionary science cannot show how anarchy will be realised. In common with his early writings, Kropotkin's mature thought demonstrates only the desirability of anarchy: what he considers to be the State's inherent aggressiveness may represent a threat to the survival of the species, but the progressive tendencies of the masses remain constrained by the influence it exerts. The same stalemate emerges in Kropotkin's consideration of the historical forces impelling society towards anarchy.

The difficulties Kropotkin encounters in his theory of change are rooted in his failure to reconcile his own understanding of nature with

Darwin's. As many of Kropotkin's defenders have pointed out, the theory of mutual aid represents a useful corrective to the more orthodox descriptions of 'struggle'. However, as Kropotkin considers mutual aid to be the most important factor of evolution and therefore a force for progressive moral development he necessarily has to pitch his argument against Darwin's. The theory of mutual aid is contradicted by natural selection. Reconsidering in 1910 the force of his essay 'The Morality of Nature', written five years earlier, Kropotkin admits this flaw:

This essay was an introduction to a study of the growth of ethical ideals in mankind from those modest beginnings to the great heights reached in the course of history. It appears, however, that before proceeding further with such a study, it is necessary to clear up a certain misunderstanding. There is not the slightest doubt that the hesitation of many biologists to recognise sociability and mutual aid as the fundamental feature of animal life is due to the contradiction they see between such a recognition and the hard Malthusian struggle for life which they consider as the very foundation of the Darwinian theory of evolution. Even when they are reminded that Darwin himself...recognised the dominating value of sociability and 'sympathetic' feelings for the preservation of species, they cannot reconcile this assertion with the part that Darwin and Wallace assigned to the individual Malthusian struggle for individual advantages in their theory of Natural Selection. It is useless to deny that a certain contradiction exists.<sup>77</sup>

Kropotkin always considers the Malthusian element of Darwin's work to constitute the greatest threat to the validity of his own research and consistently attempts to detach Darwinian theory from the principle of competition. In his later development of mutual aid, however, Kropotkin is more inclined to criticise Darwin's work. Instead of simply concentrating the force of his attack on the apparent contradiction he sees in Huxley's concepts of 'natural' and 'cosmic' development, Kropotkin re-assesses the importance of the principle of natural selection. He no longer finds that the importance of the 'struggle for existence' has been exaggerated by Darwin's followers; as natural selection assumes the existence of 'struggle' it has no biological value as an explanation of evolutionary development. In formulating his

theory of evolution, Kropotkin argues, Darwin aimed to show one major principle:

the main point for Darwin was to demonstrate, first, that there are no immutable species: that all of them give birth to countless variations which can be transmitted to the offspring. Once variability could be proved to that extent, the study of it would reveal those natural causes which are capable of giving stability to certain variations, and to transforming temporary varieties into those more stable forms which we describe as species.<sup>78</sup>

Showing variability in domestic breeding, Darwin proceeded to examine variation and the principle of selection in the natural world. In the course of his research Darwin read Malthus' *Essay on Population* and "came across...a possible cause for natural selection. It was 'struggle for life' - the survival of the fittest."<sup>79</sup> In formulating the full theory of evolution, Kropotkin contends, Darwin was always aware of the limitations of these basic assumptions:

Darwin knew perfectly well that Natural Selection was only an hypothesis, and that to be accepted as a theory it required two tests: its capacity of explaining a vast number of facts, including the difficult cases, and some proof to show that the processes it appealed to are really going on in Nature.<sup>80</sup>

Naturally, Kropotkin finds that "Darwin felt a sort of paternal predilection for his hypothesis of Natural Selection".<sup>81</sup> At the same time, however, he knew that it could not pass the the test of scientific validity. As a result, Darwin recanted on his earlier beliefs and toward the end of his life accepted the facts of evolution as they had been expounded by Lamarck. Kropotkin quotes copiously from Darwin's letters and diaries in an attempt to prove his contention.

Kropotkin clearly intended that his revision of Darwinism would force those whom he identified as Social Darwinists to reconsider their views. In July 1910 he writes to Brandes: "L'article sur le Lamarckisme...est paru, dans le no. de juillet du *Nineteenth Century*. Je crois qu'il forcera les anti-lamarckiens anglais à réfléchir. On le lit."<sup>82</sup>

Kropotkin's hopes are not, however, based merely on a regard for Lamarck.

For David Miller Kropotkin's use of biology and Darwinian evolutionary theory is an attempt to establish a link between the laws of evolution and political choice. Highly critical of this attempt, he examines Kropotkin's understanding of mutual aid in relation to more recent discussions of sociobiology.<sup>83</sup> Miller does not concentrate on the later amendments Kropotkin makes to the theory of mutual aid, but the comparison he suggests between Kropotkin's concept of evolution and modern sociobiology may nonetheless be pursued: for whilst Kropotkin lived in a pre-genetic age his later work examine the contemporary understandings of internal transmission and the effect such changes exercise on human behaviour. From the point of view of his wider theory, Kropotkin's discussion helps identify the motivations which lie behind his final revision of Darwinian evolution.

Kropotkin's survey of the pre-genetic theories of transmission is one of the most complex and confusing articles he produces. This is partly due to his desire to cover every aspect of the subject under examination. In the other part the confusion stems from the diffuseness of the subject matter itself and the habit of biologists to coin a variety of different terms to describe the same process. Kropotkin variously discusses *gemules*, germ-cells, body-cells, *determinants* and *germ-plasm* (including both principal and additional *idioplasm*); moreover, he introduces these terms in both German and English translation. Amid this general disorder, the main point of Kropotkin's examination emerges in relation to his analysis of Weismann. Looking at Weismann's understanding of germ-plasm and regeneration, Kropotkin finds:

Weismann started from the idea that...[v]ariation is not something coming from without: it comes from within - from the organisms themselves, and it is

regulated by natural selection, which, given the spontaneous variations of the germ-plasm, is sufficient to explain all the adaptations of the organisms to the conditions of their existence.<sup>84</sup>

Kropotkin provides an illustration of Weismann's experimental proof. The observable changes introduced into the toes of a horse by nutritional modification, he remarks, showed no impact on the cellular determinants of these digits:

The transmission of differences of nutrition from the digits of the horse to the determinants of these digits, so as to provoke an increased nutrition of the median toe determinants, and a decreased one for the determinants of the other toes, was thus absolutely excluded.<sup>85</sup>

In spite of these findings Kropotkin concludes that Weismann's findings of internal change are "quite unproved and unprovable". In addition he notes:

all further discussion about the inheritance of acquired characters from a theoretical point of view [is] absolutely useless - so long as we are not able to study the 'determinants,' and the still more minute 'biophores' of which they are composed....<sup>86</sup>

Admitting that the weight of evidence and the current of theoretical knowledge stands against him, Kropotkin repudiates the value of all these early attempts to prove variation by genetic inheritance: in modern terms, there are neither selfish nor altruistic genes.

Kropotkin's rejection of Weismann and transmission theory is based on an attempt to demonstrate conclusively that variation is dependent on the direct action of the environment. Thus returning to his discussion of Darwin's Lamarckian tendencies, Kropotkin argues that it was this concept of variation that Darwinian evolutionary theory really embraced. Though Darwin could prove variability, Kropotkin contends, he could not sustain the explanatory importance of natural selection. As his work developed he became more convinced that instead of being based on 'struggle', evolutionary development was guided directly by environmental action:

We saw that Darwin divided his task into two parts: Variability and Natural Selection. The former he had proved by an immense array of facts. As to the

second, his ideas fluctuated all the time between *natural selection* in the struggle for life and the *direct action of the environment*. And, with his unbounded love of truth, in proportion as new experimental data were forthcoming in favour of the factor of direct action, indicated by Buffon and Lamarck, he did not hesitate to recognise their importance.<sup>87</sup>

Kropotkin investigates the concept of the direct action of the environment as early as 1894. In one of the articles of the 'Recent Science' series he examines the efforts of plant physiologists to show the structural modifications induced in plants by "gravitation, light, and other external agencies."<sup>88</sup> In 1901 he returns to the subject, concluding,

