

EPISODE 47

MOTHER & CHILD

(And Their Very Large Crania)

Hi there. Welcome to the end of the world. My name is Michael Folz. And this is Episode number 47 of my podcast Dial It Back Or Die. Now last episode I took on the largest elephant which is in the living room of our postmodern metaphorical house of despair. And that is the idea, which is totally a function of Utilitarianism and its resultant ideology of Liberal Democracy, that gender is some sort of social construct. And that were it not for culture and tradition, etc., male and female would be identical in their abilities, inclinations, and desires.

And what I tried to show was that, to put it as simply as possible, male and female are inherently different because they literally have different brains. And without trying to overload you with data, I cited a certain amount of science to support this conclusion. Although, trust me, there's way more out there that I could have thrown in besides.

But I also acknowledged last episode that, with this idea of gender as social construct having become almost religious dogma in the West, a lot of people are not going to be convinced no matter how much science I throw at them.

So, on the off chance that the science which I've already gone over wasn't enough for you, this episode I'm going to approach the topic from a somewhat different direction. Namely through the pitiless logic of evolution itself. After all, I am sure that you are well aware that the way that natural selection works is that the vast majority of natural selections don't work. That is to say, most genetic mutations make an organism less able to survive. And survival itself of necessity involves running a gauntlet of really strict parameters which are a function of both the physical environment and of the life and death competition that a species has with all of those other plants and animals and bacteria and viruses which are trying to survive.

So that what I hope to prove to you in the next three episodes is this: When we stand back and contemplate all of the unique traits that humanity almost instantaneously burst forth with—what I have been labeling as game changers and killer apps—and we then also include the reality that humans

continue to bear the burden of being biological creatures like all the rest, it becomes crystal clear that the only way that we could have survived as a species to make it even this far is if male homo sapiens and female homo sapiens co-evolved to become highly differentiated, yet mutually dependent, creatures.

In other words, we may well be primates. And we may well share certain aspects and behaviors with other primates. But in many significant, indeed—ahem—game changing ways, we stand apart. And, most importantly, as a function of evolution itself, in many ways men and women necessarily stand apart.

Now as we start in on this, I do need to point something out to you. Because even though all of the steps in the argument which I will be going over are simple, basic, established scientific facts, still there's an excellent chance that you've never heard it before. Which means that there's a good chance that the very newness of the idea might put you off or leave you suspicious.

If this is the case, then I hope to counter that by encouraging you to actively follow along as I go over this. Keep asking yourself if there are any other plausible evolutionary answers to the very real constraints on human existence which I will be pointing out. And if not, then I trust that you'll then be able to drop any remaining belief that you might have in gender being any kind of social, as opposed to natural, construct.

So let's get rolling.

Because the first thing that we need to deal with, the most important of the game changers which produced homo sapiens, has to do with the incredibly rapid (and so far not really well explained) enlargement of the human cerebral cortex.

In other words, I'm talking about our big, giant heads. And the huge problems they create for the birthing process.

Because consider: whether a fetus is that of a giraffe or a human, most parts of this fetus are pretty soft and flexible. Which means that they can squish up pretty tightly and efficiently so that they can slide pretty easily on that journey down the birth canal. But a head, although softer than it will be when it is in its adult form, still has a certain circumference which cannot shrink. Which means that a human head, which with its giant cerebral cortex is way bigger proportionately than that of any other primate, requires a human mother's hips to be way, way wider than those of, say, a chimpanzee.

So that here, right at the outset, we have a constraint which demands that Nature be strange and different. Which is quite the constraint in and of itself.

But this requirement then runs up against another one of humanity's unique adaptations. And this is the fact that, alone among mammals, we happen to walk upright.

Now in an earlier episode I went over just how hard it was for Nature to adapt a land animal so that it could, without the benefit of a counterbalancing tail, both stand and be actually able to walk around, solely on two feet. First of all, the very bones in a human's feet had to change. Even more importantly, the spine itself had to massively adapt, with a curve here and then a curve there so as to be able to both carry and balance most of the weight of the trunk, not to mention that big, giant head.

All of which is hard enough for the relatively straightforward up and down human male. But with the human female, whose hips had to get wider and wider so as to accommodate the birth of her big headed child, at some point the hips would have gotten so wide as to throw the entire balancing act off kilter. And she could then no longer walk upright. She would fall over.

So that something had to give.

Anyway, that's the best reason that anyone has come up with as to why it is that human babies are all born to be at least a year premature.

