

**ANARCHIST ABOLITIONISM:
THE CONTEXT AND MEANING OF
KROPOTKIN'S PRISON WRITINGS**

by

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Abstract

The use of the prison is a highly debatable topic. Its main aims are to deter and reform criminals, but recent reports show high recidivism rates which suggests that the prison does not work in reducing crime. Penal abolitionists oppose the current use of the prison and wish for its removal. In line with their views, Peter Kropotkin also wished for the removal of the prison. He believed it was a harmful institution just as abolitionists did but Kropotkin further proposed a vision of an ideal society which operated without prison. In contemporary society a world without prison seems unimaginable, however, Kropotkin did not just oppose the operation of the prison but in fact opposed all forms of authority and wished for their removal. He stated that his ideal society without hierarchy and governance would prosper and crime would reduce. This thesis explores Kropotkin's thoughts on crime and punishment. It aims, by using Skinner's method, to set a historical context in order to explore if Kropotkin's anarchist or abolitionist views are reflected within his prison writings. To set such a context, Kropotkin's life will be explored. The events and influences which would have contributed to his thought will be uncovered and in addition a selection of the literature he read will be examined. This will allow for the reader to develop a similar knowledge-base to that which Kropotkin would have had and therefore will allow for an understanding of where Kropotkin's thought initially came from. After a close examination of these aspects of Kropotkin's life and thought, and after an in depth study of his prison writings, it is reasonable to conclude that his work is both anarchist and abolitionist. This shows a great overlap between the two differing schools of thought.

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INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF PRISON

Abolitionists, such as Christie (2007), Davis (2003), De Haan (1990) and Mathiesen (1974, 2006) attempt to spread their views and voice their opinions as to why the prison is an unjustifiable method for crime control. They claim the prison is an inhumane institution that is detrimental to a prisoner's health and does not successfully prevent, deter or rehabilitate those who are incarcerated within. Consequently, they insist that imprisonment as a punishment will never successfully diminish criminality. Instead, they believe that the prison system only intensifies the problem of crime and creates 'intractable problems' (Scott & Codd, 2010:168). Thus they call for its abolition.

Irrespective of these abolitionist views, it remains debateable as to whether the prison can reduce crime. In particular, high recidivism rates do not seem to support the idea that the prison works. In 2010 the Ministry of Justice disclosed that;

Of the offenders who were discharged... between January and March 2000; 20 per cent had been reconvicted within three months; 43 per cent within a year; 55 per cent within two years; 68 per cent within five years; and 74 per cent had been reconvicted within nine years.

(Ministry of Justice Statistics Bulletin, 4th November 2010)

Despite the widespread disapproval of the use of the prison and the apparently high recidivism rates of offenders, the prison remains to be the most dominant type of crime prevention. The majority of individuals in contemporary society accept that the prison is there to punish those who act anti-socially and further acknowledge that it keeps society regulated (Davis, 2003:10). With its widespread use, a world without prison seems hard to imagine.

Russian born Anarchist Peter Kropotkin however imagined just that. In the nineteenth century, Kropotkin envisaged a peaceful society whereby all human beings cooperated and the use of prison as a punishment would be unnecessary (Avrich, 1988:66). This vision comprised of a self-governed society without hierarchy in which all of its members were equal. It worked on the basis of mutual aid which Kropotkin (1902/1987) proposed to be an innate process within all human beings. He believed that improved education could produce moral individuals who were less likely to commit

anti-social acts. This alongside the removal of authority and government would make way for a self-governed society which would prosper and allow for progression and even further evolution.

Contrary to popular belief, the majority of anarchists do not desire corruption or chaos but in fact wish for peace and harmony. The word anarchy originates from the Greek word 'anarchos' which is defined as 'without a ruler' (Woodcock, 2004:12). The common misconception, which portrays anarchists as those who desire disruption and violence, often makes way for misuse of the word anarchy and further leads to the rejection of such theories. Anarchists oppose the current way that society operates and this exposes them to great criticism. They are often demonised as they offer an alternative vision of democracy than the limited democracy delivered by the capitalist state. According to Marshall (2008:36) anarchists generally 'offer a critique of the existing order, a vision of a free society and a way of moving from one to the other.' Most anarchists wish for a society free from law and government, and further propose that a society functioning without hierarchy would operate peacefully. Therefore, they suggest that society needs to change before human beings can live in peace and tranquillity.

Kropotkin dwells upon the issues of imprisonment in much more detail than any other anarchist. This could be a result of his differing life experiences and influences. Kropotkin presented his opposition to the use of the prison as a form of punishment in his book *'In Russian and French Prisons'*. This book was completed in 1906 whilst Kropotkin was in exile in England. It consists of articles which were previously written by Kropotkin for the English journal *'The Nineteenth Century'*. In writing this work, Kropotkin aimed to demonstrate to English people what Russian and French prisons were like. He made clear that in addressing an English audience, he had to briefly discuss the problems he encountered within Russian and French prisons and then discuss in general the issues present within all prisons.

Kropotkin (1906/1991: xxv in preface) claims in his introduction to this work that his last two chapters of the book are 'devoted to an analysis of the profoundly harmful influence which prisons everywhere exert on social morality, and also to the question: must contemporary humanity support these undeniably pernicious institutions?' These

last two chapters will be the focus of this study and will be referred to as Kropotkin's prison writings throughout the thesis.

This thesis aims to provide the context and meaning of Kropotkin's prison writings in an attempt to take an understanding of his views on the use of imprisonment as a response to criminal activity. This context will provide an understanding as to where Kropotkin's thought initially came from in order to attempt to answer the question: do Kropotkin's prison writings reflect his views on anarchism or abolitionism?

CHAPTER 1

THE APPLICATION OF SKINNER'S METHOD

'In Russian and French Prisons' was written in the late nineteenth century, a time very different from today. Using only current knowledge of contemporary issues, alongside reading Kropotkin's prison writings would not be sufficient enough to form a thorough understanding of the meaning of this text. It is evident that Kropotkin wrote this text on the prison to be read and understood by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century population. To take Kropotkin's text and simply read it in isolation would cause great concern leaving the interpretation open to criticism. Therefore, it has been suggested, that in order to take an adequate understanding from a text written in the past, such as Kropotkin's, it must be viewed within wider historical contexts (Collingwood 1940, Gadamer 1975/2004, & Skinner 2002).

Hermeneutics is known as the theory of interpretation. Hans-Georg Gadamer, a significant contributor to the area of hermeneutics, recognised that the hermeneutical method was successful to uncover the hidden meanings behind texts. Gadamer (1975/2004:429) suggested that concentrating on the whole rather than the text alone was more successful to achieve a fuller understanding. He claims the process of learning is ongoing and unlimited and that researchers should try to uncover as much as possible surrounding the text. Gadamer (1975/2004:357) claimed that openness is an important quality to possess whilst interpreting texts and that respect towards the views of others should be shown at all times.

In line with Gadamer's views, the British philosopher and archaeologist R. G. Collingwood outlines that textual interpretation must be achieved by looking further afield. Collingwood (1940:23) claims that 'every statement that anybody ever makes is made in answer to a question.' Collingwood alleged that a historical text or speech can only be successfully understood once an understanding of what question the historical actor was answering is uncovered. Collingwood claims that historical interpretation should not be an attempt to establish relationships between facts, but to treat these facts as thoughts, which must be grasped and understood (Johnson, 2013:34). For Collingwood, 'history is an intelligible narrative of agents' acts and purpose' (Helgeby, 2004:169). Thoughts are the reason for action and therefore to understand action, a

historian needs to uncover past thoughts and the reason behind these thoughts. Here, the idea of purpose is fundamental to understanding.

According to Collingwood, (1924:79) 'information may be the body of knowledge, but questioning is its soul'. Therefore, the way to uncover the purpose of a text is to ask questions. This question and answer logic was, for Collingwood, the only way for historians to successfully gain an understanding of the context in which the text lay. Collingwood added, that once questions are uncovered, the historical thought needs to be re-enacted in the historian's mind (cited in Fulbrook, 2002:126). The living past, for Collingwood, is the only possible form of past that we can evoke in the present by re-enactment (Tseng, 2003:273). Thus, according to Collingwood, it is vital for the historian to undertake this process of re-enactment of the thoughts presented, in order to underpin self-knowledge of the ideology of the past (Inglis, 2009:121). Collingwood (1956:215) claims that historians need to be aware of self knowledge in order to investigate the past. He states that self knowledge allows for understanding and reason and these are essential for someone wishing to engage in historical thought.

Although well supported, Collingwood's contextual idea of re-enactment is not without criticism. Helgeby (2004:161) discusses the practical obstacles to Collingwood's idea of historical interpretation. These are: the possibility of a lack of evidence to assist the interpretation and the chance that evidence may not be recognised as evidence until interpreted and therefore may be overlooked.

In response to these criticisms, Collingwood argued that there will always be an abundance of evidence available within the present world as 'the whole of the present consists of traces or residues of the past' (Dray, 1995:255). This implies that a lack of evidence is definitely not an issue. In addition, Collingwood agreed that without a specific question, evidence to help answer that question would remain unknown. He clarified that theories are advanced in the form of hypotheses and therefore answers are advanced in the form of questions. Thus, for Collingwood, questions must be asked and the answers to these questions would form the evidence. This suggests that as long as the correct questions are asked, evidence would not be overlooked.

Resembling Collingwood's contextual approach, Quentin Skinner's method is an in depth historical analysis which aims to grasp the meaning of a text. Skinner's interests

lie in recovering the meaning of historic ideas, much like the current aims of this study. Skinner developed his method due to a concern that previous available interpretation techniques that were being used by historians were insufficient. He claimed that it was inadequate to base an interpretation solely on reading a text in isolation as this obscured the original political character of the text and its potential relevance within contemporary society (Gunnel in Klosko, 2011:67). Skinner maintained that a text needs to be examined within the wider historical context of both the author and the topic. Without a clear understanding of the text within these specific contexts, the analysis would lack complete knowledge and thus be inaccurate.

Skinner (2002:47) proclaims that the author of the text must be understood, his core values, attitudes and beliefs need to be uncovered in order to gain further meaning from the text. Information regarding the author's background, life experiences and attributes of family or close acquaintances will help to construct an image of how the author lived and what made the author decide to write the text in the way that they did.

The intention of the author was Skinner's underlying concern. He reiterates the importance of understanding what an author is doing in writing a text (Tully, 1988:8). For example, a historian must attempt to determine if the writer is responding positively or negatively to other available texts or if they simply wish to add new information that has been overlooked. As previously stated, Collingwood suggested that texts are answers to questions and the meaning can only be found when the questions are uncovered. Inglis (2009:335) stated that, comparable with Collingwood, Skinner wishes to pursue the author's reasons behind writing the text, questioning whether the author was 'persuading, affirming, subverting or revising when they rehearsed their doctrines'.

Skinner proclaims it is vital to locate a text within the period in which it was written:

An understanding of the past can help us to appreciate how far the values embodied in our present way of life and our present way of thinking about those values, reflect a series of choices made at different times between different possible worlds.

Skinner (2002:6)

After completing research regarding the author's background, the historian should know within what time period the author lived and therefore should be able to ascertain what,

if any, major influences had occurred within the author's lifetime. These events may have contributed to the author's reasons behind writing the text and therefore may help determine from what position the text came. This will enable the interpreter to grasp an understanding of what type of individual made up the author's audience and this will then help to uncover where the author's ambition lay.

Furthermore, it is essential to examine additional texts, written on the same topic, available at the time because it is reasonable to assume that they will have been studied by the author. Not only would it have been in their interest to do so, but it is possible that these texts initially instigated their expertise in this area. This will help to create a base of knowledge similar to what the author had and will assist in discovering their intentions (Skinner, 2002:47). In addition, the examination of similar writings will allow for full consideration of the theories which existed at that time. This will help to ascertain key themes and ideas that other theorists presented, which, in turn, will help to establish if the author was responding to previous texts or presenting innovative ideas (Skinner, 2002:116).

Consequently, to study the period in which the text was written, the author's background and related texts, in addition to the analysis of the text in question, will add further significance to the interpretation and ultimately allow the interpreter to move closer towards uncovering the author's intention, allowing for a more accurate interpretation.

Skinner's method however, is subject to criticism. Although Skinner stressed the importance of uncovering the author's intentions, Roland Barthes (1986:50) states, in *'The Death of the Author'*, that 'it is language which speaks, not the author'. Here, Barthes suggests that the text alone is all the reader needs in order to form an accurate understanding. Unlike Skinner, Barthes implies that when interpreting a text, an author's identity is not of any importance to the reader. Their personality, background or life experiences are irrelevant to the meaning within the text. For Barthes, intentions are obsolete to the meaning of the text. Barthes opposes this type of method and suggests that the text should be separated from the author to allow the reader to form their own impression of the text.

Barthes is not alone. Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) also concluded that authorial intention is neither available nor desirable when they discussed their views in *'The Intentional Fallacy'*. Wimsatt and Beardsley (cited in Skinner, 2002:91) claim that the meaning of a text lies firmly within the language used and further claim that the author's intentions are irrelevant to construe the meaning of a text. In addition, formalist Cleanth Brooks (cited in Bennett, 2005:75) agreed that it is the text itself that is important and dismissed the need to uncover what he claims to be 'literary gossip' about the author's life, thoughts and intentions. Michel Foucault also contributed to this discussion in 'What is an Author?' (1969). Arriving at the same conclusion as Barthes, Foucault rejected the need to relate an author to a text, claiming that the author's individuality is irrelevant to the meaning of the text.

In opposition, Skinner claims a text should be examined within wider historical contexts and the author should be taken into consideration to allow for a successful interpretation of the meaning of the text. He stresses the importance of the author's intention and suggests that without any idea of purpose, the reader would overlook key parts of the text, resulting in misinterpretation or an ignorance of the true meaning of the text. In support of Skinner, Hirsch (1967:140) agrees that the meaning of a text may be taken from a text studied in isolation, but its significance, which is more important, is gained from the additional awareness of the author's intention.

Skinner's method is an attempt to expose the true meaning of historical texts by uncovering the writer's intentions and reading in between the lines to delve into the true meaning of the text. In order to achieve this, inferences will be made, which is where this method is further criticised. Taylor (cited in Tully, 1988:236) states it is impossible to accurately get into the mind-set of past thinkers. In agreement, Derrida (cited in Skinner, 2002:121) claims that an historian has no way of knowing what the author originally meant and rejects the need for authorial intentions as these are unknown entities which cannot be repossessed.

Although, Skinner agrees that it is evidently not possible to discover exactly what writers of the past thought, he claims that by using his method, historians can attempt 'to grasp their concepts, to follow their distinctions, to appreciate their beliefs and, so far as possible, to see things their way' (Skinner, 2002:3). Reading about the author's life experiences can help the historian to construct an image of how the author lived. By

accessing these pieces of information in addition to reading the text, an in-depth interpretation of the meaning of the text, as the author intended when it was written, will become clear. This is important because then, when the text is understood in its original circumstances, it may then be applied to a more contemporary meaning.

Whilst studying texts of the past it is obvious that various aspects of the analysis will have to be guesswork. Although this does suggest that the interpretation will be open to bias, Skinner (2002:121) states that inferences are used by everyone in all aspects of life. To attempt to interpret a text without making inferences would be to neglect its true meaning.

It has been suggested that Skinner's method is further flawed as it would imply that a text has only one meaning; this is the meaning that was intended by the author. Barthes (cited in Burke, 1992:24) writes 'to give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text'. By this, Barthes intended that once a reader attaches an author to a text, it restricts what meaning can be taken from it. According to Barthes, a text does not have one definite meaning, it has multiple, therefore to suggest that the author's meaning is the only one, would prevent the reader from further interpretation. Barthes (cited in Bennet, 2005:18) writes 'a text's unity lies not in its origins, but in its destination' This suggests that the reader has authority over the meaning of the text as it is the reader's own unique interpretation that will give meaning to the written work. This suggests that Barthes strongly supports the liberation of texts and maintains that a text should be isolated from its author. Furthermore, Derrida (cited in Mitscherling, DiTommaso and Nayed, 2004:57) agrees that language used in a text is of great importance and there is 'no single, final meaning to be found' within a text.

Although it is debatable as to how many meanings can be uncovered from a text, an interpretation, according to Skinner, must include an attempt to grasp the author's original intentions, otherwise the true meaning of the text will remain unknown. If the reader has authority over the meaning of the text and not the author this would suggest that every single interpretation of the same text will differ as it will mean different things to different people.

In addition, Hirsch (1967:140) clarifies that authorial intention is important but this does not mean every interpretation will be identical, he claims that the interpreter has the

ability to 'emphasise a particular goal' when looking at texts. This suggests that all interpretations that include the author's life and thought will differ depending upon the emphasis of the interpreter.

This then leads on to a further criticism, which suggests that when using Skinner's method, the interpretation of historical texts will be based on the unique judgements of the historian. This suggests the historian's interpretation is open to bias. When an individual reads a text or listens to a speech, what that individual understands to be the true meaning from the information given will vary based on unique judgements (Allport, cited in Skinner, 2002:58). It is evident that two individuals would not interpret the same text identically. As individuals, each person would have experienced completely different circumstances within their life which would make up their own unique set of qualities. Their past experiences would have contributed to the way they think, act, interpret and behave and this would reflect on their ability to construe the meaning of the text. Therefore it would be impossible for them to take exactly the same meaning from the same text.

Skinner (2002:58) would argue that although it is impossible for the historian to totally disregard their own personal judgements of what they think the writer was saying, it should be noted that historians should attempt to stay open minded and objective and endeavour to prevent their personal experiences influencing the way they think whilst interpreting texts. Skinner states that even without knowledge of the author, the interpreter would show bias when they pursue what they believe the text to mean. This implies that this criticism is not valid as it is not specific to Skinner's method but in fact will affect every type of historical interpretation. Furthermore, Gadamer, (cited in Skinner, 1985:25) admits that it is our own knowledge that essentially allows us to understand and interpret texts of the past. Preconceptions and prejudices make understanding possible and without these qualities an interpretation could not take place.