An immense amount of work is being done now in this domain; and it is a growing conviction among biologists that, at least as regards plants, there is not one single organ which could not be modified in a permanent way by merely altering the conditions of temperature, light, moisture, and especially nutrition, under which the plant is reared at certain early periods of its development.<sup>89</sup>

In another article in the same series (bringing the force of his geographical training into play) Kropotkin examines contemporary theories of glaciation with a view to demonstrating the similarity of conditions and consequently species on the plateaux stretching across Asia to the Russian Steppes.<sup>90</sup> Investigating the physiological causes of coloration, he easily concludes that the colour of an animal is determined not by the selection of useful protective features but entirely by climate. Kropotkin again dismisses natural selection as an explanation of 'retrogressive variation': the poorly developed eye-sight of cave-dwelling creatures, for example, can be explained only by the impact of the environmental factor.<sup>91</sup>

The bulk of Kropotkin's work on the direct action of the environment appears after 1910. In a series of articles written between this date and 1915 he provides more detailed evidence of his case. Looking at the variations introduced in plants at different altitudes and climates,<sup>92</sup> *campanula*, he notes, turns from white to blue when exposed to a high

temperature in winter; transporting crassula from South to North results in the plant losing its "globular form" and growing "in the shape of a column"; less surprisingly, perhaps, he observes that sempervivum fails to flower when kept in the dark. Showing a similar attention to detail in his observations of environmental variation in the animal world, Kropotkin remarks on the dwarfing introduced in pond snails by the inadequate aeration of water. He also looks at the modifications engendered by nutritional change. The surface area of the digestive tube of the tadpole, he reports, for example, increases in relation to the vegetable content of its diet.<sup>93</sup>

For Kropotkin, changes introduced by the environment are not indeterminate. Finding that plants in various desert, alpine, arctic and maritime regions exhibit the same features according to the climatic conditions to which they belong, he concludes that the modifications produced serve a protective function. In accordance with the general theory of mutual aid, Kropotkin argues, this protective role does not increase fitness against predators, but enhances survival in a given location. Contrary to Weismann, moreover, he finds that all environmental changes are inheritable.

Each plant is a complex result of all the modifications which its ancestors underwent during the long process of past evolution, and its possible variations are determined by all the past modifications. It seems difficult, therefore, to deny the possibility of indiscriminate variation, due to the inner cause of heredity. But once by the side of indiscriminate variation there is going on a process of *variation in a definite direction*, due to the direct action of the environment, and the effects of this action are *inherited*, ...then the accidental variation is necessarily subordinated to the determinate one.<sup>94</sup>

Kropotkin manages to give some examples of the inheritance of characteristics introduced in the first generation by artificial environmental modifications, but he admits that there are "few cases where the transmission of acquired characters is proved by direct experiment".<sup>95</sup> The dearth of scientific evidence supporting his view

does not dissuade him from advancing his case. Notwithstanding his scientific credibility of his argument, for Kropotkin it is more important to sustain the political point his research supports. Whilst he is always keen to claim scientific credence by establishing his links within the Darwinian tradition, in the end, Kropotkin is completely unabashed in admitting his deviation from orthodox biology and his motives for introducing such innovations. In the concluding essay to his study of direct action and evolution (published in 1919 when the editor of the *Nineteenth Century* reported his inability "to obtain any news of Prince Kropotkin" and feared that he had been incarcerated or murdered by "the accursed Bolsheviks"), he writes:

A synthesis of the views of Darwin and Lamarck, or rather of Natural Selection and the Direct Action of the Environment...was...the necessary outcome of the researches in biology which have been carried on for the last thirty or forty years...And if this really takes place, then it will be easy to free ourselves from the reproach which has been addressed to nineteenth-century science: the reproach that while it has aided men to liberate themselves from superstitions, it has ignored those aspects of Nature which ought to have been, in a naturalistic conception of the universe, the very foundations of human Ethics...

Unfortunately the vulgarisers of the teachings of Darwin, speaking in the name of Science, have succeeded in eliminating this deeply philosophical idea from the naturalistic conception of the universe worked out in the nineteenth century. They have succeeded in persuading men that the last word of Science was a pitiless individual struggle for life. But the prominence which is now beginning to be given to the direct action of the environment in the evolution of species, by eliminating the Malthusian idea about the necessity of a competition...between all the individuals of a given species for evolving new species, opens the way for a quite different comprehension of the struggle for life, and of Nature altogether.<sup>96</sup>

For Kropotkin the direct action of the environment provides a basis on which he can finally justify the introduction of anarchy: it forms an understanding of nature which acts as a force for the realisation of the anarchist society. The theory cannot make the introduction of anarchy inevitable but filling the void left by the decline of revolutionary expectations, the concept of the direct action of the environment is a call to the masses to implement the further development of mutual aid. It serves as an incitement to act practically, by embodying a promise of

material and spiritual improvement and lends Kropotkin's concept of ethical progression a human catalyst for change.

#### 4. IDEOLOGY AND THE FORCE OF IDEAS

Kropotkin's concept of the direct action the environment has an impact on his understanding of science and the role of scientific ideas. Notwithstanding his positivist stance or the rigidity of the comparison he draws between his 'inductive-deductive' method and the 'metaphysics' of thinkers as wide ranging as Huxley and Marx, Kropotkin imputes an ideological end to science. He argues that scientific thought should identify itself with a definite political goal and seek to support actively its implementation: "Most certainly," he contends, "ideas are forces",

they are *ethical* forces, if the ideas are correct and wide enough to represent the real life of Nature - not one of its sides only. The first step, therefore, towards the elaboration of a morality which should exercise a lasting influence is to base it upon an ascertained truth...<sup>97</sup>

For Kropotkin the theory of mutual aid is an ethical force. It sets before individuals "a higher purpose, an ideal which, better than any advice, would make them act instinctively in the proper direction." Establishing the 'truth' of an ethical system in science, mutual aid promises an evolutionary development which ought to be made. In a practical sense Kropotkin finds that if the masses believe his reading of science in preference to that offered by the 'vulgarisers' of Darwin's thought, they will be inspired to substitute their existing individualistic habits for those of mutual aid. Recalling his analysis of the utilitarian principles of nature Kropotkin thus argues that current egotism will evolve into morality once the populus realise that a synthesis of the two contending ideas can be attained:

For this purpose we have earnestly to study what were the means resorted to by men at different periods of their evolution, in order so to direct the individual forces as to get from them the greatest benefit for the welfare of all, without paralysing them. And we have to define the tendencies in this direction which exist at the present moment - the rough sketches, the timid attempts which are being made, or even the potentialities concealed in modern society, which may be utilised for finding that synthesis. And then, as no new move in civilisation has ever been made without a certain enthusiasm being evoked in order to overcome the first difficulties of inertia and opposition, it is the duty of the new ethics to infuse in men those ideas which would move them, provoke their enthusiasm, and give them the necessary forces for accomplishing that synthesis in real life.<sup>98</sup>

The 'evolution' toward morality is hardly natural. The theory of mutual aid can attempt only to guide moral courage in a 'righteous' direction and persuade humanity to attempt what Kropotkin believes to be the organisation of a better society. Even though he describes the progression of mutual aid to morality to be an 'organic necessity', Kropotkin is quite adamant that the acceptance of mutual aid is non-compulsory. As an ethical guide, he contends, mutual aid possesses the binding force of science, but it is purely persuasive:

The function of ethics is not even so much to insist upon the defects of man, and to reproach him with his 'sins,' as to act in a *positive* direction, by appealing to man's best instincts. It determines, of course, or rather it sums up, the few fundamental principles without which neither animals nor men could live in societies; but then it appeals to something superior to that: to love, courage, fraternity, self-respect, concordance with one's ideal. It tells to man, that if he desires to have a life in which all his forces, physical, intellectual, and emotional, should find a full exercise, he must once and for ever abandon the idea that such a life is attainable on the path of disregard for others...But even then true ethics does not trace a stiff line of conduct, because it is the individual himself who must weigh the relative value of the different motives affecting him.<sup>99</sup>

Whilst Kropotkin considers mutual aid to be a revolutionary force he continues also to represent the theory of progressive evolution to be scientific; he even appears to be sincere in making this claim. His reasoning is derived from his understanding of the purpose of science.

