

Kremlin Ants

(It's a short march to Washington)



THE PERFECT SOCIALISTS

Ants are among Nature's most interesting creations, and are one of the few creatures that can rival man for the complexity and scale of their societies, the sophistication of their behavior and even the sheer biomass of their aggregate being.

This essay will discuss the fascinating zoological aspects of ants, particularly how they seem -- at least superficially -- to be a living metaphor for the Perfect Socialist Society if you're a Noble Washington Democrat or the New York Times. However, there's a completely counter-intuitive but factual twist, which reveals that the most zoologically accurate ant metaphor is not in fact the Perfect Socialists but rather, quite the reverse.

But First, Some Ant Fun Facts

According to "The Lives of Ants" by Laurent Keller and Elisabeth Gordon, ants have evolved into around 13,000 species. Like the rest of the Hymenoptera (the scientific name for the order of insects including bees, wasps and ants) these creatures are "recently" evolved -- relative to other insects -- and did not appear until 150 million years ago, around the middle of the age of the dinosaurs, (i.e. the late Jurassic / early Cretaceous periods). In contrast, more primitive insects such as cockroaches and dragonflies appeared during the Carboniferous ages, perhaps 200 million years earlier and long before the first dinosaurs.

Ants range in lifestyle from relatively primitive species living in small colonies like Tasmania's fierce bulldog ants, to other species living in sophisticated and complex insect mega-cities like the African Driver ants which may contain over 20 million individuals in a colony, to South and Central America's Leaf-Cutter ants with colonies which can exceed 25 million individuals. The Driver ants, which are blind and have no sting, are commonly called Army ants, but the actual Army ants -- scientific name *Eciton* -- live in South and Central America in smaller colonies of up to one or two million or so; these do have a sting, and are not blind.

Amazingly, a "super colony" of Redwood ants discovered a few decades ago on a Japanese island contained over 300 million individuals.

The total ant biomass (i.e. the weight of all the ants in the world added up) is estimated to be roughly the same as man's, and the total number of individual ants is estimated at around 10,000 trillion. (Thus, there are even more ants in the world today than all the dollars in America's National Debt under Barack Obama, though he and his fellow Noble Democrats are working overtime to catch up).

The Socialists' Marvelous Ant Metaphor

More than any other creature ants seem to represent a living example of Nature's Perfect Socialists: they live in close, massive communities where each individual tirelessly devotes its labors -- and if necessary its life -- with utter selflessness for the good of the community. Even better, each individual ant not only does what it's told to do by its central government (i.e. the Queen), it does so immediately, with no

filibuster, Republicans or awkward questions from talk radio. Indeed, in contrast to most human societies, the ants in a given colony get along with one another with perfect cooperation. To the envy of progressive Democrats everywhere, there are no Rush Limbaughs, Glenn Becks or Sean Hannitys in any ant colony to tarnish this perfect social harmony.

Best of all, if ants paid taxes they would work as hard regardless of whether the tax rate was 1% or 100%. Thus, government's static financial tax projections – in contrast to the disallowed but accurate dynamic calculation processes everyone else uses – would finally not be worthless and misleading. (Most US government tax projections actually do assume that our working and business-starting behavior remains the same [i.e. “static”] regardless of tax levels, which works *only* for Progressive Democrats in theory and ants in [metaphorical] practice).

In short, the pure Socialistic orientation of ants, with their combination of selfless, complex and perfectly coordinated behavior, has long made them seem an enlightened model for man, particularly among Democrat fans of central planning, income redistribution and equality of outcome. Here are some of the reasons ants so viscerally appeal to Democrats in terms of this Perfect Socialist metaphor:

--Intense Collective Orientation. Ants are well known for the selflessness with which they sacrifice themselves for the colony, with each individual ant manifesting more berserker disdain for death than Vikings, Samurai, Spartans or even Zulus. Ants are furious in their defense of the colony, attacking in huge numbers reminiscent of the Red Chinese “Human Wave” attacks during the Korean War. Certain species of trees in the tropics have evolved in conjunction with particular species of ants in order to take advantage of this trait, and provide the colony shelter in exchange. The Acacia tree does not fear herbivorous browsing, since its colony of ant defenders will swiftly drive off the would-be eaters of its leaves be they giraffes or caterpillars. In the African jungle, the “adultery tree” housed even fiercer ants, as adulterers (primarily females) discovered to their deep distress when tied to the tree by the tribe in punishment so severe as to make the Taliban's treatment of female adulterers (or even Rahm Emanuel's congressional arm-twisting!) seem mild in comparison.

--No Individuality. And when the colony is not under attack, each individual ant is still a model of selfless **Community Service** to its society, with each ant performing its specific role with greater automatic collective precision than seen even in North Korean State Parades or opening ceremonies at the Beijing Olympics.

