# Understanding morality and ethics

Simon Perry 2021

morality leads to peace

peace leads to wisdom

slow down

# Contents

# Synopsis

**Chapter 1, introduction**: I begin in the introduction with a summary of the subjects covered by the book, in an attempt to draw all the knowledge together into a coherent whole and to describe the general moral landscape.

**Chapter 2, the Healing Principle.** This is my term for the internal pressure to thrive, survive and reproduce within each organism, that is the origin of "oughtness" or "shouldness" - normativity, the pressure to achieve goals. It is a corollary of the "selfish gene" theory popularised by Richard Dawkins, whereby one of the main functions of an organism is to propagate more copies of its genome. As such, along with cooperation and competition, its evolutionary logic makes sense of morality and ethics. I have included a mechanism for what drives the Pleasure Principle as set forth by Sigmund Freud (i.e., a biological pressure to seek thriving translates into an emotional pressure to seek pleasure).

**Chapter 3, Perfect Compassion.** The Healing Principle is maximising and pro-life. When we interact with others, we are giving or receiving the Healing Principle in the form of putting conditions in place, in each other, for its maximisation. If we wish to be prosocial to others, then the ideal is to be maximally prosocial to all concerned to the extent available.

**Chapter 4, the Stakeholder Principle.** This gives a theoretical basis for why humans help each other, seemingly at a cost to themselves. We help each other because we rely on each other: helping you is helping me (on an evolutionary level). Hence, humans have a psychological desire to help others in the vicinity. It is conceptually similar to Hamilton's Rule which describes the same logic in relation to genetic relatedness: I help those to whom I am related, because we share genes, and helping their genes is helping copies of my own.

**Chapter 5, Maps of Morality.** Here I give three different schematic overviews of morality in the form of maps or diagrams: subject areas and their interrelations; the interplay between cooperation and competition makes a moral compass; and nested normativities, beginning with the Healing Principle as instrumental normativity.

**Chapter 6, Cooperation.** Here I attempt to explain the psychological structure of human cooperation, as put forward by Michael Tomasello in his book, "A Natural History of Morality" (2016). Cooperation is important, because it is the evolutionary context and birth place of human morality. In this chapter I include a plausible and realistic account of the human conscience. I introduce a number of fundamental concepts that are in use throughout the book, such as roles, role ideals, moral ideals, norms, normativity and duty (to be ethical and virtuous), commitment, mutual risk,

mutual trust, the joint agent, joint self-governance on behalf of the group or team, mutual respect and deservingness (as valuable partners who are upholding role ideals), partner control, partner choice, monitoring, evaluation, moral identity, self-other equivalence, and the Golden Rule. I give a time line of the evolution of human cooperation.

**Chapter 7, Patriarchal Norms.** Patriarchy, the societal control and repression of females for the benefit of males, is responsible for many of the moral principles we see in human society. If patriarchy represents the lowest-cost primate male reproductive strategy (control and coercion, rather than investment in being a good-quality mate), then feminism aims to promote the liberty, thriving, surviving, and equality of females.

Along with patriarchy, reproductive pair-bonding is the other source of sexual norms.

**Chapter 8, Competition.** Human social life can be seen as a trade-off between competition (self-interest) and cooperation (or morality). Competition is inevitable because natural selection operates on the differences or relative advantages between companion members of a species. The common ancestor of chimpanzees, bonobos and humans, 6 million years ago, must have been competitive. If everyone in the group is competitive and Machiavellian, sharing and morality cannot evolve. However, this social intelligence is the necessary cognitive foundation for human social cooperation.

Possibly at the time the ecology in Africa changed from forest to variable savannah and open woodland, and the first human species evolved, around two million years ago, the human family line went through the "self-domestication of the human race", a transformation from a competitive to a cooperative way of life, which may have had three or four intertwined causes: 1) enforced sharing of carcases when scavenging; 2) human pair-bonding (that chimps and bonobos do not do), allowing family structures to become known; 3) cooperative breeding, whereby humans share the care of each other's children (not done by other great apes); 4) the invention of stone tools that can be used as weapons and are therefore a physical levelling mechanism between human males. Whereas australopithecines, the ancestors of the genus homo, were highly sexually dimorphic (the males were much larger than the females, suggesting that the biggest males got to reproduce, therefore implying male-male competition, and patriarchy in the form of individual male mate-guarding of multiple females), modern human males and females are almost the same size.

**Chapter 9, Fairness.** The fundamental theme of fairness is equality: treating others as equals, and being treated as an equal, when it comes to distributing respect, benefit and harm, or material goods. Self-other equivalence is a necessary consequence of cooperation: partners are alike and interchangeable in all important respects; status is levelled because all partners have to obey fixed, impartial practical and cooperative norms; and partners need to exchange perspectives in

order to coordinate: being able and willing to take the view from both here and there is a basis of objectivity.

**Chapter 10, Reciprocity.** This chapter gives details of the various kinds of human reciprocity, including tit-for-tat, indirect, attitudinal, and long-term interdependent "buddy" reciprocity. There is a strong emphasis on analysing the restorative power of forgiveness, which nonetheless cannot be used all the time, or cooperation falls apart.

**Chapter 11, Targeted Helping.** The evolutionary roots of human helping in response to need lie in the parent-offspring bond. Mammals and birds care for their young, and as a result, feel empathic concern for them and show helping behaviour towards them. This faculty becomes co-opted into social situations, in humans. We help each other more than most other species, because we are cooperative and interdependent.

**Chapter 12, Empathy.** This chapter explores the three kinds of empathy: empathic concern, emotional resonance, and perspective taking, including interesting comparisons with other species. For example, we believe that magpies are excellent at perspective taking because they steal from other creatures and hide objects from them.

**Chapter 13, Cooperative Breeding**. I explain the latest knowledge we have about the way that individuals of some species care for each other's young, and the implications this has for morality. The point is that while (say) a chimpanzee has not much reason to be interested in what is in the mind of another chimpanzee, a human baby is always on the lookout for people who will care for it. Hence, humans seek out knowledge of each other's mind-states, for prosocial purposes. This is foundational to the human ability to coordinate cognitively and perspectivally with collaborative partners.

**Chapter 14, Unconditional Love.** This is an important component of morality, exploring the Stakeholder Principle from a more human point of view. There is a spectrum of conditionality in our relationships.

**Chapter 15, Dark and Light Traits.** This chapter explores human evil and its various manifestations in everyday life, giving the definition of dark behaviour (thriving at the unnecessary expense of others) and various personality traits that are dark in nature. It explains the rationale for finding pleasure in harming others – or rather, points the way, inviting the reader to combine the explanations for "competition" and "pleasure". Since natural selection works on relative advantage over others, and a fitness benefit is felt as pleasure, relative advantage over others is felt as pleasure. In normal, prosocial people, this feeling is counteracted by a cooperative impulse. I also explore the opposite of human evil: extraordinary altruism and spiritual health; and give a scatter plot graph that shows, for a sample of 1518 people, how caring vs. how malevolent they are (mostly caring).

**Chapter 16, Personhood.** This chapter covers definitions of a person; human rights; and respecting people from other groups. Since compassion is normative: morally required, and human beings are vulnerable: they have needs (to thrive and survive), it is normative for humans to treat others as if they have rights to the maximum benefit and minimum harm available to them.

**Chapter 17, Virtue and Sin.** These are important concepts in morality, and I describe the way that virtue works and give religious definitions of sin: Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic.

**Chapter 18-21, Responsibility, Integrity, Good Manners, Self-Discipline.** Short discourses on these virtues.

**Chapter 22, Why do Good?** The name of this chapter may be a misnomer, since it generally covers "reasons for doing things": answering questions that the reader may have about the differences between strategic (amoral) and moral reasons, evolutionary and present-day psychological reasons, and skilful and unskilful actions in Buddhism.

**Chapter 23, Moral Foundations Theory.** Here I broaden the moral sphere from interpersonal helping, fairness and reciprocity to include the demands of the group (duties, obligations, group loyalty, deference to authority and tradition, etc.) and of sacredness (being "clean" and not "dirty"). I draw on the Big Three of Morality by Richard Shweder et al., and the Moral Foundations Theory of Jonathan Haidt et al.

**Chapters 24, The Ego.** In order to thoroughly understand morality from the personal perspective, it is necessary to have a working knowledge of the ego. The ego has traditionally been vilified as inherently bad, but in reality it is a necessary psychological feature, a "machine for looking after you", in keeping with the Healing Principle. However, of course, it can encourage competitiveness and separateness from others, and separateness from the present moment.

**Chapter 25, Ego Defenses.** Much of the time we are acting in defense against bad feelings, using coping mechanisms, although we might not realise it. I detail many of the best known ego defenses including passive aggression, and explain some differences between adaptive ("mature", conscious) and maladaptive ("immature", unconscious) defenses. These latter are designed to get under the skin of the people they are used against, which is why they tend to be so maddening.

**Chapter 26, The Emotions**. I present a simple theory of emotions as subjective reactions to goals being promoted or thwarted.

**Chapter 27, Desire and "Original Sin".** One of the issues in traditional morality is a distrust of pleasure and desire. I have reframed the problem as "the Healing Principle gone wrong", i.e., seeking to thrive in unskilful or criminal ways.

# Introduction

> Ethics is intellectually taxing.
>
> *Andrew T Forcehimes – "Ethical Theories and Their Application"*

Morality could be defined as the way that our actions affect ourselves and others, how we stand in relation to our group, or how we stand in relation to a sacred order of things, with a view to partly suppressing selfishness. Within the moral landscape is ethics, or "the good". If morality is "what people do", then ethics is "the best that people do": i.e., upholding moral ideals.

Moral theory, the abstract way that morality is put together, is best described as a forest, or an ecology of interacting families of principles. This metaphor is appropriate as we are discussing principles about living things.

This book aims to provide:

1. a basic understanding of how morality, ethics and spirituality work, from an evolutionary perspective;
2. a vocabulary of concepts that can be used to construct further philosophy and to answer philosophical questions.

It is a collection of known facts together with hypotheses "joining the dots".

It is based on two principles:

**1. The Healing Principle**

The biological pressure to thrive, survive and reproduce is a natural by-product of evolution by natural selection; specifically, effectively, the evolution of competition between different versions of genes to out-reproduce each other in an environment containing limited physical resources, that can support only a limited number of carrier organisms. Consequent to this state of effective competition between versions of genes for physical resources, there is internal pressure for individual organisms to reproduce. To reproduce, they must survive long enough to do so. To survive, it helps to thrive and to be physically and psychologically strong and healthy. Hence, there is internal pressure inside each organism to reproduce, to survive, and therefore to thrive or flourish. We choose this pressure as the primary value for this

moral philosophy, and we name it the Healing Principle, because biological healing, flourishing and regeneration are all aspects of it.

The Healing Principle unifies and governs the rest of (evolutionary) morality, from cooperation to patriarchy to kin selection. It is the biological, evolutionary pressure within each organism to maximise its own well-being, survival and reproduction. It is the ultimate source of normativity (oughtness) – among other things, it is the "pressure to achieve goals". In itself it is amoral, and we define goodness as when personal thriving is achieved cooperatively (prosocially) and not at the expense of others (antisocially). Benefit and harm are surely the basic moral currency of interpersonal interactions.

The pressure to thrive is individual, universal, and maximising. The way to access it, to allow it to bear fruit, is to put the right conditions in place, as a flower in your garden will grow strong and healthy if it is given the right conditions.

If we combine the human ethic or pressure to be prosocial (friendly to others), with the biological pressure to thrive, then the ideal way to share out benefit and harm is known as Perfect Compassion, where all those affected by my action, including myself, receive the maximum benefit and minimum harm available to them, and can therefore reasonably be happy with what they have received.

Perfect Compassion gives an answer to the question "what should I do?". We next attempt an answer to the question "why should I do it?"

**2. Cooperation with interdependence**

This hypothesis states that the reason human morality exists – what it is for – is navigating our social structure of cooperation with interdependence.

Largely, humans survive by cooperating and sharing with each other.

We are forced to collaborate to thrive, survive and reproduce because we live in a risky foraging niche. In the variable habitat where the human family tree evolved for nearly two million years: the African savannah, and open woodland, we could not just go out and pick our food off trees, like other great apes do. The food available to humans is on the whole not so readily accessible as that of the other great apes, who live in tropical forests. To this day, to a significant degree, we require sophisticated help from each other in order to live. We think and act jointly in order to obtain our necessaries, and share the proceeds fairly with our valued, respected and deserving partners once the joint goal has been achieved. Thus, individual, competitive interests become joint mutual interests, and human morality is born.

The fact that humans need their collaborative partners forms a situation of interdependence: we humans depend on each other. Since I need you to help me survive, I am concerned for your welfare. These evolutionary forces operating on the human family tree, with individuals cooperating in small, tight groups in risky

conditions, gave rise to the altruistic instincts of modern humans. Our species is far more consistently prosocial than other great apes, both in extent and frequency.

