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Jason K. Day
University of Fribourg, Switzerland
e-mail: jason.day@unifr.ch
ORCID: 0000-0002-5529-6043

Nature Without the State: An Anarchist Critique of 'Animalistic Evil'

Abstract: I here present an anarchist critique of the idea of 'animalistic evil' and its common use as a justification for the State's existence and use of force. On this view, 'evil' is a privation of morality, justice, and civilised behaviour. It is then identified with the 'animalistic' since animals are often thought to be defined by the aforesaid privation. I first clarify the idea of animalistic evil within the history of philosophy and science. Aristotle (384–322 BCE), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), and Thomas H. Huxley (1825––1895) prominently argue that all that prevents humanity from devolving into animalistic evil, a state of violent and individualistic struggle for bare survival, is the power of State government to forcibly control the animalistic drives within its citizens. I subsequently pose two questions. (1) Is it justified to associate animal life with evil when this is (a) understood as a privation of a morality, justice and society and (b) characterised as an individualistic struggle for survival? (2) If this is not justified, what is the political harm of doing so? Building on the work of the anarchist thinker Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), I argue that any conception of animalistic evil is unjustifiable, that it is a false justification for the State's existence and use of force, and that the State, upon making the empty threat of animalistic evil, both violently harms individuals and impedes the socially beneficial practice of mutual aid.

Keywords: evil, anarchism, history of philosophy, animal behaviour, Peter Kropotkin

Introduction

It is common in everyday discourse and political rhetoric for 'evil' to be identified with the 'animalistic.' This often takes the form of a claim that the actions of an individual or group violate certain social and moral norms that are believed to be essential to human nature and civilised society. This is exemplified in expressions such as "they are animals" in reference to criminals, or "they live like animals" in reference to the supposedly 'savage' practices of foreigners. Here, evil is typically understood as a privation of attributes that are considered to be exclusive to human nature: morality, justice, and civilised or socially structured behaviour. Evil is identified with the animalistic on the understanding that animals are defined by precisely the aforesaid privations. This view of what I will call 'animalistic evil' has a long history in philosophy and science. Aristotle (384–322 BCE), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), and Thomas H. Huxley (1825–1895), to name but a few proponents, have respectively argued that unlike humans, animals are devoid of morality, justice and society.[1] They warn that humanity, however, is always in danger of devolving into an animalistic state. This is a state of uninhibited violence and depravity: a struggle of all against all for bare survival. It is a 'dog-eat-dog world.' They then claim that all that protects humanity from this is the authority and power of State government to control the animalistic drives within humans.

I will raise two questions with regard to this view of animalistic evil. (1) Is it justified to associate animal life with evil when this is (a) understood as a privation of a morality, justice and society and (b) characterised as a violent, individualistic struggle for survival? (2) If this is not justified, what is the political harm of such a conception of animalistic evil? I will argue that any conception of animalistic evil is unjustifiable and that the empty threat of animalistic evil falsely justifies the harmful force that is employed by the State, the latter

[1] Aristotle, *The History of Animals*, transl. Arthur Leslie Peck (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1955); Aristotle, *Politics*, transl. C.D.C Reeve (Indianapolis–Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998); Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics: Translation, Introduction and Commentary*, transl. Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rose (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, *Oxford World's Classics* (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Thomas H. Huxley, "The Struggle for Existence in Human Society", in: *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1894), 195–236.

being broadly understood as a centralised government comprised of political elites who dictate and impose law and order by means of a monopolised use of violence. In order to make the above argument, I will refer to the work of the anarchist thinker Peter Kropotkin. In *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902) and *Anarchist Morality* (1897), Kropotkin demonstrates that mutual aid, rather than an individualistic struggle for existence, is the chief factor of evolutionary and social progress. Moreover, morality, justice, and society are not attributes that are exclusive to humanity but can rather be observed throughout the animal world. It is the State and its protection of hierarchy and individualistic gain, Kropotkin concludes, that impedes and destroys free associations of mutual aid among humans.

Kropotkin does not directly address the common identification of the animalistic with evil and its connection to justifications of State government. Yet his work provides all the necessary resources to do so. I will extrapolate Kropotkin's naturalist studies and anarchist views to address the idea of animalistic evil. I finally propose that once the threat of animalistic evil is exposed as a falsehood, the State is stripped of one of the crucial justifications for its existence, though there are other purported justifications to be contended with.[2] The cat must be let out of the bag.

