

NON-PRAGMATIC COMMUNICATIONS AND THE EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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The present article raises the problem of demarcating the sociality of animals and humans. Non-pragmatic communications guarantee, under specific ecological conditions, the success of the population's adaptation practices. It is known that these communications are directed at maintaining the unity of a group and, consequently, can be regarded as the starting point of the sociogenesis and evolution of consciousness. However, the specific features of the species involved in non-pragmatic communications, are not sufficient proof of the animals' sociality: the propensity towards cheating, for example, is but a guarantee of the eventual success in solving adaptation issues. The social qualities, peculiar to human beings, do not amount, by themselves, to a particular behaviour or psychological capabilities, as it is often wrongly thought in evolutionary psychology and ethology. Instead, they are related to perception skills of the interiorized environment of one's own kind, which are realized on an individual level. Given that such perception exists in subjective time and that the behaviour, resulting from this perception is realised according to biological cycles and physical time, there is a need to prepare oneself and other species to specific manifestation of the results. This preparation is the expression of sociality, that is, the ability to coordinate subjective intentions with a group's living conditions.

Keywords: non-pragmatic communication, proto-sociality, evolution of consciousness, sociogenesis, subjective time.

1. INTRODUCTION

The search for humans' natural origins by emphasizing the resemblance of the human to the animal and for humans' social origins by emphasizing their differences can no longer form the basis for research in the human sciences. There exists a "natural" sociality in the animal world, and it bears some resemblance to that of humans. The latter is naturalized and, once this is done, can not be a good reason for setting humans in opposition to nature, such an opposition having been widespread in the past. As it turned out, human social practices rest on the foundation, the first "building blocks" of which are so deep-rooted in life that they cannot be perceived only as a result of the humans' reasoned choice or a cultural product. Sociality appeared long before culture and before consciousness. However, from the perspective of speculative philosophy, it was culture and consciousness that were considered to be the only (or, at least, efficient) ways of actualizing the social origins. How was it actualized in nature before human beings appeared, endowed with consciousness and culture? How was it actualized, for example, for prehistoric people? Can we affirm that, in prehistoric times, people possessed some basic social origins as related to their natural origins?

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The importance of the first question lies in the necessity – crucial for the human sciences – to suggest either categories or terms that actualize sociality irrespectively of “consciousness” and “culture” (animals do not have culture, but they do have “social qualities”, and scholars in the human sciences must come to some decision as to how to face such a situation). The second question, less crucial, implies the search for phenomenology peculiar to prehistoric people, as well as the search for specific practices of social experiences (it can be of interest to the social studies within the context of the research on the genesis of sociality). Our third question implies that there could have existed a human adaptation strategy that was important in itself as an expression of the species’ vital beginning, to which *specific social practices* were related. Those social practices involving most people in our time are neutral in relation to the human vital beginning: “... a large number of cultural behaviours observed at any one time in a particular society are not aimed at adapting the population to the current physical environment” [1, p. 128]. However, the initial human sociality seems to have been more closely related to adaptation. Reconstructing this connection will enhance the understandability of the reason why “abandoned dogs turn again into gregarious predators, tied to a specific territory and headed by one male that monopolizes breeding”, “while a group of young British men, left in the midst of the African savanna, is unlikely to recreate to the full the social universe of our ancestors” (“most likely, people will die of starvation, because, for many thousands of years, we became too dependent on cultural traditions that help us provide for food and shelter”) [2, c. 398]? Why and to what extent did human social practices diverge from the adaptation ones and the *biologically advantageous* social practices? Did humans preserve some strategies and, for instance, some ways of reproduction that can be implemented on their own, without any support from social institutions?

Another thesis that is often advanced today when discussing the genesis of sociality dismisses the idea that sociality is a direct response to the “environmental challenge”. Early social practices should not be seen as a direct continuation of the adaptation practices related to the familiarization with ecological niche. Obviously, human social and biological qualities are of different nature and come from different sources, if only because human societies develop intensively as a result of mental factors, such as ideas, ideologies, theories, etc., that lack an objective natural status. However, it is also important to bear in mind that ethology and comparative psychology easily naturalize some biologically advantageous human social qualities. This being said, is there any need to join all human social qualities into one common group?

