Struggle or Mutual Aid: Jane Addams, Petr Kropotkin, and the Progressive Encounter with Social Darwinism

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THE YEAR IS 1901. Two minor celebrities from opposite corners of the globe share an evening meal in Chicago. Both are politically left-leaning, both are evolutionists of a sort, both are concerned with the plight of the poor in the face of the escalation of the Industrial Revolution. The Russian man has been giving a series of lectures to the people of Chicago; he is staying at the American woman's settlement house—Hull House. They are Jane Addams, Chicago's activist social worker and Petr Kropotkin, Russian nobleman by birth, anarchist in politics, and naturalist by inclination. Each awaits publication of their first full-length book concerning politics and moral development: *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902) on Addams's part and *Mutual Aid* (1902) on Kropotkin's. They discuss the status of moral development at the dawn of the twentieth century over dinner at Hull House.

Odds are, such a meeting took place. Kropotkin, on his second tour of the United States, was indeed a week-long guest at Hull House in Chicago. Throughout the week Kropotkin gave lectures on "mutual aid" to various Chicago area organizations. The lectures Kropotkin gave were drawn from the essays he had published in *The Nineteenth Century* over the past seven years, essays which would shortly appear in book form, as *Mutual Aid*. I initially had hoped that an archival search would reveal telling discussions of evolutionary matters between Addams and Kropotkin. What I found in written documents were travel arrangements and complimentary thank-you notes—documents that did not further the analysis and provided no delicious details of those discussions. So it remains a task for thoughtful conjecture as to how those discussions illuminated the influence and the fine controversies of nineteenth-century evolutionary social thought. This article proposes to draw from their known writings to speculate on the substance of those conversations—what were their grounds of agreement; on what points

might they have differed from each other? The comparative analysis can help us understand the power, shape, and application of evolutionary arguments on the moral discourse of the time and how those ideas of evolution shaped Addams's and Kropotkin's opinions on religion, ethics, and politics.

Both Addams and Kropotkin admired Darwin and the growing prestige of science in the modern world. But both tended to read Darwin through the lens of other Darwinists of their day who allowed for some form of moral teleology to exist in the natural world. Both Addams and Kropotkin held that mutuality in relationships was the heart of ethical commitments. One, Addams, called this mutuality in relationship "democracy"; the other, Kropotkin, saw it exemplified in the informal relationships of the village community. Though both Addams and Kropotkin deplored the individualist virtue (that simply seemed to be another name for selfishness) propounded by Herbert Spencer's natural and scientific ethic, both needed Spencer's unilineal account of history to tell the progressive moral tale that was ultimately important to them both.

Jane Addams, an undersung member of the first generation of American pragmatists, believed that human moral relationships were changing as the conditions of American society became less rural-agricultural and more urban-industrial. She busied herself with the task of understanding and participating in the new kinds of moral relationships such a changing scene called into development, for better or worse. She had high hopes that if these new relations evolved thoughtfully, the United States would progress toward fulfillment of its democratic ideals. Kropotkin thought that industrial society, as nourished by the modern nation-state, fostered a new ethos in which each person looked to individual interests in a spirit of cold-hearted competition. This struggle of all against all, he felt, was endangering a tremendously important aspect of human history and moral development—the tendency of living things to be sociable and care for each other.

Darwinism raised many moral issues in the human social context of the late nineteenth century. Did the natural world provide a basis or model for moral action for human beings? Would the authority of science come to replace the authority of theology? What could be said about human nature from a Darwinist perspective and did that mesh with the theological anthropology of the day? Were human beings more fundamentally committed to communion or to combat with each other? Was the natural moral law one of competition or of cooperation?

Nineteenth century understandings of evolution predate Darwin's ideas. At the beginning of the century, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and Thomas Mal-

thus made influential contributions that shaped Darwin's ideas and shaped the ideas of the other "Darwinists" even more. Lamarck argued that the environment shaped the characteristics of the organisms that lived within it. Those acquired characteristics could then be inherited by the offspring of those who had been changed by their environment. Malthus, arguing along lines prefigured by Hobbes and Adam Smith, held that population increased geometrically while food supplies increased arithmetically. This meant that population would always outstrip the available means for sustenance, causing a universal struggle for the necessities of life which pitted individual against individual in a dire contest for survival.

Herbert Spencer considered himself an evolutionist, coined the phrase "survival of the fittest," and published on the subject six years before Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* appeared in 1859. Spencer was a good fit for the niche he found and filled in American culture where his influence exceeded that of Darwin, though Darwin is more frequently credited with the inspiration (Hofstadter 5). His individualism, optimism, and faith in progress encouraged his American admirers to think of him as an ally. Spencer accepted Lamarck's view about the inheritance of acquired characteristics; it was central to Spencer's optimistic belief in social progress; he held to it long after the view began to be discredited (Boller 50). Spencer envisioned a unification of all fields of knowledge under one common basis which would eventually lead to a "science of ethics." Morality, in Spencer's view, would be "that which contributed to humanity's better adaptation and . . . higher evolution" (qtd. in Himmelfarb 400). This process of change had a direction—one that moved from primitive to complex. "Progress," in this view "is not an accident, but a necessity;" this necessary progress was "of a piece with the development of the embryo or the unfolding of a flower" (qtd. in Himmelfarb 400). Spencer's speculations contained a teleological thread that Darwin himself was less eager to follow.

