

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Anarchism and Morality

George Woodcock

George Woodcock
Anarchism and Morality
October 1945

Published by Freedom Press — 27 Red Lion Street, London, W.C.1.
— October 1945 — printed by Express Printers, London, England.

theanarchistlibrary.org

October 1945

The last is an example of a situation to which we can give a number of possible solutions. He can refuse to take part in the proceedings of the court. He can use the occasion for an act of defiance to proclaim his principles. He can make the law an ass by arguing legal points. Or he can take the line that he is justified in using any kind of tactic to prevent the state from having the satisfaction of keeping him safely isolated in prison. A good case could be made for each of these solutions, and all we can say is that this is an illustration of the impossibility of making a hard line of conduct for the anarchist. It very anarchist must make his own decision, according to his own judgment and the circumstances in which he is placed. He must decide for himself where he is to draw the line of compromise, and what he is to regard as compromise. But it is perhaps necessary here to say that expediency alone should never be regarded as a dominant criterion, for to justify an action by expediency leads us to a disregard of principles, and to the insidious doctrine of ends justifying means which is the beginning to a very slippery slope into Bolshevik inhumanity.

Lastly, let us repeat that anarchists should not act as moral pundits. They should regard it as right to criticise frankly where they think it necessary, and to advise from their experience those who ask for help. But beyond that the final judgment rests with the man who has to act, and in that connection we should perhaps remember that an important anarchist virtue is tolerance towards whoever commits honestly what we consider to be an error.

Contents

1	5
The Evils Of Current Morality	6
A Morality Of Free Men	7
Epicurus	8
The Nature Of Anarchist Morality	10
2	10
The Natural Morality	11
Mutual Aid: The Basis Of Morality	12
Anarchist Justice	14
Magnanimity	15
3	16
Moral Basis Of Social Change	17
The Development Of Responsibility	18
Mutual Aid In Daily Life	19
Morality And The State	20
Where Do We Draw The Line?	21

for maintain-ing anarchist propa-ganda, as when we use money to pay for printing or the state postal services to distribute literature. But the answer to this dilemma can be found very largely in the fact that capitalism and the state have usurped functions which in any case are socially necessary and would exist under anar-chism. There is nothing immoral in printing or posting a pamphlet or in eating butter, and the fact that the state or the money system inter-fere in these activities cannot prevent us from taking part in them. Another set of state functions are, however, aimed at the suppres-sion of the individual, and towards these the anarchist attitude is different. No man could join the police force, or enter the Cabinet or parliament, and remain an anarchist, because he would become part of a body of men whose function is to coerce their fellows. Sim-ilarly, an anarchist cannot consistently support war, or militarism, because they involve the subjection of men to the unlimited will of the ruling class. This kind of direct participation is obviously contrary to anarchist morals. Moreover, there are certain actions which are equally clearly the duty of an anarchist. For instance, if a strike takes place where he is working, he will undoubtedly take an active part in it.

Where Do We Draw The Line?

It is clear then, that there are some compromises with the state, such as buying a postage stamp, which are relatively harmless, and others, such as becoming a policeman, which are positively im-moral. But between the two there lies a wide field of doubtful com-promises where the only standards can possibly be the particular circumstances of the case and the judgment of the individual con-cerned. Are there any circumstances in which an anarchist should marry? Should a soldier who becomes an anarchist refuse to obey orders or should he stay in the ranks to spread anti-militarist be-lief? What should an anarchist do if he is brought up in a court of law?

the spirit of freedom and mutual aid among the people with whom he is in contact. By the example of their daily lives many anarchists in the past have done as much for their cause as they -have done by speaking or writing or organising.

But, as we have said, it is impossible to be completely free in a coercive social structure. The most devoted anarchist is in a degree conditioned by the authority around him—and for this reason anarchist morality has to consider the relation of the anarchist not only to human beings, but also to non-human entities, like the state, the church, or the system of laws.

Morality And The State

As morality concerns only the relationship of individual people, we cannot act morally towards the state as such, because it is outside morality. But our actions towards the state can affect the lives of others, and thus become immoral. The state is not immoral when men are killed in its name, because it is really only an abstraction covering the immoral actions of individual human beings. It is a form of organisation harmful to men, and should therefore be destroyed, but only the actions of individual men can partake of morality.