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND HYPOTHESIS: PROTO-SOCIALITY, SUBJECTIVE TIME AND HUMAN SOCIALITY

In line with the above, it appears that it is time to introduce the notion of proto-sociality. This notion refers to a set of animals’ qualities and abilities that are

necessary for the actualization and maintenance of a specific environment, produced by the animals themselves. An animal acts in relation not only to the “exterior” physical environment, but also to the “inner” environment, that is, in relation to another animal acting as a partner when familiarizing with the “exterior” environment. Proto-social practices concern a set of biologically conditioned actions and settings directed at improving relations inside one population and witnessing the actualization of new environmental aspects by the species, the control being kept by means of mentality and in cooperation with another species.

Proto-sociality means the sociality of animals and of humans, too. Modern human sociality is sociality properly so called. The latter’s specificity is based on the subjective and personal perception of the world of one’s like.

Proto-social practices are widespread in the animal world, and, arguably, there are grounds for building up their typology and for selecting into a separate group those of them that have played a considerable role in the genesis of human social qualities. As a working hypothesis, we assume that non-pragmatic communications were part of this specific group. Scholars have been considering for approximately forty years the hypothesis about non-pragmatic communications as a key factor of sociogenesis. Distinguished evolutionary psychologists, such as N. Humphrey [3] and R. Dunbar [4], have been formulating it within framework of the “social intelligence” theory. The term “Machiavellian intelligence” [5] turned out to be in great demand when considering the genesis of social qualities. This term is synonymous to the term “social intelligence”. However, their definitions somewhat differ. “Machiavellian intelligence” is more of a variety of “social intelligence” that is present in particular conditions (among primates, for example) [6, pp. 495-496]. Besides, it is easy to represent even the social behaviour of the primates, without placing a special emphasis on the “Machiavellian” elements of their mentality. N. V. Klyagin adopts the same approach in Russian philosophy [7].

Non-pragmatic communications take place in cases when there is no need or necessity to display a specific behaviour in terms of gender, nutrition or defence, but there is a necessity (and, maybe, a need) to achieve unity in the population. It is expected that, by adopting effective solutions to adaptation issues and, consequently, by having enough spare time, the population generates, in order to avoid disintegration or escalation of accidental or consistent conflicts, specific forms of behavioural activity aimed at the consolidation of a group during the time intervals when they are not busy solving adaptation issues (striving to “socialize their spare time by means of non-productive methods” [7, p. 44]). Some games and rituals, cognitively empty natural vocalisations or verbal communications (all kinds of “vocal grooming”, for example) are examples of non-pragmatic communications. As a matter of fact, non-pragmatic communications are directed at the “expression of mutual interest and commitment that could be simultaneously shared with more than one individual” [8, p. 187]. This provides a sufficient

explanation of what “vocal grooming” is, but games and – to some degree – rites can also be used to explain the phenomenon.

Non-pragmatic communications are also an indirect method of avoiding dangers brought forth by the new environments and dangers coming from other people: some individuals maintain the interest shown for themselves by others by means of specific words and actions, hoping not to become outsiders in the high “moral density” of the population and sometimes even despite the evident aggressiveness of the other towards themselves. Finally, even individuals’ trivial discussion of news and rumors, that has nothing to do with this particular society, can be represented as a way of indirect defence against potential dangers present in the environment of one’s like (“In the hominin world in which riskless killing becomes possible, individuals secure their safety by choosing the right friends, those who are most able of keeping them informed of any unusual situation going on” [9]). It may appear that, here, we deal with a pragmatist’s attitude and a singular strategy of defensive behaviour. It should, however, be emphasized that, even in this case, interactions between individuals are to be defined as non-pragmatic communications. An individual who attracts his group’s interest towards himself by behaving comically or by telling funny jokes and an individual who spreads or collects rumours are two examples of *asymmetrical non-pragmatic communications*, in which one party is, more or less, a deliberate pragmatist searching for benefits and profits in life, while the other party is not burdened, in this situation, by any pragmatic intentions.

Various forms and methods of symbolism are also related to non-pragmatic communications. A symbol (tattoo, decoration) performs an important regulating function; in other words, it clarifies for the recipient the status of the sender [10, 11, 12]. The amount of time that people have spent on the “symbolic interpretation” of their body makes us recognize these actions as justified from the evolutionary point of view. These weird actions (among other non-pragmatic communications) are vital, just like hunting, gathering, reproduction and protection from predators. But, on the other hand, they are, apparently, excessive and self-sufficient, that is, non-pragmatic.