--Diversity. With many or most ant species, there's amazing diversity even within a single species. Despite their manifest physical differences each caste of ants within the colony belongs to the same species, with their own specialized tasks which they perform with precision and perfect social harmony. At least within the ant colony, there is no question that Diversity enhances social harmony.

For example, among some species of Army or Driver ants, the soldiers' formidable mandibles are too massive to enable them to feed themselves. So, a smaller caste within the colony with little mandibles does this for the soldier caste. Leaf Cutter ants

-- which are vegetarian, in contrast to the highly predatory Driver and Army ants -- have a caste which does nothing but tend the colony's vast underground fungus gardens. These fungus farms are created with a mulch of chewed leaves. The leaves are provided by the cutter caste, which is in turn protected by a miniature caste which rides shotgun on the leaves as they're being carried by the cutters to the huge underground colony. The tiny shotgun hitch-hikers drive off small parasitoid wasps which would otherwise lay their eggs on the leaf-carrying ants' heads, which would be slowly eaten by the wasp larvae when they hatched if the leaf-carrying ants' heads were not protected by the tiny hitch-hikers.

(Thus, in stark contrast to US citizens permanently dependent on food stamps, welfare and other forms of government support, these Leaf Cutter ants getting a free ride from their fellow citizens actually do add value to the colony!).

--**Centralized Planning and Control.** Most ant colonies manifest a degree of central planning and micro-management that's even greater than Barack Obama's Socialized Healthcare Initiative, if that's possible. Every ant's day is planned and controlled by the Queen, by virtue of chemical pheromones she emits which govern what each ant does and what the colony does. Army (and Driver) ants need to go on mass foraging raids every month or so, since that's the cycle for the larval birth and pupation metamorphosis. If the local food runs out, the whole colony must go on the march, with **Government Housing** being provided by the massive ant-ball of the colony itself, as it bivouacs in a large, squirming ant-mass with the Queen, eggs and larvae protected in the middle.

(The Queen's chemical emissions control each detail of this behavior even more thoroughly than Waxman's and Markey's Cap and Trade legislation will control our carbon emissions.)

--**Feminism.** As is well known every ant colony is a shining example of feminism in action, whereby the Queen controls everything in the colony and is always the center of attention. Moreover, all the colony's various worker castes are sisters, albeit sterile. The ant males (who are never in great demand and comprise a clear minority within the ant world) perform their perfunctory mating obligations and once adequate insemination of the Queen has occurred, are generally driven off or killed.

(Even the progressive feminists populating the Women's Studies Departments at Smith or Wellesley might think this goes a bit too far).

--**Socialized day-care.** In many (and maybe most) ant species, free day-care is provided by The State (i.e. the colony) in the form of a specialized caste of baby-sitter ants who oversee the eggs and larvae, wipe the little larval bottoms (i.e. clean the larvae's excrement when needful), monitor their proper temperature and humidity and move their immature charges to different areas of the colony as may be needed to provide optimum baby-ant developmental conditions.

(However, the ant colony sadly lacks Teachers Unions to progressively provide for the larvae's politically correct education -- a major "fly in the ointment" from the perspective of the Democrat Ant Queens in Washington's colony).

--Socialized Health Care. In some ant species The State (i.e. the colony) even provides free healthcare for all the colony's citizens. For example, per Keller and Gordon certain ants in the Jura Mountains in central Europe endeavor to find the resinous ooze of certain spruce trees which contains antibiotic qualities. The colony's healthcare workers distribute this medicine throughout the colony to maximize the health and productivity of all its members.

(If only Doctor Obama's plan was so inexpensive and simple; Keller and Gordon do not comment on whether these medical Formicidae -- the scientific name for ants specifically -- employ resin rationing and "death counselors" for the elderly, lengthy waits for treatment or free healthcare resin to illegal alien ants sneaking in from neighboring colonies).

--Collective Farms. The huge underground colonies of leaf-cutter ants are basically stupendous collective farms, with each and every citizen doing its particular part to maximize the volume and quality of the fungus crop in the ants' underground gardens.

(The leaf-cutters' high agricultural productivity is achieved despite the lack of five-year plans or even a Department of Agriculture!).

--Socialized Banks. The honey-pot ants of the southwestern United States and elsewhere employ the bodies of "volunteers" to serve as a living supply-depot of food and water, so the rest of the colony can survive times of drought and scarcity. The volunteers attach themselves to the ceiling in the underground colony, and as they hang suspended are supplied with mass quantities of nectar and water. Their abdomens swell to the size of a grape, and effectively store the colony's largess acquired during times of plenty for distribution during times of scarcity.