It is a moral act to work for the destruction of the state, because in this way we work for the benefit of other people. The methods of struggling against the state are familiar and -need no elaborate discussion here. It remains, however, to be said that certain actions which might be immoral when applied to other men as individuals, might not be immoral when applied against the state, or men acting as its representatives. It is immoral to deceive our friends and comrades, but it is in many circumstances equally immoral to tell the truth to a policeman. The anarchist in modern society is always faced by the dilemma that while evil institutions exist he cannot avoid some kind of participation in them in order to live. It is even some-times necessary to use state or capitalist institutions

1

There might appear to be a paradox in the anarchist attitude towards morality, for, while many anarchists have pointed to what is considered morality in present society and have condemned it as antagonistic to human freedom and called upon those who would be free to abandon morality, other anarchist thinkers, among them Godwin and Kropotkin, have been deeply concerned with ideas of morality and have stressed the need for a moral outlook as the basis for a free society.

In fact, there is no real divergence of opinion. The first opinion rightly condemns morality as it is understood in our present society. But before we proceed any further, let us examine this so-called “morality”, let us see what right it has to assume that name. Morality, if we care to pursue the word to its origins, signifies the manners or customs by which men can live virtuously and peacefully in society. It springs from and has relation to the intercourse of individuals, and it can be manifested only in such intercourse. We cannot act morally or immorally towards an inanimate object or an abstraction of thought, like the State. Nor can we act morally towards our-selves—the legendary man on a desert island would be unable to practice a virtue that is essentially social. We can only act morally towards our fellow men, and the sole criterion of morality is whether our actions impede or promote the freedom and happiness of other men.

But what passes for morality in current usage is far removed from such a conception. Instead of deriving its validity from the personal contact of individuals, it is based on some supernatural theology and derives its origin from an anthropomorphic deity who cut its clauses on a piece of stone and handed them to an obscure Jewish chieftain in a distant land and a far century. Or it is based on the needs of a governmental system, and rules by virtue of some mythical collective entity like the State, the Nation

or the Race, which in fact is a representation of the interests of a privileged class.

In either case, having no basis in the nature of man, it is forced to bring into its conceptions the ideas of reward and punishment. Men are taught to refrain from certain acts lest they should be sent to prison or roast in hell, and to perform other acts because such performance would lead to a material advantage over their fellows on earth or eternal bliss in heaven. But the only true criterion of morality is whether one's actions are harmful to other men.

The Evils Of Current Morality

“Morality” of the accepted kind is essentially restrictive to freedom. It tends to the petrification of social habits and of class divisions in the interests of the few. If its main prohibitions are examined, it will be seen that they aim at maintaining those institutions of property and the family which are the foundations of an authoritarian society. They aim at preventing men from becoming free, at halting the satisfaction of their desires and hopes, even at preventing them from consciously recognising such desires and hopes, so that they become the servile tools of state and church, conditioned to obedience and subjection.

Morality is valid only according to its results, according to whether it has benefitted what Godwin would call “the general good” of men in society. A “morality” aimed at keeping one man poor and another man rich, or at restricting sexual life to the forms approved by state and church, is inevitably bad in its effects on the intercourse of individuals, and leads either to personal strife or to those mass neurotic stages where men are willing to be led to war because it brings a release from the resentment they dare not direct against their oppressors.

The evil effects of conventional “morality” are profound” and are expressed not merely in the lack of freedom or of material goods, but also in psychological disorders which are spread

Mutual Aid In Daily Life

In his daily life the anarchist should act as far as possible in friendly and sympathetic co-operation with his friends or work-mates. He should always try to envisage the effect of his actions on others by imagining them applied to himself, and thus achieve not only justice but also generosity in his relationships. He should aim at frankness and sincerity in his actions and speech. The underhand motive, the concealed intrigue, breed distrust and bring an element of unsureness into personal relationships which is destructive to social morality, while the openly expressed criticism or grievance is usually beneficial to both parties. Yet we should be tactful in our frankness, paying due consideration to the feelings of others and avoiding any suggestion of superiority in ourselves or inferiority in others. While we condemn bad ideas and conduct, we should not fall into the error of condemning outright the men who commit them. An act cannot be changed, but we can never be completely sure that a man will not change his conduct.