Spencer's "evolution" offered a metaphysical basis for developmental change where Darwin's natural selection did not. The implicit ethical message in Spencer's brand of Darwinism is, on the one hand, optimism about the direction in which the future is headed, and on the other hand, tragic determinism and fatalism about the necessary destructive consequences. Moral people on the evolutionary escalator might sincerely regret the unfortunate consequences of historical progress for "less fit" others, however, fitness remains tied to morality in this view. But Spencer misconceived what Darwin meant by the term "fittest." From Darwin's perspective, the meaning of fitness depends on the environment at hand. It may mean the presence of "moral" dispositions, such

as the disposition to care for one's young as an aid to survival. It may mean the presence of "immoral" dispositions, such as the behavioral predisposition to ruthless competition in some resource-scarce environments, or it may depend on some totally amoral characteristic of an individual organism, such as greenness in a particular environment. Survival of the fittest, at least as Darwin describes it, is an amoral process; that is, it is randomly related to morality.

In Spencer's view, the role of social scientists would be to chart "the normal course of social evolution" and "to overrule all types of behavior that interfere with it." Social science, suggested Spencer, should "teach men to submit . . . to the dynamic factors in progress" (qtd. in Hofstadter 43–44). If governments interfered with the natural processes of growth in society they would hamper social progress. There was no quick fix for social inequality, only a natural evolutionary one, for which human beings needed to wait patiently (7). Of the poor he said: "If they are not sufficiently complete to live, they die; and it is best they should die." "The whole effort of nature," explained Spencer, "is to get rid of such, to clear the world of them, and make room for better" (41).

Darwin was surprised and disappointed to find out that people thought he was recommending a social ethic that implied that might equaled right. Darwin thought that human moral sentiments and solidarity were among the highest of human capacities. In an ironic comment in a letter to the geologist Charles Lyell, he complained, "I have proved 'might is right,' and therefore that Napoleon is right, and every cheating tradesman is also right" (qtd. in Hofstadter 85). But in fact, Darwin believed that a ruthless policy of indifference toward the fates of weaker organisms would betray "the noblest part of our nature" (95).

Industrialists in America were excited to vindicate the moral rectitude of economic strength. They eagerly embraced the social implications of Spencerian Darwinism. Andrew Carnegie had his version of the principle:

> The price which society pays for the law of competition is . . . great; but the advantages of this law are also greater still than its cost—for it is to this law that we owe our wonderful material development, which brings improved conditions in its train. But whether the law be benign or not, we must say of it: . . . It is here; we cannot evade it; no substitutes for it have been found; and while the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department. We accept and welcome, therefore, as conditions to which we must accommodate ourselves, great inequality of environment; the concentration of business, industrial and commer-

> cial, in the hands of a few; and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial, but essential to the future progress of the race. (qtd. in Boller 54–55)

Said John D. Rockefeller along the same lines:

> The growth of a large business is merely a survival of the fittest . . . . The American Beauty rose can be produced in the splendor and fragrance which bring cheer to its beholder only by sacrificing the early buds which grow up around it. This is not an evil tendency in business. It is merely the working-out of a law of nature and a law of God. (qtd. in Hofstadter 45)

Spencerian Darwinism could apparently turn even industrialists temporarily into theologians. But it was not only fiscal conservatives who relied on Spencerian interpretations. Social Gospel theologians who leaned politically toward the left and, to varying degrees, toward socialism also appropriated it to shore up the metaphysics behind their faith in social reform and history. "Translate the evolutionary theories into religious faith," explained Social Gospel proponent Walter Rauschenbusch, "and you have the doctrine of the Kingdom of God" (qtd. in Hofstadter 108).

Thomas Henry Huxley, "Darwin's bulldog," gradually came to believe that seeing ethics as natural teleological development was a huge mistake. Huxley thought ethics and Darwinism were working at odds to each other. He enthusiastically embraced the idea of natural selection as an accurate account of the way biological change happened over time, but warned against extending this paradigm to natural theology and ethics. Huxley was a deeply moral thinker. He urged others to preserve human moral traditions, not by merging evolution and ethics, but by preserving distinctions between them. Alarmed at the increasingly disturbing implications of Spencerian ethics in industrial society, he feared the individualism of Spencer and his emphasis on unrestricted struggle for existence; he also feared the eugenicists who tried to propound social ideas of "fitness" as "goodness" disclosed by nature. Morality, he thought, was a matter human beings needed to stand guard over. Whatever else the process of evolution was, he decided, it furnished no guide to morality. In matters of human ethics he looked for survival—not of the fittest—but of the moral best. It was not a matter of imitating natural process, nor of evading the truth of natural process, but he thought in the end, of fighting it.

T. H. Huxley had his detractors. Kropotkin was a major dissenter from the views T. H. Huxley expressed in "The Struggle for Existence in Human

Society." Kropotkin was provoked to articulate his theory of the importance of mutual aid in the natural world in response to Huxley's characterization of a gladiatorial nature. Furious that Huxley did not give enough notice to the many instances in which individual species members aided each other in the struggle for survival and fared the better for it, Kropotkin wrote, "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 of his leading ideas, made of it an argument in favour of Hobbes's views . . ." (*Mutual Aid* 77–78). Kropotkin rebelled against the implications at which he thought scientists wrongly arrived: science claimed to show "that the struggle of each against all is the leading principle of nature, and of human societies as well" (228). But this was just wrong, according to Kropotkin. In his affronted rebuttal to Huxley, *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin claimed that species survive more by cooperation in harsh environments than by competition for the resources for survival. Though he conceded that there was "an immense amount of warfare" going on in the natural world, there was he thought "as much, or perhaps even more, of mutual support . . ." (5).

Was this a view Darwin himself would have supported, Kropotkin's detractors asked? Why of course, responded Kropotkin. Darwin had never meant "struggle for survival" in a strictly literal sense. Darwin had written that while struggle may literally mean war between individuals in a few instances, "struggle" was usually a metaphor. According to Darwin, there were "cases in which the weaker species . . . may prevail by its power of more rapid multiplication, its better withstanding vicissitudes of climate, or its greater cunning in escaping the attacks of common enemies" (qtd. in Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid* 62). In such cases what is described as competition may be no competition at all" (Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid* 62). This mutual support and the sociability it made possible put "a limit to physical struggle" and left "room for the development of better moral feelings," from a human perspective (59). Kropotkin saw cooperation modeled in the natural world all around him in his Russian landscape, rather than violence and aggression.

