

EPISODE 48

PAIR BONDING

Hi there. Welcome to the end of the world. My name is Michael Folz. And this is Episode number 48 of my podcast Dial It Back Or Die. So last episode I tried to show that, even if you wanted to ignore all of the brain science and all of the behavioral science which has shown that male and female humans both think and act in qualitatively different ways, we can also approach the subject solely through contemplating the evolutionary changes demanded by the simple, plain fact that we are born with such comparatively giant heads.

I then showed how of necessity the human female has evolved to not only be co-operative and collaborative, but to actually avoid conflict and to actively dislike violence. Not only does she genuinely look forward to working well with others, but she tends to be a docile model citizen who willingly obeys authority. In Milgram's experiment with inflicting pain, the few participants who refused to continue, who actually got up and walked out, were exclusively male. The women, even though they were usually much more horribly conflicted at the thought that they were causing harm, nonetheless sat there and continued to follow orders.

But I certainly was not trying to paint the picture that women are simply passive blobs. Actually, it's kind of the opposite. Because given that it's that their full time evolutionary jobs as mothers to protect totally freaked out and helpless premature babies from the world outside, and then to help toddlers, children, and young adults adjust to the world, this means that it is not enough just to be gentle and soothing. They also have to be proactively loving, selfless, and—most importantly—positive. After all, youngsters would have little motivation to pull it together, learn, and grow if, just as they were starting out, they were made fully aware of the hardships to follow and of the cold, hard facts of the extreme hardship of physical existence. Not to mention the certainty of final death.

Because of course the reality of this world is that it is not a fairy tale. Nature actually *is* red in tooth and claw. So that to a very large extent what a mother has to do is to actively create a sweet fantasy kingdom for her children. And that's why, especially once Civilization took hold, dangerous

real bears transformed into cute little teddy bears. Soft colors predominated. Nursery rhymes and tea parties occupied their time.

And none of this could happen, a mother for the past three hundred thousand years or so couldn't spend almost her entire life relating to and taking care of her various children, unless she also carried with her into her adult life certain childlike qualities, such as a capacity for fun and for wonder. This is said not to ignore the fact that her time wasn't also consumed with the drudgery of gathering food, preparing it, and otherwise nurturing her brood. Not to mention the very adult pain of having to deal with (on average) half of her children dying in infancy.

But think back again to that basic tenet of evolutionary biology: Mothers whose personalities are sweet, childlike and positive are much more likely to have children who grow up mentally healthy and thus able to procreate themselves. Which means that the genes responsible for those personality traits will tend to proliferate.

All in all, as most cultures, philosophies and religions would also have us believe, a virtuous cycle. And so it's not surprising that (despite what our indoctrination might have taught us to believe) most civilizations which we consider to be 'higher' ones have placed womanhood in general, and motherhood in particular, upon a pedestal.

In fact, it is quite plausible to argue that there's yet another element to that Cambrian Moment which is going on right now. For although many of the higher mammals, including bear cubs, monkeys, and puppies, engage in behavior which can only be described as 'play', usually all of this goes away in adulthood. Such mothers might well tolerate this playfulness in their young, but they themselves don't really engage in it all that much. Life has become way too serious for them, and they are responsible for making sure that their young grow up to be just as serious. Because otherwise they will die.

Human women, however, almost alone among adult animals, can and do participate in playfulness and lightheartedness. To a large extent many of them can bring their sense of innocence with them as they get older. And their innate unselfishness arising from their evolutionary lifelong commitment to taking care of others is also probably unique. After all, ever since the animal kingdom discovered that it could garner the energy required to live not by photosynthesis but rather by consuming other creatures, it is no wonder that selfishness and paranoia would be the order of the day.

Seen in that light, then, the evolution of the human female has resulted in the creation of a whole new type of being never seen on this Earth before. And if you've been thinking as I've been

going over this that I have just been providing a lame justification for the ‘traditional’ vision of women, let me instead suggest that I am actually doing the exact opposite. For what I am saying is that the human female that I am describing is, after five hundred million years of animal evolution, actually a revolutionary new creature never before seen on the face of this Earth. A being who is genuinely unselfish. Someone who, throughout her adult life, consciously seeks to serve others.

