

# 100 YEARS WITH AND WITHOUT KROPOTKIN

An online conference discussing the  
legacy, influence and relevance of  
Piotr Kropotkin

## 25-27th August 2021

### Day 1 (25th August)

**OPENING REMARKS** 10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

**KROPOTKIN AND HIS IDEAS** 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

**Michael Grooff:** The Engine of Mutual Aid: Kropotkin's Bipartite Account of Sympathy  
**Zoe Baker:** Kropotkin's Definition of Anarchism

**KROPOTKIN AND GLOBAL ECOLOGIES** 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

**Pascale Siegrist:** Kropotkin's World  
**Shangshang Wang:** Making Sense of Plants and Animals: Intellectual Dynamics of Sino-Japanese Evolutionary Imagination, 1906-1945

**KROPOTKIN IN NEW AREAS** 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**Christopher Coquard & Soren Hough:** Marie Goldsmith: "Titan of Anarchism"  
**Mark Losoncz:** Kropotkin and the Social Physiology of Value  
**James Willis:** Kropotkin's Abolition of Fear: Imagining a Mystical Anarchy after Religion

### Day 2 (26th August)

**KROPOTKIN'S ARCHIVES** 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

**Natalia Portnova, House of P.A. Kropotkin "of the Dmitrov Kremlin Museum-Reserve":** Dmitrov letters of P. Kropotkin (out of the funds of Dmitrov Kremlin State Museum-Preserve)  
**Shaun Pitt:** The Kropotkin Papers and the personal networks of Piotr Kropotkin

**INFORMAL MID-CONFERENCE DISCUSSION** 1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

**WAR, CONFLICT, REVOLUTION** 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

**Nikolai Gerasimov:** The World War Problem: P. Kropotkin and G. Maximov  
**Dmitri Ivanov:** "Applause from the Right": P. A. Kropotkin as Anarchists' Enemy, Summer 1917  
**Sergey Saitanov:** The definition of anarcho-reformism by Peter Kropotkin

**MUTUAL AID NOW!** 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**Lee Dugatkin:** Kropotkin's Law of Mutual Aid: An Evolutionary Perspective  
**Claudia Firth:** Covid-19 Mutual Aid Groups  
**Tomas Pewton:** Mutual Aid in Practice: OrganicLea

### Day 3 (27th August)

**KROPOTKIN: THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL** 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

**Constance Bantman:** Kropotkin and his friendship with Jean Grave

**David Saunders:** Kropotkin, the Logishin Affair, and the Case for Anarchism

**Lara Green:** Kropotkin, Age, and the Russian Revolutionary Movement in the Transatlantic Imagination

**HUMANISM AND MATERIALISM** 1:00 p.m. – 2.30 p.m.

**Ben Brazelton:** Mutual Aid and the Overrepresentation of Man

**Maria Rakhmaninova:** Peter Kropotkin: between classical and new materialisms

**Ole Sandberg:** Finding Satisfaction in Life: Kropotkin on Human Nature, Morality, and Joy

**DISCUSSION - WITH AND WITHOUT KROPOTKIN** 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**CLOSING REMARKS** 4:00 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.

#### Organisers:

Shaun Pitt (Northumbria University)  
Tomas Pewton (Sofia University)  
Adeline Coignet (University of Nottingham)  
Billy Godfrey (Loughborough University)  
Cord-Christian Casper (University of Giessen)

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### 1921-2021: 100 years with and without Kropotkin

Piotr Alekseevich Kropotkin (1842-1921) was one of the most prominent advocates of anarchism during his adult life, but also a famous intellectual and activist in Europe and further afield. In this centenary year of his death, we welcome you to join us for a discussion about his legacy, influence and relevance today. This conference will discuss his life and his work, but also his afterlife. Since February 1921, the world has lived without Kropotkin, but in many ways his ideas and his legacy persist. This conference seeks to specify, debate, contest, and carry on that legacy.

100 years *with* Kropotkin: time and again, his concepts – social economy, communist reorganization, mutual aid – prove their worth for analysis and transformative action alike. Amidst the current ecological and economic crisis, Piotr Kropotkin's immense body of work allows us to think across geography and the sciences, culture and politics, economy and ecology. His ethical and biological approach to social questions resonated with many of his contemporaries and continues to live on in the work of writers and activists.

However, as the neoliberal state mobilizes its full authoritarian potential to protect capitalist accumulation in a warming world, Kropotkin's anarchist horizon can appear distant. As we face compounding crises on an unprecedented scale, we are *without* Kropotkin. This means that he cannot serve as an infallible guide to revolutionary thought and action. Instead of merely celebrating Kropotkin's legacy or using his work as a blueprint, this conference aims to suggest ways of adapting his varied thought to other times and places, refracting it through different approaches, and asking what it has to tell us about the crises of today.

By thinking with and without Kropotkin, this conference takes him at his word. After all, as a thinker of adaptive change in nature and revolutionary change in social life, he called for systems to be "continually developed and readjusted in accordance with the ever growing requirements of a free life" (1903). We invite scholars from all disciplines to engage with such development and readjustment. Inquiries into the applicability and adaptability of his thought in a variety of fields will be appreciated. Throughout, we aim to understand Kropotkin's approaches as a repository of possibilities, an adaptable body of work that we invite participants to apply, revise, and reconsider.

