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2012

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gender relations, are not pre-class, but proto-class societies. All of them carry an echo of their origins in communism, but that echo is largely embedded within a political reversal of male-appropriated ritual leadership. And, as economic circumstances alter, this gender inequality becomes generalised to men as well. The family is the origin of private property, class and the state.

hunting small game. That is not primitive communism at all: it is something new, another 'barbarism'.

What does this new barbarism mean? It means that men have taken over as a collective to keep the group together on the basis of the declining productive forces of hunting in the sparse Mesolithic conditions. Again according to Marx, "the authority of the patriarch over his family is the element or germ out of which all permanent power of man over man has been gradually developed" (L Krader *The ethnological notebooks of Karl Marx* Assen 1974, p333.) To put it another way, it is the sex-strike theory in reverse, in which the men are running the blood rituals from the previous historical epoch. This is masquerading as keeping the old religion going under new economic conditions. But there has been a collapse, a reversal, a counterrevolution, leading to male secret cults, Stonehenge, human sacrifice. It is in this way that we can understand and locate Engels' 'chastity' model and 'marriage by capture'. They are part of the collapse of the earliest communism that would have taken place during the Mesolithic. It is impossible to imagine such perverse gender relations within a system in which all women were supported by their brothers to 'domesticate' husbands. These would have been practices associated with what Marx called "all the old crap".

Engels argued that the German tribes saved civilisation with their barbarism. The German tribes had a far more lenient, human relationship between men and women. They were in barbarism, but the quality of the relations between the sexes was much softer than gender relations under the slave system of classical antiquity.

Barbarism and its base unit, monogamy, is the resource out of which all class societies emerge and it is also the form into which class societies collapse when their mode of production is no longer sustainable. If monogamy contains the potential for all subsequent types of class oppression, then it is not a type of class, but the proto-type for all social classes. Therefore all of the pre-state societies since the Palaeolithic, with all of their enormous range of

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Monogamy, says Engels, emerges in the late stage of barbarism and is the precondition for civilisation. Both Marx and Engels argued that monogamy is the cellular social form of civilisation and of all class societies. As Marx put it in his Ethnographic notebooks, "the modern family contains in germ not only slavery, but also serfdom, since from the beginning it is related to agricultural services. It contains in miniature all the contradictions which later extend throughout society and its state."

Let us go back to the term, 'mode of production'. What are its dynamics? Normally, because we struggle in capitalism today, we see its origins in feudalism and become fixated on just these two modes of production (for correct reasons). But let us remember that this is an argument about primitive communism preceding all civilisation, all civilised societies. How does a mode of production work? Capitalism emerges as an expansion of the productive forces under feudalism, but that is not the case with the other main historical modes of production. A slave mode of production is based upon declining productive forces. If you turn peasant production into slave production, as happened in classical antiquity, then there is a steady decline in the productive forces. According to Engels, the classical slave society collapsed into barbarism. But, hang on a second, slavery emerged out of barbarism (which was originally primitive communism) and now we have slavery collapsing into barbarism. So if slavery emerged from barbarism, and if it descended again back into barbarism, what does that mean?

This argument just does not work - it is a jumble. 'Barbarism' must have different meanings with this usage by Engels. The barbarism of 'primitive communism' must mean, or so I would argue, a society in which men and women, as brothers and sisters in matrilineal clans, supported each other and in which men served women from their own matrilineal clan. But this broke down in the Mesolithic and the old society was adapted - now the men were doing the organising. Now the old groups were scattered, reduced to

So men take over the leadership, and they do this with initiation rituals, in which they in turn bleed, they themselves 'menstruate'. The logic is to sustain the old symbolism of blood, but now under a new leading group which can cohere under the new conditions of the Mesolithic. So this counterrevolution, or countermonopolisation of previously female power, is the way in which the group can sustain itself and keep together.

CIVILISATION?

However, with agriculture - in particular with domesticated cattle - a new situation arises, in which the economics can now sustain large groups.

Once again look at this from the point of view of a woman. A man now approaches her mother and father and says, 'I want that woman as my wife and here are X cattle in exchange. This makes up for all the hunting services I would have provided under the old rules.' The old rules meant 'bride service', whereby a hunter earns a wife through providing hunting services for her relatives. But now, thanks to domesticated cattle, a man can come along and offer many years of hunting service all in one go. From bride-service we have moved to bride-price.

