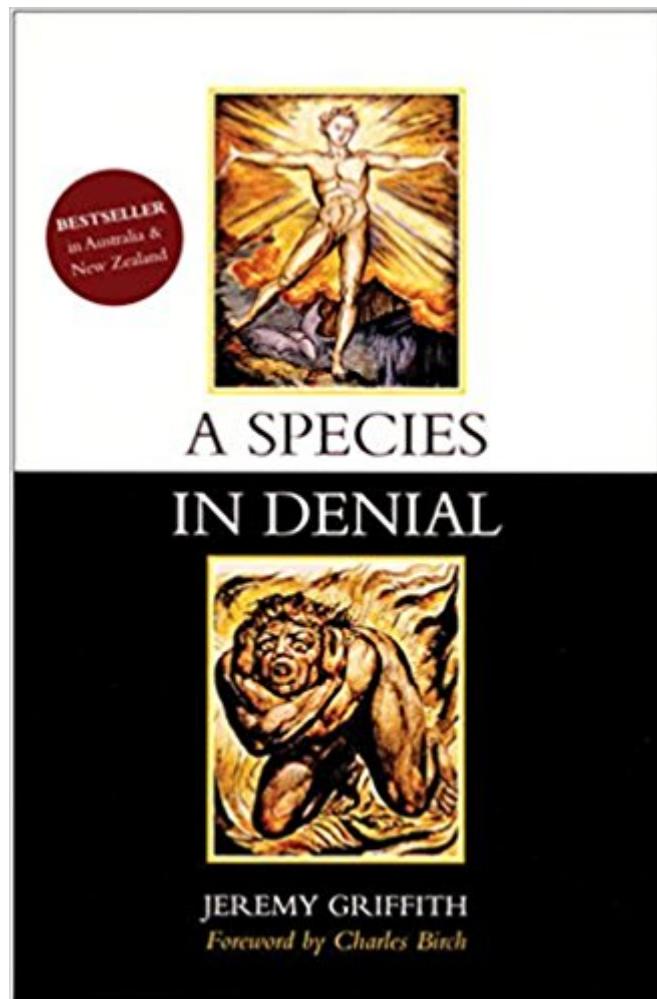


The book was found

A Species In Denial



Synopsis

A SPECIES IN DENIAL is the revolutionary bestseller by Australian biologist Jeremy Griffith. In it the author presents a series of essays addressing the crux issue before us as a species of the human condition, our capacity for good and evil, describing how humans have coped with the dilemma of the human condition by living in denial of it. Griffith then explains the biological reason for the human condition, thus ending the need for the denial and maturing humanity to psychological freedom from its historic insecure human-condition-afflicted state. With a foreword by Templeton Prize winning biologist Charles Birch, this book provides a deeply insightful examination of science, religion, politics, men and women, psychiatry and mythology.

Book Information

Paperback: 528 pages

Publisher: WTM Publishing and Communications; 1st Revised edition (October 1, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1741290015

ISBN-13: 978-1741290011

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.6 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars 20 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #119,514 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #31 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Biology > Developmental Biology #78 in Books > Medical Books > Psychology > History #87 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > History

Customer Reviews

'Like to improve your understanding of the human condition? Ever wondered about our contradictory capacity for good and evil? Jeremy Griffith believes he has the answer to the riddle of humanity. To why humanity's progress is stalled in a state of unknowing...A Species In Denial, with a foreword by Charles Birch, traverses wide ground indeed. From deciphering Plato's cave allegory, to human denial, to bringing peace to the war between the sexes, to the denial-free history of the human race and the demystification of religion.' -- John McConnell, The Sydney Institute Quarterly
'Jeremy Griffith is an Australian biologist but his range of interests and his store of knowledge seem almost infinite... The chapter called Resignation is brilliant in its insight into human nature and what we call the idealism of the young... It's worth reading the book for this essay alone but, of course,

there's so much more. Those who need brain food will find it here. It can't be said of many books that the world looks different after you've read them. It can be said of this book.'-- Antonia Hilderbrand, Toowoomba Chronicle 'A book that confronts the way we think about life...People like [Griffith] used to be drummed out of town by the vicar...Griffith gives the serious reader plenty to ponder...There is never any doubt of the courage of [Griffith's] stance in writing this book because of his commitment to his fellow man and the future of the planet.' -- Pat White, Wairarapa News, New Zealand' '10/10. Prepare to be confronted...Prepare to be enlightened.' -- Wendy O'Hanlon, Noosa Times'There is no doubt that Jeremy is talking about the big stuff.' -- Katie Wilkie, The Land's 'Friday Magazine'

