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RATIONAL EVIDENCE-BASED COMMENT FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC & HEALTH PROFESSIONALS. WE SAY EXACTLY WHAT WE THINK

Ancestral Social Stress: Managing the stresses of populous communities. **Ancestral Psyche:** The QE II Phenomenon. **Fad Diet Watch:** Vegan mother guilty of death of 18-month old son. **Q&A:** Almond butter; Couples match up according to level of 'Desirability'. **News Shorts:** Weekend Warrior exercise OK; Women can live longer & better with better diet; Childhood obesity & fitness linked to midlife cognition. Fructose & uric acid provoke hyperactive foraging response; Loss of excess weight increases men's sperm count and quality; Lean people eat less and 'run hotter'. **Viewpoint:** The transition to modern society. **Letter:** Steve Sellin

Ancestral Social Stress

Managing the stresses of populous communities

In **Maximum Group Size for Comfort**, [April 2018](#) [1] we reported on Oxford University evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar's studies which found that, quite naturally, forager bands stabilized at around 50 members. If they grew in size to more than that, they would split into two smaller bands. The split was driven by the build up in stress occasioned by congested group living (see **Rat Crowding Again**, [June 2003](#) [2]).

Even at the level of a normal band, the San Bushmen (for example) feel the need to dispel (via a trance dance, see **Myths & Rituals**, *Deadly Harvest*, [Chapter 8](#) [3], page 220) what they call "star sickness", a mysterious force that takes over a community, causing jealousy, anger, quarrels and a failure of gift-giving.

These pressures, they claim, pull people apart and damage community cohesion.

So, during the farming revolution how did forager bands manage to grow into communities numbering thousands?

Dunbar has studied this question in a remarkable scientific article [4]. He finds that, as the size and congestion of communities grew, so did the rates of murder. But gradually too there was a growth of **SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS** that allow conflict to be dampened by enhancing a sense of **BELONGING** to the community.

Dunbar examined many such institutions: he found that community feasting, singing and dancing > **p4**

Ancestral Psyche

The QE II Phenomenon



credit [5]

What would a forager make of the extraordinary outburst of public interest, emotion and devotion at the death of Queen Elizabeth?

On the one hand, he would be astonished that a society would breed a family down the generations whose sole purpose was to provide a figurehead to their community.

On the other hand he might recognize the value of this figurehead as a repository of tradition, tribal history and ancient rituals. He would be enthralled by the grandeur, ceremony and glamour of the pageantry – so much of which is subtly symbolic of deep psychological triggers. He might even see parallels with the mystery, magic and other-worldness, of his band's shaman.

Above all he would recognize the huge crowds queuing for hours to pay homage to the queen's coffin as a need to express a feeling of **BELONGING**.

This "belonging" is a vital feature of forager life. You knew who your "people" were – and they accepted you. If you didn't "belong" anywhere, you died. The consequences today are not quite so dire.

Nevertheless, it is a need deeply buried in our psyches. > **p3**

Fad Diet Watch

Vegan mother guilty over death of 18-month old son



Murder by malnutrition: a Florida court found Sheila O'Leary, 38, guilty over the death of her 18-month-old son, Ezra, who weighed just 17 lb (7.7 kg) when he died after being fed a diet of only raw fruit, vegetables and also breast milk [6]. Ezra was the size of a 7-month-old baby when he died. Sheila's husband, Ryan Patrick O'Leary, stands trial later this year.

The couple also had a three-year-old and a five-year-old who were also severely malnourished. Their skin was yellow and they had rotting teeth.

Sheila also has an 11-year-old daughter from a previous relationship and her health was considerably better than that of the other kids. Police believe it is thanks to the girl regularly visiting her father in a different state, and was given a proper diet there.

The three children were fed a diet that consisted mostly of mangoes, bananas, avocados and 'rambutans' (similar to lychees).

My View? The world contains a small percentage of the 'ideologically possessed' who create havoc in their environment.