Still from the point of view of the woman, imagine after some months she no longer likes the man. What will her mother and father say? They will say that she should return to her husband, whose cattle they now own. The same cattle they intend to use to buy the girl's brother a wife. The woman is now isolated, locked into marriage. With the rise of a new economic system of cattle-herding and domestication, we now have 'wedlocked' marriage, where a woman is locked in a marriage and her own relatives will not support her. An economic transaction has been completed and she has been purchased as a chattel. Now we have compulsion in marriage or, as Engels called it, monogamy.

In 1884 **Friedrich Engels** made a remarkable claim in *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*. We are a revolutionary species, he says. We were born in complete equality and fraternity. Women were respected, women were leaders. There were no social classes, there was no state, there was no filth, there was no war. Those were our origins, but this was all lost with the neolithic revolution. Nevertheless, when we make the next revolution for communism, we will be returning on another level to a place we have already been. Therefore our knowledge of our origins is part of our weaponry, our ammunition, to wage our struggle for a better future.

Official anthropology *hates* this argument. Indeed modern field anthropology, which is taught in the universities, established its place by destroying, or believing to its own satisfaction to have destroyed, the claims of this book. In particular, during the middle decades of the 20th century Bronislaw Malinowski of the London School of Economics and Franz Boas of Columbia University believed they had demolished Engels' claim. Such was the acceptance of this new orthodoxy within academia, that those who argued for the *Origins* in an anthropology programme were effectively silenced. In fact, any inquiry into cultural origins were disallowed in modern anthropology.

Can we on the left defend Engels successfully? If we can, then we are enormously strengthened. We can fraternally approach feminists and argue that women were leaders in the first (communist) societies. Of course, in the mid to late 1970s feminists began to dump any engagement with what happens in the real world under the influence of postmodernism and in the process they also dumped Engels, which was a great shame. And on the left there was a very unsatisfactory debate around Engels and the women's liberation movement, in which explaining the roots of women's oppression was not solved.

I would like to argue that Engels' main argument is correct; that the research of the last 20 or 30 years (which includes sex-strike

theory) confirms this. However, in order to do this we have to critically approach the text and work out what is weak as well as what is strong within it. My argument is that Engels' main model within Origins, the 'two modes' theory, is wrong and does not work. But there are five other theories in the book which are undeveloped. We need to identify and develop these so as to reconstruct Engels' argument on the basis of solid scientific evidence.

TWO MODES

As an aside we must note that Engels wrote the 'two modes' theory on the wishes of Karl Marx and we must understand the conditions under which Engels did this. He was very much involved with the building of the Second International and he rushed out this book. In fulfilling Marx's wish he pulled together all the main arguments going round in anthropology, as if they were different parts of an argument that could be harmonised. I want to suggest that of the theories in his book the main one is wrong, while others are correct. And we have to work out how to synchronise these five secondary arguments.

The 'two modes' argument refers to the mode of reproduction and the mode of production. These, he says, determine the course of history. Engels argues that there were three main phases in human history, called (using the 19th century language) savagery, barbarism and civilisation. During the first two phases of savagery and barbarism, society was largely organised around kinship rather than economic relationships. He argues that the emergence from our ape-like ancestry was led by women. Mothers policed their daughters' sexual relations on the basis of their knowledge of who was and who was not a close relative. These prohibitions on incest were at first unconscious, but slowly expanded.

Engels took this argument entirely from the work of Lewis Henry Morgan. Morgan was a millionaire Republican railroad

However, the model I have described also explains its own collapse. Once the big-game animals go, large-scale, collective organisation cannot sustain itself. Look at it from the point of view of a woman with a young baby who sees a big animal during the Mesolithic. She says to the men, 'Quick, food, go get it!' But they say, 'Sorry, it's the wrong moon. We can't hunt it.' We must remember that there were 100,000-200,000 years which say that they hunt during the waxing phase of the month. If the women instruct them to hunt anyway, then the ritual aspect, the prescription to hunt at certain times, has to be ignored. Yet if you are to survive under new conditions you have to undermine your own religion, your own cosmology.