The spectre of animalistic evil

I will first outline the views of Aristotle, Hobbes and Huxley as exemplifications of the philosophical idea of animalistic evil before refuting it. In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle characterises an excessive lack of moral sense in humans, owing to an incapacity for reasoning, as a state of brutishness or beastliness (*thêriotês*) that is beyond the limits of vice.[3] It is debatable whether beastliness can be called "radical evil" as per Pavlos Kontos's interpretation

[2] Other justifications for the State that I cannot address within the scope of this essay, but that have been extensively critiqued by key anarchist thinkers such as Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Errico Malatesta, and Emma Goldman, concern the efficient organisation of socio-economic affairs, national defence, the divine right of rulers, etc.

[3] Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1149a1.

of Aristotle.[4] For one might instead argue that such a state, being beyond the bounds of virtue and vice, is beyond all moral categorisation. Nonetheless, the examples of beastliness that Aristotle provides, such as cannibalism and infanticide, are what most people would consider prime examples of evil or would at least not see as mere vice. Aristotle provides the bizarre example of someone ripping open pregnant women and eating their unborn babies.[5]

Aristotle characterises a privation of reason and moral choice as beastly because he claims that animals "have no capacity for rational choice or calculation" and that by virtue of this privation "animals cannot possess badness or excellence".[6] In the *Politics*, Aristotle furthermore claims that animals lack the shared sense of justice that is essential to the formation of a political society.[7] This is because speech alone reveals "the advantageous and the harmful and hence also the just and unjust".[8] Lacking the capacity to speak, animals cannot share a conception of justice and therefore cannot form a political society. These attributes are instead considered exclusive to humans who are famously defined by Aristotle as political animals.[9] However, Aristotle recognises in *The History of Animals* that there are some animals that live politically by sharing a kind of activity such as bees, wasps and cranes.[10] Yet, lacking a shared conception of justice, these animals are political only in a superficial sense that does not meet the criteria of a proper *polis*: a political society that is ordered by a law-giving authority according to a shared conception of justice and the common good.

According to Kontos, Aristotle extends his notion of beastliness to the level of political society.[11] Correct constitutions aim at the rightly perceived common good and govern by laws that are in keeping with this.[12] Deviant constitutions, on the other hand, are mistaken about the common good and

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[4] Pavlos Kontos, "Radical Evil in Aristotle's Ethics and Politics", in: *Evil in Aristotle*, ed. Pavlos Kontos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 75–97.

[5] Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1148b21–22.

[6] Ibidem, 1149a35, 1145a20.

[7] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a33–5.

[8] Ibidem, 1253a8.

[9] Ibidem, 1253a1.

[10] Aristotle, *History of Animals*, 1.1. 487 b33ff.

[11] Kontos, "Radical Evil", 83.

[12] This includes kingship, aristocracy and polity.

consequently govern by unjust laws.[13] However, what is worse than a deviant constitution is the absence of any political authority and the consequent state of lawlessness. This is a beastly state of affairs, an 'extreme democracy' in which individuals have no shared sense of justice and pursue their own gain against one another.[14] Without law and government, barbarians live like violent animals.[15] In the *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes similarly argues that without subjection to a coercive political authority holding sovereign power there is no law, justice and civil society but only an animalistic war of all against all.[16] This can only be avoided by the collective yielding of freedom to a sovereign political power that can enforce the rule of law and thereby keep humans from devolving into an animalistic state of nature.[17] Hobbes sees such a brutish state of affairs among "the savage people in many places of America […] [who] have no government at all […] no common power to fear".[18] According to Hobbes, the destruction of government and ensuing war of all against all is "the greatest evil that can happen in this life".[19]

Following the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), Thomas H. Huxley interpreted Darwin's notion of 'the struggle for existence' in explicitly Hobbesian terms.[20] In *The Struggle for Existence in Human Society* (1888), Huxley argues that "the animal world is on about the same level as a gladiator's show" in that each animal fights only for its own survival against all others with only the strongest succeeding.[21] Huxley claims that the "primitive savage" who lives without morality, law, justice and the State is a non-ethical animal embroiled in this war of all against all. "The ethical man," however, tries to escape his place in the animal kingdom by creating civilised society and a moral order under State control in order to mitigate or abolish the struggle for existence.[22] But since civilised humans are still obedient to the impulse of multiplying