Kropotkin's desire to provide the theory of mutual aid with a definite moral end is not unique in his later work. His study of Russian literature, for example, expresses the same idea. The contribution of the authors whose writings Kropotkin presents is

evaluated wholly in terms of the deeper 'realities' that their books impart. Gogol's work is praised for being "scrupulously true to reality. Every peasant, every chanter, is taken from real life...the truthfulness...to reality is almost ethnographical, without ceasing to be poetic."<sup>100</sup>

Kropotkin distinguishes between two aspects of 'reality' in his study. On the one hand, he concentrates on the 'truth' of the particular details the authors offer. In the same way as he praises the accuracy of Gogol's writings, Kropotkin similarly discovers that Tolstoy's autobiographical short stories reflect an understanding of nature. Describing the message of Tolstoy's work, he finds:

The only proper way is to open before the young mind new, broad horizons; to free it from superstitions and fears; to grasp man's position amidst Nature and Mankind; and especially to feel at one with some great cause and to nurture one's forces with the view of being able some day to struggle for that cause.<sup>101</sup>

On the other hand, Kropotkin considers the extent to which Russian writers comprehend what he sees as the wider association between art and science. This understanding may be conscious or subliminal. In Tolstoy's case, Kropotkin argues, the connection between the two concepts emerges accidentally. Thus, he finds:

notwithstanding Tolstoy's distrust of science, I must say that I always feel in reading his works that he is possessed of the most scientific insight I know of among artists. He may be wrong in his conclusions, but never is he wrong in his statement of data. True science and true art are not hostile to each other, but always work in harmony.<sup>102</sup>

For Kropotkin art and science cannot be divorced. Reinforcing this the main point of his study, Kropotkin finds in his examination of the folk-novelists of the 1880s that:

It must not be forgotten that in the last analysis every economical and social question is a question of psychology of both the individual and the social aggregation. It cannot be solved by arithmetic alone. Therefore, in social science, as in human psychology, the poet often sees his way better than the physiologist. At any rate, he too has his voice in the matter.<sup>103</sup>

*Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature* is not regarded as a

seminal work.<sup>104</sup> The position he adopts in his review of Russian literature is, however, the same as that which he takes in his analysis of science. Focusing on science rather than art Kropotkin changes only his emphasis and the form of his expression. Instead of describing science entwined with art or the necessity of discovering a certain truth from scientific research he talks instead of 'brilliant deductive generalisations' and of highlighting the 'tendencies' of human development. Kropotkin presents the case in *Le Révolté*. In 'Aux Jeunes Gens', he examines the motives students have to embark on a scientific career. Assuming their incentives to be purely selfish, he writes:

Mais non, vous ne voudrez pas de cette vie d'égoïste. En travaillant pour la science, vous entendez travailler pour l'humanité, et c'est par cette idée que vous vous guiderez dans le choix de vos recherches...  
Belle illusion! et qui de nous ne l'a caressée un moment lorsqu'il se donnait pour la première fois à la science!<sup>105</sup>

Comparing the selfish scientific researcher to a drunkard Kropotkin finds that students who are really devoted to furthering the cause of humanity by their work must adopt a critical attitude toward the organisation of society. Recalling his discussions of luxury and individuality he finds that science students must understand their own privilege and the nature of the division in society between the working and exploiting classes. But Kropotkin argues more generally:

Mais si vous vous pénétrez de ces idées, vous comprendrez qu'avant tout il importe de produire une modification profonde dans cet état de choses qui condamne aujourd'hui le savant à regorger de vérités scientifiques et la presque totalité des êtres humains à rester ce qu'ils étaient il y a cinq, dix siècles, c'est-à-dire à l'état d'esclaves et de machines incapables de s'assimiler les vérités établies. Et le jour où vous vous pénétrerez de cette idée, large, humanitaire et profondément scientifique, ce jour-là vous perdrez le goût de la science pure. Vous vous mettrez à la recherche des moyens d'opérer cette transformation, et si vous ne vous départez pas de l'impartialité qui vous a guidé dans vos investigations scientifiques, vous adopterez nécessairement la cause du socialisme; vous couperez court aux sophismes et vous reviendrez vous ranger parmi nous; las de travailler à procurer des jouissances à ce petit groupe qui en a déjà sa large part, vous mettrez vos lumières et votre dévouement au service immédiat des opprimés.<sup>106</sup>

Like art, the study of science reveals a wider truth about human

existence and for Kropotkin, it should be directed towards realising this truth and discovering the rational foundations for the physical and moral health of humanity. He takes up the same point in *Ethics*. The particular 'truth', Kropotkin informs Brandes, lies in demonstrating that equality lies at the foundation of all ethical systems.

Le principe d'égalité qui est la base de toute éthique depuis le sauvage jusqu'à Bouddha, Mahomet et le Christ, ne peut pas changer. Ce n'est que la compréhension et la manière d'exposer qui change.<sup>107</sup>

In more general terms, the message of Kropotkin's work lies in showing that ethical development can be scientifically determined. Thus, in the same way that he evaluates Russian authors in terms of the contribution they make to social scientific understanding he assesses ethical thinkers by the scientific content of their ideas. Kant, for example, meets the demands of Kropotkin's particular requirements but fails by virtue of his 'metaphysical' reasoning.<sup>108</sup> Tolstoy is also accorded merit for the content of his Christian ethics but the force of his teachings is compromised by his 'mysticism'.<sup>109</sup>

In accordance with the understanding he imparts in *Ethics*, Kropotkin considers that all science contains other hidden facts of human existence over and above the specific information they are designed to expound. In his survey of research into X-rays, for example, he notes:

if Rontgen's discovery had only the effect of alleviating so many human miseries, it would already rank among the great achievements of the century. But its profound effects upon natural philosophy are far from being yet exhausted.<sup>110</sup>

Kropotkin eventually identifies the implications of these researches to lie in the understanding they provide of molecular action; though in this respect, Becquerel's work eclipses Rontgen's. In conclusion, and perhaps with his own concept of the constant fluctuation of the anarchist federation in mind, Kropotkin questions "[a]re not Becquerel radiations revealing to us that continual splitting and rebuilding of

molecules which constitutes the life of both inorganic and organic matter?".<sup>111</sup>

Kropotkin draws similarly far reaching conclusions from the examination he presents of astronomy and the understanding of comets and meteorites. In the conclusion to his review, he comments:

in the slow process of evolution of celestial bodies the matter which is spread in space in the shape of solid dust and vapours plays undoubtedly...a considerable part; and it will be one of the greatest services rendered to mankind by modern science, both for the increase of actual knowledge and for the general comprehension of the life of the universe, and consequently the unity of nature, to have brought into evidence this formerly unnoticed and unsuspected world of tiny mites of the celestial space, the meteorites.<sup>112</sup>

In common with his study of research into X-rays Kropotkin again finds that such advances in scientific investigation have furthered mankind's political and ethical understanding. He discusses the same point in relation to developments in molecular physics in *Anarchism - Its Philosophy and Ideal*<sup>113</sup>

For Kropotkin the end of science and literature is to reveal the progressive tendencies of humanity and show how mankind can raise itself to meet the "highest conceptions of human philosophy".<sup>114</sup> Each separate field contains an element borrowed from the others. Such a conception of science may not appear to be very scientific; not least by his declared methodological standards. In typical style, however, Kropotkin argues that for as long as the form of the debate is expressed in secular, rational 'scientific' terms, then it is the value of the goal which determines the scientific credibility of the thesis. Returning to his consideration of Weismann Kropotkin thus finds that the root of his experimental failure can be attributed to the fact that he:

accepted the idea that evolution without a teleological guidance from above was an unscientific conception. He thus came to the conclusion that, although evolution is a mechanical process, it must have been predetermined by a supreme power in accordance with a certain plan. And, in order 'to reconcile teleology with mechanism,' he borrowed...the idea of 'continuity' of the germ-plasm; and thus he came to a Hegelian conception of an 'immortal germ-plasm' - 'a matter endowed with an immortal soul'.<sup>115</sup>

The theory of mutual aid encompasses the particular and the general aims of Kropotkin's conception of science: it is based on "brilliant inductive generalisations"<sup>116</sup> inspired by anarchism and it expresses itself in scientific language. Measuring his understanding of nature against this first condition, and his conclusions regarding 'cosmic' progress against the second, Huxley, Kropotkin finds, unfortunately fails on both counts.