'A breakthrough in understanding the human condition.' -- Dr John H. Champness, Australian psychologist, 2003'A most enlightening treatment of the human situation.' -- Dr Arthur Jones, former Anglican Bishop of Gippsland, Victoria, Australia'A superb book, it brings out the truth of a new and wider world.' -- John Morton, Emeritus Professor Zoology, Auckland University, New Zealand'Boy! what a book ... Should be in hotel rooms like the other book.' -- Ambi Kaur, Melbourne, Australia - reader response, 2003'Offers so many insights into our divided selves.' -- Ronald Conway OAM, distinguished Australian psychologist'Reading it with great interest and excitement, I can't put it down.' -- Jeremy Shaw, retired Anglican Priest, Auckland, New Zealand, 2003'A most important contribution to human understanding.' -- Professor Harry Prosen, former President of the Canadian Psychiatric Association

An interesting take on "The Human Condition" with some useful insights but, unfortunately, Griffith's basic premise is flawed. In a nutshell he contends that all of the woes of human society are the result of the insecurity and psychosis that resulted when our conscious minds began to experiment with novel behaviors as opposed to the instinctual behavior of our past. The problem here is that this fails to explain why non-human animals would also behave in ways that we would consider immoral. Several animals, like polar bears, have been known to kill and eat their young. Old bonobos molest young bonobos. Chimpanzees go to war over territories. I think you'd be hard pressed to write all of that off as behavior that results from insecurity and psychosis brought on by failure to come to grips with a dawning of higher consciousness. When the Griffith talks about the angst of teenagers coming to grips with the good and evil sides of human nature I think he makes some valid points. When he talks about putting an end to all immoral behavior by simply coming to grips with our burgeoning consciousness I think he's over simplifying things to a enormous extent.

I was first given this book to read in 2003 and it was my introduction to Jeremy Griffiths explanation of the human condition, why we are the way we are, are we fundamentally good or evil? I found the book very enlightening and in the end life changing. I particularly enjoyed the introduction which gives you a good feel for what the human condition is and how and why humans have had to deny it until the explanation of it was found. The other chapter that really helped me was the "Resignation" chapter. This is a key concept of this explanation that all humans need to get their head around as it is such an unlocking point for understanding our current human behavior throughout the world. I thoroughly recommend this book to anyone who has a genuine interest in understanding human behavior but I would say that his more recent book "Freedom, The End Of The Human Condition" is more comprehensive.

This book is given one star for two reasons. The first is it developed Griffith's theory first put forward in 1988 in his "Free: The End of the Human Condition" that nurturing was the prime mover in human evolution, the so called "love indoctrination" thesis. This is a legitimate and significant contribution to studies of human evolution. The book also contains a great deal of meditation on the "split" nature of the human condition and the state of alienation from the deeper riches of experience that has become the norm in contemporary life. Here Griffith is merely iterating what our poets have always been saying. For example, his thinking on the visionary nature of childhood innocence has affinities with Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode' and Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and Experience'. Also, his meditations on human alienation are resonant with Blake's Prophetic Books - as well as Milton's "Paradise Lost", which was a great inspiration to Blake. The book is crowded with quotes from writers and poets who have taken a similar view of human nature to Griffith. In this sense the book does brim with insight and profound thinking. But this is where the book's worth ends. The problem with Griffith's work is he takes as his main source of data on the !Kung or Kalahari Bushmen the work of the novelist Sir Laurans Van Der Post. The Bushmen for both Van der Post and Griffith are thought to provide a model for humanity's hunter-gatherer past. This is a legitimate approach adopted by many evolutionary theorists and anthropologists. But the problem here is that Van der Post's representation of Bushman social life is contradicted by the data published by professional anthropologists. Griffith's main source of ethnographic data comes from Van der Post's "The Lost World of the Kalahari" and "Heart of the Hunter". By his own admission Van der Post only had a "short acquaintance" with the Bushman ("Heart of the Hunter" p. 157) - being approximately three days. What he wrote about the Bushmen was constructed from this brief encounter, the works of