It is possible that an anarchist may find himself in a position where other people are put at his advantage. He may be a shopkeeper, or hold some supervisory position. It seems to me there is nothing particularly reprehensible in holding such jobs when a living has to be gained under capitalism indeed, the man who manages to avoid the subjection of ordinary employment can sometimes act more independently for his cause. -What is necessary is that he should not take advantage of his position. The shopkeeper, for instance, should be content with enough for his needs, sell his goods at reasonable prices, and use his position to help those who are in need. An anarchist grocer, for instance, might be of great use in providing food for strikers. An anarchist charge-hand in a factory might disrupt the whole disciplinary system of his employers by establishing a relationship of equality and comradeship among the men he is supposed to supervise. And similarly, it is possible for every anarchist to act in his daily life in such a way as to spread

stract line of conduct, or introduce any criterion except the individual judgment of each human being. Every man must act according to his own feeling of what is right under the circumstances in which he is placed. That is the very basic necessity of anarchy and freedom. No one can command him what to do, and the only limitation that can be imposed on his liberty is that his acts should not interfere with the freedom of others.

The Development Of Responsibility

When a man ceases to direct his life according to rules and commands which are not approved by his own thoughts, he begins to attain responsibility, to develop his judgment, to act from inner conviction. As he proceeds in this way, his acts will inevitably become more moral, because they are based on something stronger than a token adherence to external codes. And as men become more aware of their inner freedom, they will become more capable of changing the order of society around them.

The first necessity of an anarchist morality is thus that a man should cease to be subject to external rules of thought and habit, but should endeavour to base every action on an honest decision of his own independent judgment. The second is that he should recognise every other man as an independent human being with needs very similar to his own and individual characteristics whose free development contributes to the richness of communal life. Most of the cruelty that exists in society to-day can be attributed to the tendency to regard human beings as units which have no common nature with ourselves. To recognise ourselves in every other human being is a necessary beginning for achieving anarchist morality.

The acts on which anarchist morality has a direct bearing in our present society can be divided into two classes. There are those which are concerned primarily with our daily contact with other men, and those which are concerned more directly with the achievement of an anarchist society.

through all Classes of society, and in a great frustration which has prevented men developing as they might have done in freedom. Speaking of the morality that is linked with organised religion and the doctrine of eternal punishment, Godwin remarked with great insight:

“We know what we are: we know not what we might have been. But surely we should have been greater than we are but for this disadvantage. It is as if we took some minute poison with everything that was intended to nourish us. It is, we will suppose, of so mitigated a quality as never to have had the power to kill. But it may nevertheless stunt our growth, infuse a palsy into everyone of our articulations, and insensibly change us from giants of mind which we might have been into a people of dwarfs.”

It is undeniably the function of the anarchist to reject such conception of “morality”, which has done so much incalculable harm to humanity in its services to the institutions of property and privilege. We should reject, denounce and seek to destroy it at the same time as we destroy the institutions of law and authority which it upholds.

A Morality Of Free Men

But, because we cast aside what is at present understood as “morality,” it does not mean that we shall be destroying the genuine morality that is at the basis of human social intercourse. On the contrary, as Kropotkin said:

“By flinging overboard law, religion and authority, mankind can regain possession of the moral principle which has been taken from them. Regain that they may criticise it, and purge it from the adulterations wherewith priest, judge and ruler have poisoned it and are poisoning it yet.”

Our conception of true morality becomes clearer when we realise that it is neither a religious creed nor an obligatory code of behaviour imposed by the authority of government or tradition. It

consists merely in an attitude towards our fellows in society which promotes a respect for their equal rights to happiness and development, and which prompts us to those actions of mutual aid that are necessary for the healthy life of society. It demands no restriction of our freedom, but it asks us to respect the freedom and benefit of others. It is supported by no physical or mental force, and its only power lies in the social conscience of man and the freely expressed criticisms of his fellows.

Such a moral attitude we regard as being in accordance with the nature of man, and, indeed, of the whole animal world. Kropotkin, whose book *Mutual Aid* was devoted to a masterly study of the nature of social life among the animals and man, concluded that "The moral sense is a natural faculty in us like the sense of smell or of touch." It is a natural tendency for men, as for other animals, to cooperate for their mutual advantage, and the whole anarchist case is based on the existence of such a faculty for natural morality of intercourse that the sanctions of church and state are not only unnecessary in society, but are even anti-social because by their restriction of freedom they set up unnecessary and unhealthy conflicts.

Here it is necessary to show in what characteristics anarchist morality differs from other forms of secular morality. There are, to begin with, some types of secular morality which are really religious in character, as, for example, those of Hegel, of the Nazis, of the Marxists, with their substitution of abstract collective entities like the State for the deities of religious morality.