One should be clearer than Kropotkin was in pointing out that Huxley did not, in fact, hold a view that suggested that gladiatorial struggle for survival was a Nature-condoned ethic for human beings to follow. Huxley abhorred an ethic of brutal competition every bit as much as Kropotkin did. Huxley simply suggested that the model for human ethics should not be drawn from what he viewed as a Malthusian natural world. Kropotkin held that Malthus was mistaken. This view of the biological world was a slander against Nature; organisms rarely reached "anything approaching to

over-population . . ." (*Mutual Aid* 70). He abhorred what many followers of Darwin were assuming to be the moral message of Malthusianism—"that men can, and must, seek their own happiness in a disregard of other people's wants . . ." (228). Ethics, Kropotkin felt, should be drawn from inductive reasoning based upon observation of the natural world; he thought that when humans rightly viewed the rest of nature, they would see that mutual aid was the engine for social progress. All the "highest," most intelligent species, he claimed—ants, parrots, and chimpanzees—were social animals who aided their own in the struggle for survival. "The fittest," he claimed, "are thus the most sociable animals . . ." (58). Kropotkin disagreed not with Huxley's ethics, but with his view of nature.

Kropotkin based his conclusions on a study of the frozen Siberian wilderness, and came to different conclusions than did Darwin and Wallace, who based their studies on the tropical environment, teeming with life. As Daniel Todes and other historians of Russian science point out, part of the differing emphases between Anglo-American evolutionists and Russian evolutionists can be attributed to their differing experiences when examining differing slices of the natural world (142). Darwin and Wallace famously spent much time studying a tropical setting, but most Russian naturalists studied the steppes of Siberia, vast and uncrowded by living organisms, with a climate hostile to many forms of life. This made for differing characterizations of the natural world.

Kropotkin's claim was not an unusual one or an original one in the 19th century Russian context (Todes 123). Russian naturalists followed Darwin's work closely and admired it, but most felt that Darwin's thinking was unfortunately tainted by a Malthusian bias that they viewed as typical of Anglo-American thinkers. Kropotkin was careful to defend Darwin's views against the Darwinists, even when Darwin was indeed guilty of a Malthusian emphasis Kropotkin deplored. Though Darwin understood the limitations of Malthusian struggle, Kropotkin explained, he fell under the idea's influence too much, for example in his "remarks as to the alleged inconveniences of maintaining the 'weak in mind and body' in our civilized societies" (qtd. in *Mutual Aid* 3). This mistake, from Kropotkin's point of view, was explainable due to Darwin's largely tropical experience and his unfortunate British bias.

But Kropotkin was subtly changing another of Darwin's emphases; Kropotkin emphasized the role of the group rather than the individual in his applications of Darwin's theories. Kropotkin argued that

> while fully admitting that force, swiftness, protective colours, cunningness, and endurance to hunger and cold, which are mentioned by Darwin and Wallace 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. (*Mutual Aid* 57) (emphasis added)

Darwin's idea of natural selection was about the relationship between individual organisms, but Kropotkin's interest in the group, rather than the individual, led him to soft pedal, then divert Darwin's original emphasis, as shown above in the way he finessed the substitution of "species" for "individual."

The main planks of Kropotkin's view of evolution are five: 1) the emphasis upon struggle with the environment rather than struggle between individuals, 2) the role of migration and isolation of species groups, 3) an emphasis upon group, rather than individual organism characteristics, 4) the direct action of environment in changing living organisms, and 5) the inheritance of acquired characteristics. Kropotkin further differed from Darwin in that he felt there was a central and essential element to evolutionary processes.

Most evolutionists missed this essential element; in arguing for "the pitiless law of struggle for existence," he explained, "they forget . . . the law of mutual aid" which was "far more essential than the former" (Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid* 7). This essential element was present in the earliest forms of human society. Those evolutionists who "thought of primitive man as of a beast who lived only by snatching . . . from the mouth of his fellowmen" (Kropotkin, *Modern Science*) missed the essence of living development present from origin to end—mutual aid—remote in its origin, "maintained . . . up to the present . . . , notwithstanding all vicissitudes of history" (*Mutual Aid*, 223). "The ethical progress of our race" told a story of "a gradual extension of the mutual-aid principles from the tribe to always larger and larger agglomeration, so as to finally embrace one day the whole of mankind . . ." (224). In each evolutionary "return to this old principle [of mutual aid] . . . its fundamental idea itself was widened" (299). "Colonies," Kropotkin argued, "are at the very origin of evolution. . . . As we ascend the scale of evolution, we see association growing more and more conscious. It loses its purely physical character, it ceases to be simply instinctive, it becomes reasoned" (53). With each historical refinement of the principle of mutual aid, humankind progresses toward its ultimate end.

> Neither the crushing powers of the centralized State nor the teachings of mutual hatred and pitiless struggle which came, adorned with the attributes of science, from obliging philosophers and sociologists, could weed out the feeling of human solidarity, deeply lodged in men's understanding and heart, because it has been nurtured by all our preceding evolution. What was the outcome of evolution since its earliest stages

> cannot be overpowered by one of the aspects of that same evolution. (Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid* 292)

Thus did the principle of mutual aid ultimately defeat the Malthusian "struggle for existence": "in the long run the practice of solidarity proved much more advantageous to the species than the development of individuals endowed with predatory inclinations" (Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid* 17–18). Unfolding history would vindicate Kropotkin's ethics naturalistically.