## **Abstracts:**

**Zoe Baker**

### **Kropotkin's Definition of Anarchism**

How Kropotkin defines anarchism is a surprisingly complex topic. In some passages Kropotkin writes as if anarchism has existed throughout history. On other occasions he refers to it as a form of anti-state socialism which first emerged in the 19th century. Various ways of making sense of these contradictory positions, such as him changing his mind or using different definitions for different audiences, do not match the evidence. I intend to present one way that the two views can be rendered consistent: Kropotkin defines anarchism as a broad tendency which has existed across history and then on other occasions implicitly limits his domain to the modern world such that anarchism refers to a subset of this tendency, anti-state socialism.

**Bennett Brazelton**

### **Mutual Aid and the Overrepresentation of Man**

The importance of Pëtr Kropotkin's work in the field of social biology is difficult to overstate; in addition to challenging Darwinian and Spencerian theories of 'human nature,' Kropotkin outlined cooperative instincts innate to human biology as a legitimate basis for socio-political reorganization. Here, I intend to address one significant concern regarding Kropotkin's account of human evolution: how can one reconcile the continuation of racial and colonial hierarchy with a supposedly innate instinct for inter-species altruism? Here, I discuss Kropotkin's (1902) *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* in light of the scholarship of Jamaican scholar and dramatist, Sylvia Wynter. Wynter is able to broach this question through a socio-biological account of European colonialism and the emergence and universalization of 'Man.' Wynter's account of colonialism and philosophical anthropology (what is 'the human'? who counts as a legitimate human?) raises a significant problem for anarcho-communist social biology—namely, the splintering of humankind into distinct species via the systematic commodification and dehumanization essential to the colonial project. Following this, I argue that the condition of possibility for a true realization of a cooperative social biology is the revolutionary upheaval in our mode of being human—that is to say, a revolutionary humanism that moves 'towards the human, after Man.'

**Chris Coquard & Soren Hough**

### **Marie Goldsmith: "Titan of Anarchism"**

Marie Goldsmith (July 7, 1871 - January 11, 1933) was a Jewish Russian emigrée who lived most of her life in Paris. She earned her PhD in biology at the Sorbonne, contributing significantly to the fields of evolutionary biology and psychology. In parallel, she was an instrumental theorist of anarchism. Her status as Peter Kropotkin's most frequent correspondent offers a clear indication of her significance, not only to Kropotkin, but to all of their colleagues. According to Gregory Maximov, she was "the only one [Kropotkin] considered capable" of continuing his work, including Kropotkin's proposed *Ethics Vol. 2*, "both in scientific training and in spirit." Based on our research in primary, secondary, and tertiary documentation, we will lay out some core aspects of her thought and sketch out the broad details of her life as we understand them to date. We will argue for her inclusion in the European anarchist canon and for restoring her historical position as an influential, well-connected figure of early 20th century political and scientific discourse.

**Lee Alan Dugatkin**

### **Kropotkin's Law of Mutual Aid: An Evolutionary Perspective**

Peter Kropotkin was one of the great thinkers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He wrote incessantly, penning books on evolution, behavior and natural history, ethics, anarchism, socialism and communism, the coming industrial revolution in the East, penal systems, The French Revolution and much more. Though seemingly disparate topics, a common thread--Kropotkin's biological law of mutual aid, which guided all living things from microorganisms to nonhuman animals to humans--tied all of these works together. What Kropotkin then called mutual aid, we now call cooperation.

Kropotkin read Darwin when he was a teenager in Moscow. He came to see that evolutionary principles explained the diversity and history of life. Over time he came to argue that natural selection was the driving force that shaped life, but that Darwin's ideas had been perverted and misrepresented by {primarily} British scientists. Natural selection, Kropotkin proposed, generally led to mutual aid, not competition, among individuals. Natural selection favored societies in which individuals displayed mutual aid over those in which such aid was not dispensed. He came to speak of progressive evolution – a term he used to describe how mutual aid became the sine qua non of all societal life - animal and human.

**Claudia Firth**

## Covid-19 Mutual Aid Groups

New forms of cooperative grassroots organisation have often emerged at times of devastation and destruction. For example, WWI was arguably the catalyst for the soviet as an organisational form, WWII engendered many small mutual aid organisations in Germany, while more recently, mutual aid on a smaller more localised scale such as Occupy Sandy has often appeared in relation to environmental disasters such as hurricanes. In the past these have sometimes had quite revolutionary implications, while more recent examples have instead been co-opted as temporary disaster relief in the development of community resilience. How might we therefore view the emergence of manifold Covid-19 Mutual Aid Groups (CMAGs) across the UK and elsewhere? Especially as there is evidence of perhaps longer term cooperative infrastructure developing from them.

In *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin charted forms of cooperative organisation such as clans, medieval guilds and city states that emerge as part of an evolutionary process that he used to argue against social Darwinism at the time. As Rhiannon Firth has recently argued, “Kropotkin’s idea that co-operation helps species thrive more than competition seems ever-more relevant as an alternative perspective in the current conjecture where our Conservative government have been accused of openly Darwinist ideas of ‘herd immunity’ (2020)”. Indeed, the proliferation of such large numbers of CMAGs across the UK and elsewhere in response might appear to suggest potentially revolutionary potential.