We invest in (help) those we depend on, for whom we feel a warm positive regard. We invest in (are fair to our partners in) the relationships we depend on. We see each other as equals, partly because within a collaboration there are fixed roles with fixed standards, and as long as they are performed properly, anyone may fill the role. This means that all egos are similarly constrained by circumstances, and that people are equivalent and interchangeable within roles, forming the bases of the Golden Rule, objectivity (the view from anywhere), mutual respect, and fairness.

Cooperative moral norms are role ideals or fixed standards that apply to any collaboration alike, and include helping, fairness, honesty, reliability, self-reliance, taking responsibility for one's actions, sticking to commitments, loyalty to the team, respect for legitimate authority, keeping oneself clean and hygienic, etc. Empathy is a way of understanding each other, thereby facilitating coordination and helping. Sexual norms have foundations in reproduction, mate guarding and pair bonding. Familial norms have to do with being part of a family, normally genetically related, but not necessarily. These include caring for children and other dependents; helping and caring for aged parents; and helping family members in preference to the outside world.

Norms in general are ideal ways to be cooperative in potentially competitive situations. Human social life can be seen as a trade-off between cooperative and competitive/selfish motives.

An obligation to others originates in an internalised commitment to collaborate and, therefore, to uphold ideal standards of cooperative behaviour. This commitment may be explicit or implicit, interpersonal or to group-wide cultural norms we may be born into and have little choice but to accept.

We are guided and kept in check, normatively, by: 1) the opinion of our group or team as a whole, about our own moral behaviour (our "public moral identity" or reputation); and 2) the opinion of ourselves about our own moral behaviour (our "personal moral identity"; our conscience and moral compass). The ancient, strategic counterparts of these were the public and personal cooperative identities. We govern each other and ourselves, on behalf of "us", the group or team, by enforcing conventional and moral norms. Any infringement can be met with a "respectful protest" from our partners, and guilt in ourselves.

The authority for this governing is ultimately backed up by the threat of not being chosen, or of being rejected, as a cooperative partner. There is individual pressure to be chosen as a cooperative partner, since we depend on others to survive and thrive, and there is a biological pressure to survive and thrive.

Moral realism is the philosophical idea that morality is somehow part of the fabric of the physical universe, like mathematics, and consequently, that something can be "really" right or "really" wrong, in the same way that something physically "really" exists or does not, objectively and mind-independently. Philosophers have long assumed that moral assertions can be true or false, like mathematical statements or statements asserting physical fact, and wondered whether science can ever confirm what is "really" right and wrong; in other words, whether science can derive what we ought to do, from what is. We find that the Healing Principle, the biological pressure to thrive or achieve goals, is the origin of oughtness that goes on to play out in various ways throughout the moral landscape, not all of them ethical.

Morals themselves are not baked in to the universe, but the conditions that give rise to them are. Human morality is an inevitable and predictable consequence of the pressure to thrive, survive and reproduce, cooperatively, on planet Earth, in intelligent social animals. The same moral foundations will predictably arise in any human group, one way or another.

We find that eight moral foundations are universal (six cooperative ones, patriarchy, and family norms) and the ways they are expressed by a group vary according to its particular culture, customs and needs.

Natural selection selects for the evolution of behaviours that tend to maximise overall evolutionary fitness in the individual – relative to other individuals. Humans are forced to achieve their comparative fitness cooperatively, thereby giving rise to an evolved moral psychology, and an eternal tension between cooperation and competition.

The sense of objectivity, where any rational person has the same beliefs you do, arises through self-other equivalence in large groups, in which we are able to take the general perspective. In morality, this is equivalent to the point of view of a disinterested observer, with group-wide standards and norms acting as the impartial, external, mind-independent authorities on what is right.

Apart from that, objective moral realism does not exist, and to think otherwise is overly simplistic and optimistic (but this is impossible to prove definitively one way or the other). Right and wrong means to uphold or violate moral norms. A norm is a standard or ideal we feel we should live up to. These norms may sometimes conflict with each other, so that the good depends on which norm we are invoking.

Not everything "natural" or "adaptive to one's environment" is "good". To assume otherwise is to commit what is called the naturalistic fallacy. After all, selfishness and competition can be adaptive (increase individual fitness) but we do not necessarily see them as good.

This model of morality is adapted from the "cooperation with interdependence" hypothesis of Michael Tomasello (2016, 2020), together with original material: The

Healing Principle, Perfect Compassion, and maps of morality. There are other models available (see, for example: the four basic modes of social interaction: Alan Fiske, 1991; the "moral foundations theory" of Jonathan Haidt et al., 2013; and the "big three of morality" of Richard A Shweder, Nancy C Much, Manamohan Mahapatra, and Lawrence Park, 1997). Like any set of theories, the different models are compatible to the extent that they are true. In fact, taken together, they can enlarge and provide background information for each other.

Evolutionary ethics is a branch of evolutionary psychology, which is a branch of evolutionary biology, which is a branch of biology, which is a science. Therefore, evolutionary ethics is also a science. As a moral philosophy, it is descriptive – it describes what we do rather than prescribes what we should do; however, in the process, it also describes what we feel we should do, and why.

# The Healing Principle

**The existential pressure to thrive, survive and reproduce**

Reaching towards the light.

Feeding the inner flame.

129  All beings tremble before danger, all fear death.

130  All beings fear before danger, life is dear to all.

*The Dhammapada*

Do you want to thrive?

If a mad dog is chasing you, you run away.

If you cut your finger, it heals up by itself.

The biological pressure that causes injuries to heal has the same origin as the pressure to achieve goals and to thrive.

All living things on Earth experience a pressure to reproduce.

To reproduce, an organism needs to survive.  Therefore, all organisms experience a pressure to survive.

To survive, an organism needs to thrive. Therefore, all organisms experience a pressure to thrive. More precisely, they experience a pressure to do the things that will allow them to thrive, including biological processes.

## Genes and survival machines

> We are survival machines – robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes.
>
> *Richard Dawkins – "The Selfish Gene"*

The hypothesis called the Healing Principle is an offshoot of the so-called Selfish Gene theory, popularised by Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book, "The Selfish Gene". (To cut a long story short: genes may be "ruthlessly selfish", but humans are both cooperative and selfish.) The Selfish Gene theory is itself a consequence of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection.

The Selfish Gene theory states that those genes that build bodies that are good at reproducing (making copies of themselves, genes and all), will survive longer in the population and will therefore become more prevalent, than those which do not.

## Origins of the Healing Principle

The pressure to reproduce originates in the context of genetic reproduction and natural selection within an environment of limited physical resources. Within the gene pool of each species (the set of all genes of all individuals of a species), there are multiple versions (alleles) of some genes. Because resources are finite, there is a limited number of live young that each allele can be born into. The presence of the opposition is another limiting factor for each allele.

Those alleles that out-reproduce the opposition will become more prevalent in the population (Dawkins, 1976). Therefore, and because resources are limited, organisms evolve to experience a pressure to win the competition, or reproduce.

The argument is outlined below:

biological reproduction of genes +

finite resources

→ finite number of carrier organisms for genes

→ finite number of reproductive slots for alleles (versions of genes)

→ evolution of competition between alleles for reproductive slots

→ evolved competition between alleles to out-reproduce opposition

→ evolved pressure for alleles to "win" the competition

→ evolved pressure for carrier organisms to reproduce

→ evolved pressure for carrier organisms to survive

→ evolved pressure for carrier organisms to thrive

**Inclusive fitness and kin selection – the promotion of "me", "mine", and "ours"**

I have through all regions wandered;
Still have I none ever found
Who loved another more than himself.
So is one's own self dearer than another,
Therefore out of love to one's own self
Doth no-one injure another.

*The Buddha*

Thriving and evolutionary fitness are seen here as synonymous. There are at least five different definitions of evolutionary fitness (Dawkins, 1982). We may define it here as the capacity to survive and reproduce. To survive, an organism needs to thrive, to be fit and healthy, physically and psychologically. It needs to be well adapted for survival and reproduction within its environment.

Inclusive fitness is defined as the fitness of the individual and of the individual's genetic relatives. In a wider sense, it can include the fitness of the individual's friends and allies (i.e., those who help the individual to thrive).

Kin selection means to selectively help those to whom we are genetically related, with the most help going to those with whom we share the highest degree of relatedness.

> Because biological kin have a higher probability of sharing identical alleles by descent, kin-selected food sharing should favor biased transfers toward kin.
>
> *Michael Gurven – "To give and to give not: The behavioral ecology of human food transfers": Behavioral and Brain Sciences (2004) 27, 543-583*

If we accept that the biological pressure to thrive is one of the two primary values in human morality, the other being cooperation, then we must also recognise that this pressure originates and operates within each individual for the benefit of that individual (inclusively).

See also:

Perfect Compassion, p. 33

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 47

Hamilton's Rule, p. 50

Warfare and out-group hostility, p. 102

Competition, p. 114

Dark and light traits, p. 182

Circles of concern, p. 201

**Pleasure**

The Pleasure Principle describes the emotional pressure to seek pleasure.

> In the theory of psychoanalysis, we have no hesitation in assuming that the course taken by mental events is automatically regulated by the pleasure principle. We believe, that is to say, that the course of those events is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension; and that it takes a

> direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension – that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure.
>
> *Sigmund Freud – "Beyond the Pleasure Principle"*

Psychologically the pressure to thrive has, in itself, taken on something of a life of its own and become slightly detached from evolutionary fitness per se. For example, we feel that we are thriving when we get lost in a good book, but it is hard to see any direct fitness benefits in reading a novel, apart from information-gathering. We are thriving when we are enjoying something for its own sake, and with no other goal in mind.

One definition of thriving is to move towards one's goals or desired states. We feel pleasure when we move towards our goals, and displeasure when we move away from them (Nesse, 2004). Therefore, we feel pleasure when we thrive.

We act in accordance with what leads in the direction of thriving, surviving and/or reproducing, but we do not have to consciously know we are doing this: pleasure indicates it for us. Consequently, pleasure has become an emotional proxy and **reward** for moving in the direction of achieving evolutionary fitness benefits, and we act in accordance with what brings us pleasure (i.e., we follow the Pleasure Principle). A fitness benefit causes us to feel pleasure, while pleasure itself is perceived as a fitness benefit. The biological pressure to thrive translates into an emotional pressure to seek pleasure.

The same argument applies to Freud's concept of Eros or the sexual instinct that pervades much of adult life, driven by the biological pressure to reproduce.

See also:

Patriarchal norms, p. 104

Emotions, p. 243

Desire and "Original Sin", p. 247

## Definitions of thriving

> 'Welfare' is defined as 'chances of survival', even if the effect on actual life and death prospects is so small as to *seem* negligible. One of the surprising consequences of the modern version of the Darwinian theory is that apparently trivial tiny influences on survival probability can have a major effect on evolution. This is because of the enormous time available for such influences to make themselves felt.
>
> *Richard Dawkins –The Selfish Gene, p 4*

"Thriving" is a vague concept, but we have no difficulty in identifying whether or not we are thriving. It is synonymous here with evolutionary fitness (see "Inclusive fitness", above).

Some define it in terms of "utility" (Gerbasi and Prentice, 2013), where thriving means to have what you find useful. Utility has been described as "a measure of goal achievement" (Moshagen, Hilbig, and Zettler, 2018).

Happiness is defined as "a state of satisfaction with one's life". Evolution selects for survival but not for happiness. Because of its blind, reflexive, biological, sometimes short-term nature, "thriving" or achieving the Healing Principle may not always match up with happiness. The idea is to harness and manage the pressure to thrive in ways that are healthy in the long term: i.e., that result in happiness.

See also:

A quiet ego, p. 195

Desire and "Original Sin", p. 247

## Goals

An organism is built and operated by genes all cooperating together (Raihani, 2021).

> ... we could think of genes as if they were tiny agents, pursuing their own agenda. But individuals we see all around us seem to be goal-driven in a similar way. An individual oak tree reaches towards the sun *as if* its goal is to grow ever taller; an individual great tit carries food to the nest *as if* its goal is to help the young chicks grow and survive. ...
>
> Evolution creates individuals by aligning the interests of the genes within them. An individual that pursues her own evolutionary agenda is therefore pursuing the agenda of all the genes from which she is made. This equivalence allows us to think of individuals as goal-driven agents, safe in the knowledge that we can translate back to the gene's-eye view at any point.
>
> *Nichola Raihani – "The Social Instinct – How Cooperation Shaped the World": p 21*

The present hypothesis is that organisms experience a pressure to achieve fitness benefits; i.e., that fitness benefits are our goals.

At the same time, we may experience a pressure to achieve goals for their own sake (e.g., mountain climbing, running a marathon) or to achieve pleasure for its own sake (e.g., recreational sex, taking recreational drugs, reading a good book).

## Short term and long term

Thriving – feeling good – can occur over the short term or long term.

Action takes place in the present moment, while the consequences can play out in the long term as life situations. Ideally, we would all prefer to thrive for a long time rather than a short time. Sometimes, actions that bring us pleasure in the present moment are bad for us when the consequences play out in the long term.

## PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### The Healing Principle and the fact-value distinction

> What if biology is not just on the 'is' side of the equation, but informs us also about the 'ought' side, such as by explaining which values we pursue and for what evolutionary reason? Every organism strives for certain outcomes. Survival is one, reproduction is another, but many organisms also pursue social outcomes that come close to those supported by human morality.
>
> *Frans de Waal – "Natural normativity: The 'is' and 'ought' of animal behavior"*

In philosophy, there is a distinction between what is (facts) and what ought to be (values). David Hume (1711-1776) stated that it is logically impossible to derive an "ought" from an "is". In other words, there is no logical way to derive what "should be" from facts, without adding extra axioms. If this is true, then a primary value is an arbitrary choice.

Arguably, the fundamental value as endorsed by humans is the Healing Principle: the primary reasons why people do things: in order to thrive, survive and/or reproduce. We could choose other primary values instead; for example: might makes right, the will to power, beauty, freedom, skill in mathematics, or anything else that we value. But any primary value has to possess an irreducible, fundamental pressure to achieve itself, otherwise it does not in itself supply a pressure to act.

The "pressure" to thrive, survive and reproduce in the Healing Principle supplies the ethical ought-ness that gives morality, both cooperative and sexual, its normativity. The causing of thriving to occur is the currency of goodness. Benefit and harm are the two sides of the coin.

Morality/cooperation and selfishness/competition are the two dimensions of human social life. As well as moral ought-ness, the Healing Principle also supplies instrumental and selfish/competitive ought-ness: we "ought" to increase our own thriving. In itself, it is therefore amoral, and becomes a currency of morality when distributed through cooperation.

See also:

Five kinds of normativity, p. 58

**Naturalistic fallacy**

The naturalistic fallacy is the idea that anything that exists in nature is "good". This is not the case. Only those things that humans see as good, are good. The idea of "good" exists in the human mind. Arguably, it means to uphold shared ethical norms.

We often go against nature, in the name of good. For example, we have medicine and technology and life jackets.

**Properties of the Healing Principle**

The Healing Principle is

- individual: internal to each organism
- maximising: it has a pressure to increase
- universal to (almost) all individual beings

Strictly speaking, there are some creatures whose existence is only making up numbers, and may not experience a strong internal pressure to survive, as part of a process called "predator swamping".

For example, some species reproduce in large numbers at one time, reducing the risk to the individual of being eaten by predators, so that some young from each birth

can live to adulthood, and the parents can achieve reproduction. These include mayfly larvae and some species of sea turtle hatchlings (Ioannou, 2017).

However, we may imagine too that each individual larva or hatchling, for example, experiences a pressure to maintain its bodily health and integrity, through biological homeostasis and seeking food and comfortable conditions.

## SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Adaptation, the rock and the water

Wisdom is defined as truth and compassion.

To maximise its thriving, surviving and reproducing, each organism needs to adapt to and make the most of its environment. All organisms are biologically programmed to take maximum advantage of their environment. The problem for organisms is how to get the maximum utility and value out of their available resources.

> Water is fluid, soft and yielding. But water will wear away rock, which is rigid and cannot yield. As a rule, whatever is fluid, soft and yielding will overcome whatever is rigid and hard. This is another paradox: what is soft is strong.
>
> *Lao-Tzu*

In order to act effectively, we need insight or truth. If there is a problem, we need to understand it. We can regard truth, hard facts, as the "rock", and the Healing Principle, compassion, as the "water" which must adapt to and flow around the hard facts and find its own advantage there. The water adapts to the rocks.

The pressure to seek knowledge, and to reason intelligently, is driven by the pressure to thrive.

## Accessing the biological "magic power" – working hand in hand with nature

Living creatures are different from inanimate objects. Living creatures are genetically programmed to be able to regenerate themselves when injured (i.e., to heal), for example; and in general, every physical aspect, and biological process, of their entire being is oriented towards maintaining, and if possible increasing, their thriving, surviving and/or reproducing. This forms an automatic goal: a fundamental existential pressure on the organism to make progress in this direction.

How can we make the most of this miraculous power to thrive and grow strong in response to the right conditions? By putting the right conditions in place. We nurture the flower in our garden by putting the right conditions in place, and the flower responds by growing strong and healthy, in keeping with its nature, of its own accord. This implies that the quality of our thriving depends somewhat on the quality of the conditions that are in place for us. It also implies that "life is what we make it": we need to make a good job of playing the hand we are dealt.

## The Healing Principle, God's love, and morality

This biological "magic power" is, practically speaking, equivalent to God's providential love: God's kindness and mercy; the "rain that falls on the just and the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).

When religious people say that God loves everyone unconditionally, this is what they are referring to.

We may see this version of God's love as Part 1 of human morality: the individual pressure to thrive.

Part 2 of human morality is cooperation: thriving together. The aspect of the Healing Principle that is comparative to others translates into a tendency towards self-seeking and competition, and therefore, people are not perfectly cooperative. Therefore, in order for cooperation to be successful, it is fundamentally necessary to employ mechanisms both to achieve (or promote) cooperative behaviour and to prevent (or discourage) uncooperative behaviour.

See also:

Competition, p. 114

This means that another function of the religious God is the Cosmic Policeman: the moral God governing the human race and seeking to ensure that we behave cooperatively. God punishes bad thoughts, words and deeds, and rewards the good.

Within religious thinking, these two functions of God are hard to reconcile, because to reject somebody outright, as when He punishes people by sending them to hell, is not compatible with unconditional love. The way human morality works is that people are punished on Earth, as a way to maintain cooperative thriving, but justice is imperfect. Any life after death would presumably include having to live with one's conscience, while being unable to right any wrongs committed during life.

**Living water and the mustard seed**

Unconditional love exists within two contexts: 1) some pre-existing situation, such as being related by family, or some historical reason to be endlessly grateful or loyal; 2) a partnership of people working towards a common goal. Possibly, many situations are a mixture of these two.

The Healing Principle, God's unconditional love that is your healing gift all the time you are alive, can be thought of like the water supply to your house: any time you need it, you only have to turn the tap on and there it is. The water metaphor is further appropriate because water is: 1) something we need to live; 2) something that can be shared; 3) something that can be stored for the future (as when we put favourable conditions in place for future thriving). But the pressure to thrive has a "living" quality – it consists of the generative, restorative and motivational aspects of living things – so in this respect it is not like water. We can think of it as the biological motor power that enables people to respond well to and thrive in a good environment, like any biological beings.

> The disciples said to Jesus, "Tell us what the kingdom of heaven is like." He said to them, "It is like a mustard seed. It is the smallest of all seeds. But when it falls on tilled soil, it produces a great plant and becomes a shelter for the birds of the sky."
>
> *Jesus – Gospel of St Thomas*

When we take action, it is like planting a seed that eventually bears fruit. Buddhism states that if the seeds are "tainted" by a lack of wisdom: by greed, hatred, or ignorance, the fruit will be unsatisfactory in some way. Good seeds can get damaged by the environment or may not exist in a favourable position. Perhaps we don't look after the tree very well, and it doesn't grow as well as it could have done; maybe we fail to make the most of things.

See also:

Sin or "mental defilement", p. 205

**Two-way relationship**

The most beneficial thing we can do as individuals is to revere, respect, take care of, and nurture, the gift of God's love, or the pressure to thrive, within us, by putting the right conditions in place.

In effect, the situation is a two-way love or caring between each of us and the thing that sustains us.

**A meaning of life**

If the meaning of X is the way that X is relevant to our goals, then the meaning of life – the meaning of the things we do – must be in the way that they are relevant to our life-goals, which are, arguably, to thrive, survive and reproduce.

If we do not have goals, our life loses meaning.

Dr Jordan Peterson, the popular Canadian psychologist, contends that meaning is to be found in responsibility: achieving goals cooperatively for the benefit of the self and others.

### Nature conservation

Human thriving requires that the right conditions are in place. This includes a well-functioning biosphere.

## HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Historical progress and the maximising ethic

The pressure to thrive is

- individual
- universal
- maximising

Steven Pinker, the popular Canadian-American psychologist, maintains that over the course of recent human history, the levels of compassion and justice have improved considerably (Pinker, 2011).

Contrary to what is perhaps the normally accepted view, there is no archaeological evidence of organised warfare, and very little violence, in prehistoric humans until around 12,000 years ago. There is a lot of evidence of long-range travel and trade in prehistoric times. So before the advent of settlement, farming, and ownership, it appears that the human race was effectively one big happy family (Spikins, 2015). Intelligent, adaptable, sociable, cooperative human beings were sparse in population over most of our history, and in the absence of competition for resources between increasingly large and complex groups, strangers would likely have been more valuable as allies than as prey or enemies.

> By considering the total archaeological record of prehistoric populations of Europe and the Near East up to the Bronze Age, evidence clearly demonstrates that war began sporadically out of warless condition, and can be seen, in varying trajectories in different areas, to develop over time as societies become larger, more sedentary, more complex, more bounded,

more hierarchical, and in one critically important region, impacted by an expanding state.

*R Brian Ferguson – "Pinker's List – exaggerating prehistoric war mortality" in "War, Peace and Human Nature" edited by Douglas P Fry*

An important milestone in looking at the origins of warfare is 8000 BC, as it stands at the very end of the Mesolithic and beginning of the Neolithic periods. It also marks major changes in the trajectory of human history, as humankind was reaching the upper demographic limits of sustainable hunting and gathering around the world. People were in the throes of the transition from a hunting-and-gathering, nomadic lifestyle to an agricultural and settled lifestyle. There is little disagreement over the rising prevalence of warfare and conflict after 8000 BC.

*Jonathon Haas and Matthew Piscitelli – "The Prehistory of Warfare: Misled by Ethnography" in "War, Peace and Human Nature" edited by Douglas P Fry*

In the time of the first kingdoms and city states, in normal daily life, the average rate of death through warfare was equal to the peak death rates in World War II. Since then, the rate has gone up or down, but overall, the trend has been downwards. Every measure of rates of violence: killing, assaulting, kidnapping, physical harm or coercion, has followed the same downward trend. Violence against women has dropped by 70-80% since the 1970s. Capital punishment and slavery are in decline. We see hugely increased rights for formerly oppressed groups: women, racial minorities, homosexuals, and non-human animals.

We humans are flexible in our behaviour. Over historical time, our moral reasoning has shown itself to be "self-correcting", like science: to gradually make itself more articulate and complete; and over time, norms improve from a compassionate point of view. It seems that there may be three stages involved in moral progress: new ideas (arguably the prime mover); expansion of empathic concern to include previously excluded groups; and the establishment of new, more humane norms which replace the old. This process may be helped by things like the arts: specifically, novels, plays, and cinema, which gives us an insight into the inner worlds of people unlike us; and international trade, which has the effect of reducing warfare (Pinker and Goldstein, 2013).

This historical pattern reflects the characteristics of the Healing Principle: universal, individual, and maximising. This suggests that within the moral matrix of any one group, or collection of groups, at any point in history, there is a pressure towards greater universal rights, even if this pressure is opposed quite strongly. We see a

historical process of seeing things more and more from the point of view of the victim (Pinker, 2011).

See also:

Perfect Compassion, p. 33

The Golden Rule, p. 74

Circles of concern, p. 201

God is love.

*1 John 4:8*

5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?
6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.
7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

*1 Corinthians 3*

I will be *with* you – will you be *with* Me?

*Richard Foster – "Life with God"*

Did not He find thee an orphan, and shelter thee?
Did not He find thee erring, and guide thee?
Did not He find thee needy, and suffice thee?
As for the orphan, do not oppress him,
and as for the beggar, scold him not;
and as for thy Lord's blessing, exalt it.

*The Holy Qur'an: Sura 93*

Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

*Matthew 7:7,8*

behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

*Luke 17:21*

Nature loves courage.

*Terence McKenna*

The only failure is the failure to try.

*Mr T*

... evolution selects for adaptive *actions*.

*Michael Tomasello – "A Natural History of Human Thinking"*

In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer. And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there's something stronger – something better, pushing right back.

*Albert Camus – "Return to Tipasa"*

Broken bones always seem to mend.

*Angus & Julia Stone – "The Devil's Tears"*

In all species, nature works to renew itself as it works to nourish itself, and to protect itself from danger, each by its kind and for its kind, in the great work of

continuation that is evolution. In humankind the work of renewal lies in the work of affection, the bond of one to another made by desire.

*A C Grayling – "The Good Book: a secular Bible"*

Eventually Muhammed's religion of al-Llah was known as islām, the act of existential surrender that each convert was expected to make to God: a Muslim is 'one who surrenders' his or her whole being to the Creator. At first, however, the believers called their religion tazaqqa. This is an obscure word, which is not easy to translate. By cultivating tazaqqa, Muhammed's converts were to cloak themselves in the virtues of compassion and generosity; they were to use their intelligence to cultivate a caring and responsible spirit, which made them want to give graciously of what they had to all God's creatures. By pondering the mysteries of creation intelligently Muslims would learn to behave kindly and this generous attitude would mean that they acquired a spiritual refinement. Al-Llah was the great exemplar. Muslims were urged to contemplate His 'signs' in order to appreciate His graciousness to the whole of the natural world. As a consequence of his generous intelligence, there was order and fruitfulness instead of chaos and selfish barbarism. If they submitted to His edicts, they would find that their own lives could be transfigured by a similar refinement.