Jane Addams, unlike Kropotkin, had no experience as a biologist, zoologist, or naturalist. She loved science as a girl, started a Science Club at Rockford Seminary, and dabbled in taxidermy with her stepbrother during her college days. She invited lecturers to Hull House to teach about current scientific theories of the origin of the universe. Her writings show the influence of Auguste Comte. Comte thought that society moved inevitably in a progression beginning with a theological basis, moving to a metaphysical basis, and ultimately finding a correct and scientific basis. He argued that human society can ultimately be understood through a social science of humanity and religious thought will ultimately culminate in a religion devoid of theology or metaphysics—a religion of humanity. Though Comte has an influential story about progress, his writings predate Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. But Addams's picture of progress comes partly from his ideas.

Jane Addams's understanding of Darwin's ideas arrived filtered through American culture. Her writings show that she is thinking incessantly about "evolution," but the writings don't show direct engagement with Darwin's main texts. Rather, she seems to imbibe what she takes to be the premises of Darwinism through the broader American cultural milieu. Addams's conception of "evolution" is as much a product of Victorian evolutionary social thought as it is of Darwin's conception of natural selection. To a large extent she, like most Americans of her day, interprets Darwin through the lens of Herbert Spencer, and in so doing, comes up with a unilineal and progressive picture of human moral and social development. It is worth noticing that such a picture made a bit more sense then than it does now, given that knowledge about the mechanics of genetic inheritance was in its infancy and largely unknown at the time. The possibilities for the inheritance of acquired characteristics put forward by Lamarck also still seemed to be more an open question in her day than they became later. There is often an implied teleology to her evolutionary view, though Addams makes little or no distinction between genetic inheritance and the inheritance of cultural habits. What is

implied is a sense of morality that coexists with the natural world and that lacks any appeal to supernatural powers or a dualistic metaphysic. Spencer's writings on egoism and altruism were clearly on her mind, as well as his categories of military society versus industrial society. Addams's views were further influenced by Hegelian idealism as presented to her in the writings of Edward Caird (*The Evolution of Religion*, 1893) and John Dewey. Addams enjoyed a close intellectual companionship with John Dewey (Seigfried, "Socializing Democracy"); throughout the decade of the 1890s, both became less Hegelian idealists and more Darwinian American pragmatists during the course of their friendship in Chicago.

Addams's 1902 publication *Democracy and Social Ethics* explained how social relationships were evolving. Past moral codes, Addams explained, had in part persevered into the present under changed circumstances; the percentage of the population who were recent immigrants to the United States was as high as it had ever been—the growth of industry seemed to know no bounds. Those changed and still changing circumstances in turn altered the kind of morality that would be "fit" to them. Addams examines a number of relationships of power inequality: the charity worker and the poor immigrant, fathers and daughters, wives and their domestic servants, corporate labor and management, teachers and students, politicians and voters. Addams argues that all these relationships were changing in a way that was progressing toward a humanistic Christianity and a democratic ideal. Addams's concern in *Democracy and Social Ethics* is to help people understand in detail the moral worlds of those whose lives were concealed from them by the blinders of differing social class or generation.

Addams disdained a "survival of the fittest" ethic as much as Kropotkin did. She resisted the standard American interpretation of what Darwinism implied morally in the American Gilded Age industrial context—a survival of the fittest where "fittest" seemed to mean the most profitable in business and the most successfully ruthless in competition. It is clear to a reader that Addams is quite aware of American industrialist appropriations of "the evolutionary sciences" to justify their accumulation of wealth. This gospel of wealth, aggression, and polarization of the social classes was anathema to the Christian sense of morality Addams inherited both from her father and from her readings of her Christian hero Leo Tolstoy. Addams developed her own moral framework for confronting the excesses of the laissez-faire industrialist appropriations of Herbert Spencer's evolutionary ethics. Industries owned by the likes of Carnegie and Rockefeller had caused so much of the misery she saw in the Chicago immigrant populations that Hull House served. Her

argumentative tack against their individualistic ethos is not a head-on one; rather she tries to argue that industrialists have drawn the wrong conclusions from the correct evolutionary premises.

Aspects of Addams's evolutionary thinking include the insight that ethics is fundamentally relational (Seigfried, "Introduction" xiv). Biologically speaking, the organism survives in an environment; both organism and environment can vary over time. A change in either variable element implies that a corresponding change might possibly be needed in the other for survival. By metaphoric extension of this biological paradigm to ethics, the ethic survives in a social context. Both an individual's sense of the good and social context can vary over time. The ethic must "fit" the environment. The environment in turn shapes personal character. For reform Darwinists such as Addams, human poverty was not caused by individual sin or defect but is rather shaped by environmental conditions (Piott 62). She speaks the language of ethical survivals and ethical vestiges. There is the distinct possibility that an ethic can survive its usefulness to the person who holds it or the group that nurtures and favors it and can become counterproductive. She explains: "To fail to apprehend the tendency of one's age, and to fail to adapt the conditions of an industry to it, is to leave that industry ill-adjusted and belated on the economic side, and out of line ethically" (*Democracy and Social Ethics* 62). It was also possible, Addams thought, to change the social environment through human efforts when necessary in order to favor the survival of a treasured ethic. And for human beings, an extremely salient portion of that environment was other human beings.

Addams believed that nature confirmed a model of altruism that was more primordial than aggression. "The evolutionists tell us," she wrote, "that the instinct to pity, the impulse to aid his fellows, served man at a very early period, as a rude rule of right and wrong" (*Democracy and Social Ethics* 14–15). She argues this because she believes that the human urge to provide for and nurture their children and their community in the earliest tribal communities, centered on women in her view, predated the beginnings of militarism (Curti 245). Whether or not the claim has merit, Addams's belief in a primordial altruism bears distinct family resemblances to Kropotkin's idea of an essential instinct of living things toward mutual aid.