I would like to use this paper to explore the relationship of the state, organisation and technology to decentralised grassroots initiatives such as the CMAG’s. While the emergence of CMAGs in response to the pandemic raises questions around the withdrawal of the welfare state and austerity, anthropologist David Graeber also argued that the origins of the welfare state actually lie with grassroots initiatives of trade unions, neighbourhood associations and co-ops rather than benevolent central governments and that the state created its own less revolutionary version. This echoes Kropotkin’s own argument that the rise of the state destroyed the independence of other forms of organisation in favour of its own bureaucracy (p119).

Are the CMAGs simply compensating for austerity and the withdrawal of the welfare state, in themselves risking reproducing the ideology and interests of the corporate sector? Or could they be a sign of a commons-based social transformation facilitated by voluntary contribution and participatory forms of technology?

**Nikolai Gerasimov**

## The World War Problem: P. Kropotkin and G. Maximov

At the beginning of the 20th century, anarchists throughout the world faced a difficult political and ethical dilemma. The anti-war discourse traditional to anarchism has logically always been an extension of the critique of the state as a militaristic political institution. State conflicts were understood by anarchists as international conflicts, based only on the interests of different political elites (kings, members of parliament, etc.) and not those of society itself. The state has always sought to convince society that people are citizens, and that citizens, in addition to rights, have a duty to defend the state against an external aggressor. Anarchists, starting with P. J. Proudhon and M. Stirner, opposed this idea, believing that the state exploits society by sending people to war for the benefit of the political elite. This criticism worked well until the outbreak of World War I.

P. Kropotkin drew attention to the fact that the total nature of military conflict throughout the world is a special phenomenon not previously seen in history. Anarchists should reconsider their position on this issue. By 1914, P. Kropotkin's influence on the international anarchist community was enormous. This probably made the Russian prince muster up the courage to publicly voice his position on the war. P. Kropotkin suggested that the anarchists should support the Entente. Why? He saw in the Austrian and German militarism a threat to the whole world, but above all for the future revolution. France seemed to him «the cradle of revolutionary life». If «the cradle of revolutionary life is in danger», then it must be saved by any means. P. Kropotkin believed that the pacifist position would not save the future revolution but would destroy it. Thus, a small group of anarchists, advocating the war on the side of the Entente («anarcho-patriots») was born. P. Kropotkin was not saved by his authority. His position was criticized in many anarchist journals. Among the critics was the anarcho-syndicalist G. Maximov.

After P. Kropotkin's death G. Maksimov was deported (1921) from Russia to Germany. From Europe G. Maximov emigrated to the U.S.A. (1925), where he earned the reputation of the most influential Russian anarchist in America during the 1930s. The outbreak of the World War II again raised the problem of the anarchists' attitude to the war. V. Volin believed that anarchists should not support either side in the conflict. Moreover, revolution and revolutionary propaganda should already be prepared. V. Volin published leaflets, which criticized even the french La Résistance movement. G. Maximov, who had previously criticized P. Kropotkin, suddenly came out in favor of «revolutionary defense». He believed that the Red Army is the workers, hostages of the totalitarian state. These workers and hostages the USSR sends to war against another totalitarian state (the Third Reich). Like P. Kropotkin, G. Maximov believed that Hitler's victory in the war meant the final collapse of the revolutionary movement. Hitler's defeat is a «signal to the world revolution». If P. Kropotkin was criticized by many anarchists concerning the First World War, G. Maximov avoided a similar situation. Why?

1. G. Maximov relied on the experience of P. Kropotkin and stated his thoughts more accurately;
2. The German aggression in 1939-1945 seemed much stronger than in 1914-1918.
3. The anarchist movement was in crisis (the defeat of the anarchists in the Russian Civil Wars of 1918-1921 and in Spain 1931-1939).

The experience of P. Kropotkin and G. Maximov shows that if a global military conflict breaks out around the world, when almost all countries are at war, anarchists tend to take one of two positions: 1) the traditional anti-war position; 2) on the side of those countries that are «defending» themselves against the aggression of the coalition of countries that started the war. The first position is based on a blending of political philosophy and ethics. The second is based on a distinction between political philosophy and ethics (in which case the pragmatic choice in favor of anarchist participation in the war is explained as a forced measure, as a choice in favor of the lesser evil).

We must admit that without P. Kropotkin, the problem of "anarchism and world war" would probably not exist. Yes, Kropotkin's position seemed to most anarchists to be fundamentally wrong. As the case of G. Maximov shows, Kropotkin only voiced new theses that were implicitly present in anarchist theory - the anarchists possibility participating in a world war against the strongest aggressor.