Perhaps the old women would demand that the old ways that worked were stuck to. But in the Mesolithic they do not work any more. You can imagine the terrible divisions that might have emerged in the group: should they stick to the old ways or should they innovate? If the argument gets out of control, then the collective starts to break down. How can they stay together as a group? Economically you adapt by fragmenting the group, but symbolically you must find something to hold you together, by making revisions to the system. Perhaps they did this by agreeing to meet up only once or twice a year, on the solstices perhaps, to act out the dark-moon ritual which can no longer be followed every month.

The group that emerges, according to all the field work that has been done, is one in which men have displaced women in taking over the leadership role, and they do this in alarming ways. They do it by taking over the blood symbolism that women previously used; by organising 'brotherhoods', secret societies, organisations of men, in which they then substitute themselves for the group as a whole. Women now will be unable to stay together as a group, unable to synchronise menstruation and drive the social dynamic according to a monthly lunar schedule that oscillates between waxing and waning phases.

small game large groups cannot survive. Therefore the large coalitions for the provisioning of mothers with children collapse - in fact in the archaeology books it is called the 'Mesolithic crisis'. During the Mesolithic evidence of the existence of large social groups disappears completely.

We are almost certainly completely human 120,000 years ago - maybe 200,000 years ago. The end of the Palaeolithic is 10,000 years ago. Therefore for well over 100,000 years - an astonishing period of time - we are living in what Engels called primitive communism. And then it collapsed. If sex-strike theory is correct, it makes some very unusual predictions. In fact these predictions are so unusual that they are easy to test and therefore easy to refute. It makes the prediction, for example, that women led sex-strike strategy through synchronising their menstrual cycles by collectively secluding themselves and collectively bleeding at the dark moon, then mobilising the men as husbands to go on a hunt at full moon, its illumination facilitating this over the nights and days required. The hunt is complete and the meat is brought back to the camp, which is the sphere of the women. The cooking fires are re-lit and the menstrual blood is removed. Their blood and that of the animals is conflated symbolically and it can then be consumed. Women and meat can be 'consumed'.

This is an unusual argument, and most people do not know how to 'hear' it. Many will understand this as the 'little woman stuck at home' argument - on occasion it has led to a terrible hue and cry, because it is thought that I am collapsing into a domestic portrayal of a woman's role. But the women are collectivised, women control the fires, women control the centre. The men go away to do the hunting and this sounds as if the men are being active and the women passive, but that is not how this argument works. Our culture makes it hard to hear this the way the argument is intended, which is why it has yet to get anywhere and there are only a few of us making it. For those of us who study it carefully, however, it works. We must go for the long haul and stick to the argument.

speculator pushing the railway to the west coast and he had dealings with the Seneca Iroquois Indians in the eastern states. Being an upright, honest and straight-talking Yankee, he was much respected by and came to know them well.

He was astonished to find that for the Seneca there were no *individual* descriptive kinship terms. There were whole groups of people called 'husbands' and 'wives', and other groups called 'mothers' and 'fathers'. Later the Smithsonian Institute carried out a survey and discovered that there were many other places throughout the world that used the same group kinship terms, in which whole categories could be 'partner' or 'parent'. Morgan called these practices 'classificatory kinship systems' and 'group marriage'. This was a primitive, early stage in human evolution, in which group marriage was allied to hunting, gathering and early horticulture. Engels and Morgan believed that the economic basis for these cultures was extremely fragile and that people were constantly on the edge of starvation.

However, the argument goes, as we evolved and became more human-like, we were better able to invent technology and from there to grasp and organise the basis of our subsistence. This then moved us away from being on the constant edge of starvation. Hunting and gathering won't cut it - that was the belief. It is fragile, and does not facilitate easy survival. Therefore, the closer we are to hunting and gathering, the closer we are to animality. The closer we are to agriculture, the closer to humanity.

According to this argument, the 'group marriage' mode of reproduction of our earliest ancestors was eventually replaced by pairing marriage. It is through this evolution of kinship terms that we then became fully human: we became more intelligent, more able to build technology and, through that technology, more able to move towards a mode of production in which food is *produced* rather than hunted or gathered. This is the 'two modes' argument.

So in the stages of savagery and barbarism - the Iroquois being in barbarism, according to Engels - the mode of production was ex-

tremely narrow and we had not fully evolved. As Engels is making this argument, however, he is at the same time saying, 'Women are enormously respected amongst the League of the Iroquois. They have leadership roles, their voices are equal to men, women are not abused.' He thus has enormous respect for the Iroquois based on the reports of Morgan. But he goes further. He says that amongst the Hawaiians we can find even more ancient kinship terms, in which it is not just groups, but brothers and sisters and possibly fathers and daughters, mothers and sons who can have sex. According to Morgan and Engels, this must indicate an earlier form of kinship less able to prohibit incest. So it is possible to find even more ancient forms of group marriage than those amongst the Iroquois.

