

May 2021 Entry (on anti-natalism, reproductive consciousness and worldviews)

“They [dogs and cats] don’t even understand, we are sure, any relationship between a sexual encounter and pregnancy and birth, and therefore, cannot understand the necessity or techniques for interfering with the process. They seem closed off from their own mortality and the peril of it all. That level of comprehension would appear to be ours alone.” – [Roger Caras, A Cat is Watching \(1989\)](#), p. 208.

On sunny April 26, 2021, I ‘rescued’ a young female cat who rubbed up against my leg outside while I was talking to the neighbor lady’s friend on the sidewalk down the block. A cat rubbing up against my leg is not uncommon either in my house or on my porch so I didn’t at first notice, but then I realized I wasn’t at home and looked down to see a pretty grey tiger cat that I took to be about a year and a half old, rubbing against my leg. I exclaimed in [falsetto](#) (my normal ‘cat-talk’ voice), “Where did you come from!?” The lady I was talking to asked, “Is that one of your cats?” “No, I’ve never seen this cat before,” I replied. The cat followed me home (what every kid says when they bring a stray dog home!), but I had to lure her into a cat carrier with food to get her into the house.

I quarantined her from the other cats to let her get used to the house, she was very friendly to me (but not toward my other cats...) and I am sure she was someone’s cat that either got out or that some [you fill in the blank ____] human dumped in the neighborhood. I came to suspect that she was pregnant, this is possibly the reason she was dumped or got out or perhaps it was a result of it. It is also probably the reason she was looking for a human caretaker or [pet parent](#); as a lady friend pointed out to me an hour or two later, female cats become very affectionate and vocal before giving birth. I do not, of course, know her previous name, but that evening, I decided to call her [Gaia](#) (I am sure it matters not to her...), as I had recently been reading a selection from [Lynn Margulis](#)’ 1998 book [Symbiotic Planet: A New Look at Evolution](#) on Google Books.

I was that evening discussing getting her [spayed](#) with an animal rescue friend and I assumed that they wouldn’t spay her if she was pregnant, that they’d check beforehand, but I found out that is not the case. I am not in any way medically trained, I have only the general idea of what they do to spay a female cat or dog, but I was told that if they spayed her they’d have to [euthanize](#) her kittens in the process. That provoked a [visceral reaction](#) (an issue discussed in [5 Fallen to Earth](#)) from me and stopped the conversation.

“Julio Cabrera, David Benatar ... and Karim Akerma all argue that procreation is contrary to Immanuel Kant’s practical imperative (according to Kant, a man should never be used as a means to an end, but always be an end in himself). They argue that a person can be created for the sake of his parents or other people, but that it is impossible to create someone for his own good; and that therefore, following Kant’s recommendation, we should not create new people. Heiko Puls argues that Kant’s considerations regarding parental duties and human procreation in general imply arguments for an ethically justified antinatalism. Kant, however, according to Puls, rejects this position in his teleology for meta-ethical reasons. ...

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Julio Cabrera argues that procreation is a violation of autonomy because we are not able to obtain a human's consent when we act on this human's behalf through procreation, and that a rational agent, having reliable information about the human situation and the ability to speak about its possible coming into existence, might not want to be born and experience the harms associated with existence (this is a reference to a thought experiment proposed by Richard Hare, who claims that birth would be undoubtedly chosen)." – from Wikipedia article, "Antinatalism," captured July 31, 2019.

So I thought, how does this reconcile with my understanding of [reproductive consciousness](#) and my anti-natalist reasoning? There are really two different questions here, or two different levels of the same question. For starters, I am not opposed to [contraception](#) for humans who understand reproductive consciousness (however, the worldwide dropping [Fertility Replacement Rate](#) may eventually change that conversation again, there are a lot of moving parts, discussed in [4 Taxation & Census](#)) nor do I oppose generally [spay/neuter](#) for common domesticated, [feral](#), and [semi-feral pet species](#) who do not understand reproductive consciousness. But that's where I draw the line, I will not be the 'harm' that can come to a fetus or a baby animal for being in this world, absent any compelling necessity (the larger moral and legal abortion argument is more nuanced in this respect). One of the things that really riles me is when I hear that a man got a woman pregnant and then asks her to get an [abortion](#). Man-up already! Deal with it, ok? It takes two to tango, you did it. *Be a human*.

