

Human Ethology Newsletter

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Newsletter Submissions

Anything which might be of interest to ISHE members is welcome: society matters, suggestions for Forum topics, Growing Points, Mini Communications, Current literature and films, and material for the Bulletin Board such as announcements of meetings, sabbatical opportunities, employment opportunities, etc., should be sent to the Editor.

Suggestions for books to review, or reviews, should be sent to the nearest Book Review Editor dealing with the language concerned. A list of the book review editors is printed in the column inside the backpage.

Submissions in any legible format are acceptable as long as these are in English. Floppy disks containing Wordperfect files produced on an IBM-PC (compatible), or ASCII files can be processed as well and are in fact preferred, because they lower the production costs.

Submission deadlines are as follows: the material should have reached the editor in Amsterdam before February 15, May 15, August 15, or November 15 for inclusion in the next issue of March, June, September, or December, respectively.

Publishing Policy

No material in the Newsletter is selected by critical peer review and thus material is printed only to foster free and creative exchange of (even outrageous) ideas between researchers. The fact that material appears in the Newsletter never implies the truth of those ideas, ISHE's support of them, nor any support for any policy implications that one might be able to draw from them.

FORUM

The publications of J. Philippe Rushton on racial differences caused a great stir in the North-American media last year and remained not unnoticed in Europe. Therefore a symposium was organized at the 10th International Congress of Human Ethology in Edinburgh this year, with opponents and proponents expressing their views. Since most people felt that the opportunity to discuss matters publicly and openly with Dr. Rushton was limited, the forum discussion is continued in the newsletter. References to Rushton's primary publications can be found in the reference lists following the various discussions.

The Editor.

Intellectual Freedom and Responsibility

by: I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Forschungsstelle für Humanethologie in der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, Von-der-Tann-Strasse 3-5, D-8138 Andechs, Fed. Rep. of Germany.

What do we mean when we speak of freedom? In fact we can mean quite different things. Some see freedom in terms of the opposition between what is determined and what is not determined. This is evidently nonsense, as has been thoroughly discussed by Hassenstein (1979), amongst others. Subjectively we feel free to choose, but in fact choice takes place on the basis of experience, be it phylogenetic or individual, and the values deriving from it. Without such values, there would be no such things as responsibility.

But there also exists a freedom for which people fight — that is the freedom to express one's opinion. This freedom is granted to us, if we are lucky, by our society. It is a social freedom and we aptly speak of liberty when we are free to express ourselves. However, people who express themselves freely may do so by presenting very dogmatic views, stemming from the experience of rigid ideological indoctrination. Such people have freedom of speech in as far as they are allowed to openly express their thoughts. Their statements may, however, lack intellectual freedom, as defined by the openness to consider the points of view of others and to be able to revise their own opinions accordingly.

Intellectual freedom cannot be granted by society. It is a freedom that everyone has to struggle to obtain within themselves through self-discipline and training. In order to achieve intellectual freedom, we must be able to detach our rational self

from our emotional self, and it is our emotional self that is normally triggered when we become aroused by anger, love or ideological values. Only when we succeed in detaching emotion from thought, have we created a situation without tension that allows us to reconsider and be flexible in our opinions.

Interestingly, our ability to detach thought and action from emotion has roots in our mammalian heritage. I became aware of this during my studies of the ontogeny of play behaviour. In 1949 I raised a baby badger. Once he was weaned, he lived freely under my barrack in the Viennese forest. In the evening he sought my company as a playmate. He would attack me and then retreat in mock fight. If an object caught his attention, he would catch and shake the object in mock hunting. He would freely shift to and fro from fight, to flight to hunting behaviors. Evidently he was not aroused by emotions of aggression or fear during these play sessions. It was then that I realized that higher mammals are able to decouple their emotions from behaviour patterns. They are thus able to experiment freely with their motor abilities as well as their environment, allowing them to explore, experiment and learn.

I later read in Wolfgang Köhler's account of his chimpanzee studies of how Sultan discovered how to put two sticks together to get a banana lying outside his cage. When first confronted with the task, he tried to use two short sticks, first one and then the other, in rapid succession, but of course in vain. Finally he threw a temper tantrum and turned his back on the scene. When his temper had cooled, he began to play with the sticks and then accidentally discovered how to put them together to form one long stick. Once he had done this, he remembered his old objective and got the banana that was now within reach of his longer stick.