Now it's incredibly important for you to know that what I just said is a totally uncontested, totally accepted by the scientific community, scientific fact. And I'd like for you to stop and think about it for a moment. Because I'd also like you to start thinking of some of the obvious implications of this scientific fact. And I'd really like you to start wondering why it is that the greater community of humankind has been kept ignorant of this basic scientific fact.

Because, to a greater or lesser extent, virtually all mammal mothers exhibit at least some degree of nurturing their young. Birds, which of course are not mammals, also do this. Even crocodiles show some mothering behavior after their babies are hatched. And paleontologists speculate that at least some of the dinosaurs also 'mothered' their young.

But human mothers, of absolute biological necessity, have to take this nurturing thing to a whole other level. And to see why, let's take the time to fully consider what a strange, unnatural, and totally precarious situation a newborn baby human is in.

For the way that Nature works is that a newborn anything has to have at least a fighting chance to survive in this cruel world once it is born. Which means, as you may already know, that a baby caribou is born ready to walk on its first day of existence, and is thus able to immediately keep up with

the herd. Other animals, such as kittens, may be born blind and relatively helpless. But then cats, like so many other animals, instinctively have dens or nests where the mother can hide with her newborn. And at the far end of helplessness, baby kangaroos and other marsupials are really tiny and unformed. But that's why marsupials evolved pouches in which said babies could ride safely until they were big enough to move around by themselves.

Human babies, however...

Okay. When we contemplate the situation of human babies, we first have to consider what child bearing is like for all of the other primates. After all, they are by far our closest relatives. And, just to remind you, the way that biology works is that it is extremely conservative. It doesn't randomly jump families or orders. And the fact that some bird or some fish or some insect exhibits some strange sexual or parental behavior doesn't reflect one iota on the human condition. Because we humans may well be special, special animals. But when it comes to basic biology and the like, then, yes, we are still indeed primates.

Now one of the most basic features of primates is that they evolved to live in trees. With all of the moving about from branch to branch which that supposes. And another feature is that, even if they live in the warmest of tropical climates, virtually all primates have a copious amount of fur. Because the way that Nature has solved the problem that newborn primates can't immediately move from branch to branch is to make sure that a newborn primate can immediately grasp on to its mother's fur.

And hold on for dear life. Because for the next while the only way that it stays alive is if instinctively hangs on while its mother eats, grooms, moves around, and does all of her other behaviors with her troop. And as for the mother, what with her baby passively yet determinedly hanging on, there's not that much of a disruption to her regular life. She can basically ignore dealing with her baby, even when it nurses.

Not to mention that whatever disruption there is only lasts several months. Even the relatively highly evolved and intelligent chimp can survive by itself if it is orphaned at the age of six months.

And, by the way, that instinctive grasping thing that primate babies have? That's also why all newborn human babies still reflexively open and close their tiny hands.

Although it wouldn't do those tiny hands the slightest good even if they could fully cling. Because a fur-less human mother has nothing to cling to. What's more, even gorillas can still easily climb trees. Humans, not so much.

And we'll get back to this particular problem in a bit. Because meanwhile those practical problems of immediate survival, while almost overwhelming, are still trivial when compared with an even larger problem which our unique status as humans creates for the newborn baby. And this happens to be, once again, a function of that big, giant head.

Because remember that that big, giant head is entirely a function of our big, giant brains. As humans we think way, way more than any other animal. Perhaps more importantly we emote way, way more than any other animal. And at the moment of birth it's not just that we can't immediately get up and walk. No, the much bigger problem for human babies is that their big, giant brains have also been born at least a year prematurely. Which means that they haven't even begun to be wired up properly, so that they can't even begin to think and to emote properly. Which means that all of the sensory input that's all of a sudden flooding into this new being, all of the sights and sounds and smells, etc., are all arriving inside a brain that in no way has been set up to receive them.

Which would be bad enough for any young animal. But here's the thing: Because we really don't know what 'consciousness' is like for a newborn human. On the other hand, though, we do know that it's got to be way more conscious than what consciousness is like for any other animal.

Now some of you at some point in your life may have imbibed an extra large dose of LSD or some similar drug. And as a result of that you might have gotten yourself into a space where thoughts couldn't connect, where 'meaning' no longer had any meaning, where there was no longer a reality which you could hold on to. And this is why they've always said that if you are going to take LSD or a similar drug, you need to do it in a calm, comforting environment. Because otherwise it is extremely easy to freak out.

