

Did Gender Egalitarianism Make Us Human?

Camilla Power

12 June 2018

Contents

Preamble	3
Introduction	4
Graeber & Wengrow's 'Origins of inequality'	9
Define 'Gender egalitarianism'	11
Marlowe: predictors of forager egalitarianism	13
Egalitarian tendency in evolution?	15
Areas of evidence	15
The babysitting ape; intersubjectivity; female kin-bonded	16
African foragers, marriage and residence pattern: brideservice, several years uxori/matrilocal	18
Cooperative eye hypothesis	18
Deep social mind (Whiten 1999)	19
Gray ceiling - Isler and van Schaik (2012)	21
Our reproductive physiology is levelling and time-wasting!	22
Symbolism and language depend on egalitarianism	24
Boehm <i>Hierarchy in the Forest</i> (1999)	26
Modern human female sexual signals	26
Female cosmetic coalitions	27
Predictions of Female cosmetic coalition	28
Human females signal 'no'	28

Camilla Power explains how social equality and, specifically, gender equality were crucial to human evolution and are demonstrated by existing hunter-gatherer communities.

Her lecture also criticises the misleading assumptions made by David Graeber and David Wengrow and the confusion they have propagated in recent publications.

The talk is prefaced by comments on equality and trans-identity, gender fluidity and the politics of sex.

See also <https://vimeo.com/260771955> for more blurb and further reading.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xr_7qbI0GbK

Preamble

Camilla: OK, just before I do start the lecture, how many people were actually here last week? Have we got quite a number of people who were here listening to Morna? Because I want to try and link back to Morna a bit last week.

The other thing is that when I got home after the lecture last week, I received a message through personal messages on Facebook to the RAG site which was a very heartfelt and rather upset message to say that the person was expressing concerns about certain anti-trans commentary and attitudes in RAG that she felt was being expressed.

So she said she came to a couple of RAG lectures, I don't know which other one, but last week in particular and said that last week any person, any trans-identified person might have felt upset and I thought about that, I reflected about that and tried to respond to her.

In particular, I was responding that when it comes to hunter-gatherers, just as Morna was telling us, egalitarianism is never simple, it's incredibly complicated, complex and difficult, So with Hunter Gathers, gender is never simple, it's incredibly complex.

But when I reflected, I thought, well, yes, there actually was some items in the conversation, in the questions and discussion, which a trans person might have felt was, you know, just was getting too close, that was possibly attacking or making them feel uncomfortable.

So we've just got to reflect a little bit on issues of safe space here and I think that this may be a discussion that would be good for RAG at the AGM, which is going to happen in four weeks, on July the 10th, and to which anybody is very, very welcome, that we should.

So the Chair's responsibility is to make sure that anyone who's engaged in the discussion feels are okay and protected and can lift their voice.

If we think about RAG's models, models and evolution, the evolution of language, for instance, to a large degree, the evolution of language is the evolution of safe space, isn't it? Safe space means anybody can speak and feel that their voice will be heard with respect.

Now, there are a few of us around in here. If we remember Morna last week, she was talking about this source of morality as organic corporal morality that there was such intensive that we find in a hunter-gatherer society, for instance, such intensive intersubjectivity, such a kind of feeling in the solar plexus.

She was relating it to these concepts I've written up on the board from, for instance, for the that they are concepts of transformation and change where people are sensing them in each other, with each other, and kind of going with each other.

She was contrasting that aspect of morality to a kind of hierarchical aspect of command and control where somebody is saying at the top, you know, you are in that box and you are in that box. So you back me up, Inridge. Hunter-gatherer peoples, They are never trying to define or say what another person is like or should be like or how they should live. They may have a lot of arguments. They may do masambo and rant and say, you were being stupid, you did something stupid. But they will never say, you shouldn't be the way you are. Absolutely not.

Hunter-gatherers have a powerful value of diversity and that everybody in the camp has different abilities. So, Morna was really contrasting those two types of morality. In fact, he contrasted one as the real source of morality to another as kind of an anti-morality, if you like, that sort of aspect of controlling and fixing things down.

Now, all these concepts are about the opposite of fixity. They're taking their concepts of fluidity, change, constant transformation. So I'm kind of saying stuff which should be self-evident for us, for everybody.

RAG had a really proud record all the way with issues of gay rights from very early starts. LBGTQI+ should be second nature for RAG, actually. So we've just got to attune ourselves on that. If there is any reason why anybody would feel uncomfortable, this should be safe space for everybody, whoever it is, including unreconstructed Marxist dinosaurs like me or Robin and Chris, and for trans identity people, obviously.

Introduction

Camilla: So having said that, I want to try and relate a bit more back to Morna.

I'm going to talk about evolution, obviously, today. So from a perspective, like a trans identity or gender fluid perspective, evolution must look like horribly heterosexist and cis. The one thing we know, the one thing we know about our ancestors is they did heterosexual acts, pretty cis, that's for sure. We don't know much else about them, but we know that because otherwise we wouldn't then be here.

So it may appear on the surface that evolutionary models have to be horribly sexist, have to be horribly reductionist, And yet we say absolutely the contrary, that RAG's perspectives, RAG's models, are actually giving us an evolutionary perspective onto the whole range of human sexuality, the whole variety of human gender, performance and practice indeed.

And I can say that all the research I've done in respect of RAG has been focused on gender, informed by hunter-gatherer gender cosmology for many decades. So that's kind of always been part of RAG's models. And even in this picture here, we're kind of getting girls versus boys. I'll say more about this when I come to it again later.

It all looks quite cis binary, but actually it's not, because the sexes are swapping round in their roles and in the imagination of what they are capable of and what powers they have.

So this is actually extraordinarily fluid performance in this ritual being performed amongst young hadza people.

So the focus in this discussion, did gender egalitarianism make us human, is very much on female strategies. Because I'm an old Marxist dinosaur, I look at very material economic problems, problems of energy. So the material story of human evolution is the problem of energy. How did mothers get enough energy to give birth to raise, as the human lineage evolved, increasingly large-brained offspring. This is a problem of energy. How did they manage to do it?

But in the course of doing that, in the course of solving that problem, which was fundamentally, so it's fundamentally a female problem, so as a Marxist, I expect that there must be resistance amongst females and females are going to solve that problem because it's their problem. In the course of doing that, there are a number of ways in which others and other genders get involved in that.

So first of all, we have the example of Sarah Herdy's book, *Mothers and Others*, with a cooperative breeding. So females need others in the support. And the first who is the other in support is the mother's mother, fundamentally.

Now that is kind of constrained by evolution. That's kind of constrained by biology and by the facts of selfish genes. So we've got selfish gene biology kind of underlying the Darwinian models here, that the mother's mother will have sufficient cooperation to work with her daughter for the children.