Epicurus

Of the truly secular forms of morality, the only important current of thought, apart from anarchism, is that which derives from Epicurus and comes down through the Utilitarian philosophers of the nineteenth century to a number of modern thinkers. "The aim of life, toward which all living beings are unconsciously striving is

can never escape completely the influences that are brought continually to bear on us, and consequently, with the best intentions, we find it difficult to always behave as an anarchist should.

Moral Basis Of Social Change

Nevertheless, if we would achieve anarchy, we must start our moral transformation here and now. It is no good waiting for the revolutionary crisis, in the expectation of marching into a promised land of freedom and mutual aid. We must prepare for the end of the old order, not merely by seeking to destroy the class structure of society, but also by eliminating from ourselves and our conduct the kind of motives and actions that lead to the acquisitiveness and strife on which class societies are built. If the government fell tomorrow, I am sure the majority of people would be unable to act in such a way as to ensure the preservation of freedom. Those who declare that everything will come to us through a "change of heart" make too simplified a programme, but those who declare that all we have to do is to change the social structure are equally wrong. Man is not wholly the creature of his environment—his individuality is something more than the sum of his experiences, and an inner change in moral outlook is necessary as well as the outer social change, before men can live in freedom, respecting the freedom of others. It is my belief that the two are interdependent, but if one is more important than the other, I should say it is this matter of individual conduct, of the application of anarchist morality to our daily lives, for in this way we wage the most vital struggle of all, against those ideas and habits of subjection and selfishness which are the very foundations on which the power of governments is built.

Anarchism brings no fixed code of conduct for the individual. No two situations are the same, no two people are the same, and to attempt to bind all people and situations in a fence of rules would make us as foolish as the lawmakers. We cannot lay down any ab-

chief elements. Because of this, it can never take the form of a fixed code, as it must rest on individual judgment of the particular circumstances concerned, and, since every case is unique, there can be no prophetic rule which tells us exactly what to do.

I have attempted to trace in these two sections the nature and characteristics of an anarchist morality as distinct from the conventional and false morality of current society. In the remaining section I will endeavour to show how an anarchist attitude to morality should affect our actions in the present society.

3

If a discussion of morality is to avoid being merely an academic dissertation on theoretical debating points, it must arrive in the end at the question of how our actions are to be affected by the moral principles we have discussed. In the two preceding sections I endeavoured to show the nature and basis of a true morality of freedom. But as morality is only concerned with the actions of men, and not with any abstractions that are removed from the plane of our daily lives, it is natural to ask the question, how can I act in an anarchist manner? Or, even more pertinently, how can I act according to a free morality in the present coercive society?

I do not think these are easy questions to answer. If we had all been born in a society of free institutions, if our lives had never been subjected to the fetters of mental or physical coercion, it would be easy and natural for us to act morally towards our fellows, because everything around us would induce such actions. But to-day we all live in a society where coercion of various kinds twists our lives and influences our thoughts from childhood to the grave. The moral instincts of animal nature are in continual competition with the at once selfish and self-destructive patterns of life imposed by the rule of acquisitive and inhuman institutions like the state. However free we may try to be in our actions, we

happiness," said Epicurus, "because, as soon as they are born, they already desire gratification and resist suffering". This is the central point of all Epicurean and Utilitarian teaching. Because of this attitude Epicurus was accused of being concerned only with the gross satisfactions of the flesh, but in fact his teaching and his own life were ducted on a high moral level.

"Putting as man's aim the happy life in its entirety, and not the gratification of momentary whims and passions, Epicurus pointed the way to achieving such happiness. First of all a man must limit his desires and be content with little. Epicurus, who in his own life was ready to be content with a barley millcake and water, speaks here as a most rigorous Stoic. And then one must live without inner conflicts, with a whole life, in harmony with oneself, and must feel that one lives independently, and not in enslavement to external influences." -Kropotkin, Ethics.

Epicurean morality had certain definite virtues. It diverted morality from a supernatural to a humanist basis, and it recognised the primary importance of the individual. But it was a system with many limitations, largely because of the abstract nature of its thought. It tended to be a romantic form of individualism which failed to recognise sufficiently well that all men live in society and are subject to social influences. It also failed to recognise that morality does not concern man himself, but his relations with other men. As a result of this attitude, Epicurus and his followers accepted slavery without protest and the nineteenth century Utilitarians did almost nothing to combat the evils of contemporary capitalist exploitation, this in spite of the fact that they were personally men of the most generous characters. It may be true that ultimately, and considered abstractly, human life tends towards the gaining of personal happiness. But in practice the nature of the social life of men is too complicated for such a simple formula to explain fully the real moral issues that confront us.

