



Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow

Pyotr Kropotkin

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His classic vision of a new world, updated by Colin Ward.

Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow Details

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Author : Pyotr Kropotkin

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From Reader Review Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow for online ebook

Lee says

This is another classic by Kropotkin and outlines in more detail certain aspects of anarchist-communism such as the decentralization of industries and decreasing the work day to a 3 or 4 hour period of physical labor doing the work that is necessary for the collective and opening up time for intellectual labor. The book is still as relevant today as it was in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with one exception- the second chapter of the book dealing with agriculture is outdated and at the time was amount of time needed to spend on agriculture and distribution of produce in the UK. Well, needless to say, times have changed in the past 100 years, so that is why the ideas simply will not work in western industrialist nations of the 21st century. As a whole, the book is definitely a must have if learning about anarchist-communism and applying theory to everyday worker's self management of industries and land cultivation.

Matthew Conroy says

Lots of rather outdated figures throughout (though especially chapter 2), but chapters 4 and 5 finish the book well.

Micah says

Britain had its Angry Brigade and its Class War Federation, but for the most part English anarchism seems to be of the more moderate, pragmatic variety, symbolized by people like Colin Ward. Could Kropotkin's long stay in England and later books like this one be partly responsible? Seems possible. Kropotkin's calm, quiet, almost boring optimism shines on every page. The central underlying idea seems to be that a radically better future is practically visible already and right around the corner. "And what prevents us from turning our backs to this present and from marching towards that future, or at least, making the first steps towards the future, is not the 'failure of science,' but first of all our crass cupidity - the cupidity of the man who killed the hen that was laying golden eggs - and then our laziness of mind - that mental cowardice so carefully nurtured in the past," he remarks in the Conclusion. If only that were all that prevented us! Such an attitude can be hard to swallow for anarchists today. But there's a lot to be gleaned from this book despite its simple faith.

The first priority of the revolution will be feeding itself. Kropotkin gives a lot of food for thought here - if you can stomach all the statistical detail and his detailed description of such things as the ins and outs of horticultural methods in Belgium in 1903 (You will learn a lot about the importance of loam and greenhouses). Today in the US, food politics are usually the province of liberals with no connection to struggles for social transformation. Nowadays lots of people are "locavores," fans of "slow food" and all things "artisanal" and "organic," heirloom products and sustainable agriculture, urban gardening - but often motivated by a kind of snobbish aesthetic appeal and backed up by deep pockets. If Kropotkin were alive today it seems he might encourage revolutionaries to reclaim these things as our own. His advocacy of small-scale, intensive, decentralized agriculture, more like a garden than a farm, near and inside cities as well, with great variety in each region sustaining itself by growing its own food, and participation by everyone, fits right in with today's reaction against the nightmare of agribusiness, factory farms, pollution,

genetic manipulation, chemical fertilizers etc. When you connect the urge to take land and grow food for ourselves to an attack on capital, things get interesting. And Kropotkin's data and examples might be tiresome, but he demonstrates that even around 1900 such things were easily achievable.

Kropotkin essentially takes the themes of decentralization, appropriate scaling, and integration (of city and country, manual and intellectual labor, tasks and skills, crops and industries, etc.) and puts them at the center of his "political economy." His confidence in science and technology would surely be shaken if he lived now. His optimistic observations on the rapid global circulation of knowledge and technologies practically make him sound like a post-operaista Negri of the nineteenth century. But he is surely still in the right in his argument with Malthus - it is possible to sustain the whole world's population comfortably. And his musings on the possibilities of a new education, activity that isn't drudgery, and the difficulties of sustaining inequalities when alternative methods already exist, in germ, can still provide some inspiration.

Liam says

Have a prized copy of this from 1913!

Joshua says

(Notes on the edition available online at: http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_...)

It is extraordinary how prescient Kropotkin is on modern post-industrial issues. Perhaps I am reading into his work too much, but it seems that he was 100 years ahead of the general population both in diagnosing the failures and the possible "fixes" for our current economic and societal discontents.

