

Rational Feminism

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Contents

1 Finding Women To Join A Lasting Endogamous Community	1
2 Offering A Better Deal	2
3 The Importance of Gender Roles	3
4 Considerations For Increasing Fertility	3
5 The Deal Women Are Currently Getting	4
6 The Non-Hedonistic Woman: Changing The Modern Outlook On Family	5
7 Achieving A Rational Value System	5

This is part of a series of thought experiments regarding the creation of an endogamous community. Endogamous does not mean inbred, although the community would need to be fairly large to prevent such a thing.

1 Finding Women To Join A Lasting Endogamous Community

Science fiction aside, creating a lasting endogamous community requires positive birthrates. That means the community must be made up of roughly equal numbers of men and women. Why is this a problem? Well, going around looking for people who would want to participate in such a venture is all but guaranteed to turn up many more men than women.

I am not in favor of imposing many arbitrary criteria on initial membership, but it seems obvious that joining should require a thorough understanding of the theory behind the project, being reasonably functional, being motivated to be a part of it, and having reproduction as one of your core values. While those are merely the criteria it would be difficult to do without, they still exclude a vast majority of men, and virtually all women.

How to solve this?

One way to go about it is to only accept people who already have a partner and/or children. While that seemingly solves the problem, it does so at the cost of women's adhesion to the project. It means that women will mostly join because their husband does, and thus be ancillary members

with no real attachment to the group. If we want this to be an endogamous community, women need to be full members. So, although this is one way of solving the parity question, it is unstable and suboptimal.

The preferable alternative is to find women who want to join. How to do so?

The whole project is based on the premise that members need to be individually incentivized for it to work. **Women, like men, need to get a better deal out of being part of the project than they are getting in modern society.** This is difficult because as long as you adhere to a standard hedonistic worldview, modern society appears to be an excellent deal for women: get a basic job and you can have a jolly good time, with many rights and few responsibilities. (this is true of men too) For a person to join, they need to assess that being a part of it is preferable to being outside of it. I see three ways of helping them make that assessment:

- offering a better deal.
- emphasizing how bad the deal they're currently getting actually is.
- philosophical inquiry into value systems

I'll treat those three approaches separately, but I believe we should do all of them.

2 Offering A Better Deal

The reactionary idea that, because there once existed in the west a more (intellectually and reproductively) fertile culture than the one we have now, we should simply try and turn back the clock on social attitudes despite all that has changed between then and now, is delusional. The reason why gender roles emerged the way they did in agricultural societies is because they worked: a man working the fields while his wife tended to children and did housework was a competitive unit that could reproduce successfully. If we want to have high fertility rates, it is pretty clear that we cannot just do what everyone else is doing in the west, but simply emulating what went on in the past is also inadequate, because the environment has changed.

Actually, there is one way you could do that: by re-creating the old environment. That's the way Amish and Mennonites communities make it work. A 19th century farmer lifestyle allows them to successfully copy and paste the family structure of then. Interestingly, when the population approaches the carrying capacity of the environment, another agrarian family structure becomes more competitive: the so-called communitarian family that separately emerged in China, Russia and central Italy. Both parents work the fields while grandparents take care of the children. Grandma does most of the housework and grandpa acts as a head of clan.

Either of those options defeats the initial goal of maintaining modernity, so it's not really what I was going for. What is needed is a family structure that allows for high fertility in modernity, while being sustainable – thus also excluding the parasitic models of Hasidic Jews in Israel or Muslims in Europe. If we take the traditional Western European family structure as a starting point, what changes in the environment relevant to the family structure, have happened in the 20th century? Well, to name just a few:

- Household appliances have made most housework obsolete, except maybe for cooking.
- Work is more intellectual, thus women's productivity in the workforce is closer (not equal in aggregate, but closer, and equal in many domains) to that of men than it used to be.

- Work being more intellectual, people live and work to a slightly older age.

Lastly, in the current environment, what are the best predictors of high fertility in women?

- Being an at-home woman whose husband is the breadwinner.
- Regular religious practice (i.e. being a part of a community that places high status on having a lot of children)
- Early marriage / little educational achievement.

3 The Importance of Gender Roles

We also need to keep in mind that the nature of the community we want to create dictates that women in it be smart and capable. Smart and capable people generally want intellectually challenging tasks, status, and a certain amount of respect for their individual agency. What system could be as appealing to those types of women as possible, and allow for high fertility?

The key is gender roles. Household appliances have freed up women from a lot of the tasks that used to be theirs traditionally. Simply diverting that time and energy towards the free market is not a good solution, because it depresses fertility: career women need to study until their late 20s, and after that their work takes up so much of their time that they have to make a choice between having kids and pursuing their other goals. Our status-seeking nature dictates that in those conditions, other goals will be prioritized.

(but wait, I hear you cry: many women are lazy wastes of carbon with too much free time of their hands. Well, I don't care about those. I'm talking about intelligent and driven women, in other words high-agency people.)

Since not tapping that potential is also suboptimal, "neo-traditional" gender roles need to be defined. There are many useful tasks that women could do for the household, that would give them intellectual satisfaction and social status, while allowing them to work from home: online translation, online teaching, household finances, daycare, coding, counseling, investing. Working from home is appealing to many people, and it is probably good for fertility rates. It could be a good idea to make "working from home" into a tradition for women in our community.

Since early marriages are good for fertility rates, we could pair people up when they are younger, and before they begin their studies – allowing them to plan their life as a household, not as solitary souls. This requires arranged marriages, which is a practice that comes with many costs and benefits. I'm not going to expand on this here, but there are ways to reduce the constraints that arranged marriages place on young couples.

That may seem repulsive to the reader, but there is no evidence that arranged marriages are less happy or stable than regular ones, and they are usually the fruit of a compromise between the prospective couple and the matchmaker. Arranged does not mean forced.