previous authors and his own sensitive imaginative sympathy with Bushman spiritual life. Van der Post fits the Bushman into his own pre-conceptions of the Edenic nature of tribal life; for example they are 'without sin' ("Heart of the Hunter", p. 153). What aggression and violence does exist Van der Post accounts for as a response to conflict with other African peoples and Europeans and that as he writes 'there is ample evidence from the past that the Bushman were not always so aggressive' ("Lost World of the Kalahari" p. 42). Yet as sustained field data has shown the Bushman have homicide rates higher than those evident in modern urban centres; and most cases of murder are between male Bushman fighting over women not conflict between Bushman and other cultures or conflict provoked by outside peoples. For example in his "The !Kung" Richard Lee reports between 1920-1955 15 serious wounding and 22 homicides resulting from violent encounters (pp. 371-72). Given this is in the context of a small band of hunting people of less than 1500 people this is a very high homicide rate - higher than in any modern urban centres with the exception of the more violent Afro-American ghettos in the U.S. In other words it is statistically safer to live in New York, Sydney, London or Paris, than it is to live in a Bushman tribe. So much for being a peaceful people 'without sin'. Lee also mentions older !Kung who recounted stories of raiding expeditions between groups (382), a practice that is common in other hunter-gatherer tribes. While the !Kung are a co-operative people within the context of their small band existence, it is misleading to claim they are a people devoid of violence and incidents of murder. Aggression is frowned upon but when it does explode it has lethal consequences. In his biography of Van der Post "A Teller of Many Tales" D.F. Jones emphasised the fact that Van der Post romanticised Bushmen life. It is widely accepted by experts with a solid grounding in anthropology that Van der Post's depiction of Bushman life is romanticised and reflects more Van der Post's abiding philosophical concerns more than the people themselves and how they actually live. In his essay 'Ethnographic Romanticism and the Idea of Human Nature', Melvin Konner, one of the pioneers of !Kung ethnography, writes of the projection of Western philosophical concerns onto other cultures, a problem particularly evident in the work of Van der Post and Griffith. As he writes when discussing "the use of ethnological description as a sort of projective test..." "...in which the investigator's fundamental pessimism or optimism about the human condition leads to a specific distortion of the complexities of life in a given society. These simplifications - a sort of philosophical reductionism as opposed to the more usual scientific kind - can abolish at one blow not only the creative variety of generations of a culture but also the individuality of its members(p. 42) It is this process of projection and consequent distortion that are fundamental problems throughout Van der Post's writings - and consequently Griffith's. The strengths of Van der Post's writing is that he had a great sense of sympathy with Bushman religious

life and mythology, partly a result of being nursed as a child by a Bushman women who would tell him the myths of her ancestors. In this sense the works evoke the riches of Bushman spiritual life and the deep sense of affinity with the natural world that is intrinsic to their culture. But in terms of accurate ethnographies of Bushman social life and behaviour they are misleading and highly inaccurate. The problem is Griffith seems to be unaware of the problematic nature of Van der Post's works and that they are explicitly contradicted by data obtained by anthropologists over decades of sustained field work. In a circular fashion he rejects the anthropological community's criticism of Van der Post's work as resulting from their own defence mechanisms; that in other words they cannot confront the truths about Bushmen life Van der Post revealed and therefore they are compelled to persecute him and denigrate his work - see "A Species in Denial" (pp. 255-56) for Griffith's attempt to deflect the issue away from the actual content of Van der Posts work to the supposed sinister motivation of anthropologists. Even assuming anthropologists do find Van der Posts writings confronting and are thus motivated by an unconscious desire to silence these disturbing "truths" the question still remains as to whether his books are a faithful and accurate portrayal of Bushman social life. Personally I find Van der Post's books on the Bushmen beautiful and nourishing to read, full of a deep sense of affinity and sympathy with nature and brimming with wonderful and profound insights about human nature. Van der Post was also able to articulate the Bushman's emotionally rich social life, qualities that have tended to become repressed amongst modern industrial peoples. However, his brief acquaintance with the !Kung Bushman and his imaginative liberties resulted in an over romanticised portrayal of Bushman life that is not to be trusted. I would recommend people read the major ethnographies by Richard Lee and Melvin Konner as an antidote to Van der Post's and Griffith's work. It will then become clear that Jones was correct to claim van der Post romanticised Bushman life - independent of whether he (or anthropologists) have sinister motivations for doing so or not. Griffith's discussion of Van der Post's work completely avoids the central issue of the ethnographic veracity of his writings (and by implication his own) - which is what anthropologists have rightly and legitimately questioned. This makes "A Species Denial" a very poorly written and argued book that no-one with a reasonable grounding in anthropology could take at all seriously. Throughout "A Species in Denial" Van der Post is quoted supporting the supposed benign nature of tribal life, with a quote from Bruce Chatwin's "Songlines" apparently clinching the argument regarding the relatively Edenic and Hesiodic nature of tribal culture ("A Species In Denial" pp. 105). Elsewhere, in his "Freedom Book 1", again echoing Van der Post's sentiment, Griffith sates that the "Bushman are Christ-like themselves" (p.403). What Griffith does throughout his writings is contrast the violence of modern urban people with the supposed peaceful condition of