Assuming that non-pragmatic communications are possible candidates to bridge innate programs of adaptation behaviour and social practices per se, the following question needs to be answered: why is the potential population segmentation, taking place after adaptation challenges have been responded to, unacceptable, after all? What dangers does it pose, beside the fact that, due to the rise in labour productivity, “production needs of hominids in one another decreased, and their communities should have disintegrated, lose their technology and turn hominids back into animals” [7, p. 42]? Or rather: “. . . some of hominids’ spare time became idle, and, with every achievement in rising labour productivity, spare time continued to take on an increasingly important role in hominids’ life. Inevitably, our ancestors had

the impression that their intense sociality was not at all needed for survival. <...> As a result, our ancestors' sociality was in danger. Those hominids' societies that learned to occupy their spare time with non-productive communication managed to live through it. Less successful societies disintegrated and became extinct" [13, p. 115]. As stated above and in many of his works, N. V. Klyagin pointed out that "human sociality... never depended on human will and consciousness" [13, p. 114], as it is determined by objective factors ("demographical and technological"). Despite this, when defining the genesis of sociality, Klyagin actualizes, voluntarily or not, the subjective factor: he mentions our ancestors' "impression" that intense proto-social (productive) practices were not needed; it is assumed that one part of our ancestors (ambiguously named "successful") felt the need – in the name of their future – to occupy their spare time with non-pragmatic communications. Perhaps, it would be worthwhile to investigate such reasons why our human ancestors, who embarked on the path of technic and technological development, showed a tendency towards preserving the unity of their communities, that would fit into the productive objective "demographical and technological" approach.

Let us imagine one of the versions of modeling objective reasons why early human communities did not disintegrate due to an important amount of spare time they had as a result of an effective adaptation strategy. Non-pragmatic communications will be examined here, first of all, as biologically determined and, secondly, as paving the way for social practices, properly speaking. Thus, we intend to show the status of this kind of practices in sociogenesis.

It is important to draw attention to some biological features of people, to the specificities of their adaptation behaviours inciting them to non-pragmatic communications. Omnivorism is peculiar to humans' eating behaviour. Reproductive capacity on a year-round basis is humans' sexual behaviour. The absence of predators that humans must face in order to survive is peculiar to humans' defensive behaviour.

How will such an animal survive? It might be suggested that control over vast territories featuring plenty of food resources that are accidentally and interchangeably consumed by an omnivorous population demands this group's constant mobilisation. It is required, first of all, to control the territory which, in its turn, secures stable access to a great variety of food resources. Figuratively speaking, connections within the group are similar to the stretched-out net comprising this or that territory and seizing everything useful.

The best possible size of populations of individuals having a year-round reproductive capacity is uncertain, as it varies within considerably different bounds (mainly shifting in balance towards dramatic growth) without adverse effects on the population.

The ecological factor (as it is the case with the eating behaviour) plays an important role in maintaining this situation: the environment favourable for

reproduction and having excessive resources reduces the dependence of a group's size on the environment's specific bio-productivity threshold. Potential access to a sexual partner at any time turns spare time into waiting time. However, expectation will be rewarded and justified only if the group will constantly exist as a group. The existing system of relationships within this group can be modified and updated, but the group itself should not split up and, all the more so, disintegrate.

The defensive behaviour of the population, that for some reasons has no grounds to fear the representatives of this or that species during specific time intervals without, however, being themselves predators, will again be effective only if individuals are constantly mobilized within the system of group interactions. If there is no threat at the time being, it can appear a minute later incidentally and coming from the representative of a previously unknown species.

Intersectionality of the above-mentioned behavioural models is easy to determine. The same goes for their relation to unique, to a certain extent, environmental conditions (in particular, ecological).

The image of early humans described above may seem unsightly. This being makes a practice of non-pragmatic communications ("culture") and spends the time free from solving adaptation issues on various "social fads that allow us to create a common bond among the members of a particular community" [14, p. 162], in order to be assured, as a matter of fact, that he can meet his basic vital needs and have easy access to food, sexual partners and safe environment. However, this image can be complicated.

In a more complex version, this model presents our ancestors' non-pragmatic communications as a generator of their intellectual skills necessary for future evolutionary conquests. These non-pragmatic communications contain something important for the genesis of the human intellect, an essential adaptation tool used to approach challenging tasks. Humphrey observes, quite reasonably, that, if animals spend most of their lives in "non-productive socializing" showing no "biological profit", they must effectively compensate the expenses in the remaining time: "If an animal spends all morning in non-productive socialising, he must be at least twice as efficient a producer in the afternoon" [3]. Non-pragmatic communications directly condition the growth of effective activity resulting in a specific direction of the human cognitive evolution. Let us call it spiritual development (objectively speaking, its content includes the enhancement and promotion of new forms and types of non-pragmatic communications).

