

Human Ethology Newsletter

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MEMOIR Four Decades of Ethology - A Personal Perspective (Continued)

By: Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt,
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In 1961 upon the invitation of Eckhard Hess I lectured one term at the Psychology Department of the University of Chicago. In 1966 I spent another term at the Institute of Child Development of the University of Minnesota (Minneapolis). It was there that Bill Charlesworth and I met for the first time. We have been close friends ever since, and our discussions together over the years have been most profitable.

In the early sixties I began investigating ways to study human behavior from an ethological point of view. It was a lucky coincidence that at this time Hans Hass decided to make a television series about humans. Originally he wanted to cover a wide variety of facets, from morphology, to phylogeny and from genetics to behavior. I suggested that he should focus on behavior, and he entrusted me with the ethological consultation.

I then began a series of ethnographic investigations. On two trips - one to East Africa (1964) and one around the world (1965) - we experimented with filming unstaged human behavior in the natural

context of everyday life. We used mirror lenses that Hans Hass had constructed. A trip in 1967 led me to remote areas of New Guinea, this time all alone, filming eyebrow flashes and other expressive patterns.

In 1966 I started to film the behavior of congenitally deaf and blind children. Even though these children were deprived of any opportunity to see or hear a social model, they behaved remarkably normally as far as their facial expressions were concerned. There could be no doubt that motor patterns, such as smiling, crying, laughing and the facial expression of anger, developed without any learning from social models.

In 1967 the first edition of my textbook Grundriß der vergleichenden Verhaltensforschung (English: Ethology, the Biology of Behavior) was published. It was the first attempt to present a detailed overview of the field showing the different directions in which it fanned out. I kept it up to date, and the revised seventh German edition appeared in 1987. In addition to the English edition, it was translated into French, Spanish, Italian and Japanese.

After my return from New Guinea I proposed to the Max-Planck-Society that a long-term research program on the cross-cultural documentation of human behavior be started. The proposal was accepted, and in

1970 I was entrusted with a research group, which grew into an independent research institute.

For longitudinal documentation I selected traditional cultures practising different subsistence strategies and living in different geographical areas. The cultures included the Bushmen of the central Kalahari (since 1970: !Ko, G/wi); the Yanomami of the upper Orinoko area (since 1969); the Eipo of the mountains of western New Guinea, a completely intact Neolithic culture at the time of our first contact in 1974; the Himba, pastoralists in north Namibia (since 1971); the Trobrianders of the island Kailéuna (since 1981); and the Balinese (since 1965). In addition, we carried out shorter studies on other cultures. Time flies, and the Himba children, whom I filmed playing with dolls in 1971, are now mothers with little daughters who in turn play with homemade dolls.

In 1963 Konrad Lorenz's book On Aggression was published and became the subject of widespread discussion. Even though Lorenz emphasized that aggression does not have to be accepted as fate, a number of authors insisted that by pointing out phylogenetic adaptations for aggression, fatalistic attitudes are induced in the reader. Others argued that biologists would follow the traditional view of nature red in tooth and claw.

To try to set the record straight, I published Love and Hate (German edition 1970). In this book I dismissed the "bestia humana" concept as a modern caricature of man". I argued that man was preprogrammed not only for agonistic behaviors but also for affiliative bonding. With individualized brood care evolved the motivation to nurture, and along with it specific caretaking behaviors as well as reciprocal infantile behavior to trigger nurturant care.

Love and Hate was followed by a book on the biology of war and peace in which I traced the cultural evolution of destructive

aggression. The main thesis was that war has to be considered a result of cultural evolution. In order to achieve peace, however, we must realize that war fulfills vital functions and that these must be met by alternative means. To simply declare war as a deviance cannot help in finding solutions.

Up to the present my small team has focused on cross-cultural documentation, which by now has resulted in an extensive collection of about 230 km of films. More than 100 film units have been published in cooperation with the Institute for the Scientific Film (Encyclopaedia Cinematographica). Documentary work brought me in contact with many more ethnologists, such as Derek Freeman on Samoa, the Bushmen (San) researcher Jürgen Heinz, the Hottentot and Herero researcher Kuno Budack, the Papua and South Oceanic researcher Gert Koch, the !Kung researcher Polly Wiessner who joined my staff later, and others.