Let us then stay cool when discussing subjects that are likely to arouse us emotionally, for we are going to discuss the hypothesis of racial differences in reproductive behaviour. I say cool, but not unengaged.

When gathering scientists from different branches of our discipline, we might ask the question, "What do we as scientists have in common?" For one thing, hopefully we have a concern for other people. We must remember though that our loyalties are graded. First come our family and kin, then closer related people of the same ethnic group and so on. Sociobiologists like Van der Berghe have discussed the phenomenon of ethnocentrism in the light of evolutionary theory and now we understand it at least in principle. Since it is genetic survival through survival of offspring which counts in evolution, ethnocentrism was a means of promoting the survival of our own genes. But from this it does not follow that we need to continue the ruthless ethnocentrism that has tainted most of human history up until now. We may not be able to love five billion people who are unknown to us, but we have every reason to foster a spirit of mutual tolerance and understanding since, as Hans Hass (1981) has expressed it: "Everything responsible for our human existence is due to a anonymous multitude of others who lived before us and whose achievements have been bestowed upon us as gifts."

We have created a concept of mankind in an attempt to foster a feeling of common heritage and thus to overcome the antagonism that leads to war. And since, amongst many other universally found behaviours, we share affiliative emotions, we are prepared to continue our struggle for survival in cooperative efforts. We have, however, to find ways to achieve this by respecting and appreciating cultural and racial diversity which requires social contracts as precautions against domination. To

do this we need as full as possible an understanding of human behaviour. So far, research in human ethology has concentrated on elucidating behaviors that are universally found in man. The result has been the discovery of an immense repertoire of shared behaviors. However, few human ethologists have looked for biologically based differences. If no such differences are found — fine — that makes it easier to grasp a feeling of common heritage. However, if differences do exist, only through an understanding of these can we attain mutual respect and peaceful co-existence. Differences, after all, have provided the pool of diversity essential to our evolution and, in humans, can either be used as the basis for antagonism or complementarity.

r/K Theory and Human Differences

by: Jay R. Feierman, Presbyterian Behavioral Medicine Center, 1325 Wyoming Blvd., N.E., Albuquerque, NM 87112, USA.

The issue that concerns me has little to do with the appropriateness of r/K theory to explain human differences, although I believe it is presumptuous to assume that the distribution of highly context dependent behavioral variables necessarily reflects the distribution of genotypes. But I do not want to argue that issue here. Rather, what concerns me most are the sociopolitical implications of the questions. Where is this leading us? And who is "us", white man?

If the question is simply the predictive potency of r/K theory, I believe that the welfare of the individuals who are being hurt by the supposed answers is more important than the question. Science is not done in a sociopolitical vacuum.

There is also an issue of "informed consent" in any human research where there is potential for harm to identified individuals. It is fairly clear what group is being harmed and, parenthetically, what group is benefitting by the press coverage of this issue. Scientists are not immune from sociopolitical responsibility.

The sociopolitical implications of an entire "race" of humans being of "low intelligence," "low altruism" and "low law abidingness" are so clear. I therefore believe that an organized scientific body needs to study the validity of the evidence and then issue a statement or a report. Unfortunately, academic debates in meetings and in newsletters don't get the same type of international press coverage as "racially inflammatory statements" by otherwise distinguished Professors.

The embers of another era are still smoldering. I suppose that some of us are more sensitive to this issue than others.

Human Ethology: r/K selection and the "New Racism"

by: Karl Grammer and Maximilian Stöckl, Forschungsstelle für Humanethologie in der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, D-8138 Andechs, FRG.

"Population differences exist in personality and sexual behaviour such that, in terms of restraint, Orientals > Whites > Blacks." Furthermore, "this ordering is predicted from an evolutionary theory of r/K reproductive strategies in which a tradeoff occurs between gamete production and parental care." These statements were made by J.P. Rushton in his article "Race differences in sexual behaviour: Testing an evolutionary