4 Considerations For Increasing Fertility

Since people live longer and work is more intellectual, there should be traditional roles for grandparents. Helping out with the kids could be one of these tasks, as it is already the case in many parts of the world.

Since being a part of a community that places high status on having kids is a deciding factor, we also need to have that. The way you make having many kids high status is by expressing admiration for people who do, especially women. The way you create a sense of community and belonging is through regular interaction. The tried and true way that religious congregations do it is Sunday morning gatherings. It doesn't have to be exactly that, but it's a good start.

Since all of this requires housework to be mostly a thing of the past, we should make work-replacing household appliances a fundamental part of married life. Those key appliances are: washing machine, dryer, dishwasher, robot vacuum cleaner, air purifier, water softener.

At the root of women's rejection of traditional gender roles is a problem of status: housework is low-status work. The family structure I'm proposing solves this: most housework can be automatized, women can pursue varied, interesting and high-status activities from the comfort of their home. As a community, we can easily organize daycare and (up to a point) schooling with the help of grandparents.

Besides this, some aspects of the community's culture will be attractive to both men and women. Without going in too much detail, a culture is defined by its rituals and its aesthetics, and that appeals to many people regardless of gender. Do not underestimate the value of lumpy decorum such as seals, symbols, holidays, sacred books, architecture and heirlooms. Those are not just the cherry on top of a strong identity – more often than not, they make up the bulk of it. Another cultural aspect that is valuable in and of itself is promoting a work ethic, the pursuit of fundamental knowledge and physical fitness. If realized, such a culture will as a natural byproduct increase the "market value" of its men.

All those points I've mentioned directly and indirectly improve the deal that women are getting out of being a part of this culture.

5 The Deal Women Are Currently Getting

Let's have a hard look at the current predicament of women. Any predisposition a woman has towards being smart, hardworking, brave or even slightly eccentric, is rewarded with extinction pure and simple. Most of the personality traits modern women consider to be valuable, are fast disappearing. The female phenotype is turning into its own boogeyman.

In males, the environment that we created for ourselves selects for behavior that is collectively self-destructive. In females, the behavior that is selected for is one of conformity, stupidity and helplessness. If no effort is made to change course, the woman of the future will have extremely low agency, because low agency women have a much higher fertility rate than high agency women. We are in an environment where smart women who do well in their studies and work hard to achieve their own goals, are being replaced at wartime rates by devout and submissive women who can barely pass a mirror test.

This is a bleak picture of what is likely to happen to womankind, but it's also very apparent and easy to demonstrate. Most women who are able to understand it would find it undesirable, but the worst thing about it is that there is little they can do as individuals – your character is your character. Even among women who realize what's at stake, few would be able to emulate the behavior of those women who are replacing them, and fewer still would see that as a success in turning the tides. Is it winning if you have to become what you wish to prevent?

You are in a competition for existence with grotesque creatures who can't understand anything you value, in an environment they are much better adapted to than you are, with an inescapable social and legal pressure to give away your time and energy for the purpose of subsidizing their proliferation. As a consolation, you get a buffet of acceptable boogeymen to blame and hate for what's wrong in the world. That's the deal women collectively get in modern society.

If only there was an alternative.

6 The Non-Hedonistic Woman: Changing The Modern Outlook On Family

Affecting someone's value system is delicate and takes a long time. For most people, it can't even be done. One of the few tools that can help us is emotional manipulation, but in this case it is useless.

To be perfectly clear, I am not opposed to (a degree of) emotional manipulation when it is used to bypass irrational reactions to an inconvenient truth, because in that case it works. Emotional manipulation consists of appealing to someone's values to ease them into seeing your side of a question. If that side is compatible with their values, and better supported by evidence, an honest person should change their mind. That works well for a truth question (is or is not). For a value question (good or bad), emotional manipulation consists of pitting someone's values against one another, so that some of them take precedence over the others. It works within the scope of their existing values, and in fact that is exactly how most cults and ideologies plug into people's value system and modify it.

However, this is no good to us, because we're not trying to make small adjustments to the mainstream value system: hedonism. We're trying to demonstrate that it is inherently unsustainable, self-defeating even. You can't appeal to someone's value system if your own offers no common ground. As an individual, the only thing you can really do is laying your case bare and hoping they are convinced by their own reason.

7 Achieving A Rational Value System

At this point I'm not going to go through the whole process of how to do that: I outlined some ideas in my "Receptive leftists" post, and I will expand on it later.

- Exposing and discarding hedonism is a difficult process, but not a complicated one.
- Leading people towards nihilism is easy.
- Helping people along the way out is not easy.

It is different for everyone, and probably depends a lot on individual character.

Emotional manipulation doesn't work very well in this case, but as an individual you can try and avoid generating strong emotional reactions through: politeness, respect, and one-on-one discussions.

As a collective, there are other ways to create the right conditions for promoting a different value system.

- You can “demonstrate” your value system in action, so it will be harder to strawman. In layman’s terms, this is called leading by example.
- You can make family / having kids high status in the community. The way to do that is to show your values: express praise for people who have kids, and perhaps subtle disdain for people who don’t. Note that the idea isn’t to manipulate people into having kids so that they get the praise (although that could happen), but rather to normalize your value system and put some of the “burden of proof” on the hedonists.
- Conversely, you can shame excessive consumerism and hedonism.

That is all for now. I don’t have a suitable conclusion, but I want to stress that this isn’t about men manipulating women for their own benefit. It is about finding a common ground and a mutually beneficial recipe for maintaining our existence in modernity. To an extent, persuasion is manipulation, there is no escaping that – but if there is a common interest to be found (and there is), persuasion doesn’t have to be detrimental to its ‘target’.