Another criticism of Skinner's method is that it is difficult to know where to start and when to end. With such a vast amount of literature available to consider when interpreting texts, Skinner's contextualism can be time consuming. But without taking time to assess the period in which the text was written, the interpreter would overlook the original question the author proposed to answer and instead would apply it to

contemporary concepts which may not have existed at the time of writing. It is evident that the text could currently have a completely different meaning than it did 100 years ago and therefore to understand it within its context is crucial to gain an accurate meaning. Although this process of contextualism can take time, the longer a historian spends uncovering relevant facts, the more accurate the interpretation will be. Although it is impossible to discover every minute detail about the past, Skinner reaffirms that the historian can attempt to uncover what they believe to be specifically important to that study and this can make the interpretation achievable.

It has also been suggested that this theory presents a tendency to emphasise the context over the text itself, however, this criticism has been contended by Skinner, as he states with greater emphasis upon the context, a deeper meaning of the text can be established.

Overall, despite the criticisms presented, Gunnell (cited in Klosko, 2011:68) states that the new historicism is a body of knowledge, more credible than much of the earlier scholarship. Although Barthes provided a strong argument as to why the text and the author should be separated, it is evident that Skinner shows continual support towards the importance of the author. It should be acknowledged that collectively both Collingwood and Skinner also sufficiently express the importance of history when interpreting texts. This historical importance relates to the context in which the text was written. It has been suggested that concentrating on both the importance of authorial intention together with the re-enactment of past thought are essential points to consider when examining historical texts. Both thinkers have provided a significant contribution to an in-depth historical analysis approach. And therefore, the present study will retain the valuable points put forward by Collingwood, but will closely follow the hermeneutical approach of Skinner in order to interpret Kropotkin's anarchist prison writings.

For this thesis, I have chosen to use Skinner's method. Firstly, his method is thorough. Secondly it gives a chance for the author's meaning to be re-established as it aims to uncover their original intentions from the time in which it was written. And thirdly it allows the researcher to take an understanding of history into account when interpreting the meaning of the text. Therefore, despite the various criticisms presented, the work of Skinner's hermeneutical method will be applied to this study. Thus, the points put

forward by Skinner to successfully interpret a historical text will form the structure of this thesis.

As discussed earlier, Skinner would suggest that an enquiry into the life of the author is essential. This would help to understand the author's background, his values and beliefs and uncover any experiences the author may have had that would have contributed to his work. Therefore, Chapter two will take form of a biographical study of Kropotkin's life.

Skinner would also suggest that an analysis of the author's thoughts should be undertaken. This will further help to uncover any underlying theories that were held by the author. *'In Russian and French Prisons'* was written at a time when Kropotkin held anarchist views and similarly at a time when he was impressed with the scientific study of evolution within nature. Therefore, in the current study, Skinner would promote the exploration of anarchist themes, in order to establish the specific anarchist movement at the time that the text was written. Anarchist writers such as Bakunin and Proudhon will be acknowledged, their work briefly analysed and their influence on Kropotkin assessed. As for Kropotkin's interest in the scientific study of evolution within nature, Darwin's influence on Kropotkin will be investigated. These themes will be explored within the biographical chapter as and when they become part of Kropotkin's thinking.

Furthermore, Skinner would suggest that an examination of similar texts written about the topic, both prior and in the same time period, should take place. These texts, it is assumed, will have been read by the author, as it would have been in their interest to do so. Therefore, this will enable the researcher to construct a similar set of thoughts and thus consider any additional knowledge that the author of the past held. This according to Skinner will allow for a greater understanding of the written text.

In order to address the issue regarding the amount of texts available, this thesis will have to be restricted due to time constraints. Following Skinner's hermeneutical approach, the method would suggest the need to establish everything that was written on the prison, prior to, and at the end of the nineteenth century. Due to the extensive amount of texts that will be available on this subject within this vast time period, the current study will need to be refined. Therefore, this study will examine a number of

texts which have been cited by Kropotkin in his book '*In Russian and French Prisons*' alongside other significant texts which Kropotkin would have read.

As both time and space permit, only a select few sources have been chosen as they are what I believe to be the most important. I have studied English written texts and those which have been translated into English. Although this will refine the analysis, it will make the study achievable. Therefore, Chapter three will consist of an analysis of a selection of texts which explore the view from prisoners from below, the view from prison officials from above, and also the criminological theories available at the time.

Thus the analysis of the author's life and thought, and further analysis of the author's literary influences, should provide an appropriate context in order to understand Kropotkin's prison writings. And so, chapter four will consist of the analysis of Kropotkin's prison writings within the wider context explored.

CHAPTER 2

THE LIFE OF AN ANARCHIST

The aim of this chapter is to extract and draw upon Kropotkin's most significant life events in an attempt to discover how his past contributed to his thought. As the method claims it is important to understand the author and his life in order to understand his work. Therefore, the key events which occurred within Kropotkin's life, the people he associated with, those who influenced him, the literature he read and his underlying anarchist and scientific thought will be explored and discussed in detail.

Kropotkin's Nobility and Childhood

Peter Alekseevich Kropotkin was born in Moscow on 9th December 1842 into a wealthy and noble family. The Kropotkins were direct descendants of the Ruriks, who ruled Russia before the Romanoffs. Despite being born into such a noble family, Kropotkin gave up his prosperity and became a revolutionary anarchist.

To briefly set the scene, in the early 1800s, Russia was a 'huge but underdeveloped country' which 'still maintained the belated feudalism imposed on it by Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great' (Woodcock, & Avakumovic, 1970:7). The majority of the social and economic life of the country was built upon peasantry and the system of serfdom (Thompson, 2009:255). Thus from a very young age Kropotkin witnessed how Russian peasants and serfs were inhumanly treated. Kropotkin thought differently to most born into nobility, as Cahm (1989:20) states he sympathised with the oppressed serfs. Likewise, Kropotkin's mother took pity on the serfs and was always pleasant and compassionate towards them. Unfortunately, she died of consumption in his early childhood, yet, despite this shortened relationship, Kropotkin (1899/2010:12) wrote in his memoirs that his 'whole childhood is irradiated by her memory'. Kropotkin felt and remained loyal towards his mother for the rest of his life and often dedicated his work to her (Anarchy Archives, 2012). The serfs took over her mothering role and Woodcock (2004:156) states 'it was from his childhood contact with serfs, fellow sufferers from the capricious tyranny of his parents, that Kropotkin first perceived a common humanity between the rich and the humble'. This early inclination towards equality instigated his later anarchist thought.

Kropotkin's relationship with his father was somewhat distant. Kropotkin disliked his father's attitude towards the serfs, and further opposed how he treated them. Kropotkin witnessed his father order serfs to be flogged, married against their will and sent to the army as a punishment (Miller, 1976:12). He was a strict father who tried to instil military discipline in every aspect of his children's lives. It is reasonable to assume that without his father's authoritarian attitude, Kropotkin would have perceived the world differently. His later hatred towards power and authority was triggered by his father's attitude during his childhood.

Furthermore, Kropotkin was raised in an era in which scientific discovery was rife and innovative ideas were universally appearing, this benefited his intuition from an early age. In addition, Kropotkin's nobility ensured him a fine education. He was privileged enough to be home tutored which meant he could gain access to a wide range of literature. The books he indulged himself in as a child contributed to his later thought. Kropotkin (1899/2010:66) stated 'under my childish appearance, I was then very much what I was to be later on. My tastes, my inclinations, were already predetermined'.

Poulain, Kropotkin's first tutor, often took the children for walks in the country whilst acting out historical lessons. These lessons captivated Kropotkin and as Dugatkin (2006:25) states, Poulain was 'a liberating influence' on him. This period of time which Kropotkin spent in the countryside during his infancy allowed him to appreciate the beauty of nature. This early awareness generated his later passionate interest in this area.

Kropotkin's subsequent tutors Smirnoff and Pavini introduced him to democratic ideas. Intrigued by his tutors, after hearing stories of other noblemen renounce their titles, Kropotkin considered it himself and as of the age of 12 he signed his name using his initial and not his prefix. He chose to reject his noble status for the remainder of his life. This rejection is evidence of his early disapproval of hierarchical structures. In addition, literature banned by the censor such as Alexander Herzen's '*Polar Star*' was shared with Kropotkin and this broadened his knowledge and left him with a healthy appetite to learn more (Kropotkin, 1899/2010:127). Access to these influential pieces of work evidently shaped Kropotkin's way of thinking.

The relationship between Kropotkin and his older brother Alexander was an intellectual one. As youths, they would share knowledge and spend their time debating and discussing topics of interest. It was Alexander who introduced Kropotkin to Darwin's '*On the Origin of Species*' (Dugatkin, 2011:6). This proved to be a highly influential piece of work and played an important part in Kropotkin's later proposed theories. After reading Darwin's work, Kropotkin's already inquisitive interest in nature amplified. This perhaps triggered his determination to travel to Siberia when graduating from the Corps of Pages a few years later. Borello (2010:32) writes that "Kropotkin's experience was clearly coloured by his reading of Darwin". In addition, Levine (2006: x in preface) states that for Kropotkin, Darwin's ideas served as a strong theoretical basis for anarchism and mutual aid.

Kropotkin's nobility ensured him a place in the prestigious Corps of Pages in St Petersburg (Shatz, 1972:269). He often rebelled against the various forms of authority at the Corps and his defiant attitude irritated most teachers. This type of behaviour was unacceptable and Kropotkin was often punished. In 1860, Kropotkin's participation in a student protest resulted in confinement to the black cell for ten days which was his first real experience of imprisonment. This early rebellious activity was an indication of his future disobedience and his negative outlook towards authority.

During his time at the Corps, on the 19th February 1861, Alexander II emancipated the serfs. This reform liberated 22 million serfs from 100,000 noble estate owners (Moon, 2001:3). Most nobles were hostile to this reform but young Kropotkin was at first overjoyed (Todes, 1989:124). Kropotkin held great respect towards the Tsar and was grateful for his decision to liberate the serfs. He believed the Tsar was a great reformer and that he could trust him. However, the reason behind the emancipation of serfs was not one that Kropotkin would have supported. It was a political reason which hoped to bring Russia in line with enlightened opinion in Western Europe where slavery and serfdom had already been abolished (Keys, cited in Rodriguez, 1997:561). The Tsar did not abolish serfdom on the grounds that it was immoral but he did so to better Russia's great power status and military prowess which had been previously damaged by the Crimean war (1853–1856). It was suggested that serfdom was the main cause of poverty in Russia, therefore the Tsar and his officials believed that ending serfdom would strengthen the Russian economy and thereby the country as a whole (Moss, 2005:25).

In 1856, Alexander II told a group of Moscow nobles ‘that the existing order of serfdom cannot remain unchanged. It is better to begin to abolish serfdom from above than to wait until it begins to abolish itself from below’ (Pearson, cited in Thackeray, 2007:3). This implies that the nobles were fearful of an outbreak of peasant revolt and disturbance (Easely, 2009:38). Although Kropotkin had not yet realised this underlying objective, he had noticed that the peasants were worse off after the emancipation. The majority of serfs were illiterate and so were unable to read their rights. Being unsure of the rules of the emancipation left them without work and this infuriated Kropotkin. Growing up in the midst of this struggle made an impact upon Kropotkin’s future beliefs and values.

Due to Kropotkin’s excellent intellectual ability, in his last year at the Corps he became personal page to Alexander II. With admiration for the Tsar, Kropotkin believed that this new position would allow him to finally become a useful contributor in reforming Russian society. However, working within the courts, Kropotkin was appalled to witness that they were filled with corrupt officials and soon realised how the Tsarist regime actually operated. This insight led to his disillusionment with the government and he no longer held admiration for the Tsar (Miller, 1976:47). This was a significant event in Kropotkin’s life as it was his initial disappointment with the government which was the first of many to come. In hindsight, this event became the foundation upon which Kropotkin was to build his future anarchist beliefs.

In 1862, when Kropotkin graduated from the corps, instead of choosing a prosperous career in the courts, he chose to become a military administrator in a Cossack regiment in eastern Siberia (Marshall, 2008:310). This choice was primarily made because Kropotkin secretly wanted to escape from St. Petersburg, away from the corrupt government and the narrow minded individuals that surrounded him (Woodcock, 2004:158). But to others he stressed that he wanted to make a difference in Siberia and was ambitious to apply the great reforms there (Cahm, 1989:18).

Despite this enthusiasm, his father, brother, school master and even the Tsar, questioned Kropotkin’s career choice and were disappointed at his selection. They continuously tried to persuade him to pursue a much more prosperous career, but Kropotkin was adamant in his decision. Grand Prince Mikhail Nikolaevich endowed him a place in the

Cossack regiment and despite his father's wishes, Kropotkin accepted the place and set off for Siberia.

Kropotkin (1906/1991:4) later states that his Siberian experience was where his attention was first attracted to the great question of crime and punishment. Therefore, it is evident that the vast experience he gained from Siberia contributed to his later revolutionary anarchist position and also significantly contributed to his prison writings.

Kropotkin's Siberian Experience and his Interaction with Revolutionaries

Kropotkin's experience of Siberia presented him with two major encounters. The first was the horror of the oppressed human beings who were punished there. The second was a great insight into the geographical uniqueness of Siberia.

On arrival in Siberia, Kropotkin was assigned to the Zabaikal division under General Kukel, Governor of Transbaikalia, and a known liberal administrator. Kropotkin was nominated aide-de-camp to the governor and travelled to Chita the capital of Transbaikalia, where Russian hard-labour convicts were sent to work in the Nertchinsk mines. Here, Kropotkin became secretary of the Prison Reform Committee. His task was to visit prisons, interview prison staff and use this evidence to propose reforms that would improve the service. Kropotkin was told that the results of this report would be used for future reforms (Woodcock, & Avakumovic, 1970:55).

After extensive research, Kropotkin found that the prisons were in a dreadful condition and concluded that the facilities were inadequate. He witnessed overcrowding, ill treatment and ultimately claimed that prisons were a risk to the health and wellbeing of all prisoners. Kropotkin compiled the report which evidenced these major problems and outlined detailed plans for future reform. Kropotkin hoped that his work would lead to the improvement of prison conditions but to his disappointment, both the report and his suggestions of reform were ignored (Dugatkin, 2011:11). Kropotkin later saw new circulars issued which stressed the importance of strong rule and discipline within the prison but mentioned nothing of the horrendous conditions that he had discovered. This event seriously affected Kropotkin and further pushed him away from the government and their unorthodox ways.

Another important task given to Kropotkin was to collect evidence and investigate the activities of a local official who had been accused of abusing his power by robbing and flogging peasants (Kropotkin, 1899/2010:171). After speaking with the peasants and gaining their trust and respect, Kropotkin persuaded them to write statements against the official. This evidence successfully led to his removal, however, Kropotkin later discovered that he had been appointed a higher position in another province. With this level of corruption, Kropotkin was beginning to realise that Siberian authority was much similar to that back in St. Petersburg. Kropotkin was outraged and this incident added to his long list of disappointments with the government.

Despite Kropotkin's negative experiences up to this point, it was in Siberia that Kropotkin first met and interacted with revolutionaries who had been exiled as a punishment for their political views. Exiled poet Mikhalov, who was sentenced to hard labour in Siberia, gave Kropotkin a copy of Proudhon's *'The System of Economic Contradictions or Philosophy of Poverty'*. Proudhon (1809-1865) was a highly influential figure in Kropotkin's period, he was the first to call himself an anarchist and his work was used as a basis upon which many later anarchist thinkers rested their theories. Proudhon ultimately opposed the government, he claimed;

To be governed is to be watched, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, regulated, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, checked, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right nor the wisdom nor the virtue to do so.

(Proudhon, 1923:293)

The authority that the state claims over individuals, according to Proudhon, is unnecessary. He compares it with the authority of a father over a son and states as soon as the infant has grown up and has come to realise that he no longer needs to be ruled, the father's authority over him comes to a close and instead he becomes the associate of his father. This Proudhon claims, is comparable to individuals under control of the state. Their lack of knowledge may have led them to state control but when their reason is properly developed it will lead them out of it (Crowder, 1991:102).

Proudhon not only opposed government, but also rejected capitalism and religion and claimed all three similarly oppressed individuals within society. In *'What is property'*,

Proudhon wrote 'What capital does to labour, and the State to liberty, the Church does to the spirit' (Horn, 2008:50).

Proudhon's work *'The System of Economic Contradictions or Philosophy of Poverty'* rested upon his fundamental opposition to government, capitalism and religion. Instead of these evils, Proudhon suggested that mutual organisations of labour should exist whereby political economy is denied and personal property abolished. This would lead to freedom which for Proudhon was paramount in human nature and would lead to a just society.

Proudhon's critique of the ownership of property derived from his idea that property is both theft and despotism. He explains those who own property do not use it, but instead they exploit workers to produce labour, and these workers use the property but do not own it. Here the property owners steal from and exploit the labourers. Proudhon does not support the idea that property should be shared equally but instead he advocates its entire abolition. He claims that the property which an individual produces is the only kind of property which should be allowed and that only those who produce it are the rightful owners. Therefore he suggests that workers should manage themselves in associations in what Proudhon referred to as mutualism. The producer of goods should share with others his products and in return he will gain the benefits from receiving goods from others (Ritter, 1969:134). This suggestion conflicted with what Karl Marx had to say on the subject and these two thinkers, despite being left socialists with similar objectives, held opposing ideas.

Proudhon stressed that a just society consisted of the existence of mutual respect among its members. By acknowledging in others the human dignity found within, each member would recognise they have the ability to govern themselves (Crowder, 1991:103). In this transformed society, mutualism was a core value. Although Proudhon was a revolutionary he opposed violence and instead wished for a peaceful transformation towards this just society. Kropotkin read Proudhon's work enthusiastically and was deeply inspired by his anarchism (Woodcock & Avakumović 1970:57). Proudhon's ideas would have significantly contributed to Kropotkin's later anarchist views.

In 1866, Kropotkin set off for the Olekmin-vitim expedition. The objective was to find an overland route for transporting cattle between Chita and the Lena Gold mines. This

expedition proved to be of great importance to Kropotkin. It gave him an insight into the geographical uniqueness of Siberia and also allowed him to complete observations upon wildlife.

Having read and extensively debated Darwin's work '*On the Origin of Species*', Kropotkin was keen to witness what Darwin had discovered for himself. Kropotkin expected competition within species to be rife, just as Darwin had described. He searched for evidence of animals competing for survival within their habitat but failed to find it (Kropotkin, 1902/1987:26). Instead, Kropotkin discovered that the environment was the real danger for living organisms. The severe temperatures and stormy winters left a number of species endangered. In Siberia it was not, as Darwin had put, a struggle for survival against other members of the same species, but it was a struggle for survival against the hostile environment.