Now consider that newborn baby with that giant brain which so far hasn't created the physical neural connections necessary for thoughts to make sense, for meaning to have meaning. All it knows is that one minute it was safe and warm inside of its mother's tummy. And now all of a sudden it is being perpetually assaulted by all of these sensory inputs. You, too, would become frightened and be crying your eyes out.

So that it should be fairly obvious that in such conditions 'normal' mothering, such as that which a bear or a mongoose might provide, will be totally insufficient here. Because, first of all, another trait common to all primates is that their brains are proportionately larger than that of all other orders of animals. So that in order to mature emotionally even baby monkeys require a certain level of warm, soft mother. But that doesn't mean that monkey mothers can't at the same time be very matter

of factly rough with their young, ignoring them why they themselves are foraging, and whacking them on the head when they misbehave.

Again, you can't come close to doing that with human babies. Their highly creative, but as yet totally ungrounded and unfocused consciousness demands that they be treated with the gentlest of kid gloves. In fact, even in this postmodern present, when so-called humor makes a point of mocking and negating just about every social and human convention, no one dares seek a laugh by suggesting an image of an infant deliberately being hurt. Because absolutely no human, probably even sociopaths, would ever even think of going there.

So it should be pretty clear from all of this that for Nature to allow this new, utterly helpless human baby with its hyper-sensitive and totally fragmented consciousness to exist, Nature would also have to come up with a new hyper-sweet, hyper-soft, and hyper-nurturing human mother so as to take care of this newborn bundle of utter confusion. Not to mention the fact that on top of all the mental and emotional problems which arise from humans basically being born in the middle of a bad trip, human babies are also born lacking even rudimentary control over most of their bodily functions.

And how does Nature accomplish this creation of a new, hyper-nurturing mother? Well, through our old friend Natural Selection. That is to say, if human babies can only thrive—hell, can only exist—if their mothers be soft and caring, and if you have two human mothers—one soft, gentle, caring, and baby-centric, and the other one not so much—then the mother with the soft, caring personality will tend to have more of her offspring survive. As time then goes on, the female personalities of ensuing generations will tend to become ever more soft and gentle. Until at some point softness and gentleness becomes the norm of the human female's personality.

What's more, as opposed to those chimps who can, if need be, live on their own after six months, a human child has by far the longest 'juvenile' period of any animal on Earth. The first year or so, what with its bodily functions mostly not up and running, it needs to be attended to constantly. And what makes matters worse is that human brains are so large and complex that they require a relatively huge amount of energy just in order to function. And I don't know if you know this, but in the first year of life over 85% of a baby's caloric intake is consumed in just getting all of its brain's wiring up to where it would have been had the baby not been born a year prematurely.

And it doesn't let up all that much once the first year is over. Because, first, there are all those motor functions, etc. A human child can't really walk steadily until it is about three. It certainly can't

remotely ‘keep up with the herd’ until at least six or seven. Speech, that most amazing of human killer apps, requires years before it is really effective. And as for the ability to physically look out for oneself in the context of the harsh outside world, one has to wait until at least the mid-teenage years.

All of which means that the birth of a human child necessitated that the child’s mother could expect that child to consume much or most of her attention for at least the next fifteen years or so.

But wait. There’s more. Because remember that up until a little more than a hundred years ago around half of all children died before their fifth birthday. So that on average each and every human mother would have to have two children for every one that survived. Which means that, when you consider that—given those big, giant heads—a certain number of women would die in childbirth, and you also consider that a certain number of other women would be infertile, it turns out that the norm for homo sapiens mothers would be about six or seven children. With, since there was the possibility that they might all survive, each one potentially requiring fifteen plus years of its mother’s pretty much undivided attention.

So even if you were to put aside the sweet, gentle, caring requirement, Nature also demands far more time and energy from its human mothers than is asked for from any other female animal. And what makes it even more burdensome for the human mother is that she—as with all of the other humans out there—also has a big, giant head with a big, giant brain inside of it. She also has a relatively huge consciousness, she is not solely working off of instinct, and she is well aware of the incredible amount of hassle and trouble which is involved in bringing up these children.

All of which means that, of necessity, that same Natural Selection would also tend to, over the millennia, weed out all of those mothers who did not particularly cotton to all of the demands which child rearing requires. And thus, as a species, we would end up with the vast majority of women having evolved to become people who really, really, really *like* having children.

