

## ORIGIN OF SHYNESS – I

What is shyness? Where does it come from? And why does it persist in a social universe where it isn't welcome?

Well, most people take it for granted that Homo Sapiens is, and always has been, a social animal. Solitary, shy people are seen as social weaklings without enough chutzpah to make it in the social arena. But humanity hasn't always been so social. Though Homo Sapiens is at least 200,000 yrs old, there's no evidence of tribalism (let alone towns, cities, etc) until about 40,000 years ago.

For at least 150,000 years we appear to have existed only in small, scattered, hunter-gather families. We were a scarce animal then, maybe an endangered species. Some research suggests that the world population was sometimes as low as 16,000 people, yet we were in Africa, Europe, and most of Asia.

That time when we were so rare may have been the real time of the monogamous family – one man, one woman and their children, the family unit of most mammals and birds. The monogamous family doesn't fare very well in the modern world where it's immersed in sexual competition and other social pressures, but it probably suited us then.

Maybe it was the time of the "loner" too, when mature sons and daughters set out alone to find their own mates, as the young of so many other species still do

But about 40,000 yrs ago, for some reason, part of humanity started to become more social. Some populations increased, tribes developed, and warfare began. Meanwhile, shy, less social people probably took refuge in deserts, mountains and rainforests, the places where the last remnants of the hunter-gathering peoples remain today.

Today the human race is a 6.8 billion strong herd. Anyone who isn't social, or isn't at least trying to be, isn't very welcome. But there is nowhere left to go. Now we all mix, social and non-social, whether we like it or not. If someone shy tries to resist convention and live according to their shy and/or autistic instincts, they're told that they are either making a mistake, or they must have a disorder, some kind of genetic mistake.

Which I think is a big mistake. For, yes, I think the shy human is a perfectly natural being from the long lost past. Some of us became herd animals, some of us didn't. I think it's time that those of us who are shy and solitary stop apologizing for it, and start living lives that suit us. You'll find advice for that elsewhere on this site, and in *The Birdcatcher*.