But Sarah Hurdy's arguing that cooperation gives rise to what we call inter-subjectivity, the ability to start seeing ourselves as others see us. And as that's happening, then you start getting what Tomasello refers to as self-other equivalences.

So you can start to change your carer from being your mother to her sister, to her aunt, to brothers.

So the self-other equivalence means that this potential of care spreading, cooperation, spreads out and out and out very rapidly to include absolutely anybody.

Carers, until the point where in hunter-gatherer camps, all adults are carers of all children.

That is the ultimate point that it reaches.

Secondly, the female strategies involve or necessarily will involve the female strategies required to enlist sufficient support and investment for their large-brained offspring requires coalitions of everyone.

So they can't exclude anybody from the coalitions.

They need the help of everyone.

Against who is the enemy? The enemy is a would-be alpha male.

a male that is intent on grabbing ***** without, in academic terms, without providing investments.

Okay.

So that is like the enemy that everyone is in coalition against.

So that coalition of everyone includes all of us, everybody, all ages, all sexes, all genders.

The third thing that the female strategies, the evolutionary, so these are evolutionary strategies, do is they produce a revolution into a whole new level, the level of symbolic communication.

Something completely new happens coming out, emerging from this female strategies with the coalition of everyone.

And this is symbolic culture.

Now what I wanted to say was to draw attention to these extraordinary concepts that Morna was taking us through last week.

These concepts for the , the Bushman in Kalahari Bushman group, an idea of potency.

The thing is, we can't translate these names, these words, but potency that associates to the transformations in a girl's first menstruation ritual, healing rituals, Ekila of the Bayaka Benjele, associated to, again, a whole array of different meanings.

Epeme and the Hadza, so this ritual of maitoko is connected to the Epeme complex of the Hadza.

And we cannot translate these words, actually.

They don't have a specific meaning.

What it is about them is that they are always changing and changing their meanings.

They're always transforming.

What they seem to me to be are a kind of nuclear fissile core that goes all the way back to the very origin of symbolic culture itself and the creation of meaning itself.

That what is symbol, what is metaphor, It is that one thing stands for another thing, which it isn't.

And it's a purely arbitrary, conventional creation of meaning.

So these words are exactly that.

capacity, that human capacity of symbolic cognition to agree a meaning and then change and again agree a meaning and again change.

So what's happening in these, what Morna was telling us of these rituals where the energy is like feeling all the way up.

It just goes from the solar plexus all the way up our spines and is kind of joining the community so powerfully is that people are able to jump, share a meaning, understand each other, jump again, share a meaning.

So this is changing all the time, changing all the time.

Nothing could be more demonstrating the closeness, the intimacy, the empathy, the intersubjectivity, this mutual understanding mind reading.

It's not just mind reading, it's like solar plexus reading, as Morna was describing, the corporal source of morality lost.

So what I'm trying to say is that anyone coming from a gender fluid perspective looking at these models of the emergence of language, the emergence of symbolism.

What is symbolism? It is the overthrow of brute reality.

What is gender? It is the overthrow of brute realities of sex, in my view.

And these words, these concepts from African hunter-gatherer groups are right at the heart of how these things happen.

How did they happen? How are they still happening? is what I was wanting to express in relation to that very, provoked and heartfelt comment from last week by somebody who is here listening at RAG.

So RAG is, RAG's evolutionary models are just, I'm going to defend them completely that they are not reductive.

Even though we are dealing with hunter-gatherer lives where men and women may be doing quite different things in sex division of labour.

This is still, these are still societies that are amongst the most gender egalitarian on earth.

And I'm going to talk about and defend that in this argument today.

Did anybody want to make any comments regarding the last week or Any feelings about last week at all? So Dominic? I agree with you.

I think last week there's a lot of focus on what a wonderful thing bringing up children is for everyone.

I think that could be misunderstood.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Well, you know, if I, yeah, I mean, I think, yeah.

That's a possibility, but I think everybody thought that was expressed with an intense positivity.

I'm going to claim that one of the indices of gender egalitarianism must be how much resources go to mothers and children.

Although, of course, child carers today do not necessarily have to be female.

In hunter-gatherer camps, a large proportion of child carers do have to be female, but of course that's not true today, for us anyway.

So, that's a possibility.

I think there were perfectly legitimate comments in the discussion last week, like, a Marxist perspective that is saying, well, today we are having, we are getting all these issues arising for certain reasons at this point in history.

That's a perfectly legitimate debate.

But making comments like, A childless woman doesn't care about children or something like that.

Or gay people don't understand the problems of families.

That's not, that's absolutely not legitimate at all.

And we know that.

Yeah, we all know that.

Anybody else had any thoughts? Yeah, that's what I was trying to say, that it just spreads to a point where.

Mums and dads and stuff.

Anybody and everybody will be participating in the child care for children.

That's an absolute.

And really we can compare, to some extent, we can compare the status of women in hunter-gatherer camps to women in our society.

The extent to which we spend on nuclear weapons trident compared to the extent to which it's spent on nursery or pre-nursery care for or childcare, that's just an imbalance, an outrageous imbalance, that those resources should be put in towards children's schooling and children's care, which of course they are in hunter-gatherer camps.

Okay, that's a Mossambo.

Audience question: What were the comments that were complained about specifically?

Camilla: I didn't get into the nitty-gritty about it or say particularly, but I thought about it and thought that there might have been some, the sorts of things that I was just saying. I mean, there were just stereotyped comments about the kinds of things that I don't think we need to. We can discuss in the pub more. It's not necessary here.

I don't know anybody from last week who heard and thought it was, but somebody was moved to say, well, she was saying that she felt UCL had very anti-trans, lacked a safe space, and she was saying that specifically that RAG, she hoped, would be better, but she was finding not.

But I had a good exchange with her and she said she would be coming today. I don't know if she did. I couldn't meet her yet. Okay, we can take this and develop it on. I think it's a good idea for us to attune to the comments. I thought they were at least, you know, well, they should be listened to, of course.

Graeber & Wengrow's 'Origins of inequality'

Camilla: Okay, so we've heard from Chris, I actually put this lecture together for a group of students at Kent University who were interested in the RAG models.

But I was also provoked to come and talk again here back in March during the Anthro strike happenings.

And we actually spoke on the picket line on one occasion.

And Graeber and it was in response to Graeber and Wengrow's article, which appeared in an online magazine called Eurozine.

The reference to that, if you Google Graeber, Wengrow and Eurozine, you will find it.

The reference to it is in the little pamphlet, which is down at the back.

And they're really concerned with the story about the origins of inequality.