Of the two, Kropotkin was far more familiar with both the actual writings of Darwin and with the practice of naturalist observation. Kropotkin's naturalist activities involved fieldwork and published monographs in the science journals of his day; Addams's familiarity was limited to readings of well-known texts in college and explorations of taxidermy with her stepbrother. Neither

thinker tolerates more than a passing nod to the elements of randomness in natural selection. Both will occasionally point to aspects of chance and luck and acknowledge them to exist in a peripheral way, but neither thinker gives them a central place in the process of natural selection.

In Kropotkin's view the natural world was a progressive one, but this directional change was a natural and mechanical process. His picture of evolution was gradual, as Darwin's was, and unidirectional, as Darwin's was not. Kropotkin was able to believe in directional progress because he was a committed and self-conscious Lamarckian. He believed that the environment directly influenced and changed organisms and that the changes individual members of a species underwent in their lifetimes would be inherited in the next generation of the species.

At the heart of any human reflection on the social implications of Darwinism lies the relationship of the organism and the environment in which it lives. This translated into reflection upon the relationship of the many to the one and the place of the individual and the group. For Kropotkin, the individual was the individual living organism and the group was the species or clan. The environment, as he thought about these matters, was the abiotic terrain and conditions in which the species survived. Addams, on the other hand, tended to think of other people as part of the given social environment. If environment largely meant climate to Kropotkin, environment largely meant society to Addams. Others have pointed out how Addams falls within a pragmatist tradition that views human intelligence as developing out of efforts to solve the problems that human organisms have with their environments (Seigfried, "Introduction" x). I will highlight how Addams's view, like the other originating pragmatists' views, draws on her difficulties with Spencerian interpretations of Darwinian natural selection, even as she turns to Spencer in other elements of her account.

Kropotkin tended to view accounts of evolution as accounts about the changes species underwent over time; in this assumption he failed to recognize that Darwin's innovation to evolutionary thinking was about changes in individual organisms, not species groups. On this subject, both Darwin and Kropotkin could be seen as products of their own cultural biases in terms of aspects of evolution they chose to emphasize. Darwin and Spencer both emphasized the individual; Russian evolutionists tended to emphasize the social group, be it species of bird or human tribal clan.

Addams's Darwinism, like Kropotkin's, emphasizes the role of the environment. Personal traits, she explained, vary given the conditions in which they necessarily grow. "This evolutionary principle . . . is fast being applied

to . . . the development of the child"; we should "expect certain traits under certain conditions . . ." (*Social Ethics* 32). Not only should we expect to grow certain sorts of people in particular kinds of environments; human beings, unlike most animals, could alter the environment in which human beings grew quite consciously through the right kind of educational processes. For humans, the organism-environment interaction was a back and forth process, open to feedback and both terms variable.

But while Addams and Kropotkin both paid attention to the role of environment in moral development, however differently they understood that term, they differed greatly in the valuation of the individual. Kropotkin constantly tried to deemphasize the role of the individual. It was "utterly false," he wrote, "to represent primitive mankind as a disorderly agglomeration of individuals, who only obey their individual passions. . . ." The individual in Kropotkin's moral vocabulary meant selfishness. "Unbridled individualism is a modern growth," he declaimed, "but it is not characteristic of primitive mankind" (*Mutual Aid* 88). Emphasis upon the individual was a false turn in the story of human moral development.

Addams, like Kropotkin, opposed a Spencerian emphasis on the individual. But, unlike Kropotkin, Addams nonetheless spoke of the importance of the individual moral variant. As Charlene Haddock Seigfried writes, Addams exemplified the pragmatist view that "rejects ethical systems, whether determinist, materialist, or utilitarian, that exaggerate the power of the environment to shape or determine human values or that subsume the good of individual persons to the good of the whole society" ("Introduction" xiv). The individual who brought something new to society was more than just a quirky mutant in Addams's view. "Progress must always come through the individual," she reminded her readers, "who varies from the type and has sufficient energy to express this variation" (*Democracy and Social Ethics* 71). Emergent ethical values would first be manifest in an individual before becoming widely accepted by a whole society. The new value might make for either moral advance or for moral regression; the moral valence would remain to be tested in the wider social environment. But without variation, without individuals who brought forward something new (or who held out against the crowd for the sake of something old and threatened), nothing changed. This correlates in Addams's American context with a valuation of pluralistic difference. According to Addams, the individual formulated "a certain scruple which the others share, but have not yet defined even to themselves" (72). Her conception of an individual moral variant owes more to Emerson than it does to any understanding of mutations. Addams's posttranscendentalist

view of the natural world retained a romantic valuation of the individual totally missing from Kropotkin's account. But this individual variant, as conceived by Addams, is explicitly not Carlyle's hero or great man (Dewey xx). Addams democratized "great man" thinking further even than Emerson had. She pointed out the difference that the humble citizen made, and the new insight and cultural contribution an immigrant could bring to the table of democratic society. She was looking forward to the contributions that the poor, the non-Anglo-Saxon, and women could make to the wider good. For Addams, though, the individual and the social group interact in important ways. Individuals are constrained by social consent. Ideas and actions instigated by individuals will thrive and develop in the environment or they will not. It is not solely the moral agent that matters. The environment is a testing ground for moral change—the environment sustains certain moral agents or it does not. Addams also believed that when a democratic community shares a minimal, broad consensus grounded in mutual consent concerning what counts as justice, then to the extent of that consensus, the government should secure that justice to its constituents through its laws (Fischer 54).

