

# Why we should

An introduction by memoir into the implications of the  
Egalitarian Revolution of the Paleolithic, or,  
Anyone for cake?

by

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"You shouldn't should on people."

I cannot remember her name. Nor her face. Brown hair, maybe. Short. All of them, us, had short hair. No, not me, I had long thin nothingness. They were squatting a terrace. Hippie-punks? I was crashing there.

Trendies, that was the word. Melbourne. Brunswick. 1985?

The trendies were chatting earnestly in the kitchen. I was in the lounge room and I might as well have been still in Tasmania. I was not a part of the conversation. I am sure she had used the phrase before. I carry what she said even now.

For someone even younger than I had just begun, quietly and well meant, "Well, you should—"

What the advice was for I cannot recall, perhaps to help in responding to yet another somebody's behaviour, also not present. These names and their doings just floating by. Unmemorable. And then.

"You shouldn't should on people."

General laughter.

I do remember that Brian Howe was the Minister of Social Security in the Hawke government. He either owned the property squatted, or the squatters had put all the services on in his name, or both.

He would get all the bills. General laughter.

I guess they should not have done that, but they felt they should make a point, about housing stress. Sorry Brian.

Sorry Melbourne, I hear you are headed for a population of 8 million.

### Hunger does not tell you how to bake a cake

"You shouldn't should on people."

I would love to add that the trendies were baking a cake in the kitchen, but they were just hanging out. So instead I will bake an essay.

Cakes, like all things we make, are produced from a number of sources, ingredients and tools, and produced for a variety of

reasons and occasions in which the cake will be shared. I will list my essay ingredients in a reading list at the end.

Now, in a modern economy each source is honoured with a supermarket of options, but even in the oldest human ecologies the cake, even a simple damper, is the product of a society in negotiation. Who does what when.

Seeds will be gathered as grain, then processed and ground, on quernstones, into flour. Water must be drawn nearby and held ready to pour into the wholemeal and mixed into dough, perhaps in a fired-clay bowl. Fuel must be collected, a fire ignited and tended, until, at least if no oven is built, its coals and ashes are just right to bake the dough, without burning, into a cake or loaf if the dough ferments. It might take a group of people all day to get this simple thing done. Let alone the later seasons of labour in agriculture.

Here the recipe is often taken as finished, when it is ready to eat, but actually the recipe continues in organising the meal itself. For all cakes have a why, if only in the sharing among those who have helped with all of the tasks above, or, importantly, who may help tomorrow. And here, in the shared occasion, the problems of the day, of the coming week, will be discussed and things organised, for the meals to come. Recipes

are never finished in the long run, not even, not yet, over generations. The meal is a meeting at the hearth on a midden. It gets things done by organising them, not by ordering them. These are the reasons for baking a cake. It's the recipe for the recipe, for hunger does not tell you to how to bake a cake, and certainly not why.

### Why you share

Among primatologists and ethologists investigating the evolution of humans full of shoulds and should-nots, from primates and other more political animals, alpha-ed and fanged and given to displays of dominance, a new claim has arisen in answer to question, "Why share, at all?"

Sharing requires an ability to imagine things from another's point of view. And to imagine a world in which others can do that too. At some point the capacity grown in a larger group of humans all with well-developed theory of minds, lead to an egalitarian overthrowing of alpha dominance, or at least a restriction of those tendencies, and the creation of the world as we know it, sometime in the Paleolithic. Out of the crude politics of the primate troop a morally urging creature pulled itself up out of the in-fighting. Humans did this themselves.

The urge to share I will call the moral urge, and not just to share the foodstuffs, but to share it as a meal among the group, related or not. And not just a meal but the urge to share the conversation, share the day, share tomorrow, imagine that. And in that meeting space, well fed and safe, we feel the urge to should on people in conversation about what should be done, what should be planned for, what should be worried about in the days to come. For when basic amenities are met and comfort can be accommodated much wrangling can be eased. Or, as we would say, should be met, should be accommodated, just as we should share fire and food as shelter and hospitality.

It is society, in making a meal out of food, that it makes of itself a home for the public sphere. We call this the world. Before we created the world there were no humans. We have always been here.

When we share we meet, when we meet we organise our lives. This literally insured survival for *Homo* groups in unpredictable and bad times. The meal allows the meeting to discuss tomorrow's activities and any future risks of scarcity. It gives us the space to think about the children. The world is primarily a space for nurturing tomorrow. But it does so in a very roundabout and confusing way, which even after all this time we have

not yet fully worked out. That's why I want to share this cake, I mean, essay.