And, as with the idea of the lion lying down with the lamb, we can now get a good idea of how the whole Utopian vision of a future of love and kindness could have arisen.

From a consideration of the human female.

Unfortunately, and especially for the greatest part of the past two million years or so of our hominid existence, all those teeth and all those claws were still out there just waiting for a chance to get at our juicy soft flesh. And as hominid females were evolving to become gentle, sweet, nurturing caregivers, they were simultaneously turning into creatures who were spectacularly unequipped to defend themselves against the ugly reality of existence.

Although—to remind you once again—they couldn't have developed otherwise. The combination of our large brains and upright posture meant that women *had to* evolve to be soft and gentle, and therefore unable to defend themselves from viciousness. And I'm not just talking about their psychological natures. Because their bodies also had to evolve to become soft and warm so as to physically comfort those freaked out infants.

So what did Nature come up with in order to solve this dilemma? Because, again, remember that if Nature hadn't solved it, we as a species wouldn't have survived to be here today.

Well, one thing was for humanity to become more and more hypersocial. Strength in numbers and all that. Although this in itself created its own feedback loop. Because the larger our social unit, the larger our brains had to become in order to process and navigate it. Which meant the more premature our births became. Which meant that the larger the social unit had to become.

Which of course meant that there was now much more culture and social behaviors that children had to absorb before they were able to exist on their own. Which meant that there was much more time that their mothers had to spend with them, had to hang out with and relate to them, and therefore in certain ways had to maintain their own childlike qualities. In short, more and more time and energy needed to be consumed in child rearing.

And this is no doubt the explanation for why women go through menopause.

For it has always been hard for biologists to answer the question as to why, almost uniquely among animals, human females should continue to live after they can no longer reproduce. After all, chimps, elephants, you name it, can and do all have babies right up until they die of old age. And if you believe, as biologists do, that the only point of life is to pass on the genome to the next generation, then it makes no biological sense to keep a female organism alive after it no longer can do that.

Now a big reason for this has to do with the incredibly long time that a human mother needs to be taking of her young. The mother of a baby chimpanzee or elephant can die and there is still a good chance that it can survive on its own, especially if the rest of the social group is intact. With a human, not nearly so much.

But probably the major reason for menopause existing is what is called the 'grandmother effect'. In other words, those child-free twenty or thirty years after menopause means that the older female is now available to help out her daughter or daughters with *their* child rearing and cultural transference, etc.

Which makes the burden of preparing all those children for hypersocial life a little lighter

Although it still isn't nearly enough. Especially since, until recently, not as many women lived long enough to become grandmothers. Not to mention that this still doesn't really deal with the overwhelming problem of all those pretty much defenseless women and children *and* grandmothers.

Which is why, *of necessity*, humanity also had to invent the role of the father and the husband.

Now it is very important for you to know that is extremely rare among mammals for fathers to do any sort of fathering. And it is almost unknown for this to happen among primates. Indeed, one reason that mother bears are so ornery is that father bears have been known to eat their own cubs. And when a male gorilla adds a new female to his harem he will often kill whatever children she already happens to have so that now she can devote all of her energy and attention into bearing and rearing *his* offspring.

As for pair bonding, that, too, doesn't happen very much with mammals, with only 3% of all species participating in this particular institution. And why should they? Because by and large Nature has seen fit to have mothers do all of the, uh, mothering. On the other hand, for hundreds of millions of years males have been programmed so as to spend their energy constantly fighting with each other in order to see which one can spread its seed the furthest and widest. For instance, it has been determined that female moose use about 20% of their total energy bearing and rearing their children. Whereas

male moose spend 20% of their total energy growing those giant antlers which serve no purpose other than to intimidate and/or fight with other male moose.

And not only that, but males of virtually all species are also pre-programmed to desire to mate with as many different females as possible. For instance, a breeding bull will soon tire of mating with the first female that he is presented with. But if a second one is presented he is immediately aroused again. And so on for the third and the fourth and the fifth and the sixth.

Any of this sound familiar?