tribal hunting peoples. He sees humans progressing from a peaceful, innocent, unconditionally loving primate to modern "Homo sapiens". Hunting peoples, by virtue of being members of "Homo sapiens" share in the "upset" psychological state of all humans - in this sense they are only, in Griffith's view, "relatively innocent". Yet he believes they are more "innocent" and less aggressive than modern agrarian and urban peoples. As he writes 'as all the relatively innocent races, such as the Bushmen of the Kalahari,evidence, it is us modern humans today who are the extremely upset, aggressive variety of humans. We humans progressed from an original innocent, upset-free state to an increasingly upset, angry and aggressive state'(Freedom Book 1-The Biology,p.572). This position however contradicts the current consensus about violence in pre-modern societies;as Bruce Knauft, Professor of Anthropology at Emroy University, has demonstrated in his paper "Reconsidering Violence in Simple Societies" ("Current Anthropology" August-September 1987), tribal cultures such as those of Aboriginal Australia and Africa have some of the highest homicide rates of any cultures in the world. For example, the Murdgin of Australia, according to Knauft, have a homicide rate three hundred times greater than the major cities of Britain and the U.S.In addition to Laurens van der Post, Griffith has based his view of the !Kung Bushman on the field work of Elizabeth Marshall Thomas. Marshall published her findings in her book "The Harmless People", which Griffith believes provides evidence for the relatively peaceful, relatively innocent nature of !Kung social life. However, Marshall's book is no longer considered an accurate portrayal of !Kung social life by the anthropological community.Marshall's field work was undertaken after the 1950's, a time when older forms of violence decreased amongst the !Kung. From this point on the presence of governments and anthropologists resulted in a decrease in lethal violence. Researchers are now aware that around 1955, the intrusion of anthropologists and the extra resources they brought caused deadly conflicts to become non-existent until the 1970s. The data cited by Lee in "The!Kung San: Men, Women, and Work in a Foraging Society" extends back to the 1920s and is based on government records of !Kung violence and homicide as well as reports from the people themsleves. For example, from 1920 to 1955 among the !Kung there were fifteen cases of non-fatal fights using poison tipped weapons and 22 cases of homicide (382). For a population of about 1500 this is a quite high rate of lethal violence. It is approximately one murder every year. It is unthinkable that a modern country town of 1500 people in a modern state based democracy would have this rate of lethal violence. In a town of 6000 such a rate would mean approximately four murders annually - this would be unthinkable even in the most violent of country towns (for further discussion of Lee's homicide data and accompanying table, see my review of Griffith's "Beyond the Human Condition").The problem with Marshall's book "The Harmless People" is her research was limited to

