

## **Book Review: Springer, S. (2016). *The anarchist roots of geography: Toward spatial emancipation*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press**

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**A**narchy and Anthrozoology: Anarchy is a term that often conjures up feelings of hostility and provokes uncritical dismissal. It is often thought of as violent and impractical. However, such reactions are often the result of knee-jerk responses to the term itself, and not on an understanding of the theory and practice. In *The Anarchist Roots of Geography: Toward Spatial Emancipation*, Simon Springer, one of the world's foremost anarchist intellectuals, clarifies many misconceptions of this political philosophy. In doing so, multiple positive influences anarchism can lend anthrozoology become apparent. Throughout six chapters, there are careful ruminations on violence, hierarchy, intersectionality, political configurations, and religion, all of which bear direct implications for the reality of nonhuman animals.

In the Introduction, anarchy is positioned as uniting theory and practice, hope and struggle, and between individuals. The spirit of anarchy naturally embraces nonhumans because it opposes any and all hierarchies or systems of inequality, including that of humans over nonhumans. We learn that anarchy is naturally tied to geography through the space of *the commons*, places where everything is shared between everyone. We must imagine possibilities, worlds, and experiences, and experiment with ideas and practices. Although sounding utopian, Springer is resolute that these lofty ideals are something we all hold “right here in our own hands” (p. 20).

Chapter 1 outlines the history of anarchist geographies. We are given overviews of the thought of Proudhon, Bakunin, Reclus, Kropotkin, Bookchin and Ward, and how they applied anti-hierarchical and holistic philosophies to more-than-human geographies and the material world. Such visions were played out in everyday practice. For example, Reclus promoted wildlife conservation, spoke out against animal cruelty, and was a vegetarian (see also Reclus, 2013). We learn that Bookchin published a volume linking environmental problems to social ones, several months before Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Many works of the above-mentioned thinkers have received little publicity because of their "radical" notions. But such conceptions are gaining a second wind with the concomitant rise of anthrozoological thought. I would also argue that anthrozoology would also benefit from looking at anarchist geography and adopting some of their methodologies in a mutual reciprocation of free, critical, and inclusive scholarship and practice.

The main thrust of chapter 2 is a critique of Marxism, which Springer sees as actually adhering to and promoting the very structures it claims to admonish. Springer also explicitly recognizes the role intersectionality plays, listing some two dozen forms of domination as different arms of the same monster. Attempts to separate any one form of domination from the rest actually supports all forms at once. This has major ramifications for anthrozoology which insists that human and animal well-being are linked.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the ideological split of socialism into Marxism and anarchy. Marxism supposes a rule of some kind as necessary for freedom. Anarchy views any ruling system as violent as it coercively imposes a will over all. Anarchy, on the other hand, is governed by only the vaguest of principles like non-violence, community, and self-government. How these terms are realized are as unique as individual places because variety is better suited to meeting the needs of individuals and groups and is particularly suited to cross-cultural perspectives. Springer places great emphasis on the *here* and *now* as the

quintessential spatiotemporal locus of action and living. For animals, this would entail acting to improve and save lives now, not hoping they will be saved by others later. From an anthrozoological perspective, this point is made clear with in vitro meat. Researchers and financial stakeholders of in vitro meat claim lofty intentions of saving untold numbers of animals from suffering by circumventing the need to slaughter animals for meat. But very few, if any, act on this *now* by being vegetarian or advocating for vegetarianism.

Chapter 5 delves into the ability of organized religion to be ultimately liberatory. The axiomatic existence of a god superior to all creation sets up an impenetrable and unquestionable hierarchy setting limits to equality and compassionate treatment. Rather than religion, Springer advocates *spirituality*, which emphasizes the interconnectedness and oneness of all existence, Springer also asserts how veganism is essential to his anarchist practice because it disavows a hierarchy of species, a fundamental and common tenet of organized religion. While Springer raises the question of religion within anarchy, he does not wrestle with the question of vegetarianism in anarchist praxis. This would round out the triptych of anarchism, religion, and animal studies. While anarchism ideologically embraces vegetarianism, the popularity of the diet within anarchism is underwhelming (Dominick 2015). It should not be said that vegetarianism is a *necessary* component to anarchism as personal and structural limitations constrain one's abilities. This particular intersection is still underdeveloped within anarchism. Herein lies potential to further bring together anarchism and animal studies (White, 2015).

*The Anarchist Roots of Geography* is immensely inspiring. Springer rarely mentions animals directly, but this would in no way diminish my recommendation of his book. Perhaps it is taken as a given that animals are included, that it goes without saying that equality means equality for all, and that *all* truly means *everyone*. Anthrozoology would do well to take some

influence from anarchist thought. Likewise, anthrozoology could influence anarchy in promoting a call for more direct attention to nonhumans within anarchist praxis.

## References

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