Chapter 2 predicts the flight of manufacturing to where workers are least expensive. "Industries of all kinds decentralise and are scattered all over the globe; and everywhere a variety, an integrated variety, of trades grows, instead of specialisation. " "The Chinese slumber still; but I am firmly persuaded from what I saw of China that the moment they will begin to manufacture with the aid of European machinery--and the first steps have already been made--they will do it with more success, and necessarily on a far greater scale, than even the Japanese."

Later chapters discuss a sort of prototype permaculture and urban-market gardening, and even discuss inoculating the soil with beneficial bacteria and microrhizae.

He then goes on in the line more recently expounded in Matthew Crawford's "Shop Class as Soulcraft" and the "Maker"-movement:

"None but he who knows the machine-not in its drawings and models only, but in its breathing and throbings-who unconsciously thinks of it while standing by it, can really improve it. "

"We maintain that in the interests of both science and industry, as well as of society as a whole, every human being, without distinction of birth, ought to receive such an education as would enable him, or her, to

combine a thorough knowledge of science with a thorough knowledge of handicraft. We fully recognise the necessity of specialisation of knowledge, but we maintain that specialisation must follow general education, and that general education must be given in science and handicraft alike. To the division of society into brain workers and manual workers we oppose the combination of both kinds of activities; and instead of "technical education," which means the maintenance of the present division between brain work and manual work, we advocate the education integrale, or complete education, which means the disappearance of that pernicious distinction."

Even the idea of crowd sourcing scientific discovery (discussed in the recent book by Michael Nielsen, "Reinventing Discovery") is within his scope: "Darwin spent almost thirty years in gathering and analysing facts for the elaboration of the theory of the origin of species. Had he lived in such a society as we suppose he simply would have made an appeal to volunteers for facts and partial exploration, and thousands of explorers would have answered his appeal. Scores of societies would have come to life to debate and to solve each of the partial problems involved in the theory, and in ten years the theory would have been verified; all those factors of evolution which only now begin to receive due attention would have appeared in their full light. The rate of scientific progress would have been tenfold; and if the individual would not have the same claims on posterity's gratitude as he has now, the unknown mass would have done the work with more speed and with more prospect for ulterior advance than the individual could do in his lifetime. "

In the end, Kropotkin's solution looks a lot like:

- * Local manufacturing (for more, read <http://www.mutualist.org/id116.html>)
- * Unplugging from capitalism (http://howtolivewiki.com/en/The_Unplu...)
- * Intensive local agriculture done intelligently and cleverly by all (with elements of community gardening and community-supported agriculture)
- * Post-growth/steady-state/"plenitude" economics (<http://www.newdream.org/>)

Craig Bolton says

"Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow by Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin, KnIAZ, (1975)"

Steven Peterson says

Peter Kropotkin was of royal blood in 19th century Russia. Oddly enough, despite that, he was, ideologically, an anarchist. He wrote scientific works, such as Mutual Aid. He also wrote works trying to demonstrate how anarchism could work in practice. This is one such work. As an example, he shows how agriculture might be made more productive in England, Scotland, and elsewhere by adopting anarchist organizational principles. Will readers accept his perspective? Most probably will not, but his arguments are provocative. Similar arguments are raised with respect to manufacturing and so on.

If one wants to get a sense of Kropotkin's effort to be "relevant" in the late 19th and early 20th century, this would be a useful work to explore. . . .

Kenna says

Not a very good book, not particularly fascinating, I think it was written far too optimistically for such a book on capitalism, if you are discussing capitalism, then you should be sort of nihilistic with your approach towards capitalism, his optimism is very tedious, the way that it was written is not in the way that you would expect coming from a philosophy + politics-related book, I got to about pge 184 and said "I can't read anymore of this book, this is far too boring" luckily I was just about finished with the book, only one more chapter to go with this book and I would be finished, the only good thing about this book is that compared to The Conquest of Bread, there isn't 17 chapters, there's only 5 chapters, this book drags on for ages, the chapters are fairly long, and you keep wondering to yourself "when will the book be finished?" You know one of those books where you can't seem to put the book down, it's too fascinating to stop reading, this book isn't one of them, it's dull and lifeless, not a very great book