Kropotkin observed that the more cooperative and social species were stronger in comparison to those that fought and remained solitary. Here, Kropotkin claimed that cooperation is essential to survival. This implies that his observations were conflicting with the popular notion held by social Darwinists, that nature was 'red in tooth and claw' (Levine, 2006:92). This later became the basis of Kropotkin's work. He proposed that mutual aid was a dominant factor in the evolution of all species and soon after he rested his entire theory of anarchism on these scientific foundations (Kropotkin, 1902/1987:14).

However, it was not until he attended a lecture '*On the Law of Mutual Aid*' by zoologist Karl Kessler in January 1880 that he combined his observations with Kessler's work and formulated his own theory of Mutual aid. Avrich (1988:57) stated that this lecture had a great impact upon Kropotkin's thinking. Even Kropotkin (1902/1987:14) himself proclaimed that Kessler had thrown 'a new light on the whole subject.'

In addition, Kropotkin was influenced by the work of Adam Smith, an economist who published '*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*' in 1759. This gave Kropotkin an understanding that morality was a physical fact of nature (Dugatkin, 2011:52). However Smith's work was limited to humans and Kropotkin wanted to prove that animals showed empathy, sympathy and mutual aid just as humans did.

Mutual Aid

In 1888 Kropotkin began to produce a series of articles on mutual aid in the journal '*The Nineteenth Century*'. These articles described how both animal and human species cooperate and practice mutual aid. They were later compiled to form a book titled, '*Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*' (1902). Kropotkin originally wrote these articles in response to Thomas Henry Huxley's article, titled '*The Struggle for Existence; A Program*' which he utterly disagreed with. Huxley (cited in Avery, 2003:64) stated that 'the animal world is on about the same level as a gladiator's show'. This infuriated Kropotkin (1899/2010:499) and he described Huxley's article to be 'atrocious'. Kropotkin responded:

Sociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle... if we resort to an indirect test and ask Nature: "who are the fittest: those who are continually at war with each other, or those who support one another?" we at once see that those animals which acquire habits of mutual aid are undoubtedly the fittest. They have more chances to survive, and they attain in their respective classes, the highest development of intelligence and bodily organisation.

(Kropotkin, 1902/1987:24)

Beginning with small insects first, Kropotkin stated that ants practice mutual aid. They regurgitate food for those that need feeding and are committed to work together for their community. These natural instincts are reciprocated by all members of the ant community and in turn, their colonies successfully develop, which allows for progression in terms of evolution.

Kropotkin adds that within the bee community a combination of the division of labour, sociability and solidarity leads to progression. Their species in numbers is more powerful than any individual effort, regardless of how fit and willing the individual is to fight. Although robbery and idleness also exist within the bee community, Kropotkin (1902/1987:32) states 'the cunningest and the shrewdest are eliminated in favour of those who understand the advantages of sociable life and mutual support'. Therefore, according to Kropotkin, anti-social members of this group will eventually be revoked by natural selection. Those willing to combine efforts will progress and evolve whilst those willing to steal and live independently are most likely to perish.

Kropotkin further maintains that sociability and mutual aid within birds is evident. He describes his observation of the coming together of different species for protection against predators. A numberless flock of birds are less vulnerable in comparison to those who travel alone or in reduced numbers. In addition, mutual support when hunting, feeding and nesting allows birds to successfully catch their prey and to protect their young and therefore the species will thrive (Kropotkin, 1902/1987:45).

Nature is often described as a pitiless struggle where carnivores constantly engage in conduct leading to the destruction of other animals. Kropotkin maintains that although carnivores may viciously kill their prey, they also practice mutual aid. Kropotkin (1902/1987:48) writes, 'Association and mutual aid are the rule with mammals. We find social habits even among the carnivores'.

Wolves hunt in packs as united they are stronger. Even solitary mammals such as lions and tigers hunt in company for protection suggesting that mutual aid is essential for survival. Wild horses unite in herds in order to resist attack. Whilst together in the herd they are unbeatable, however, if panic persists and the herd disperses, those unfortunate to be separated will undoubtedly perish. This again supports the idea of mutual aid, suggesting that when animals stay together and protect each other they are more likely to survive.

Kropotkin (1902/1987:54) explains that fallow deer have shown 'the most striking illustration of mutual support'. During an expedition, Kropotkin took note of how thinly-populated the Amur regions were but on return two years later he witnessed thousands of fallow deer. Due to early heavy snow fall, the fallow deer had decided to migrate to lower lands, in order to avoid competition when the weather was at its harshest. Demonstrating great intelligence they crossed the Amur at its narrowest point and demonstrating sociability they had gathered from a variety of scattered groups living within an immense territory. Kropotkin states that this proves that when necessity arises these animals group together for greater protection and they avoid competition in favour of mutual aid in order to survive the harsh conditions that nature imposes.

Most monkey and ape species join together in numberless bands and become unhappy if isolated. When an individual within the group is about to be attacked, a cry of distress immediately brings the whole band to the rescue. Kropotkin (1902/1987:56) states with

mutual aid they can successfully resist the attack of most carnivores. In addition, they provide protection to each other when the weather is bad and further provide care and support towards wounded comrades by persistently attempting to restore their life. In hunting for food a group will often combine to help overturn a large stone in order to find ant eggs. Their intelligence, playfulness and the mutual attachment shown proves that monkeys and apes are indeed ‘sociable in the highest degree’ (Kropotkin, 1902/1987:56). This provides them with a great chance of survival and therefore a greater chance of progression and evolution.

In addition to Kropotkin’s observation of animals, he also found that humans could be just as cooperative. After observing Russian peasant communities, Kropotkin found that empathy and sympathy were prevalent amongst these individuals. He was amazed at the way in which these peasant communities successfully organised themselves without any form of authority or hierarchy and this reminded him of the way in which most animal species cooperated (Dikshit, 2006:96). For Kropotkin, their healthy community which prospered was proof that a society without government was possible.

Kropotkin then used his evaluation of some of the smallest creatures along with his evaluation of the Russian peasants to demonstrate how power and authority in human society is unnecessary. He claimed that the state has damaged humans’ instinctive ability to be cooperative and suggests that humans do not need to be controlled as nature already provides a natural ability to cooperate and to practice mutual aid. Therefore, state domination is unnecessary and should be abolished to make way for a new society. Kropotkin’s theory of mutual aid later became the basis of his anarchism.

After Kropotkin’s visit to the Lena gold mines where he witnessed the extreme inhumane conditions that other less fortunate people were forced to work and dwell in, he realised it was time to leave the military (Cahm, 1989:23). Kropotkin strongly believed that the existing economic system had to be drastically altered to allow for an improvement and so he returned to St. Petersburg in 1867, and continued with his geographical studies.

Kropotkin and the Workers' Movement

In 1871 Russian newspapers sensationalised the Paris Commune where discontented workers took charge and formed their own government. The great coverage of this event enhanced Kropotkin's interest in the workers' movement. Kropotkin's relationship with geographer and anarchist Élisée Reclus inspired his hope for a revolution. Reclus participated in the Paris Commune and shared his experience with Kropotkin (Ward cited in Jun & Wahl, 2010:213). For Kropotkin, hearing about the Paris commune was a fundamental event which altered his way of thinking and perhaps even changed his future. Kropotkin was overjoyed to hear of such a working socialist movement occurring without any involvement from the government. This triggered Kropotkin's urgency to begin a revolution in Russia.

After the death of his father, Kropotkin felt he could now actively pursue what he set out to from a very young age; to live a useful life. The hidden resentment that Kropotkin held towards the tsarist regime finally surfaced and he eventually renounced his career within the government. He had decided that he wanted to begin a new career dedicated to revolution (Miller, 1976:76).

Kropotkin travelled to Switzerland to discover more about the workers' movement. He had heard that those involved in the Paris commune had fled there and also many revolutionaries lived there. In Switzerland, Kropotkin eagerly searched for individuals who could explain the activities and ideas of the Jura federation in Neuchatel, which he heard had been set up by Bakunin, a revolutionary anarchist. Kropotkin met Guillaume, who showed him the organisation and explained their principles; no distinction between leaders and workers, no centres of power to manipulate the workers and a rejection of politics (Miller, 1976:81). This group significantly impressed Kropotkin; he was amazed by the way these watchmakers worked together without hierarchy. He stated in his memoirs that it was at this position in his life where he became an anarchist (Kropotkin, 1899/2010:287).

Bakunin's anarchism was very similar to that which Kropotkin later outlined and was based upon Proudhon's earlier work. In 1840, Bakunin studied in Berlin where he came across a school known as the left Hegelians. Their commitment and support towards freedom evidently inspired him (Weir, 1997:27). Individual development for Bakunin

was highly important and in order for human development to occur, freedom was essential. However, Bakunin (cited in Morris, 1993:89) states 'a man in isolation can have no awareness of his liberty' and therefore implies that freedom can only truly exist when all men who are equal have fought for their emancipation together. This togetherness for Bakunin was extremely important in order to achieve freedom; he claims that a society whose members are not free is 'a society not of men, but of brutes' (Crowder, 1991:123).

In addition, Bakunin was concerned about class struggle, he stressed that as society operated, he was aware that humans were separated into two categories: the oppressed which made up the majority and the oppressors who were in the minority. The latter had great power over the masses and owned most of the private property. These capitalists exploited their lower class employees and stole profit at the workers' expense. Bakunin stated that the majority were living without freedom and in order to further develop, freedom was essential. The control which the government has over society denies the freedom within that society; therefore Bakunin supported the idea of a revolution.

Bakunin believed that a system of social organisation would allow for humans to prosper without exploitation or domination and therefore desired an anarchist society whereby all its members were equal. To get to this state he wanted to spread revolutionary consciousness to the workers and reaffirm to them that this change would be possible. Bakunin was well aware that to create this new society, violence and destruction would be inevitable. For the exploited majority to overthrow the ruling minority, he stressed the importance of workers strikes. Bakunin (cited in Saltman, 1983:141) stated that strikes were necessary as they would act as a catalyst that would unite the workers together in rejection of the conditions they are subjected to. These strikes would diffuse realisation that capitalism is not to be accepted and instead should be abolished to make way for new social organisations. Bakunin (cited in Dolgoff, 1980:304) states these strikes were 'the beginning of the social war of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie' which would then make way for a 'new world'.

Bakunin's critique of capitalism, the state and religion originated from his opposition to the use of authority, domination and hierarchy. Instead of the use of authority, Bakunin supported the idea of 'self-management'. He claimed that individuals should work collectively and without any form of hierarchy to dominate them. Instead the power

which is currently concentrated and overused by the minority should be spread equally amongst everyone and this will allow for freedom. He acknowledged that it would be absurd to reject all forms of authority and clarifies the difference between being an authority and being in authority. The latter he opposed. Bakunin (cited in Maximoff, 1953:255) claimed that the 'only great and omnipotent authority, at once natural and rational, the only one we respect, will be that of the collective and public spirit of a society founded on equality and solidarity and the mutual respect of all its members.' Thus Bakunin set up the Jura Federation to put these principles into practice.

Impressed by Bakunin's ability to set up such a federation, and with the awareness of his great revolutionary enthusiasm, Kropotkin (1899/2010:288) admired Bakunin and regretted that they never met when he had the chance to in earlier years. Miller (1976:82) states 'that after the death of Bakunin in 1876, Kropotkin's influence in the anarchist movement became paramount.' It is evident that Bakunin indirectly influenced Kropotkin through setting up the Jura Federation and this soon after contributed to Kropotkin's independent anarchist theories.

When Kropotkin returned to Russia, he brought with him socialist literature from Switzerland which was prohibited by the censor. He shared the work with his brother and the Chaikovsky circle which he became a member of. This educational and propagandist group was founded in 1869 by Nicholos Chaikovsky. It aimed to share books and articles to spread revolutionary consciousness throughout Russia.

Kropotkin became increasingly involved in the workers' movement. He disguised himself as a peasant, named Borodin, to deliver speeches to the workers. This disguise hid his Prince Kropotkin identity which successfully deterred the police and effectively helped him make connections with his peasant audience. Workers listened and believed in what the peasant Borodin had to say, his speeches were influential and many workers followed his principles.

After many powerful speeches and numerous attempts to persuade the workers to revolt, the police discovered copies of a revolutionary manifesto written by Peter Kropotkin and so concluded he was the leader of this revolutionary group. On March 21st 1874, Kropotkin was arrested. Throughout his interrogation, he denied having any involvement in the revolutionary group, but the police had enough evidence from

peasants who were bribed to testify against him. Kropotkin was charged with criminal activity against the state and sent to Peter and Paul Fortress in April 1874 (Kropotkin, 1899/2010:341).

Kropotkin's Russian Prison Experience

Despite Kropotkin's vast life experience, nothing could prepare him for the prison sentence that he was about to encounter. Although Kropotkin had previously experienced solitary confinement as a youth, and was highly knowledgeable about prison conditions from his work in Siberia, he was still unaware of what to expect. The Peter and Paul fortress had gained a ghastly reputation from its history of torture and anguish. But Kropotkin approached his sentence with a positive attitude and convinced himself to stay strong by thinking 'I will not succumb here' (Kropotkin, 1899/2010:344).

Whilst entering the prison, Kropotkin (1899/2010:352) detected a numbing silence which he described in his memoirs to be the worst aspect. At this point in his life, he was unaware that throughout the course of his punishment this theme of silence would remain dominant. He was immediately stripped of all of his possessions and forced to wear the prison attire. He described this prison uniform as 'a green flannel dressing-gown, immense woollen stockings of an incredible thickness, and boat-shaped yellow slippers' (Kropotkin, 1899/2010:342).

He was then taken to his cell which was located in the Trubetskoi bastion. This part of the fortress only held political prisoners. It consisted of two floors, each containing thirty six cells. The cells were dark and gloomy as the small window prevented sunlight from entering and within each cell contained only a bed, a table and a stool (Kropotkin, 1899/2010:345). At the time of Kropotkin's sentence, the Trubetskoi bastion only held six political prisoners, positioned in cells far apart to restrict communication, in addition to the thick cell walls covered in a layer of felt which muffled any noise (Miller, 1976:115). Kropotkin tried to communicate with prison guards, when they peered through the peep hole to observe him or to give food, but he claimed he never received a reply. Kropotkin recollected in his memoirs that he would sing to relieve him of the silence but eventually the prison guards prevented him from doing so. Only the ringing of the Cathedral bells was authorised to break this deadly silence and Kropotkin

(1899/2010:353) describes that this repetitive ringing ‘announced to the sleepless prisoner that a quarter of an hour of his uselessly spent life had gone’.

Activities within the prison were almost non-existent. Prisoners were allowed half an hour’s walk in the prison yard each day. Kropotkin (1899/2010:353) stated that ‘the need of new impressions in prison is so great’ that he significantly benefited from this small walk. However, this amount of exercise was nowhere near enough to keep up his physical strength, and so, Kropotkin also decided to pace up and down his cell and exercise with his heavy stool each day. Not only did this prevent him from becoming physically ill, but it also kept him mentally occupied.

Reading was another activity that occupied prisoners in The Peter and Paul Fortress. Books from ex-prisoners remained in cells and so a large collection of reading material was available. Kropotkin spent a substantial amount of his time scrutinising the pages of many books and asked for writing equipment to make notes, but his request was strictly denied. Kropotkin (1899/2010:347) stated that he ‘suffered very much from this forced inactivity’. Despite this, Kropotkin was grateful that reading was permitted to stimulate his mind. Although reading benefited educated prisoners like Kropotkin, it did not prove meaningful to those who were illiterate. Peasants who were accustomed to physical work and could not read, suffered even more in solitary confinement. Many illiterate prisoners showed signs of madness and unfortunately, Kropotkin witnessed the destruction of a fellow prisoner’s mind, a challenging experience that many prisoners had to encounter during their time spent at The Peter and Paul Fortress.

With the help of his brother, Kropotkin was eventually granted special permission to write an article for the geographic society. Allowing Kropotkin to complete educational work whilst incarcerated was a great privilege that other prisoners were not given. This activity helped Kropotkin pass the time and also would have kept his mind active. He stated it gave him ‘something immediate to live for’ (Kropotkin, 1899/2010:350). However, the satisfaction Kropotkin received from working on his geographical studies was short lived. In 1875, his brother was arrested and later exiled for an opinionated letter he wrote. In the letter he explained his hostility against how Russian officials operated and further articulated his disgust over the continuous arrests that were being made. This obvious contempt for the gendarmes led to his arrest. He was later exiled to Siberia where he remained for twelve years. Kropotkin (1899/2010:355) explains how

his 'life suddenly ceased to have any meaning'; he lost all interest in his walks, exercise and work and could only think of his brother's arrest. He mentioned that for him imprisonment was painful but for his brother who had a loving wife and son the pains of incarceration would be magnified and even more intense. This caused Kropotkin great stress and anxiety.

In addition, the prison began to fill up and more political thinkers were being arrested. Kropotkin was no longer alone and had someone to communicate with in the neighbouring cell. He could now hold conversations with other prisoners by knocking on the cell walls and waiting for a reply. Although this broke the silence that he had suffered for many months, Kropotkin's awareness of the break-up of revolutionary circles along with his brother's arrest began to affect him psychologically. This, together with the acute rheumatism he was suffering from his damp cell began to exacerbate Kropotkin's already deteriorating condition (Woodcock and Avakumovic, 1970:136).

Kropotkin's case had been passed on to the judicial authorities and in the early months of 1876 he was transferred to a prison attached to the court of justice; namely St. Petersburg House of Detention. This was a show prison where visits from foreign officials took place. Thus its appearance and general aesthetics were of a much greater standard than other prisons in Russia. Kropotkin (1899/2010:363) stated that there was 'much more life in it than the Fortress, more opportunity for correspondence, for seeing one's relatives, and for mutual intercourse.' Despite these advantages, the cells were much smaller than the previous prison and the building itself had poor ventilation. In these conditions Kropotkin became considerably weaker.