Another very important contact was Paul Ekman. Some of the members of my staff--Margret Schleidt, Wulf Schiefenhövel and Karl Grammer--learned his facial action coding system (FACS). After several joint meetings they visited him in California, making it possible to apply his methods to our film material.

We have had numerous guest visitors, and our staff as well as visitors have come from very different disciplines - linguistics (Volker Heeschen), art history (Christa Sütterlin), cultural anthropology (Polly Wiessner, Gabriele Herzog), and others. It is a fine, spiritually motivated team.

The cross-cultural documentation project was supplemented by a kindergarten project initiated by Barbara Hold. She has studied processes of self organisation and strategies of social interaction in groups of kindergarteners in Europe and Japan. The project has been continued by Karl Grammer up to the present.

The seventies could be characterized as the years in which human ethology established itself. They were also the decade of sociobiology. For a short time ethology and sociobiology emphasized the contrasting points of their own approaches, but mutual interest and the shared approach of evolutionary biology unite us more and more in our common endeavour to understand our species.

In 1984 the first edition of my textbook Human Ethology appeared. The English edition followed in 1989.

The eighties were filled with field trips. In addition to my human ethological studies, I started documentary work on Jane Goodall's chimpanzees. We had first met in 1964, and ever since have enjoyed ties of friendship. Her work had always impressed me as outstanding. To be a good ethologist you must enjoy deep sympathy for your subjects, be they animals or people. Jane certainly combines this criterion with outstanding intellectual faculties and the gift of keen observation. I was very happy when she invited me to join her team.

Early in the eighties, our institute started a project on urban ethology in Vienna. As members of a small interdisciplinary group, we discussed the needs of urban populations, particularly that of housing (project "Vollwertiges Wohnen"). Modern housing projects for Viennese people with low income provided privacy for the family units but also isolation and alienation. They were unable to form social ties with other members of their community; they wanted a neighbourhood. It was found that socially integrative structures in the environs of the home could be created to facilitate the establishment of acquaintanceship.

As a result of this investigation, we were recently asked by the Viennese government whether we would be willing to establish and direct a Ludwig-Boltzmann-Institute for Urban Ethology. We were

pleased with this development, and Karl Grammer from my institute will move to Vienna as its co-director while I will continue to stay on in Bavaria.

The perspective of evolutionary biology has certainly proved to be inspiring to all branches of behavior science. In the eighties basic ethological concepts began to be explored down to the neuronal level. Even the neuronal basis of imprinting has been illuminated by the studies of Wallhöfer and Scheich. It is certainly necessary that we take into consideration the fact that phylogenetic adaptations shape human behavior in a variety of ways. In particular our emotions, including our related brain chemistry, are part of our ancient phylogenetic heritage.

We should also be aware that these phylogenetic adaptations evolved in the course of the long period during which we lived as Stone Age hunters and gatherers in small communities with primitive technology. Through cultural evolution we have created an environment of technical civilization, urbanization, and anonymous mass societies. We necessarily encounter problems, however, since not all of our phylogenetic adaptations fit this new way of life. In order to adapt culturally, we need to know about the extent of our preprogramming, in particular about the potential pitfalls of our more archaic self. We have not changed during the last 10,000 years, or perhaps even longer, as far as our biological equipment is concerned, and thus must face the fact that preidents with Stone Age emotionality lead superpowers today.

It is all too evident that we need to learn more about ourselves. We have achieved control of nature, and we readily invest billions in search of new tools to conquer our non-social environment. But what we need more than ever is efficient self-control, and to achieve this we must acquire a greater degree of self understanding.

In Eastern Europe we have just experienced how politics based on the "blank slate" theory of behavior finally led to a collapse, and one would therefore think that extremely environmentalistic views of human nature should be something of the past. But this ideology is still strong and in vogue, as recent contributions to our newsletter have pointed out. These extreme environmentalists seem less interested in scientific truth than in what is "politically correct", this being determined by their ideology. They set standards without much consideration of human nature. By submitting to such dogmatism, we delegate power to gurus with a totalitarian bent. This may well be detrimental to liberal democracy.