And basically, Wengrow's an archaeologist, David Graeber, a famous cultural anthropologist, they feel that there is a huge myth out there that hunter-gatherers, supposedly, we lived as happy-go-lucky egalitarian hunter-gatherers for 10s of thousands of years in the early human existence, until, well, happy campers, they sometimes say, but they didn't say that in this article actually.

until farming came along and lo and behold there's all this stratification, all this inequality, it's a kind of Rousseau-esque myth about the first man who put up a fence and this created all the, this created a kind of fall from the Garden of Eden and people became so unequal and all the troubles, all the warfare, all the slavery, all the rape, all the mayhem happened as a result.

They do not like this story.

They like to show that hunter-gatherers can have slavery too.

They can have both slavery and they can have egalitarianism.

And what's more, they can move between the two during maybe a year or seasons.

And they tried to show this with evidence from the Upper Paleolithic, looking at burials in the Upper Paleolithic.

They also like to show that farming cultures may have very significant indices of egalitarianism, including like Neolithic farmer and villaging village systems like Chattle Hook.

And they want to defend civilization against all the charges that have been made, including by Marxists.

They never mention Engels, actually.

Engels, for some reason, is completely kept out of their discussion.

But They want to defend civilization and say, well, humans have been just as good at resisting being oppressed in civilization as they ever were amongst hunter-gatherers.

And there's probably just as much bad stuff amongst hunter-gatherers as amongst human civilizations and cultures that have arisen since our paleolithic hunter-gatherer passed.

What confuses me about Graber and Wengrow is that they keep on saying they are just talking about the last 30,000 years, the Upper Paleolithic, and they point to Upper Paleolithic hunter-gatherers as having, as what are called complex hunter-gatherers, which implies complexity implies political hierarchy or stratification.

Now, from Mourner's talk last week, already we should be querying this badly, querying this loudly.

Do you have to wait for hierarchy to have complexity? It's not totally surprising that archaeologists like to, because hierarchy brings them more interesting structures and more complex structures like pyramids and megaliths and all kinds of interesting things.

Archaeologists probably aren't so keen on egalitarianism as they are on hierarchy.

There's maybe not so much to see for in hunter-gatherer grass huts.

There's not so much exciting stuff.

So they try to say they're talking about 30,000 years, but actually they keep slipping back into diatribes of the ways that hunter-gatherers could be just as bad in maybe warfare or in slavery or in gender relations.

They have all kinds of sort of, smears about domesticity, living, men and women just living in small groups.

Oh, there's going to be all this domestic violence going on.

They never say that, they're kind of implying it in there.

okay.

I'll forgive you.

But they really aren't talking about human origins.

So if their thesis is about the Upper Paleolithic having a lot of political, what they call complexity, which means, by which they mean variability, that means some people in the Upper Paleolithic may be hierarchical, some people may be egalitarian, and especially they have a model of people moving between the two and changing through the seasons.

That's okay.

And arguing that, okay, there may not, the shift from hunting, gathering to farming may have been a very creeping process.

I don't mind that.

That's okay.

That's fine.

That's almost surely to be true.

That there may be a lot of resistance People didn't just lie down and get oppressed.

They didn't just accept hierarchy and tyranny.

There were many issues of religion and politics involved.

That's okay.

But if they start saying they're talking about human origins and there are places where it feels like that's what they're doing, then they really can't.

They just don't have the qualifications to do it for these reasons.

They are saying absolutely nothing whatsoever about evolution.

They don't even discuss human evolution at all.

They don't have a lot of expertise to do it either.

They say almost nothing about sex or gender.

And I just want to pose, you know, just hold on that.

If you're going to discuss egalitarianism and you don't discuss sex or gender, how does that? surely is a huge hole.

It's just, they have only very incidental things to say regarding sex and gender and nothing that's germane to their argument.

So how can you speak about inequality at all, or equality at all? I don't see.

And the other thing they do is they have nothing about Africa.

Everything is focused on Europe and the Upper Paleolithic or the subsequent stages of history, periods of history.

So the continent on which we evolved as modern humans and where we have been modern humans, I'm not just talking about distant hominins, I'm not just talking about hominins way back in time, I'm talking about modern humans, *Homo sapiens*, where we've been *Homo sapiens* more than twice as long as anywhere else on earth is not mentioned or hardly mentioned, only to say something about a few modern day hunter-gatherers, and even that is extremely inaccurate discussion.

So I'm going to say, Greg and Wengrow, you actually aren't talking about human origins, okay? As long as you admit it, that's fine.

But isn't the interesting question, rather than being the origins of inequality? from an evolutionary perspective, how did we actually become, how, it's not how we got to be unequal, but how did we become equal? Because if you look at that from a perspective of primates, non-human primates, whose societies are very much organized through dominance and subordination, and where there is rank hierarchy determining enormously, the fitness of animals, the outcome for fitness of these primates, to become egalitarian is from a Darwinian perspective, enormously puzzling.

Where did that come from? How did that happen? So egalitarianism is seen by most people, Graver and Wengrow are trying to argue it, but most people will accept that a significant number of hunters, not every hunter-gatherer culture, there are differences.

But what are known by James Woodburn as immediate return hunter-gatherers have a very serious degree of egalitarianism.

And so how did that arise? And is this a deep time phenomenon? And I believe it must be.

And how did that arise? Is it a part of our evolutionary past? I believe it must be.

Define 'Gender egalitarianism'

Camilla: And I'm going to show you areas of evidence that I think prove we had this egalitarian past.

Let's just say a few things about gender egalitarianism.

What that implies, can we define that a little bit more? So James Woodburn, in his discussion of egalitarianism in relation to immediate return hunter-gatherers, stressed that for hunter-gatherers, egalitarianism is asserted.

It is constantly being worked at.

You've had to keep making sure that anybody who tries to get their head above the parapet and tries to act as the boss gets pulled down and make sure that egalitarianism is, it isn't a given, it's not like a human right, it's something that people work at.

And Morna last week was telling us about that, about how people are so this constant kind of interaction that maintains egalitarianism.

People are, hunter-gatherer, people are always autonomous and they are incredibly protective of their autonomy.

They will maintain autonomy, their ability to make their decisions, to find their food and whatever resources they need, above all, it's something very strong for hunter-gatherer people and that would of course apply to women as well.

Agency and decision making kind of linked to autonomy as extremely strong value for hunter-gatherers.

Economic independence.

Even amongst the Hadza, for instance, where I've worked, children at even five or six years of age, by seven years of age, they're pretty much, they can find whatever they need.

They're pretty much economically independent.

If you have that, you can make what you need to live, you can find what you need to eat.

Nobody can tell you what to do because you've got that capacity to look after yourself.

So nobody can boss you.

As far as women are concerned in terms of gender egalitarianism, evidently control over sexual and reproductive life is just a fundamental.