Prison Escape and Travel throughout Europe

A medical examination revealed that Kropotkin was weak due to a lack of oxidation. With this news, he was moved once again, this time to a small prison attached to St. Petersburg military hospital in order to recover. This prison was much more relaxed and it was here that Kropotkin formulated a plan to escape. The plan was to secretly improve his health so that he could build enough strength to run to the open gate where a horse and carriage would await. This plan involved many outsiders who each had specific roles; to either signal when the coast was clear, to help distract, or to prevent

any interference on the day of the escape. He communicated this devised plan through secret coded messages to those outside the prison and successfully escaped. With the help of many associates he spent the evening hidden from the authorities. Without hesitation he changed his appearance and after obtaining a false identity, he travelled to England (Kropotkin, 1899/2010:375).

In London, he supplied The Times with articles on Russian geographical explorations and wrote reviews of articles for a company called 'Nature'. This provided him with a good income but after being recognised, Kropotkin chose to travel throughout Western Europe where he aimed to find useful anarchist activity that he could contribute to. He moved to Switzerland where he joined the Jura Federation of International Workingmen's Association which had previously significantly impressed him. He settled in Switzerland but to avoid arrest he left once more for England. Disappointed with the lack of activity there, Kropotkin decided to go to Paris, where he set up a revolutionary group that began small but grew in numbers to hundreds. In April 1878 the French Police arrested many members of the group and condemned them to 18 months imprisonment for being internationalists, however, Kropotkin managed to escape arrest due to his alias.

In 1879, he returned to Switzerland, where he started a new fortnightly revolutionary newspaper under the title of '*Le Revolte*'. After the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, Kropotkin was expelled from Switzerland. In 1881 he returned to London, later describing the time he spent there as a 'year of real exile' due to the inactivity he encountered (Kropotkin, 1899/2010:440). Kropotkin eagerly returned to Paris, despite receiving several letters from friends advising him to disappear. He justified his move by stating 'better a French prison than this grave' (Kropotkin, 1899/2010:442). As foreseen, whilst in Paris, he was arrested on 21st December 1882 and taken to the St Paul Prison in Lyons. His trial was held in January 1883 and he was sentenced to five years imprisonment in Clairvaux Prison for belonging to the International Workingmen's Association.

Kropotkin's Imprisonment in France and Exile to England

During his second prison encounter, Kropotkin's reform conditions were considered comfortable. He could keep his own clothes, obtain food from outside and was

permitted to occupy himself with geographical work (Woodcock and Avakumovic, 1970:192). Later on in the Clairvaux Prison, he was given a large room to share with his comrades, the governor and the warders were polite and they were allowed access to an additional room to continue their studies (Cahm, 1989:191). His time here was filled with activities such as cultivating a vegetable bed, teaching comrades a variety of subjects and completing his own work but despite these numerous activities he still felt that his mind failed to function as it should and that lassitude overtook him (Woodcock and Avakumovic, 1970:193). Kropotkin was released early on the 15th January 1886 from increased pressure from his public supporters who participated in petitions demonstrating continuous disapproval of his imprisonment.

Kropotkin (1899/2010:452) describes the injustice of his arrest and claims that the evidence was a letter that he wrote to a worker to improve his grammar which he found to be a 'comical incident'. The prosecution stated that this letter was not to help the worker improve his writing or to help make him earn an honest living, it was in fact 'written in order to inspire him with hatred for our grand and beautiful institutions, in order only the better to infuse into him the venom of anarchism, in order to make of him only a more terrible enemy of society' (Kropotkin, 1899/2010:454).

After being released, Kropotkin settled in England for over thirty years. In this time he wrote extensively about mutual aid, anarchism, and significantly for this research; the prison. With anarchism and revolutionary ideas becoming increasingly popular in this period in England, Kropotkin chose to research the English prison system. It can be assumed that the references cited in Kropotkin's prison writings, influenced him and therefore, these literary influences will be explored in depth in the next chapter.

Overall, a combination of the events that Kropotkin experienced throughout his life, his acquaintances and the intellectual books he read all contributed to his anarchist position. In summary, Kropotkin, born into nobility, was brought up in an era in which reform was imminent and scientific discovery was rife. He spent his early childhood surrounded by peasants, who he witnessed were badly treated. Whilst he quietly disagreed with this and in line with his views and opinions, he saw them later become liberated. Kropotkin had experienced punishment early on in life after rebellious activity at the military Corps de Pages, yet he still succeeded to earn the position of Page de Emperor where he first discovered the tsarist government were actually deceitful and

corrupt. Within this role he realised he wanted to pursue a more 'useful' career which led him to choose to travel to Siberia where reform would be much more achievable. During Kropotkin's Siberian experience, all efforts to encourage reform were ignored which led to continuous disappointment. Eventually, Kropotkin realised his chance of successful reform would never be achieved through conventional procedures and that a different method should be employed. Thus he became an anarchist.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT KROPOTKIN READ ON PRISON

Alongside Kropotkin's intellectual biography, there are six main sources of knowledge that would have been available to him in the late 1800s as he worked on his prison writings. For the purpose of this thesis, these are categorised as the following: prison novels, journalistic accounts, prisoner autobiographies, accounts by prison officials, official reports, and the theories of positivistic criminology. Within each categorised area, a specific set of sources will be reviewed, due to their significance and because Kropotkin cited the majority in his prison writings.

It must be acknowledged that not all sources examined within this chapter were cited directly by Kropotkin in the chapters that are the focus of this study. However, these sources should not be overlooked as their relevance is important and it must be noted that Kropotkin will not have referenced everything he read. It can be assumed that Kropotkin read the chosen sources due to their nature; they were on the topic of the prison and were published in same period in which he was writing. Therefore they will be discussed in addition to the work he referenced.

As Skinner's method would imply, a greater understanding of Kropotkin's prison writings will be uncovered if the researcher builds a similar knowledge-base to that which Kropotkin had in the late 1800s. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to consider the sources which Kropotkin would have read, and to study these sources in an attempt to grasp an understanding of what influenced his thought regarding prisons and prison life.

Prison Novels

There are three popular Russian prison novels which were written in the late nineteenth century. These are Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, Dostoevsky's *House of the Dead*, and Checkov's *Sakhalin Island*. Although these novels are deemed to be fictional, all three authors have included auto-biographical facts which would have influenced Kropotkin.

Although it is obvious that Kropotkin may have read many more prison novels before writing his views on prisons, these specific novels have been selected for a number of

reasons. Firstly, in the introduction to *'In Russian and French Prisons'* Kropotkin made reference to Chekov's *'Sakhalin Island'* and Tolstoy's *'Resurrection'*. Furthermore, in 1905, Kropotkin wrote *'Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature'* which contained a short review of both Tolstoy's *'Resurrection'* and Dostoevsky's *'House of the Dead'*. This provides evidence that Kropotkin had read these novels. Secondly, Woodcock (cited in Kropotkin, 1991/1906: x in preface) claims these novels were well-known and highly influential in Kropotkin's era, and therefore contributed to his thought. Thirdly, their relevance to the prison topic which undoubtedly intrigued Kropotkin suggests the themes within these novels should be explored. Finally, having been translated into English their consideration is achievable. As to why they might have influenced Kropotkin will be discussed below.

Tolstoy's *'Resurrection'*

'Resurrection' describes what Russia was like at the end of the nineteenth century and was censored after being published due to its content. This would have further demonstrated to Kropotkin, after his awareness of censorship from the books he read as a child and his membership in the Chaikovsky circle, that the government tried to prevent the circulation of ideas, controlling what Russian society could think. Despite this censorship, the novel would have secretly circulated and therefore would have spread awareness of the injustice and inequality of Russian society.

This novel told the tale of a wealthy prince who lusted after a servant and abused her. He threw money at her to correct his misdeed but her pregnancy led to her dismissal and she later lived a life of prostitution. Coincidentally, she appeared before the court for a crime she did not commit and the prince served on the jury. During the trial, court officials showed incompetence: one previously had a domestic argument, one had not read through the case details and another was preoccupied with future plans. Their personal circumstances interfered with the process. They misguided the jury and wrongfully convicted the servant (Tolstoy, 1901/1996:237). The prince tried to appeal, arranged special prison visits to see the servant and secured for her a privileged position working in the prison hospital. He questioned the authorities about the imprisonment of those who had been detained without cause which led to their release, demonstrating evidence of discrimination and injustice. He also undertook the journey to Siberia alongside the marching convicts and described their weak condition after already being

locked up for months. After they arrived, the servant's case was reassessed and she was released. Throughout this ordeal, the prince realised the world is full of oppression and misery, and describes his 'resurrection' through religion (Tolstoy, 1901/1996:637).

Key themes evident throughout this novel are: distinctive class division, social and economic difficulties of the lower class, and the injustice of the punishment system regarding the law, courts, corrupt authority and use of prison (Freeborn, 1973:277). Kropotkin (1905:147) states that Tolstoy's '*Resurrection*' shows the problems and contradictions of society not just within Russia but all over the world. He suggests that the novel asks 'has society the right to judge?' and 'is it reasonable in maintaining a system of tribunals and prisons?' (Kropotkin, 1905:147). These questions left Kropotkin with further doubt about systems of punishment.

Dostoevsky's '*House of the Dead*'

Dostoevsky describes the prison experience from the view of an upper class gentleman who has been condemned to penal servitude in Siberia. He claims a gentleman's prison experience was 'ten times as cruel' as a peasant's prison experience (Dostoevsky, 1860/2010:68). He states that peasants receive familiar or better conditions than previously accustomed to whereas gentlemen suffer from having to adapt to poor food, bad air, and association with the lower class, many of whom reject them based on their status, and even at the end of their sentence would not consider them a comrade (Dostoevsky, 1860/2010:306). This he claims was one of the most difficult aspects. In contrast, he describes the degrading aspect of prison warders watching over all prisoners as though they were equal. This is further exemplified by having to wear similar clothing and suffering from a lack of privacy in shared accommodation.

Some of the intimidating, domineering and petty fault-finding officers were said to gain pleasure out of using corporal punishment on prisoners. Such horrific forms of punishment forced prisoners to often fake illness or exaggerate symptoms to gain a bed in the prison hospital, to avoid some of the pains of incarceration and to rest. Dostoevsky describes prison medical staff as kind and compassionate, and suggests prisoners were grateful for this (Dostoevsky, 1860/2010:64).

Money in prison was considered to be of great importance to buy luxuries and improve quality of life, and therefore was valued almost as much as freedom. Entertainment consisted of cards and drink, which often led to arguments, and events such as Christmas theatricals broke the monotonous and depressing routine. Despite this, Dostoevsky claimed how all years that had passed seemed so much alike and that impressions throughout his time spent there were few. Nothing was exceptional and the whole encounter was oppressive and repetitious. He admitted that even though he gained over 100 companions, he was lonely and looked forward to freedom, praying for it to come quickly and dreaming of family and friends. He states the passionate desire to begin a new life gave him the strength to hope (Dostoevsky, 1860/2010:343).

Overall, this novel makes Kropotkin further aware of what prisoners endure and reaffirms the prison is a damaging institution, not only to prisoners but to Russia itself. Although Dostoevsky's description of complete association differs from Kropotkin's initial experience of solitary confinement, in which he claims he felt isolated and lacked human contact, this novel shows that even when association is permitted the prison still proves to be a harmful institution. This is in line with Kropotkin's later views where he claims that whatever is done to try to improve any one of the various harms of incarceration, there will still remain a harmful aspect. Thus Dostoevsky's novel further made Kropotkin aware that reforms are pointless as they cannot totally eradicate the harms of incarceration, leading Kropotkin to further question imprisonment as a punishment to control crime.

Chekhov's 'Sakhalin Island'

Chekhov's work is based on his journey to Sakhalin Island and describes how the penal colony on the island operated from a visitor's perspective. After describing his tedious and problematic journey, Chekhov describes the different settlements and highlights the inherent harms visible.

On the first settlement of Alexandrovsk, he observed that settled exiles roamed around and enjoyed relative freedom. They were trusted with dangerous tools, worked alongside each other as cooks, nannies and coachmen, and taught children without supervision (Chekhov, 1895/2007:60). Most prisoners walked free from shackles and did not have to wear common prison clothing, however were still restricted and under

control making escape almost impossible. Those attempting escape were punished in the Fetter Block, known to be the worst punishment on the island (Chekhov, 1895/2007:87). This was a small cell which could hold over twenty people. When Chekhov visited, he witnessed prisoners wearing ripped unwashed clothes and irons. They were all emaciated, had no bedding and inadequate toilet facilities which were unclean and compromised privacy (Chekhov, 1895/2007:87).

Chekhov (1895/2007:95) describes the extreme weather conditions, the unsuitable land which prohibited cultivation in some settlements, the type of work in which convicts engaged, and the way in which officials treated prisoners as slaves to clean their houses and to make their food. Chekhov (1895/2007:96) writes ‘this is not convict labour but serfdom’.

He further describes the filth and unhygienic aspects of the prisons, the unventilated buildings which left prisoners with inadequate air and the combined cells where between 70 and 170 prisoners crowded on a bench to sleep allowing disease to spread easily (Chekhov, 1895/2007:86). Prisoners were denied personal property and were not given solitary time to reflect or pray and instead had to in association (Chekhov, 1895/2007:91).

Throughout this novel, Chekhov noted the apparent boredom of prisoners due to the general lack of entertainment throughout their monotonous life and further describes his pity for the exiles, claiming it was apparent that they lived in poverty as food was scarce and death by starvation was common. Chekhov (1895/2007: 126) also showed great empathy for the women and children who had accompanied the convict to penal servitude, having to succumb to this dreary life and being punished with the convicts.

Overall, Chekhov’s description of Sakhalin Island made Kropotkin aware of the present harms of penal colonies and would have given him an insight into how they operated and under what conditions exiles lived. This novel shows that the inherent problems within the prison system, which were later identified by Kropotkin, remained evident throughout all types of punishment.

Journalistic accounts

In the late 1880s the prison was a taboo subject and information regarding how prisons operated was of great interest to the public. *'Dartmoor'*, written by an anonymous ex-prisoner who referred to himself as 'B24', was cited by Kropotkin in his prison writings and contained an account of a prisoner's first week at Dartmoor.

B24's *'Dartmoor'*

B24 describes the long journey to Dartmoor, during which time prisoners are handcuffed and pitying individuals give them tobacco, which is shared around before the guards are able to detect it. When in sight the prison was described as ugly and dreary with armed men as guards showing prisoners that escape was tough. In the yard, prisoners are relieved of handcuffs and sent to bathe. After dinner they are stripped for the medical examination which is held in front of other convicts. B24 (1886: unpaginated) described this process as 'a sort of gymnastic performance' and questions its necessity, stating that it 'knocks all sense of shame, modesty, or even common decency out of the heart of the convict'.

They are given prison uniforms and sent to their dreary cells where they find a hammock to be assembled each day before they sleep, a mug and plate to be pushed out when food is served, and a brush to clean their cells. They then begin to follow the tedious routine of prison life following each and every instruction given to them.

Each morning prisoners attend church, they choose either Catholic or Protestant denomination and must remain loyal to this faith throughout their sentence. Prisoners were then separated in the yard into gangs, and searched, counted and totalled before being sent to work. B24 (1886: unpaginated) listed possible positions of labour. Outside gangs consisted of gardeners, quarry men, turf-cutters, road makers, bog men, latrine cleaners and town scavengers, some travelling miles before reaching their place of work. Inside gangs consisted of laundry men, cleaners, artisans, shoemakers, tailors, oakum pickers and stocking knitters, who completed their exercise in the yard beforehand. Cooking and hospital gangs were sent straight to their post. Prisoners returned to their cells for lunch, when requests to see either the doctor, governor or chaplain were responded to.

This routine was repeated from Monday to Saturday, apart from schooling one evening a week. On Saturday evenings new underclothes were issued and garments could be repaired. New soap, candles and rags could also be requested.

Sunday was a day of rest and prisoners woke later and exercised more. They attended church, although their appearance was scrutinised beforehand and they were constantly observed by warders and men with loaded rifles. B24 (1886: unpaginated) described this to be 'a very unpleasant feature.'

This summary of the prisoner's routine at Dartmoor would have been important for Kropotkin to help him understand the exact prison procedure that prisoners in England are subjected to in comparison with his experiences in Russia and France. It would have also added to his awareness of English attitudes towards prison life which according to B24's article seem to mirror the attitudes displayed by Kropotkin. B24 questions the necessity of such prison procedures mirroring Kropotkin's last chapter in his prison writings, titled 'Are Prisons Necessary?' This is evidence that Kropotkin and B24 held similar views.

Prisoner Autobiographies

Two prisoner autobiographies written in the nineteenth century were cited by Kropotkin and used throughout his prison writings: '*Leaves from a Prison Diary*' by Michael Davitt and '*Five Years Penal Servitude*' by an anonymous author known as 'One Who Has Endured It'. Both authors were members of a privileged class and experienced imprisonment during the late nineteenth century in England. Both gentlemen aimed to express, in their autobiographies, the harms of imprisonment and what should be done to correct it.

Michael Davitt

In Volume One of '*Leaves from a Prison Diary*', Davitt wrote twenty-one lectures addressed to the blackbird he had in his cell. The majority explain what Davitt believed to be a class system of criminal convicts within the prison. These classes, according to Davitt, were categorised by the behaviour of convicts and not by their crimes. These categorisations led Davitt to discuss the differing types of criminal and their modus

operandi, linking this to their prison attitudes and behaviour. He reflected upon his personal experience of time spent in several prisons, namely 'Clerkenwell, Newgate, Millbank, Dartmoor, Portsmouth and Portland' to observe these differing characters (Davitt 1885:11).

Davitt often makes reference to the socioeconomic backgrounds of the types of criminals he describes. With generalisations concerning their backgrounds, Davitt (1885:108) writes that 'hooks' (pickpockets) are often brought up by 'invariably drunkard parents' and that they are 'often the offspring of unfortunate women... mothers who are little better than prostitutes'. Here, Davitt believed that social injustice was the main cause of criminality.

He also describes examples of the prison slang that inmates used and how some appeared proud of their crimes. This level of vanity was expressed in a number of different ways. Criminals often boasted their crime, carved graffiti on walls, or wrote poetry in books to display a range of emotions: guilt, sorrow, pain and even strength in some cases. He explained how the prison encouraged moral teachings through religion and censored literature, the prison library only containing stories of remarkable men in order to encourage prisoners to practice such behaviour. Davitt (1885:185) claims he owed these books 'a debt of gratitude' for the hours he spent which enabled him to pass the time.