### The moral urge does not tell you how to be moral

The moral urge is not an urge to be moral, or to have a morality, but to should people into personhood, I.E a member of society. Its greater outcome is what we call the world, where all those shoulding members interact.

For just as the urge to eat does not tell us how to bake a cake, the moral urge does not tell us how to code a morality, how to norm our conventions, nor how to make the world. This urge tells us to get on with it, or at least to should aloud, that, "something should be done!"

What should be done however is up for discussion (which in itself scares many people about the fragility of the world, as if talking can destroyed the world that talking creates).

It is in this social push that the moral urge organises us, not through any finer directives of behaviour, even if there are thresholds of avoidances for individuals (via imperatives of disgust, anxiety). This push is an indirection, and moves us to get along with each other, despite/because of critical opinions freely flowing. Opinions that include, we should get along, or



not. This is what the moral urge provides in provoking conversation, and is met in organisation, by family and band which broaden into society and tribe or market. A movement from which mistakes can be made and lessons learned, then shared, passed on and reviewed.

Groups of primates who were less organised than this bare modicum did not survive as well in unstable times. Our human success is due not to being the best ordered gang in existence, because of a morally superior morality, but to being organised at all, badly or not, and being able to learn from those errors, well or not. That is the baseline for humans to be more than a bunch of well-fanged if high-browed red-arsed baboons.

The missing link is not a bone, but an urge, the moral urge.

### We are human because we have meetings

Hunger and thirst are urges, and move us to action in kindness or distress, which when sated allow other notices to prevail, to seek shelter, perhaps, to seek a mate, in love or desire. These urges have been brought into the moral order, for every encounter thus moved is shared with the moral urge. We socialise everything: the repetitive greetings, the wayward conversations, a tedious brunch, a fantastic sporting match, the tired

rites and obsessive rituals, in enduring birthdays, giving praise, or shyly accepting thanks.

We are human because we have meetings— and a meeting is a meal without food.

These things, these everyday movements cluster into expectations, and their routines clutter the baking of cakes into cuisines (tribes, nations, leagues), i.e. the smaller moral outcomes inform the bigger, which then abstract themselves with names: Morality, Religion, Tradition, Order *etc.* These things are derivative abstractions, they are not causal.

Of course, these overlap with each other, and inform each other. They breed and reproduce in “epicycles” memetically. Each a different emphasis, popular at different times, in different places, of the same “thing”. These fashionings delineate the group and their individuals (band and families, cults and clubs) from outgroups, enemies and the non-human. A 1980s Brunswick anarchist will look at that capitalised list of names above *etc.* and say, “you shouldn’t should on people.”

But it is the same thing.

The moral urge does not care about categories, overlapping or not, or even the logic of the excluded middle, for it precedes

grammar. The first sentence ever spoken probably held some shouldy sentiment, and a lot less grammar.

These are the voices inside and out that should you to marry, not just who. That should you to believe, not just what. That says you should get what you get because you should better than those devils over there who don't even...

The moral urge does not care about Morality, Religion, Tradition, Order *etc.* For as long as you should on others as you should have them do you, then humans can survive. The moral urge does not care what the details of your dietary code are, as long as you share a meal and survive another day. It does not care that you think yourself a man rather than an adult. The moral urge does not care what you all say, so long as you all chat and chant together. The moral urge does not even care whether you all should the same way, even though that seems the most basic should of all.

As long as people are shoulding near each other, in agreement or not, society is created, and people will survive. Even in a shitty society, compared to none, for everything else is up to us —should we choose to take it on.

## It should not be

The moral urge does not care, but so strong is the moral urge in us that we are shocked when this is pointed out. It should care. It should be meaningful. It should be the well-spring of everything we hold dear, and not merely, umm, instrumental. Otherwise the world will fall apart. Exclamation mark.

But life goes on, so that must be wrong, even if it feels right, because we care about the world.

But care, like meaning, arises out of all the urges we meet and negotiate in our day to day lives. Care is always of the world first, even when it is about the world. Care thus has difficulty preceding the human world.

For just as hunger does not care about how you bake and share a cake, the moral urge is quite uncaring about caring. It cannot care to care. Merely that we should ourselves about things like... how we should care about others, as ourselves.

Or not.

Thus the world is made. It may not need saving if we should it along, and thus heroes will not be needed except in stories and song to shorten the nights of no dreaming.

Human groups that did not do this chatty shouldy virtual building of worldly virtue —were not as successful at surviving the bad times, at evening out the less than ordinary, nor at preparing for the seasons ahead. These groups could not plan, nor review the behaviour among themselves, nor measure outcomes. They can only shout at the sun.

Next time you should on someone you should remember all of this, and don't be ashamed to should. Even when you agree you shouldn't should on someone.