The role that formal democratic government plays in Jane Addams's story of moral development through history is a positive one. Kropotkin, on the other hand, did not share such a sanguine view of government. As an anarchist, he viewed the state as a big part of the problem when it came to preserving the instincts for mutual aid. Kropotkin argued that the state took community members off the hook in their responsibilities toward each other (*Mutual Aid* 227). Nation-states and their laws transformed what had been "a humane, a brotherly element" with a "formal element" (176). No longer constrained by well-understood and informal social ties and constraints, people began to rely upon the government to meet each other's needs. The government would now supply aid to the individual citizen in matters of justice; community fellows need no longer bother themselves with that obligation.

This detrimental development of the state, in Kropotkin's view, was in part caused by the greed of feudal lords eager to trap peasants in servitude, but he placed most of the blame on the influence that the Roman Empire had on Enlightenment institutions. Village moral ideals were "corrupted by ideas of Roman Caesarism," and eventually they became "prey to . . . military States" (*Mutual Aid* 224). With the "growth of the State on the pattern of Imperial Rome" (294), medieval village communities were gradually killed off. Kropotkin's negative view of Roman culture is not limited to political institutions. It extends to the harms he thought wrought by the Roman Catholic Church.

Kropotkin's objections to the Christian church seem to be centered on three factors: an objection to the church as a hierarchical institution, an objection to its tendencies to embrace supernaturalism, and his bias against the institutions of Roman culture. Concerning the Roman Catholic church he wrote: "The clergy are so anxious to prove that all that comes from human nature is sin, and that all good in man has a supernatural origin, that they mostly ignore the facts which cannot be produced as an example of higher inspiration or grace, coming from above" (*Mutual Aid* 278). Kropotkin even offered his own reinterpretation of the Reformation along lines that conform to his story about the history of the mutual aid instinct. According to him, the Reformation was not simply about the right to interpret Christian scripture for oneself; the Reformation was also about trying to amend political affronts to the mutual aid instinct. The Reformation involved demands that "communal lands [be] restored to the village communities and feudal servitudes [be] abolished" (225). Insofar as the Christian religion had been a friend and ally of the mutual aid instinct, it was a good thing, but clerics and church institutions, he thought, tended to undermine those elements of Christianity. Kropotkin claimed that he had "not the slightest doubt that the great bulk of [the Christian church's] members are moved by the same mutual-aid feelings which are common to all mankind. Unhappily the religious teachers of men prefer to ascribe to such feelings a supernatural origin" (282–83). "The very religion of the pulpit is a religion of individualism," he wrote, "slightly mitigated by more or less charitable relations to one's neighbours, chiefly on Sundays" (228). He was reluctant to equate this instinct to mutual aid to the concept of Christian charity—it was more encompassing than Christianity's message; "instead of the *mutual aid* which every savage considers as due to his kinsman," he complained, the church had "preached *charity* . . . " (283). Christianity had taken what was a natural law of justice between living beings and made it parochial and the product of a supernatural grace.

Jane Addams also held the notion of Christian charity at arm's length. She did so because she thought most Christians understood charity as a kind of philanthropy. Philanthropy, in her view, failed to capture the ways in which one must enter into the lives of others in order to understand their worlds and to be of any genuine help at all. Once philanthropists started to actually live with the neighbors to whom they sought to extend charity, they were likely to find that they learned more and received more from the relationship than they brought to it. Christian concern for the poor was near the center of her understanding of her own religious faith, but "charity" as commonly understood was not the word she would choose to describe that concern.

Addams's religious faith owed a lot to American transcendentalist notions of nature and democracy. Her understanding of the roles of human equality and popular participation in government displayed the influence of Emerson and his advocacy of romantic democratic individualism. This Emersonian-influenced individualism was not about self-centeredness, selfishness, or Horatio Alger bootstrap philosophy. Rather it was about the value each individual held as an irreplaceable part of the whole. Without each person's contribution of their most vital, best ideas and actions, the democracy could not become what it was ultimately meant to be. This understanding of democracy was undergirded by a romantic religious appeal to the over-soul that guaranteed the good of the whole. It also assumed the divinity of nature and each human as a vital part of and contributor to that divinity. Addams saw Christian charity as part of the process of evolution toward the democratic ideal.

Kropotkin, more so than Addams, was concerned to eliminate any remaining elements of supernaturalism in evolutionary views. Addams apparently held a romantic view that love and/or sympathy has some supernatural backing behind it. Kropotkin thought that mutual aid would emerge the winner in the metanarrative of natural history, but he claimed to think that this would be a merely mechanistic process. He had no use for philosophical idealist philosophies that tried to smuggle a spiritual teleology into the natural world.

While Addams was more the avowed Christian than was Kropotkin, her Christianity was far from traditional. She adhered to the generally Protestant social Christianity of her day. She defined this Christianity for herself in a mix of influences. Her dad had been a nonpacifist Quaker who refused to affiliate himself with any particular meeting. While he took Jane to attend several churches, mostly Presbyterian, in her youth, he taught her to reject Calvinist predestinarianism. Jane herself resisted joining any Christian congregation until later in her adult life and even then she did so with mixed feelings about the matter. She resisted pressure to be baptized throughout her women's seminary education and she viewed Moody Bible Institute, a local evangelical educational institution in the vicinity of Hull House, with disdain. After a trip to Europe where she visited the catacombs in Rome, she became fascinated with the earliest Christian communities as she understood them; for her, they exemplified communal courage and self-sacrifice for each other. It was this idealized communal understanding of primordial Christianity that she embraced at the time of her baptism. She further derived her idiosyncratic Christian sensibilities from the evolutionary thinking about religion of Auguste Comte and Edward Caird (Fischer 24). From Comte, she gained

an enthusiasm for a humanistic version of Christianity and through the writings of Edward Caird, she tried to put this Christianity into an evolutionary context. Her peculiar Christian faith was also nourished through wide reading and study of the Christian moral writings of Leo Tolstoy, who exemplified for her someone who made a conscious choice of a Christian life of solidarity with the poor and the ideals of absolute pacifism (Knight 149).

