

Re: The Origins of Human Society

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- *From:* "g" <gillawton@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Tue, 16 Jan 2007 19:12:53 -0500 (EST)
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Chris,

Much I read in history books and ABOUT certain foci on specific developments through history suggest to me that categories, such as "The Middle Ages" or "The Mercantilist Age," are -- on the one hand, very convenient pigeon holes to aid in teaching and to serve as "earmarks" for certain periods of time, among objective historians.

HOWEVER, historians themselves realize that these pigeon holes or earmarks not only are imprecise but, also, often become enormously misleading to non-historians trying to get a grasp of history.

Concomitantly, the term *REVOLUTION* is so variously interpreted and applied as to mean many different things to many different people and, as even to mean different things a single individual using it twice in the same breath. Of course, in some cultures the term has a very deep significance and is spoken almost with voice lowered, and in something akin to reverence. And cultures have a perfect right, in my opinion, to such special emotional attachments, if they wish to make them. However, I simply wish to submit that one who uses the term "revolution" may well be understood differently by those of other cultures, or in different academic levels, than as he/she wishes it to be inferred.

How often we hear academic discussions about such a question as "WHAT REVOLUTION IS," or, more on subject here, "WHAT BIO-EVOLUTION IS." And this old layman asks those who would have him understand what they mean to be as explicit as possible, in order to make it possible.

One generic definition we can ALWAYS attribute to ANY term used by a writer (including a poster to this news group) is that it means exactly whatever the person using it intends it to mean. As to what that may be, sometimes only the writer/poster impresses this layman to be privy. (:>)

As I have said about bio-evo, I am unable to follow many references to terms which a writer (including, but not limited to... a poster in a news group) uses, when he does not illumine me, and others, of what it means to HIMSELF OR HERSELF. (As you can see, I am not insisting that a word have only one set of subsumptive

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relations for every person and every time and every place. But let the writer beware, if he expect others to get it right, unaided by the writer.

In fact, SOME writers impress this poor layman as wishing to seem quite adroit in AVOIDING clarity, rather than SEEKING it. This is not meant to be personal, or to apply to present company. It is just to say that sometimes some writers impress this poor seeker after understanding as affecting profundity, by tossing around terms which mean different things to different people, in hopes... perhaps... of seeming so bright as to overwhelm others into thinking they are rendered confused by being unable to follow the argumentation. Again, present company excepted, and a general point in hopes of being made to any reader who might wish not to leave the impression of being culpable in that way, when that is not in the least his/her actual intent.

To reach elsewhere for an example, we often hear or read a term used such as "existentialism," when a broad reading on the significance of that will have disclosed a MANY a twist and turn as to what one thinker would mean by it, and perceive its significance to be. Some of THOSE have been all too meticulous in seeking to leave no stone unturned in disclosing what they have meant, as being quite separate and distinct from what another thinker may have meant. And, in all fairness to those, it would seem unfair to toss them into the same bag with others who may, or may not, have been so careful in their disambiguations.

Even some who speak of "The French Revolution" of 1789–99, put their own slant upon certain aspects of it which are, dare I say it, "impressionistic" rather than historically broad enough to cover its multi-faceted essences. As for myself, I cannot hear of it without lamenting the beheading of one of the greatest geniuses who ever lived, Antoine Laurent Lavoisier — which, had the cake-eaters who had no cake, been a bit more discriminating, they might have reflected that they were creating by that excision an excruciatingly acute example of how those with even the best of intentions, might toss out the baby of genius with the bath water of a justice served.

Some equate "revolution" politically to "democratization." Some equate it to the unseating of one cult of personality, by the fomenters of a coup, for no other sake but that of replacing the one with another. Sometimes the term "revolution" is used in the same way as "paradigm shift" which is another multi-faceted buzz word — not through any fault of its own, but because it has been dropped by so many, so casually at so many a cocktail party, job interview, or image building affected brochure written by a handsomely paid public relations specialist.

But... most importantly, to the tired brain of this old layman, in his struggle to follow and learn from another's sincerely intended meaning... let us not forget that none of us wishes for the tail of our conceptual models ever to wag — and hence obfuscate — the dog of effective reasoning.

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Hopefully these humble words will be received as being on subject in this news group, as, and insofar as, they conduce to coming back around to the subject of biological evolution. It is assumed by this poster that the mention of "revolution" is meant to contribute something aimed at our mutual appreciation and comprehension of that.

(:>)

"Spanish Paranoia" <laparanoia@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message [news:eogg3r\\$br4\\$1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:eogg3r$br4$1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

"Every educated person since Darwin has labelled himself an 'evolutionist'. But a real evolutionist must apply the idea of evolution to his own forms of thinking. Elementary logic, founded in the period when the idea of evolution did not yet exist, is evidently insufficient for the analysis of evolutionary processes. Hegel's logic is the logic of evolution. Only one must not forget that the concept of 'evolution' itself has been completely corrupted and emasculated by university professors and liberal writers to mean peaceful 'progress'. Whoever has come to understand that evolution proceeds through the struggle of antagonistic forces; that a slow accumulation of changes at a certain moment explodes the old shell and brings about a catastrophe, revolution; whoever has learned finally to apply the general laws of evolution to thinking itself, he is a dialectician, as distinguished from vulgar evolutionists"
Leon Trotsky, In Defence of Marxism

Until the 1980s, ideas about human origins were for the most part gradualist. It was believed that a recognisably human lifestyle began emerging some two to three million years ago, in a drawn-out evolutionary process linked with the establishment of bipedalism and tool-making. According to this way of thinking, speech co-evolved with the making of simple stone tools, becoming increasingly complex as technology evolved. Art, ritual, the organisation of kinship and other aspects of culture became more complex in the same gradualistic, piecemeal way.

Such gradualism, although still defended, has recently become a minority position. It is nowadays widely acknowledged that those archaeologists who excavated early hominid sites in Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania, and saw the beginnings of "home bases", "language" and "a sexual division of labour" among these bipedal toolmakers were projecting assumptions and stereotypes derived from modern culture onto the distant past.

Over the past two decades, there has been a revolution in archaeology and palaeontology, leading to the view that the earliest tool-makers, while more intelligent than apes, were involved in essentially primate-style social and reproductive relationships. Admittedly, humans were co-operatively hunting large game animals by at least 500,000

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years ago. But archaeologists have found no evidence for art, ritual or other "symbolic" behaviour at such early dates. Most archaeologists are now agreed that even large-brained humans such as the Neanderthals were not leading a recognisably human or "hunter-gatherer" lifestyle. The dominant view is that anatomically modern humans emerged in Africa around 130,000 years ago and then, some 60,000 years later, rather suddenly spread across the world in an explosive process known as the "human revolution". It was during the earliest stages of this revolutionary process that symbolic art, ritual and language emerged.

by Chris Knight

<http://dreamflesh.com/essays/societyorigins/>