NOTES: CHAPTER SIX

1. P. Kropotkin: 'Co-operation: A Reply to Herbert Spencer', published in two parts, *Freedom*, Vol.X, No.111 (December 1896); & Vol.XI, No.112, (January 1897).
2. P. Kropotkin: 'Anarchism', N. Walter (ed.) *Two Essays*, Freedom Press, London, (1987), p.7.
3. *ibid.*
4. *ibid.*
5. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among the Barbarians', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXXI, No.179, (January 1892), p.107.
6. *ibid.*, pp.106-7.
7. *ibid.*, p.108.
8. *ibid.*, p.109.
9. Kropotkin questions the Hobbesian implications of Huxley's thesis in the essay 'Mutual Aid Among Savages', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXIX, No.170, (April 1891), pp.538-40.
10. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Amongst Modern Men', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXXIX, No.227, (January 1896), p.72.
11. P. Kropotkin: *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793*, Vol.II, translated by N. F. Dryhurst, Vanguard Press, New York, (1927), pp.415-6.
12. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Amongst Modern Men', *op.cit.*, p.73.
13. *ibid.*, p.68.
14. *ibid.*, p.83.
15. *ibid.*, pp.82-3.
16. *ibid.*, p.80.
17. P. Kropotkin: *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, (1916), p.50.
18. *ibid.*, p.7.
19. *ibid.*
20. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Among the Barbarians', *op.cit.*, p.112.
21. P. Kropotkin: *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*, *op.cit.*, p.10.
22. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Amongst Ourselves', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXXIX, p.232, (June 1896), p.923.
23. P. Kropotkin: 'The Russian Revolutionary Party', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol.XXXI, New Series, (January-June 1882), pp.654-671.
24. *ibid.*, p.662.
25. *ibid.*
26. These drawbacks of the Russian peasant commune are discussed in B. Mironov: 'The Peasant Commune After The Reforms of the 1860s', *Slavic Review*, Vol.44, (1985), pp.438-467.
27. P. Kropotkin: *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*, *op.cit.*, p.68. The distinction between the natural government of the mir and the bureaucratic control of the State is similarly sustained by Stepniak: 'The Mir and Police', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol.XXXXI, (January-June 1887), pp.237-248.
28. P. Kropotkin: *Mutual Aid*, Extending Horizons Books, Boston, Mass., (N.D.), p.326.
29. P. Kropotkin: 'Communism and Anarchy: Paris Congress Report, 1900', *Freedom*, Vol.XV, No.158, (July 1901).
30. *ibid.*
31. P. Kropotkin: *Ethics: Origin and Development*, translated by L.S. Friedland & J.R Piroshnikoff, Benjamin Blom, New York & London, (1968), p.20.
32. P. Kropotkin: 'The Morality of Nature', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LVII, No.337, (March 1905), p.425.

33. P. Kropotkin: 'Anarchism', *op.cit.*, p.8.
34. P. Kropotkin: 'Co-operation: A Reply to Herbert Spencer', pt.1, (December 1896), *op.cit.*
35. P. Kropotkin: *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793*, *op.cit.*, pp.581-2.
36. P. Kropotkin: 'Co-operation: A Reply To Herbert Spencer', pt.11, (January 1897), *op.cit.*
37. See, for instance, M. Bookchin: *The Ecology of Freedom*, Cheshire Books, California, 1982.
38. R. Rocker: *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, Seeker & Warburg, London, (1938), p.1.
39. P. Kropotkin: 'Anarchism', *op.cit.*, p.8.
40. P. Kropotkin: *Ethics*, *op.cit.*, pp.30-1.
41. P. Kropotkin: 'Mutual Aid Amongst Ourselves', *op.cit.*, p.927.
42. *ibid.*, pp.927-8.
43. *ibid.*, p.927.
44. *ibid.*, p.924.
45. *ibid.*
46. *ibid.*, pp.924-5.
47. *ibid.*, p.924.
48. *ibid.*
49. P. Kropotkin: *Modern Science and Anarchism*, Freedom Press, London, (1912), pp.66-7.
50. P. Kropotkin: *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793*, *op.cit.*, p.576.
51. *ibid.*, p.577.
52. *ibid.*, p.581.
53. *ibid.*, p.580.
54. Whilst generally admiring Marat as a 'devoted friend of the people', Kropotkin does criticize him for the differences he admitted with Roux and Valet. See his appreciation, *ibid.*, pp.450-52.
55. *ibid.*, p.580.
56. P. Kropotkin: 'The Breakdown of Our Industrial System', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXIII, No.131, (April 1888), p.497.
57. *ibid.*
58. *ibid.*, p.498.
59. P. Kropotkin: 'The Small Industries of Britain', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XLVIII, No.282, (August 1900), p.257.
60. *ibid.*
61. *ibid.*
62. P. Kropotkin: 'The Breakdown of Our Industrial System', *op.cit.*, p.498.
63. *ibid.*, p.503.
64. *ibid.*, p.514.
65. *ibid.*, pp.499-500.
66. P. Kropotkin: 'The Industrial Village of the Future', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XXIV, No.140, (October 1888) p.514.
67. *ibid.*, pp.517-20.
68. Kropotkin does admit that the relocation of some heavy industry would be difficult: shipbuilding, for example, is necessarily located geographically. See *ibid.*, p.528.
69. See especially 'The Small Industries of Britain', *op.cit.*, pp.257-263.
70. P. Kropotkin: 'The Breakdown of Our Industrial System', *op.cit.*, p.499.
71. P. Kropotkin: 'The Industrial Village of the Future',

- op.cit., p.525.
72. *ibid.*, p.521.
73. *ibid.*, p.526.
74. P. Kropotkin: 'The Breakdown of Our Industrial System',  
*op.cit.*, p.499
75. *ibid.*, p.501.
76. P. Kropotkin: 'The Industrial Village of the Future',  
*op.cit.*, p.527.
77. P. Kropotkin: 'The Theory of Evolution and Mutual Aid',  
*The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LXVII, No.395, (January 1910), p.86.
78. *ibid.*, p.88.
79. *ibid.*
80. *ibid.*, p.90
81. *ibid.*
82. Kropotkin to Brandes, (22 July 1910), P. Kruger (ed.),  
*Correspondance de Georg Brandes*, Vol.II L'Angleterre et  
La Russie, Rosenkilde Og Bagger, Copenhagen, (1956), p.215.
83. D. Miller: 'The Neglected (2) - Kropotkin', *Government  
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84. P. Kropotkin: 'Inheritance of Acquired Characters:  
Theoretical Difficulties', *The Nineteenth Century*,  
Vol.LXXI, No.421, (March 1912), p.516.
85. *ibid.*, p.529.
86. *ibid.*, p.530.
87. P. Kropotkin: 'Evolution and Mutual Aid', *op.cit.*, p.92.
88. P. Kropotkin: 'Recent Science', *The Nineteenth Century*,  
Vol.XXXV, No.206, (April 1894), p.685.
89. P. Kropotkin: 'Recent Science', *The Nineteenth Century*,  
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90. P. Kropotkin: 'Recent Science', *The Nineteenth Century*,  
Vol.XXXV, No.203, (January 1894), pp.146-157. Kropotkin  
draws on the findings of this research in the later essay,  
'Evolution and Mutual Aid', *op.cit.*, p.97.
91. P. Kropotkin: 'The Response of Animals to Environment',  
*The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LXVIII, No.405, (November 1910),  
pp.862-3.
92. P. Kropotkin: 'The Direct Action of Environment on  
Plants', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LXVIII, No.401,  
(July 1910), pp.58-77; 'Inherited Variation in Plants',  
*ibid.*, Vol.LXXVI, No.452, (October 1914), pp.816-36.
93. P. Kropotkin: 'The Response of Animals to Their  
Environment', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LXVIII, No.406,  
(December 1910), pp.1046-1059; 'Inherited Variation in Animals',  
*ibid.*, LXXVIII, No.465, (November 1915), pp.1124-44.
94. P. Kropotkin: 'Direct Action of Environment on Plants',  
*op.cit.*, p.72.
95. P. Kropotkin: 'Inherited Variation in Animals', *op.cit.*, p.1145.
96. P. Kropotkin: 'The Direct Action of Environment and  
Evolution', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LXXXV, (January  
-June 1919), p.89.
97. P. Kropotkin: 'The Ethical Need of the Present Day', *The  
Nineteenth Century*, Vol.LVI, No.330, (August 1904), p.220.
98. *ibid.*, pp.220-1.
99. *ibid.*, p.222.
100. P. Kropotkin: *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*,  
*op.cit.*, p.69.
101. *ibid.*, p.115.
102. *ibid.* p.117.