only a few years from between 1950 and 1956. Homicides, according to Lee's data, were higher in the period prior to Marshall's field work. The "blood- feuds" associated with marriage arrangements are not frequent but when they do erupt they are intense and result in numerous deaths. Marshall over her two years of field work would not have witnessed many of these incidents as they are infrequent. Not having obtained longitudinal data over a number of decades, nor having data prior to the period of 'pacification', Marshall unknowingly minimised the severity and incidence of lethal violence among the !Kung. The more extensive data discussed by Lee are a corrective to her limited data base. Marshall's field work and her claims of the !Kung Bushman being a peaceful, harmless people have consequently been questioned by this more extensive research, the current consensus being her work is an inaccurate portrayal of !Kung social life. The aspects of Griffith's work based on the data of Marshall are therefore misleading. Another problem with Griffith's methodology and his reliance on the work of Van der Post and Marshall is his mistaken notion that the !Kung were more peaceful and less violent prior to their interaction with other races. Griffith often refers to the !Kung in their 'natural state' being more cooperative, and following Van der Post, claims that increased violence and aggression resulted from colonisation and conflict with other peoples, from interaction with more 'exhausted' peoples. But !Kung homicide rates are amongst the !Kung themselves and seem to have been higher when they were in their 'natural state'. What Lee's data has shown is that the !Kung were more violent before interaction with Europeans, who tended to clamp down on and reduce violence. So the data going back to the 1920s actually contradicts a major tenet of Griffith's thesis. Griffith makes the mistake of assuming Bushman who had not been in contact with other peoples were less 'corrupted' and therefore more co-operative - whereas Lee's data suggests the opposite - that the Bushmen were more violent before their interaction with Europeans. Again Griffith's thinking is dubious and based on ungrounded assertion derived from his reading of Van der Post: Also, quite a number of adults from relatively innocent representative races of *H. sapiens sapiens*, such as the Bushmen of the Kalahari, must not be resigned to be as happy and full of the zest and enthusiasm for life and as generous, selfless and free in spirit as numbers of them are, or at least were when they were still living as hunter-foragers...the existence of unresigned individuals amongst unmolested, natural living Bushmen might not in fact be a rare phenomenon-indeed, the happy, excited dispositions of so many suggests it's not' (Freedom Book 1-The Human Condition Explained, Part 3:11B Sobered and Depressed Adolescentman). And again when discussing Lorna Marshall Griffith writes: Lorna Marshall...one of the only Westerners to live with the Bushmen before they became contaminated through contact with more modern races, described honestly, like Sir Laurens, 'their [the Bushmen's] predominantly peaceful, well-adjusted

human relations' (The !Kung of Nyae Nyae, 1976, p.286 of 433, quoted in Griffith's "Freedom" Section 5.2). The irony here is that Griffith believes that the lack of violence Marshall encountered was due to a lack of interaction with, or 'contamination' by, other races, when in fact we now know the opposite is true: the reason violence was absent in the 1950s when Marshall did her field work is precisely because of the Bushman's interaction with other races, particularly European government officials and anthropologists. Griffith may be correct - he also may be wrong. Why it is difficult to decide and why he is unconvincing is he provides no data but merely offers speculative reflection based on the writings of a novelist. What data we do have suggests he is wrong in his assertions. Griffith is not offering data based empirical science here but mere speculation. Because Griffith believes hunter-gatherer societies are more co-operative and less violent than modern post-agricultural and postindustrial cultures, he ends up making erroneous claims about Australian Aboriginal societies. Here again philosophical bias is given precedence over empirically based research. In traditional Aboriginal society violence is used as a means of punishing contraventions of law and also the means by which individuals and groups advance their own interests. For example, Catherine Berndt has written of her field work in Northern Australia:...along the coast, in the mid-1940s, north eastern Arnhem Landers used to boast about their reputation for forceful behaviour, their quick emotional reactions to supposed slights or insults, and their ability to get their own way through violence or threat of violence. They would refer in matter of fact terms to episodes in their own experience where, for instance, a man was killed for the specific purpose of taking over his wife or wives. ("Learning Non-Aggression", p. 50) The prevalence of violence in traditional, pre-contact Aboriginal culture has been systematically downplayed over the last forty years as images of a socially and ecologically benign culture were promulgated under the guise of the 'Noble Savage' myth. Recent research in the area is highly critical of such sanitised views, highlighting the degree to which inter-tribal conflict and culturally sanctioned violence against women are implicated in current rates of homicide and domestic violence in remote Aboriginal communities (see for example Stephanie Jarrett's "Liberating Aboriginal People from Violence"). As Joan Kimm writes in "A Fatal Conjunction: Two Laws, Two Cultures" Aboriginal religious practice sanctions the violent gang rape of young women if they refuse to comply with forced marriages organised by senior men. As she writes of so-called "sacred rape", the punishment inflicted on young girls if they refuse to marry their often much older promised husband: At Warrabi in the 1960s young girls were prepared to "take on the tribe" rather than marry. Young girls wanted to and did, form relationships with young men of their choice. Many of the girls were badly beaten up, and by their mothers also... In 1982 Aboriginal elders inflicted violent bashings and pack rape, "sacred rape", upon young Gurindji

