

Title:

Cannibalism and Human Sacrifice

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Summary:

Cannibalism (more precisely, anthropophagy) is an age-old tradition that, judging by a constant

Keywords:

Article Body:

"I believe that when man evolves a civilization higher than the mechanized but still primitive

(Diego Rivera)

"One calls 'barbarism' whatever he is not accustomed to."

(Montaigne, On Cannibalism)

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son

(New Testament, John 6:53-55)

Cannibalism (more precisely, anthropophagy) is an age-old tradition that, judging by a constant

The Britannica Encyclopedia (2005 edition) recounts how the "Binderwurs of central India ate t

Other sources attribute cannibalism to the 16th century Imbangala in today's Angola and Congo,

The Wikipedia numbers among the practitioners of cannibalism the ancient Chinese, the Korowai

From Congo and Central Africa to Germany and from Mexico to New Zealand, cannibalism is enjoyi

Cannibalism is not a monolithic affair. It can be divided thus:

I. Non-consensual consumption of human flesh post-mortem

For example, when the corpses of prisoners of war are devoured by their captors. This used to

Similarly, human organs and fetuses as well as mummies are still being gobbled up - mainly in

On numerous occasions the organs of dead companions, colleagues, family, or neighbors were rel

Finally, in various pre-nation-state and tribal societies, members of the family were encourag

II. Non-consensual consumption of human flesh from a live source

For example, when prisoners of war are butchered for the express purpose of being eaten by the

A notorious and rare representative of this category of cannibalism is the punitive ritual of

The Sawney Bean family in Scotland, during the reign of King James I, survived for decades on

Real-life serial killers, like Jeffrey Dahmer, Albert Fish, Sascha Spesiwtsew, Fritz Haarmann,

III. Consensual consumption of human flesh from live and dead human bodies

Armin Meiwes, the "Master Butcher (Der Metzgermeister)", arranged over the Internet to meet Be
The Aztecs willingly volunteered to serve as human sacrifices (and to be tucked into afterward
Dutiful sons and daughters in China made their amputated organs and sliced tissues (mainly the
Non-consensual cannibalism is murder, pure and simple. The attendant act of cannibalism, though
But consensual cannibalism is a lot trickier. Modern medicine, for instance, has blurred the a
What is the ethical difference between consensual, post-mortem, organ harvesting and consensua
Why is stem cell harvesting (from aborted fetuses) morally superior to consensual post-mortem
When members of a plane-wrecked rugby team, stranded on an inaccessible, snow-piled, mountain
As the Auxiliary Bishop of Montevideo said after the crash:

"... Eating someone who has died in order to survive is incorporating their substance, and it
(Read, P.P. 1974. *Alive*. Avon, New York)

Complex ethical issues are involved in the apparently straightforward practice of consensual c
Consensual, in vivo, cannibalism (a-la Messrs. Meiwes and Brandes) resembles suicide. The cann
Consensual cannibalism is not the equivalent of drug abuse because it has no social costs. Unl
If we own our bodies and, thus, have the right to smoke, drink, have an abortion, commit suicid
When does our right to dispose of our organs in any way we see fit crystallize? Is it when we
Do dead people have rights and can they claim and invoke them while they are still alive? Is t
We find all three culinary variants abhorrent. Yet, this instinctive repulsion is a curious ma
If cannibalism enhances the chances of survival - why is it universally prohibited? For many a

I. The Sanctity of Life

Historically, cannibalism preceded, followed, or precipitated an act of murder or extreme depr

II. The Afterlife

Moreover, in life, the human body and form are considered by most religions (and philosophers)

For this reason, to this very day, orthodox Jews refuse to subject their relatives to a post-m

III. Chastening Reminders

Cannibalism is a chilling reminder of our humble origins in the animal kingdom. To the canniba

IV. Medical Reasons

Infrequently, cannibalism results in prion diseases of the nervous system, such as kuru. The s

V. The Fear of Being Objectified

Being treated as an object (being objectified) is the most torturous form of abuse. People go

The cannibal reduces others by treating them as so much meat. Many cannibal serial killers tra

VI. The Argument from Nature

Cannibalism is often castigated as "unnatural". Animals, goes the myth, don't prey on their own

Alas, like so many other romantic lores, this is untrue. Most species - including our closest

Moreover, humans are a part of nature. Our deeds and misdeeds are natural by definition. Seeki

VIII. The Argument from Progress

It is a circular syllogism involving a tautology and goes like this:

Cannibalism is barbaric. Cannibals are, therefore, barbarians. Progress entails the abolition

The premises - both explicit and implicit - are axiomatic and, therefore, shaky. What makes ca

Because we do not eat the bodies of dead people - we ought not to eat them.

VIII. Arguments from Religious Ethics

The major monotheistic religions are curiously mute when it comes to cannibalism. Human sacrific

"That the consequence of Transubstantiation, as a conversion of the total substance, is the tr

(Catholic Encyclopedia)

"CANON II.-If any one saith, that, in the sacred and holy sacrament of the Eucharist, the subs

CANON VIII.-lf any one saith, that Christ, given in the Eucharist, is eaten spiritually only,

(The Council of Trent, The Thirteenth Session - The canons and decrees of the sacred and oecum

Still, most systems of morality and ethics impute to Man a privileged position in the scheme o

Yet, it is impossible to rigorously derive a prohibition to eat human flesh from any known mor

According to Greek mythology, Man was created from the ashes of the Titans, the children of Ur

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