Davitt spoke of the difficulties that prisoners experience, describing various cases where they held on to hope, but hope turned to despair as they realised they had to endure the remainder of their sentence. Davitt (1885:170) discussed how prisoners hide their pain in order to avoid 'the mockery of human pity'. They do not express themselves and mask their true feelings behind pretence. Davitt (1885:171) further states that if prisoners were to express their emotions every time a thought about their family and former pleasures came over them, they 'would become as unmanageable and dangerously restless as a thousand hyenas', suggesting that the prison is a painful institution and causes great harm for those who are incarcerated within.

According to Davitt (1885:172), the first two months of a sentence are the hardest: 'liberty has only just been parted with' and memories of family and friends remain fresh. This for a prisoner is the ultimate test of mental endurance. In solitary

confinement at Milbank he described the ‘voice of Big Ben’ notifying prisoners that ‘another fifteen minutes of their sentence has gone by’ (Davitt 1885:172). He explains how suicidal thoughts cross the minds of many, and claims it is ‘not surprising that many men have gone mad’ (Davitt, 1885:173). He provides an insight into what lengths prisoners would go to gain better prospects, such as drastic examples of faking illnesses or madness, and self-injury.

Davitt then reveals a short summary of the system of penal servitude. He uses the Report by the Penal Servitude Act Commission 1879 (vol 1 pages 14-19) to give a brief description and then systematically discusses his suggested remedies.

Davitt (1885:226) suggests that criminals with no previous convictions should be fully separated from habitual criminals, and clarifies not just in terms of accommodation but also labour. This will not entirely remove the risk and so Davitt (1885:226) suggests that prisoners should be separated by the offences they commit to further ‘minimise the evils of contamination’, as those experienced in one type of crime may attempt to influence others. A division of young and old prisoners in each category he claims would also be beneficial for the same reason.

Davitt criticises the use of solitary confinement. He states that warders and chaplains are likely to show support for this technique as it maintains discipline and order whilst allowing time for religious teachings, but have no interest in its effect on health (Davitt, 1885:231). According to Davitt (1885:233), individuals who have worked most of their lives would find separate confinement to be distasteful. These individuals are more ‘susceptible to reformation’ and therefore more attention should be paid to them. Although the effects of solitary confinement are different for each individual prisoner, Davitt (1885:232) claims that nine months solitude is too much, and could work to reform inexperienced first time offenders if reduced and combined with...

more rewards, in better food and increased gratuities for work and exemplary conduct, greater attention on the part of the schoolmasters, chaplain and superior prison officials, with increased privileges in the way of keeping home influences – such as letters and visits – together with shorter sentences

(Davitt, 1885:234)

Davitt (1885:232) implies that solitary confinement has ‘no reformatory effect whatsoever’ on habitual prisoners and its only real purpose is to punish them. Davitt (1885:233) further suggests that hard labour is healthy whilst at the same time distasteful, but it is what habitual criminals require in order to reform them. He suggests that a penal colony for confirmed criminals would be beneficial to the public and to the criminal by removing them from the surroundings of a society which they hate (Davitt, 1885:237).

In Volume Two of *‘Leaves from a prison diary’*, Davitt focussed less upon prison and targets problems with education, poverty and politics in relation to crime. Davitt (1885/1910:17) was convinced that education, if implemented at a young age, would help prevent criminal activity. He suggested a free compulsory education system should be set up for children irrespective of their socio-economical background. He stated both boys and girls should learn trades and there should be the opportunity for evening classes for those who begin work at a young age for the chance of continued education. This he claimed would create law-abiding citizens and would reduce delinquency.

O’Hara (2006: unpaginated) writes a summary of Davitt’s work and states that he ‘was appalled by the barbarity and harshness of the system with its punitive element’. This is apparent throughout Davitt’s work. His opposition to the punitive element of punishment leads to suggestions which focus upon the reformation of the criminal. The issues which Davitt discussed are similar to the issues Kropotkin stated when reflecting on his own experience. They both emphasised that the loss of liberty and memory of loved ones was apparent whilst they were left to reminisce, every hour of every day. Being familiar with another prisoner’s perspective of the pains of incarceration will have added to Kropotkin’s understanding and would have further provided support for his claim that the prison is a harmful institution. Davitt’s suggestion that social improvements would help to decrease crime implies that he believes the current operation of society is ineffective, in line with Kropotkin’s view. Therefore Davitt’s work provided Kropotkin with further ideas on what should be done to prevent crime.

One Who Has Endured It

In *‘Five years Penal Servitude’*, the author reveals a detailed description of the prison and the daily routines of prison life in the three institutions he experienced, namely:

Newgate, Millbank and Dartmoor. *One Who Has Endured It* (1878:2) claimed that only those who have undergone imprisonment really know the true pains of incarceration.

Prisoners were sent to Newgate whilst awaiting trial. They were issued with a cell of their own and were to occupy themselves with books, as no labour was to be inflicted upon them whilst on remand. *One Who Has Endured It* (1878:17) stated that prisoners in Newgate were the worst fed in respect to both 'quantity and quality' and the discipline and management there was 'frivolous and absurd' (*One Who Has Endured It*, 1878:28). Prison visits were permitted but visitors to all convicts were crowded into one room, separated from the prisoner by a wire grating. Prisoners could not speak to loved ones in private and had to shout over simultaneous conversations. *One Who Has Endured It* (1878:27) claimed this was highly unnecessary and that as long as the prisoners were 'kept secure from escape' that would be sufficient enough to meet the aim of their detention.

It is to be noted that prisoners at Newgate were awaiting trial and therefore might not have committed the crimes they were accused of, yet the procedures they had to endure remained the same. The accused, but potentially innocent prisoners, had to mix with habitual criminals who are also on remand, they had to be stripped and searched for security reasons and they are subject to this irrespective of guilt. *One Who Has Endured It* (1878:28) discusses the problems associated with this procedure. Firstly, the faces of those later found to be not guilty may have been seen in the Newgate visiting quarters and later recognised and discriminated against in society. Secondly, they have been in association and thereby influenced by habitual criminals. Thus the author suggests visiting should be done in private, that separation from hardened criminals should be implemented and that once convicted criminals should be sent immediately to a different prison (*One Who Has Endured It*, 1878:28).

After being sentenced to five years penal servitude, the author is sent to Millbank where he is stripped, searched, examined, classified and issued with a uniform. Millbank is where nine months solitary confinement is to be served. Prisoners would eat, sleep and work alone in their cell and would only leave it to exercise or to go to the chapel. *One Who Has Endured It* (1878:48) describes his cell to be lonely and outlines the prohibition of pictures of loved ones to be a 'great mistake'. If allowed they would have benefited the majority of the prisoners, making them think positively and preventing

them from breaking rules. This questions the necessity of such regulation – why implement such harmful unnecessary measures against already punished individuals? Such questions would have added to Kropotkin’s thought regarding the necessity of prisons.

In addition, the author describes his employment as a tailor but also explains that there were a number of other trades that prisoners were accustomed to. When not occupied with work they were allowed to read which *One Who Has Endured It* (1878:53) claimed to be his ‘great solace’ and feared ‘if the authorities were to take away the books a very large proportion of the convicts and particularly the better class, those who have lost a good position, would become insane’. *One Who Has Endured It* (1878:104) reaffirms the importance of prison books when he refers to them as a ‘convict’s greatest blessing’.

He describes regular problems with prison warders, declaring that they often sold prohibited items such as tobacco to prisoners, but when caught in possession only the prisoner would be punished. *One Who Has Endured It* (1878:60) suggests that tobacco should be prohibited for warders and proposed they should be searched before entering the prison to prevent such problems. For Kropotkin, this evidence that English prison guards were also corrupt would have added to his already conceived disapproval of authority.

The author was then sent to Dartmoor. After spending months at Milbank in isolation he feared association, knowing that some individuals had changed for the worse due to the influence of more experienced criminals. On arrival, he was bathed, stripped and examined together with other prisoners. *One Who Has Endured It* (1878:76), states ‘when a man enters a prison’s walls he must leave every feeling of decency, modesty or shame outside.’ This evidence of humiliation and degradation would have reconfirmed Kropotkin’s feelings after experiencing these elements in his own imprisonment.

This account written by *One Who Has Endured It*, reiterates that the prison is ultimately a harmful institution and further questions the necessity of such an intense punishment in line with Kropotkin’s view.

Overall, these prisoner autobiographies allowed Kropotkin to identify with the experience of others specifically within the English prison system. It further allowed

Kropotkin to appreciate that other prisoners felt the prison system was insufficient and unnecessary, suggesting there was a great need for something to be done.

Prison Officials' Accounts

Accounts written by prison officials would have been of interest to Kropotkin as they show a view of the prison system operation from a different perspective. Accounts written by prison officials and cited by Kropotkin in his prison writings are Sir Edmund Du Cane's *'The Punishment and Prevention of Crime'*, Prison Matron's *'Prison Characters'* and John Campbell's *'Thirty years' experience of a medical officer in the English convict service.'*

Sir Edmund Du Cane

Du Cane became the first chairman of the Prison Commission in 1877. He was an advocate of changing the prison system to adapt a new stricter regime of punishment known as 'hard labour, hard board and hard fare' (Flynn, 1998:31). All prisoners exposed to this regime were to work, sleep and eat in solitary cells to prevent criminal contamination through communication. Du Cane also believed in the importance of punishing the criminal for the crimes they committed in an attempt to deter others. He states the 'object of the penal element is more to deter others than the effect on individuals subjected to the punishment' (Du Cane, 1885:2).

Du Cane compares criminality to a disease which needs a cure, although suggesting that some individuals are incurable. He claims that despite great efforts to deter and reform, crime will remain. The threat of punishment does not deter these people and the punishment itself does not reform them either. According to Du Cane (1885:2) these individuals are 'mentally deficient' but should be punished and made an example of to deter others. He claims that if punishing the incurable would deter 'the fresh recruits from joining the ranks of the criminal class then the object of punishment is effected' (Du Cane, 1885:2). He argues that despite high recidivism rates, the prison system at that time was not defective. If eventually 'all convictions were re-convictions and none of them first offences, we should be in a fair way to putting an end to crime altogether' (Du Cane, 1885:2).

However, Du Cane (1885:4) suggests criminals who can be treated, deterred and reformed should be dealt with using different principles to the incurable criminal type. He stresses in particular the importance of reforming younger criminals, where he believes the greatest effect is to be had, suggesting their minds and character are still 'unformed and underdeveloped' and they also formed the greatest percentage of criminals (Du Cane, 1885:6).

Du Cane claims it is important to look at the history of punishment to justify the practice of imprisonment. He states that previous approaches which endeavoured to prevent the increase in crime had proven ineffective, thus new techniques should balance both advantages and disadvantages. He discusses the way the prison operated at his time of writing and presents his opinions on its effectiveness to deter and reform through three stages of penal servitude.

In the first stage, the prisoner spends nine months in solitary confinement to prevent criminal contamination. They are subjected to long days of labour with a strict but sufficient dietary regime. They are allowed daily exercise and attend the chapel for religious teachings. They would suffer from the absence of freedom and would be under constant supervision by the warders. According to Du Cane (1885:157), the prisoner will become 'open to lessons of admonition and warning'. They would be likely to regret their actions and listen to those who teach them new ways. Du Cane (1885:158), then questions why this stage is not continued for the whole sentence and suggests that alongside the punishment aspect and being taught what is morally right, the prisoner needs to be well equipped for their return to society. Therefore, a full sentence of solitary confinement would not be adequate as long periods of solitude had proven to cause the deterioration of morale, and both mental and physical health issues.

In the second stage, the prisoner was transferred to a prison where they work but in restricted association, under what was known as the silent system whereby communication with others was prevented. They each had a separate cell but would only occupy this when not at work, under instruction or during exercise. Throughout stages one and two prisoners were given 'marks' if they produced enriched labour together with good conduct. These marks led to more lenient restrictions such as more frequent visits or the chance to write and receive letters. Food consisted of the bare necessities and was not improved for good behaviour as previously it had been asked

why prisoners should be fed better than a man at liberty. Privileges were taken away if misconduct occurred and punishments such as reductions in diet, corporal punishment or solitary confinement were issued. This according to Du Cane, (1885:165) made prisoners work hard to gain privileges and remain orderly to keep them. Consequently according to Du Cane (1885:166) disorder in prisons had significantly reduced, 'not due to an easy and slack system', but because 'order is strictly maintained' and 'discipline is exact without being severe'.

Du Cane clarified that most prisoners obtained enough marks to progress to the final stage where they had the chance to diminish their sentence, by a quarter at the most by obtaining conditional release. This gave them a chance to improve their ways whilst at liberty but under close supervision by the police. A breach of the conditions of their release would result in them being re-imprisoned to serve out the remainder of their sentence, without a chance of early remission.

According to Du Cane (1885:170), prison labour has a threefold effect: it deters the criminal and the criminal class, it produces a reformatory effect on the prisoner himself and it recoups as much as possible the cost of maintaining the prison. Throughout the first two stages of punishment, prison labour and religious and literary instruction are continuous. This aims to reform the prisoner by teaching morals, developing their intelligence and giving them a chance to adapt their skills. Du Cane states these aspects work together to produce the objects of the prison, namely general deterrence and reformation. Overall, he believed this three stage system of punishment to be a successful system. For Kropotkin to access a view of the prison from the perspective of an English prison official would have been advantageous. This differing perspective would have allowed Kropotkin to consider why advocates of the prison believe it works and is necessary as a form of punishment. Du Cane's opposing view would have fuelled Kropotkin's determination to explore whether these methods actually work to prevent crime and would have further prompted him to expose his own views.

Prison Matron

'*Prison Characters*', written by Prison Matron explores the prison system with regards to female prisoners. She describes the initial pains of incarceration, the differing

characters she came across and the difficulties she encountered through her time as prison matron.

Prison Matron (1866:8) begins by commenting that females break out more frequently than males, and suggests it is possible to reduce the amount of breakouts but claims any improvements made will never succeed in completely eradicating them.

She suggests that it requires a certain character of matron to achieve this; they 'should be well-ordered well-educated young women, firm without being stern and gentle at times without being conciliatory' (Prison Matron 1866:12). After referencing Mary Carpenter, Prison Matron (1866:11) agrees that in order to maintain order and obedience in a prison you need to find 'the best way to combine a wise, firm discipline with a benevolent spirit of administration'. Furthermore, following the advice given by Sir Joshua Jebb, it is important for a prison matron to be a good judge of character. Prisoners themselves can often judge a character better than matrons can and this results in the prisoners finding the matrons' weaknesses and then taking advantage (Prison Matron 1866:12).

According to Prison Matron (1866:13), all matrons should be 'steady and grave' and their golden rules should be to 'never say what is not meant' and 'never threaten or promise what is not the intention to carry out'. If these rules are followed, prisoners will understand and respect matrons. Prison Matron (1866:14) explains that cold expressionless and unsympathetic officers along with those who work by persuasion are a curse to the service and should not be allowed the position. Uninterested matrons do not help improve prisoners and those who allow 'too many encroachments of the rules by coaxing women from rash intentions by vain promises' are treated with disrespect (Prison Matron, 1866:16). It is obvious that this type of matron fears the women she is in charge of; she undoes the work of the matrons before her who gained the obedience and respect of prisoners and makes it difficult for future matrons. A clever matron may be physically weak but these women understand human nature best, they are women of 'tact and keen perceptions', and possess 'more power over the prisoners than fifty matrons of greater physical development' (Prison Matron 1866:16).

Prison Matron proposes that all matrons should be supervised to examine their methods and improve the system. She suggests it is vital to keep the same matron and the same

rules for as long as possible as once accustomed, prisoners become severely disturbed by change.

Prison Matron (1866:20) further outlines the hard conditions that prison matrons have to work in, the long hours, minimal holidays, the dismal quality and poor quantity of food and the constant mental exhaustion. She reiterates that the job itself is not attractive and states that this is why the wrong type of individual is attracted to it. She states the prison matron 'should have her heart in her work rather than her eye on the salary' (Prison Matron, 1866:22). Thus Prison Matron (1866:23) suggests that the directors should raise the standard of qualification, exclude the illiterate and thoughtless from the work, reduce the long hours of service, provide extra surveillance support and employ more liberal members of staff. This will allow the matron to sow the seeds of goodness in others and thus the job will become more rewarding.

Prison Matron then discusses the issues in prison with regards to religion, exercise, labour, classification, visits, association, chaplains, diet and pride. Throughout she describes a number of prison characters and how it was difficult for the matrons to manage them. She outlines her ideal vision of a prison based on the same structure, rules and regulations but with the above improvements regarding the employment of matrons and a few minor tweaks in the direction of improved conditions for prisoners. Prison Matron (1866:72) suggests that that more exercise and improved labour should be implemented after observing that 'women soften marvellously in the airing yard'. She adds that women who engage in active labour are the best behaved and that sedentary pursuits should be avoided. Prison Matron (1866:88) claims that prisoners would be less likely to break out if employed as 'labour women' completing activities as laundry women and in the bake house and therefore more jobs like this should be provided for all prisoners.

Furthermore, Prison Matron suggests that the period of solitude at Milbank should be shortened to six months as through experience she observed that breakouts occur more frequently in the seventh and eighth months (Prison Matron, 1866:90). Acknowledging that association does not help moral regeneration, Prison Matron (1866:123) supports the idea of separate cells, but emphasises that work, exercise and prayer should be attended in silent association. She then adds that communication cannot be entirely prohibited and therefore suggests that prison visits under supervision should be more

frequent. She suggests that prison matrons should become a prisoner's companion alongside the chaplain and the scripture reader, and, that a special class of volunteers should be employed. Their task should consist of reading and 'talking to the convict in a kind gentle manner, devoid of religion, unless the prisoner should seek that topic' (Prison Matron 1866:125). She reiterates that the contact of two unhealthy minds together evokes nothing but disorder, but contact with a mind that is healthy and pure will produce a great amount of good (Prison Matron, 1866:126). She also suggests that this process should continue after the prisoner's release, for example a prisoner aid society for women.