[13] This includes tyranny, oligarchy and democracy.
[14] Aristotle, *Politics*, V 9 1310a30–36.
[15] Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1149a10–11.
[16] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIII.13.
[17] Ibidem, VI.7.
[18] Ibidem, XIII:11.
[19] Ibidem XXX. 3.
[20] Huxley, "The Struggle", 204.
[21] Ibidem, 199.
[22] Ibidem, 206.

their species, the struggle for existence can always be re-established as the population increases, resources grow scarce and competition increases.[23] If the organisation of a society does not mitigate this tendency but intensifies it, warns Huxley, "the animal man […] resumes his ancient sovereignty and preaches anarchy […] to reduce the social cosmos to chaos, and begin the brute struggle for existence once again".[24]

It is now clear that the identification of evil with the animalistic is not merely a fanciful image in the popular imagination or a turn of phrase in political rhetoric. Nor is it a black sheep in the flock of moral ideas. It has descended from a long line of thinkers who evince the idea that animals are devoid of morality, justice, and society and that the State is necessary if humanity is not to devolve into animalistic evil.

Mutual aid: a refutation of animalistic evil

I will now show, with reference to the work of Kropotkin, that the conception of animals upon which the idea of 'animalistic evil' is premised is patently false. In *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin argues that the extent and importance in evolution of the struggle for existence – understood as the competition for resources in which only the fittest survive and are thereby naturally selected – has been grossly exaggerated by most Darwinists and misconstrued as chiefly being a competition between individuals of the same species.[25] Kropotkin argues that competition is limited to periods of exceptional resource scarcity and that this is caused primarily by adverse changes in climate rather than some blind, individualistic drive in animals against one another.[26] This does not mean that there is not an immense amount of struggle and extermination that occurs between various species and classes of animals, through predation

[23] Ibidem, 205–206.
[24] Ibidem, 215.
[25] Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Montreal–New York: Black Rose Books, 1989), xxxii.
[26] Ibidem, 70.

for instance, but only that individuals of the same species cannot be said, as a rule, to struggle against one another.[27]

Kropotkin does not intend to posit that the struggle for existence as a competition between individuals is not a factor in evolution, only that it is not *the* law of nature.[28] His aim is rather to demonstrate that what he calls "the mutual aid tendency" is the *chief factor* in survival and evolutionary progress and that it keeps competition in check without abolishing it.[29] The mutual aid tendency is to be broadly understood as the instinct for cooperation and sociability. Animals of the same species live in society and struggle alongside one another, rather than against one another, for survival. According to Kropotkin, mutual aid and living in society is the rule with few exceptions in the animal world. This occurs at all degrees of evolution and in varying degrees of complexity and scope.[30] Supported by more recent research, I here provide only a few examples for, as Kropotkin states, it is easier to describe the few species that live in isolation than to name the scores of species that are social.[31] Bacteria form societies in which they share information by chemical signals to coordinate their reproductive rates and level of virulence in the host.[32] Ants live in societies with complex, non-hierarchical organisation, together building structures, sharing resources and distributing tasks.[33] Many species of birds coordinate their flight patterns in massive migrations, and cooperate in breeding and mutual protection.[34] Herds of bison, zebra, antelope and others live together in mutual protection and search of food as lions, jackals, wild

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[27] Ibidem, 5, 74.
[28] Ibidem, 30.
[29] Ibidem, xliv, 59, 223.
[30] Ibidem, 53.
[31] Ibidem, 36.
[32] Edward O. Wilson, *Genesis: The Deep Origin of Societies* (New York–London: Liveright, 2019), 52.
[33] Mark W. Moffett, Simon Garnier, Kathleen M. Eisenhardt, Nathan R. Furr, Massimo Warglien, Costanza Sartoris, William Ocasio, Thorbjørn Knudsen, Lars A. Bach, and Joachim Offenberg, "Ant Colonies: Building Complex Organizations with Minuscule Brains and No Leaders", *Journal of Organization Design* 10(1) (2021): 55–74; Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 12–17.
[34] Niki Teunissen, Sjouke A. Kingma, Marie Fan, Michael J. Roast, and Anne Peters, "Context-Dependent Social Benefits Drive Cooperative Predator Defense in a Bird", *Current Biology* 31(18) (2021): 4120–4126; Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 20–21.