103. *ibid.*, pp.244-5.
104. A positive assessment of the importance of the work is presented by A. Reszler: 'Peter Kropotkin and His Vision of Anarchist Aesthetics', *Diogenes*, Vol.78, (Summer 1972), pp.52-63.
105. P. Kropotkin: 'Aux Jeunes Gens', E. Reclus (ed.), *Paroles d'un Révolté*, Paris, Librairie Marpon et Flammarion, (1885), p.48.
106. *ibid.*, p.50.
107. Kropotkin to Brandes, (17 November 1904), *Correspondance de Georg Brandes*, *op.cit.*, p.186.
108. P. Kropotkin: *Ethics*, *op.cit.*, pp.10-11.
109. P. Kropotkin: *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*, *op.cit.*, pp.128-45.
110. P. Kropotkin: 'Recent Science: Unsuspected Radiations', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XLVIII, No.286, (December 1900), p.927.
111. *ibid.*, p.933.
112. P. Kropotkin: 'Recent Science: Meteorites and Comets', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol.XLVI, No.274, (December 1899), p.946.
113. P. Kropotkin: *Anarchism - Its Philosophy and Ideal*, Free Society, San Francisco, (1898), pp.3-8.
114. P. Kropotkin: *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*, *op.cit.*, p.166.
115. P. Kropotkin: 'The Direct Action of Environment and Evolution', *op.cit.*, p.75.
116. *ibid.*, p.78.

## CONCLUSION

The relationship between anarchist organisation and the process of change in Kropotkin's thought forms the central theme of this thesis. The discussion does not assume that this relationship poses a particular difficulty in understanding his ideas. Rather, the context of the analysis is provided by those interpretations of Kropotkin's writings which have suggested a discontinuity between his 'early' and 'mature' thought. At the beginning of the thesis it is argued that these interpretations have been inspired by a desire to rescue anarchism from its discredited reputation and to assert the continuing relevance of anarchist ideas in the modern world. Whilst well-intentioned, it is also suggested that these revisions of Kropotkin's work have exercised a distorting effect, assigning an undue importance to the strategy of anarchist change. The contrast that is made between the two phases of Kropotkin's career is thus described as one which divorces his early espousals of the violent revolutionary overthrow of the State from his later, apparently more considered calls to institute programmes of immediate reform.

Placing the examination of Kropotkin's work within this framework the thesis does not aim to re-evaluate the radicalism of his work, though it is clear that his concept of anarchy does stretch beyond an advocacy of, for example, workers' control, educational reform and consciousness raising. The review of the relationship between the 'ends' and 'means' in Kropotkin's anarchism is instead designed to serve as the basis on which to reassess his concept of science.

The first chapter argues that the discontinuity of Kropotkin's thought has been substantiated by a number of different factors. These have ranged from embellished biographical accounts of his writings to

observations of the alteration of his literary style, his personal circumstances and European politics. The most important 'proof' of the theoretical re-evaluation of his early work, uniting all these diverse strands of evidence, has been provided by Kropotkin's formulation of the theory of mutual aid. In terms of Kropotkin's personal political commitments the first chapter suggests that the theory of mutual aid has been interpreted as an exposition of the two most important tenets of the anarchist canon: that the State is an unnecessary imposition on society and that individuals are inherently sociable. The understanding confirms Kropotkin's anarchist credentials but at the same time manages to divert attention away from his hostility toward the State and his demands for its abolition. As a scientific theory of evolution, mutual aid, the chapter contends, is hailed less as a condemnation of government and capitalism than a counter to liberal justificatory theories of the State. For many contemporary authors the theory provides a rational demonstration of the force of anarchist theory where apparently there existed only a tradition of unenlightening criticism. But considered simply as a political metaphor, in practical terms Kropotkin's concept of evolution sustains a faith in the eventual victory of anarchy and guides anarchism towards a 'constructive' concern with changing authoritarian patterns of thinking. Critics of Kropotkin's work, the chapter suggests, have accepted the validity of this interpretation of his scientific writings, but have responded by alternatively charging that Kropotkin's formulation of evolutionary theory is deterministic.

*Mutual Aid* lies at the centre of Kropotkin's science; whilst he covered a range of subjects in the latter part of his career most of Kropotkin's later writings relate to the further exposition of his evolutionary theory. Identifying the theory of mutual aid at the centre

of his mature thought, contemporary writers distinguish between Kropotkin's particular theory of evolution and the wider concept of science which they believe it supports. Maintaining this distinction, modern authors classify Kropotkin as a typically Victorian thinker, highlighting two aspects of his work. On the one hand, his espousal of the 'inductive-deductive' method is taken as a sign of his commitment to positivism. This understanding variously considers Kropotkin's belief that all knowledge is based on observed 'facts', that 'science' refers only to empirically verifiable hypotheses and that all phenomena may be explained by the same method. Kropotkin's inspiration is traced to Comte and his positivism is interpreted as an attempt to discover certain laws of social development by the careful ordering of scientific knowledge. On the other hand, Kropotkin's rootedness in Victorian tradition is demonstrated by his optimism in the progressive force of technology.

Kropotkin's conformity with the scientific values of the Victorian era is supported by his own commentaries on science and the development of scientific thought. Kropotkin stresses the importance of objectively testing hypotheses against existing knowledge and the need to apply the same method of investigation to all research; the account he provides in his autobiography of the process of his geological studies, for example, is clearly intended to serve as an analogy for his anarchist work. Yet Kropotkin's statements on science are often made prejudicially. Eager to impress the superiority of the 'inductive-deductive' method upon his readers Kropotkin frequently uses his anarchist science in order to discredit the 'metaphysics' of Marx, rather than to consider the principles of creating an objective synthetic philosophy.

Casting Kropotkin as a Victorian thinker, modern writers have tended to ignore the ways in which Kropotkin uses his science for political

ends. Assuming that there is a firm distinction between his 'journalism' and his 'scientific thought' they have instead remarked on his adherence to positivism with a prejudice which equals Kropotkin's: by demonstrating his acceptance of Victorian values they have reinforced the validity of the political conclusions that the concept of evolution is variously deemed to support. To substantiate this view the first chapter points out that few of Kropotkin's supporters have ever attempted to defend the objectivity of his scientific method. Whilst placing him within the positivist tradition, writers such as Woodcock and Baldwin deny the objectivity of his scientific methodology and validate his credentials with reference to the training he received as a geologist. David Miller judges the merit of Kropotkin's attempt to provide anarchism with a scientific foundation and the quality of his methodology in negative terms; but rather than questioning the validity of the positivist classification Miller uses Kropotkin's attempt to apply science to anarchism in order to demonstrate the deterministic implications of his later work.

Questioning the adequacy of both the critical and defensive interpretations of Kropotkin's later scientific thought, the thesis does not reject the standard characterisation of his work to be entirely inappropriate. Nor does it dismiss the distinction between his early writings and his later work. By setting Kropotkin's theory of mutual aid in the context of his early writings the thesis aims instead to broaden the scientific terms of reference currently used to describe his work. In conclusion the thesis argues that it is only by widening these terms that the full contradictions of his scientific anarchism emerge. Before proceeding to examine the nature of these contradictions, the argument of the thesis will be briefly summarised.

The thesis is premised on the understanding of a basic continuity in Kropotkin's work. The first chapter identifies the coherence of Kropotkin's anarchism in his concern to find a balance between the structural organisation of society and mass behaviour. Rather than being preoccupied with the tactics of revolutionary struggle, it suggests that the problem which Kropotkin addresses in his early work is the difficulty of overcoming the political 'fall' of humanity in the State by means of the careful practical reorganisation of society.