This text would have demonstrated to Kropotkin how female prisoners act within prisons in comparison to males and this would allow Kropotkin to appreciate that they also suffer from the harms of incarceration. The suggestions put forward by Prison Matron would have been important for Kropotkin as they demonstrate that she was unhappy with the way in which the prison system operated, and that it was in need of change. Kropotkin would agree with Prison Matron's suggestion that communication should be encouraged but would clarify not just because it could provide a good influence but mainly because to prevent it would go against human nature. Kropotkin's view of human nature stated that communication enabled progression and therefore should never be restricted but instead encouraged.

John Campbell

John Campbell describes his '*Thirty years' experience of a medical officer in the English convict service*' and reflecting upon one of his roles as a surgeon on-board a convict ship, outlines his disagreement with the transportation of criminals to penal colonies. He claims it was unfortunate to send English convicts overseas as they were in great health, had built up strength and had become enterprising and industrious. Campbell (1884/2012:6) thought these individuals were 'an advantage to the colony' but 'a loss to the mother country'.

In 1852, Campbell obtained the position of a medical officer in Dartmoor Convict Prison and states that during this period, solitary confinement had been favourable and men subjected to this treatment 'gave evidence of impairment, both bodily and mentally' (Campbell, 1884/2012:7). He claims that he often saw prisoners suffer with

'great depression, a semi-idiotic expression and dilation of the pupils', but after their move to Dartmoor, where prisoners worked in association, these symptoms would dramatically improve (Campbell, 1884/2012:7). According to Campbell (1884/2012:7), the results of prolonged solitary confinement may have made men 'more submissive to discipline' but 'the ulterior effects were no doubt in many cases most injurious'. He states that some prisoners arrived in such a bad condition that they were almost incurable after being kept in isolation for so long.

Campbell claims Dartmoor's foggy surroundings may have depressed prisoners, but it seemed to significantly improve their physical health. He added that the ventilation and warming of the prison building was in a 'very perfect state' and a further advantage of the establishment, from a medical point of view, was that prisoners were able to find suitable employment to match their capability (Campbell, 1884/2012:8).

Campbell was then transferred to work on the hulk ships which he describes as having various evils and disadvantages, such as a limit to the variety of duties, which 'make its discontinuance desirable' (Campbell, 1884/2012:9).

Woking Prison, where he was later transferred was a newly-built prison specifically designed for prisoners who needed medical assistance. Campbell (1884/2012:10) expressed his approval as he had suggested that the mixture of healthy and unhealthy prisoners was harmful and an establishment to separate them, as Woking intended, was advantageous. Although some of these 'weak-minded men were troublesome and often expressed fits of excitement', according to Campbell (1884/2012:16), a great many were 'harmless and even industrious'.

As a medical officer, he described how desperate prisoners faked a range of illnesses and were determined to deceive the doctors in order to gain privileges such as being exempt from labour. Campbell (1884/2012:15) stated these imposters were difficult to detect as some prisoners would go as far as to endanger their own lives, performing mutilations, creating wounds, and causing injury to their eyes and other organs. According to Campbell (1884/2012:17), these were the worst kind of criminal and should be subjected to the most deterring punishments. Malingerers of this type caused great difficulties for the medical officer; he was responsible for this detection and could

be charged with being too strict or too easily deceived. Medical men were often criticised for their decisions and had to ensure they could justify them.

Later, prisoners classified as 'insane' were sent from other prisons to a ward in Woking instead of 'lunatic asylums'. According to Campbell (1884/2012:19), these individuals were of a violent type with little hope of improvement. Their histories included a 'life of vice and crime' and their seclusion was considered to be 'a great benefit to the community'. After five years of vigilant supervision and firmness, Campbell (1884/2012:21) was impressed with the general improvements of the conduct of these criminals. He suggested further improvements such as a separate building for the criminally insane which employed only warders trained in dealing with these types of offenders working under greater security (Campbell, 1884/2012:21).

Campbell then showed his support for reformatory measures, agreeing with the notion that the prison should reform criminals into law abiding citizens. He believed society had enabled the creation of such individuals and placed the utmost blame on the criminal's parents, who according to Campbell, (1884/2012:22) taught them all they knew. He suggested that a change to the prison environment can be of great advantage to these individuals. They ultimately gained better living conditions, sufficient food and clothes and were also provided with the chance to become educated and learn a trade, instilling industrious attitudes within them before their release, to prevent them from re-committing crime.

According to Campbell (1884/2012:24), it is important to avoid all contaminating influences; therefore he supports a prisoner's initial solitary confinement, claiming this allows them 'time to reflect on their past misdeeds, but also inculcates habits of order and cleanliness', whilst encouraging religion, education and labour. Campbell also suggests that well-educated prisoners are generally well-behaved and therefore should be mixed with other inmates to provide them with a positive influence.

Campbell further suggests that prison labour is vital to occupy prisoners' minds, and although impractical for invalid prisoners due to their mental and physical condition, it was encouraged albeit the type of labour had to be aptly considered. Campbell (1884/2012:27) states that simply punitive labour, such as turning the crank and picking oakum, 'appears of very doubtful efficacy and is unlikely to be followed by any

permanent good'. This type of labour has no productive outcome and therefore is unlikely to improve prisoners, as they are without an end result and will lack interest. Similar to Kropotkin's view on unproductive labour as discussed in the next chapter. Leading from this, Campbell (1884/2012:26) states a productive occupation would be more beneficial and further states that the selection of each prisoner's occupation is necessary to guard against injury to health. For example, a man should not be given heavy labour if it is unfamiliar to him.

The amount of nourishment that convicts receive is sufficient enough to keep them in health, but Campbell (1884/2012:26) claims that a uniform diet in prison cannot be justly maintained as those employed in hard labour require more nourishment. He added that reducing a prisoner's food for disorderly behaviour is not a justified punishment and neither should an improved diet be introduced as a privilege. Campbell does however suggest that corporal punishment needs to remain to prevent disorder.

Campbell (1884/2012:27) reaffirms that prisoners undergoing sentences for heinous crimes should have no right to expect luxuries, or anything more than kind or generous treatment as long as they are industrious and amenable to other rules of the prison.

In favour of a mild and encouraging system, with a view to the improvement of the moral and physical condition of convicts, I also desire to see the strictest discipline carried out, so as to suppress any tendency to insubordination or disobedience to prison rules.

Campbell (1884/2012:27)

Overall, Campbell (1884/2012:27) concludes that the English convict system is 'humane and reasonable'. The improvements that Campbell suggests look towards improving the health of the prisoners and prevent further deterioration of mental and physical health. Campbell's view of the prison from a medical perspective remains widely influential in contemporary studies of the prison, as Joe Sim's *Medical Power in Prisons* demonstrates.

This perspective from a medical officer would have provided Kropotkin with an alternative view of the care of English prisoners. Campbell's awareness of the effect that the differing aspects of imprisonment had upon prisoners supports Kropotkin's view that the prison is a damaging institution. Campbell's suggestions demonstrate to Kropotkin that he was aware that improvements could be made to better conditions in

prison and further outlines that strategies and techniques could be implemented to cater for mental illness.

However Campbell's suggestion for the necessity of strict discipline which also reflects the suggestions made by Du Cane, would have been opposed by Kropotkin. Although Kropotkin would have been glad of the care that Campbell gave to prisoners, he still would have regarded the prison as a harmful institution and would therefore not have suggested stricter discipline.

Official Reports

The Gladstone Report.

The Gladstone report is known as one of the major reports in the history of reforming the prison. It was published in 1895 but was not directly referenced by Kropotkin. Although there is no definite evidence that Kropotkin read this report, being such an influence report, it is reasonable to assume that his contemporaries would have discussed it with him.

Pushing for the reformatory approach to punishment, The Gladstone Report (1895:8) stated that the prison should improve the prisoner by aiming to 'develop their moral instincts, to train them in orderly and industrial habits, and whenever possible to turn them out of prison better men and women, both physically and morally, than when they came in'.

The report discusses the evident problems in punishing criminals, stating that individual differences lead to inequalities in terms of the level of punishment given. It explains that some hardened criminals see their imprisonment as a temporary nuisance which does not intimidate them, whilst other first-time criminals find the whole process daunting and suffer immensely for the rest of their lives. The report implies that the responsible authorities should include an improved classification system to overcome this problem.

In addition, a worry that the prison system as it operated was not successful enough as a deterrent, was expressed. Thus the report stressed the importance of the prison system to remain tough with discipline whilst simultaneously working on the reformatory approach to improve prisoners in time for their release.

That the fact a report of this size was issued and published during this period demonstrated to Kropotkin the need for the improvement of prison conditions. The authors of the report felt the need to produce justifications for imprisonment which must have been doubted by others, showing that individuals within England shared concerns similar to those expressed by Kropotkin. Kropotkin would have disagreed with this report and this may have resulted in his determination to produce his prison writings, to highlight to others the damaging influence that prisons had on prisoners and to further question its necessity

The theories of positivistic criminology

Auguste Comte, a French philosopher strongly influenced nineteenth century thought with his doctrine of positivism, which became popular. Those who could use science to back up their theories were highly credited (Slattery, 2003:57).

Cesare Lombroso

Lombroso was an Italian physician and a psychiatrist in the late nineteenth century and was specifically interested in why some individuals committed crime whilst others did not. He believed criminals were different from non-criminals and wanted to identify these differences. In 1876 he produced '*L'Uomo delinquent*' (Criminal Man) which expressed his theory. The third edition of this book was cited specifically by Kropotkin and is therefore examined within this study.

After examining 832 incarcerated criminals and a further 66 skulls of deceased criminals, Lombroso observed that the physical appearance of criminals differed from non-criminals. He alleged that the biological characteristics of criminals were distinctive and referred to these as stigmata. The stigmata that Lombroso identified were: abnormal height, cranium size, eye colour, asymmetry of the face, retreating foreheads, overdevelopment of the jaws and cheekbones, large or small protuberant ears, fleshy lips, abnormal teeth, flattened nose, angular from the skull, scanty beard, hairiness of the body, excessively long arms and hunch backs (Lombroso, 1876/2006: 222).

He argued that this difference in physical appearance had a causal effect on their behaviour and made them predisposed to commit crime. He distinctly stated that these traits do not cause the crime, but insisted that individuals with these stigmata are atavistic, a term coined by Darwin to be evolutionary throwbacks of the past. Messerschmidt (2004:6) states that according to Lombroso, these evolutionary throwbacks were 'driven biologically' to commit crime. Lombroso claims that although humans evolve, some devolve and this is the cause of crime. His main distinction was that criminals are less biologically evolved than ordinary citizens. He compares them to animals such as carnivores, rodents and birds and further describes them as savages. He ultimately states that these individuals are born criminal.

Aside from their physical appearance Lombroso explains why criminals have tattoos and explains this is due to their boredom and the need to express their emotions. He also states that they lack religious beliefs and intelligence, they are poorly educated and the way in which they speak is inferior due to the small size of their cranium. Lombroso essentially explored a number of possible causes of crime but his theory focused primarily on the physical observations of the criminal and the structure of their brain.

Due to the criminal's distinct biological composition, Lombroso stated that they cannot be held responsible for their criminal tendencies. He further clarified that punishment would not be appropriate but instead these individuals needed treatment. This scientific theory gave Kropotkin information regarding the differences between criminals and non-criminals, theorising a link between physical deformities and crime. Kropotkin considered the impact these theories had upon his thought in his prison writings, discussed in the next chapter.

Enrico Ferri

Lombroso's student, Enrico Ferri (also cited by Kropotkin) added to this positivistic theory. Ferri believed that sociological causes of crime also existed alongside biological explanations. Ferri proposed a set of three causes for criminality. These were anthropological, physical and social (Morrison, 1995:126).

The suggested anthropological causes, which mirrored Lombroso's theory, suggested that criminality was innate and could be inherited. Physical causes were related to the

environment and nature such as temperature, seasons and climate. And social causes consisted of economic status, educational opportunities, housing and employment (Pond, 1999:23).

Ferri believed that social factors were of greater importance as crime control could be achieved by making improvements to these social causes (Hollin, 2013:15). He further suggested it was the government's responsibility to improve social conditions in order to combat crime.

Ferri's theories would have provided Kropotkin with an important understanding of the differing causes of crime. Ferri's principal focus upon social aspects alongside individual and physical aspects would have been of interest to Kropotkin as they are in line with his views of the social causes of crime.

Overall this chapter has exposed a range of sources that would have been available to Kropotkin at the time he wrote his prison writings. This has provided an insight into the thoughts and theories which existed at the time; it has presented a number of issues with the prison during that period and has exposed what Kropotkin's contemporaries thought about the prison. This together with the previous chapter concerning the important events within his life has now provided a similar knowledge-base to that which Kropotkin had, and thus will allow for an analysis of Kropotkin's prison writings.

CHAPTER 4

WHAT KROPOTKIN WROTE ON PRISON

After close examination of Kropotkin's key life events, and the literary influences that were available, it seems somewhat understandable that he wrote in depth about the problems of crime and punishment. With his already distinguished anarchist views, his opposition to state control and his scientific vision of an ideal society, Kropotkin demanded the abolition of the prison.

Kropotkin critiqued the use of the prison as he believed it was not the correct way of dealing with anti-social acts. He ultimately believed that the prison did not work to reform the prisoner but in fact increased their chance of criminality. He expressed these opinions in his book titled '*In Russian and French Prisons.*' This book was written in 1906 for an English audience. In the first part of the book, Kropotkin describes to the reader what prisons in these foreign countries were like and then goes on to describe his own experience of prison. For the purpose of this thesis, only the last two chapters of Kropotkin's book will be examined as these are chapters which contain his views about the use of the prison in general and can be applied to all countries. Throughout, these two chapters will be referred to as Kropotkin's prison writings.

This chapter aims to analyse Kropotkin's prison writings. This analysis will provide an in-depth explanation of Kropotkin's views against the use of prison and will further address the key harms of incarceration that Kropotkin focuses upon.

Kropotkin had not always supported penal abolition. During his youth, in Siberia, he first believed that reform could correct the problems within the prison. After witnessing the state of prisons, as previously mentioned, Kropotkin compiled a report containing suggested improvements in hope that the government would acknowledge its importance and reassess the current penal system. Despite these reports, circulars were issued that emphasised the importance of the prisons tightening the regimes so they became harsher and more intimidating. After continuous disappointment, Kropotkin eventually realised that reforms to improve the conditions for prisoners would not be made.

Despite Kropotkin's original commitment to penal reform, it was not until his own experience of imprisonment that he began to realise reform could not succeed in making the prison a humane institution.

Kropotkin's personal experience of imprisonment, as previously described, was limited. Firstly it was specific to Russia and France. For his first encounter, Kropotkin was imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg, in 1874. He was transferred to a military hospital due to deteriorating health and escaped in 1876. For his second encounter, Kropotkin was arrested in 1882 and was held at Lyons in the St. Paul Prison until his trial in 1883. After being sentenced to five years imprisonment in Clairvaux Prison, Kropotkin was released early in 1886 with help from his supporters. He spent his years in exile in England researching the operation of the English prison system (Dugatkin, 2011:37). Although he never experienced it, he gained an insight into the English prison system by reading prisoner autobiographies, accounts written by prison officials and prison reports, as stated in the previous chapter (Kropotkin, 1906/1991: 300).

Secondly, being a political prisoner who had a noble background gave him better prospects in prison. Kropotkin realised that other prisoners suffered far more than he did. For example, some prisoners had nothing to occupy themselves with, whilst others were forced to complete insignificant tasks which had no productive outcome. In comparison, Kropotkin had special permission to complete his geographical work whilst in prison, a hobby he enjoyed, and in addition he had an array of books to occupy his mind for which he was extremely grateful. Despite such privileges, there still remained the underlying harms of incarceration which have been identified by Kropotkin to exist in all prisons throughout the world irrespective of the conditions a prisoner is held in and regardless of their location.

When discussing the influence that prison had on prisoners, Kropotkin confirmed that he would not rely solely upon his own experience of imprisonment but would also use reflections from his role as secretary of the Prison Reform Committee in Siberia and the knowledge he gained from widely reading and studying the topic. He compared his own experience to the literature he had read and comes to the conclusion that despite the insignificant differences in levels of discipline, 'serious improvements are impossible under the present system' as it is 'wrong from the very foundation' (Kropotkin,

1906:304). This shows Kropotkin's support towards prison abolition as the only reasonable solution.

After reading Kropotkin's prison writings, it is evident that his views on prison are in line with his anarchist and abolitionist views. Despite the claims which suggest the prison is justified as a means to protect society by deterrence and reformation of the criminal, Kropotkin states that the prison does not deter crime and as long as it continues to operate it will not rehabilitate the prisoner showing support for prison abolition.

He discusses recidivism rates and identifies that 'as soon as a man has been in prison, there are three chances to one that he will return thither very soon after his release' (Kropotkin, 1906:304). He adds, 'nearly one-half of all people condemned by the Courts are regularly released prisoners' (Kropotkin, 1906:305). This suggests that the prison, according to Kropotkin, is more likely to increase levels of criminality and therefore is unjustifiable as a punishment for criminality and should be abolished.

Not only are the objectives of the prison never met, but the way in which the prison system operates to try and meet these objectives causes harm to the prisoners, their families and even to the rest of society. Kropotkin highlights these harms and tries to deduce their significance in relation to these apparent objectives.

According to Kropotkin, the prison provides criminals with a 'prison education'. He states 'if a man has been kept in prison for some minor offence, his return to a prison will be under a graver charge' (Kropotkin, 1906:307). The spreading of criminal knowledge is a great problem for prisons all over the world. In the history of prisons there have been attempts to prevent criminality spreading, however these attempts, according to Kropotkin, are unsuccessful and create more damage than good.

Kropotkin (1906:302) suggests 'that the system of prohibiting talk between prisoners should be frankly given up, because the prohibition remains in France, in England, and in America, a dead letter and a useless vexation.' In addition he claims 'whatever the schemes hitherto introduced either for the seclusion of prisoners, or for the prevention of conversation, prisons have remained nurseries of criminal education' (Kropotkin, 1906:309). Here Kropotkin, (1906:309) states that those who try to make prisons into

reformatories have 'proved a complete failure' as 'prisons have not moralised anybody, but have more or less demoralised all those who have spent a number of years there.'