The argument is that if society is organised around kinship terms and if the economy is undeveloped, then we are not fully evolved. The more equal we are, the less developed the economic organisation, the less agriculture there is - the less there is a mode of production. So where there is equality between men and women, where there is communism, it is in the most primitive conditions, where we are driven by biology, but have little control over our economic survival. In fact the term 'mode of production' hardly applies to Engels' argument about the equality of primitive communism. Instead of specifying the relations of production this argument specifies biological relations. It may be consistent with the concept of a mode of reproduction, but as a Marxist method it does not work. Within anthropology today no-one would accept this characterisation of kinship organisation.

The Hawaiian Indians, for example, did not practise a form of group marriage where brothers and sisters or fathers and daughters could have sex. Morgan, and therefore Engels, completely misunderstood what was going on amongst the Hawaiians, where the verbal categories 'brother' and 'sister' or 'husband' and 'wife' do not match our expectations. They had a very loose language system and used the terms in a way that was outside the linguistic categories we are familiar with. Straight after Engels died the German

approaching males compared to those who did temporarily reject doing so - the costs and benefit of getting males to provision you, as opposed to just looking after yourself.

The greater the coalition you can bring around you, the more likely you are to survive; and the more likely your offspring are to survive, who then will have their own offspring. That is the way the new Darwinism makes the argument, which is confirmed by the mathematical models.

WHEN DID IT ALL GO WRONG?

The economic precondition for all of these arguments is mass, big-game plenty. Therefore this is not a sex argument: sex drives apes, but economics drives humans. We turned sex around, we domesticated sex, we set the conditions under which sex can happen when as hunter gatherers we were present at our own making.

However, the material precondition of mass, big-game plenty in the Palaeolithic eventually collapsed and there is a mega-extinction of big-game animals at the end of the Palaeolithic. Almost certainly that happened because we humans are really good at killing animals. When we got together in a group, we only had to kill one or two of the matriarchs in, for example, a mammoth herd, and that herd would collapse. It could not have been climate change that was the cause, because there had been seven ice ages before the Palaeolithic and the big animals did not die out. It was only when we developed a sufficiently high level of social solidarity that we could organise collective big-game hunts. And then, wherever we arrive, wherever we spread all over the globe, within about one millennium all the big-game animals have gone. Our success actually undermined the very conditions of what Engels called primitive communism.

The next period in archaeology in north-western Europe is the Mesolithic, where humans are now *small*-game hunters. But with

points out that what unites these two family forms amongst apes is the fact of primate jealousy - males cannot cooperate amongst themselves, because they are always competing to monopolise females.

All of modern primatology confirms this argument - cooperation beyond a certain level will always break down. And it goes further. No ape male provisions an ape female. Males may guard them or fight off other males, but what we know about primate social systems today is exactly what Engels was talking about. He argued that our ancestors, our common ancestors with the apes, somehow overthrew the system of competitive male sexual jealousy - they must have done it in some way, although he was quite candid that he did not know how.

Now this argument works, because the primatology is correct. But notice that this is not just us becoming a little less ape-like or a little bit more human-like. This is a revolutionary argument: competitive male sexual jealousy must have been overthrown.

This is why I support sex-strike theory, which uses exactly that same foundation to work out an abstract model about how we could have become human. That abstract model can then be tested against all the different types of evidence we have available. I do not know of any other argument that comes close to explaining how we overthrew ape male sexual jealousy other than sex-strike theory. And it is based on the radical conclusion of women's leadership. Groups of women repelled approaching males with the demand that they become economically useful. The women only released themselves from inviolability once they were being economically provisioned.

Human children are enormously dependent on adults, and the burden of bringing up a child is colossal. A female in the Palaeolithic needs lots of support. She gets support from sisters and mothers, but it would be a real advance if she could also get support from the male who may be the father of the child. You can work out the costs and benefit to those females who did not reject

Marxist anthropologist Heinrich Cunow wrote a critique of *Origins*. He said that Marx's' method was strong in so far as it specified the relationship between economic organisation and social practices; and that to suggest that primitive communism is not related to economic organisation, but simply to the sexual dynamic to overthrow incest, is a deviation from the Marxist method.