*Karen Armstrong – "Muhammad"*

What is the difference between "I like you" and "I love you"? Beautifully answered by Buddha. Buddha's answer was so simple. When you like a flower, you just pluck it. But when you love a flower, you water it daily. One who understands this, understands life.

*"Fake Buddha quotes"*

Because I made that decision to live a clean life, every step I take towards doing what's right makes me happier.

*Patrick Lawson, winner of the Hello London Award for outstanding customer service at Transport for London's annual London Bus Awards, January 2019.*

## Left brain and right brain

We are a "lateralized" species: the two halves of our brains specialize in quite different functions. In the same way that we are overwhelmingly right-handed when using tools, we rely heavily on the left hemisphere for the perception and production of language. These two biases are related: the right hand is controlled by the left side of the brain. It was initially thought that the connection between language, tool use, and brain asymmetry existed only in our own species, but now there is growing evidence for lateralization in apes, suggesting that the connection emerged before language capacities had fully evolved.

Apes favor the left limb for certain tasks (a mother preferentially cradles an infant with her left arm), while selecting the right limb for others (locomotion is often initiated with the right hand). When comparing data on the bonobos at the Yerkes Primate Center and the San Diego Zoo, William Hopkins, an American expert on brain lateralization, and I were excited to discover that handedness extends to gesticulation. Bonobos wave, beg, wrist-shake, or make threatening gestures predominantly with their right hands. This is the first evidence in a close relative of ours that a communicatory capacity other than language may be associated with the left side of the brain. The similarity in brain specialization hints at a shared evolutionary history between gesturing and language.

[note] In humans, the right hemisphere specializes in parallel mental processing, control of emotional responses, and processing of faces, whereas the left hemisphere specializes in analytical thinking and language.

*Frans de Waal and Frans Lanting – "Bonobo: the forgotten ape"*

## Homeostasis in the body

The chances are you're reading this in a room at 18-22°C, you've recently had a meal and there are no large predators nearby. But don't be fooled. It's a dangerous world out there. From your first breath to your last, your body is in continuous battle to maintain the specific conditions required for life. This battle is called homeostasis – quite literally meaning 'staying the same'. It

describes the tendency of the body to maintain its internal conditions even when faced with external changes.

Why is this such a vital foundation for life? The answer can be found by looking at the wide variety of critical parameters that exist inside our bodies, which if varied by the smallest of margins rapidly result in death. Temperature, pH, oxygen and glucose are a few of the most familiar ones, but there are many more, and they all only need to change slightly for the results to be catastrophic. Each one of our cells is a complex bag of chemistry with specific reaction conditions. Our bodies are locked in a continual dance with our environment, which provides a relentless challenge. Twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year our bodies monitor, react and adjust our relationship with the external world to make sure the internal world stays the same. This drive for sameness covers our heartbeat, blood pressure, urine output, calorie expenditure and many other processes devoted to homeostasis.

But homeostasis is not merely physical. It is intimately wired to our emotions. Fear is a system designed to alert and trigger evasive action whenever our internal balance is threatened, whether faced with the toxic threat of a poisonous snake or the gravitational threat of a cliff edge. Disgust is another homeostatic emotion, to prevent infection and infestation from the food we eat, contamination that once inside us can rapidly destabilise the balance. And when these early warning systems are breached and pathogens gain entry through the food we eat or the air we breathe, our immune system is equipped to react to anything that threatens the balance.

*"Secrets of the Human Body" – Chris van Tulleken, Xand van Tulleken and Andrew Cohen*

# Perfect Compassion

Respect your neighbour as yourself.

Respect your neighbour as an equal.

since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

*John 4:11*

God is good relations between people.

*Percy Hammond*

Beauty is about how you behold
more than silver more than gold
if I say I am beautiful
it means beauty is accessible,
beauty is about how you greet
de everyday people dat you meet
you are beautiful so all rejoice
your beauty is a natural choice.

*from "Miss World" – Benjamin Zephaniah*

Cooperation comes from friendship, friendship comes from trust, and trust comes from kindheartedness.  Once you have a genuine sense of concern for others, there's no room for cheating, bullying, or exploitation; instead, you can be honest, truthful and transparent in your conduct.

*His Holiness The Dalai Lama, Facebook, 2 December 2019*

The practice of morality (çīla) consists in the observance of all moral precepts; in feeling fear, shame and remorse at the smallest violation of any of them; in not giving room for blame or disgust; in practicing those deeds which lead to moderation and contentment, and in endeavouring to induce all human beings to abandon evil and practise virtue. He alone truly practises morality, who desists from evil-doing when the best opportunities present themselves for doing evil. In Buddhism the moral life is of fundamental importance. Of all the pāramitās, the excellences which form the means of arriving at Nirvana, the çīla pāramitā is the foundation.

*P. Lakshmi Narasu – "The Essence of Buddhism"*

Whatever living beings there may be;
Whether they are weak or strong, omitting none,
The great or the mighty,
medium, short or small,
The seen and the unseen,
Those living near and far away,
Those born and to-be-born –
May all beings be at ease!

*from the Metta Sutta*

**A prosocial attitude opens the door to applying the Healing Principle to others**

If I have a prosocial attitude, then I wish good towards others. This "opens the door" for the maximising, universal, individual, pro-life Healing Principle to begin operating in others through my interactions with them. The currency of benefit and harm is the conditions we put in place that allow others to thrive naturally like a flower in a garden. If I give you fertile soil, rain, and sunshine, you are more likely to thrive.

If I have no concern for the consequences of my actions on others, then I have no concern for whether those others are thriving or not as a result. It may be that I have an anti-social nature in my interactions with others, and instead of helping them to thrive, I exploit them for my own ends, whether emotional or material.

See also:

Dark and light traits, p. 182

## Altruistic instincts in humans

Altruism means helping others. We humans have a psychological instinct to help others in need. On an evolutionary level, this is because we are interdependent as a species – we need each other to be in good shape, to collaborate with. This instinct of concern applies to everyone in the vicinity, everyone we encounter, consistent with the ancestral conditions of early humans, from around 2 million years ago, living in small interdependent groups whose members depended intimately on each other to survive.

See also:

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 47

Personal interdependence and helping, p. 64

Why do good?, p. 215

## A general ethical formula

Arguably, the core human ethics consist of:

- fairness or justice
- helping in response to need
- obligation to others (moral normativity or ought-ness)

These can be represented by the formulae: you = me, you > me, and we > me, respectively (Tomasello, 2016). They are also known as justice, mercy, and duty.

Morality comes into play only when we interact with others – when our actions affect others. Ethics concerns the good, or what we feel we "should" do, morally. Given that we are interacting with others, and we have humanitarian concern for the consequent well being of others when we interact, and that benefit and harm is the currency of human interaction, the question becomes how we should share out the benefit and harm that is available to all concerned, in that situation, as a result of the interaction.

If we combine the individual, universal and maximising properties of the Healing Principle, that which we all seek, with the ethic of concern for others, then it must logically follow that a general ethical formula should state that

> each person affected by my actions, including myself, is to receive the maximum benefit and minimum harm available to them.

The normativity or ought-ness of Perfect Compassion originates in the two obligations or pressures from which it is made: 1) the pressure to maximise thriving, and 2) the pressure to help others in need (of thriving). These are taken as axiomatic, i.e., self-evident. The first is genetic in basis, The Healing Principle; and the second is an evolutionary result of human interdependent cooperation: to help others in the vicinity is to invest in a resource for the self.

Perfect Compassion is therefore a social distribution of benefit and harm, emanating from the individual via their actions.

This formula, Perfect Compassion, assumes only the ethical values of:

- maximising personal thriving as I go about my business
- proper concern for the consequent well being of others.

Falling short of this formula tends to elicit resentment from others and a need to justify the actions and intentions. If we seek to justify our (possibly questionable) actions then we generally appeal to the shared moral norms within which we live (Tomasello, 2016).

There is also a rational, strategic, self-interested normativity or pressure to follow Perfect Compassion, since it tends to produce the best personal consequences, karmically.

See also:

The Healing Principle, p. 13

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 47

The moral compass, p. 55

Psychopathic ethical compass, p. 56

Normativity in small teams, p. 81

Fairness as respect, p. 138

Dark and light traits, p. 182

Sin or "mental defilement", p. 205

## Perfect Compassion as distributive social justice

In Perfect Compassion, each person may reasonably be pleased with what they have received (the maximum benefit and minimum harm available to them), and this is a form of fairness.

Perfect Compassion may be seen as a form of distributive social justice (see Fiske, 1991), where goods and burdens, i.e., benefit and harm, are distributed to others via our actions. We may do this according to one or more of the following criteria:

- equality: everyone gets the same
- reciprocity, proportionality: people are treated according to how they have treated ourselves or others; equal return per unit of investment
- charity: in response to need
- according to some kind of rank or status
- according to deservingness: how well they have fulfilled a role or duty
- to honour an obligation of some kind
- to protect oneself
- according to procedural justice
- etc.

To an outside observer, treating others negatively according to tit-for-tat reciprocity may or may not appear judgemental or vindictive or mean-spirited, because the reason for it may be invented. Reciprocal "deservingness" may be used by narcissists in particular as a weapon of personal control, appealing to the shared norm of reciprocity.

See also:

Deservingness, p. 38

The moral compass, p. 55

The Golden Rule, p. 74

Sharing and distributive justice, p. 124

Inequity aversion, p. 130

Forms of justice, p. 137

Reciprocity, p. 141

Controlling behaviour, p. 185

Narcissism, p. 186

Personhood, p. 197

**Deservingness**

Deservingness can come into play as a criterion in distributive justice: whether 1) material distributive justice, sharing of material goods or burdens; or 2) social distributive justice: social sharing of benefit and harm.

Deservingness may be determined by how well someone has matched some standard, ideal or norm, or fulfilled a duty. For example, a worker may be given a bonus because he has exceeded expectations in his performance. We may feel that someone is deserving simply because they have special status as a member of our collaborative team or group, where, through self-other equivalence: the cooperative levelling of status, whereby each partner is bound by others and the requirements of the joint goal to fulfil her duty; and the plan "bird's eye view" of the collaboration, each person is treated as an equal in some way.

Someone may be regarded as deserving because of being in need: a "deserving case".

Deservingness is not a simple concept (Baiasu, 2021). Do we reward effort, skill, or results? How do we deal with the fact that somebody's credit or blameworthiness in a matter may be a natural accident – that they cannot truly be held responsible for factors outside their control? Are we only deserving for what we can claim credit for? How can we ever know the true extent of agentic responsibility, and on that basis, can we ever truly judge deservingness?

See also:

**Self-interest and the interests of others**

> In our view, the same action can be guided by both self- and other-interest.
>
> *Margaret E Gerbasi and Deborah A Prentice – "The Self- and Other-Interest Inventory", Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 105(3), 2013*

These two motives are independent of each other. If somebody is self-interested, this does not automatically mean they have a callous attitude towards others (Moshagen, Hilbig and Zettler, 2018). Human life does not have to be a "zero-sum game" where if I win, you lose or vice versa. Instead, we are interdependent: so, to varying degrees, what is good for you is often good for me. This is sometimes called "enlightened self-interest" and a positive-sum game, where the result is win-win.

Whether we act more for ourselves or for others depends on the particular context.

The less interdependent and more self-sufficient we are, the sharper is the contrast between our own interests and those of others. People tend to become more prosocial and more interdependent as they get older.

Other-directed caring is associated with perspective taking, empathic concern, and the personal endorsement of a prosocial attitude (Gerbasi and Prentice, 2013).

A relationship of interdependence tends towards the principle of "unconditional love", where short term give and take are not strictly counted, but instead are likely to even out over time. Unconditional love involves partner control and forgiveness: making the best of the partner one has.

When we are less interdependent, we are more likely to use tit-for-tat reciprocity than unconditional love. Tit-for-tat reciprocity represents proportional fairness in exchanges (Wilson, 1993): impersonal justice, but perhaps not mercy.

See also:

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 47

Partner control and joint self-governance, p. 76

Competition, p. 114

Reciprocity, p. 141

Empathy, p. 163

Unconditional love, p. 178

Dark and light traits, p. 182

Personhood, p. 197

## Some benefits of Perfect Compassion

### Moral authority

Perfect Compassion is impossible to improve upon, unless circumstances change, and more benefit and less harm are now possible. Therefore, someone who uses Perfect Compassion has moral authority in the eyes of others; none can be better, he is at the moral pinnacle of all possible behaviour.

If Perfect Compassion is, logically, the best possible behaviour in terms of benefit and harm, then logically, it must be an ideal of ethical rightness in terms of benefit and harm.

### Trust and love from others

Somebody who practices Perfect Compassion as much as they can will tend to earn the trust, respect, gratitude and esteem of others.

### Lack of bruised feelings and other negative consequences

If you fail to benefit someone when you could have done, or if you harm someone when you did not need to, this is likely to lead to bruised feelings on their part.

### Web of prosocial connections

"... a prosocial orientation generates a web of prosocial connections ..."

(Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng, and Keltner, 2010:781).

See also:

Fairness as respect, p. 138

Downstream reciprocity, p. 149

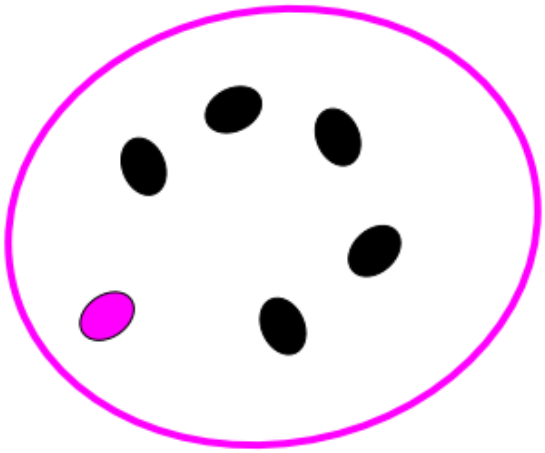
**Expanding the ego**

The ego is that part of your psyche that looks after you and enables you to do things and help yourself.  What your ego does for you, it can also do for others.  In the case that it is working for someone else's benefit, we can say that your ego has been expanded.

See also:

A quiet ego, p. 195

## Distributing benefit and harm from the perspective of the ego

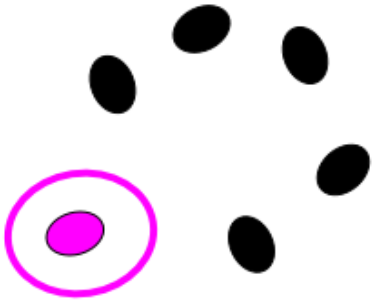


**Perfect Compassion: thinking of all concerned**

Distributing benefit and harm so that each person concerned can be satisfied.

Your ego:

- looks after you and gets things done
- works also for others
- expands its sphere of benevolence to include each person affected by your action
- sees the needs of others
- uses its functions to give each person affected by your action the maximum benefit and minimum harm available to them

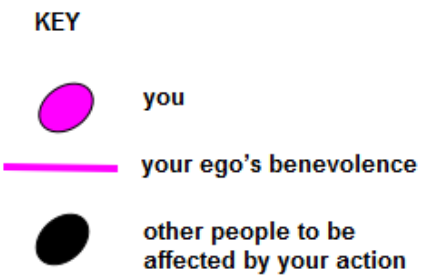


**Selfishness: thinking only of yourself**

Other people are treated as objects.
Consequences are troublesome in the long term.

Your ego:

- looks after you and gets things done
- works only for yourself
- sees others only in terms of your own self-interest, not as real people
- ignores the needs of others
- doesn't give everyone affected by your action the maximum compassion and minimum harm available to them



Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

*Matthew 22:37–40*

He is not a believer who eats his fill while his neighbour remains hungry by his side.

*The Prophet Mohammed, peace and blessings be upon Him*

... altruism becomes applied egotism.

*P. Lakshmi Narasu – "The Essence of Buddhism"*

A man is not a great man because he is a warrior and kills other men; but because he hurts not any living being he in truth is called a great man.

*The Dhammapada*

Tenderness and kindness are not signs of weakness and despair, but manifestations of strength and resolutions.

*Kahlil Gibran –"The Prophet"*

Least said, soonest mended.

*Proverb*

... dopamine-related neural pleasure centers in human brains are stimulated when someone acts generously or responds to a generous act.

*Sarah Blaffer Hrdy – "Mothers and Others – the evolutionary origins of mutual understanding"*

we feel a "warm glow", a pleasurable feeling, at improving the plight of others

*Frans de Waal – "The Age of Empathy"*

Without prosocial emotions, we would all be sociopaths, and human society would not exist, however strong the institutions of contract, governmental law enforcement, and reputation.

*Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis – "The Origins of Human Cooperation"*

A week later Swagger rang me. He had bumped into a deflated Tuggy Tug on the street. He had nowhere to sleep and nothing to eat. Swagger had only £10 in his pocket but nonetheless he bought a takeaway for them both and took Tuggy Tug back to his flat for the night. As I put down the phone, I heard Tuggy Tug complaining, 'I don't even want this dry chicken, blud. I can't eat this dried food,' and Swagger laughing at him. 'Content now? Is your belly content?'

I thought of the many successful men I knew; men of whom the world approved and rightly rewarded; men who moved people with their oratory; knowledgeable men who could fathom future trends and who set up foundations for the poor; men who would never steal a fridge. How many, down to their last £10, would have taken in Tuggy Tug – and done it with love?

*Harriet Sergeant – "Among the Hoods – my years with a teenage gang"*

> Making kids say bonjour isn't just for the benefit of grown-ups. It's also to help kids learn that they're not the only ones with feelings and needs.
>
> 'It avoids selfishness,' says Esther, who dragged out her daughter – an adorable, doted-on only child – to say goodbye to me. 'Kids who ignore other people, and don't say *bonjour* or *au revoir*, they just stay in their bubble ... When will they get the sense that they are there to give, not just to receive?'
>
> *Pamela Druckerman – "French Children Don't Throw Food"*

> Nothing in the world – indeed nothing even beyond the world – can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a *GOOD WILL*. Intelligence, wit, judgment, and other talents of the mind however they may be named, or courage, resoluteness, and perseverance as qualities of temperament, are doubtless in many respects good and desirable; but they can become extremely bad and harmful if the will, which is to make use of these gifts of nature and which in its special constitution is called character, is not good.
>
> *Immanuel Kant – Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals (first section)*

Love your neighbour as well as yourself.

Don't ruin your own house for the sake of someone else.

**Alternative version – a Buddhist story**

You're driving down the road in your car on a wild and stormy night. The weather is like a hurricane, with heavy rains, high winds, and lightning flashing constantly.

You arrive at a partially covered bus stop, where you find three people:

1. Your long term partner (your perfect "soul mate") whom you arranged to meet at the bus stop, and who is about to dump you unless you finally start paying them proper attention and doing right by them.

2. A stranger, an old woman, who looks ill, as if she may be about to die.

3. A loyal friend of yours who once saved your life, who is presently trying to look after the old lady, and happens to be desperately in need of a lift into town for a separate emergency.

Knowing that you only have room for one passenger in your (two-seater) car, what would you do? And why?

Can you please everyone? Can you give everyone what they need? Can this situation be resolved to everyone's satisfaction?

One possible solution:

The old lady's needs are great and pressing, and your friend also needs to get into town immediately. So hand the car over to your friend so that he can drive the old lady to hospital. Stay behind with your soul mate. Probably ask your friend to come back with your car later, so that you and your paramour can drive away together, leaving your friend back at the bus stop. Alternatively, if it is reasonably convenient, give him a lift where he needs to go, and then go back for your soul mate.

# The Stakeholder Principle

Dependence and interdependence (symbiosis).

Investing in the people we depend on.

I won’t leave 'til you come too.

*The Incredible String Band – "Mr and Mrs"*

... friends in the stone age depended on one another for their very survival. Humans lived in close-knit communities, and friends were people with whom you went hunting mammoths. You survived long journeys and difficult winters together. You took care of one another when one of you fell sick, and shared your last morsels of food in times of want. Such friends knew each other more intimately than many present-day couples.

*"Were we happier in the stone age?" – The Guardian, UK, 5th September 2014*

Perhaps it is time to abandon the idea that individuals faced with others in need decide whether to help, or not, by mentally tallying up costs and benefits.  These calculations have likely been made for them by natural selection.  Weighing the consequences of behavior over evolutionary time, it has endowed primates with empathy, which ensures that they help others under the right circumstances.

*Frans de Waal – "The Age of Empathy"*

Only know that I love strength in my friends and greatness.

*James Liddy*

you would help me more / help me more / if you helped yourself

*Joan Armatrading – "Help Yourself"*

... individuals should help friends without looking for a contingent return: 'instead of being cheated, the primary risk is experiencing a world increasingly devoid of deeply engaged social partners or sufficiently beneficial social partners or both'.

*Gilbert Roberts – "Cooperation through interdependence"*

If I depend on you, it means that I need something that you do. In some cases, it can mean that you help me habitually just by existing.

If I depend on you, and you depend on me, it is called interdependence or symbiosis.

In the early history of humans, it would have made practical sense from the point of view of each individual to help the others upon whom they depended to survive and thrive. A formula to describe this "stakeholder" model of altruism has been proposed:

"I will help you when" $s \times B > C$

$B$ = your well being

$s$ = my stake in your well being: the proportion of you that benefits me

$>$ is greater than

$C$ = my cost in helping you

The left hand side shows the benefit to me of your well being ($s \times B$), and the right hand side shows the cost to me, $C$, of helping you.

"I will help you when the benefit I gain from your well being is greater than the cost I incur in helping you." Costs and benefits are spread out over the extended period of the relationship. In other words, you benefit me day after day, just by existing, so I go on helping you so that you are in good shape.

For example, if my hunting partner is sick, I may try to bring him back to health so that we can continue hunting.

In present day terms, dependence implies a situation where "what's good for you is good for me".

This was primary among the ancient selection pressures that have led to the evolution of the generalised altruistic psychology in modern humans. In other words, the ultimate cause of human altruism towards non-kin is interdependence, and the proximate cause of human altruism is a psychological desire to help others.

As another example of interdependence, we may consider the cleaner wrasse, a small fish that lives by picking parasites and debris from the skin and mouths of larger fish. The wrasse obtains food and protection, while the larger fish enjoy considerable health benefits. Each relationship is a dependent one, resulting in symbiosis or interdependence between the two.

See also:

Why do good?, p. 215

**Warm positive regard**

If person *A* helps me, then I will typically feel a warm positive regard towards *A*.

If I experience a fitness benefit, I feel pleasure. If someone else helps me, increasing my fitness, then I will likely feel gratitude and perhaps loyalty (a commitment to help) towards them.

**Collaboration and respect**

If the helping is within a collaborative context, then person *A* is helping "us" towards our joint goals. The hypothesis is that consequently, I feel respect towards my valuable helper, person *A*.

**Hamilton's Rule**

> From a gene's perspective, it does not matter if it is transmitted through the organisms in which it resides or if an identical copy is passed on through a relative, an insight first made by W D Hamilton in the 1960s.
>
> *J Arvid Ågren – "An idea with more bite", Aeon.co September 2021*

The Stakeholder Model of interdependence is related to Hamilton's Rule, which captures a similar situation from the viewpoint of genetic relatedness. Both versions, if you think about it, are from the point of view of "inclusive fitness", but one relates to "friends" and the other "relatives".

Hamilton's Rule states that an organism will help its relatives to the degree that they are genetically related, because the more they are related, the more genes they share, and in helping its relatives, the organism is helping its own genes to survive. Hamilton's Rule is given as

> "I will help you when" $r \times B > C$

"I will help you when the amount by which it benefits the genes we share is greater than the cost I incur in helping you".

> $B$ = your benefit
>
> $r$ = coefficient of relatedness
>
> $>$ is greater than
>
> $C$ = my cost

(Roberts, 2005; Tomasello, 2012, 2016; Gerbasi and Prentice, 2013; Roberts, 2011)

See also:

**The Koan of the Prize Winning Corn Farmer**

A Koan is a story told to Zen monks that they can ponder upon and use to help them reach enlightenment.

> A story is told of a farmer who grew award-winning corn. Each year, he entered his corn in the state fair where it won a blue ribbon. One year a newspaper reporter interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it. The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbors.
>
> "How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbors when they are entering corn in competition with yours each year?" the reporter asked.
>
> "Why sir?" said the farmer, "didn't you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn, cross pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. I must help my neighbors grow good corn."
>
> If we are to grow good corn, we must help our neighbors grow good corn. That is the connectedness of life. We often get too engrossed in our own success that we forget those around us and their impact in our progress.
>
> *Credit unknown*

## Plants, communication, and interdependence

**James Wong**:

Plants don’t just communicate through their root system, but also through the air by emitting fragrances: volatile organic compounds, in geek-speak.

That's something that Professor Karban has been studying, particularly with sage brush plants reacting to insects.  ... so what were the plants ‘talking’ about, in inverted commas?

**Prof. Richard Karban**:

The information that is being conveyed is information about the risk of herbivory.

**James Wong**:

In other words, being nibbled by a plant-eating animal.

**Prof. Richard Karban**:

And plants that are receiving this information are then able to change their defences so that they receive less, primarily, chewing damage from a variety of different insects that chew their leaves.

**James Wong**:

The fact that the message about an insect was not only received but acted upon is important, because some scientists argue that communication isn't communication unless there was a beneficial response in the receiver.  And that's not just limited to fighting off insects, as Rick Karban found:

**Prof. Richard Karban**:

Plants that have received cues from their neighbours were able to produce more new branches and more flowers than plants that hadn’t received these cues, so that the plants that were receiving the cues were benefiting from that information.

**James Wong**:

... research has also shown that plants could have a potentially huge vocabulary of different aromas that they can emit. This may not just be for threats, but also to synchronise other behaviour.