**Lara Green**

### **Kropotkin, Age, and the Russian Revolutionary Movement in the Transatlantic Imagination**

This paper explores foreigners' attitudes towards the Russian revolutionary movement in Europe and North America through the theme of age in representations of Kropotkin. In his later life, Kropotkin's age and ill health came to dominate discussion of his thought and activities in the mainstream press. This paper suggests that such representations reflected growing nostalgia for the heritage of the Russian revolutionary movement among foreign publics who had become broadly sympathetic towards efforts to overthrow the despotic tsarist regime in the Russian Empire. This paper argues that this nostalgia had profound effects on foreigners' perceptions of revolution in Russia in 1917 and during the ensuing Civil War, influencing attitudes towards the Bolsheviks. As such, foreigners experienced the Russian Revolution not only by observing Bolshevik activities, but also through the Bolsheviks' treatment of aging revolutionaries.

**Michael Grooff**

### **The Engine of Mutual Aid: Kropotkin's Bipartite Account of Sympathy**

The law of mutual aid is at the centre of Peter Kropotkin's scientific as well as his political writings and it continues to influence scholars and activists to this day. Though the instantiations and effects of mutual aid have been thoroughly explored, there is a lacuna of literature on the mechanisms that directly drive mutual aid. In this article, I investigate Kropotkin's account of sympathy as the driving instinct behind the mutual aid tendency. I argue that Kropotkin's conception of sympathy as presented in *Anarchist Morality* is ambiguous and contradictory. This tension may be resolved by reading Kropotkin as having a dualist account of sympathy. Analysing this dualism in terms of a 'simulationist' and a 'perceptual' account of sympathy, I argue that, contrary to Kropotkin's own claim, he moves beyond merely applying Adam Smith's simulationist account of sympathy as described in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* to the broader field of animal life. Although Kropotkin adheres to Smith's theory of sympathy, he also describes a directly perceptual sympathetic 'sense', which anticipates later phenomenological accounts of empathy. A dualist reading of Kropotkin proves necessary for making sense of his attribution of sympathy to all animal life, which would otherwise be incompatible with the Smithian account. Moreover, a dualistic reading resolves seemingly contradictory statements on sympathy in *Mutual Aid*, where Kropotkin claims to ground the mutual aid tendency on something more fundamental than sympathy, thus disagreeing with his own claims in *Anarchist Morality*.

**Dmitrii Ivanov**

### **"Applause from the Right": P. A. Kropotkin as Anarchists' Enemy, Summer 1917**

P. A. Kropotkin was a (or even the) recognised leader of the international anarchist movement in the early 20th century. However, when he returned to Petrograd from emigration on May 30, 1917, he found himself championed by the moderate and conservative forces, and shunned and even verbally attacked by the anarchist movement he helped bring to life. This paper looks at the circumstances that created such a paradoxical situation. It argues that Kropotkin's libertarian federalism was perceived as alien to the anarchist movement due to the constellation of political forces in Russia's revolutionary ecosystem of 1917 that made liberalism the furthest openly manifested current to the right.

Contributions of Kropotkin's vocally proclaimed pro-Entente stance and the role of Russian popular press to forming his public image are also considered. It was fairly common for the Petrograd press to pit the 'bad anarchist' Lenin against the 'good anarchist' Kropotkin. Publishing strategies also mattered. Whereas Russian anarchists were happy to reprint Kropotkin's old books and pamphlets, his newer works were contributed to specifically liberal publications, such as the *Russkie Vedomosti* (Russian Gazette) daily in Moscow.



Another factor that tied Kropotkin to the forces deemed hostile by Russian anarchists was his place within the network of revolutionary veterans and post-February politicians. Many of Kropotkin's generation supported the Russian version of the *Union Sacrée* against German militarism and imperialism, and even more outspokenly so after the fall of Tsarism. Connections to revolutionary veterans like E. K. Breshko-Breshkovskaia or Kropotkin, referred to semi-officially as "grandmother" and "grandfather" of the Russian revolution respectively, were an important source of validation and authority for Provisional Government figures like Prime Minister A. F. Kerenskii.

Kropotkin's links to Kerenskii and other politicians involved in suppression of anarchist actions made him particularly irksome to Russia's anarchists in 1917. But the crucial factor was his outspoken condemnation of anti-war activism, in which anarchists were militantly involved. The attitude to war was the issue that split Russia's social-democratic and socialist-revolutionary parties; the same also occurred to the anarchist movement.

Evidence consulted for the paper includes newspapers and magazines, pamphlets, letters, diaries and other under-utilised sources.

## Mark Losoncz

### Kropotkin and the Social Physiology of Value

Kropotkin's work, especially *The Conquest of Bread*, contains many deep economic insights. As a theory, it offers both a detailed criticism of capitalism and a positive view of how an anarchist society would look like. The presentation is going to argue that Kropotkin's argument is based on the criticism of value such as it appeared in classical political economy. According to his analysis, capitalism is a somewhat irrational system as it tries to measure something that is by its nature immeasurable. Namely, contrary even to mutualism and collectivism (that is, to Proudhon and Bakunin), he claims that labour has become so cooperative that individual contributions are immeasurable. In other words, labour has become so much social that wages are simply absurd. This conceptual strategy implies a relentless criticism of labour-tokens or time-chits. Accordingly, Kropotkin refused to endorse an alleged economic alternative in which workers would exploit themselves as their own capitalists. His analysis of value is extended to a wider theory that embraces phenomena such as the imperative of productivism, the coordination of production and consumption, exploitation etc. Kropotkin claims that "the theories of value that economists have endeavoured to base, from Adam Smith to Marx, only on the cost of production, valued in labor time, have not solved the question of value". However, in spite of what Kropotkin suggests about Marx, it is precisely the criticism of value that connects him both to Marx and to certain heterodox forms of "Marxism" such as autonomism, criticism of value-form (especially Neue

Marx-Lektüre), or communization. "Marxists" such as Harry Cleaver or the journal *Troploin* have explicitly praised Kropotkin for the depth of his analysis of value. Thus, Kropotkin's economic theory can serve as a fruitful basis for anticapitalist dialogue. On the other hand, it helps us to think of a postcapitalist society that would get rid of the imperative of the self-valorization of capital and of forced evaluation.

