

Anti-Human Memes and Institutions



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Perhaps one way to begin a conversation on human ethics is to start at the beginning of humanity. *Homo sapien*, our species, has been around for two hundred thousand years, and our closely-related ancestral species lived as far back as two millions years. For the great majority of their evolution, our primitive ancestors were hunter-gatherers. It wasn’t until very recently (in the grand scheme of things, ten thousand years ago) that we adopted agriculture, and there are still hunter-gatherers around today. What can we learn from them about human relations? About property norms? About parenting? About education? About nutrition and exercise? Using the evolution of *h. sapien* as a guide, we can determine a number of patently anti-human memes and institutions.

Parenting

A growing trend among modern parents is the philosophy known as “attachment parenting.” This philosophy argues that babies and young children need constant companionship with adults. Infants are breastfed as long as possible and worn in a sling all day long. Parents sleep alongside their babies and children. Hunter-gatherer (HG) parents were/are natural attachment parents. HG infants are never separated from the adults in their lives. Somebody is always coddling them and meeting their every need. In contrast, modern (MD) parents in many societies are taught to keep their baby’s bed in another room, and to let their babies “cry it out” in order to learn to “self-soothe” themselves to sleep.

Fast-forward a few years, HG parents never yell at, spank, put in time-out, or otherwise punish their children. There’s never a need because they have proper expectations of childhood behavior. Children are supposed to be curious, playful, and messy. It’s how they learn and grow into self-controlled autonomous adults. MD parents on the other hand constantly disrespect, berate, chastise, spank, smack, withdraw their love, or in other ways try to control their children for fear of them never learning self-control. And more, while HG parents give their children all the freedom in the world to exploit their growing

independence, MD parents are increasingly putting shackles on their children and actively seeking to diminish their independence. In the words of evolutionary psychologist Peter Gray, as written in *Free to Learn*, HG parents are “trustful,” while MD parents are “directive.”

Schooling and Child Labor

As explored in my column “Prison, Plantation, and Indoctrination Center,” schooling is a major sponsor of anti-human practices. Everything about schooling is antithetical to how human beings were raised in the past. HG children are physically active all day long. Modern schooled (MS) children are forced into physical passivity for several hours during school and several more hours after school, doing homework. HG children are playing at what *they want* to play at all day long. MS children are forced to do the work *that others* have chosen for them. Because their play groups are age-mixed, HG children learn valuable skills from older children while young and learn to look after and nurture younger children when older. MS children are stuck with others their same age. HG children are not “disciplined” by authority figures such as parents or other tribal leaders. MS children are given low marks for bad performance, drugs to induce passivity for the overly active, spankings or other forms of punishment for “undesirable” behavior by parents, and in some places teachers, and otherwise expected to be “obedient” and “compliant” to authority.

With the invention of agriculture came the necessity of hard labor. HG adults work less than twenty hours a week to meet their needs, and HG children play all day. Because agriculture requires so much work, families started having more children, and put them to work as early as they could. Life became a constant struggle and full of stress, starting in childhood. Agriculture soon evolved into industry, and as children were once forced onto farms, they were now forced into factories and mines. Today, they are no longer forced into factories or mines, but they are forced into schools, where they continue to labor at tasks assigned to them by others. This much is clear, children evolved to grow and learn through self-directed, easy play, but now most societies expect them to grow and learn through other-directed, hard work.

Imperialism

Every modern state has their origin and growth in conquest. Private criminals may assault or rob you once or twice, but public criminals (the state) rob you over and over and use propaganda and indoctrination to convince you that its necessary and justified. And more, they not only perpetually rob you, but they use their power to control your behavior, and require you to seek their permission before doing anything at all. Want to trade with someone? You must get a statist permit. Want to defend yourself? You must get a statist permit. Want to spend the rest of your life in love with someone and start a family? You

must get a statist permit. And for those goods and services that the state has decided only its actors can provide, you are forcibly prevented from providing. Statism, and its big brother imperialism, has no bounds. Whatever those who control the machinations of government say is their right to do, they have the power to acquire the means to do it.

HG tribes, on the other hand, are small enough that everyone is usually related to everyone else. They are like large families. Both children and adults have the autonomy to do as they please, their only constraints come in the form of norms and conventions. Believe it or not, the simple act of *teasing* goes a long way in keeping HGs humble and committed to the welfare of their tribe. And unlike modern states, HG leaders don't menace their tribes with "an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary" in order to make popular their imperialistic efforts. Further, HG tribes teach mutual aid and welfare through fraternity that is a natural byproduct of the way children are raised. In contrast, modern states have destroyed fraternity and fueled class warfare through the propagation of compulsory welfare for both poor and corporate interests.

Final Thoughts

I'm sure there are many more anti-human memes and institutions that can be found using the guide of human evolution. Many religions employ anti-human practices. Slavery is another example. You may ask, "so what?" I think its important that we know who we are and how we evolved as a species in order to better understand our needs as people. Too many in society today seek to gain for themselves at the expense of others. And too many in society today have anti-human beliefs that are keeping people from realizing their potential. My intent is not to romanticize the primitive past, but to scientifically ascertain the myriad ways in which society violates our humanity to our mutual detriment. From the way we raise our kids, how we are controlled as people, to our dietary and exercise needs, we can learn a lot about ourselves as a species by studying our evolutionary past. And we must realize that there are changes that we *can* make. We can change the way we approach our children. We can give them the privilege of learning the way nature designed them to learn. We can raise our voices against war and empire. And we can lend a helping hand to our fellow human beings.