That would be a fundamental that we would expect.

Now we do see, and that was part of what I was talking about at the beginning, that there are differences in sex roles in hunter-gatherer, sex division of labour.

This is very common, it's very normal.

There sometimes is overlap of roles and there's flexibility, but sometimes certain things men do, some things women do.

But the fact of difference does not necessarily imply superiority, inferiority or hierarchy.

Not necessarily at all.

And in fact, we get a lot of work being done to assert the interdependency of men doing certain things with women doing certain things, and that they really are interdependent on each other.

And that is, again, a form of assertion of egalitarianism.

And when we come to symbolic items, which is coming back to our famous concepts here, symbolic, these volatile and fluid symbolic concepts, reproductive taboos, particularly, I was talking last week in an event to do with menstrual menstruation matters and menstrual taboos, and it has happened in the past that feminist anthropologists particularly, even where they cannot see very much, you know, reduction of women's status in the actual real life, which for hunter-gatherers that's usually the case, Women will, feminists may point to reproductive taboos, to menstruation taboos and say, look, you see, woman's being devalued there.

She's got to observe certain taboos.

Well, for a start, most of those taboos are operating not just on the woman, but on everyone who's around her, including the men, absolutely including the men.

And secondly, these taboos do not have any concept of pollution.
at all.

They do have a concept of power.

The concepts that are written up on the board, they are all what can be termed ideologies of blood.

Now that idea is that the blood from women and the blood from game animals must be kept apart.

But then the strange thing is that when a man is hunting, when he shoots an arrow, well the metaphor for a girl who's menstruating is to shoot an arrow.

And when a woman is pregnant, the way her husband tracks through the forest may affect, and the way he approaches certain animals may affect her fetus.

So the tracking of an animal and the pregnancy of the woman, they get intertwined with each other.

This is again an example of these kind of completely separated sort of roles or taboo powers being conflated and brought together.

So a woman giving birth and a man killing a game animal and the blood falling on the earth become equivalent processes that almost change, they almost turn into each other.

So there's an extraordinary equivalence actually being established in this very gendered symbolism.

So These are aspects of going from sort of the basic economic aspects of personal and political life to symbolic aspects in which we would expect gender egalitarianism.

Marlowe: predictors of forager egalitarianism

Camilla: Now Frank Marlowe is a great evolutionary ecologist with the Hadza, working there for many years, using a large sample of hunter-gatherers.

The sample he uses is always the most relevant from an evolutionary perspective.

That is, warm climate hunter-gatherers with non-equestrian.

He doesn't include any hunter-gatherers who've taken in horses for evident reasons.

So they're warm climate hunter-gatherers, the most relevant for our evolution, including many of the African hunter-gatherers.

And he tried to identify what things tend to lead to a greater egalitarianism in the particular society.

And he came up with these factors.

Mobility, highly significant.

And we have quite a lot of studies which show that when hunters sedentarize, women particularly lose out.

When they start settling down, women lose out from the ability to move about and use their networks and gain support if they're having a bad time with in one community, okay, move out and find support elsewhere.

So mobility is a key aspect.

That goes along with multi-local residents.

The ability the hunter-gatherers have to live, they may live with the wife's family, they may go and live with the husband's family, or they may go and live in their own place and other friends or relations.

They have a creative capacity for creating these fictive relationships, fictive kinship, finding pathways of kinship to anybody that they really want to establish the links with.

Multi-local residence is part of the support structure very strongly.

Then the third thing, which is really quite significant, again in relation to arguments that can be made by some feminists, Feminists suggest sometimes that if you have a division of labour with men hunting large animals and women not allowed to hunt, that's the way it's often put, not allowed to hunt, then surely the men are gaining much more status and superiority and the women are somehow regarded as inferior.

That their being not allowed to hunt makes them in there.

Okay, Marlowe was actually finding that in societies where there is more hunting of large game, and that applies to African hunter-gatherers who are the, for example, warm climate hunters of large game, women have better status.

They have greater solidarity, they have better protection, better ability to defend themselves.

Central praise provisioning, this is what he termed instant fluid coalitions.

And what the role of instant fluid coalitions has is whether that's coming from children or whether that's coming from women or just whoever it might be, those coalitions ensure that somebody turns up to take hold of the food, whatever food there is around the camp, coming into the camp, somebody takes it and takes hold of it.

So-called demand sharing, ability to just get control of that food, The person who's hunted the food, so we're looking at these, are Kalahari Ho hunters coming back with a fantastic Hemspot antelope.

They are not going to be able to keep hold and keep control of that.

Other people will take that food away.

So we do not have any such situation as men keeping a control over resources and using that to leverage and influence and make and control women or children at all.

It just doesn't happen in this situation.

The weaponry is an interesting part of it, but if you have poisoned arrows, which is characteristic for Bushmen or the Hadza or Bayakov as well, I mean, a poisoned arrow, anybody can use it to to injure anybody.

So this puts a, to injure and kill anybody, it puts people in a very, people have to be very, very careful about how they treat each other in that situation because anybody has the capacity.

You know, women do not normally handle poison arrows and usually there is a strong prohibition against that.

But anybody can, fundamentally.

So anybody has that power.

Okay, so these are the factors that seem to be contributing to egalitarianism in modern day hunter-gatherers.

Egalitarian tendency in evolution?

Camilla: But what I want to look at is evolution and where are the areas that we have evidence of egalitarian tendency in evolution, what it actually is.

Areas of evidence

Camilla: So I'm going to cover; where is there evidence in human evolution and why does that have to be gender egalitarianism? It isn't just any abstract egalitarianism, it is specifically gender egalitarianism.

For time, I'm going to focus mostly on the evidence in our bodies, the evidence of our bodies, our psychology, our life history.

And this is, to me, just compelling and, you know, it's unanswerable evidence.

It just says we evolved as an increasingly egalitarian genus and then species.

We will bring up some aspects of strategies of counter-dominance and reverse dominance in the ethnography of African hunter-gatherers.

I'm focused on Africa, not very apologetically, because that is the continent on which we evolved, and a little bit on the archaeology.

But because we've seen a lot of these areas from Mourner last week, from Dasha and Jerome and others in the recent past at RAG, I'm going to mainly look at the species biology.

The babysitting ape; intersubjectivity; female kin-bonded

Camilla: So, I'm referring here to Sarah Herdy's fantastic book, *Mothers and Others*, simply the best book written on human evolution this century.

If you haven't read it and you want to know about human evolution, that is the place to go.

There isn't any better.

I certainly think David Graeber and David Wengrow ought to read that book.

And what she does in there is really try to explain, Sarah Herdy, we should give her background as the leading evolutionary anthropologist on the planet, who's a very Darwinian, selfish gene, sociobiologist, but also feminist.