dogs and wolves hunt and live in packs.[35] Primates display complex social practices and conventions in food sharing and mating, which can even be particularised in specific communities.[36] But animals do not only associate for the sake of bare survival. Many species of birds and higher mammals can be seen to engage in play, thereby establishing social bonds and teaching social practices to the young.[37]

Kropotkin further argues that the fittest animals in the struggle for existence are *not* the strongest in competing for resources amongst each other. The fittest are instead those that best practice mutual aid, limit competition and live most closely in society.[38] They enjoy greater protection from enemies, better access to resources, and display a higher development of intellectual faculties.[39] Thus, Kropotkin argues that better conditions for survival and evolutionary progress are created by "the elimination of competition by means of mutual aid".[40] Contrarily, those species that "willingly or unwillingly abandon it [living in society] are doomed to decay".[41] Thus, the traits favoured by natural selection are those that entail greater sociability, while anti-social traits that are disadvantageous to group survival are eliminated.[42]

It is now clear that animal life cannot be characterised as a Hobbesian war of all against all for survival, or, in other words, as a privation of society and common interest. Kropotkin explicitly opposes Huxley in this regard, and further argues that life in societies would be impossible without "a certain collective sense of justice growing to become a habit".[43] Within ant colonies, for example, individuals that refuse to share food are treated as enemies.[44] Bees

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[35] Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 39–41.

[36] Robert M. Sapolsky, "Social Practices among Nonhuman Primates", *Current Anthropology* 47(4) (2006): 641–656.

[37] Marc Bekoff, "Wild Justice and Fair Play: Cooperation, Forgiveness, and Morality in Animals", *Biology and Philosophy* 19(4) (2004): 489–520; Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 22–23.

[38] Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 58.

[39] Ibidem, xliv.

[40] Ibidem, 74.

[41] Ibidem, 57.

[42] Ibidem, 17.

[43] Ibidem, xlii, 58.

[44] Ibidem, 12.

that grow lazy are punished by other members of the hive.[45] As Jessica Pierce and Marc Bekoff detail – in also arguing that there is a sense of social justice among wild animals – wolves feed on carcasses in turns, follow a meritocracy, and share resources based on the needs of individuals and the group.[46] They further describe how canines engage in self-handicapping and role-reversing in social play, ostracising individuals that violate the trust of their playmates by being too violent.[47] As another example, communities of chimpanzees punish individuals who engage in anti-social behaviour and even overthrow tyrannical alpha males.[48] It is therefore the case that many species of animals can be observed to display a sense of morality and justice according to which they live in societies.

Kropotkin's argument can be strengthened by citing more recent research to the effect that instances of mutual aid can even be observed between different kinds of living beings. For example, mycorrhizal networks are communities of trees, even of different species, and fungi that share resources and information.[49] Honeyguide birds lead humans to bee hives in exchange for honey, and even simply having a domestic pet is to engage in mutual aid between species.[50] Kropotkin further argues in *Anarchist Morality* that there is a most basic and general sense of morality and justice that is shared across all species: "what is considered good is that which is useful for the preservation of the race; and that which is considered evil is that which is hurtful for race

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[45] Ibidem, 17.

[46] Marc Bekoff and Jessica Pierce, *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 64, 112.

[47] Jessica Pierce and Marc Bekoff, "Wild Justice Redux: What We Know About Social Justice in Animals and Why It Matters", *Social Justice Research* 25 (2012): 128.

[48] Jill D. Pruetz, Kelly Boyer Ontl, Elizabeth Cleaveland, Stacy Lindshield, Joshua Marshack, and Erin G. Wessling, "Intragroup Lethal Aggression in West African Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes verus*): Inferred Killing of a Former Alpha Male at Fongoli, Senegal", *International Journal of Primatology* 38 (2017): 31–57.

[49] Marcel G.A van der Heijden and Thomas R. Horton, "Socialism in Soil? The Importance of Mycorrhizal Fungal Networks for Facilitation in Natural Ecosystems", *Journal of Ecology* 97(6) (2009): 1139–1150.