**Prof. Ariel Novoplansky**:

Some chemical is being emitted by the roots of blooming plants, picked up in some cases by neighbours, which join them in accelerated blooming, compared to a situation in which their neighbours are not blooming. My neighbour is my partner for reproduction, right.

**James Wong**:

The more chance of your neighbour flowering means that from a distance you're a more colourful patch, that means the pollinators are more likely to go to you if you're not the only one flowering.

**Prof. Ariel Novoplansky**:

Yes, and this gives you a higher chance of avoiding the need to reproduce with your own cells. This is something that humans or mammals cannot do, but plants can. They can pollinate themselves, and if they don't have neighbours, then some of them some of the time pollinate themselves, which we call 'selfing'. In the case that you have neighbours, it's always better to have sex with somebody else.

*BBC Radio 4 – "Is Eating Plants Wrong?", 14 May 2018*

## Exploitation: the dark side of dependence

When one person depends on another, this implies an asymmetry or imbalance of power. Depending on the good will of the person being depended on, i.e., of the one who holds the power, this could potentially be exploited by them for personal gain, possibly at a cost to the dependant.

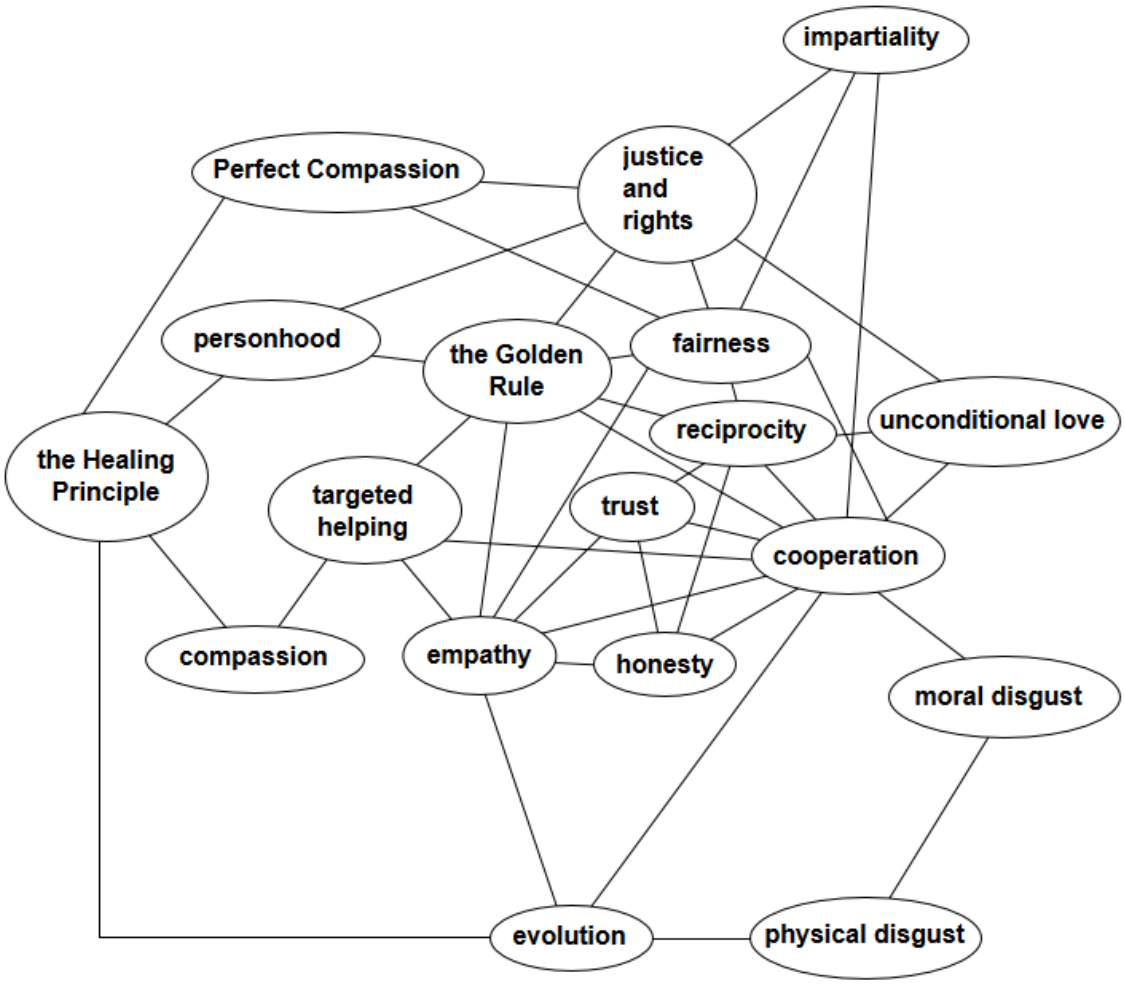
See also:

Patriarchal norms, p. 104

Dark and light traits, p. 182

# Maps of morality

The elements of morality are related to each other in various ways.  Below is a simplified diagram showing some of the elements and how they are linked.



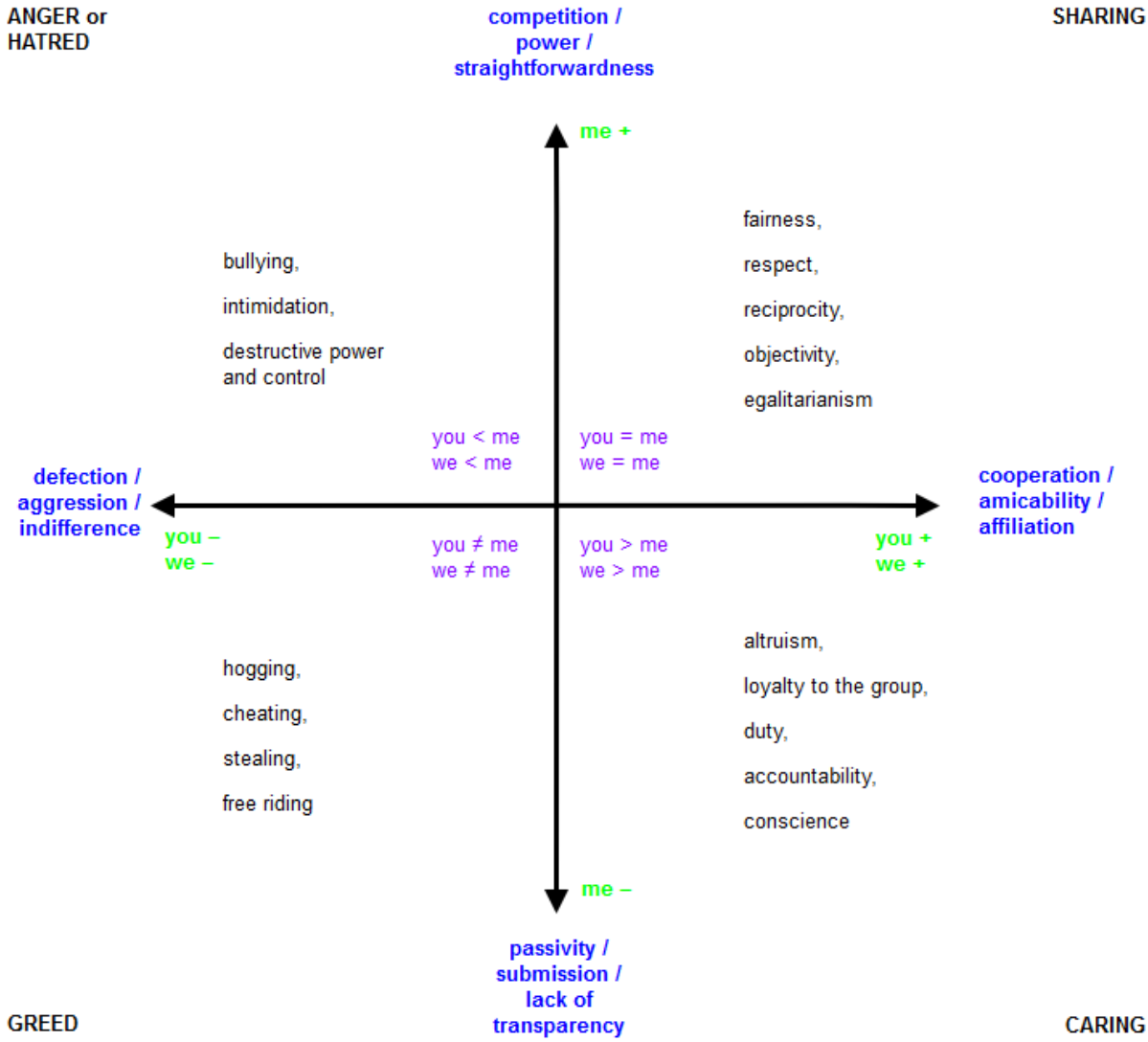

Interpersonal morality can be thought of as similar to mathematics, in that it consists of a collection of facts, logical relations between the facts, and principles arising from the human condition of thriving, surviving and reproducing cooperatively within a risky foraging niche.

The moral principles outlined above are simply necessary when people live by collaborating together in small groups.  Probably, a computer could be programmed with those facts and goals, and would arrive at the same principles.

This ancient, small-scale, interpersonal system exists within the more recent evolutionary story of human morality in large groups, on a large scale, featuring norms, culture, institutions, the social contract, etc.

In the map above, we can identify an "empathy" cluster, a "fairness/reciprocity" cluster and a "cooperation" cluster (Bekoff and Pierce, 2009). The Golden Rule, and justice and rights, also seem to be highly connected with other aspects of morality.

## The moral compass



## Ethical formulae

In the ethical formulae, "you = me", "we = me", "you > me" and "we > me", the interests of the self are either equated or subordinated to those of "you" or "we".

≠ represents "is not equal to".

See also:

Moral identity and conscience, p. 98

Egalitarianism, p. 134

The "big three" of morality, p. 220

The left-hand side was constructed by symmetry with the right-hand side and diagonals, following Boehm's (2012) idea, through Shermer (2015), that there are two kinds of anti-social behaviour: bullying (and intimidation), and cheating (or not sharing fairly), and two moral kinds of prosociality: compassion and fairness.

The right hand side can be considered ethical, as Perfect Compassion (fairness as respect through compassion) and the Golden Rule (compassionate perspective taking) both conform to it. The left hand side corresponds with the so-called "dark" traits of thriving at the unnecessary expense of others.

## Psychopathic ethical compass

Unlike narcissists, who tend towards competition and dominance, with all that entails; or people with antisocial personality disorder, who tend towards material exploitation, with all that entails: psychopaths are not inherently anti-social or unethical (Walker, 2018): simply unemotional, self-centred and goal-focused (Baskin-Sommers, Krusemark, and Ronningstam, 2014). A psychopath who wishes to be ethical may understand the top right quadrant, "you = me" and "we = me", representing justice, equality, fairness, reciprocity, impartiality, objectivity, egalitarianism, and cognitive perspective taking, as these can all be done by using the cognitive faculties only (Walker, 2019b; 2020a; 2020b).

A psychopath may lack the motivation to help others out of "empathy" or from a desire for reputational maintenance (Walker, 2021), and may lack the pressure to self-govern through the moral emotion of guilt, represented by the bottom right quadrant, "you > me" and "we > me". Guilt fits the definition of an emotion, since it

consists of an emotional reaction to a goal (a moral norm or ideal standard) being thwarted, i.e., regret and sorrow, and self-punishment. Compassion is a desire to achieve a goal (helping), and if neurotypical people fail to act compassionately when required, they may experience guilt.

Athena Walker (2021a), a self-identifying psychopath, cites "necessary action", doing what needs to be done to solve a problem, as a reason for altruism and helping. For example, she once helped to rescue a man in a wheelchair who had become stuck on a railway line. For her, compassion is "action without feeling". In (2019c), she demonstrates that she recognises and respects the need of others to thrive, and that she will sometimes try to bring about positive consequences for others: for example, by telling a "white lie" to protect someone's optimistic feelings about their ugly dress.

It has been shown that psychopaths lack emotional resonance (Marsh, 2017), while Athena Walker shows genuine helping behaviour and concern for people's welfare, for whatever reason. Athena self-governs through rationality rather than emotion.

It may be that an emotionless person is more use in a crisis (Walker, 2021c), than a neurotypical person who might become emotionally overwhelmed by the plight of another in distress. Athena Walker (2021c) demonstrates cognitive empathy, as information gathering and perspective taking, in order to help another. Taken together, the implication for moral theory is that helping behaviour is an evolved motivation, and can exist separately from the emotion of empathic concern (Walker, 2021d).

We conclude from this evidence (Walker, 2021b) that psychopaths experience the evolved motivation of the pressure to thrive, but not the accompanying emotions felt by neurotypical people. Compassion is therefore an emotional reaction to someone else's goals (thriving or surviving) being thwarted.

See also:

Perfect Compassion, p. 33

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 47

Self-other equivalence, p. 73

The Golden Rule, p. 74

Moral identity and conscience, p. 98

Cognitive empathy, p. 163

Dark and light traits, p. 182

Emotions, p. 243

**Five kinds of normativity**

1. instrumental

Instrumental normativity is "individual" normativity: the pressure to achieve goals whether or not other people are involved. This is the kind of normativity that non-human organisms experience, to the best of our knowledge. It is an aspect of the Healing Principle: the pressure to thrive, survive and reproduce.