The model presented above is not the only one. We can also suggest an alternative model that offers excellent development prospects. Non-genetic strategies of nutrition, gender and defence-related behaviours, such as domestication of plants and animals and related food and gender taboos and aggression within species. are the reasons for maintaining the unity of a successfully adapting group. These strategies contribute to the successful adaptation (we need not hurry to

mention its social status). However, given that they are non-genetic – it is only through experience that they become familiar with them – and rather burdensome for some specimens, D. Diamond rightly points out that a more aggressive and effective survival strategy of the human societies, as compared to the previous one, is not necessarily the most comfortable one for individuals that make up the population from physical and psychological perspectives [15]. Nature is expected to provide constant support to such individuals: societies involved in these strategies must periodically show behaviour, to which individuals are naturally predisposed, for instance, ludic or ritual behaviours. Thus, non-pragmatic communications result here from early humans' transition to new – stress – principles of determining the structure and size of populations and act as some sort of balancers of important, yet unstable connections.

No matter which one of the versions of the determinants of non-pragmatic communications has been chosen, the latter will be pointed at as the key factor of sociogenesis.

Undoubtedly, non-pragmatic communications are, at a global level, part of an adaptation strategy underpinned by specific ecological factors. From the evolutionary perspective, this strategy implies the individuals' privatization of time, which would have, probably, been impossible without the surplus of environmental resources necessary for early humans. In case these resources lacked or, even, if there was no surplus of them, human beings would have striven to privatize space, that is, to control the area where necessary resources were available. A primitive hunter or gatherer would move around for hours within a specific, controlled locus, waiting for an uncontrolled encounter with a difficult-to-obtain resource within the natural bio-productive environment. The same applies to relations inside the population: searching or fighting for a partner means, at the same time, searching or fighting for the places suited for mating. Time control comes forward when the place factor loses its significance: food is available everywhere, riskless and easy mating is possible everywhere. The length of waiting time related to access to a vital resource replaces the length of time needed for an action to take place in a hospitable and controlled locus, under specific ecological conditions. Since the necessary resource is available "everywhere" (there is no need to overcome an obstacle or some hostile environment in order to get access to it), it is not necessary to control time as physical action time, but control over subjective psychological time, important for shaping intentions, becomes possible. "Tools" and "organs" required by the subject to explore the privatized time considerably differ from those tools and organs used by the beings that dominate the space but are captives of time. "Mental tools" and "virtual organs" come into sight, and, in prospect, they will shape the perception of the social environment itself: conscience, sense of duty, wisdom, dignity, grandeur, law, among others. "...Mental time travel by humans is relatively unconstrained and allows a more rapid and flexible adaptation

to complex, changing environments than is afforded by instincts or conventional learning. Past and future events loom large in much of human thinking, giving rise to cultural, religious, and scientific concepts about origins, destiny, and time itself" [16, c. 133]. Of course, it is interesting, first and foremost, to investigate the very "mechanism" of the rise of "cultural, religious and scientific concepts" through the capability for "mental time travel", shaped by evolutionary processes.

The time perspective of activities - very relevant for humans - opened to their ancestors owing to the fact that bio-productivity of the controlled environment sharply increased, for some reasons, and guaranteed and/or planned events came into the life of the population blessed by fortune/nature. The time of expecting a resource and the time of controlling its consumption made up new circumstances in life. A hungry animal living on sporadic preys becomes an animal eating regular meals. As stated above, this change in circumstances is due not only to the chance, but also to a certain initiative: the environment's "artificial" bio-productivity, launched by the domestication of plants and animals (initially, domestication can be represented as a sort of symbiosis), can serve as an alternative to the environment's increased natural bio-productivity. Here, the need for a time-dependent organisation of the environment is even more evident: the time factor is essential to control "artificial" cycles of reproduction of the bio-resources. As a matter of fact, it is not at all important whether time became anew significant for the "hedonist", who lives from one meal to another in a comfortable setting, or rather for the "doer", whose life is determined by cycles of reproduction of plants or animals and by the management of the subsequent distribution of the resources obtained. What is important is that the dynamics of the exterior environment gets fixed in subjective time, and subjective time raises over biological time (or fits into it); beings that have a certain "reserve" of intentional attitudes, gathered in subjective time until the moment of possible action, appear in nature (in prospect, these beings turn into beings taking advantage of their ability to make plans and schemes before acting).