## Tomas Pewton

### Mutual Aid in Practice: OrganicLea

"Our vision is of a socially and environmentally just food system where the means of production and distribution, including access to land, seed and water are controlled not by markets or corporations but by the people themselves"

OrganicLea is a food co-operative formed in 2001 and based in London. It's maxim was that "more food can and should be grown locally...and that it's better to work with others than alone." This presentation will offer OrganicLea as an illustration of mutual aid in practice.

Taking over an acre of derelict land on the edge of Epping Forest, OrganicLea now works twelve acres, is in partnership with organic farms nationwide, supplies food to the local community, distributes it for free to those who need it, creates a safe space for vulnerable people, offers training, knowledge and access to qualifications, helps set up community gardens and has an army of volunteers.

In this we see clear traits of Kropotkin's theory of mutual aid; solidarity, enthusiasm, sacrifice, cooperation and community. The production of food was something close to Kropotkin's heart, as revealed in *Fields, Factories and Workshops* and *The Conquest of Bread*. This presentation will give a short history of OrganicLea, its development and aims. It will feature interviews with volunteers, videos and pictures from the site and show how it aligns closely to Kropotkin's ideal of how food production should be; local, sustainable, self-sufficient and run on the application of mutual aid. It will also offer hope in relation to broader contemporary problems; climate change, the covid-19 pandemic and putting mutual aid into practice within a neoliberal society.

## Shaun Pitt

### The Kropotkin Papers and the personal networks of Piotr Kropotkin

In this paper I will discuss the Kropotkin Papers, an ongoing project intended to facilitate a greater understanding of the personal, political and scientific networks of Piotr Kropotkin and his immediate family. I will discuss the website itself, and

future plans for it, but also the insights about Kropotkin's networks it will contain and future plans for a statistical analysis of Kropotkin's personal networks.

As a website it currently serves largely as a tool to help visitors find items of correspondence, and the discussions contained in this correspondence, to and from members of the Kropotkin family. Behind the scenes however I have been keeping records of all the addresses of correspondents to Kropotkin, connections to other individuals included in the correspondence and works of Kropotkin's that are mentioned. In time this should help me map Kropotkin's global networks and see which of his works was most frequently discussed. Like many digital humanities projects this will provide people interested in Kropotkin's life many interesting questions to look into further.

As one of the most prominent anarchists of his lifetime Kropotkin was incredibly well-connected to the international anarchist movement (including many networks outside of Europe and North America) and numerous local anarchist movements. However the data from the State Archive in the Russian Federation also shows how Kropotkin was a relatively well-regarded scholar in Europe and was embedded in a variety of academic networks surrounding his work on geography, zoology, biology and economics. As a resident in the South East of England for the majority of his adult life (1886-1917) he was particularly well connected to British political networks and most of the correspondence to Kropotkin that has survived appears to be written in English.

## **Maria Rakhmaninova**

### **Peter Kropotkin: between classical and new materialisms**

One of Kropotkin's main discoveries is the phenomenon of mutual aid between creatures of different species. A panoramic review of this phenomenon forms the basis of his treatise "Mutual Aid as a Factor of Evolution", revealing it in all animal species. The radicality of Kropotkin's statement appears to us if we consider the consensus in the scientific community against which Kropotkin writes his work - in short it can be described as a system of postulates essentializing competition, struggle and confrontation of all against all (which is quite characteristic of the world picture, the impulse for which was given by T. Hobbes).

Kropotkin, a follower of Darwin, adds value to his theory of evolution, arguing, first, that all living things are as inherently mutualistic as they are struggling, and for the same reason - because of the need to survive. Second, Kropotkin shares and develops Darwin's concept of evolution as a single trajectory of species formation. According to this concept, at the origin of the human was a creature that was not human. In this sense, Kropotkin was unanimous with the positivists and other scientists of his time, who denied the idea of the specificity of man as a species among other species.

For this thesis that Kropotkin is criticized by many philosophers working from an anarchist perspective: by doing so he loses the key idea of the individual that distinguishes anarchism from Marxism. This criticism does indeed seem consistent, but only on condition of preserving a metaphysical picture of the world in which things and ideas, culture and nature, subject and object belong to different registers of being, and are labeled differently, in terms of their significance. This was the picture of the world before poststructuralism and the new materialisms, and therefore exactly up to that point such criticism remained valid. Considering that metaphysical antinomies always relate components hierarchically, in terms of classical epistemology, for which matter is simple and mechanistic, this meant that Kropotkin "reduced" the subject to the object, depriving the personality of its spirituality, elevating it above the world of "simpler" beings and dense matter, and thereby giving it a special dignity.