2. cooperative or moral

Cooperative/moral normativity is formed when individual normativity becomes joint, and we (are forced to) work together with others.

See also:

Cooperative normativity, p. 81

Normativity in large groups, p. 97

3. fairness and respect

The normativity of fairness and mutual respect are aspects of the normativity of cooperation. Partners are respected because they are valuable. During a collaboration, I respect you because you are helping me by fulfilling your role ideals. After a collaboration, I am grateful and loyal to you and wish to reward you. The rewards are equal all round because of self-other equivalence.

In our collaborative unit "we", all are respected and valued equally and interdependently.

4. family

Family normativity is underpinned by Hamilton's rule. It is the normativity attached to taking care of genetic relatives and the responsibilities towards the self. It may also extend to friends: those who help the self. The evolutionary hypothesis is that we care for those whose genes we share, so that a portion of our genes can live on after we die (we can achieve reproduction).

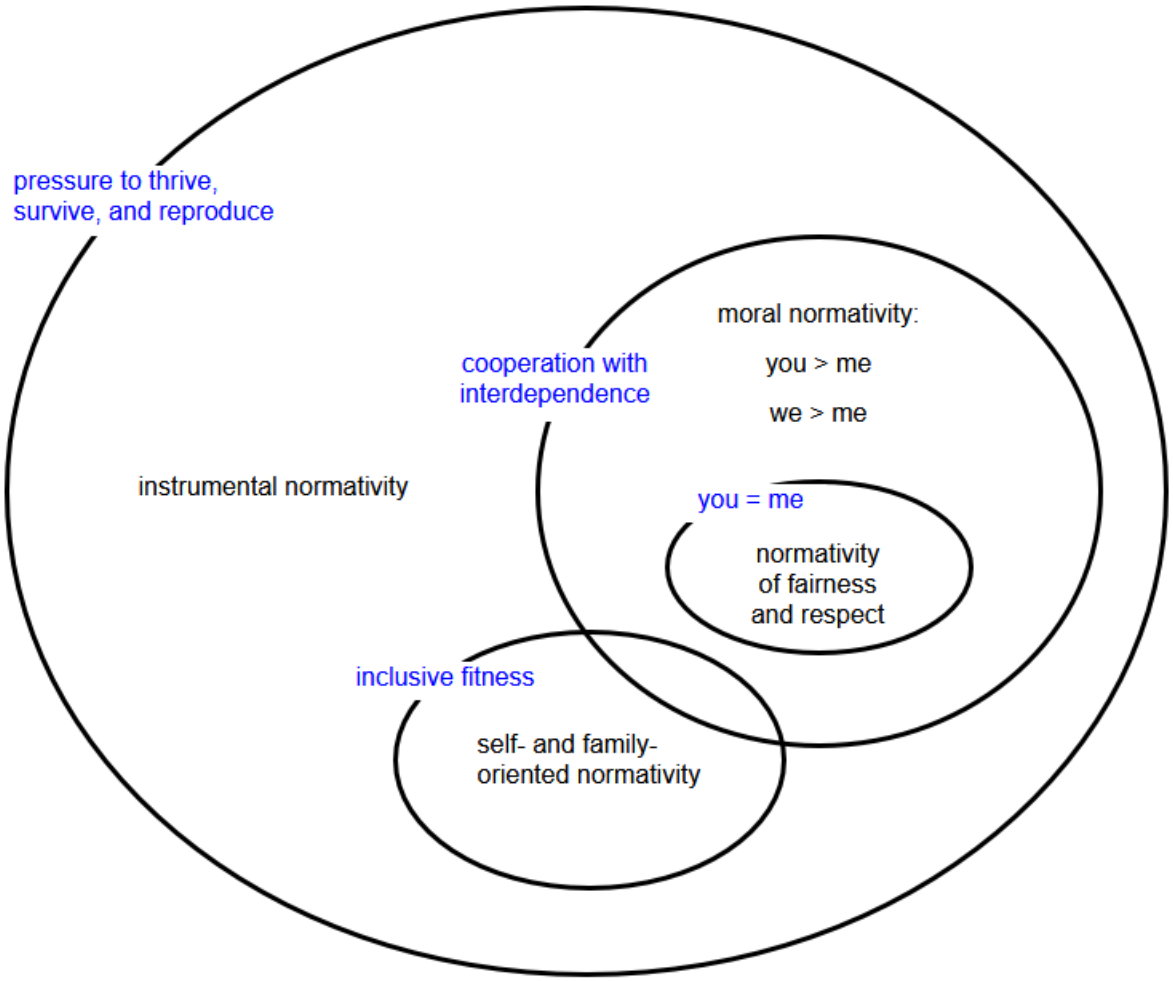
See also:

Inclusive fitness and kin selection – the promotion of "me", "mine", and "ours", p. 15

5. patriarchal

For the sake of simplicity, patriarchal normativity has been omitted from the diagram. Part instrumental and partly moralised, it is a result of the cooperativisation, through social and moral norms, of the primate reproductive strategies of: 1) sexual pair-bonding; and 2) mate-guarding by males of females. As such, it gives rise to norms of sexuality and sexual politics. A pair bond may be polygynous or polyandrous; however, monogamy is egalitarian.

Arguably, patriarchy as a male reproductive strategy is independent from, is not a product of, cooperation and fairness, but plays out in human societies as social and moral norms, i.e., as ideal ways to be cooperative in otherwise competitive situations. For example, there are very strong norms aimed at protecting the human reproductive pair-bond, whether monogamous or polygynous.




See also:

# Cooperation

- collaboration
- coordination
- communication

People who cannot work together cannot succeed together.

– *Mark Price, Daily Telegraph (UK), 19 September 2017*

Tomasello (2016) proposes a three-stage cooperative history of the human family tree:

1. collaborating in small groups, from around 2 million years ago, living in "cooperative worlds" (*Homo erectus*); scavenging at first; hunting large game by around 500 thousand years ago (*Homo heidelbergensis*). This was a time of joint intentionality, interpersonal cooperation, normativity, direct mutual risk, etc.
2. collaborating in large tribal cultural groups, "moral universes" split into smaller bands, by around 150 thousand years ago (*Homo sapiens*). Here began collective intentionality, norms, and generalised obligation.
3. collaborating in large, settled, culturally mixed agricultural communities, from around 10 thousand years ago. This was when organised religion began.

## Overview

cooperation → roles → role ideals → enforcing role ideals through partner control and self-regulation on behalf of "us" (cooperative normativity)

cooperation → roles and role ideals → self-other equivalence → fairness, respect, impartiality, objectivity, egalitarianism

## Features of cooperation

### Interdependence

- helping; empathic concern
- shared interests

### Partner choice

- evaluating others and self
- maintaining cooperative identity, personal and public
- choosing and being chosen
- mutual value, bargaining power, and respect

### Initiating collaboration

- joint commitment to collaborate
- risk and normative trust: "I need you to fulfil the commitment"
- commitment is a source of normativity

### Working together

- the joint agent "we": the partnership, team, group, or cooperative unit
- joint intentionality, thinking, and action
- individual roles and perspectives
- role ideals
- partner control; self-governance
- self-other equivalence
- The Golden Rule
- impartiality
- mutual deservingness
- sharing fairly
- excluding free riders

- normativity of responsibility to partners
- positive pressure to achieve joint goals
- negative pressure of threats to cooperative identity and membership of group

**Cooperation and the evolution of morality**

Cooperating to thrive, survive, and reproduce throws up a number of practical, social problems for which morality, and a moral sense, are the solution.

The human moral sense is psychological and motivational in nature, and our present-day moral psychology and motivations have evolved to be this way through ancient selection pressures on our human ancestors.

It is thought that around 2 million years ago there was a trend towards a cooling and drying of the climate, and the African forests shrank back, spilling a population of great apes (our ancestors) onto the savannah where they had to make a living in a new, uniquely risky ecological niche where human food is harder to obtain and process. The monkeys that were already living there, such as baboons, likely had taken the easily available food for themselves. It was obligatory for early humans to collaborate with each other for scavenging, foraging, child rearing, communal provisioning, and, by 500,000 years ago, in *Homo heidelbergensis*, hunting big game. Therefore there was a strong evolutionary pressure on the entire human family tree towards being able to learn the psychology of intimate cooperation. What began as a practical, instrumental necessity became, over millions of years, something we morally, psychologically "should" do: cooperating, caring, and sharing, equally.

While great apes are socially and cognitively highly intelligent, monkeys do not have these skills, and so monkeys do not have the same "base-material" of cognitive abilities from which to evolve a sophisticated moral psychology. Only great apes could have evolved the skills necessary for joint thinking and advanced cooperation.

The other great apes: chimpanzees, gorillas, orang utans, and bonobos, do not have to cooperate to nearly the same degree as humans, to obtain their plentiful fruit and other jungle foods. Male chimpanzees will cooperate loosely to hunt monkeys or to attack other groups, but their intentionality, thinking, and goals are presumably individual rather than joint, and they have no concept of fair or voluntary sharing (Tomasello, 2016).

See also:

Strategic cooperation in chimpanzees and bonobos, p. 119

Cooperative breeding, p. 173

## SMALL-GROUP COLLABORATION – interpersonal morality

### The Stag Hunt

We hypothesise that the prototypical situation for sophisticated collaboration in early humans was the "stag hunt". An individual could hunt for small, low-value, low-risk game animals like tortoises, or take a risk, abandoning the easy prey, and collaborate with others to hunt for high-value large game animals such as deer.

### Personal interdependence and helping

Chimpanzees and bonobos help family, friends, and coalitionary partners if the cost is not too great; but humans willingly help collaborative partners, prospective collaborative partners, and strangers too.

On a small scale of cooperation, people are interdependent with known partners. In this case, in the way that partner *A* needs partner *B*, it makes sense for partner *A* to personally help partner *B* in general, because partner *A* needs partner *B* to be in good shape on an ongoing basis. Individually, this situation is experienced psychologically as a desire to help anyone in the vicinity without necessarily expecting to receive direct benefits in return.

It has been found experimentally in young children that their helping behaviour is not motivated by a desire for reciprocity (return benefits) but just to see the person in need helped, it does not matter by whom (Hepach, Vaish, and Tomasello, 2012). This suggests that the helping behaviour we see in humans is not likely to have evolved in the context of tit-for-tat reciprocity (helping for immediate reward), and instead is likely to have evolved in a situation of interdependence and the need to keep people around us in good shape (unconditional altruism).

Humans will help "paternalistically" in the sense that they will take care of someone's physical well-being before considering their other desires: for example, a cyclist who has fallen off their bike may be more concerned with their bike than themselves, but onlookers will wish to attend to the person's needs first. This again suggests that the evolutionary origins of the extended helping behaviour of humans lies in interdependence.

Altruism can be thought of as one-way helping. Collaboration is a form of two-way (or more) helping, where each partner helps the other to achieve a joint goal, including helping each other to fulfil their respective roles.

See also:

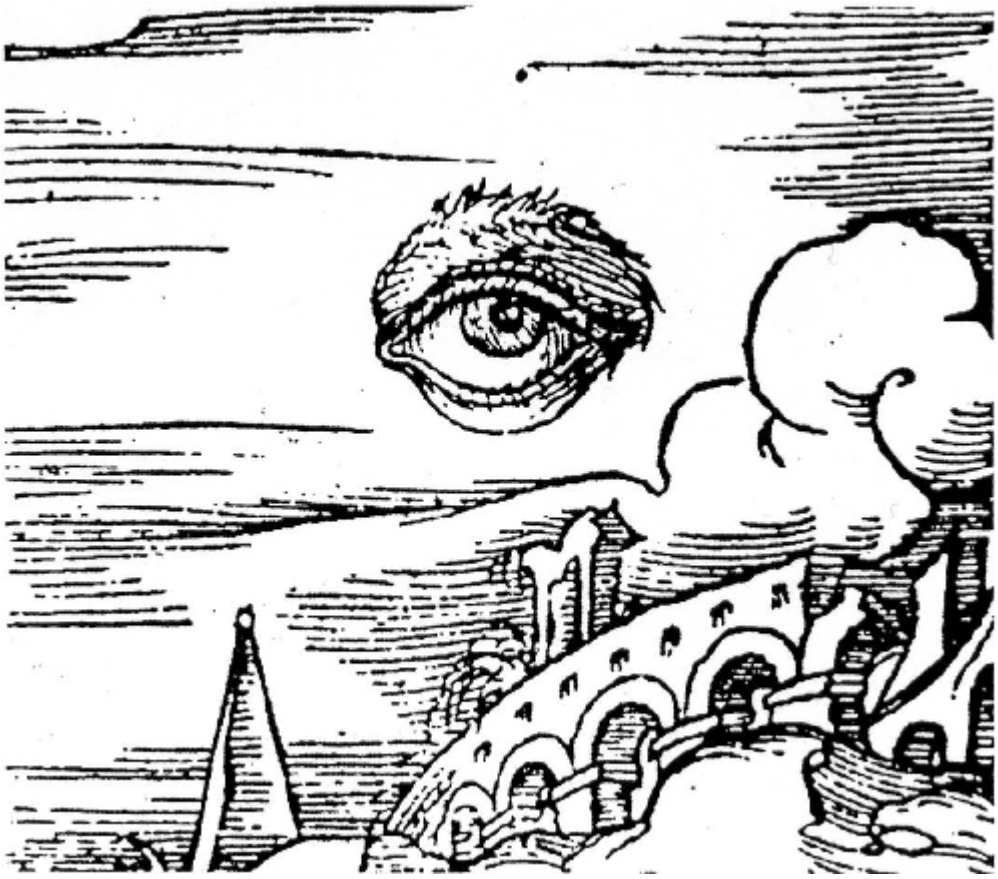
The Stakeholder Principle, p. 47

Reciprocity, p. 141

Targeted helping, p. 155

Unconditional love, p. 178

**Partner choice; reputation**



Watched people are nice people.