In addition to acting in ways that demonstrated solidarity with the poor, both Kropotkin and Addams agreed that communities of poor workers within the city created social environments in which people retained the habits of caring for each other in ways that seemed foreign to those more taken in by industrial individualism and its unfortunate ethos of the survival of the fittest. Said John Dewey of his friend, "Miss Addams had a deep feeling that the simple, the 'humble' peoples of the earth are those in whom primitive impulses of friendly affection are the least spoiled, the most spontaneous" (Dewey xix). Expressing a similar sentiment, Kropotkin explained that "in the richer parts of the large towns, people live without knowing who are their next-door neighbors. But in the crowded lanes people know each other perfectly." This knowledge paid off morally, Kropotkin argued: "within their circle mutual aid is practised to an extent of which the richer classes have no idea" (*Mutual Aid* 284).

Increasingly the poor tended to reside in city environments that provided them with industrial jobs. Labor was moving from the fields to the urban environment at a before unheard-of rate. Neither Kropotkin nor Addams was particularly critical of the role of technology per se. Both saw promise in it for the future of humankind, once corporate technology's individualistic tendencies were properly corrected and its goals were adjusted to the good of the community as a whole. Addams disliked appropriations of Spencer that condoned corporate selfishness, but she was not opposed to the productive capabilities industry would bring. But if Addams and Kropotkin did not disagree about the role of technology in the history of moral and social development, they did disagree about the extent to which the growth of cities helped the cause of human mutuality. Kropotkin saw the industrial city as a haven for the greedy and selfish individualist—a place where factory owners exploited their workers with impunity (Deegan 262). He saw it as an unfortunate chapter of social development—one to be overcome in a return to small, nonhierarchical communities. Those who argued that industry owed its rapid growth to an increase in the emphasis on the individual, something Spencer argued, were simply wrong. "The sudden industrial progress which has been achieved during our own century . . . which is usually ascribed to

the triumph of individualism and competition," he countered, had "a much deeper origin than that" (*Mutual Aid* 297). Indeed, he felt it had an origin in the mutual aid instinct. Addams, on the other hand, saw the industrial city as a favorable environment for moral progress, given the differing sorts of people it brought into proximity and relationship. She believed that the urban industrial environment, exemplified by Chicago, held underutilized potential for progressive change. Though she bemoaned the state of affairs faced by Chicago's impoverished immigrants, she thought that Chicago sat on the cusp of developing a truly democratic industrial community. Once factory workers and factory owners began to see themselves as fellow citizens responsible to each other, they would become a productive human community where the finest fruits of democracy could flourish. Addams was optimistic about the democratic potential for industrial society, but understood her way—as a nurturing industrial sociality, one that produces rather than destroys (Deegan 262–63). In this assessment she was influenced again by Herbert Spencer's typology of military versus industrial society. Military society was hierarchical, authority driven, and dedicated to destruction; industrial society, he believed was more democratic and productive. Addams, following Spencer's lead, viewed the military framework as inimical to the kind of human thriving she desired. Instead she favored the industrial model Spencer put forward as a flawed but salvageable framework (Fischer 76). The industrial model, she thought, could be socialized when industries learned to become "breadgivers" to society, a nurturing task that women would play no small role in spreading to the larger society once they were released from the private realm and allowed to participate in and influence the public realm.[1]

Addams viewed the Victorian family model as on the way out and the industrial family model as coming into favor; she wanted to extend the domestic ethic from the private sphere to the public sphere (*Democracy and Social Ethics* 62). Both Addams and Kropotkin held a deep distrust of the role that the patriarchal family had played and would play in progressive social development, but for rather different reasons. Addams felt keenly the calling of women to serve and nurture humankind, but she resisted the idea that this service should be limited to a role within a family. Progressive social development, in her view, meant that women would increasingly bring their nurturing natures out of the privacy of the family home and into the public environment as a needed influence upon industrial democracy. Kropotkin's distress over the patriarchal family stemmed from the economic role it had played in social development. He felt that "the separate patriarchal family . . . meant the individual accumulation of wealth and power . . ." (*Mutual*

Aid 120). He saw the development of the patriarchal family from a previously clan-oriented social grouping as an ominous beginning for the development of private property that would be held separately from the good of the community and its commonwealth.

Both Kropotkin and Addams held that the natural world provided examples of the efficacy of both cooperation and competition as survival strategies. Yet both of them went on to emphasize the role of cooperation and de-emphasize the role of competition, in ways that conformed to their respective moral and political inclinations. For Kropotkin this was a matter of showing the undue influence of Malthus in Anglo-American evolutionary thought and correcting it. For Addams, this was a matter of showing how industrial communities could cast aside the militaristic and individualistic vestiges they unwisely clung to so that they then could turn to helping realize human democratic community.

Neither thinker made a sharp distinction between a natural view and a social view. For them both, human beings were a relevant part of the natural world. In ways that depart from a view like Huxley's, neither thinker specified something metaphysically distinctive about the human portion of that natural world. At times Kropotkin did discuss cultural modes of inheritance almost interchangeably with changes inherited biologically and may have blurred the distinction. (As noted previously, Mendelian genetics, though developed in the 1860s, didn't get off the ground until the first decades of the twentieth century.) Sociable life he claimed, "is not imposed, as is the case with ants and bees, by the very physiological structure of the individuals; it is cultivated for the benefits of mutual aid, or for the sake of its pleasures" (*Mutual Aid* 54). He spoke of groups developing habits that become biologically inheritable over time, noting occasions when he observed "a certain collective sense of justice growing to become a habit" (58). There is a not always conscious slippage between moral choices, cultural habits, and inherited genetic tendencies in his writings. Addams, too, saw no culture-nature dualism. She viewed education as a prime example of a cultural phenomenon, but one that was as natural as any other human art. The tendency to educate the next generation was only human nature. Neither person strayed as close to a dualistic picture of a natural world in conflict with a world of human morality as T. H. Huxley did.