Alexander Pope wrote, "The proper study of mankind is man". Let us pursue this enterprise in an effort to learn more about the systems which govern our conduct.

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SOCIETY NEWS

Elections Results

In two very close elections, Karl Grammer was chosen Secretary and Nancy Segal Membership Chair for 1992-1994. On behalf of ISHE, I thank all the candidates for their willingness to serve, and the outgoing officers for their fine work: Gail Zivin as Secretary and Jay Feierman as Membership Chair.

Membership Renewals

This is the first 1992 issue; have you renewed your ISHE membership for this year? Please check the paid-through date near you address to determine if you need to submit your dues for 1992. If so, please see instructions on last page. It usually takes about one month to update the membership list, so please disregard the date if you have recently paid.

Budget

Herman has submitted the following budget for ISHE as of 1 January 1992. Figures are in Dutch guilders (ƒ).

Balance 1 Jan. 1991	7703
Income dues	11510
Income interest	204
Subsidy Wayne State	950
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	12664
Expenses newsletter, directory	7124
Balance end 1991	13243

Note 1. An exchange rate of ƒ 1.90 per U. S. dollar is used.

Note 2. The increase of ƒ 5540 is pleasant, but does not reflect extra expenses made just after the end of 1991.

Note 3. However, costs are less now that the newsletter is being produced and mailed in the U. S.

BOOK REVIEW

Darwin on Trial, by Phillip E. Johnson. Washington, D. C.: Regnery Gateway, 1991. Distributed by National Book Network, 4720A Boston Way, Lanham, MD 20706 USA (\$19.95).

Reviewed by Wade C. Mackey

9713 Saigon Drive, El Paso, TX 79925 USA(his address)

Phillip E. Johnson, a lawyer, has written a book in which he takes to task Charles Darwin and his adherents. The tack pursued by Johnson is neither to deny outright Darwin's conclusions nor to marshal evidence that would invalidate the basic axioms of evolutionary theory, human or otherwise. Instead, the barrister takes the route of rejecting the full range of evidence that is used to support the superstructure of evolutionary theory in general and, by extension, human evolution.

Johnson uses the analogy that, just as in American jurisprudence wherein the accused is innocent until proven guilty and the prosecutor must prove his case, Western science mandates that a scientist must convince his audience, with evidence, that his or her analysis is correct. A jury may decide not to accept the validity of the prosecutor's evidence, and an audience does not have to accept the scientist's evidence. Johnson takes the role of an audience and promptly rejects any evidence that would validate the very existence, not just the form, of Darwinian evolution. For him, the evidence is not persuasive, hence the case is not proven.

The key theme running throughout the work is Johnson's notion that any evidence for the existence of Darwinism in creating diverse forms of flora and fauna is equivocal. Hence, the very existence of Darwinian evolution is problematic.

The book does have an engaging style. Like a good lawyer should, Johnson develops a case that presents his side in a favorable light, presumably from Diogenes' lantern. The opposing side as manifestly culpable and without serious consideration, much less redemption.

Johnson freely resorts to ad hominem arguments and misdirection. Corroborating evidence across a zoo of species is not introduced. Key data are omitted entirely. Johnson makes a rhetorical point on phylogeny: "When I want to know how a fish can become a man, I am not enlightened by being told that the organisms that leave the most offspring are the ones that leave the most offspring" (p. 22). But no mention is made of the fact that virtually indistinguishable germ cells lead to vastly different taxa embracing organisms with quite different circulatory, respiratory, reproductive, and digestive systems.

Johnson focuses on gaps in our knowledge of evolution, human or otherwise. When gaps loom, Johnson accuses us of filling them by inserting the putative creative powers of natural selection as a deus ex machina. Rather than using scientific rigor, we are seen as resorting to a nominal fallacy that is based on faith, not empiricism. But we know our limits, mostly, and we can separate a model from an hypothesis.