However, it is particular tragic when it comes to a dietary fad which starves babies to death. >**p4**

Questions

Almond Butter



Q. *If this product is just almonds, does it conform to healthy eating, or is it too processed?*

A. The product is just almonds pulped up as might be done in a food processor. The almonds are just fine; however the processing does bypass the chewing phase of eating.

As we have often said, we would prefer our food to be as chewy as possible since that is how our teeth, jaws and even blood and lymph circulation are designed to work. See: **Your Jaws are what you chew**, [Aug 2011](#) [7]; **Chewing reduces dementia** [Dec 2012](#) [8].

Nevertheless, let's keep this in perspective. If almond butter is your pleasure it is not a big deal to consume it in what are, presumably, modest quantities.

Couples match up according to level of 'Desirability'

Q. *I refer to your article [Last month](#) [9], **Relationships best between those of similar desirability**. I don't follow the logic and findings. If "everyone knows each other" and the communities are relatively small, then wouldn't they, by sheer proximity and community size, end up by having similar values?*

A. I think there has been a misunderstanding caused by the use of the term "values". A better word is "desirability".

The study was carried out among some 50 bands numbering some 1000 individuals of the Himba tribe. Typically, just like pure forager bands, they all had knowledge of each other, particularly as they would have, from time to time, a festive 'meeting of the clans' (or 'corroboree' as the Australian Aborigines call it).



Young men and women would go after the individuals of the opposite sex who would be most 'desirable'. Typically women would fix on men who were good providers and protectors (see, **Marriage, Deadly Harvest, Ch 8**, p 210 [10]; **Strength and Fighting Ability Revealed In Male Faces**, [Dec 2008](#) [11]).

Men would fix on the women who were most fertile as triggered by the proxy of physical attractiveness. (See **Barbie-shaped women more fertile**, [June 2004](#) [12], **Low Female Waist-to-Hip Best**, [May 2010](#) [13]; **Men's Cross-cultural Breast Preferences**, [March 2017](#) [14], **Fertility Assessment**, [Deadly Harvest, Ch 8](#), p 215.

Mostly 'assortative mating' resulted with the men and women finding a partner of equivalent "desirability". These were the relationships which endured.

Sometimes there was an imbalance; for example a high desirability female might team up with a low desirability male. This couple would be bedeviled by high desirability males sniffing around the high desirability wife who would be tempted to wander.

News Shorts

"Weekend Warrior" exercise OK

"Individuals who engage in the recommended levels of physical activity may experience the same benefit whether the sessions are performed throughout the week or concentrated into fewer days". So says a multinational study published in the prestigious journal, JAMA [15]. Translation: get your 150 minutes per week of exercise how you like: all at the weekend or spread out over the week.

My View? For young and old, the forager pattern was to be physically active most days of the week with,

perhaps a day or two in the camp doing little chores.

Furthermore, they averaged far more than 150 minutes a week of physical activity – that is a number produced by the World Health Organization and must be regarded as a strict minimum.

See: **Run to Stay Young**, [Aug 2018](#) [16]. See also: **Hadza Forager Energy Expenditure same as Westerners?**, [Sept 2012](#) [17].

Women can live better & longer with better diet

Women tend to live some 4 years longer than men but typically have higher rates of illness, notably poor eye health and diminished brain function.

Now, research from University of Georgia suggests these higher rates of illness can be improved by a better diet, one that is high in the pigmented "phytonutrients" known as "carotenoids" [18]. Particularly rich sources are highly colored foods such as kale, spinach, watermelon, bell peppers, tomatoes, oranges and carrots, and egg yolks.

The carotenoids are particularly important in preventing macular degeneration and dementia. In particular they are beneficial since they are **ANTI-INFLAMMATORY**. But why would women be more afflicted when their carotenoid intake is just the same as for men? The researchers opine that women have, on average, more body fat which hides away reserves of carotenoids.

