

recent British television series on the behaviour of primates clearly showed a young chimpanzee being passed around its apparently adoring aunts and uncles, who all took a turn in its grooming. This is remarkably like a human society with its extended families. However, in one regard the animal nation is totally unlike our own, since it does not lead them to kill each other or indeed to try permanently to deprive enemies of their territory. Disputes at territorial borders can be noisy and highly excitable affairs, especially in the case of some apes, but they rarely lead to anything other than darting minor incursions into other territories, and even these are apparently not motivated by imperialist expansionism! Whilst there may be monkey nations, there are no recorded instance of monkey empires. Indeed those species that do operate national territorial behaviour seem remarkably affable – to us the chimpanzee seems, and indeed is, a friendly, apparently fun-loving creature who cares for and helps fellow members of the nation. The level of dominance in such animal societies is very low compared with that found in non-territorial parallels, and the inward amity is thus maintained entirely without compulsion or threat by strongly dominant individuals. Whilst they are not free from violence altogether, such animals are generally peace loving. Ardrey argues that the primates have developed the nation as a natural response to their strengths and weakness.

We primates are distinguishable from the rest of nature by two main characteristics. We have generally capable, flexible bodies with hands that enable us to manipulate tools, and we have highly advanced brains that enable us to develop strategies for dealing with problems. Otherwise our bodies are generalized rather than specialized. We do not have any particularly strong attacking features like the jaws of a crocodile or the claw of a crab, and nor do we have effective defensive capabilities like the spines of the hedgehog or the camouflage of the chameleon. Under such circumstances, when we want to hunt or to defend ourselves against others we need to co-operate and win our battles through force of numbers and execution of strategic operations. Put this way, the nation looks a pretty effective device for promoting and ensuring collaboration.

Morris has argued that our deep-seated need for structures based on social dominance related to territory are reflected in our invention of religion. He argues that we evolved away from the dominance through fear that characterized our early ancestral beginnings and replaced this with leaders who commanded respect. This was necessary to develop societies that initially co-operated in hunting and later in farming, and we needed to maximize the benefit to society as a whole of the intellectual capabilities of all its members. Such leaders were thus no longer all-powerful figures to whom we gave unquestioning allegiance. Morris argues that we were unable to totally free ourselves of the basic need