However, the revision of the very notion of "matter" initiated in the project of new materialisms allows us to rethink Kropotkin's role and the central tenets of his concept, which seems especially important today, in the context of the crisis state of most ecosystems of the planet, climate change and facing the clearly catastrophic consequences of the current ways of human presence in the world.

Leaving the metaphysical perspective, the new epistemology breaks with the mechanistic image of matter, discovering for the first time not only its complexity, but also its agency (for example, in the framework of the actor-network theory), and allows to abandon through this discovery the subject-object prism as such. This gives rise to the so-called object-oriented ontologies, as well as to agentic, vitalist and other materialisms that redefine not only the entire scientific methodology, but also the entire ontology of science.

This new perspective makes it possible to discern with amazement the anticipation of the new materialism in Kropotkin's theses on complexly organized networks of mutual assistance, a theme that has already been consistently developed in modern times by representatives of new materialism (for example, Anna Tsing, a researcher of networks of mutual assistance between fungi). In fact, as was shown earlier, the materialists of Kropotkin's time did not reflect on mutual aid or think in the anarchist categories of confederations of entities (as, for example, J. Bennett).

This gives rise to a side of Kropotkin's conception not previously covered, unexpectedly modern and topical, consonant with a new materialism that clearly inherits the anarchist philosophical tradition and the akratic approach in general. This reinterpretation also makes it possible to leave the limits of the grounds for a just criticism by anarcho-individualist anthropology: in this new optic, it is not the complexity of man that is reduced to the simplicity of inert matter, but inert matter is elevated to a complexity previously attributed to man alone, commodifying him and gaining access to the political, equally including him and his social and political practices in their complex entanglements and rhythms. This new level of

cooperation is a worthy and legitimate development of Kropotkin's ideas, revealed through the angles of a new materialism, which, in turn, draws its origins from the philosophy of anarchism.

## **Sergey Saitanov**

### **The definition of anarcho-reformism by Peter Kropotkin**

The anarchist views of Peter Kropotkin exclusively are known for everybody from his printed works, which were written and published during his long emigration to England. And it was they formed the basis of his classical radical anarchism. And because of it the same vision of Kropotkin remains in our days. This is due either to the inaccessibility of Russian sources and the language barrier for foreign researchers, or to the established Bolshevik tradition of presenting Kropotkin as the forerunner and justification of their totalitarian power.

Considering the anarchism of Peter Kropotkin through the prism of revolutionary radicalism, unfortunately, we still completely ignore a very significant layer in his later socio-political views. Meanwhile, Kropotkin's anarchism underwent very significant changes after the return of Peter Alekseevich from exile to revolutionary Russia.

And, above all, this was expressed in the viewpoint of Peter Kropotkin to the central problem for any anarchist - the issue of the State. During the anarchist-radical period of his anarchist views, Peter Kropotkin saw in the State only evil for all mankind, not admitting any progressive role. However, already in 1897, he openly declared that possibility of the appearance of parliament in tsarist Russia would be a more progressive State system. For the same reason (thinking about more progressive State system) he supported the Russian State in its war with Japan, and then in the First World War.

But we can observe a particularly fundamental change in the anarchist views of Peter Kropotkin after his return to revolutionary Russia, when he supported the Provisional Government of Alexander Kerensky. And first of all, this refers to the participation of Peter Alekseevich in the work of the State Conference (August 1917). Representatives of all classes and political parties and movements gathered there. There were not only minor extreme radicals, such as the Bolsheviks. At this meeting, Peter Kropotkin proclaimed the need to establish the Federal Democratic Republic in Russia as the most progressive form of government.

Kropotkin believed that a social anarchist Revolution is possible only not earlier than in a hundred years because modern society was not yet ready to establish an anarchist system. For Kropotkin, the anarchist society still remained the top of human existence, but this required the evolutionary development of society through a progressive State system that would prepare people for anarchy.

Thus, we can state the presence of two seemingly contradictory development vectors in the late socio-political views of Peter Kropotkin. However, a closer look reveals that these vectors are more likely supplement each other. Reforming an existing State acts as a tool or tactic for the development of society and establishing an anarchist society is a common goal or strategy. And since these vectors in Kropotkin's views do not contradict each other, but organically complement each other, I allowed myself to apply the term "anarcho-reformism" to his later socio-political views as a scientific interpretation of one of the directions of anarchism of Peter Kropotkin.

## **Ole Sandberg**

### **Finding Satisfaction in Life: Kropotkin on Human Nature, Morality, and Joy**

Toward the end of his life, Kropotkin set out to write his philosophical magnum opus, *Ethics – its Origins and Development*. Here he engages with the history of moral philosophy while laying out the foundations of his own thoughts on ethics, both as a normative ideal and as something that can, and must, be given a naturalistic explanation. His philosophy was inspired by the appearance of the theory of evolution and build directly upon the works of Charles Darwin who proposed that the development of social instincts must have allowed some animals to live together and thrive in social groups. Without these, mutual aid, would be unlikely. This is the foundation for the further development of ethical sentiments which can be expanded to include a sense of justice and finally what Kropotkin considered “true morality.” True morality for Kropotkin can be altruistic but not in a way that is self-sacrificing in a Nietzschean sense: it is possible when conditions allow an individual who is overflowing with energy to share that energy as an act of joy.