The leader of the feminist turn in sociobiology effectively.

And she has a history of books from the woman that never evolved, *Mother Nature*, and ultimately this one, *Mothers and Others*, is the kind of culmination.

She worked originally with langur primates, the small temple monkeys, the Hanuman temple monkeys, and was observing their behavior, and in particular, the female strategies that occurred amongst langurs to counteract male infanticide of their infants.

So this was kind of seared into her consciousness at a very early stage.

So she knows that she's a hugely expert primatologist.

She's just an encyclopedic and one of the greatest scholars on the planet in terms of primatology.

And so she's asking the question, what really makes us different from the other great apes? What do we do that's different? The other great apes have so many capacities that are so similar to us.

But this quality that we can call intersubjectivity, which is mind reading that goes in two directions.

It's not just mind reading, but it's understanding the mental state, the emotional state of the other individual and being prepared for the other individual to understand your emotional state, this intersubjectivity.

So what Sarah Herdy argues, she has a very straightforward story about how did that happen to us in our ancestry, but it really doesn't happen to great apes.

Great apes don't do inter-subjectivity.

Not even the bonobos do, really.

So they're very interesting.

Great apes are hugely interested in knowing what each other's going to do.

They want to find out, what's he going to do next? What's she going to do next? They're watching, they're listening, they're watching that.

But they're not interested or not motivated to let the other eight know what they are thinking, what that individual's thinking.

They're not interested in inviting them in.

So Sarah Hurley's story is just so simple.

She says, What set up the pressures for intersubjectivity is as simple as a mother, for the first time, a hominin mother in hominin evolution, gave her baby to another individual.

And great apes never do that.

A great ape mother will only, in very exceptional circumstance, give her vulnerable baby to another individual.

It just doesn't happen normally in the wild at all.

Now what is the difference? What difference gets set up in those circumstances? If a mother gives the baby to somebody else as a carer, then immediately a selection pressure for all this creation of looking and gestures and sounds and checking each other out, checking out each other's eyes.

So if I hand my baby to Robin, Robin's going to be looking at the baby and going goo goo goo and the baby's going to be looking at Robin and trying to get him to smile and the baby's going to be looking, where's mama? And I'm looking at Robin, everything's all right and we're...

So you're getting a kind of interaction, three-way interaction, where each of the individuals in that triangle has to gauge the intentions of the others, has to try and consolidate and be really overt about their emotional states.

As soon as that happens, the selection pressures are set up.

Why don't great apes do it? Wouldn't it be a good thing for Great Eight mothers to have a break? I'm sure that many of them would love it because Great Eight mothers are single mums who do all the work themselves.

They just can't risk it.

Herdie describes the Great Eight mothers as hyper-possessive.

They hang on to their babies because they can't risk it.

Why not? They do not live with female relatives.

They do not live with their mums or their sisters.

Now the situation with monkeys, and Sarah Hurdy looked at monkeys first, she was looking at langurs.

The situation amongst langurs where there is close female relationship is different.

We get babysitting with monkeys because monkeys live with female relatives, but with great apes, not.

So this is telling us if this story of the emergence of intersubjectivity, and it is really the best story going, If this story is true, it says necessarily that we in our hominin, in our evolutionary past, were living with female kin.

Mothers were living where their female kin were.

And so this, really, Sarah Herdy's model is a combination of Michael Tomasello's understanding of intersubjectivity amongst human children compared with great apes, for instance, and the famous grandmother hypothesis.

So she's brought in the grandmother hypothesis to put it into this framework of what she calls cooperative childcare.

Cooperative childcare becomes the matrix for our evolved psychology.

African foragers, marriage and residence pattern: brideservice, several years uxori/matrilocal

Camilla: Now, I'll just show this quickly without going into any elaboration, but amongst African foragers, the marriage and residence patterns We did mention multi-local residents as a feature of egalitarian hunter-gatherers, but this has a life history that when a mother is very young, when she's having her first child and probably the second child, she is very likely to be living with her mother.

in amongst all the African hunter-gatherers, we have evidence in population genetics and in residence data from the Hadza, population genetics from Central Africa and Southern Africa.

So this is a lovely Hadza grandmother who is living with her daughter and has all these grandchildren here with her, and that is typical.

Later on in a woman's reproductive career, or maybe that's later, maybe her own mother is not alive anymore, she may be moving to other places, to her husband's camp and so forth, but this initial status of living with her mother is obviously very critical and important for.

Cooperative eye hypothesis

Camilla: Now the mechanism, this is perhaps the stamp of egalitarianism on human bodies. The mechanism which supports inter-subjectivity, which supports our ability to read the mind of another and allow that other person into our own thoughts, is the so-called cooperative eye.

Humans have eyes that are designed completely differently from every other primate species. Every other single species of primate We're looking at a collection of young great apes. So these are young individuals with their eyes, and we can see a standard form of the eyes. Basically, they are round. They're very round in shape. There is hardly any sign of a lighter part of the iris around there, a little bit of the whites there, but they're very dark and round. And with that, with that shape, it's quite hard to tell what is the ape looking at.

As soon as you go to this design, which belongs to all humans on the planet, but I take African default here, we have this very almond shape with a bright white sclera, with the iris very dark against that.

And it just makes it so easy to look at somebody, look at something else, gesture with your eyes, show anybody that you want to show what are you interested in, what are you thinking of.

Even just for primates, looking into their eyes, it's a threat to look straight in the eyes of most primates.

For us, It's quite the opposite of that. It's inviting an extraordinary level of intimacy and inviting the other to sense what we're feeling.

So this is an impossible thing to envisage, the evolution of this kind of eye, unless there is significant level of egalitarianism, inequality, and no kind of threat, you can only have this evolving where there really is safe space, where there really is safety in the types of relationships where the eye mechanism is being used, the inter-subjectivity.

For the apes, it isn't a surprise, and for the monkeys also, it is no surprise that They are wanting to know what the other apes are doing, but they're not allowing others to read their minds very easily because they're living in very Machiavellian and very competitive circumstances.

So this is just saying something different happened in our evolution.

Something different happened for hominins that enabled those eyes to evolve.

Deep social mind (Whiten 1999)

Camilla: Okay, now we can start to think about how and when this egalitarianism changed, when did these cooperative eyes and did the egalitarianism, the inter-subjectivity and the babysitting that Sarah Hurley's talking about, when was it evolving? Okay.

[[[

So this sketch is coming from work done by Andy Whiten.

I think actually the sketch was done by Bruce Naft.

But It's an idea, it's this kind of rough hypothetical sketch of start over here.

This is back in evolutionary time.

We're looking at like the ancestor of us and great apes.

