What drives people to practice Cannibalism?

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Abstract

This paper explores two literary works one by Richard Sartore called “Humans eating humans” and the other by Clay Blair Jr. called “Survive”. Also an article and a video on the origin of cannibalism and why people are driven to practice it. The paper explains Three reasons on why cannibalism is practiced. Cannibalism is the practice of humans eating human flesh. This term is also used in zoology meaning any species eating their own kind or type. The first reason people practice cannibalism is because it’s a part of their culture and life style. This is known as Spiritual and Ritualistic Cannibalism. The second reason is for the cause of extreme survival. This is called Survival Cannibalism. The third reason is called Criminal cannibalism which is when a person murders the victim then eats the remains.

What drives people to practice Cannibalism?

Cannibalism has been around for a long time. Some anthropologists believe that cannibalism has been around for over five hundred thousand years. The word originated from the tribe called Carib. This was the name of a tribe who ate human flesh. When Christopher Columbus sailed to the Caribbean Islands he found the tribe called “Carib” and he accidently called them Canibales. Since the Spanish word for dog is “Can” Christopher called them “Canibales”. He called them this because he thought that them eating human flesh was more of a dog thing to do than human. Fetzer, Scott. (1992). (1992). *The World book encyclopedia*. Chicago, IL: World Book, Inc.

Spiritual and Ritualistic Cannibalism is what the Aztecs believed in. They thought that eating human flesh would bring them closer to their “God”. “The Aztecs saw consumption of human beings as part of a sacrament that brought people into a close connection with the gods. The consumption of human flesh was never the primary focus of the Aztecs”. Sartore, R. (1994). *Humans eating Humans*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Cross Cultural Publications, Inc. On the other hand they were interested in making the gods pleased. So pleased that they would grant the Aztecs more birth, regeneration and reproduction. The Fijians were very similar to the Aztecs and how they sacrificed and practiced cannibalism. One thing that the Fijians did different from the Aztecs was that this tribe would eat the flesh of their enemy to show dominance. They would also hang the gentiles of men and women so that when the victor goes home to their wives; the sexual tension is increased therefore more reproduction. The Iroquois were an indigenous people that

lived around the sixteenth century in North America. This group of people reported to have eaten the hearts and body parts of their enemies. For them the heart was an important part of the sacrifice.” It was fed to several tribe members who, it was believed, gained the characteristics of the victim, such as strength and courage. The ritual sacrifice of eating the heart was followed by the consumption of all body parts.” Sartore, R. (1994). *Humans eating humans*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Cross Cultural Publications, Inc. For this group it meant Dominance. The main goal for the Iroquois was to appease the appetites of the war gods. Before they killed the prisoner of war they would run a gauntlet where the torturing of the prisoner would commence. For the Aztecs, Fijians, Iroquoins and many other tribes sacrificing and cannibalism was a way of life and culture. They didn’t do it for the taste and nutrition but for the relationship with their god.

Survival Cannibalism is probably the only type of cannibalism that is accepted. Im not saying that people agree on it, I am just saying that if it has to be done in order to survive then so be it. When you are pushed into starvation and your lacking nutrients and vitamins that your body needs; Your mind tends to rot as well and you start to no to care about anything or anyone but yourself. That’s when you finally start to see that any moving thing is food. “A famous case in London was Regina vs. Dudley and Stephens, decided by a court in 1884. Two well respected English seaman by the names of Captain Tom Dudley and mate Edwin Stephens were tried and sentenced to death for the murder of fellow shipmate Parker. They killed and then ate this young man in order to survive the twenty four days that they were stranded on the ocean.” Sartore, R. (1994). *Humans eating humans*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Cross Cultural Publications, Inc. There have been numerous accounts where people have had no choice but to eat their fellow comrade, fallen or not. “The recorded history of man is full of tales of Anthropophagy practiced unwillingly, usually when under siege in war, or during prolonged famines. Under extreme circumstances, the bible condones it. In the old days, when famines ravished Europe, the starving killed wives, husbands, children, and devoured them.” Blair, C. (1973). *Survive!*. New York, NY: Berkeley Publishing Corporation. In August 1846 about twenty seven people were traveling from Utah to California when a storm kicked in and delayed them. The animals that were pulling the wagon had died due to the cold temperatures. With not enough foods to feed them all they turned to cannibalism and ate the ones that died off.

Jeffrey Dahmer was an American serial killer that would have sex with his victims, kill them and then eat them. Two cops made a gruesome discovery in Jeffreys home which revealed the consumption of human flesh in countless instances. His home was a slaughter house. Human heads were found in the freezer and refrigerator. Remnants of bodies were also discovered throughout the apartment. Bones and rotten bones were found along with genitals. Dahmer confessed to the murders and that he ate the remains of his victims. On the surface Dahmer appeared to be a regular mild mannered type of guy but when researched deeper it was found that he was an acclaimed homosexual and a child molester who suffered from a very shaded past. Sartore, R. (1994). *Humans eatings humans*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Cross Cultural Publications. When Dahmer was young he lived a regular childhood until he turned ten. At this age he started to avoid people and would seclude himself from society. He would ride his bike going around looking for dead animals which he would then take home then dissect.

Andrei R. Chikatilo was a former school teacher in Russia who admitted to killing and cannibalizing fifty two people. The fifty six year old appearantly gouged out his victims eyes. In other instances he said he cut off fingers, breasts, and genitals, and ate some of the flesh. Sartore, R. (1994). *Humans eatings humans*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Cross Cultural Publications. He is supposedly the worst serial killer in the world. Worse than Jack the ripper or New Yorks “Son of Sam”. The murders began in 1978, during the pre-glasnost era when crime was considered a capitalist phenomenon and was seldom publicized in the Soviet Union. As a result, Rostov residents were not warned for more than five years that a maniac was killing young women and children in their city of 1.4 million people, about 600 miles south of Moscow. And in their desire to stop the killings quickly and quietly, Russian authorities now acknowledge, they executed the wrong man before arresting Chikatilo near a murder scene in November 1990. Throughout the 12-year killing spree, Chikatilo was married, raising a family and employed as a Russian language teacher and office worker. He was even a Communist Party member. Psychiatrists in the case say Chikatilo acted out of rage, stemming from sexual inadequacy. Cooperman, A. (1992, April 25). Accused killer silent while trial spectators swoon soviet school teacher confesses to 53 murders,rape and cannibalism. *Journal Star*, A-1.

Cannibalism is defined in so many different ways. Spiritual and Ritualistic, Survival, and criminal cannibalism are some of many. But these three I see all fall under one school of thought and that is the school of Cognitive Psychology. When the Aztecs would eat the remains of the sacrificed they did it thinking they would get closer to the gods that way. They saw that by sacrificing the gods would do good things to their land; so maybe by eating the flesh even better things would happen. For people that have no choice but to eat another person that’s known as survival cannibalism. When a person is stranded with no food and nothing to drink their mind starts to think that anything and everything is edible. It’s a human instinct, eat or die! Jeffrey Dahmer and other cannibalistic serial killers have some sort of nuerological problem because you cant just eat human flesh for the heck of it. There’s a reason behind it.

References

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