My View? These famous carotenoids are none other than 'lutein' and 'zeaxanthin' which we first met decades ago. See: **Macular degeneration**, [Dec 1999](#) [19] and **Macular Degeneration**, [Natural Eating II, Ch 8](#), page 173 [20].

Interestingly, pregnant mothers who had a high intake of these carotenoids gave birth to kids who had 38% better chance of having good visual acuity (clarity of vision) three years later.

Moral? Eat Paleo like we say and you will automatically get an abundance of these wondrous anti-inflammatory carotenoids.

Childhood obesity & fitness linked to midlife cognition

Australian researchers found that children with the highest levels of cardio-respiratory and muscular fitness and lower average waist-to-hip ratio had higher midlife scores in tests of processing speed and attention, as well as in global cognitive function [21].

Translation: Fat, unfit children grow up to have, 35 years later, lower brain power, and greater risk of dementia.

The Australian study began in 1985 and followed a representative sample of 8,498 Australian children aged 7-15 years.

My View? Childhood obesity and fitness is one of the greatest challenges facing our western societies. And we've been reporting on it for a long time: **Child Obesity Time Bomb**, [March 2004](#) [22].

Childhood obesity locks in a dysfunctional biochemistry and any child afflicted by this is doomed to fighting sickness for the rest of his life: See: **Child Obesity – Adult Sickness**, [June 2017](#) [23].

Allowing your child to become obese could be considered a form of child abuse, although so often it arises through harassed parents just letting the obesogenic environment do its worst.

Allowing your child to become obese could be considered a form of child abuse...

In this, a return to forager ways is helpful – bring on the grandparents! See: **Grandparental support helps reduce child obesity**, [July 2015](#) [24].

Fructose & Uric acid provoke hyperactive foraging response

According to a paper from USA researchers, fructose is a unique nutrient that stimulates an innate survival pathway that involves the foraging for food with storage of the energy as fat.

In Western Society the high intake of fructose, mainly in the form of HFCS - High Fructose Corn Syrup (as in sugary sodas) has placed this survival pathway in overdrive, leading to an increase in obesity and diabetes.

Excessive fructose intake leads to a hyperactive foraging response, contributing to behavioral disorders such as impulsivity, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), manic depression, and aggressive behavior [25].

The researchers suggest that fructose, and its by-product uric acid, alter 'dopamine pathways'. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter made in the brain. It plays a role as a "reward center" and in many body functions, including memory, movement, motivation, mood, attention and more.

My View? Who knows? The rocketing rise in conditions like ADHD and similar disorders is certainly paralleled by the introduction of HFCS into the food supply. **AVOID!** See **HFCS**, [Deadly Harvest](#), [Ch 3](#), p73.

Loss of excess weight increases men's sperm count and quality

Men all over the world are suffering from deteriorating semen quality -- often referred to as an outright fertility crisis. Now, however, Danish researchers show that men with obesity improve their semen quality, and have higher sperm count, if they lose weight -- and maintain the weight loss [26].

Men who delivered semen samples, were 18 to 65 years of age, and had obese BMIs between 32 and 43, but were otherwise healthy. When they lost on average 16.5 kg (36 lb, 2½ stone) their sperm concentration increased 1.49-fold and sperm count 1.41-fold.

My View? This is yet another drawback of obesity which is within an individual's ability to control. We have seen it before in **Obesity & Male Infertility**, [May 2016](#) [27].

Mind you, there are other problems with an obese man's sperm too. For example, obese fathers make sperm with warped DNA which leaves their offspring with poor appetite control.

See: **Is Obesity Optional?** [March 2016](#) [28]. And a father's high fat diet predisposes a daughter to diabetes – see **Ancestor's Lapses Visited on us**, [Dec 2010](#) [29]. (In this case, seemingly, the DNA damage

only occurred in the sperm carrying the X (female) chromosome)

Lean people eat less and 'run hotter'

We probably all know an example of those frustrating people who are very lean without any effort. Now scientists looked at such individuals with a very low BMI.

