The Human Animal

**The Immortal Gene**, by Desmond Morris

Our species has the heaviest parental burden of all species on earth.

The Baby: (1st stage)

Why do Russian nurses in St. Petersburg, Russia, bound the new born baby so tightly?

Because this tight wrap, mimics the tight quarters of the womb.

In Russia the baby’s family is separated from the mother and baby for the first 7 days. The mother only sees the baby to feed it. New born babies have better co-ordination in water than on land. For the first couple months, they have an innate ability to swim. They stick their tongues out to prevent swallowing.

-New born babies have an ability to mimic hand and face movements, 15 minutes after birth.

-Rocking a baby is done almost uniformly across the world at roughly 72 beats per minute, which seems to suggest the rhythmic sounds of the heartbeat heard in the womb have a lasting calming effect.

- only 45 hours after birth an infant can identify his mother by scent alone.

* Before baby food, infants were fed food already chewed by the parents or grandparents. Morris suggests that this is the origin of modern kissing.
* Characteristics of a baby face are: big eyes, large pupils, chubby cheeks, and a flat face.

Babbling Stage (Stage 2)

* Each human will begin to acquire language.

Toddlers (Stage 3)

* Toddlers demonstrate that competition is more ancient than co-operation as the fight over toys.

Children Stage (Stage 4)

* Each child goes through special rights of passage, such as first attending school. Each culture in the world has ceremonies to celebrate the passage of the child from youth to the adult world.

Puberty: (Stage 5)

There is a rush to sexuality by many societies. Ceremonial conformity is imposed on the youth by the older generation.

Young Adult: (Stage 6)

* The young adults are paired off to begin their own families.

Middle Age: (Stage 7)

* Typically the middle-aged of society want to deny the aging process. Men are attracted to younger women and people engage in activities associated with their youth.

Old Age: (Stage 8)

* Morris asks the question “Why do humans live beyond their productive years?”
* His answer is that the parental responsibilities are so great, that grandparents are needed to help with this. They help teach the youth language and social skills.

Afterlife:

We are the only species that can contemplate the future, including the afterlife.