Actually, it seems that Kropotkin and perhaps Addams as well wanted to have the best of two conflicting pictures of the natural world. On the one hand, Kropotkin wanted to be intellectually honest enough to admit along with his hero Darwin that there was a certain amount of competitive aggression in the natural world, but he hesitated to point out that this aggressive

impulse sometimes furthered the goals of survival. Once he acknowledged the existence of aggressive instincts, he then minimized this tendency so much that he found a mutual aid instinct to be essential to an unfolding natural story. By seeing a moral model in nature, Kropotkin did stray dangerously close to engaging in the naturalistic fallacy when he tried to derive an "ought" in ethics from an observed "is." One should remember that Herbert Spencer and the American Gilded Age industrialists and theologians of the gospel of wealth who hung on his coattails were also guilty of that same naturalistic fallacy. When Spencer and Huxley looked at nature they saw a different picture than Kropotkin did. But both Spencer and Kropotkin wanted to take the natural world as a moral model, a model that taught them very different lessons, whereas Huxley had wanted to rebel against that model.

Concerning the issue of individual good versus the good of the group, both Kropotkin and Addams tended to emphasize the group, though Addams felt there was a distinct role for the individual to play in the evolutionary scheme. Kropotkin tended to downplay or outright ignore the individual's role. He was ultimately concerned with the good of the species. Addams, however, had a comparable notion of group good particularly shaped for a role in democratic society, which she referred to as lateral progress (Hamington 95, 107). Lateral progress, according to Addams, was a form of social progressivism that was not driven by forceful or aggressive competition, but rather by cooperative human associations that sought improvement for the larger social group instead of for competing individuals. Lateral progress secured a newly achieved good: "without the advance and improvement of the whole no man can hope for any lasting improvement in his own moral or material individual condition" (Addams, "Subjective Necessity" 28). The whole social group must progress, she thought, not just the individual at the expense of his or her fellow citizens. Democratic societies, insofar as they relied upon consent in political affairs, provided a ratchet effect for moral progress in her view. Robbing the group good for the sake of the individual good was a sometimes successful, always immoral short-term strategy for individual success. "An individual may be successful," she explained, "largely because he conserves all his powers for individual achievement and does not put any of his energy into the training which will give him the ability to act with others" (*Democracy and Social Ethics* 63). But this kind of individualistic advantage, the sort sought by robber barons, was shortsighted and insecure. Lateral progress would be slower, but ultimately surer for a democratically inclined people.

> . . . If in a democratic country nothing can be permanently achieved save through the masses of the people, it will be impossible to establish a higher political life than the people themselves crave; . . . it is difficult to see how the notion of a higher civic life can be fostered save through common intercourse; . . . the blessings which we associate with a life of refinement and cultivation can be made universal and must be made universal if they are to be permanent; . . . the good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain, is floating in mid-air, until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life. (Addams, "Subjective Necessity" 17)

This would be a slow, tedious task, but well worth the effort, she thought.

Why should we care about the nuances of a conjectured conversation that is now over one hundred years old? What still-vital issues emerge from this comparative analysis? Have either Kropotkin's or Addams's ideas stood the test of time? On what issues were they simply naïve or blind? Surely Addams was naïve to see in human militarism a vestigial trait. Militarism seems as ingrained in human nature as cooperation is, and subsequent history seems to have borne this out. Kropotkin's vision of group good seems vulnerable to an easy turn toward a violent tribalism bent on group honor and revenge that he could not easily acknowledge. His interpretation of the natural world looked for advantage to the species through cooperation, rather than reproductive success by individuals; in that sense, he diverged from Darwin in ways that have not weathered later scholarship.

Kropotkin and Addams shared some foibles. Both of their progressive unilineal accounts of the natural history of morals are vulnerable to criticisms about inevitability. Did both thinkers fall prey to a sense of the inevitability of progress that justifies moral passivity, a passivity neither of them would ever intend to support? When they needed to in order to support their moral outlooks, both made an appeal to the authority of origins—the primordial, the elemental—that ought to be out of place in a Darwinian account of change (Taylor 79).[2]

Why did Kropotkin choose Huxley as his antagonist rather than Spencer? Why was Addams so ready to embrace Spencer's social ideas as well? Huxley separated nature from culture in a way that neither Addams nor Kropotkin did. Kropotkin had more use for Spencer than he had for Huxley. Huxley then became the target of his attacks, rather than Spencer. Huxley offered him no progressive picture of nature, as opposed to Spencer, who did. Contemporary readers of Addams and Kropotkin are in a position to scrutinize

the differences between biological and cultural modes of inheritance in ways that they were not. Both of them felt that it was entirely appropriate to look at moral development through the lens of Darwinian natural selection. In some ways they were right; in some ways they were wrong. Certainly, human morality has to exist within the framework of a natural world if it is to exist at all—it must be compatible with human brain functioning and biological limitations. But we have good reasons to question whether cultural habits become natural instincts; we know that some elements of human culture are transmitted in ways that do not involve genes and that some of these transmission methods can transcend biological, if not natural, limitations. But perhaps we are as vulnerable to the authoritative imprimatur of the biological sciences on social ethics as they were.

NOTES

1. See Knight 97 for the significance of the word "breadgivers" for Addams.

2. Taylor more than other interpreters of Addams sees the inconsistencies in her evolutionary thought.

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