Let us begin this remembrance of Kropotkin by listening to a recollection of his practice or attending. A memorial article by Errico Malatesta finds him compelled to recount first, before any specific commentary or criticism of his thought, the fundamental generosity of his longtime comrade. He recounts:

“I remember what he did in Geneva in the winter of 1879 to help a group of Italian refugees in dire straits, among them myself; I remember the small attentions, I would call maternal, which he bestowed on me when one night in London having been the victim of an accident I went and knocked on his door; I recall the innumerable kind actions towards all sorts of people; I remember the cordial atmosphere with which he was surrounded.”

In this paper, I would like to take time to meditate on what might be understood by this phrase the “maternal attentions” and how these might be central to understanding Kropotkin’s project of anarchocommunism and how this phrase invites us to meditate more carefully about his project, and how opening up his political philosophy to various works in feminist, particulary maternal and thoruhgs about care might illuminate his work. Before we even begin this investigation into the particularly maternal aspect of his thought we can already remark on the the significance that the usage of the word “attentions” to characterize Kropotkin’s activity, because it demonstrates that Kropotkin’s anarchism is not simply an activity abut a reactivity. One’s attentions are directed focus of his mental activity but also a responsivednss and attunement to the needs of other people, a straightforward apprehension of how other people are making demands upon oneself. Demands that occur at an ethical or a affective level, an awareness of antoerh person’s needs that makes a demand on oneself but this demand is not yet a form of subjugation or enslavement, not a call to subjugation but awareness of a demand and a need.

We will investigate this type of attention by comparing it with insights provided us with feminist theory, exploring the types of insights we gain from understanding the world as a process of regeneration. The idea of regeneration involves us in a cycle of continuous creation, of birth and rebirth,a nd to say that we are caught up in it already implies questions of our own agency. To say that we are born seems like a trivial and obvious, but the suprising fact is that this very elementary fact of our existence, or our possibility of being born is already something that is overlooked by modern hilsophy. We can find this most apparently at the beginning of modern social and political thought in the Thomas *De Cive,* the latin word for citizen, that also describes how the possibility of civilization can occur by transforming the barbarian individual into a political subject, a civilization that always threatened by the barbarism of civil war, maintains his a book which describes the necessity of the authoritarian state from the character of individuals. The model of the individual is one that is focused on will, and this will is tnding towards violence. All are opposed to all and we require a set of contracts which ultimately contract with the state to be its subjects. In order to define the primordial event of the emregenceof these wills, these inidividauls who only know the drive to ego as if they were mushrooms “" Let us return again to the state of nature, and consider men as if but even now sprung out of the earth, and suddainly (like Mushromes) come to full maturity without all kind of engagement to each other:" Hobbes introduces this ina chapter about masters and slaves, domination is already an axiom. This is a state of nature understanding nature itself as a fascist might-makes-right, excess power of crude Darwinianism. The only reason why people enter society is to gain honor or profit, a desire to dominate each other is primordial and to seek one’s own gain. Voluntary agreements mitigate this original violence such that they agree to subject their own wills to antoher person as a conditon and contract of their own freedom. A relationship with death and violence. The soil is not the place of decay as well as birth. A mechanism of the superior will to power . He bases this in a primordial materiality of man’s constitution, as a series of mechanisms and causes and effects connected by nerves strings and membranes of the body, In this context, Hobbes understands even the parent’s realationship with the child as being one of domination and of property. .into inert and fragmented

matter, mere “raw material” to be processed into a finished product,’ though nature is in reality

cyclical, regenerative process

However, when we consider the real existence of humans only as a metabolic process, the generation of life from the death and decay into nutrients to a new life, an energy from the sun, fueling the photosynthesis into animal and human and then into decay and death to be depositing nutrients into the soil which can give generation of new life that feeds off of it. While this is well and good, the process of life and of existence isn’t just an abstract metabolic of life circulaton of life energy in various lines of flight and wills to power, but already relationship with a human person. Birth isn’t a reassertion of my human subjectivity as primary which already involved the contradiction in Hobbes, that my personal will becomes swallowed up by a soverign will than my own but that the involvement of an other. Pataricia Glazebook explains tha t “The original architectural site—the first place—is the womb. Aristotle argued that place cannot be a body, because if it were, two bodies would be in the same place at the same time (209a7)”

“Pregnancy is a rounding logic of self into other … The presence of the one in the self. The womb is not a passive receptacle, but the original landing-site of architectural body, the first place with which the body finds itself co-structuring. It

is not inert, but living and growing. Giving birth is not building a baby.”

We understand this in metaphorics of Levinas, which figures the ethical responsibility as one of maternity as the very basis of the body of the corporeal “Sensible experience as an obsession by the other, or a maternity, is already the corporeality which the philosophy of consciousness wishes to constitute on the basis of it. The corporeality of one’s own body signifies, as sensibility itself, a knot or a

denouement of being, but it has also to contain a passage to the physico­

chemical-physiological meanings of the body. And this latter does devolve

from sensibility as proximity, as signification, as one-for-the-other, which

signifies in giving, when giving offers not the superfluxion of the superfluous, but the bread taken from one’s own mouth. Signification signifies, consequently, in nourishing, clothing, lodging, in maternal relations, in which matter shows itself for the first time in its materiality.The sensible - maternity, vulnerability, apprehension - binds the node of incarnation into a plot larger than the apperception of self. In this plot I am bound to others before being tied to my body.”