Therefore, if a mammalian species is going to adopt pair bonding, there had better be a really good reason for it. Because you are fighting against an incredible amount of Nature's inertia.

And what possibly could that reason be?

Well, let's look at the birds. Because it turns out that around 90% of bird species are pair bonded. And when we look at the particulars of a bird's situation the answer is quite clear.

Because, first, in order to be able to fly birds require a robust metabolism and an inordinate amount of energy. Which means that they have to be constantly eating. For instance, every day a hummingbird must consume literally half its weight in food.

Then there is the fact that birds' eggs must be kept uniformly warm for several weeks before they hatch. And then when they are in their completely helpless flightless condition baby birds need to be constantly protected. And fed.

Now all of this eating and warming and protecting is totally impossible for a mother bird to do on her own. Which is why so many bird species have evolved to mate for life. And why some others pair bond for one breeding season at a time. But one way or another most male birds end up shouldering a large part of the responsibility of gathering the food and warming the eggs and raising the hatchlings. Otherwise the next generation of birds would not survive and it would be the end of the species.

Pretty simple, really.

And it's exactly the same situation with humans.

Except that there's one more reason for the necessity of ongoing fatherhood which is unique to humans. After all, adult bird behavior is either mostly or totally instinctual. But the vast majority of adult human behavior is cultural, and this needs to be actively transmitted from one generation to the next. And, since human males and human females have evolved to become so highly differentiated,

only a designated father actively involved with child rearing can effectively transmit said culture to his sons.

And of course you are forgiven if you are under the mistaken impression that monogamy (which is just another word for pair bonding for life) is not the one and only means by which human society has ever existed. After all, as you'll recall, one of the dominant (and recurring) thoughts during the Age of Enlightenment was that, were it not for repressive religion, culture, and tradition, humans would naturally be promiscuous. That, as per Jeremy Bentham and others, sex was a harmless and fun pleasure principle, almost a consumer product if you will. And that the sooner we all realized this, the better off we would all be. Not to mention the less repressed.

And anthropology—like the other social sciences a direct outgrowth of this line of thinking—then tried its best to confirm this line of thinking. It was pointed out that chimpanzees, supposedly our closest cousins in the animal kingdom, were wildly promiscuous. The study of the hundreds of disparate cultures out there, which practiced everything from homosexuality to polygamy to cargo cult worship to cannibalism, seemed to prove that there couldn't be just one way to organize our lives, especially the sexual part of them. Indeed, Margaret Mead, perhaps the most famous of 20th Century anthropologists, made her name from the book 'Coming of Age in Samoa', which supposedly proved that Polynesian natives lived guilt free and stress free lives of easy sexual hookups.

What's more, the postmodern world is constantly telling us that, while traditional marriage is still an acceptable option, it is just one of many for a consenting adult to choose, and that anyone who thinks otherwise is one of those foolish and backwards religious fundamentalists.

But what science actually says is that in reality pair bonding for humans is a cold, hard, indisputable anthropological fact. Because chimps may be promiscuous, but that this isn't even true for other primates. Gorillas, for instance, are polygamous. And both of them have brains of less than 400 cc. So why are we comparing ourselves to them? And all of those strange cultures out there may indeed permit all sorts of quote/unquote 'deviant' behavior, but during the critical child bearing and rearing years virtually *every single culture ever discovered* has observed the rules of pair bonding/monogamy.

And Margaret Mead? It turns out that she made up the entire story, and that young Samoans were just as sexually hung up and prone to jealousy, etc., as any other people in the history of the world.

And the kicker to all this is that it has recently been determined (through the relative lengths of fingers, of all things) that there is an excellent chance that not only have humans been pair bonders all along, but that their hominid ancestors have been so for at least the past two plus million years.

Because, as with the birds, we as a species couldn't have survived any other way. It just takes way too much time, energy, attention, and effort to raise human children and to make sure that our complex human culture is properly transferred to them. Even with grandmother standing by, it still absolutely requires two full time parents to be involved. And on top of that the helpless, defenseless baby and its almost as helpless and defenseless mother thoroughly and completely *need* the physical protection of one permanently assigned male. They can't escape danger by swinging through the trees like chimpanzees or orangutans. Unlike baby birds, they can't be camouflaged or hidden away in a nest somewhere. They're just sitting there totally exposed on the ground.