Then there is the plain fact that human mothers also have to personally and consciously relate to all of those children through all of those long, young, dependent years. And on top of that human mothers, by staying home to forage while the men went out hunting, ended up becoming the people who were principally responsible for teaching their children the toilet training, the speaking, and so on. And so that their children could understand them, they needed to communicate in simple, loving, non-threatening ways. And they could only do this if they related to their children at the level of the child. After all, they certainly couldn’t demand that the child rise to their level. Which meant that Natural Selection thus also worked to ensure that human women necessarily retained certain childlike qualities

on into adulthood. Such as wonder and surprise. Playfulness. A pleasure in talking baby talk. In other words, remaining 'young at heart'.

Finally, there was one other major behavioral requirement for human mothers to develop which was necessitated by their children being born so premature and so basically helpless. Because all of the other creatures of the world, and Nature itself, continued to be as they had been for the hundreds of millions of years before the ascent of Man. Namely it was still dog eat dog out there. Death was always around the corner. Lions and tigers and bears lurked right outside of any settlement's perimeter. In short, the world was objectively and genuinely a scary, scary place.

Then you couple this with the fact that humans, uniquely, are both only too aware of their own consciousness and only too aware of their mortality. Which means that any young child, even once its brain has become sort of connected, is in no state of mind to be able to deal with the reality of how deadly and cruel the world really is. Which means that, once again of necessity, the only way that children could grow up halfway sane and not perpetually fearful of death is if the mother was also successful in not only maintaining a positive, uplifting attitude, but also in creating a positive fantasy world where at least for the first few years the environment was calm and everything in it was benign. Thus lullabies were sung. Pleasant, simple stories were made up. The child was psychologically protected from the awfulness which awaited.

So that, in conclusion... When we consider the various parameters which inevitably arise from the consequences of humans, first, being so much smarter and more conscious than anything which ever came before them, and, second, being born into this physical world long before their bodies and minds are even remotely prepared for it, then it is easy to see that the only way that evolution could work it out, the only way that we could survive as a species, is if the human female evolved so as to become gentle, sweet natured, and always loving, while at the same time positive, upbeat, and playful.

Now there are two big cautions here.

The first is that we need to always remember the term 'tend to'. Because natural selection involves long term tendencies and gradual changes. All of which means that of course I am not saying that there is only one personality profile for every single woman who is on the face of this Earth. Of course there will be some women who don't particularly like childbearing and motherhood. Of course there will be some women who aren't particularly warm and comforting. As I mentioned some episodes ago, even animals as simple as roundworms have different personalities. And when we get up

to the level of humans there are probably more possible combinations of personality traits than there are different types of snowflakes.

Okay, that was one point. And here's the second: Because when I said that women necessarily evolved so as to retain certain childlike qualities into adulthood, I was in no way intending to mean that the mind or outlook of a woman is therefore like a child's. After all, the adult female human had to also have the mental and spiritual strength to be able to handle the likely death of at least half of her precious young charges. More importantly, evolution also demanded that she never be able to shirk the constant day in, day out responsibilities absolutely inherent in keeping those babies and children alive. Once again, those women who were not born with this quality being an automatic part of their mentality would tend not to have their offspring survive. And then so much for that genetic trait in the future.

So that it should be clear that, in her maintenance of a constant sense of responsibility, the average human female is more evolved, is more adult, than the average human male. And that, looked at in total, a grown mother is in effect a unique amalgam of both the childlike and the adult.

Anyway, with those two cautions out of the way, let's return to our conclusion that, given both our ridiculously premature births and our resultant totally unorganized brains at births, the only way we could exist as a species is if human mothers became those soft, tender, always loving and supporting creatures which they evolved to be. And let's address another inevitable aspect of the mother and child dynamic which muddies up the situation of the human condition even more.

Because remember what I said earlier about human females having no fur to hold on to. Since alone among primates—actually, except for strange underground exceptions like mole rats—alone among mammals, humans don't have any protective covering. Just skin. And so far no anthropologist has come up with even a halfway decent explanation for this.

But, whatever the explanation, it is undeniable that naked mothers are indeed the case. Nor, the way that evolution has worked out, are they able to, as every other primate mother is, snatch up their baby and escape in the presence of those lions or tigers or bears. They just physically can't. Further, the very fact that they necessarily evolved to be so soft and gentle means that they have extremely high levels of progesterone and oxytocin, which promotes sweetness and affection, and extremely low levels of testosterone, which is the hormone which is almost solely responsible for assertiveness and aggression.

Which means that, in the face of those lions and tigers and bears, a mother and her child by themselves in the wild are absolutely, totally screwed.

Which, in terms of survival of the species, creates quite the evolutionary pickle.