Enactment of maternal relations we can consult Sara Ruddick’s work on the materiality of maternity . She defines it as a practice and a relationship, separated from any characteristics of the person who enacts it or the particular gender characteristic of the maternal being. She presents it as a responsiveness to demands for preservation, growth and social acceptance. “to be a mother is to be committed to meeting these demands by works o f preservative love, nurturance, and training.” Conceptually and historically, preservative love is preeminent. Hum “As a species, human children share prolonged physical fragility and therefore prolonged dependence on

adults for their safety and well-being. In all societies, children need protective care, though the causes and types o f fragility and the means o f protection vary widely”” the key question of problematic is what “commitment” means. “To be committed to meeting children’s demand for preservation does not require enthusiasm or even love; it simply means to see vulnerability and to respond to it with care rather than abuse, indifference, or flight.” In a sense its not evena voluntary or involtary reaction ; the commitment is prior, a witnessing of the suffering of tanother person. How this commitment is honored is the problematic upon which the entire social and political structure is about. What are these relationships that structure this commitment and what are we committed towards. How can we develop a world of preservative growth?

" Not a virtuatous characteristic but the apprehension that there is an ethical demand being made upon them. What they share is not virtuous characteristics but rather an identification and a discourse about the strengths required by their ongoing commitments to protect, nurture, and train

I add that the point about gender difference is not that women are mothers but that everyone is born from a mother, regardless of who raises them. Being a woman does not mean you are, will be, or want to be a mother. But being a person means someone cared for you.

What does it mean to be faced with the demands of a dependant person, nad to have to care for this person. Alongside the difference critique and dominance ccritique of feminist thought, Eva Kittay presents the idea of a dependency critique,

First, the conception of society as an association of equals masks the, inevitable dependencies and asymmetries that form part of the human condition—those of children, the aging anil the ailing—dependencies that often mark the closest human ties. A conception of society viewed as an association of equals masks

inequitable dependencies, those of infancy and childhood, old age, illness and disability. While we are dependent, we are not well positioned to enter a competition for the goods of social cooperation on equal terms. By excluding this dependency from social and political concerns, we have been able to fashion the pretense that we are independent—that the cooperation between persons that some insist is interdependence is simply the mutual (often voluntary) cooperation between essentially independent persons voluntarism

Contrary to the voluntarist, however, voluntarily undertaken

obligations are not the only source of obligations in relationships.

My point is that this interdependence begins with dependence, It

begins with the dependency of an infant, and often ends with the depen­

dency of a very ill or frail person close ro dying.

If we can sec each individual nested within relationships o f

care, we can envision relationships that embrace the needs of each.

Maternal practice—providing for children—requires that we provide

caring institutions while recognizing that the work itself often dem ands

the commitment of a self transparent to the needs of the charge. The

recognition of equality inherent in the understanding that we all are some

mother’s child—or connection-based equality—has implications for

responses appropriate to the requirements of dependency work.

Interdependence is based on dependence: the buddhist idea of dependant-coorirignation, each origin is already dependant on other things and therefore is not complete in itself. Dependency is a fundamental fact taken from the first noble truth that all things suffer, all things are passive

Dependents require cave. Neither the utterly helpless newborn who must he cured for in nil aspects of her life nor a frail, but functioning, elderly person who needs only assistance to carry on with her life, will survive or thrive without another who meets her basic needs.

Questions of who takes on the responsibility of care,

who does the hands-on care, who sees to it that the caring is done and

done well, and who provides the support for the relationship of care and

for both parties to the caring relationship— these are social and political

questions.

nstead, the question

is: What are my responsibilities to others with whom I stand in specific

relations and what are the responsibilities of others to me, so that I can

be well cared for and have my needs addressed even as I care for and

respond to the needs of those who depend on me?

T

Many moral theories can be and have been used to justify

such moral obligations of both society as a whole and of particular indi­

viduals, but the obligations owed to those whose who give care, who

attend to dependency, has not figured in moral, political or judicial dis­

cussions.

Although we sometimes speak of dependency care, 1 have chosen th e

word work to emphasize that care of dependents is work. the dependency

worker is exceedingly vulnerable to exploitation, to domination by the

one upon whom she depends for support. Th

l) her own needs; 2) the needs of her charge (which in the self-understanding of the dependency worker gets taken up as—even as they stand in tension with—her own needs); and 3) the resources required to sustain the dependency relation,

What is interesting in the family not voluntary cain and abel " am i my brother's keeper; all of the tales of greek trgedy and much of Shakespeare

We can state a principle of doulia: Just as we have required care to

survive and thrive, so we need to provide conditions that allow others —

including those who do the work o f caring—to receive the care they need

to survive and thrive.

KRopotkin