(These storage ants are the honey-pot colony's living banks, and they ably fulfill that socialized banking role with no need whatsoever for Barney Frank's or Chris Dodd's helpful oversight and burdensome regulations).

--Affirmative Action and Planned Parenthood. Ants enforce a system of quota-based affirmative action that would surely garner a favorable Supreme Court ruling from **Lady Latina Sonia, Queen of Quota**. Moreover, they efficiently combine this with even more effective planned parenthood than that favored by her policy-making team-mate **Baroness Bader, Ruth the Red** in her recent comments in support of the self-service eugenics afforded by unrestricted abortion. That is, whenever there's a shortage or overage of individuals among the colony's different given castes, the Queen sees to it that the proper Quota Proportions are reestablished, via the types of eggs she produces, what the larvae are fed, what pheromones they are exposed to or other biological affirmative action initiative.

(It's too bad the New Haven Fire Department lacked such an effective mechanism for regulating the composition of its workers).

Progressive Liberals' Zoological Wet Dream (or Nightmare?)

In short, ants seem to be an ideal zoological metaphor for Perfect Socialist Order. Each individual and caste knows its place and task, never complains and automatically follows the enlightened chemical dictates of the elite Democrat Central Planners (i.e. the colony's Queen) in Washington, Havana or Pyongyang.

Washington's Noble Democrats may well be even greener with envy over this system of government than they are politically green with their various windmills and solar panels (which interestingly are like an ant in the size of their aggregate power output in proportion to our needs).

For Progressive Democrats, an ant colony truly is a veritable emblem of social cooperation, equality of outcome and rigid central planning so exciting and attractive as to require cleaning the political sheets, due to legislative nocturnal emissions (but not carbon emissions) caused by too much backroom Marxist **Stimulus**. (An example of the Progressive Democrats' joyous nocturnal legislative emissions would be Midnight Cap and Trade, emitted in a sudden politically sticky burst only in the wee hours of the night before next morning's hurried vote).

But, from a deeper and more purely Darwinian (and less Marxist) zoological perspective, the Progressives' glorious ant colony is actually a completely inaccurate socialist metaphor. For, in reality each ant colony is far closer to being Nature's Perfect Nazi (note the singular form) than it is to a City of Nature's Perfect Socialists.

Ant Colonies and Human Cities

From a purely Darwinian standpoint, what is the single biggest difference between an ant colony and a typical city like Detroit, Washington or New Orleans?

Note: this is a trick question because the seemingly obvious answer – which is that the ant colony functions whereas these Democrat-run cities don't – may be completely accurate but it's not the correct answer.

Rather, the correct answer is that each and every human being in these and all other cities is an independently reproducing entity, competing with all other humans to gain immortality by proxy via generating more offspring, offspring's offspring, etc. This is not the case with an ant colony, where only one member – the Queen – reproduces. In the human city comparison, it would be as if (a) only the mayor reproduced and (b) did so at an exponential rate. (Admittedly, in certain of these cities the mayors do seem to be doing their best to live up to their metaphorical ant role models).

Darwinian Success

In other words, Darwinian success is defined solely by the extent to which one's genes populate the future. This is the essence of Natural Selection, whereby "most fit" is ultimately synonymous with genetic longevity and predominance.

Homo Sapiens are around today instead of Neanderthals because Homo Sapiens were more successful than Neanderthals in reproduction. Over time, a larger and larger percentage of the total humanoid gene pool became predominately Homo Sapiens, because we were better than Neanderthals at adapting to the ever-changing environment, and generally out-competed them (notwithstanding the Neanderthals' phenomenal muscular strength. Interestingly, according to some scientists [such as Andrew Froehle of the University of California and Steven Churchill of Duke University] one of the reasons we may have out-competed Neanderthals is energy efficiency: we may have required 100 to 350 fewer daily calories than Neanderthals.)

Therefore Homo Sapiens infused more and more of their genetic content – the biological stuff which made them more successful – into the future's gene pool. Eventually Homo Sapiens comprised 100% of the humanoid gene pool, because each reproducing individual was better at survival -- and thus reproduction -- than his or her Neanderthal counterpart.

Ants' Counter-Intuitive Darwinian Essence

In complete contrast to Man (and to virtually all other non-hymenoptera species, except for termites, naked mole-rats, certain communal shrimp species and maybe one or two others) most individual ants are not reproducing agents themselves. All the ants except the Queen (and the relatively rare and short-lived males) do not reproduce. Therefore, all but the Queen (and rare, short-lived males) are direct Darwinian non-entities, for they have zero chance, opportunity, inclination or ability to engage in sexual reproduction and thereby become *direct* participants in Darwin's Footprint Olympics.