So a common ancestor with the chimps and bonobos, maybe gorillas too, pretty hierarchical rank organized societies with dominant individuals, beaters and gamers, and a lot of strife and plenty of Machiavellian corporation as well. Remember that.

These are very Machiavellian intelligent animals.

We'll talk about it in a moment.

But it's hierarchical, okay? So it's carrying on, carrying on, carrying on.

Then something causes that to start changing.

And it's on this slope that we can envisage intersubjectivity, babysitting, cooperative childcare, cooperative eyes beginning to emerge.

So they haven't tried to put any time frame here.

They're just giving it a kind of sketch and saying, well, that's happening.

Now what they imagine is that coming, this is the cause of the evolution of human hunter-gatherers.

This is where human hunter-gatherers are kind of maxing out as the ultimate in egalitarianism.

And what that time frame is, the origins of human hunter-gatherers, they're supposing maybe it's homo sapiens.

I'd probably agree with that or a bit older than that. And then this bit, that's history. That is the farmers. That is the past, that's history, capitalism, all that bit.

So this bit is evolved psychology, is under natural selection, that is under like class society and history. That's different. So this isn't changed by genes.

Arif: What are the assumptions they're making? It seems like a very sort of speculative thing.

Camilla: Well, Erdal and Whiten, so it's these guys' work, they're taking, they are looking for universal characteristics of hunter-gatherers, and they identified what they call counter-dominance, and they particularly focused on food economics, vigilance sharing and demand sharing.

And they said, look, any hunter-gatherers you go to, you will find these counter-dominants.

And they had a very good scholarly sample with a lot of literature.

These are evolutionary psychologists, but they did a good job.

For evolutionary psychologists, they did a good job.

So more than that, They have this, that Andy Whiten is the father, one of the fathers of Machiavelli intelligence theory, which is the predecessor of Social Brain.

So they have a beautiful argument about how does egalitarianism emerge, which is a Darwinian argument.

It's a very clever argument.

So Machiavelli intelligence is the idea amongst apes and monkeys that in order to compete, you need to cooperate.

You need to get allies.

and you need to work with those allies to be able to be better at getting resources, better at getting sex, et cetera.

So it's a really subtle idea.

You compete to cooperate, you cooperate to compete, Machiavellian intelligence.

Okay, so the more that you get Machiavellian intelligence, which goes with brain size, with neocortex size, okay, the more you can make alliances, which means the more Machiavellian intelligence you have, the more difficult it is for any one animal to be able to dominate.

It becomes harder and harder.

And then they say you get a kind of flipping point.

You get a flip where it is no longer possible for one individual to dominate the others.

And at that point, the best strategy is just to settle for making sure you are not dominated.

You just make sure nobody can put you down.

They don't dominate you.

So that leads to a rough and ready egalitarianism in that sense.

So this is a neat argument.

It's very clever.

And so this is just hypothetical sketch.

They're just giving, you know, putting their theory into practice.

They're taking it to the furthest extent.

And it's a cool idea.

Counter-dominance describes what we really know about hunter-gatherers.

Demand sharing, keeping an eye out in case anybody tries to hoard some supplies, laughing and mockery if anyone's above themselves, doing masamba, doing moajo, whatever it might be.

And Whiten wrapped this into what he calls deep social mind, which is really inter-subjectivity in terms of Sarah Herdie and Michael Tomasello.

But he said, deep social mind, he put the politics into there and he said, you have to have egalitarianism as part of it.

You can't do inter-subjectivity if there are differences of hierarchy and rank with people.

You're not going to let them look into your eyes if that's the case.

So he wrapped together as co-evolution mutual mind reading and subjectivity with egalitarianism and cultural transmission.

And all of those things could work together and they depended on each other.

That was his argument of deep social mind.

I think it's a neat argument.

Gray ceiling - Isler and van Schaik (2012)

Camilla: We can do better than being vague by looking at this:

[[[

And this is really the part This is really the aspect of our anatomy, which is so different from great apes, it's so hugely different from great apes, in that great ape, this is looking at brain size, the brain volume, a great ape brain volume is basically down here, And all these Australopithecine, Ardipithecus, early hominin species and all their descendants, paranthropines, even down to **** naledi, which would be down around here, there, all of them are basically great ape brain sizes.

This here is what's termed by Isla and van Schijk, the grey ceiling.

Great ape mothers said, they can't hand their babies to anybody because they have no female relative to trust.

They have to do the entire work themselves.

Males are worse than useless. They're A hindrance and a possible risk. Some of you may have seen that horrendous film or read about the incidence of the poor chimp mother who gave birth with the others in the group and some male just swiped her baby and ate it within about half, within a few minutes.

So chimpanzee mothers have to go on maternity leave to give birth so that they're not near anybody. So males are worse than useless. And we have no reason to believe these species did anything else except ape motherhood with single mothers.

Something happened 2 million years ago, just after 2 million years ago, smashing through the grey ceiling, just smashed through In this species, which is early genus

homo and this is large brain, large bodied Homo erectus, that we've got more than twice the volume of a chimpanzee brain size.

Mothers had to have others. We have to have grandmothers, mothers, mothers, female kin bonds. We have to have the beginnings of cooperative eyes. We have to have, starting to be, tending to be egalitarian tendency.

So this slope that he has here has to go with two million, it has to go with Homo erectus somewhat. It's constrained by the amount of energy required to get through the grey ceiling, basically.

So that carries on, and then something even more incredible happens. It's this, with 600, 700,000 years, this rise of brain size going three times bigger than chain volume and keeping going, it goes far, far more than that.

We have come down a bit in average brain size since then, which is saying that the amount of energy available to mothers and babies here in the evolution of both ourselves and Neanderthals are like our shadow experiment, was phenomenal, with so much, we can give this as an index of gender egalitarianism.

The more that you put into brain size, the more that mothers are receiving in terms of energy for their offspring, the more the gender egalitarianism. It's that simple. It's measurable in that case.

So I've tried to just draw against that a kind of negative correlation of dominance versus the rise in brain size.

So that is positive of egalitarianism against the rise of brain size.

We're going to have the slope down with hermerectus, some stabilization, and then something much, a real change, and this maximization of egalitarianism down here at the time period that leads to modern humans.

Audience question: Sorry, what's the red line?

Camilla: It's just tracing dominance and egalitarianism. Yeah. It's in reverse. It's reversing from the brain size, because the more you have large brains for mothers and offspring, the more you don't know.

The lower the line, the more the egalitarianism. So it's drawing that chart, but much more precisely against a brain. Actually, Time goes that way. Time is, yeah, it's going differently, yeah, sorry about that. But we can flip it, we're good at that.

Okay, so this has to be gendered. Somehow those females are gaining so much extra energy. The best answer to where that extra energy is coming from is males are getting organized to become routine investors into these large-brained offspring.