[50] Claire N. Spottiswoode, Keith Begg, Colleen M. Begg, "Reciprocal Signaling in Honeyguide-Human Mutualism", *Science* 353(6297) (2016): 387–389.

preservation".[51] This sense of good and evil varies in complexity according to the species in question.[52] Yet the basic principle remains constant and common in all species, even in humans.[53] Non-human animals may not have the capacity to speak but this is not necessary for a collective sense of morality and justice. Animals display these attributes and communicate in this regard in many non-linguistic ways.[54]

Thus, animal life cannot be characterised as a war of all against all for survival and that animals are not devoid of morality, justice and society. If 'evil' is understood as a privation of morality, justice and society and the consequent performance of pitiless violence for individual survival, then it is accordingly the case that there is no such thing as 'animalistic evil'. Yet the threat of animalistic evil remains a chief justification for the existence of the State.

Slaying the Leviathan: an anarchist refutation of the state

It is commonplace to imagine that if there were no State government to forcefully impose law and order, then society would collapse into a depraved war of all against all. This is the argument made by Aristotle, Hobbes and Huxley and it is still the dominant narrative reiterated by politicians and citizens today. The existence of the State is considered necessary on the basis of the idea that animalistic evil exists as a real and constant threat to humanity. As Kropotkin states, the claim is made that humans must submit to State authority "under the menace of succumbing in a world based upon mutual extermination".[55]

But, as I have earlier shown, the very idea of animalistic evil as a privation of morality, society, justice, and a war of all against all for bare survival is a false-

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[51] Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchist Morality", in: *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Dover, 1970), 91.

[52] Ibidem.

[53] Ibidem, 89.

[54] To give a few examples: primates use gestures, ants communicate via pheromones and the movement of antennae, bees communicate through 'dance' patterns, canines adopt special postures during play, and cetaceans use complex acoustical communication.

[55] Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 4.

hood. There is no animalistic evil for humans to devolve into. Moreover, as Kropotkin states, humanity is not an exception to nature.[56] Here, the principle of 'evolutionary continuity' applies which entails that all differences between species are differences not in kind but only in degree.[57] This means that the mutual aid tendency is the chief factor in the social and evolutionary progress of humanity just as it is throughout the animal kingdom. Humanity only displays, to our knowledge, a particularly complex and widened sense of good and evil, justice and society. These attributes are not exclusive to humanity and, as Kropotkin argues, they are anterior in the evolutionary timeline.[58] Thus, there has quite simply never been nor could there ever be a state of nature among humans as a war of all against all for bare survival. Since a moral sense of good and evil, justice and society are anterior to the evolution of humans, even our pre-human ancestors practiced mutual aid and lived in some form of society.

Mutual aid and life in society, rather than mutual extermination, is the predominant state of nature across the animal kingdom and human prehistory, and nature without the State is the rule, whereas the human formation of State government is the exception. Furthermore, the existence of the State – as a centralised authority comprised of political elites who dictate and impose law and order by means of a monopolised use of violence – is but one of many diverse forms of societal organisation that humans have developed.[59] It is not the necessary condition for a collective sense of morality and justice. For animal societies have a collective sense of morality and justice in the absence of any law and order enforced by State government, as did human communities living without a State.[60]

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[56] Ibidem, 115.

[57] Cheryl E. Abbate, "'Higher' and 'Lower' Political Animals: A Critical Analysis of Aristotle's Account of the Political Animal", *Journal of Animal Ethics* 6(1) (2016): 57.

[58] Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 54.

[59] For an extensive anthropological and archaeological study to this effect, see David Graeber, David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (London: Allen Lane, 2021).

[60] Instances of mutual aid practices through human history are cited in Chapters 3–8 of *Mutual Aid*. Here, Kropotkin details the origins of human society, the mutual aid practices of supposed 'savages', the village communities of so-called 'barbarians', the guilds of medieval cities, and the labour unions and free associations of modern times that persist despite State interference.