Their findings reveal that these individuals are actually considerably less active than people with a BMI in the normal range. However, they ate less and had lower physical activity. Nevertheless, they also had surprisingly high metabolic rates (calories burnt when resting) linked to raised levels of their thyroid hormones.

My View? There is not much we can do about our metabolic rate but we can certainly reduce the amount of food we eat!

Viewpoint

The transition to modern society

Most of humankind has transitioned from the forager lifestyle to one based on farming. Some of us have transitioned further to one based on industrialization and capitalism. This latest transition has lifted billions from the drudgery and poverty associated with a farming lifestyle.

[Next month](#) we will look at what happened to allow the industrial revolution to take place and why it is a good idea to embrace it.

Continued from Page 1

The QE II Phenomenon

Not knowing who you are, or where you come from, is a source of great psychological distress for modern peoples - who perhaps without realizing it, feel alienated, rootless, aimless and worthless. See **Belonging**, [March 2020](#) [30]



Finally, the monarchy, with all its pomp and circumstance, is a **SOCIAL INSTITUTION** which, with its mix of **CONTINUITY** and **TRADITION**, helps cement a people together. They feel part of an occasion greater than themselves. See Robin Dunbar's article, **Managing the stresses of populous communities**, page 1.

Continued from Page 1

Managing the stresses of populous communities

... generate endorphins (feel-good hormones) which encourage social bonding; men's clubs which limit and channel the energy of young adult males; the calming influence of charismatic, socially recognised leaders; and the stability provided by the institution of marriage and family. To manage all this there was the emergence of elites, organized religions, and formal rituals.

My View? Most of us have absolutely no idea that our highly congested communities are totally out of kilter with our savanna-bred natures.

It is almost a miracle that we have managed to organize ourselves with institutions that can make overcrowded societies work. It is, as evolutionary psychologist Jordan Peterson says in his book **12 More Rules for Life** [31], Rule 1: "Do not carelessly denigrate social institutions".

In other words, the current attacks on the family, male institutions, our traditions, our language, our culture, and our history are designed to

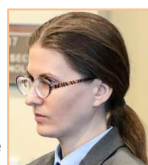
cause the collapse of our civilization. As George Orwell opined: "The most effective way to destroy a people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history."

Those who promote this might like a return to the Stone Age but, personally, I prefer to have the best of both worlds: live like nature intended in a world of enlightenment, clean running water and antibiotics!

Continued from Page 1

Vegan mother guilty over death of 18-month old son

We don't know the full O'Leary story but it seems that they were following an extreme form of veganism where they only ate fruit.



For an adult, this might just about work (but see: **The Vegan in his Blindness**, [April 2000](#), [32]; **Schenck: Recovering Vegetarian**, [March 2012](#) [33]; **Vegan Food Poisoning**, [July 2006](#) [34])

However, babies and toddlers require a different diet to anyone over the age of about 4 years old. For them a vegan diet is dangerous but, with suitable precautions and supplements, it is possible. See:

Vegan Diet in Young Children, [Feb 2021](#) [35].

However, it is only too easy to get it wrong. See: **Vegan Diet: Baby gets Rickets**, [Jan 2019](#) [36]; **Vegan Baby & Calcium**, [June 2020](#) [37];

It is also easy to demolish the practice of veganism with rational argument. But some people do indeed have a deeply felt emotion about exploiting critters in any form and, although it is not Paleo (or how nature intended), we do guide them how to survive well with their principles. See: **Practising Paleo-Veganism**, [April 2017](#) [38].

Letter

From Steve Sellin, Palm Springs, CA.

I still read all of your newsletters every month. You have many great stories to tell that are as good today as they were when you began your newsletters. So much scientific data that is not mentioned in many of today's nutritional books. I've found only a handful of books that have the same level of scientific data in their nutritional information, like you...

Paleo in a Nutshell: Geoff's latest work encapsulates, concisely and easily, current thinking on living the way nature intended. www.paleo-nutshell.com



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