From previously examining Kropotkin's life, his views reflect his great interest and knowledge of human nature. Although Kropotkin does not specifically relate his work on mutual aid with his critique of the prison, it is reasonable to conclude that Kropotkin would disagree with the whole system of imprisonment as it goes against the grain of nature by preventing communication and mutual aid. Here Kropotkin maintains that even though prisons encourage seclusion and prevention of conversation in order to prevent criminal contamination, it is evident that recidivism still occurs and so this unnatural seclusion and prevention of communication is unnecessary and should not occur.

Furthermore, 'none of the condemned people - a few exceptions apart - recognise that their condemnation is just' (Kropotkin, 1906:309). Prisoners are aware that left in society are those individuals who commit much larger crimes than they have. They are aware that those in higher social classes are unlikely to be condemned due to the fact they are in positions of power and this higher category is exempt from imprisonment. Kropotkin (1906:310) wrote from a prisoner's perspective that 'the small thieves are here, but the big ones are free, and they enjoy the respect of those very same judges who condemned me.' For this reason the prisoners perceive their own condemnation as unjust.

Kropotkin does not mention anarchism in his prison writings, but here it is apparent that it is his underlying thought. Kropotkin ultimately rejects hierarchy, authority figures and the corrupt use of power as a result of his early disillusionment with the government. An example of this was the level of corruption he saw when working in the courts alongside the Tsar and his officials. Furthermore in the novel '*Resurrection*', Tolstoy describes the unprofessional mannerisms of the court officials and showed how some prisoners were held without reason demonstrating injustice. Such an awareness of the injustice of the penal system from his own experience and from the evidence in the literature he read, would have reinforced Kropotkin's own personal distaste for the way society operated and thus would have reconfirmed the need for the development of a new, more just society without government and without harmful institutions such as the prison.

In addition, Kropotkin claims it is well known amongst prisoners that within society there are individuals who are more cunning and therefore avoid arrest. Prisoners believe it is unfair that they have been caught committing crime and imprisoned. They learn that criminals who were more cunning were more successful as they remain in society. Therefore, on release, instead of regretting the choices they made and trying to improve their habits, they believe they need to be more cunning when committing crime.

His brain will work in the direction of mediating the injustice of society which pardons the most cunning and punishes those who were not cunning enough. As soon as he is out, he will necessarily try to occupy the highest steps in the ladder; he will try to be cunning; he will conceal the “swag” better.

Kropotkin (1906:311)

Again this leads to the notion that prisons are ‘nurseries of crime’. The criminal has not learnt to repent and does not possess any feelings towards becoming a law abiding member of society. Instead he wishes to pursue a life of criminality more successful than before, suggesting that the prison does not prevent crime but exacerbates it. Therefore, according to Kropotkin, regardless of the schemes put in place to produce a reformatory effect, prisoners will undoubtedly mull over the injustice of society throughout their time spent in prison. Thus, on release it seems quite inevitable that most prisoners will reoffend, either as revenge to the unjust society in which they have been unfortunate, or with reason to believe they were not cunning enough.

It is suggested that to remain occupied in prison would improve the prisoner’s health. Du Cane, Prison Matron and Campbell all supported the use of labour in prison. They suggested it made a positive impact upon prisoners by occupying and instilling industrious qualities within them which would be beneficial upon release. However, according to Kropotkin prison labour has the opposite effect. Being a political prisoner, Kropotkin did not suffer this specific pain of incarceration, but after his wider reading around the topic he was able to gain an understanding and an awareness of what other less fortunate prisoners were made to do.

Kropotkin (1906:314) agreed that to leave prisoners without labour would be to ‘demoralise them and to inflict on them a quite useless punishment, to kill their last energy and to render them quite unable later to earn their living by work.’ Although it is

known that labour relieves a man, Kropotkin maintains that there are two different types of labour: free labour and forced labour. He briefly describes the differences between the two.

According to Kropotkin (1906:314), free labour ‘releases the brain from painful and morbid thoughts’ and ‘makes man feel himself a part of the immense life of the world.’ On the other hand, forced labour ‘degrades man’ and ‘is done reluctantly, only from fear of a worse punishment’ (Kropotkin, 1906:314). The latter exists in prison and thus prisoners learn to hate labour whilst in prison and these feelings follow them on release to society.

From reading English prison literature Kropotkin would have been aware that prison labour in England consisted of a number of tasks which varied depending upon the area in which the prison was located. According to the accounts written by B24, Davitt, One Who Has Endured It and Campbell, oakum picking and the treadmill were popular forms of labour given to English prisoners. These useless tasks were issued purely to break a prisoner’s spirit and with no productive outcome they were seen as a mere punishment. Campbell showed his concern doubting the efficiency of such punishments and in agreement Kropotkin (1906:314) uses his understanding of human nature to refer to this type of labour as a ‘wicked’ invention due to its unnatural aspects. He claims that unproductive labour is such a harmful aspect of imprisonment that it provides the prisoner with hatred towards labour and thus towards society as a whole which will be implemented upon release. This system does not provide the prisoner with a chance of improvement and has instead failed both the prisoner and the rest of society.

While all humanity work for the maintenance of their life, the man who picks oakum is condemned to perform a work which nobody needs. He is an outcast. And if he treats society as an outcast would, we can accuse nobody but ourselves.

(Kropotkin, 1906:315)

Suggestions for more productive forms of labour became popular, however according to Kropotkin (1906:315), the outcomes for prisoners were equally as destructive. The work being done was now useful and profitable and prisoners often supplied companies with products at a cheaper rate and were in turn paid a small wage. They learnt to make products such as shoes, clothes and baskets but according to Kropotkin (1906:317) ‘the

work which has no attractiveness in itself...gives no exercise to the mental faculties of the labourer, and is paid so badly, (that it) comes to be considered as a mere punishment.'

Kropotkin, (1906:318) states that prisoners who are 'working merely to enrich his employer' would not view prison labour as just or moralising and instead would think the opposite. Kropotkin (1906:323) disagreed with this system and believed it was a form of slavery, to make prisoners work for next to nothing whilst those in charge made profit. This theme occurred within Chekhov's novel where he likened prison labour to serfdom in disguise and further relates back to Kropotkin's anarchist thought about capital which he grasped from reading the earlier work of Proudhon and Bakunin. This, in addition to his life involvement with peasants, serfs and workers, gave him a strong belief that how society operated was wrong. At a young age he was well aware that serfdom should be abolished and that all humans had a right to be equal. He disagreed with the class system and believed that all hierarchical structures should be abolished to make way for a new society whereby all its members were equal and lived peacefully and tranquilly under natural laws such as mutual aid. Speeches he gave to peasants and his later involvement with the Jura Federation in Switzerland showed his ambition to change the future for these oppressed individuals and his later written work on anarchism clearly showed his views regarding the problems with the production of labour.

It is evident here that according to Kropotkin, penal labour reflects and amplifies all the negative aspects of labour and the oppression which accompanies it operating within society. Kropotkin spent years questioning these negative aspects of society and to discover that they existed but in an intensified form within the prison walls, can explain why Kropotkin wished for prison abolition.

Kropotkin (1906: 319) then states that 'those who schemed our prisons did all in their power to cut all the threads which might keep up the prisoner's connection with society.' The initial removal of the prisoner from society, according to Kropotkin is so unnatural that it is bound to cause great harm. Again, referring to Kropotkin's knowledge of human nature, he is aware that communication and interaction is vital for human beings. And so to put restrictions in place to prevent these vital human instincts is extremely damaging and should not be permitted.

Kropotkin clarifies that the prison denies a prisoner all the best feelings and places him under strict control. 'His wife and children are not permitted in this country to see him more than once every three months and the letters he may write are a mere mockery' (Kropotkin, 1906:319). He refers to the visiting situation in French prisons and claims that although fewer restrictions are put in place in terms of visiting, prisoners here are no better off. It is more often than not that the families of a convict, who mainly belong to the poorest classes, cannot afford the long journey to the prison and so a prisoner would have to go without seeing his family for the entire sentence (Kropotkin, 1906:320).

In the literature, inappropriate visiting conditions were described in Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection*, outlined in One Who Has Endured It's account and were also mentioned in Prison Matron's list of improvements. This provides Kropotkin with further knowledge that such restrictions on visits and seclusion from society was evidently harmful for prisoners.

The restrictions put in place to prevent the prisoner from seeing their family as often as they would like is evidence of the power that those in high positions exert over helpless prisoners. Kropotkin's anarchist thought here is apparent. Those in the lower classes form the majority of prisoners, and when caught and imprisoned, their families are also penalised in the sense that they are prohibited from seeing the prisoner during their sentence. Those rich enough to afford the journey to a distant prison are permitted to visit and those poor and already unfortunate individuals who have no money for the journey have to suffer more. They had suffered in society prior to incarceration and then whilst imprisoned they suffer again for the lack of the one thing that would relieve them - to see family members. Again this apparent injustice is a recurring theme which provides evidence towards Kropotkin's notion that society is unjust and needs to be transformed.

Kropotkin (1906:320) claims 'the prisons of old were less clean; they were less orderly than the modern ones; but at any rate, under this aspect they were more humane.' This suggests Kropotkin believes the prison has not developed for the better but for worse, despite reformations to improve cleanliness and order.

Kropotkin (1906:320) states that a prisoner's 'physical energy is very soon killed in prison'. He describes in detail how his own prison experience affected him, how he soon felt 'lassitude' overtaking him and how although he tried his best not to succumb in prison, he eventually felt that his 'bodily energy disappeared' as time went on (Kropotkin, 1906:321).

In addition to physical deterioration, the mental abilities of prisoners are also put at risk. Kropotkin (1906:321) states that during imprisonment 'the brain has no longer the energy for sustained attention; thought is less rapid, or rather, less persistent: it loses its depth.' According to Kropotkin, life inside the prison is dull and mundane, in comparison to life before incarceration. He states that, in ordinary life, the sights we see, the sounds we hear and the events that occur stimulate our minds and these refresh our thought processes, and being able to observe new things allows the brain to remain active. Kropotkin (1906:322) states 'nothing of the kind strikes the prisoner; his impressions are few and always the same'. Therefore, a prisoner is always eager to hear or see new things; their need for new impressions is so great that this inactivity of the brain often leads to depression. Kropotkin (1906:323) states that under this condition the 'prisoner may learn a handicraft, but he will never learn to love his work. In most instances he will learn to hate it'. The prisoners' hatred towards all types of labour has been generated within the prison and therefore on release prisoners will not be equipped for their return to society. This does not provide them with a position to improve but instead provides an increased likelihood of their return to prison. Here Kropotkin implies once again that the prison system is damaging to prisoners.

Kropotkin (1906:323) points out that another demoralising aspect of imprisonment is the deprivation of liberty and a prisoner's 'firm want of will'. From Kropotkin's viewpoint, society contains individuals that are familiar with making their own decisions to some extent. Although some behaviours and decisions are deemed unacceptable and therefore punishable, the individual lives life with relative freedom and can make their own decisions. However, on entering the prison, a prisoner is denied free will and from then on is fully controlled by the strictest rules and regulations. This aspect is re-confirmed to Kropotkin by the accounts written by B24, Davitt and One Who Has Endured It, who claim every aspect of a prisoner's life is regulated: when they should eat, drink, sleep or work is dependent upon prison rules and regulations. These daily activities are further manipulated by the discretion of the prison guards, which can

be subject to corruption a matter which is later discussed. These accounts show that the prisoner inherently suffers from this denial of free will.

Kropotkin adds that those who enter the prison have already previously faced difficulty in resisting temptations (Kropotkin, 1906:323). Although, whilst incarcerated, they are secluded from these temptations, Kropotkin (1906:324) wrote that the prisoner whilst in prison 'has almost no opportunity for exercising and reinforcing the firmness of his will. He is a machine. He has no choice between two courses of action' and thus on release, the 'firmness of will as he may have had before entering the prison disappears' and he will find it difficult to resist further temptations which may arise. Thus removing an individual's free will, and then releasing him back in to society, will not prepare him for the outside world.

This grew from the desire to instil prison discipline in order 'to keep the greatest number of prisoners with the least possible amount of warders' at low costs (Kropotkin, 1906:325). 'And it is not to be wondered at that men accustomed to be mere machines do not prove to be the men whom society needs' leaving us to question: is there any wonder recidivism rates are high? (Kropotkin, 1906:326).

Kropotkin (1906:326) explains that when released, the prisoner's old comrades await and after questioning who else would assist them, the convict realises that returning to crime is their only option because of their social group. Kropotkin (1906:326) maintains that 'Guardians and Prisoners Aid Societies (which) are there to help cannot help. All they can do is to undo the bad work done by the prison, to counterbalance its bad effects in some of the released prisoners'. Kropotkin states that this help would have been much more useful before the prisoner committed the crime. The influence of an honest man in his former life would have had a much greater effect and could have prevented his criminality before being sent to prison. Instead these individuals live their lives amongst bad influences, they find themselves in prison where they receive a prison education and then on release they have more criminal tendencies and thus it seems quite inevitable that they will return to their former ways. Here Kropotkin reaffirms that the help given to these individuals arrives too late to have any effect upon them. Thus once again Kropotkin would suggest that the system has failed them and suggests here that the blame lies within society.

Kropotkin (1906:327) further questions ‘who is the woman who would like to marry a man who has once been in a prison?’ Therefore, knowing of the slim chance to find a partner or a willing honest individual to become an associate, the prisoner instead associates with those who do not judge, those who do not care that he has been in prison, those who already have a prison education. This type of associate are the ex-prisoner’s only option and this continued association will eventually lead them to commit more crime and ultimately to their reconviction.

Kropotkin states at his specific time of writing that individuals no longer advocated the deterrent influence of prison alone and instead they promoted deterrence together with reformation to be the joint aims of the prison. However, Kropotkin claims that these proposed objectives are never met due to the everlasting degrading aspects which exist in all prisons. He claims that ‘prisons are made for degrading all those who enter them, for killing the very last feelings of self-respect’ (Kropotkin, 1906:328). On entering the prison, criminals are initially stripped of their identity. With their clothing and personal belongings confiscated they are made to wear the prison attire which is purposely made to ridicule and demoralise them. Kropotkin (1906:328) suggests that ‘even an animal is ashamed to appear amidst its like if its coat renders it conspicuous and ridiculous’. To reduce a human to this level is to humiliate them and to remove all feelings of self-respect.

Prisoners no longer feel like an individual. Kropotkin (1906:329) states they feel indistinguishable from all other prisoners and begin to feel like an item ‘a thing, a mere number’ instead of a person as B24 previously demonstrated. With the identical prison outfits, the prisoners are made to feel degraded. Despite their differing levels of criminality they are now all equal and therefore subject to the same punishment. After discarding their names and being given a number this is the only thing which makes them identifiable. Kropotkin (1906:329) writes ‘no animal could bear such treatment year after year without being utterly abashed; but those human beings, who in a few years ought to become useful members of society, are treated in this way.’

In addition to this treatment, Kropotkin (1906:330) describes that prisoners cannot show their feelings and to lie and deceive become their second nature. Throughout their entire sentence they have to hide their feelings but they are never alone and even in the solitude of their own cell they are watched by the warder. This aspect was outlined

within Dostoevsky's novel and was also pointed out by Chekhov when he described the convicts on Sakhalin Island. It was also confirmed within the accounts written by Davitt and One Who Has Endured It, when they outlined the effect that this had upon them in prison. This knowledge, alongside Kropotkin's already developed awareness which he gained from his own imprisonment, allowed for a greater understanding of the harms of incarceration. In Kropotkin's earlier work, he portrays human beings as naturally caring with the innate ability to practice mutual aid. But under government control, humans act in a different way; those in a position of power degrade those who are not and harmful institutions are set up whereby a further abuse of their power is exposed. This level of control exists throughout societies all over the world. Here Kropotkin's distinguished hatred towards the governance of society resurfaces as it is reconfirmed that those in power exploit others.

Prisoners, who are already aware that injustice within society exists, also have to suffer from injustice throughout their prison sentence. Kropotkin discusses the effect that authority has upon men. Prison officers are given a high level of authority and are able to use it at their discretion. From the reading that Kropotkin undertook, it is evident that he was aware that prisoners suffer from the authority of prison warders in numerous ways. For example, within Dostoevsky's novel it is described that some officers gained great satisfaction from issuing corporal punishment. Their enjoyment of the physical beatings of prisoners shows evidence that humans, when given power and control over others, are fully willing to use it to their advantage irrespective of injustice.

An understanding of the prison system from this time period illustrates that not only did prison warders have the authority to increase the prisoner's workload, to pay them less and to issue additional punishments if the work was not being done to the specified standard or time limit, they also had the authority to inflict whatever punishment they felt necessary for whatever breach of discipline they chose. They could search without reason, which humiliated and degraded prisoners, and they could peer through a prisoner's cell whenever they wanted which gave the prisoners no privacy. This amount of control, according to Kropotkin, is dangerous and, when issued to human beings, can cause great injustice and inequality.

Kropotkin refers to a number of incidents which show the corruption within prison. He mentions that warders profit from prisoners by stealing their money and trafficking

tobacco, they sneak it into prison and sell it to prisoners at astonishingly high prices (Kropotkin, 1906:331). He maintains that it is difficult to get rid of such bribery in the administration and reports that prisoners are of the opinion that those in charge of the system are the real criminals and often exclaim ‘the real thieves are those who keep us in – not we’ (Kropotkin, 1906:318) He also mentions how the most trifling breach of discipline may once go unnoticed by one officer but for the same breach, that same warder when given more power will call down a punishment upon the perpetrator’s head (Kropotkin, 1906:332).

Penal reformers often suggest that individuals of a higher calibre should be issued with the job role of prison warder or matron. They claim that those currently in this position are corrupt and if they were changed to a better set of staff then these problems would resolve. As discussed earlier, Prison Matron describes the attributes needed for a successful matron. However, Kropotkin disagrees with this view and suggests whatever type of individual employed in this position within the prison is likely to become corrupt. Kropotkin’s argument differs from that of penal reformers as he does not just critique the current staff organisation but the very nature of power and authority. This was perhaps instigated from his early disappointment with those in positions of power namely the Tsar in the Corps of Pages and even the Siberian officials who would not listen to suggestions of reform. This identifies one of Kropotkin’s major issues with the problems of society and here his anarchist thought is evident. Kropotkin states that any individual given power or authority is destined to abuse it. He wrote:

Men are men: and you cannot give so immense an authority to men over men without corrupting those to whom you give the authority... as they hold the power, they abuse it like all those who hold power in their hands.