Now it should be immediately noted that in the real world a mother and her child are almost never by themselves in the wild. And this is because, being part of a hypersocial species, they are always members of some larger social group. Having said that, though, this doesn't negate the fact that they would be totally helpless were they for some reason kicked out of the larger group. And this reality brings up some more traits which Natural Selection had to select for. Namely, that it was necessary for women to evolve so as to become relatively docile, unassertive, and given to compromise and conciliation.

And if that's not obvious, let me quickly explain. You see, a female gorilla can have a dispute with the dominant male, leave the group, and go solo in the jungle with her baby. I mean, what other animal in the jungle is going to mess with a gorilla? Female chimps can also do this. After all, they have far more strength than an adult human male. What's more, those babies have all that fur to hold on to. Not only that, but the mother doesn't spend fifteen years with each child, so that they only need to take their current offspring. All of their other children have matured and joined a larger group long ago.

But if primitive human females didn't like where the rest of the group was going, if primitive human females argued with the dominant males, they risked being ostracized from the group. And then they and their children would almost certainly die. Along with their genomes. Which means that once again Natural Selection would have done its thing.

In other words, for untold millennia of evolution, strong independent women very quickly became strong, independent dead women.

And if you respond that human females could bond with other human females, and that there would then be strength in numbers, then you've actually made a good point. After all, this is what often happens in troops of monkeys. And this bonding with other females is extremely important. Because, first, it heightens the need for cooperation and conciliation all the more. And, second, it helps explain why human females have evolved to have such a strong need for social acceptance from other human females.

But social bonding only goes so far. Because when faced with threats from other males or from Nature itself, all of those other females would also be tied down by their utterly dependent offspring. So that they really wouldn't be all that much help.

And then there's the undeniable fact that all homo sapiens, both male and female, are—compared to other animals—just incredibly weak physically. Gone are the sharp claws that all other primates have. Gone are the razor sharp fangs. And human females in particular, by evolving to stay and forage in semi-permanent encampments while the males went out to do the dangerous work of hunting (not to mention having had to evolve to have those sweet, nurturing natures) women also evolved to become much weaker physically than the males.

So that it becomes questionable as to how much strength there actually was in primitive sisterhood. And we're back to the plain reality that human females necessarily had to evolve to become relatively docile, unassertive, and given to compromise and conciliation.

But there's much more to this than the mere supposed subordination of women to the second class role of child rearers. Because remember what science also says about the fact that in reality human beings are actually hypersocial animals. That, as opposed to being selfish individuals, our salient biological/psychological traits are that we, as humans in general, are co-operative. Collaborative. Trusting. Altruistic.

.Although those 'selfish gene' biologists are actually broadly correct that in many ways the history of Life, especially animal life, is one of lonely individuals endlessly struggling against each other. Eating or being eaten. Dying and decomposing. And this holds true even among most species of mothers. For instance a cow will instinctively try to get between the herdsman and her calf. But if it's a choice between her calf and some food, there's no contest. She is now looking out for Number One. Nor do cows get together, co-operate, or think about the greater good.

So that it really is a big deal that all of a sudden we hypersocial, (relatively) hyper-intelligent humans should come along. Once again: It's never happened before in the history of Life. And in this context we need to stop and think for a moment about those traits of co-operation, collaboration, trust and altruism. For these are also cardinal behavioral attributes which brain sex says are characteristic of women.

In other words, in us hypersocial animals, the woman who is caring, unselfish, nurturing, and always putting others first is actually the being who has evolved the most. *She* is the one who is closest to being described as a true human.

And if you now throw in the additional requirement that, in order for their babies to survive, mothers absolutely need to be soft, gentle, soothing and loving, then the whole situation starts to become rather interesting.

Because what I am saying is that what the modern world has condescendingly termed as the 'traditional' role of a woman actually describes what in reality is the definition of a truly first class and superior citizen of the hypersocial human culture that evolution has produced. And that the so called 'liberated' woman of secular humanism—individualistic, assertive, and independent—is actually a *regression* back to the more primitive dog eat dog and cat eat mouse conditions of the rest of life on this planet.

Okay. And that's how the reality of our big, giant heads necessarily shaped the evolution of the human female to be at the same time responsible for far more offspring rearing than any other animal and also far less able to physically protect herself and her offspring from any other animal.

So how did Nature try to solve this problem?

Well, the answer to that is the subject of our next episode.

Because this episode is now officially over. As each episode usually is at around this time.

Although I would like to add, as I do on every episode, that once again I would like to thank you so much for so far having listened.