OTHER MODELS

Origins also contains other models separate from the two modes theory. Let me start with what I would call the chastity model and another I would call the 'marriage by capture' model.

According to the chastity model, women were attempting to end incest by removing group marriage. As I have said, group marriage entails a situation where whole groups of women could have any man within a group as a husband. Engels argues that the move towards pairing relationships implied an aspiration to chastity as a form of release from group marriage. In stating this he is capitulating to Victorian morality, because in other parts of the book he states that at certain festivals women enjoyed a release from the bonds of marriage through brief liaisons with young men.

The 'marriage by capture' model predicts that, once pairing marriage is brought in by the mothers, and once there is an ideal for chastity, then from men's point of view there occurs a scarcity of women. So groups of men go on the hunt for women and, when they capture one, in Engels' words, they "have their pleasure with this woman, and the man who led the capturing party then has her as his wife". Not to put too fine a point on it, this is gang rape. Again, remarkably, when Engels is talking about the high status of women with the Iroquois, he also refers to marriage by capture. These arguments do not fit.

Engels has another theory relating to what he calls the 'primitive communistic household'. He talks about groups of women amongst

the Leagues of the Iroquois, as sisters with their mothers and brothers, running the long house. And in these relationships their husbands from another matrilineal clan are temporary sexual partners who come to visit them. The men live with their sisters and their mothers but they have wives in another long house.

Engels points out that because of sororal solidarity a visiting man who sexually approaches a woman is then at a disadvantage because he must go to a house where she has all her sisters and her mothers around her, and perhaps her brothers if she needs help. Therefore a visiting husband must be on his best behaviour because he is being watched and assessed as to whether or not he is respectful towards the woman. The most significant way he can demonstrate respect is to provide her and her relatives with hunted meat.

In this model of the matrilineal long house women have power because they are sisters. They do not have power as mothers policing the sexual relations of their daughters against incestual liaisons. So the communistic household argument, which also came from Morgan, gives power to women as matrilineal sisters and, unlike the incest avoidance argument, it works. The whole of modern anthropology supports it.

When Engels was writing, anthropology was in its infancy and very little field work had been done. But I would suggest that Engels is not using the term 'mode of production' in a Marxist way. Looking back today from modern capitalism it seems that the low level of simple 'flint and fire' technology, typical of the Palaeolithic, was one of fragility. But what does it mean when we talk about forces of production? It means labour itself, instruments of production and the objects of labour. Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers, according to our standards, had extremely diminished instruments of labour.

However, what we have found in the anthropology of the period over the last 30 or 40 years is that the hunters of the Palaeolithic lived, effectively, in a garden of Eden. They lived in a situation of

mass, big-game plenty. An extreme affluence, in that abundant objects of labour were roaming the landscape. As long as you have solidarity, as long as you have fire, as long as you have flint, you have enough for regular, successful, big-game hunts. All of palaeoanthropology has established this through the archaeology of our hunter-gatherer ancestors. Therefore, measured from the point of view of labour-time, these cultures were ones of mass luxury.

That brings us back to Engels' claim that in so-called primitive communism there was complete equality, freedom, no classes, no oppression and enormous respect for women. But now we can see that the economic basis of such equality was one of mass affluence. This contrasts with Engels' claim that such equality and respect for women was based on extreme scarcity - on cannibalism in fact! He says that they lived in such terrible conditions that cannibalism was endemic in these cultures. No, cannibalism began later - it was with agriculture that there developed a human sacrifice dynamic. There was no cannibalism among the big-game hunters of the Palaeolithic.

So Engels has it completely upside-down in terms of the economics of hunter-gatherers which preceded agriculture. We need to link the term 'mode of production' to our hunter-gatherer ancestors and then come up with an argument that works on the basis of modern anthropology.

SEX STRIKE

There are two final models within Engels' *Origins*, the first of which concerns the overthrow of primate jealousy.

There is an astonishing little paragraph where he quotes Alfred Espinas, a primatologist of the 19th century. Espinas had pointed out there were two types of ape social system: monogamy, in which one ape male monopolises one ape female; and the harem system, in which one ape male monopolises a group of females. Engels