women in the Northern Territory in order to force them to enter promised marriages (p.52)Mervyn Meggit, in his seminal ethnography, "Desert People", discusses numerous incidents of spousal violence amongst the Aboriginal people of Australia's desert regions. Meggitt describes one incident where a man discovered that his two wives had been secretly having affairs with two young bachelors. Meggit describes the man's response upon discovering what had been occurring:He enlisted the support of several countrymen who were close brothers of his wives and then attacked the two women and their lovers. He speared Johnny through the knee and Liddy through the arm: Willy he stabbed in the back with a long knife, and only European intervention prevented him from cutting Marcie's throat. At the same time his countrymen thrashed all four of the offenders with clubs and boomerangs.(99)What is significant here is that the men who help the man are the brothers of his unfaithful wives. This is because intertribal marriages cement alliances between groups - through the out-marriage of their sisters, the brothers and the sister's husband become kin or "brothers in law" who consequently have reciprocical use of hunting grounds and waterholes. Therefore acts of adultery implicitly jeopardise such alliances. Griffith seeks to explain all human conflict as a result of our conscious self being "upset" by our instinctive conscience. Yet these men help in this punitive action because they believe the women have jeopardised the intergroup alliance their marriage has facilitated. The brothers are not "upset" at all - they are merely following the judicial premises of their culture. Other members of the community would not object to this behaviour for they would believe such punitive measures are legitimate forms of punishment for breaking the moral code of their culture. This is violence as an expression of "group conscience" - or what Freud would have called the super-ego - punishing contraventions of Aboriginal Law. These men do not believe they are defying their conscience - in fact they believe such violent acts are just and moral expressions of their social conscience. Grffith's paradigm, which purports to explain all human behaviour, fails to make any sense whatsoever of such customs. Further, it is unclear how a culture that sanctions such behaviour is less violent than those of modern state based democracies in which such behaviour would not be tolerated - it would in fact be illegal.In a more recent publication "Freedom Bk1: The Biology" Griffith quotes Ashley Montagu claiming that in Aboriginal Australia all 'observers agree upon the extraordinary tenderness which parents display towards their children, and to all children, whether of their own family or race or not' (419). However, this sanitised assertion is contradicted by the work of other more recent researchers; for example the process of "cruelling" in which a young child is "pinched", often drawing blood and provoking them to hit their mother with sticks, is a culturally sanctioned practice that inculcates violence in young boys in preparation for their adult life of violent combat and participation in revenge expeditions(Peter

Sutton 'The Politics of Suffering" pp. 111-113). Griffith believes that adult behaviour is the product of early nurturing. His reasons for quoting Montagu in this context is he is making the inference that such loving child rearing practices explain why Aboriginal cultures are less violent and more co-operative than modern, post- agricultural societies. Such an approach fails to explain why such supposedly benign child rearing practices produces adults who commit homicide at approximately a rate four hundred times that of modern state based societies (who apparently lack such forms of indulgent child rearing). In this, as in many other instances, Griffith merely makes assertions based on his supposed infallible method of "introspection" - a method of inquiry that turns out to be highly unreliable. This is not an example of data based scientific research but of emotive assertion. Elsewhere Griffith claims his writings will help explain to "innocent races" such as Aboriginal people why modern humans are so "alienated", "lost" and "corrupt" (Freedom Book 1-The Transformation of the Human Race. 94). What this attitude overlooks is the morally problematic nature of traditional Aboriginal culture, one that, as discussed above, sanctions violence and ritualised rape of young girls. To invoke the "corruption" of modern urban peoples, and the absence of "corruption" in such "innocent races" as those of Australian Aboriginal peoples, reflects more Griffith's philosophical concerns than an empirically grounded analysis of culture. In his earlier writings, echoing Van der Post's ideas on the innocence of the Bushman and their domination by Europeans and other African races, Griffith adopted the same notion to explain frontier violence in colonial Australia. For example Aboriginal people's primal "innocence" is thought to explain the fact they were massacred by European Australians; as he writes in the early days of settlement "Aborigines were murdered because of their innocence" (Free: The End of the Human Condition, p.129). This assertion fails to consider the fact that Aboriginal people were murdered because they frequently speared the cattle of pastoralists and violently resisted pastoral incursion into their lands, resulting in waves of frontier "warfare" in which their spears could not match the superior weaponry of Europeans. It also does not consider the fact that Aboriginal people living on remote, non-arable lands where conflict over land did not exist, were treated humanely and not murdered at all. In a further example of fitting data to his preconceptions, instead of looking at the evidence objectively, Griffith conflates the Biblical myth of Eden with Aboriginal mythology; as he writes the state of Edenic primal innocence is described in "the Bible as 'The Garden of Eden' and in Australian Aboriginal mythology it is aptly called the 'dream-time'"(Free: The End of the Human Condition, 129). This comparison overlooks the fact that Aboriginal dreaming stories, or the mythic creation period referred to as the 'dream-time', contains numerous instances of murder, combat and rape, and evokes nothing like the state of primal innocence depicted in the Biblical myth of Genesis.