Apparently, a number of new needs, psychological by nature, are shaped in subjective time. In the first place, it is the need to bring random actions to a close (a "doer's" goal-oriented behaviour, stubbornness, perseverance). Another need amounts to the process of rhythmization and harmonization of random actions (a "hedonist's" tendency to idle about). These needs are due to the ability to correlate mental states and motor acts from the subjective time perspective: "if I am not persistent and stubborn, I will be disappointed", "if I relate my current euphoria to the bold and distinct rhythm the same way I related it yesterday, by pure chance, without any negative effects for myself, it will probably be understood correctly". The "mental time travel" ability acts nowadays as a precise demarcation line for animal and human cognitions and practices. When characterizing this ability, it is important to keep in mind that it not only provides access to the relevant reality at

the present time (it allows to distinguish it from the reality that has been preserved in memory and the reality that can be imagined). In the situation when objective time of the course of vital processes ceases to be important for survival, the “mental time travel” ability becomes the ability supported, mainly, by non-pragmatic communications (“spiritual culture”).

3. CONCLUSION

It has already been said that proto-social practices are directed at addressing important adaptation issues. Some of these practices are specific in the sense that they are not directly connected to nutrition, gender and defence-related behaviours, but rather to maintaining the biologically profitable unity of the population and, when realized, these practices contribute to support the subjective time perspective. There exists no certainty as to the adaption value of shaping the subjective time perspective: in order to maintain the “mental time travel” ability, it is necessary that it should exert some influence on survival or reproduction, and this influence can be revealed: “Mental time travel provides increased behavioral flexibility to act in the present to increase future survival chances” [17]. However, authors admit that they could have been merely “a fortuitous side effect of some other adaptations”. As of now, it is difficult to establish the existence of objective reality parameters present in the privatized time. It should be borne in mind that “... a good explanation of the adaptation of consciousness would look like. Such an explanation would ideally include (i) evidence that selection has occurred, (ii) an ecological explanation of adaptation advantage, (iii) evidence that the trait is heritable, (iv) information about the population structure, and (v) phylogenetic information about trait polarity” (about the possibility of implementing its function, regardless of the way it has been realized in human beings) [18, p. 74]. Subjective reality in evolution has a “pendant”, that is, decidedly ontological, status: it exists *somehow*. It is possible that, from the viewpoint of naturalistic conceptions, it will be presented only in an epiphenomenal status and, consequently, as not having been selected. Nevertheless, N. Humphrey made a successful attempt at creating a selection model of such an attribute of subjective reality as qualia [19]. R. Gregory provides a clear and elegant explanation of the pragmatic evolutionary importance of the ability to correlate events in the time perspective and to identify the present moment by accessing qualia [20]. “When crossing a road, one needs to know that the traffic light seen as red is red now, and not a past remembered red light”; “So perhaps what qualia do is flag the present so that we do not get confused with remembered past or anticipated future” [21]. If we adopt the aforesaid statement, it will be necessary to clarify the hypothesis about the ability to correlate events (various communication effects, above all) in time as being the distinguishing characteristic of humans’ sociality and as a factor important for the evolution of consciousness. Access to time through qualia, as imagined by R. Gregory, is not, apparently, an ability typical of human

beings only; animals, too, can “travel in time”. Therefore, the search for characteristics of existing in subjective time, specific for human beings, is a sizeable opportunity. In addition to qualia that seize the present moment (what is going on “here and now”) for the subject, some supplementary features and properties must be proper to the subjective time perspective that is relevant for human beings. As mentioned above, the ability to gain the subjective time perspective, which is the ability shaped during the evolution process and initially justified from the adaptation viewpoint, ceases to be vitally important for human beings at a certain point in their evolution. It is maintained regardless of the desire to live but is heavily dependent on an individual’s immersion into the “network” of non-pragmatic communications and in the world of culture.

In conclusion, let us point out that, from the philosophical perspective, any kind of naturalistic models of the genesis of social qualities and phenomena are useful and efficient as long as they are relevant to the ongoing projects in the humanities (it is philosophy that usually affirms their relevance). As far as natural sciences, sociology and applied social sciences are concerned, the existence of such models will be justified by an efficient reduction of complex social processes and phenomena, necessary for the elaborating the anthroposociogenesis theory, bringing forth the mechanisms of demographic processes and studying the genesis and dynamics of the anthropogenic factor in nature.

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