



Ethics: Origin and Development by Prince Kropotkin; Louis S. Friedland; Joseph R. Piroshnikoff

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perience and also of the stage upon which experience itself appears, the reality which envelopes it. No one in our time has done more than Mr. Dewey to insist upon the prime necessity of bending every effort to the intelligent liberation and control of the latent and stupidly hemmed-in energies and values of human experience. It may be, however, that this eminently practical and pragmatic task cannot be intelligently and fully entered upon until we seek not simply for a method of enhancing the values of experience, but also for some insight into the kind of world which must be supposed to be real if our human impulse to the liberation and the expansion of our deepest interests is really the thing that it is.

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ETHICS: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT. By Prince Kropotkin. Authorized translation from the Russian by Louis S. Friedland and Joseph R. Piroshnikoff. New York: Lincoln MacVeagh, The Dial Press, 1924. Pp. xvi+349.

According to the Introduction by the Russian editor, Prince Kropotkin planned a work on ethics which should form the final summary of his scientific, philosophical, and sociological conclusions. This work was to be divided into two volumes, the first dealing with the origin and development of ethical theories and ideas, the second with the "bases of realistic ethics," or the systematic formulation of a moral ideal in the light of the most complete scientific and philosophical knowledge. Kropotkin died, however, before this design was completed. The greater part of the volume here published belongs to the historical part of the work planned, though even this part was not finished. The later chapters, in particular, have clearly not received a final revision; two of them at least are broken off before the end is reached; and the editor tells us that a chapter on Nietzsche, Tolstoi, and other contemporary moralists remained unwritten. Of the second volume nothing was written beyond a few essays which were published as periodical articles. In form, therefore, the present volume is a history of ethics prefaced by three introductory chapters giving a general statement of Kropotkin's ethical point of view.

It appears also from the Introduction that even the parts which were completed were written under very unfavorable circumstances. The author was living in a small Russian village, he had almost no books, and he was already in failing health. The composition of a historical work covering the whole literature of ethics was really impossible, even if Kropotkin's main interest had been the writing of history, which was certain-

ly not the case. It is true that he had a wide range of reading at the back of his mind, but nevertheless much of his exposition is frankly second-hand, being based for the most part on Jodl's *Geschichte der Ethik*. The book can scarcely claim importance as a historical work.

Its interest consists, in fact, in the glimpses it gives into the thought of Kropotkin himself. It takes us back, indeed, to the ethical evolutionism of the 1890's—to the days of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* and Spencer's *Justice*—and serves at once to remind us how much the issues have changed, and also how few of the problems started have really been solved. The frankly stated disappointment of Spencer (in the Preface to the last part of *The Principles of Ethics*) has been amply justified. Kropotkin's optimistic faith in science, now that the supernatural, the theological, and the metaphysical have been safely put out of the way, makes the present-day reader feel strangely old and disillusioned. The new system of ethics, derived with scientific certainty from biology, psychology, and sociology, a moral ideal not only explained but justified by science, seems farther away than it did forty years ago.

More specifically it is the scientific theory of evolution upon which Kropotkin relies for the basis of the new ethics, and here he achieves a theory which is at all events more consistent than Spencer's. In this respect his ethics is a development of the biological theory which he ably defended in his *Mutual Aid* (1891-94). The superficial interpretation of natural selection as a *bellum omnium contra omnes*, which obliged Huxley to place the ethical and cosmic processes in bald opposition, is abandoned for the view that mutual aid, at least within the limits of a single species, has as a rule higher survival value than mere strength, or cunning, or individual prowess. It follows that the psychological apparatus for mutual aid, which Kropotkin calls vaguely the social instinct, is deeply ingrained in most species, and perhaps most deeply of all in man. It is at least as normal as the so-called instinct of self-preservation, which egoism was wont to take as self-explanatory. Kropotkin's contribution to ethical theory might therefore be summed up somewhat as follows: On biological grounds mutual aid, sociality, altruism are as easily to be understood as self-assertion. And indeed no one would now dream of denying either the truth or the importance of this general conclusion. On the other hand, it is clear that the "social instinct" is as fictitious as the instinct of self-preservation.

Beyond this point the ethics of Kropotkin, though professedly derived from science, really passed over into the region of ideology, in this case the ideology of the social revolutionist. From mutual aid and the social instinct he derives the ethical principle of equity or justice, the recog-

dition that all men's rights are to be regarded equally, and that as a result all class distinctions must in the end disappear. This is based upon the alleged law of evolution that individuality and sociality develop side by side, and is said to be supported by tendencies discoverable in human history. As in most such cases, the evidence for this tendency depends largely on the degree of resolution with which we close our eyes to all other tendencies. Finally, from justice the author derives morality itself, which he identifies with altruism or self-sacrifice. Following Guyau, he regards these qualities as a sort of overflow of energy which takes place after the needs of individual life have been satisfied. The three principles, mutual aid, justice, and self-sacrifice, form the foundation of what Kropotkin considers to be a scientific system of ethics.

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LIFE IDEALS, THE WAY OF DECREASE AND INCREASE, WITH INTERPRETATIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE PHILOSOPHIES OF THE EAST AND THE WEST. By Yu-Lan Fung. Shanghai, China: The Commercial Press Limited, 1924. Pp. vi+264.

What Dr. Yu-Lan Fung has attempted in this study is an integration of oriental and Western thought. As far as is possible in a book of this size he has done this very successfully. According to the *Vita* (p. 263-64), he is mainly interested in western light on the contemporary problems which face Young China. While his undertaking is hardly as ambitious as the main title suggests, the subtitle indicates the scope of the work fairly accurately, and it does bring together the Chinese and European traditions in an interesting and suggestive manner.

Two ways suggest themselves of studying ideals. One would be to observe and describe men's works and deeds, and from what they were able to do, infer what they tried to do and, hence, what in practice their ideals were. The other way is to take their philosophies and interpret what they say about the ideal life. The latter is what Yu-Lan Fung has done. Taking a fundamental basis he is able to make a classification which cuts across regional and chronological classifications and lines up such far-sundered thinkers as Chuang-tse, Plato, and Schopenhauer, or Aristotle, Confucius, and Hegel. The basis of his classification is suggested by the saying of Lao-tse: "He who devotes himself to knowledge seeks from day to day to increase. He who devotes himself to Tao seeks from day to day to diminish" (p. 10). Devotion to knowledge amounts to idealization of art, and devotion to Tao is idealization of nature.