The fourth chapter confirms the centrality of this problem to Kropotkin's anarchist thought in relation to his conception of mutual aid. It questions the extent to which Kropotkin aimed only to refute the validity of the 'Hobbesian' element of Huxley's interpretation of natural competition and argues that instead of attempting to repudiate the justification of the State the theory of mutual aid demonstrates the importance of the relationship between ethical development and structural change. In common with his early writings Kropotkin confirms his rejection of the State on the grounds that its existence impedes the evolution of ethical mutual aid. Whilst representing the development of the ethical principle to be natural to mankind the chapter finds that he supplements the process of its 'spontaneous' development by mapping out the organisational features of the future anarchist society.

Accepting that there is a difference in the political style of Kropotkin's first essays and his later written works the thesis compares the solutions he variously finds to the problem of anarchist organisation. Tracing the development of his thought chronologically, it examines the impact that the theory of mutual aid has on his conception of anarchist morality and on his analysis of the institutional supports necessary for its realisation. Chapters two and three outline the account he presents prior to 1890 and the remaining

chapters focus on his scientific anarchism. The thesis arrives at two conclusions: (i) in his later work Kropotkin reorders his organisational priorities to ground the progression of anarchist morality on the establishment of the federal communal structure rather than on the implementation of communism; (ii) he adapts his conception of the relationship between the organisation of anarchy and the process of anarchist transformation to suit the changes in the political climate, but his understanding of the process of anarchist change remains largely unaltered. Throughout his career Kropotkin considers his anarchist model to be a spur to revolutionary action, demonstrating the possibility of the State's abolition in practical and inspirational terms. His formulation of the theory of mutual aid does not fundamentally upset this relationship but replaces Kropotkin's early faith in the immediacy of revolution with a theoretical motivation for anarchist change.

The key to understanding the relationship Kropotkin posits between anarchist action and organisation may be considered to rest in his understanding of the natural potential of society toward anarchy. In both his later and early writings Kropotkin portrays anarchy as an unfulfilled 'tendency' of the masses; on the basis of the critique he advances against the State and capitalism he also finds that this 'tendency' can be realised and that anarchy is desirable, possible and necessary. The victory of anarchist organisation is not, however, guaranteed: whether Kropotkin considers the 'tendency' of the masses in 'revolutionary' or biological terms he never believes that it amounts to more than an historical potential to revolt against the authority of the State. Often doubting the constancy of the masses' rebelliousness he assesses the 'tendency' of society in possible rather than probable terms. In his early essays, Kropotkin thus stresses the importance of

raising the masses to revolt by the actions of the dedicated minority and of the necessity of planning for the post revolutionary society. In his later career he similarly finds that experiments in the organisation of free, co-operative institutions are forever being compromised by the prevailing egoistic spirit of the State. By itself, he admits, the 'tendency' to practise mutual aid is not sufficient to secure its own further progression to morality. Humanity needs to comprehend that the alternative mutual aid society requires that the majority take concerted action to overcome the impediments of the State. Unaided by such determined intervention, Kropotkin argues, humanity's natural co-operative spirit will not only remain forever hampered by the State's existence but, anticipating the outbreak of war, subject to its biologically self-destructive influences.

In so far as mutual aid demonstrates the 'naturalness' of the anarchist alternative or the 'evolution' toward anarchy, it does so by serving as an ideological incentive for future action. Reflecting his belief that Europe was not about to explode in revolution, in the theory of mutual aid Kropotkin reaffirms his understanding that moral behaviour depends on the restructuring of the environment and attempts to impart to evolutionary theory a revolutionary force. That humanity is convinced of the relationship he posits between environmental change and ethical development will provide the inspiration to secure the realisation of the anarchist goal. For Kropotkin the theory of mutual aid is a 'kinetic' concept.<sup>1</sup>

This analysis of Kropotkin's concept of mutual aid does not divorce his later writings from the prevailing scientific assumptions of the Victorian age. It acknowledges, for example, that Kropotkin's faith in mankind to provide easily adequate food, shelter and clothing for all citizens is an indication of the extent to which he is imbued with the

progressive assumptions of the era and may be equated with Lenin's judgement of the transforming power of electrification. It also acknowledges that there are important reasons for recognising the degree to which Kropotkin's work adheres to the Victorian tradition. Many contemporary writers, including anarchists, have found that his characteristic optimism in the improving capability of science is exaggerated, if not wholly mistaken. In the modern world, they point out, science has been applied to serve regressive as well as progressive causes. Scientific advance is responsible for the enthusiastic development of nuclear power and the proliferation of increasingly complex and destructive weaponry as well as for the discovery of penicillin.<sup>2</sup> Kropotkin cannot be blamed for his failure to anticipate the development of thermonuclear physics. But in the light of his belief that scientific knowledge resides with the governing classes, his failure to countenance the possibility that technological development may inhibit the realisation of his goal is certainly not beyond criticism.

Rather than denying the force of such critiques, consideration of the continuity of Kropotkin's thought highlights the obvious implausibility of some of his ideas. The point can again be made in terms of the standard critiques that have been raised against his work; and particularly in view of what has been commonly regarded as the implausibility of Kropotkin's economic assumptions. In the past, his belief that the problem of scarcity can be overcome and that well-being for all can be provided within the decentralised commune on the basis of a four hour day and in spite of the projected doubling of the world population, has been questioned with some incredulity.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, however, many modern writers have continued to defend Kropotkin's thought by reading his work preferentially and extracting from it

various specific suggestions for reform. *Fields, Factories and Workshops* has thus been presented in terms of the corrective solutions it offers to the problems of industrialisation, urban decay and modern farming practices. Rarely is his work taken in its totality and read as a complete guide to the restructuring of society. Kropotkin also insists that the anarchist plan is "not a gospel to be taken in its entirety".<sup>4</sup> But in so far as this analysis emphasises the importance he places on the relationship between environment and behaviour, Kropotkin's particular recommendations of reform must be considered to be less selectively adaptable than both he and his defenders have suggested. His conception of morality brooks little compromise with the ideal of realising communal autarky.

Notwithstanding the usefulness of certain aspects of the standard critique, in so far as Kropotkin's adherence to Victorian ways of thinking is identified with a steadfast adoption of positivist principles the characterisation remains too limited. It mistakes the force of his ideas, reading into them compromises which Kropotkin does not offer. Beyond the conscious attempts that have been made to customise Kropotkin's thought, the inadequacy of the characterisation rests in its failure to encompass the range of sources which his writings draw upon. In spite of his obsession with statistical data, in his practical conceptions, Kropotkin can hardly be considered to sacrifice "the artistic imagination to a realistic grasp of the facts".<sup>5</sup> His conclusion to *Fields, Factories and Workshops* evokes strong pastoral images; the springs of his imagination are operated as much by the romanticism of writers such as Morris as they are by the stark social realism of Zola. Kropotkin attacks Morris for his 'Luddite' mentality. In formulating his ideas Kropotkin nevertheless draws on the older, classical inspirations which Morris' thought embraces. Constantly he

extols the virtues of the Renaissance and the success with which mediaeval culture integrated science with art. With this historical prejudice Kropotkin is willing to criticise the scientific achievements of his own age; he repudiates the fantastic feat of hydraulic engineering accomplished in the construction of Tower Bridge, for instance, because of what he considers to be the concealment of its architectural imperfections.<sup>6</sup>

Kropotkin's methodological inspirations are similarly diffuse. To advance the point negatively, the application of his 'inductive-deductive' method cannot be explained solely by the references he makes to Comte or Spencer. In *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin deliberately alters the details of his investigation in order to prove the transition of the biological to the ethical principle. In spite of the similarity Kropotkin asserts between plant, animal and human life he does not consider that the details of mankind's development are disclosed purely by the study of other organisms. On the contrary, he explains human progression only by devising a chart of social development alongside the biological evolutionary scale, jettisoning his empirical, naturalistic reasoning in favour of an obviously subjective historical analysis. Similarly, whilst considering that humanity is less bound by nature than by a duty to learn from it, Kropotkin considers that the biological message has been reinforced by the development of other fields of science. But he does not order his information; nor does he believe that the expansion of knowledge reveals any progressive scientific truth. Rather, Kropotkin simply extracts what information he can from science in order to build up the truth of anarchism by association. The principles of molecular physics, for example, show the importance of building 'from the simple to the complex';<sup>7</sup> astronomy reveals the interconnection of planetary movement and is therefore a demonstration

of the interdependence of the individual and society. Medical advances and the discovery of a cure for malaria illustrate the power of free international co-operation. Kropotkin's examples are profuse. He discovers such messages in all theories - ethics, history, chemistry, - and in all periods of civilisation. Whilst the potential to realise the principle of mutual aid has been enhanced by modern methods of production and the ability to overcome economic scarcity, the historical opportunity to reorganise society does not represent the maturity of modern culture or the higher comprehension of the European 'scientific' mind. Mutual aid represents a return to principles Kropotkin believes have been expressed since antiquity.