This is yet another example of Griffith's supposedly infallible method of enquiry through "introspection" leading him to make false assertions. Throughout his writings Griffith fails to adequately engage with the serious ethnographies on Aboriginal culture nor those of the world's other hunter-gatherer cultures, preferring to see such cultures through the lenses of Van der Post's notion of primal innocence, or the sanitised myth of the Rousseauean 'Noble Savage', which seems to be his favoured paradigm for interpreting tribal cultures and humanity's hunter-gatherer past (*A Species In Denial* p. 115). However, there is merit in Griffith's more nuanced assertions found throughout his writings that agrarian and modern urban people may be less violent than hunting peoples because they have developed means of civilising and restraining violent behaviour or what he terms psychological "upset". This may account for the different homicide rates that exist between hunting peoples and modern agrarian and urban peoples. In this sense his theory does acknowledge that hunting peoples are not completely free of "upset", and by implication aggression and violence. However, this is where his thinking comes unstuck, unclear and ambiguous - are tribal people less violent than modern urban peoples as he frequently claims, or more violent because they do not restrain their violent behaviour like modern urban peoples do? Griffith seems to assert both ideas simultaneously not realising they contradict one another. In fact this is when his thinking descends into incoherence - it is not at all clear what Griffith is actually claiming regarding degrees of violence in various cultures. This is why data analysis is important - it gives you an indication of actual rates of lethal violence cross culturally so that the kind of polemical, emotive and misleading assertions we find in works like Griffith's can be avoided. Further, if Griffith does acknowledge tribal people may be more violent than modern urban peoples because they do not restrain their "upset", such an admission makes the comparison between the !Kung Bushman and Christ unsustainable. It may explain the differing homicide rates, but we are still left with the problem how a Christ-like people can be so unrestrainedly violent in the first place. The Bushman cannot commit homicide at the rate they do and be Christ-like - this is a contradiction in terms. Griffith's theory is in this sense illogical and empirically unsustainable. Griffith's main claim in "*A Species in Denial*" is that anthropologists have subconsciously exaggerated levels of violence in !Kung society. Because he accepts the work of Van der Post and Marshall, in order to sustain his position he is compelled to somehow refute the work of anthropologists who have questioned the benign nature of !Kung social life. In adopting this strategy Griffith has developed a circular system of thought akin to that of Freudian and Marxist theory, which contain internal caveats that explain why people may object to the proposed theory. Scientists do not take such circular systems of thought seriously as they fail to meet one of the fundamental requirements of objective enquiry - that is Karl Popper's notion of