The Nature Of Anarchist Morality

Anarchist morality, while it also regards the individual as the central and all-important unit in human life, endeavours to relate the search for individual happiness to the actual factors of human development and to the real circumstances of intercourse among individuals. It recognises that men, who live in society for the mutual enrichment of the material and spiritual lives, cannot be wholly concerned about their own individual pleasures. Social life demands a willingness to help others and to refrain from causing them avoidable harm. The recognition of moral duties does not arise from any merely altruistic motive. It should derive from individual recognition that in society no man can fulfill himself by a selfish disregard of others. Privilege, class rule, the chaos of capitalist exploitation, are what arise out of individualism deprived of the sense of moral responsibility towards others. Man should live on the basis of reciprocal help and consideration towards other men because this will ultimately lead to his own peace and security. As he cannot be completely happy alone, he should strive for that happiness of all, as he cannot be free in enslaved society, he should strive for the freedom of all. Apart from these facts, he will almost certainly find a life of cooperation and friendship more satisfying than a life of conflict and selfishness. But his actions towards other men should be voluntary in their nature and spring from an understanding of their needs, for morality based on coercion and ignorance is a sure breeder of the neuroses and hidden conflicts which bring major social tragedies.

2

The anarchist does not regard morality as something outside the nature of man. Indeed, in opposition to the supernaturalist who regards morality as a system to be imposed on man by an artificial code of laws must restrain the actions of men because human

than the mere recognition of such rights—he desires an active spirit of sociality which will set out to assure the achievement of such equality. “Justice,” said Godwin, “is a rule of conduct originating in the connection of one percipient being with another”. It has no validity outside the relationship of individuals, and there can be no connection between true justice and an institution like the state which negates equality from the beginning by overriding the individual’s rights to freedom of choice.

Magnanimity

But justice is not all. A living morality needs something that will carry men beyond the mere recognition of reciprocal equality, giving to other men what is their exact due. For human society to grow, for the relationship of men to become fruitful, it is necessary for another quality, which Kropotkin called magnanimity, to be exercised. Magnanimity has often been shown in the past by exceptional individuals who have given their efforts freely in various ways, as revolutionaries, as artists, as scientists, that men in general may enjoy fuller and more ample lives. For society to go forward to anarchy, for anarchy itself to be fruitful, it is necessary for men to develop this quality of magnanimity, for them to learn to give their efforts freely in whatever way they have chosen to help humanity, and to go always beyond what justice itself might demand of them in their relations with other men. It is a mistake to think that such action necessarily means any kind of mystical self-sacrifice on behalf of others. On the contrary, pure altruism as envisaged by the moralists does not exist, and the man who gives and continues to give does so because he finds that in this way he gains a greater personal fulfillment.

Finally, it must be emphasised that anarchist morality is based on the voluntary choice of each man according to his independent judgment, but that it also allows the influence of the freely expressed criticisms of his fellows. Freedom and sincerity are its

ation, to act as your thought and imagination urge, the more will the moral sentiment grow in you, the more will it become habitual.” — KROPOTKIN, Anarchist Morality.

It is from this kind of mutual sympathy, of putting oneself in another’s position, that there arises the “Golden Rule”, which enjoins man to act to others as they would like others to act to them. But this rule in itself is too vague for it to be effective in producing a morality for free men. For centuries it has formed a part of the Christian teaching -but it has rarely prevented Christians from supporting an unfair social system or carrying on sharp business relations with their neighbours and co-religionists. This is because it has been accompanied by no explicit statement of the individual and equal rights of men, and because it was easily diverted to actions on some nebulous spiritual plane rather than in our present material life.

Anarchist Justice

The morality of anarchism is distinguished by the explicit recognition of equality which is missing from the Christian idea of the Golden Rule. This is what anarchist writers have meant when they talked of “justice”. Justice is a word which has unfortunately been misused by legalistic societies, and has tended to become synonymous with the administration of the law. We hear of courts of justice, which are really only courts of punishment, and a judge who has bullied thousands of prisoners to undeserved fates is given the title of Mr. Justice So-and-so. This makes a mockery of the very meaning of justice, which is twisted to signify the legal system of a society all of whose relationships are fundamentally unjust.

When the anarchist talks of justice, however, he means something very different. He means the recognition of each man as an individual with equal rights to the satisfaction of his needs, to complete freedom of choice, and to an equal share in all the opportunities of the society in which he cooperates. He means even more

nature — according to him — is chaotic and anti-social, the anarchist regards morality as a natural law of life, which is to be observed throughout the animal kingdom and which has only been perverted because men live in societies based on artificial standards and not on the internal nature or man.