Kropotkin's primary target is the dualistic moralists - especially another Darwinian theorist, T.H. Huxley - who locate the source of ethics outside of human nature, and outside of nature itself. It is necessary for Kropotkin that we do not set up a false contrast between biological instincts and ethics - that either leads to self-loathing or cynical nihilism, a rejection of one's own body or of moral behavior. We must, he insists, find moral satisfaction in *life*. To illustrate the modern relevance, I will show how Kropotkin's critique of Huxley applies to contemporary thinkers like Richard Dawkins who claims that human nature is nothing but aggressive selfishness and must be transcended and repressed by a rational will. This view is ironic given its similarity with certain Christian dogma and Dawkins' position as a firebrand atheist. The repression of bodily instincts represents the life-denying asceticism that the atheist philosopher Nietzsche saw as the worst element of Christianity – one that can continue even after the rejection of “God.” Kropotkin died before he finished the final chapter of *Ethics*, which was intended to engage with Nietzsche's



anti-moralism, but we can find traces of his thoughts elsewhere. These indicate that even though they fundamentally disagreed politically, Kropotkin shares with Nietzsche the belief that life and (human) nature should be affirmed and celebrated.

**David Saunders**

### **Kropotkin, the Logishin Affair, and the Case for Anarchism**

One of Kropotkin's five 'Letters on Russia' in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* in 1881-2 centred on a storm which erupted at various levels in the Russian Empire in the 1870s after the Governor of the province of Minsk attempted to expropriate the land of the villagers of Logishin (Lahišyn, in what is now south-west Belarus). Kropotkin told the tale to his Newcastle readers by way of conveying his hostility to tsarist administrators (and perhaps to bureaucrats in general). His conclusion was that, 'If it were known in Europe what our unfortunate people suffer from such miscreants [as the Governor of Minsk],' foreigners would not ask why Russian revolutionaries had recently killed the tsar. Sergei Stepniak took more or less the same line in *The Russian Peasantry* in 1888; Kropotkin returned to the story in both the English and the Russian versions of his autobiography; and two modern scholars, one of them with significant archival support, have also echoed the 'anarchist prince'. Yet the conclusion Kropotkin drew on the basis of the Logishin affair was surely illogical, for the reason it was in the Russian-language press at the time he spoke in Newcastle was that the case of the governor in question had reached the Russian Senate and, having already been moved on from his governorship, the governor was on course for dismissal from the tsarist service altogether. In other words, the tsarist system had for once proved equal to the task of punishing a 'miscreant', and some bureaucrats were to be applauded for doing the right thing. Additional archival evidence, furthermore, paints the villagers of Logishin in what, from the point of view of an anarchist, was a less than heroic light, for it makes out that religious considerations played as large a part as the question of landownership in their resistance to the depredations of their governor. Although anarchists tend to find organized religion just as oppressive as large-scale systems of governance, the inhabitants of Logishin in the nineteenth century seem to have found it vital. Thus the paper concludes (1) that Kropotkin chose a poor example to support his hostility to bureaucrats (2) his insight into the drivers of village society was less than complete, and (3) in view of the way in which he recycled his account of the Logishin affair in later publications, he never became the attractively rounded theoretician of anarchism that he can sometimes be thought to be.

**Pascale Siegrist**

### **Kropotkin's World**

This paper is an attempt to read Kropotkin as a global thinker. Taking his early training and practical experience as a geographer as a starting point, the paper offers an interpretation of Kropotkin that stresses his commitment to a universalising notion of science as well as a Humboldtian cosmological vision. Such a reading then allows me to reevaluate how Kropotkin thought about typically 'anarchist' issues such as revolutionary agency, diversity, and local initiative and sought to place them within his global vision.

To undergird my argument, I take a closer look at Kropotkin's world. By this, I mean to situate his thought within the larger historical processes that marked the end of the nineteenth century – the age of the 'first' globalisation if you will – but, more importantly, also through a careful reconstruction of his immediate intellectual context. Pointing to his collaboration with other anarchists and geographers, I connect his thinking to that especially of Élisée Reclus: For the latter, the notion of a 'global consciousness' was central to how he imagined the transformation of the relationship between humankind and nature – and eventually that of people all over the world to each other.

### **Shangshang Wang**

#### **Making Sense of Plants and Animals: Intellectual Dynamics of Sino-Japanese Evolutionary Imagination, 1906-1945**

Having emerged trans-imperially through Russo-Japanese intellectual relations, the idea of mutual aid emerged in a drastic contrast to social Darwinism based either on the harsh views of Herbert Spencer or Japanese authors such as Katō Hiroyuki and Oka Asajirō. Mutual aid represented for political radicals in China and Japan an alternative yet vibrant motor of a progressive historical temporality, dismissing both the force of struggle and competition in Darwinist evolutionary theory and a centralized state and imperial autonomy. Almost at the same time, political radicals in China and Japan developed strong interests in anarchist thinking that underlie writings on geography and biological evolution.

