

Title: Of Entropy and “Hairy Paws;” A Vision of Biocentric Freedom in Evgenii Zamiatin’s *We*
Author: Christopher Pike, Northwestern University

Abstract:

Evgenii Zamiatin’s 1924 dystopian novel, *We*, presents the reader with an argument against the application of the principles of industrialization and Frederick Taylor’s theory of scientific management to human life. The main character, D-503, describes a world where regimentation based on rational principles has solved the problems that plagued “the ancients,” and promises to ultimately perfect the organization of human society. Yet “atavistic” elements, citizens with a tendency individualistic expression, continue to appear in the “One State” like ink blots on a page. Ultimately it becomes clear that the only way to rid society of these elements, to relieve citizens of their “fancy,” is to mandate universal lobotomies, thereby acknowledging that there is a fundamental aspect of the human character that cannot be subjugated to reason.

While the opposition of rationalistic regimentation to the entropic elements of human nature in *We* has been fairly thoroughly explored by existing scholarship, this paper expands the breadth of the problem by considering the connection that Zamiatin establishes between the human necessity for individual expression and the natural world. Technology, science, rationality, and modernism, on the one hand, are juxtaposed against nature, art, the passions, and primitivism on the other. I argue that, in *We*, Zamiatin suggests a biocentric worldview in that he portrays mankind as an inseparable component of the natural world rather than as a rational being capable of detaching himself from the non-human and governing and manipulating nature as a “workshop” in the Bazarovian sense. Moreover, I advance the idea that Zamiatin identifies the natural world as a fundamental source for human creativity, passion, and freedom that is intrinsic to the human experience.