(Kropotkin, 1906:333)

Here, Kropotkin is comparing the power that is abused in prisons by warders to control the prisoners, with the power which is abused in society by the state to control the lower classes. This underlying anarchism is evidently a strong part of Kropotkin’s thinking and reiterates to the reader of Kropotkin’s work that he cannot fully separate his anarchism from his prison writings, as the problems which arise within the prison are identical to those which Kropotkin finds wrong with society.

Kropotkin then addresses the prisoner's feelings towards society: their segregation from the rest of society prevents ill feelings and their awareness of injustice further pushes them away.

Kropotkin (1906:333) states that the prisoner 'accustoms himself to hate-cordially to hate-all those "respectable" people who so wickedly kill his best feelings in him.' Thus prisoners begin to view the world as having two categories: those within the prison 'to which he and his comrades belong' and 'the outer world represented by the governor, the warders and the employers' (Kropotkin, 1906:334). They begin to see everyone but fellow prisoners as the enemy. They have been led to believe that prison officials, guards and even those in society are against them. Kropotkin (1906:334) states that it is prison education that makes the prisoner consider society as an enemy and thus a 'brotherhood rapidly grows between all the inmates of a prison against all of those who do not wear the prisoner's dress.'

This highlights prisoner solidarity which will influence prison culture. For example, likely implications would be that prisoners would be difficult to control, resistant to change and less cooperative. Kropotkin has already outlined his concern for the isolation of the prison and this concern is once again reaffirmed when he discusses that a prisoner brotherhood rapidly forms. This is representative of his wider understanding of the prison and similar viewpoints have been expressed and explored in the work written by Davitt.

Therefore, the prison, according to Kropotkin does not provide the prisoner with the chance to make a new start on release. Instead the prisoner has harboured negative feelings about society and thus is willing to implement them on release. This suggests that the prison does not have a reformatory effect upon prisoners but instead turns them against society.

Despite the support shown for the dual attempt to reform and deter, the prison has, according to Kropotkin, never been able to improve a prisoner by reformation of his character. In Kropotkin's era, experiments that implemented solitary confinement as a punishment in order to restrict prisoner contact were often attempted. This became known as the separate system. At first, the suggestion that communication between prisoners should be blocked gained great support. Du Cane was an advocate of solitary

confinement and suggested that prisoners would become penitent, regret their actions and become 'open to lessons of admonition and warning' and therefore on release their new way of thinking ensures they will think twice about committing crime. Kropotkin strongly disagreed with Du Cane's suggestion that solitude works to allow for reflection and reformation.

Although Du Cane provided support towards solitude he also acknowledged that prolonged periods would cause mental and physical health issues. This mirrored Campbell's viewpoint who also claimed solitude was injurious after prolonged periods. Although both Campbell and Du Cane believed long periods of solitude were harmful and suggested the period should be shortened, Kropotkin on the other hand supported its entire eradication.

Kropotkin (1906:336) concludes from his own experience and from reading Campbell's and Du Cane's work that solitude led to a 'dreadful proportion of cases of insanity'. He writes 'cellular imprisonment which has so many advocates now would be merely a useless cruelty, and a more powerful instrument in weakening still more the bodily and mental energy of prisoners' and claims that 'even a few months of cellular imprisonment may prove a most fatal experiment' suggesting the severity of its damaging impact upon health (Kropotkin, 1906:337). This would have been due to Kropotkin's understanding of nature. He acknowledged that human beings are naturally sociable and require communication for healthy progression and therefore would not have supported solitary confinement as it goes against the grain of nature and prevents all natural laws from occurring. According to Kropotkin, these restrictions and controls should not be put in place and instead individuals should make way for the transformation to a more peaceful anarchist society whereby no such restrictions would be necessary.

After explaining the moral influence of prisons on prisoners, in his next chapter Kropotkin asks 'are prisons necessary?' He outlines that all of the above issues provide evidence that the prison does not render a man suitable for release into society and claims 'prisons do *not* moralise their inmates; they do *not* deter them from crime' and ultimately asks 'what shall we do with those who break the law?' (Kropotkin, 1906:338).

He compares the problem of crime with the problem of disease and states that medicine used in the past to cure disease was trial and error, and often killed many patients. However, now it has advanced and aims to not only cure disease but also to prevent it and he believes the same should be done with crime (Kropotkin, 1906:339). He then outlines three causes of crime: the cosmical, the anthropological and the social, and believes as long as they remain crime will continue to occur.

Firstly Kropotkin, (1906:343) points out that a number of studies have found cosmical causes such as temperature to correlate with crime. It has been discovered that in summer crimes against persons increase and in winter crimes against property increase. Studies such as these would have been of great importance to Kropotkin with his interest in human nature and his additional interest in its relation to human behaviour. However, these cosmical causes indirectly influence such problems in crime and have a larger effect alongside other influences.

Anthropological causes according to Kropotkin are much more important. They imply certain inherited faculties and bodily structures are linked to criminality. Kropotkin uses the work of Lombroso, as stated in the previous chapter, to explain the links discovered. He claims Lombroso's work must be taken as facts but his conclusions cannot be endorsed. For example, information which suggests defects in the brain and differences in the arm length of criminals link to their behaviour is of great value for science but cannot be taken any further (Kropotkin, 1906:346). Kropotkin states this information cannot be used to protect society against crime but shows gratitude towards Lombroso for his work into this area and concludes that his work reaffirms that prisons which only aggravate mental disease in these individuals cannot help to cure them and so therefore should be abolished (Kropotkin, 1906:346).

In agreement with medical findings, Kropotkin states it is evident that inmates of our prisons are affected with some disease of the mind but this does not mean that lunatic asylums should replace prisons as they share identical principles. Kropotkin (1906:357) reiterates that prisons 'do not cure pathological deformities, they only reinforce them' and after spending several years suffering from its 'deteriorating influence' a prisoner leaves prison 'less fit for life in society than he was before'. On release those who do try to help prevent further acts of criminality can only do so when the damaging influence

of prison upon such prisoners has been undone. This task can prove hopeless because, as earlier mentioned, this help arrives too late.

With support from Kropotkin (1906:350), who describes social conditions within society as 'abominable', Ferri states that social factors also contribute to the causes of crime. These conditions are suffered by a large percentage of society. Kropotkin (1906:365) compares the inequality between the rich and poor questioning why 'hard and blackened hands are considered as a sign of inferiority and a silk dress and the knowledge of how to keep servants under strict discipline a token of superiority'. According to Kropotkin, all aspects of life lead individuals in a certain direction. The inequality within society manufactures individuals who are likely to commit crime due to an inbuilt hatred towards society and its injustice. As Kropotkin (1906:366) states 'man is a result of those conditions in which he has grown up'.

Thus, Kropotkin claims instead of imprisonment, fraternal care and treatment should be implemented in order to develop the higher instincts of human nature and to prevent the development of anti-social feelings which have been developed chiefly by bodily disease or social influences.

Kropotkin uses the example of lunatics who were chained up like animals but when later recognised as a brother the chains disappeared and asylums were erected. This system was as bad as the chains and after a comparison with the prison Kropotkin realised these institutions did not help. However, Kropotkin outlines as an example when kind-hearted peasants set lunatics free and took them into their families, miraculous cures followed. This shows that fraternal care together with liberty will provide the best care.

Kropotkin describes how in the past communities which worked together proved successful. Each commune was considered responsible as a whole for any anti-social acts committed by any of its members. Kropotkin claimed that individualism became dominant and that everyone cared for himself or his nearest relatives and would not reciprocate care to others in their community. But a return to the previous way of life was, for Kropotkin, a way to eradicate crime. Crimes against property would cease to exist when property is restored to its original owner, the community and crimes against the person would further reduce as moral and social habits would develop. Of course

there will always remain anti-social acts but when the communities combined efforts work together to eradicate such problems these acts are rendered harmless. Therefore Kropotkin suggests:

Let us organise our society so as to assure to everybody the possibility of regular work for the benefit of the commonwealth – and that means of course a thorough transformation of the present relations between work and capital; let us assure to every child a sound education and instruction both in manual labour and science, so as to permit him to acquire, during the first twenty years of his life, the knowledge and habits of earnest work – and we shall be in no more need of dungeons and jails, of judges and hangmen.

(Kropotkin, 1906:365)

Kropotkin (1906:349) outlines if there was a greater awareness of influential work of the causes of crime such as that produced by Ferri, then people would realise those who are put in jails or put to death are merely people in need of fraternal treatment and not imprisonment.

CONCLUSION

What Kropotkin brought to the discussion

Although Kropotkin's book *'In Russian and French Prisons'* made English readers aware of how foreign prison systems operated, it significantly addressed the problem of imprisonment on a global scale. Kropotkin concluded that the prison is predominantly harmful to any individual who has to endure any length of time there, irrespective of what country it is in and regardless of how well it is presented. For example aesthetically pleasing spacious rooms with ventilation may seem healthier but according to Kropotkin, as long as the prison remains operational, no matter what reform implemented, the prison continues to cause harm.

Overall, Kropotkin has identified that the prison does not work to produce its dual aims of deterrence and reformation as high recidivism rates prove. Instead, according to Kropotkin, the prison causes harm to prisoners whilst trying to achieve such goals, suggesting it is an unnecessary punishment for crime and therefore should be abolished.

Kropotkin's work has significantly contributed to the discussion of the problem of crime and punishment. Within his prison writings, Kropotkin identified numerous problems with the use of the prison. According to Kropotkin, prisons are 'nurseries of crime' and the preventions put in place to diminish the risk of criminal contamination, such as the use of solitary confinement or the silent system, cause more damage than good. The restrictions placed upon communication are unnatural for humans and often lead to mental deterioration. Furthermore Kropotkin outlines that the realisation that society is unjust and all forms of authority are corrupt reduces the chance of a prisoner's improvement when released back into society as they foster negative attitudes about the world and how it operates. Prison labour which is intended to produce industrious attitudes leaves prisoners corrupted and exploited. In addition, the separation from society does not help their condition and the reduction of their will results in the formation of an individual unfit for return to society. Furthermore, Kropotkin claims that the continuous demoralisation and humiliation of prisoners throughout their sentence ensures their inevitable return to crime and ultimately their return to prison. From these points, it is evident that Kropotkin believed the prison to be a harmful institution destined to make criminals worse.

Leading from this, Kropotkin outlined how the procedures in prison and ultimately the prison itself is unnecessary which then leads to his suggestions of a new solution to the problem of crime and punishment. Kropotkin provides an alternative to prison which involves the transformation of society into communes where all members equally share their workload and all contribute towards their society. He further states the children of these new societies should be educated and instructed from an early age to provide them with skills for their future. This, Kropotkin hoped, could correct society and eradicate the need for prisons. In this new society, those who generated anti-social feelings could be fraternally cared for by all members.

Kropotkin's originality

Although the idea of communes and new societies had been exposed previously by earlier anarchists such as Proudhon and Bakunin, Kropotkin's work is original. A discovery of Kropotkin's noble status and background, which has been uncovered after reading his auto-biographical memoirs, shows where Kropotkin's thought initially came from.

Kropotkin had, in earlier years, a privileged opportunity to inspect prisons in Siberia and was asked to suggest reforms which he thought could be made to improve them. Using the knowledge he gained from this, alongside his own unique experience of imprisonment and in addition to reading and reflecting upon accounts produced by prisoners and prison officials, Kropotkin's work was and remains original.

Furthermore his interest in the cooperation displayed by animals, and the fact he used this to relate to the innate abilities of mutual aid within human beings, further makes Kropotkin's work distinctive. Although not directly stated, Kropotkin added his understanding of the natural state of human beings to his thoughts on the damaging aspects of prison.

Kropotkin strongly disagreed with the seclusion and the prevention of communication and questioned its necessity, claiming it is unnatural to suppress free will in human beings and that prisoners are thus reduced to machines (Kropotkin, 1906/1991:325). He further states that throughout prison life, prisoners are subjected to inhumane treatment

and are ‘condemned to a bestial life’ suggesting that the prison prevents man from being man (Kropotkin, 1906/1991:331).

Kropotkin (1906/1991:355) then acknowledges that despite a prisoner’s level of criminality, kindness can be shown, explaining that even the most hardened criminals have compassion. This suggests that Kropotkin is aware that all human beings, even those who are deemed criminal, can show mutual aid, as sharing compassion is evidence of humans’ innate instincts.

In addition to his view of human nature, Kropotkin was an anarchist. This aspect adds to his originality as not all those who wrote about prisons and the effect upon prisoners had anarchist views rooted in nature as Kropotkin did.

Why Kropotkin’s work makes him an Abolitionist and an Anarchist

This study aims to identify the context and meaning of Kropotkin’s prison writings, in order to answer the question: do Kropotkin’s prison writings reflect his views on anarchism or abolitionism? An examination of his work reveals that Kropotkin’s prison writings are undoubtedly both abolitionist and anarchist.

It is evident that Kropotkin’s prison writings are abolitionist as he wants to eradicate the prison due to its inherent harms. But novel to his contemporary abolitionists, Kropotkin demanded absolute abolition of the prison in addition to abolition of all forms of authority within society, in order to allow for his ideal society to exist which also makes his prison writings anarchist.

Kropotkin’s additional interest in science and nature conjoins with his anarchist and abolitionist views and these together form the underlying thought of his prison writings. Kropotkin’s view of human nature demonstrates that his vision of an ideal society is possible. He believed that human beings have an innate instinct to be social and are predestined to cooperate and practice mutual aid in favour of their own progression.

Those who are imprisoned, however, are prevented from acting socially. They are denied free will and prevented from communicating which deprives them of a basic human need to interact and socialise. With these facts in mind, the prison, according to

Kropotkin, proves harmful as it goes against the grain of nature. Thus the prison from its very foundation is the exact opposite of Kropotkin's vision of an ideal society which is why he strongly opposes its operation.

From Kropotkin's view, the prison does not reduce crime, nor does it improve the offender but instead it does the opposite. It prevents natural human instincts and abilities and proves damaging to all those who enter it.

In addition to the inherent harms which prevent human's natural abilities, the prison is controlled and ruled by those in authority. From Kropotkin's autobiography, it is clear that his view on authority had previously diminished. From early disgust of the treatment of serfs, numerous disappointments and distrust of the government and during his own imprisonment, his hatred towards authority grew stronger. His anarchist vision, to remove all forms of authority to make way for a new society where all individuals were equal, and could peacefully cooperate without government control, was, for Kropotkin, the underlying thought to his prison writings.

The prison, according to Kropotkin, is a harmful place where individuals are restricted from communication, prevented from exercising mutual aid and are under the strict control of authority. Therefore, in Kropotkin's opinion, the prison is a microcosm of all that is wrong with society and therefore should be abolished.

What we can learn from this study

Following Skinner's contextualist approach, a concise historical discussion of the events which occurred in Kropotkin's life, including a brief understanding of his underlying anarchist and evolutionary thought, in addition to further examination of literacy influences, has provided a strong base to allow for an interpretation of Kropotkin's prison writings.

Following this method has allowed for an appreciation of Kropotkin's wider thought and an awareness of some of the major events and influences within his life. Events included the emancipation of serfdom which he had previously considered unjust in his childhood, and later on the Paris Commune and the setting up of the Jura Federation which both equally impressed him. Influences included Darwin, Smith, his tutors:

Poulain, Pavini and Smirnoff, and the revolutionaries he met in Switzerland who gave him access to the work of Proudhon and Bakunin. These events and influences would have undoubtedly made an impact upon his later thought.

Skinner's method has also exposed a number of interesting views from those who wrote about prisons during the same period, namely: B24, Davitt, One Who Has Endured It, Du Cane, Prison Matron, Campbell, Lombroso and Ferri. These authors were shown to be of great interest to Kropotkin. They provided him with knowledge and understanding, whilst giving him a source which he can use to either add to the thoughts he gained from his own experience or to refute and therefore respond with opposing views.

Further opportunities for examination

If further time and space allowed, this study could compare the differences between French, Russian and English prison systems which would be of great value as it would provide a wider understanding. It could have even further explored the literature of authors imprisoned in a number of other countries rather than concentrating specifically on novels which showed the Russian experience, and the wider literature which focused upon English prisoners. This could have revealed whether the influence of prison upon prisoners really was similar in all countries throughout the world or whether Kropotkin's opinion that suggested the similarity of the effects of imprisonment worldwide could be dismissed.

A further study could examine the other authors within this study. For example to explore the life of Davitt, Du Cane, Prison Matron and Campbell. It could, in a similar way that this study did with the life of Kropotkin, look into their experiences in more depth and uncover which influences and events led to their way of thinking about the prison system.

Another study could compare contemporary studies on anarchism and abolitionism in order to examine if any work has since been written linking the two views, much like Kropotkin did. This could identify if the work which Kropotkin produced has been expanded upon or simply replicated by others.

As evident in contemporary society, the prison remains to be the dominant punishment for crime control. Contemporary prison abolitionists continue to discuss the problems associated with the prison system and aim to spread awareness to persuade others to advocate prison abolition. This suggests that although reforms have gone a long way to improve certain aspects of prison life since the late nineteenth century, not much has changed. Today abolitionists speak of the same problems as Kropotkin did over 100 years ago: risk to health, the unnaturalness of the prison and the harm it exerts mostly upon the poorest section of society. This provides evidence which implies that the prison is still viewed as a problematic institution in contemporary society as shown by the thoughts of abolitionists today who claim that the prison remains at the centre of a socially unjust world, and continues to damage all those who enter its walls.

Overall, this study has aimed to identify the context and meaning of Kropotkin's prison writings, in order to answer the question: do Kropotkin's prison writings reflect his views on anarchism or abolitionism? By using Skinner's Method, this study has provided an in-depth awareness of the key parts of Kropotkin's life and thought which would have significantly contributed to his work. This set a relevant historical context in which to examine work. The analysis revealed that Kropotkin's prison writings contained both anarchist and abolitionist views and has further concluded that these two theories significantly overlap. As Kropotkin makes clear throughout his work, the prison, which exerts power over prisoners reflects the government which exerts power over individuals in society and for Kropotkin, the abolition of all institutions which exert such power should go ahead to make way for his ideal peaceful self-governing society.

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