And if you still find the necessity of monogamy difficult to believe, try this mental exercise: According to feminists everything has always been run by men. According to everybody men would much prefer to be promiscuous. So if that's the case how come there haven't been any successful promiscuous societies? Ever? You would think that if there were any way for promiscuity to work out that, given how evolutionary biology/psychology works, that form of sexual arrangement would have quickly become the dominant one.

But of course it hasn't. And it couldn't. Even though all those horny Age of Enlightenment men (and, let's face it, most other men throughout history) would have loved it to be the case.

And, yes, again, I am well aware that there are occasional fish and other species in which males participate in the protection and/or rearing of the young. But the way that evolution works is that those lines separated from ours so long ago as to be totally meaningless. And by far the larger truth is that throughout our line of evolution, and specifically throughout the realm of primate development, fatherhood, let alone monogamy, is an extremely rare event. So that it is an extremely critical point for you to understand that, as a result of the 'original sin' of our giant heads, the male-female relationship that has developed in homo sapiens is another one of our almost uniquely human characteristics.

Although it doesn't end there. Because there are three other important results which arise from this.

The first is that men and women are far more differentiated than just about any other 'higher' animal. After all, what with the need for six or more children just in order to keep the species going,

and what with the need to nourish and hover over them for up to fifteen years each, the human female *had* to evolve into a creature that specialized into doing just that. Then in turn the human male had to evolve into someone who had to cover for the females (and of course their children) who could no longer cover for themselves. No wonder the Mars/Venus dichotomy in mental states diverged as much as it has. Because of our totally different (and necessarily complementary) functions in life, we *had to* develop different ways of thinking.

Not to mention the ways that our bodies—as opposed to the other primates—look so strikingly different.

The second point has to do with how the monogamous relationship in human nature was critically important in how we evolved to live in those stable and relatively peaceful groups of 150-200. Because, even putting aside the female's need for a fully committed mate to help with parenting and protection, it is difficult to envision how such large 'proto-hypersocial' groups could have developed without the building blocks of a nuclear family 'micro-group'. If nothing else, it was the only way to keep both jealousy and to-the-death fights over women in check.

After all, while it is true that chimpanzees can and do live in promiscuous quote/unquote 'societies', those groups seldom get to be larger than 20 adults. And although chimps can react in an open and friendly way when meeting strangers, they can also react with instant and murderous rage.

And, in a relevant example from human history: The reason that the men mutinied on the *Bounty* was not because of Captain Bligh. Rather it was because they wanted to go back to Tahiti, pick up a bunch of what they thought were naturally promiscuous Polynesian women, and then head off for an 18th Century sexual paradise. When this group was found on Pitcairn Island years later all that were left were women and children and one old man. This was because all of the other males, white and Polynesian alike, had killed each other off in fits of jealousy.

But this fact of human monogamy would seem to be even more critical in our post-Neolithic leap to a truly hypersocial culture. Because, for instance, you can start out being a McPherson. And then you can later identify as a Scot. And after further consolidation and expansion you can consider yourself a citizen of Great Britain. But all of this only seems possible because you started out with that basic nuclear identity of being a husband and a wife and a family. For, if you think about it, even if we had somehow gotten to that tribal level of 150 through shared promiscuity, it is extremely difficult to see how we could have expanded beyond that. Because at that point whatever tenuous bonds of fatherhood there were in such a hypothetical group of 150 would totally disappear. Those defenseless

women would be entirely at the mercy of totally strange men. And the species would then immediately collapse.

But the final—and perhaps most important—result of our evolution towards monogamy has to do with the intrinsic human nature of women.

For remember that, given that they evolved to be almost exclusively mothers, women also had to evolve to really, really, really like having children. Otherwise their subjective existence would have been miserable. And miserable mothers would not tend to have children who successfully survived.

But, not only that, women also evolved so that their basic, most important need was to proactively love.