So I would never agree to abort animal fetuses in the process of spaying a female. But certainly, it's a very thin line because humans who are subjected to involuntary sterilization for [racial- or ethnic-cleansing](#) purposes (check the sordid history of this, e.g., [Eunuchs of the Chinese Imperial Court](#)) or for other equally immoral and silly reasons (e.g., [Castrato](#) opera singers), certainly consider it a 'harm' to them that they cannot reproduce. *Because, they have reproductive consciousness*. While it is not at all clear that animals who are 'fixed' understand that they cannot reproduce, or if they would care if they did... which spins off into another question, does '[harm](#)' depend on perception and understanding? That is a question I have wondered about before because in psychology, history, and anthropology, one encounters ritualized cultural behaviors that would in our world be instantly considered homosexual and/or pedophilic, criminal – and the 'victims' and their culture don't seem to suffer harm because it is considered normal, honorable, familial, sacred, or ritual, as part of growing up or coming-of-age in their culture. Moving on...

I don't think therefore that Kantian anti-natalist thought is a license to abortion (or [murder](#) or [suicide](#)) and I certainly hope that no one has read my comments in that way; I've never been an abortion activist either pro or con, I've never felt politically motivated by the issue, but certainly some situations force one to reason through ideas and ideals in ways that they might not normally have encountered them previously and to make a sensible tapestry of their views.

As it turns out, the question was [mooted](#); she gave birth in her temporary cat cage home

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on the night of April 28-29, 2021 and I awoke to find her nursing two finger-sized mewling kittens. *Gaia* was actually a perfect name for her! She was very friendly, with no hostile reaction to me being around, touching or handling her kittens but was not so toward the other cats who were instinctively curious about the source of the little mewling sounds. I am sure this is her first litter and having only two kittens is [consistent with the female being young and/or a first time mother](#). Nature is kind in that way not to overburden a young female first-time mother, or perhaps nature is cold and calculating in enhancing the likelihood that the young mother and kittens will survive and make more. She will, of course, be spayed after her kittens are weaned and if the kittens survive, that will amount to a fertility replacement rate in her case of 2.0 or [zero population growth](#).

Continuing Thoughts, Late-May 2021:

The subject of [testosterone](#) in the development of early-modern humans is discussed in [3 Technology](#).

“Humans went through a major development 50,000 years ago, when the species, which first developed 150,000 years earlier, started to develop tools and art started to flourish.

Testosterone levels in humans was beginning to moderate down to modern concentrations around the same time, according to a new study. Study was undertaken of 1,400 modern and ancient skulls, which led to the understanding of decreasing testosterone levels. Among these were 13 skulls more than 80,000 years old, along with 41 specimens aged between 10,000 and 38,000 years, and 1,367 modern skulls, representing 30 ethnic backgrounds. Researchers believe that lower levels of the male hormone may have led to a greater degree of understanding between people, reducing violence, allowing arts and toolmaking to become more advanced. ‘The modern human behaviors of technological innovation, making art and rapid cultural exchange probably came at the same time that we developed a more cooperative temperament,’ Robert Cieri, from the University of Utah and lead author of the study, said. Decreasing testosterone levels were noticeable through the changes to the shape of human skulls from the period. Thick eyebrow ridges receded, as heads became rounder.” – James Maynard, “New Study Links Lower Testosterone Levels to the March of Civilization,” Tech Times, August 12, 2015.

While the plural of antecedent is not data, my daily interactions with and observation of the behavioral changes in recently-neutered male colony cats bears out the theory of the effect of decreased testosterone levels in complex mammalian males. They are much calmer (after a week or so), socialable toward both their human caretaker and other cats, and they show evidence of tribal bonding and collective territorial defense against other marauding male cats. They still harass and chase the spayed female cats though...

“Testosterone levels can also affect social interactions of our primate relatives, according to researchers. Male chimpanzees experience a large increase in testosterone levels

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during puberty, while concentrations among bonobos is small. When chimps become stressed, their bodies release additional testosterone, while cortisol, a hormone related to stress, floods the bloodstream of bonobos. Social interactions between chimpanzees are much more prone to violence than similar incidents between bonobos. Brow ridges are also much more pronounced in chimps than they are in the mellower species.” *Id.*

By Charles W. Phillips