### Morality is Narcissus by the pool, a reflection, it is not the spring

The moral urge is not a morality ordering society, that has it backwards. And no, society does not make a morality to order, that is not what I mean here. Both “morality” and “society” are the larger outcomes of the “moral urge”. As co-products, neither morality nor society can be the originary source of the other, they “co-presence”. They may codify the shoulds and the should-nots, they may rule on who gets what they deserve in the blame game, they may recycle and recursively play in confounding ways, “a co-evolution”, but all of these details and the way these details have come to be, the stories we tell, are of no

concern to the moral urge. It merely urges that something should be done, but not what something that is, nor how.

Human survival depends upon this organisational power, but human extinction is not foresworn if we should and should-not all day long, as many moralities proclaim, or at least, the moral urge shoulds on us to feel-think.

Perhaps we should examine this more —that we have everything backwards.

The moral urge can push people to should in such a way, as to say, that they, the people who should the world into existence, are merely pointing out what some orchestrator has decided. Thus we should called them “the creator”. Unfortunately the world came first. God is like a patent troll, and you cannot be a patent troll where there are no legal patenting systems.

These gods or karmic orders are an outcome of the moral urge playing upon rituals and roles we perform, behaviours we act into habit and stages of life. It is the moral urge which pushes us to pick up these outcomes and proclaim they order society, even as the moral urge pushes us to create the world in the first place. It is in the provocation to organise that creates the world, and not in the proclamation to name some so-and-so as respon-

sible for creation. That's a blame game (also powered by the moral urge unfortunately).

A repetition here is instructive.

We make gods in our own image, so we have made gods makers, and what could be more sickly narcissistic than the self-abnegation required to make our gods responsible for making the whole world. We made this up and in that moment avoid responsibility for making it up. And then we say, lazily, all is as it should be under heaven.

How beautiful we are. Exclamation mark.

In this apotheosis, looked at more positively than perhaps we should, we offer up our own natures to the gods we have just made up. We sacrifice ourselves in order to create the creator. This sacrifice creates the entire sacred space that the religious feel they should impose upon the world, saying, it was always thus, or to save it anew. For remember, of truth, reality, the moral urge cannot care.

Religion would be nothing without the world.

For the longest time we could not even imagine that we are our own origin. Even when we know we have always been here.

Confoundingly, we give what makes us human, to beliefs we make in our own image, and all at the urging of what allowed us to make the world from among us in the first place, in the long ages of the paleolithic, in a revolution that took hundreds of thousands of years among a number of *Homo* species, that subsumed the politics of primacy into a moral order, which should also be known as the world. Religion is always idolatry.

### Worldbuilding

The world is thing made by us. It is the every thing. A thing, that is, if you know the word 'thing' means meeting, and still means parliament, pardon my French, in Nordic languages. It is only by the usages of things as affairs, items, that the thing as object gains it's more ontological status. Things are not originarily objects, but meetings. Useful to remember in a compositional space like the human world. (Possible useless in discussing space-time however.)

So if things are meetings, and the world is everything, the world is a meeting, and never ever over. Meetings feel like they go on forever because they have been going on since the beginning of the world. (This is why hell is other people.) The world's beginning is so long ago it is as if it has been here since the beginning of the world. Umm.... (The earth is older than the world, as is time itself).

When a hero saves the world, he is saving a meeting. Often portrayed in some minor task like a stable boy, the stage is set to imbued the now Herculean work as vital to the world itself. Of course not every stable hand is allowed to save the world by virtue of their work. Ancestors get first claim, as giants or their kin, and in our latter days one's job to save the world simply consists in honouring the



ancestors, or castrate them before they, like Chronos, eat all the children.

It's a bit conflicted this world creation thing, created as it was by urges originally not sharing anything at all, but learning to negotiate their way.

But here, now, that we begin to see that everything we have thought true is everything put backwards, what should we do?

### What is the ethical response to morality?

I have already apologised, if offhandedly, to Brian Howe, previous Minister of Social Security, and here I would like to also offer my thanks, to Brian and to everyone who contributes to society, not because they can but because they should, and thus for providing the space in the 1980s, with services that accommodated, with amenity and comfort, a group of young people discussing how to save the world, or at least how we, among others, were failing to do so. In particular, for making room for someone, who I have never met again, and who said, "You shouldn't should on people."

If you think you know who she might be, or what group in Melbourne talked like that in the mid-1980s, please let me know.

Also note, with this type of cake, you can eat it and share it too. Another win for the world.

## Ingredients and Methods

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Addendum 2020 March 30

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Forgot this influence because I never read it, only heard about it at the time of it's publication.