After all, as I've already mentioned, babies in particular are a huge mess. They constantly defecate, urinate, vomit. They have no control over their bodies, their minds, or their emotions. And it goes on and on for years. And for child after child. If a mother didn't really love her offspring, if she didn't have an extremely positive emotional attachment, none of this would be remotely worth it.

So that, if a woman was more or less 'born to love', then it is not hard to extrapolate from this evolutionary fact to a wife's almost innate instinct to proactively love her husband and protector. Further, the plain and simple evolutionary biological fact is also that she needs him way more than he needs her. So that one of the main ways that she makes it worth his while is to provide him nourishment and to otherwise serve him—those behaviors which she has already naturally evolved to do with her offspring. So that what makes the intrinsically subservient position that a human female found herself in psychologically acceptable is that from an early age human females have also evolved to seek to want to love their future husbands.

And therefore to also have within them an innate possession of a romantic ideal.

Now such a statement in the middle of this postmodern age might well certainly sound bizarre in the least. Don't worry though. We'll get to the masculine half of this arrangement shortly. But right now I'd like to possibly further alienate you by finishing this episode with one of its most important observations.

Which, once again, ignoring 'tradition' or 'religion' and just concentrating on how the logic of evolution works, I think you will find hard to refute.

It is this: As I've been incessantly pounding into your heads, human females evolved, what with their soft, fatty, unmuscular bodies and squalling helpless babies, to be utterly incapable of surviving on their own without a husband to protect them and, more importantly, provide protection for those babies.

In other words, without a man who declares responsibility for his offspring, *and a surrounding society which enforces that responsibility*, she is utterly screwed.

In fact, she is dead. Period. And so is the baby. And so are their respective genomes. And it's been that way for up to the past two million years or so.

So that in terms of pure, basic survival, the last, worst thing that a human female can possibly do is to have casual, promiscuous sex. Because then there is no lifelong male there to protect her and her offspring. And in effect this works out to be about the same thing as committing physical suicide. Much more important, it would also amount to biological/genetic suicide.

And a central understanding of biology and genetics is that, more than anything else, the process of evolution does not want that to happen.

Which means that one doesn't have to be particularly brilliant to conclude that female humans have evolved over these hundreds of millennia to be born with *an inner conviction of modesty*. To be actually repulsed by the thought of casual sex. Because the ones who were born without that conviction proceeded to have casual sex (with men who were—guess what?—always available), then proceeded to get pregnant and to have babies which they could not protect in this world of lions and tigers and bears.

And then they died, along with their genome.

So that I suggest, as a mental exercise, that you imagine how we could have possibly survived as a species if human females actually fit the 'promiscuous' model of the postmodern world. Which, for the umpteenth, umpteenth time, is a direct function of those ideas of the 18th Century.

Because, first, as I mentioned last episode, any 'strong, independent' woman who challenged the authority or otherwise sufficiently annoyed her husband or the male leaders of her group would have been thrown out and ended up sitting there in the jungle or the savanna by herself.

Further, any woman who engaged in promiscuous sex would end up with children who no male would support. And probably, because of the social norms which developed so as to enforce non-promiscuity, also ended up sitting there in the jungle or savanna by herself. Along with her children.

And those are just plain, hard to refute, anthropological and biological facts.

Now Sigmund Freud, a truly secular mental descendant of the Age of Enlightenment, famously posed the rhetorical question, 'What do women want?' For all of his ruminations on sex and sexuality he really couldn't figure it out.

But that is because, just like those 18th Century Age of Enlightenment men before him, he just assumed that women, like men, wanted to have sex. And the more the merrier.

But they don't. Certainly not in and of itself. Because those who did like being promiscuous throughout the last three hundred thousand years or so almost always didn't survive to pass on those genes.

Instead, in their natural state, absent a bizarre ideology concocted by men and foisted by men upon them, women evolved to want to have *children*.

Which is a somewhat different point of view.

Okay. By now I've probably pounded the female half of our equation to death. But we still really haven't looked nearly as thoroughly at the male half.

Don't worry, though. We're going to be doing that next episode.

And by my saying this that means that, as always, this episode is over.

As always, though, I would like to, yet again, thank you so much for so far having listened.