Plus also cooking. Cooking technology is coming in as a regularity into there. That would make a lot of difference as well.

But you've got to have something to cook. You've got to get the males organized to get something to cook.

Our reproductive physiology is levelling and time-wasting!

Camilla: Okay, so how do females do that? And this is the other aspect.

So far I've said Cooperative eyes, the size of the brains, life history in terms of grandmothers, mothers, mothers, the life history of the menopause itself, of course, is wrapped up in that.

The life history of childhood itself, stages of life history, and our non-submissive evolved psychology are all markers of our egalitarian deep time past.

But this is like a killer.

is female sexual physiology, is also designed, our reproductive physiology is designed to level reproductive success amongst males and to waste the time of males as much as possible.

So many people have seen this before, but we're now looking at it from the perspective of egalitarianism.

So if we think of monkeys and apes, particularly great apes, males will have a huge difference in their likely fitness outcomes.

The main import or the main outcome of rank difference amongst male apes is that some males have a lot of fitness, a lot of reproductive success, other males have very little indeed.

So there's a wide range of difference.

When we come to hunter-gatherers, this is actually quantifiable and measurable if we use population genetics on Y chromosomes with hunter-gatherer populations, you will see an extraordinary variety of Y chromosome lineages for hunter-gatherers.

Y lineages are various for the Hadza, for instance.

And that means that nearly every man is having offspring.

Nearly every single man.

You would not get that with great apes, that every single male has offspring.

How do females do it? They're spreading the chances amongst a lot.

Why would they want to do it? They want to do it because, it's what the Bayaka say, one woman, one penis, they say, as Ingrid and Jerome taught us.

Because every woman, far from being a single mum and a great ape, every woman, if a male is useful, every woman needs one.

Okay? So They need to share around the chances of sex and the chances of fertility with as many men as possible, to as many men as possible, and undermine any attempt by males to dominate and keep harems.

They don't want that.

If you need lots of food to ensure that your large-brained offspring gains, can grow up, you can't possibly remain in a harem with a dominant male.

It doesn't work.

So this design of humans, of women, for concealed ovulation that's unpredictable, it's very difficult for, if you have a boyfriend, and you're a woman, does your boyfriend know when you're fertile or ovulating? I bet you he doesn't.

You might think he does, but he'd be very confused about it.

And he's meant to be confused about it.

He's also confused by the fact that we have a greater proportion of our cycles as sexually receptive.

Almost any time of cycle can be sexually receptive.

So there is very little clue for males about when is a female fertile.

We're designed to really confuse that issue.

We've been designed by human evolution to confuse it.

scrambles the information to the males about the moments of fertility, which means that if males are interested in getting a female pregnant, they've got to hang around.

And if you've got to hang around a long time with one female, then it's very difficult to be a harem male and to guard one female.

And whilst you're busy with one female, then some other male is going to be busy with any of the others.

So this is undermining the dominant male monopoly of keeping many females.

And as I said, the Bayaka have this ritual chant, one woman, one penis, which is part of their very important Ngoku fertility spirit rituals.

Symbolism and language depend on egalitarianism

Okay, I'm going to wind up with symbolism and then just say how symbolism got there.

Symbolism and language itself require egalitarianism. So far I've been talking about biology, aspects of anatomy or psychology, but actually our symbolic cognition, the use of symbolism is dependent on a level of trust that could only be fostered by egalitarianism.

And I'm just going to invoke from cultural anthropologists, American cultural anthropologists, well Victor Turner's British social anthropologist, but just cultural anthropologists talking about the symbolic because they are the experts.

Social anthropologists, the experts of symbolic.

So Sallins, when he used to do comparisons of hunter-gatherers, egalitarian hunter-gatherers with the societies of apes and monkeys.

He did that back in the 1960s.

And he has this quote, culture is the oldest equalizer.

Among animals capable of symbolic communication, the weak can collectively connive to overthrow the strong, he notes.

So he's talking about hunter-gatherer politics.

But I think it should be the other way around.

It's because the weak can collectively overthrow the strong, because we have counter-dominant alliances, that we are capable of symbolic communication.

That is really the way around it goes.

Victor Turner's noticing the powers of the weak are always central and crucial in ritual and ceremonial sacred aspects.

But this is the one I really like, this one from Graber.

I'm sorry for the people at the back on.

It is quoted in my little pamphlet, if you want to grab that for a quid, if you like it. comes from Fragment of Anarchist Anthropology.

He copies this passage in many places he's written it, but yeah, he keeps, but he does copy and paste, like the rest of us.

He's talking about the powers of the bureaucratic state and the stupidity and idiocy of the bureaucratic state that doesn't have to think about what people are feeling.

Yes, but actually what he's saying applies beautifully to the evolution of language too, quite simply.

If you have the power to hit people over the head whenever you want, you don't have to trouble yourself much figuring out what they think is going on.

Therefore, generally speaking, you don't.

Hence, the surefire way to simplify social arrangements, to ignore the incredibly complex play of perspectives, passions, insights, desires, and mutual understandings that human life is really made of is to make a rule and threaten to attack anyone who breaks it.

Okay, so he's talking about the bureaucratic state, make it with its stupid arbitrary fines and regulations and that people, that normal human beings can't understand.

But what he is talking, what he's mentioning here, this complex play of passions and perspectives, with everything that we've been saying about intersubjectivity, about this mutual capacity of understanding, each other's point of view, the empathy, being able to put ourselves into others' shoes and negotiate and work out our mutual situation.

It is about language requiring consensual process and safe space to operate.

Language doesn't operate in any other way.

You can't do the evolution of language without the evolution of safe space, is what we were saying, what I was saying earlier.

And he's got it in one, except that he thinks he's talking about the state and he thinks, and this is where he's going, you know, Science was going wrong because he's putting it the wrong way round.

Graber's going wrong because he thinks that rules come from dominant individuals trying to give themselves an excuse to bash people up.

But I don't think any dominant chimpanzee ever needed to give themselves an excuse to bash people up.

They just bash people up.

They don't need to find an excuse to do it.

So rules are not going to be made-up first by dominant individuals in hierarchies.

They're more likely to be made-up first by the, as aspects of powers of the weak to protect those who are weaker rather than used to give more power to those who are powerful.

Boehm *Hierarchy in the Forest* (1999)

Just a little bit more to try and tie up on Boehm's reverse dominance and then our model and then we can talk about it.

So where does morality itself come from? We heard a lot from Morna on the corporeal organic morality last week.

Christopher Boehm, alongside the counter-dominance model, which was purely Darwinian, purely kind of individualistic idea of resisting being dominated, was counter-dominance.

Boehm opens that up to what he calls reverse dominance.

This comes from hierarchy in the forest.