Rather, the only Darwinian significance of the ant workers, soldiers and all other non-reproductive castes is how they contribute to the Queen's success, since their own individual genes are at a Darwinian dead-end. Their only participation in Darwin's Footprint Olympics is by *indirect proxy*. In effect they can only cheer on the Queen with their support, but they can't compete themselves.

The other ants do, of course, indirectly contribute to the Queen's success and thereby their genes do survive into the future, but only indirectly via the Queen, through "kin selection." ("Kin selection" occurs when non-reproducing individuals assist in the reproductive success of a relative [usually a brother or sister]. Male lion brothers, for example, may together rule the pride and fight off innumerable single challengers, even if only one of the brothers mates with the lionesses. Ants have a similar system, except with sisters and expanded exponentially. But, this "reproduction by proxy" is nevertheless indirect and hence diluted from the non-reproducing individual's genetic perspective, like a proxy vote instead of a direct one in the booth).

But regardless, in this vital Darwinian sense, the Queen is indistinguishable from the colony as a whole.

Leopards, Cows and Ants

Thus, from a Darwinian perspective a colony of predatory Army (or Driver) Ants is far more like a single leopard which can divide itself into millions of tiny pieces than it is akin to a city of people. Likewise a colony of leaf-cutters is akin to a cow which also can similarly disassemble itself at will. Because none of the individual ants reproduce except the Queen (and the rare, short-lived males), all the Darwinian selective forces are narrowly focused solely on those reproducing individuals, and the only long-term significance of the innumerable non-reproductive ants is their aggregate contribution to the colony's survival and thus to the Queen's (and the male's) reproductive success.

This is the reason ants in a given colony get along so well together. More-or-less like your stomach gets along with your bowels or your muscles cooperate with your bones. In terms of Darwinian Reproductive success, each worker and soldier ant has about as much importance to the colony's success as your fingernail or strand of hair has to do with yours. They all play a role, but only in terms of how they contribute in aggregate to your own individual reproductive success.

So, the apparent "selflessness" of the individual ants is illusory, they are in fact as selfless with respect to the colony as your own body's separate tissues are to you. From a Darwinian standpoint, an ant colony is like a Hedge Fund portfolio of one single stock, which happens to have thousands of individual business units each separately reporting their own individual cash flows. In both instances there is no real diversification.

Ants and Gay Rights

Because virtually 100% of the inhabitants of any given ant colony at any given time are female, one could justly speculate that an ant colony might well be a veritable hot-bed for lesbian activity. However, Keller and Gordon -- as well as every other entomologist, in all likelihood -- have never reported such behavior. The fact that all the sisters are sterile except the Queen possibly explains the ants' unprogressive disinterest in this matter, notwithstanding their otherwise spotless feminist credentials.

Marx or Hitler?

In summary, the appropriate question to ask from this deeper Darwinian perspective in the context of Ants is, are they Perfect Socialists or in fact Perfect Nazis?

And, no surprise, the answer is clearly the latter.

Some ants enslave others, capturing a neighboring colony's larvae and transporting them to their own colony to work for the rest of their lives in a fashion which would have made the Nazis' slavers (primarily Fritz Sauckel and Albert Speer) seem inept. Moreover ants cannot abide another colony that's too close, and will wage frequent, aggressive war on its neighbors, sometimes to the point of genocidal ferocity. And if a domestic species of ant colony has the misfortune of being too close to a colony of

Argentine ants or their fire ant relatives, the domestic variety will undergo an experience reminiscent of Poland circa 1939.

As the Life Nature Library volume entitled “The Insects” states:

“The ants’ most dangerous enemies are other ants, just as man’s most dangerous enemies are other men’.....Ant battles even among colonies of the same species, are carnages terrible to behold. The ants seem constantly girded for war...”

In his book “On Human Nature” famed Harvard entomologist Edward O. Wilson notes that:

“Ant wars are very easy to observe....One simply looks for masses of small brown ants struggling together on sidewalks or lawns...thousands of individuals may be involved, and the battlefield typically occupies several square feet of grassroots jungle.”

Ants, People and Progressives

Wilson finally adds:

“Our societies are based on the mammalian plan: the individual strives for reproductive success foremost and that of his kin secondarily; further grudging cooperation represents a compromise in order to enjoy the benefits of group membership. A rational ant -- let us imagine for a moment that ants and other social insects had succeeded in evolving high intelligence -- would find such an arrangement biologically unsound and the very concept of individual freedom intrinsically evil.”

It would be difficult to find a finer concluding quote, to capture the essence of the attitude that the **Noble Democrat Ant Queens** in Washington’s colony have toward the rest of us.

Damocles
July, 2009
(updated, 2011)