This is not to say that there is no violence and injustice committed by humans against each other, of course, nor is it to overlook all the wars, genocides and enslavements that have occurred throughout human history. The point is rather that in everyday human life the practice of mutual aid and cooperation in society is the rule, whereas anti-social violence is the exception. When anti-social violence does occur, we must not appeal to a false notion of animalistic evil to explain it. We should instead call into question the societal conditions that lead to violence: a society of disparate wealth and political power in which the poor commit violence out of necessity and the rich commit violence out of fear or encouraged egoism. Indeed, the correlation between poverty and violence, as well as crime in general, is extensively corroborated.[61] Every authority that maintains these conditions, makes us live in fear of animalistic evil, divides and turns us against one another by making us fearful of each other, and uses this fear to justify their use of violence against us, must be called into question.

The State uses the false threat of animalistic evil to justify its use of violence to maintain 'law and order.' In the modern capitalist State, this is hardly more than a euphemism for the protection of individual property rights, wealth inequality and the hierarchy of power according to which all this is distributed. Consider the police brutality committed across the USA in response to the Black Lives Matter protests *against* police brutality. Excessive force against citizens was often justified on the basis that protestors were destroying private property and disturbing law and order.[62] "When the looting starts, the shooting starts", said the then President of the United States of America Donald Trump during the protests.

The State also preaches the threat of animalistic evil that lies beyond the borders, warning that without State control of national territory animalis-

[61] Muhammad Khalid Anser, Zahid Yousaf, Abdelmohsen A. Nassani, Saad M. Alotaibi, Ahmad Kabbani, and Khalid Zaman, "Dynamic Linkages between Poverty, Inequality, Crime, and Social Expenditures in a Panel of 16 Countries: Two-Step GMM Estimates", *Economic Structures* 9(43) (2020): 1–25; Baomin Dong, Peter H. Egger, and Yibei Guo, "Is Poverty the Mother of Crime? Evidence from Homicide Rates in China", *Plos One* 15(5) (2020): 1–22.

[62] Michael S. Rosenwald, "'When the Looting Starts, the Shooting Starts': Trump Quotes Miami Police Chief's Notorious 1967 Warning", *Washington Post*, 29.05.2022, access 15.03.2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2020/05/29/when-the-looting-starts-the-shooting-starts-trump-walter-headley/.

tic 'savages' will enter the country to murder, rape and steal.[63] Consider the anti-immigrant sentiment that has swept Europe in recent years. Consider how Aborigines were hunted for sport in Australia because they were seen as animals, and how colonialist atrocities were directed by the idea that Africans are animalistic savages that need to be civilised by being violently brought under State control. What of animals, the scapegoat of humanity's rhetoric of evil? The idea that animals are devoid of morality, justice and society and are therefore beneath humanity as mere resources to be exploited has long justified the cruelty of mass production farming, slaughter and destruction of habitat. The State hurls the threat of animalistic evil and thereby kills not two but three birds with one stone: human citizens, non-citizens and animals.

The reason that the State justifies its existence by the false threat of animalistic evil can be found in the work of one of its historical proponents, Aristotle. Here it is, straight from the horse's mouth:

> Political orders are kept secure not only by means of distance from what would destroy them, but sometimes by means of proximity thereto: for when the citizens are afraid, they hold firmly to the political order. Therefore those who think on behalf of the political order must contrive causes of fear, that the citizens may be on guard and like sentries at night not relax their watch; and they must make what is distant appear to be at hand.[64]

As Kropotkin points out, the modern capitalist State has absorbed or regulated all social functions – healthcare, education, defence, justice, infrastructure, etc. – while at the same time preaching an individualism according to which humans are by nature competitors in a 'free market' in which only the strongest survive. They are allowed to compete within the limits set by the State,

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[63] Aristotle, Hobbes and Huxley each anecdotally refer to the heinous 'animalistic' acts of infanticide, parricide and cannibalism that ungoverned 'savages' are supposed to commit. As Kropotkin demonstrates, this is either (1) patently false, being a mere projection of imagined bestial features onto the unknown other, (2) a failure to recognise that if such acts do rarely occur among humans living in incredibly harsh environments, this occurs out of necessity with the intention of easing the suffering of an individual or aiding the survival of the group, and (3) an abject failure of Europeans to understand the practices of mutual aid and societal organisations of non-Europeans (Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 100–110).