Even today men act morally in most of their actions towards people with whom they come into direct contact, and do it without thinking beforehand whether their actions are moral or otherwise. There is a decency in the majority of direct social contacts which opposes the evil nature of indirect contacts, contacts through the state or other oppressive institutions, and in this way, because of this unconscious morality of our actions in most circumstances human society has so far been prevented from falling completely into those depths of chaos and depravity which are the products of authority and property with their attendant offspring of war.

The Natural Morality

It is by returning to this natural morality, by observing it and building our ideas from what we discover, that an anarchist morality can be evolved, a morality having as its basis the general good of individuals within society and not an abstract duty to the state or any promise of reward in heaven for fulfilling the will of some supernatural lawmaker. How men can best act towards each other for their mutual benefit is the sole criterion of anarchist morality.

Godwin, the first great anarchist theoretician, based his system of ‘political justice’ on the conception of a morality that would enable men to live together in mutual trust without the unnatural interference of “positive institutions”, as he called the state, the legal system and the church. Godwin held that every man should be free to decide on his own actions, because any form of coercion or promise of reward would introduce an irrelevant criterion and would tend to corrupt the qualities of sincerity and mental

strength which are necessary for a healthy social life. But, because men should be free from external coercion, it does not mean that their actions should be capricious and inconsiderate. In place of the outward government of force, man should adopt an inward system of judgment for his actions. In everything he should act according to 'justice', by which Godwin meant, not an arbitrary code imposed by external authority, but an idea of the good of all men in society as the basis for the actions of the individual. We should always act so that the greatest benefit to society is achieved, but by society is meant no abstract entity, but an aggregate of individuals, for, as Godwin said, no action is beneficial unless it assists some individual man.

Godwin's exposition of moral ideas reached its height in his condemnation of the property system, which he showed to be completely opposed to the idea of moral justice, and which he replaced by the contention that any article of property justly belonged only to him who had the greatest need for it. A moral society would not be achieved until every man had, not only enough to satisfy his physical needs, but also an equal opportunity to fulfill his nature and develop his personality as he might desire.

Mutual Aid: The Basis Of Morality

Kropotkin followed Godwin's work by making a scientific study of moral problems. He challenged the current ideas of both the orthodox church men and the scientific materialists, who regarded man as by nature immoral. The theological idea of original sin, and the Huxleyan conception of the struggle for existence were surprisingly alike in their view of human nature. The clergyman and the populariser of science both put forward the theory of "nature red in tooth and claw", and held that man was naturally vile and could only be made virtuous and morally responsible by the external rule of some temporal or eternal authority, by the State or God, or, in the case of the Churchman, both.

Kropotkin, following a line of Darwin's teaching that had been ignored by his more vociferous followers, demonstrated conclusively that evolution was primarily due not to an unrestricted struggle for existence, but to a law of solidarity, or "mutual aid", among animals of the same species by which they assist each other in their daily social lives. This natural law of mutual aid is the basis of morality, which thus exists as a factor even among the lowly forms of animal life. Nor does this law cease to act with the appearance of man. On the contrary, man has evolved because he was a social animal, given to the practice of mutual aid, to the voluntary cooperation by which the discoveries of individuals were used for the benefit of all and the various assets of social life, such as agriculture and fire, spread throughout the human race. Kropotkin showed, by a careful study of the social life of both primitive and civilised man, that the natural law of mutual aid is still the underlying motive of moral actions, and the principal cause of those voluntary cooperative endeavours which, in spite of the stultifying influence of coercive institutions like the state, still demonstrate the essential solidarity of humanity.

The instinct of solidarity, then, lies at the basis of a true morality, which is thus derived from man's natural tendencies towards cooperation. But with the development of human consciousness, the growth of reason and imagination, there is added the element of sympathy, by which we try and put ourselves in the place of another person, and thus understand his needs and sufferings.

"The more powerful your imagination, the better you can picture to yourself what any being feels when it is made to suffer, and the more intense and delicate will your moral sense be. The more you are drawn to put yourself in the place of the other person, the more you feel the pain inflicted upon him, the insult offered him, the injustice of which he is a victim, the more you will be urged to act so that you may prevent the pain, insult or injustice. And the more you are accustomed by circumstances, by those surrounding you, or by the intensity of your own thought and your own imagin-