And it's again a very simple story.

Two types of primate coalition.

You've got alliances that maintain dominance.

So the alpha maybe goes to the gamma to keep the beta in their place.

That's about maintaining dominance and status quo.

Or you get alliances that resist dominance.

Now that might be the gamma and the beta ganging up against the alpha, but they might also need to take all those under them as well.

Now what Boehm is suggesting is that with primates you basically keep on sort of mixing between those two.

But what happened with us in the situation of increasingly egalitarian hunting-gathering economies, we generated what was called reverse dominance.

Morality came from a wholesale coalition of everyone against someone who tried to become the alpha male.

And everybody else as what with collective intentionality, what Thomas Sellen or John Sell would call we intentionality, became a kind of moral group resisting that.

So he sees this as, it's a kind of Daxheimian moral collective here, resisting someone who tries to dominate.

It's a very abstract model.

Who are these alphas? What are they doing? How are they trying to be alpha? Who are the rebels? Who are resisting them? Why are these strategies constantly repeated? How do they become so ingrained in us? Why are they constantly repeated? So what I want to do is to gender that model.

I'm just going to put gender into it and we'll come out with something.

Modern human female sexual signals

So let's go back to our sexual signals. We said concealed ovulation, sexual receptivity, scrambles the information to males. Males don't know when females are fertile.

This was a very important part of females maintaining reproductive egalitarianism, keeping one male each.

Okay, but the trouble is menstruation.
Menstruation is always the trouble.
Menstruation gets the blame for everything.
It's a giveaway, a reliable cue.

Female isn't now pregnant.
She can be made pregnant in the near future.
So she, that menstrual female is the target.

Any male in a Darwinian world is interested in a menstrual female.

Menstruation causes conflict amongst the female group because the menstruating female might be able to take male investment away from the females who are pregnant and breastfeeding, the females who need the most energy.

And it's going to cause conflict amongst the males too, because all the males are interested to find that you get close to, bring flowers, offer chocolates to that menstrual girl or woman.

Female cosmetic coalitions

So I'm just jumping you through this.

You've seen this a number of times, probably in the past, so I don't need to argue it very closely.

As soon as there's one menstruating female, and we've got to remember that for hunter-gatherers, menstruation is relatively rare.

Women are pregnant, breastfeeding, menopausal, most of the female population will be.

Menstrual cycling is relatively rare, so it will cause, it will get a lot of attention.

And the males are very interested because it means the female's fertile.

These females have to solve that problem.

They've got to work out what to do about it.

They can try to hide it, but hiding won't work very well necessarily.

Even hiding draws attention, doesn't it? So the best thing is to do that.

The best thing is to join the menstrual and make a big display out of it.

And that is the HIMBA modelling beautifully the so-called female cosmetic coalition strategy.

They are demonstrating in very clear terms their unity, their solidarity, They are establishing themselves as a moral collective, as inviolable, the men must back off and be respectful, they can't just go in there and mess with them.

Everything suddenly gets solved by that.

The competition amongst the females is sorted out and therefore the competition amongst the males is sorted out.

To the extent that these females are solid, The males are going to be solid.

Now, if any alpha male does try and charge in there and try and grab, well, she's the one who's really menstruating, actually, the males who are willing investors are not going to be happy with that.

We're going to get exactly what Christopher Burns said.

We're going to get the coalition of everyone against an alpha male who tries to break that down.

And in fact, the males who are willing investors, who are the ones who are going to do bride service and support the bride and bring the meat back to the coalition, they will be sexily selecting these females.

Because these females are eliminating alpha males from the competition.

And they are settling, they are demanding reproductive egalitarianism, fundamental reproductive egalitarianism with bride service as part of that.

Predictions of Female cosmetic coalition

How, yeah, we've got a whole series of predictions on that, which we can talk about, including the ochre, the archaeology of the ochre and so forth.

And the archaeology of the ochre I'm going to skip through.

Human females signal 'no'

But this is really where the cosmology of the symbolic, of all these concepts, these transformative potency concepts, are stemming from, they're stemming from this symbolic construction of the female refusal.

Now, Graeber has this lovely phrase of the culture as creative refusal.

Well, this is the original culture as creative refusal.

Wrong species, wrong sex, wrong time is the way Females tell males no.

We know in the era of Me Too, we know that males aren't very good at hearing no from females because female bodies have evolved over evolutionary time to be super attractive to keep males hanging around.

So telling them no and making them go away hunting is a big job.

It requires rituals.

Days of rituals, days of singing and dancing.

The girl's in the menstrual hut.

The women are all around her dancing this ancient music.

They are actually with red ochre as well.

We can't see it very, very clearly.

They are doing this little mating dance where they're ilan bull, they're ilans, the mighty antelope, the mighty santhro of Africa.

They're mating with the girl herself is the ilan bull.

They have these horns which are used to poke the men.

and keep them at a good distance.

The young Hadza women in Maitoko have the mythology.

They identify with a matriarchal ancestress who used to have a bow and arrow and hunt zebra.

And when she got a male zebra, and then she would cut off the penis and tie it on herself.

So these girls are either the wives of Mambedoko or they're actually Mambedoko herself.

So we have these menstrual rituals This Ilambul dance is probably the prototype of human ritual.

It always stretches back an ancestry all the way, so this is Maitreko again.

And Ngoku for the Bayaka, where we have an extraordinary pantomiming of women's of women pantomiming male behaviour as they establish the ground for their rituals of the Ngoku fertility spirit.

and they're dancing in these militant dance formations.

So no man is coming anywhere.

Jerome Ingrid has taken these pictures from a long way off because he can't go close, can he? And the older women are showing the young women how badly behaved men are by acting out male sexual ineptitude.

So there is a lot of hilarity a mimicry and ridiculous mockery which is levelling down the men as part of the Ngoku, as well as it being very sacred and secret and empowering for the women.

Okay, so we're getting this, that's just more on the Elan Bull Dance, aspects of female solidarity, group solidarity, and from Central Africa, mechanisms by which women are creating that solidarity and asserting their egalitarianism as just fundamental core aspects of African hunter-gatherer life.

But the biggest thing to emerge from these female strategies is symbolic culture itself, metaphor itself, language itself, as this capacity of sharing meaning and constantly changing, shifting, and sharing meanings, as this creative ability of language itself.

We'll leave the Upper Paleolithic. That was something that had to do with Wengra and Graeber.

Just to say that we were listening to Morna last week who co-edited with me this volume, *The Human Origins, Contributions in Social Anthropology*.

Thank you.

The Ted K Archive

Camilla Power
Did Gender Egalitarianism Make Us Human?
12 June 2018

<www.youtube.com/watch?v=xr_7qbI0Gbk>

www.thetedkarchive.com