[64] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1308a24–30.

forced to fight for survival, and what they win they are allowed to keep for themselves as private property.[65] They are not obligated to share this with the weak and vanquished, namely, the underpaid and poverty-stricken. They are warned that the poor will murder them like animals and pillage their rightful property if the State does not prevent it. As Kropotkin identifies it, "Every one for himself, and the State for all" is the principle of State government.[66] Citizens are hence made to be dependent on the State at the same time that they are set against each other by the State or are mobilised against whomsoever should disturb the established order. This sleight of hand is achieved by contriving the fear of animalistic evil.[67] Then, the claim is made that the political order of State government is the only force that can protect citizens from animalistic evil and provide the moral sense of good and evil, justice and society that keeps them from devolving into a brutal war of all against all. Out of fear of animalistic evil, citizens hold firmly to the political order.

Recall Kropotkin's statement that throughout the animal kingdom, including humans, there is a common sense of good as that which is useful to the preservation of the society and a common sense of evil as that which is harmful to it. In this limited sense, the State is evil.[68] The practice of mutual aid preserves and develops society. The State violently impedes and destroys mutual aid by making individuals fearful of one another, encouraging individualism, protecting the unequal accumulation of private wealth and property, and dividing citizens and non-citizens, humans and animals.

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[65] Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 227.

[66] Ibidem, xlii.

[67] I do not mean to suggest by calling 'animalistic evil' a contrivance that the individuals that comprise State government are necessarily aware that it is one and deceitfully employ it to manipulate the citizenry. There is no conspiracy. There is only a false way of thinking that is inherited and educated into individuals who are typically convinced that they are acting in the interest of the common good by enforcing State authority and who under the threat of animalistic evil act out of fear themselves. As for those individuals who do maliciously manipulate State government to their own individualistic gain, they merely carry out its logic to extremes.

[68] More specifically, the State is an instance of 'systemic evil' in the sense that it is a system of institutions that conditions individuals towards evil behaviour and commits evil actions itself.

Conclusion

If the conception of animals upon which the idea of animalistic evil is premised is false, and if the existence of the State and its use of violent force is not only premised on the false threat of animalistic evil, but also actively harms the practice of mutual aid that preserves society, then Kropotkin's anarchist rejection of the State is not without a serious basis.[69] To live free of the State would assuredly not be to return to a state of animalistic evil as a pitiless war of all against all that is deprived of all morality, justice and society. We should thus consider the possible value of eliminating all State impedance to the practice of mutual aid: socio-political hierarchy, private property, law and police.[70]

One need not thereby commit the naturalistic fallacy of saying that because nature without the State is the rule, and mutual aid the dominant tendency, that humanity should conform to this for no other reason.[71] Those species that best practice mutual aid and live most closely in society survive and flourish better than those that do not. The State is detrimental to the practice of mutual aid. Thus, it might simply be pragmatic for humans to develop Stateless societies freely based on mutual aid. This is the anarchist endeavour. It is outside the scope of this paper to explain how an anarchist society could be established

[69] Kropotkin, "Anarchist Morality", 98.

[70] Ibidem, 103.

[71] We also need not presume that we can describe nature independently of our culturally embedded perspectives, that is, purely 'objectively.' We can instead recognise that collective conceptions of nature, of animalistic evil, shape human culture; a culture of individualism and deference to State control. In turn, enculturation in the view of animalistic evil entails a false view of nature as being devoid of culture, that is, of basic cultural elements of morality, justice, and socially structured behaviour that can be particularised across populations. We might also conceive of 'culture' as a natural phenomenon in any case – evolved in different forms and to varying degrees across the animal world – albeit that 'culture' is a term that typically describes a certain complexity of shared behaviours, goals, beliefs, coordinated activity, etc. In so recognising that the nature/culture divide is spurious, in the sense that neither purported pole is independent of or opposed to the other, the importance is emphasised of critiquing views of nature that are provably false because, as I have argued, these incur significant harm to both humans and other animals. In short, if humans are political animals then they may be crucially so in relation to their views of animals.

and organised.[72] I have only aimed to show that the threat of animalistic evil is a falsehood, that the threat and its maker are harmful to human society, and that the State loses a crucial justification for its existence when this threat is shown to be empty.

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[72] This is a topic that is extensively debated in anarchist literature. A detailed guide to the establishment and organisation of anarcho-communist society, premised on the notion of mutual aid, can be found in Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* (1892).

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