falsification. If Griffith's work is to move beyond circularity and emotive assertion into the realm of serious data based research, he would need to demonstrate why Lee's data based on extensive analysis of government documents is wrong. If he can show it to be wrong then his notion that Lee has exaggerated homicide rates could be sustained. To date he has been unable to demonstrate this - beyond mere emotive assertions that this is the case. Griffith is making very serious allegations about the anthropological profession - that it is essentially duplicitous, deceptive and fraudulent (albeit at an unconscious level). But he offers no serious data analysis to support this supposition. Readers should not take Griffith's position in "A Species in Denial" at all seriously unless he can produce a substantial data base indicating the analysis of Lee and Knauft is incorrect. Tim McCartney Snape, the famous mountaineer and long-time supporter of Griffith's work, has also accepted the myth of the Rousseauean 'Noble Savage' and Van der Post's work as providing sufficient basis for a theory of human origins and social organisation. As he writes in the Forward to Griffith's earlier publication, "Beyond the Human Condition" when reflecting on the supposed moral and psychological virtues of small band hunting life: `...by recognising [our hunter-gatherer past] and trying to practice those dietary, physical and social patterns and trying to put them into a modern context we would immediately solve many of our current problems. Why isn't this taught in school?(41). This view is based on a mistaken view of the patterns of social organisation and behaviour evident in hunter-gatherer societies, which if implemented in a modern context would most likely exacerbate, as opposed to diminish incidents of violent conflict. After over a quarter of a century of self-publication and self-funded promotion of his ideas, Griffith's books to date have received no detailed critical analysis by the anthropological community nor any recognition of his contribution to anthropological debate. Nor have his books been published by any reputable publishing house - he is solely a self-financed and self-published author, disseminating his writings through the organisation he founded to promote his ideas, the World Transformation Movement. He does however have quite significant support from the lay community and the general public who seem to have accepted the veracity of his theory and his claim that the anthropological profession has subconsciously distorted data on !Kung social life. Griffith has taken the work of Van der Post on good faith - and then on the basis of this good faith felt compelled (misguidedly I believe) to defend Van der Post's work against his critics. So it is not that he has knowingly misled his supporters and his readership. I believe he has acted in good faith - he just happens to be mistaken due to a lack of more in depth research and critical reflection upon his own assumptions. The real tragedy here is that a large number of people, when they do some serious reading and take a good look at the ethnographic record, will come to the realisation they have been taken in by

what is essentially a fantasy. If you base your work on bad and flawed data, as Griffith has done, then your own work will reflect this. The challenge for Griffith is to provide a rigorous analysis of why the current consensus amongst anthropologists regarding !Kung social life and homicide rates are incorrect. If he cannot do so he is obliged to retract the assertions made in this book. While this book may offer readers genuine insights into their own lives, people should be very skeptical of its grandiose claims of being the final word on the human condition - the long sought for truth that will save the human race. A false theory cannot be a liberating truth - and it is my suspicion that history will judge much of Griffith's work as wrong and ill-informed.

[Download to continue reading...](#)

A Species in Denial Sold into Extinction: The Global Trade in Endangered Species: The Global Trade in Endangered Species (Global Crime and Justice) Cephalopods of the World: An Annotated and Illustrated Catalogue of Cephalopod Species Known to Date (FAO Species Catalogue for Fisheries Purposes) Butterflies of North Carolina, South Carolina & Georgia: A Guide to Common & Notable Species (Common and Notable Species) Species: A History of the Idea (Species and Systematics) Covert Capital: Landscapes of Denial and the Making of U.S. Empire in the Suburbs of Northern Virginia League of Denial: The NFL, Concussions, and the Battle for Truth Dealing with Doctors, Denial, and Death: A Guide to Living Well with Serious Illness The Denial of Aging: Perpetual Youth, Eternal Life, and Other Dangerous Fantasies Denial: How Refusing to Face the Facts about Our Autism Epidemic Hurts Children, Families, and Our Future Ashamed to Die: Silence, Denial, and the AIDS Epidemic in the South The Denial of Death The Madhouse Effect: How Climate Change Denial Is Threatening Our Planet, Destroying Our Politics, and Driving Us Crazy Denying History: Holocaust Denial, Pseudohistory, and How We Know What Happened in the Past The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature Unsettled: Denial and Belonging Among White Kenyans (Ethnographic Studies in Subjectivity) German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial Death Without Denial, Grief Without Apology: A Guide for Facing Death and Loss Denial of the Soul: Spiritual and Medical Perspectives on Euthanasia and Mortality Denial: Holocaust History on Trial

[Contact Us](#)

[DMCA](#)

[Privacy](#)

[FAQ & Help](#)