Now, it is clear that any individual who would advocate discretionary values of π or an ambiguous likelihood of the existence of gravity or variability in the speed of light would find no support or interest from geometrists, astronomers, or physicists, respectively. Nonetheless, Johnson's thesis did find an editor and a trade publisher. Trade publishers are in the business of finding a readership to find a profit. Any theorist disclaiming the existence of gravity would find neither. Johnson found both.

Given the tens of thousands of books published annually, Johnson's thesis could have been published, read by a few acolytes, and then buried by time and a mammoth dose of indifference. But, on the contrary, his effort has taken a far different trajectory. As of January 1992, his book has been reviewed by, at least, the Chronicle of Higher Education, Science, Library Journal, National Review, Publishers Weekly, Booklist, Bookwatch, Christianity Today, and Insight. Darwin on Trial was used as a cornerstone to the U.S. News and World Report's lead article "The Creation" (12-23-91, pp. 56-64).

In the same article, a poll indicated that 47% of Americans believed that "God created man pretty much in his present form at one time within the last 10,000 years," while 40% believed that "Man developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but God guided this process, including man's creation. But only 9% believed that "Man has developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life. God had no part in this process." These are not encouraging figures for human ethologists.

The one value of his book to us may be analogous to the use of a canary in a coal mine: they both serve to measure how favorable is the immediate environment. Because Darwin on Trial was accepted for publication and has received wide attention across professional and popular readerships, our ether may not be as vital as we would like. How or if we decide to counter this and other pre-Keplerian versions of the universe will determine, in part, the way in which Joe and Josephine Sixpack view their own "normal science." Tip O'Neill's maxim that all politics are local can eventually be translated into the tenures of canaries.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Change of Address

Herman Dienske would like all correspondence sent to the following address from now on:

Schelpenkade 35
2313 ZW Leiden
The Netherlands.

Postponement of Symposium

The symposium on Ideology, Warfare, and Indoctrinability has been postponed a year to the summer or fall of 1994 in Bavaria. One reason for the delay is that Karl Grammer, who has organized the meeting so far, is now co-director of the Ludwig Boltzman Institute for Urban Ethology in Vienna. Hence Wulf Schiefenhovel and Polly Wiessner will now assist in organizing the symposium. Another reason is that an exhibition on Eibl's work in five cultures is being planned for 1993, the year he turns 65. This exhibition will require much time and effort.

Human Behavior and Evolution Society Meeting

The fourth annual meeting of HBES will be held July 23-26 in Albuquerque, NM. For registration information contact Nancy Wilmsen Thornhill, University of Bielefeld, Wellenberg 1, 4800 Bielefeld 1, Germany; telephone 49-521-1062743; FAX 49-521-1062782; EMAIL Thornhill@zifrg2.uni-bielefeld.de. Registration deadline is May 1. The abstract deadline was April 1. The editor is sorry that this information is late. It was received just after the deadline for the last issue.

International Society for Research on Aggression

Most ISHE members will have received the announcement of the tenth world meeting of ISRA, in Siena, Italy, Sept. 6-11. Speakers will include Eibl* (* denotes ISHE member), John Hutchison, Stefano Puglisi-Allegra, Frans de Waal*, Michael McGuire*, and Dan Olweus. Deadline for hotel reservations is June 15. Deadline for abstracts was April 1, but it is not too late to register. Correspondence should be addressed to Francesca Farabollini*, Istituto de Fisiologia Umana, Universita degli Studi, Via del Laterano 8, 53100 Siena, Italy, telephone 577-287403, fax 577-46148. Again, I regret the lateness of this message.

1993 ABS Meeting

By way of atonement, I hereby announce the 1993 meeting of the Animal Behavior Society. The 30th annual meeting will be held at the University of California, Davis, July 24-30, 1993. For information contact Benjamin Hart, Dept. of Physiology, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of California at Davis, Davis, CA 95616 USA.

Subsidy from Wayne State

The College of Liberal Arts of Wayne State University in Detroit, MI has again donated \$500 to the newsletter. I thank Dean John P. Oliver for this important assistance.

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