Kropotkin's extension of the boundaries of positivist thought and his tendency to make the facts of his analyses fit the wider hypotheses he wishes to advance is not, as some of his defenders have claimed, simply a marginal deficiency of his work. It reflects his general inability - or reluctance - to distinguish between the truth of his empirical observations and the hopes he has for social renewal. Kropotkin's scientific method is subordinate to his assumption that the 'tendency' of society is toward anarchy. In his later work he never challenges this earlier view; rather he designs the theory of mutual aid to encourage the 'tendency' by providing its expression with solid theoretical foundation. The body of his 'scientific' work is grounded on this speculative conception of societal development and notwithstanding the claims he advances for his 'inductive-deductive' method Kropotkin consistently verifies scientific knowledge by testing it against against the accepted truth of the anarchist tendency. He thus finally dismisses Comte's political thought on the basis of its failure to take account of Kropotkin's own version of the Darwinian theory of moral development.<sup>8</sup> In *Ethics* he evaluates moral thought

extending from Aristotle to Nietzsche only after delivering his final exposition of Darwinian evolutionary theory. In his study of Russian literature, the contribution of authors is estimated in relation to his historical understanding of the decline of the commune, the tradition of folklore and his assessment of nature.

Evaluating all knowledge in terms of his understanding of the anarchist 'tendency' even Kropotkin acknowledges that the process of his 'inductive-deductive' reasoning is problematic. His insistence on the truth of the 'tendency' leads him to deny the validity of entire fields of research. In his survey of pre-genetic inheritance theory the inconclusiveness of the evidence enables Kropotkin to minimise his differences with the rest of the scientific world. The attempt he makes to prove Darwin's rejection of natural selection, however, perfectly illustrates the herculean efforts he is prepared to make in order to substantiate the scientific validity of the anarchist tendency. Similar difficulties are demonstrated in the one-sidedness of his historical portrait of the city-state or the peasant commune and by the conflicts which arise as a result of his inter-disciplinary approach; there is a general tension between his biological and anthropological analyses of human progression and his historical and political theories of the 'fall' of mankind, illustrated, for example, by his attempt to synthesise anarchist morality with individualism.

The intellectual debt Kropotkin claims to owe to Comte combined with the novel use he makes of Darwinian theory has perhaps obscured the source of his scientific inspiration. Darwinian evolutionary theory led Huxley, for example, to distinguish firmly between the natural and ethical processes of human development. Epitomising the incompatibility between religious and scientific teachings the revolution in biology similarly caused thinkers as diverse as Tolstoy and Matthew Arnold to

reassert the importance of faith to political thought. Whilst the dividing line between scientific and non-scientific thought was becoming more rigid,<sup>9</sup> Kropotkin deliberately blurs the distinction between the two. Mistaking the nature of the confusion Kropotkin makes between 'science' and 'theory' does not, however, remove him from the Victorian tradition any more than his practical accommodation with Morris denies the strength of his assumption in the progressive force of technology. Kropotkin's belief that science should serve a definite end is one which was shared by some of his socialist contemporaries. Edward Carpenter, for example, wholeheartedly supports all attempts to redefine science in a manner which will challenge liberal laissez-faire thinking. In an essay entitled 'The Need of a Rational and Humane Science' he argues that liberal thought has founded science on "self-seeking and competition". By opposing these principles socialists, he concludes, "have evolved a quite new phase of...science." This phase is concerned with "the great facts of Community of life and Co-operation" and the idea "that Society is in the main an illustration of these latter principles".<sup>10</sup> Kropotkin's proposal to discover a scientific basis for ethical development finds support in Belfort Bax. Writing in 1884 in *The Commonwealth* Bax finds that all existing ethical philosophies are founded on the notion that "there is a permanent antagonism between individual and community". The idea, he continues, must be overturned. Presaging the argument which Kropotkin presents in *Ethics* Bax concludes that any new system of ethics must be scientific and "take into account the entire evolution of society, in which human nature is shown in the making...and in which the several elements constituting it are displayed in their interaction."<sup>11</sup>

Placed within this wider Victorian tradition Kropotkin's thought is possibly best evaluated in terms of its persuasiveness rather than its

relevance to modern politics. Considering his work in this way does not deny his association with anarchism but identifies his science less as a contrast than as a development of anarchist thought.<sup>12</sup> The formulation of scientific anarchism gives new expression to the anti-State impulse traditionally associated with the romantic belief in spontaneous revolt, the jacquerie and the unceasing rebellion against authority. In Bakunin's work the impulse is associated with the lumpenproletariat; Buber expresses the same sentiment in his analysis of the anarchists' prophetic eschatology. Cohn concludes that the roots of anarchism are traceable to mediaeval millenarianism and the cult of the Free Spirit; numerous others identify in anarchism an equally mystical devotion to violence.

The revelatory aspect common to all these different images leads frequently to the identification of anarchism with love and spiritual renewal. In an essay entitled 'What Is Anarchism', Woodcock, for example, considers that the anarchist ideal appeals even to the anarchists' most implacable critics. Notwithstanding the fears of violence and social disorder it provokes, anarchism, he argues, promises the existence of natural human 'goodness'.<sup>13</sup> Parsons comments similarly: anarchists "judge from experience that man is a gregarious animal...".<sup>14</sup> In the State, anarchists argue, the impulse to be 'good', or to act in sympathy with others is crushed. In anarchy the impulse to 'goodness' will miraculously return to humanity. Individuals will overcome their personal egoism and unite with one another in peace and harmony: they will learn to love each other. A *Freedom* pamphlet of the 1890s encapsulates this belief precisely. In response to the question, "Do you believe in Love?" the answer is returned: "Yes. By love we hope to redeem the world. It is to the feeling of universal human love that Anarchism mostly appeals."<sup>15</sup>

Certain aspects of Kropotkin's scientific thought contrast strongly with this traditional imagery. Owing to his disillusion with the potential for immediate revolution, in his later writings Kropotkin places little importance on the spirit of revolt or on the principle of propaganda by the deed. There are no secrets in his work: in all his writings, Kropotkin is repelled by the conspiratorialism of the Illuminati and the bakuninist Brotherhoods which were their inspiration.<sup>16</sup> His work has no sense of the unknown: Kropotkin's revolution is not a chiliastic transformation and is utopian only to the extent that utopianism refers to what is practical. In *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin makes strenuous efforts to divorce the moral instinct from feelings of love or even sympathy. Perhaps because of his personal aloofness he understands anarchist morality as 'solidarity'; it develops in opposition to close-knit family ties.

Yet Kropotkin does not reject all the symbols of traditional anarchism. He combines the distinction between love and mutual aid, for example, with a profound personal empathy with the oppressed. In his autobiography he reminisces nostalgically about his childhood and the relations he enjoyed with Tikon, "Jack-of-all-trades", and the other servants on his parents estate.<sup>17</sup> He also recollects the personal torment he suffered in his knowledge of the wretched conditions the serfs were forced to endure.<sup>18</sup> Kropotkin relates his impressions of the native peoples of Siberia and the working classes of St. Petersburg and the Jura with a similar warmth, highlighting his own humility and negatively comparing his early political conceptions with their practical understanding of courage, self-sacrifice and fraternity.<sup>19</sup> Kropotkin repeats to Brandes the impossibility of exaggerating his faith in the moral good sense of humanity and particularly 'primitive' and peasant peoples; but he further demonstrates his identification with the

masses symbolically by pointedly refusing to be bound by social etiquette and by relinquishing the use of his title.