My research analyzes anarchist evolutionary imagination by focusing on early twentieth-century Sino-Japanese translingual practices and intellectual exchange. Utilizing an in-depth empirical study of anarchist writings and a synthesis of social and intellectual history, it highlights how transnational political activists developed concrete ideals of Élisée Reclus' and Pëtr Kropotkin's anarchist ideas of nature—through studying organism, plants, and animals—at conceptual and societal levels in a global age of nationalism. Drawing upon interdisciplinary insights from the history of science and global intellectual history, my dissertation reveals an anarchist reading of a decentralized nature that, from microbiology to cosmology, negotiated forms of knowledge on the evolution and interspecies relationships.

Moreover, it unearths how anarchists envisioned evolutionary mutual aid as a globally synchronic endeavor of cooperation to facilitate institutional transformation, thereby challenging Japanese imperialism and state-centered science of control.

**James Willis**

### **Kropotkin's Abolition of Fear: Imagining a Mystical Anarchy after Religion**

Kropotkin's antagonism toward Christianity and organized religion stemmed from a deep suspicion of the triumvirate of power exercised in the state, law courts, and the church. That is, mutual symbiosis of these three made complicit a blinding exercise of power instilled through educational manipulation. In short, one of Kropotkin's legacies (and, arguably, ethical challenges) involves unpeeling the backdrops to modern state power implemented through mutually-beneficial institutions. A century after his death, and indeed a century which went on to see unmatched bloodshed, technological advance, and state transformation, violence - in its different registers - is imprinted in the name of this triumvirate and solidified in the actions of average citizens. Whether through policing, crushing capitalism, or simple capitulation to exploitation, what underpins them all is the power of fear. Such fear is particularly useful in the scope of religious belief for, as one of Kropotkin's modern interpreters, Newman (2019), argues we are filling the "empty place of transcendence left vacant by the collapse of the theological world" (p. 131). This gap is no mere death of God, but rather a reconfiguration of debt and guilt as highlighted by Newman (2019) and other of Kropotkin's interpreters, Graeber (2011). Fear is the currency which binds together the religio-political reconfiguration, so it is worth asking if it is possible to imagine a future with Kropotkin's abolition of fear.

Without entering into the foray about so-called "Axial Religions," if we can generalize a bit about the traditions which emerged at very similar times in human history and formed the major religions of today, we might also make some conclusions about the building of society (McCullough, 2014). Today, Axial Religions span global belief, yet there is a common underpinning of fear and violence of debts which must be repaid. Whether originating in the Abrahamic, Brahmanic, or Confucian systems, which have different starting points about whether humans are fundamentally flawed, each involves a formulaic way to salvation: respectively, through being saved by the grace and actions of God, the escape from karmic cycles of rebirth, or through the perfectibility of humanness through good governance. At the heart of these systems is an act of exchange, an action, belief, or compliance which then enacts an outcome. Each of these can be a catalyst for exploitation because they all presume a debt which must be repaid (Graeber, 2011). Fear is the currency which binds together Axial Religions because it serves as the attendant

guilt and anxiety to thread together the exchange to repay the ephemeral debt of existence.

Here, I wish to explore if there is a way to tie together Landauer's (2010) potent, but arguably not fully worked out, idea of *mystical anarchy*, particularly as it relates to Kropotkin's abolition of fear. In other words, if we take Kropotkin at his word and re-educate away from violence and fear, what is left in the life of the divine? For if we take seriously his notions of emancipation, which are beyond "a vengeful God" (p. 123) and outside the corruption of the state and exploitative ordering, might mystical anarchy show what is after religion?

**Portnova Natalia Yurievna**

### **Dmitrov letters of P. Kropotkin (out of the funds of Dmitrov Kremlin State Museum-Preserve)**

The letters written in The epistolary heritage of P. A. Kropotkin is extremely large and insufficiently researched, it is of great interest to researchers of his scientific heritage. The English researcher J. Slatter assumed that the total number of letters that have only been preserved is about two thousand (Slatter J. Letters of P. A. Kropotkin as a historical source / / Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference dedicated to the 150th anniversary of the birth of P. A. Kropotkin. M., 2002. Issue 4. pp. 158-178.).

Few researchers of the life of P. A. Kropotkin turned to his letters. There are many reasons for this: a large number of letters themselves, a diverse geography of both recipients and the archives in which they are stored, the use of several languages both in the entire correspondence and within one letter.

To date, about a thousand letters of Kropotkin have been published to about 85 recipients. The largest publication contains 376 letters of Kropotkin to Maria Isidorovna Goldsmith, as well as to several other persons [Anarchistes en exil, 1995]. The well-known two-volume collection of letters of the Kropotkin brothers [Kropotkins P. and A., 1932-1933] contains 140 letters of P. A. Kropotkin to his brother and 62 response letters. Thirty-five letters to the Canadian economist, professor of the University of Toronto James Mayvor for 1886-1901 [The anarchist Prince, 1996].

the period from the summer of 1918 up to February of 1921 are of special interest, since at that very time P. Kropotkin lived in Dmitrov.