In his detachment from the language of mainstream anarchism Kropotkin does not deny the basis of the traditional anarchist appeal. Nor does he accept the validity of the charges that have been raised against anarchism as many of his modern defenders have done.<sup>20</sup> Refusing to be intimidated by the popular associations that have always been made between anarchism, violence, chaos and utopianism, Kropotkin attempts to conceal the basis of the appeal by redefining his terms and using them against his attackers. Anarchist violence, he claims, can only be considered as the reaction of a sensitive soul to the violence of the State. The charge of 'utopianism' is acceptable in so far as it is applied to anarchists by those lacking 'practical imagination'. Contrary to Feyerabend Kropotkin's "bold and revolutionary" thought also leads him to question the nature of science and accuse the existing scientific establishment of political bias.

The partial nature of the changes that Kropotkin introduces into traditional anarchism by the development of anarchist science illustrates the depth of the tension in his thought and highlights the extent to which his later writings are designed to reformulate the basis of the anarchist appeal. Though his ends are liberatory, anarchism, he argues, is not concerned with the soul; it is prompted by issues of efficiency and survival. In his discussion of the liberation of the serfs Kropotkin denies that humanity is naturally good and therefore capable of living without the State and questions only whether mankind can afford to encourage its selfish and submissive side.

It is possible that this defence of anarchism enhances the plausibility of the anarchist alternative; similarly, it may be that the potential for groups to live peaceably by free agreement is more

convincingly discussed in terms of the 'cybernetics of self-organising groups' than as a sense of spiritual oneness.<sup>21</sup> Most interpretations of Kropotkin's work suggest, however, that his discussion of anarchism in scientific terms confuses his intentions. If Kropotkin's science is considered to encompass the ideals he expresses so vibrantly in his early writings, anarchist science must be acknowledged to have left a dull impression on his thought. There seems little in his later work that could be described (as Bakunin's work has been) as "always hortatory or polemical, usually ironical, sometimes sparkling, always gay, always entertaining, always readable..."<sup>22</sup> Kropotkin compromises the attractiveness of his ideal by his seriousness and originality. Even Woodcock questions the extent to which Kropotkin's anarchy can secure freedom. Notwithstanding Kropotkin's commitment to base the social order on a secular ('scientific') commitment to friendship and co-operation,<sup>23</sup> the empirical proofs of mutual aid which he discovers in the Russian peasant commune and the tribal society are thought by Woodcock to diminish the force of his libertarian claims; and whilst Woodcock claims that the anarchist ideal appeals even to the anarchists' critics, he refuses to extend the recommendation to Kropotkin's plan.

Kropotkin never questions the aptness of science as a tool to advance the anarchist case; nor does he show why Tolstoy's 'metaphysical' Christian anarchism, for example, is inadequate to induce anarchist change. It may be expected that a system of belief that is founded on a religiously based appeal, already understood, would stand a good chance of success in uniting otherwise disparate groups of people. Whilst Kropotkin accepts this point,<sup>24</sup> he maintains a vehement distrust of religion to the end of his career. In *Modern Science and Anarchism* he returns to his earliest analysis of authority and the corruption of primitive tribal society in the state of nature. Examining what he

considers to be the imposition of the decalogue he complains that all religious precepts contain hidden rules. The commandment not to covet, for example, "for a long time...legalised slavery, and put woman on a level with slaves and beasts of burden."<sup>25</sup> Believing that science embraces a greater potential for free expression than religion, Kropotkin rejects the simplicity of Tolstoy's thought.

Kropotkin's rejection of Tolstoy's mysticism does not render his scientific writings either reformist or deterministic. His point is not to prove an evolution to anarchy or to demonstrate a preference for evolutionary methods of change; by utilising the language of science he hopes simply to enhance the credibility of the anarchist message. Thus Kropotkin does not apply science to anarchism, he invents a science on the foundation of his anarchist beliefs. Developing anarchist thought in this way removes anarchism from the realms of mystical belief. But it is doubtful whether Kropotkin manages to increase the persuasiveness of the anarchist ideal. His concealment of the traditional symbols of the anarchist appeal introduces into anarchism a mechanical element which, as Malatesta argues, is perhaps alien to it. Conceiving the message of nature and mutual aid as a scientific truth as opposed to a belief which ought to be encouraged, Kropotkin invents an ideology which denies the spontaneity of the anarchist appeal. Individuals are incited to achieve anarchy but the realisation of the achievement is not guided by faith and an independent action of will, it results in response to a subconsciously accepted end.

NOTES: CONCLUSION

1. P. Kropotkin: *Modern Science and Anarchism*, Freedom Press, London, 1912, p.38.
2. See, for example, H. Baecker: 'Technology, Science and Anarchism: Homo Aedificans', *Anarchy* 25, Vol.3, No.3, (March 1963), pp.65-70; M. Goldman: 'The Terrible Flaw', *ibid.*, pp.72-4.
3. See C.V. Drysdale: *Can Everyone Be Fed? A Reply to Prince Kropotkin*, The Malthusian League, London, (1913).
4. P. Kropotkin: *Preface to E. Pataud & E. Pouget, Syndicalism and the Co-operative Commonwealth*, translated by C. & F. Charles, New International Publishing Co., Oxford, (1913), p.vii.
5. L. Mumford: *The Story of Utopias Ideal Commonwealths and Social Myths*, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London, (1923), p.129. Mumford makes the observation about the work of James Buckingham.
6. P. Kropotkin: *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, Extending Horizons Books, Boston, Mass., (N.D.), p.212.
7. P. Kropotkin: *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal*, Free Society, San Francisco, (1898), p.5.
8. P. Kropotkin: *Modern Science and Anarchism*, *op.cit.*, pp.19-20.
9. For a discussion of the incompatibility of the two systems of thought see R.M. Unger: *Knowledge and Politics*, The Free Press, London, (1984).
10. E. Carpenter: 'The Need of a Rational and Humane Science', *Humane Science Lectures*, George Bell & Sons, London, (1897), p.24.
11. E. Belfort Bax: 'The New Ethic', *The Commonweal*, (February 4 1884).
12. For a modern interpretation of Rocker's conception of the evolution of anarchist thought see N. Chomsky: 'Notes on Anarchism', *New York Review of Books*, 14, (21 May 1970), pp.31-5.
13. G. Woodcock: *What Is Anarchism*, Freedom Press, London, (1945), p.4.
14. A.R. Parsons: *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis As Defined By Some of its Apostles*, Mrs. A.R. Parsons, Chicago, (1887), p.173. For the same view see also G. Nicholson: 'The Simplicity of Anarchism', *Living on a Volcano: Selected Articles from the Anarchist Journal 'Freedom'*, Vol.4, Freedom Press, London, (1954), p.63.
15. Freedom Press: *What Is Anarchism*, Freedom Pamphlet, London, (189-), p.3.
16. See Kropotkin's comments on Nechaev, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, C. Ward (ed.), Folio Edition, London, (1978), p.213.
17. *ibid.*, pp.31-2.
18. *ibid.*, pp.51-9.
19. On his impression of the watchmakers see *ibid.*, pp.194-6; and for his views of the workers of St. Petersburg, *ibid.*, p.228.
20. For a recent denial of the anarchists' 'utopianism' see J.R. Mintz: *The Anarchists of Casas Viejas*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, (1982), pp.1-9.
21. J.D. McEwan: 'Anarchism and the Cybernetics of Self-Organising Systems', C. Ward (ed.), *A Decade of Anarchy*, Freedom Press, London, (1987), pp.42-58.

22. I. Berlin: 'Herzen and Bakunin on Liberty', *Russian Thinkers*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, (1982), p.108.
23. For his comments on 'secular family communes' see M. Taylor: *Community, Anarchy and Liberty*, Cambridge University Press, London, (1982), pp.159-63.
24. P. Kropotkin: *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, (1916), pp.144-5.
25. P. Kropotkin: *Modern Science and Anarchism*, *op.cit.*, p.35.

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