*in Ara Norenzayan – "Big Gods – how religion transformed cooperation and conflict"*

... the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.

*Paul the Apostle – Romans 2:15*

## Partner choice

People who cooperate do better than loners (Alvard 2013).

Young children prefer to work collaboratively with others, while chimpanzees show no such preference (Rekers, Haun, and Tomasello, 2011).

Humans collaborate to survive and thrive, and therefore face the following two problems in social life:

1. finding good partners to cooperate with: who are skilled and diligent, and not lazy or dishonest, for example;

2. being chosen oneself for collaborative activities.

To solve these problems, we need therefore:

1. to know the track records of others as cooperators;

2. to have a good track record ourselves.

## Cooperative identity

Our public image as a good or bad cooperator is called our public cooperative identity. As we evaluate others, we know that others are evaluating us. This process of everyone evaluating everyone is internalised psychologically as a personal cooperative identity, defined as our opinion of ourselves as a good or bad cooperator. In the strategically cooperative world we envisage for early humans, there would have been strategically normative pressure (i.e., towards individual thriving and surviving) to maintain a good public cooperative identity, with the personal cooperative identity being used to evaluate the actions of the self in this direction. We may see these as a proto-reputation and a proto-conscience, respectively.

Ultimately, the pressure to be chosen for collaboration supplies a pressure to maintain our good cooperative identity. The best way to be seen as a good cooperator is actually to be one. Since we all monitor ourselves and our actual and prospective collaborative partners, we may engage in "impression management", taking steps to maintain a good public reputation. If we are faced with doing something that goes against our moral compass and would therefore damage our cooperative identity, we may say "that's just not me".

Reputation (information about somebody's moral standing) spreads through gossip. In Islam, "backbiting" or spreading unfavourable information about a person is considered a great sin.

In schizophrenia, somebody may believe that their internal state is on show for all to see and they are being judged for the calibre they display in a battle of good against evil. Their personal and public moral identity can merge: they may believe that the world is monitoring them monitoring themselves.

A cooperative identity belongs to a cooperative world of face-to-face interactions, such as prevailed in the small groups of our ancient human ancestors. A fully-fledged moral identity and moral sense, including a conscience, and a sense of objective right and wrong, operates within a large-group "moral universe".

See also:

Normativity in large groups, p. 97

Moral identity and conscience, p. 98

Moral injury, p. 100

Collective moral identity, p. 101

Indirect (reputational) reciprocity, p. 147

**Initiating collaboration: making a commitment**

We can initiate a collaborative activity either by:

- implicitly, simply "falling" into it;

  We are loyal to – implicitly committed to helping – the people we depend upon, according to how much we depend on them. As the benefits they give us grow large, we may be totally committed to helping them in any circumstances.

  See also:

  Stakeholder principle, p. 47

  Unconditional love, p. 178

- explicitly making a joint commitment: communicating an intention to collaborate to achieve particular goals, between two or more people.

To be trusted, a prospective partner has to have a good track record as a cooperator; i.e., a good public cooperative identity or reputation. One partner addresses the other respectfully, with an assumption that they are trustworthy and have a cooperative attitude. Each partner has bargaining power with respect to the other, as prospective collaborators.

Explicitly communicating an intention to collaborate involves laying out in common ground knowledge: 1) the goal; 2) all that is required to ideally fulfil each role (the role ideals, or sub-goals: see below).

Each partner openly invites the other to make plans to do X, and to trust that they can be depended upon to persist in the project, and to fulfil the role ideals, until both are satisfied with the result and receive their reward. Terminating the joint commitment requires another joint commitment in itself: one partner asks to terminate the commitment, and the other must agree.

> The content of the joint commitment is thus that each partner plays her collaborative role diligently and in the ideal way until both have benefited.
>
> *Michael Tomasello – "A Natural History of Human Morality"*

Once the commitment is made, the partners are depending on each other.

It is risky for partners to trust each other to stick to a collaborative activity faithfully to the end, without giving up, being tempted away, or losing motivation. What each needs is for the other to feel that they "ought" to stick to the commitment, that they owe it to one another. Then, they can trust one other more deeply, in a more committed way, and the risk is reduced. A commitment is a mutual act of trust in each other.

The social "oughtness" of the commitment is enforced by: 1) a positive pressure to achieve or maintain a good cooperative identity; 2) the threat of damage to one's cooperative identity; 3) mutual partner control; 4) positive instrumental pressure to achieve the desired joint goals and negative instrumental pressure against failing.

## The joint agent "we", joint attention, and separate perspectives

The joint agent "we" is the cooperating unit formed by individuals collaborating, coordinating and communicating towards a joint goal, cemented by a joint commitment.

The members of the team think and act jointly. They have joint attention, in that each is attending to the joint goal, together, and through this network of attention, each therefore knows that the other is attending to it.

Each member has their own role to play and has an understanding of the other roles as well. This means that in principle, the people playing the roles can be exchanged and the result can be the same.

The same is true of perspectives: each player has their own perspective and has an understanding of the other perspectives too. In fact, it is necessary from a collaborative point of view for each person to monitor the actions and perspectives of the others.

> Based on their capacity to coordinate actions and attention with others toward joint goals, humans came to understand that different individuals can have different perspectives on one and the same situation or entity. ... We thus encounter once again the dual-level structure of simultaneous and individuality. Just as collaborative activities have the dual-level structure of joint goal and individual roles, joint attentional activities have the dual-level structure of joint attention and individual perspectives.
>
> *Michael Tomasello – "A Natural History of Human Thinking"*

## Bird's eye view

It is possible that the members see the collaboration in plan form, as a "bird's eye view" of all the roles and perspectives within it, with their own just one among many.

**Common ground knowledge**

Communication is used to skilfully coordinate the different perspectives and roles towards the joint goal. The knowledge that is communicated then becomes part of the common ground knowledge of all concerned, and can be used by all to further the work towards the goal. Common ground knowledge is the store of practical knowledge that all partners share, that can be used to facilitate achieving the joint goal. In large groups, the equivalent is cultural knowledge.

See also:

Normativity in small teams, p. 81

Self-other equivalence, p. 73

Mutual respect and deservingness, p. 77

**Role ideals**

> There's so many ways to do it
> So many ways to see
> But the only way to do it
> Is to do it properly.
>
> *2 Puerto Ricans, a Blackman and a Dominican – "Do it Properly"*

A role ideal is an ideal way that a role should be performed within a particular activity. They are the goals of each role: sub-goals of the overall goal of the joint agent "we". There is instrumental pressure towards achieving success and against failing.

If an individual fails in their performance of a role, it negatively affects everyone involved in the project. This common-ground knowledge adds a social pressure to perform properly, since we value our partners and what they think of us, and we need to maintain our personal and social cooperative identities.

A role ideal is "agent-independent" in that it applies impartially to anyone performing that role. A role ideal forms an ideal standard, an objective, impartial external arbiter of the quality of someone's behaviour, and therefore of their deservingness. Each member of the group, team or "we" is judged impartially, by equal standards. This levels the status between collaborative partners.

People who are called "judgemental" spend a lot of time evaluating the deservingness of others.

Role ideals have all the hallmarks of being the ancestors of today's shared social norms (ideal behaviour).

**Moral principles**

There are specific standards or ideals which apply to specific roles, and general role ideals which apply to all collaborative roles alike. These general role ideals are moral principles – the general role ideals of being a good cooperator, or ideal cooperative behaviour.

They include reciprocity, fairness, helping, honesty, accountability, honouring commitment, and responsibility to others to uphold specific role ideals.

See also:

Conventions, norms, and institutions, p. 91

Four views of norms, p. 93

**Role ideals and respect**

If someone upholds role ideals then it engenders respect for that person in the eyes of others.

See also:

Mutual respect and deservingness, p. 77

**Self-other equivalence**

- swapping perspectives
- interchangeability of personnel within fixed roles
- impartiality of role ideals
- universality of role ideals (each partner is equally bound by them)
- each partner is equally a causative force
- levelling of status

"This person is just like me."

"I am one among many."

> I and my partner are equivalent in all important respects in this collaborative context.
>
> *Michael Tomasello – "The moral psychology of obligation"*

The hypothesis is that among collaborative partners, there is a sense of self-other equivalence, leading to equality of status, and mutual respect and deservingness.

The existence of separate roles, each with its own necessary role ideals, leads to the situation that among partners, roles can in principle be reversed, and as long as the role ideals are upheld, then from the point of view of the overall collaboration, the result will be the same. Personnel are therefore, in principle, interchangeable within the collaboration.

During a collaboration, it is necessary, for purposes of coordination, to take the perspectives of other partners. In this process we recognise that we are thinking jointly about the same thing, but from separate perspectives. Apart from humans, other great apes are not able to think jointly in this way (Tomasello, 2014). The ability to take multiple perspectives is a building block of the human sense of objectivity: the "view from anywhere" (in my rational moral universe).

The fact that role ideals are an external, impartial constraint on each partner's behaviour leads to the recognition of the equality of status of partners: the egotism of each one is similarly constrained, and individual statuses are somewhat levelled out by an equal yoke of duty. This may be a crucial factor in the human sense of

egalitarianism. Equality of status must lead to a degree of mutual respect, as each recognises the other as an equal person in a fundamental way.

Each partner is recognised as a causal force in producing the desired outcome.

Therefore, in a sense, it is possible for the concerns of others to be seen by the individual as as important as one's own. The natural sense of the self of being the centre of the universe is somewhat reduced. Chimpanzees, by contrast, are much more acooperative and self-centred.

See also:

The joint agent "we", joint attention, and separate perspectives, p. 70

Objectivity: the view from everywhere, p. 94

Egalitarianism, p. 134

**The Golden Rule**

> Respect your neighbour as yourself.
>
> I will treat this person as I would treat myself or another loved one.
>
> Treating others as you would like to be treated.
>
> Treating others as you would like your loved ones to be treated.
>
> Exchanging perspectives and empathic concern between yourself and a suffering other.
>
> Exchanging perspectives and empathic concern between your loved one and a suffering other.

Self-other equivalence – cooperative interchangeability – may lie at the heart of the Golden Rule. The present hypothesis is that the Golden Rule consists of my recognition of similarity (i.e., equivalence) between a stranger and an already valued person (myself or another), leading to compassion for them, then wanting to take

their perspective by putting myself in their position, and learning about their point of view.

We perceive that the stranger is similar to ourselves (or a loved one), i.e., no longer strange, but beautiful. Their predicament could be our predicament. What if that happened to me? How would I feel if I were on the receiving end of that treatment?

The hypothesis is that the Golden Rule consists of:

1. recognition of similarity / equivalence of stranger to self or loved one
2. compassion for the stranger
3. "imagine self in position of other" perspective taking (distressing to self)
4. compassionate "imagine other" perspective taking (soothing to self).

The Golden Rule is therefore similar to empathic concern for a loved one, but transferred to any person who reminds us of them. We treat anybody who is like ourselves or a loved one, as we would treat them.

We sometimes say, "see it from my perspective!" or "if I were in your position, I might have done the same thing." If somebody treats us badly we can say to them, "how would you like it if I did that to you?" These are examples of role reversal, swapping perspectives, made possible because people are in principle equivalent within fixed roles.

If we imagine ourselves into the position of a suffering other, this can lead to our own personal distress (Decety, 2011), but if we focus on the other person, and we feel compassion for them, this can lessen our empathic distress (Singer and Klimecki, 2014).

If we see someone with whom we share similar (negative) experiences, we feel empathic concern for them, and this makes us want to take their perspective (Israelashvili, Sauter, and Fischer, 2020).

The situation for early humans was that if I collaborate intimately with my family, friends and neighbours for survival, then they must be nearly as valuable to me as myself. Here, perspective taking, interdependence, and empathic concern are bound up together in cooperating and coordinating with others to survive. If I am going to take the perspective of someone, then it is likely to be someone I depend upon and therefore care about empathically, and I am taking their perspective: 1) in order to help and care for them; 2) to coordinate with them. These would have been the people I identified with, if I lived 2 million years ago.

Taken together, this suggests that since we are all human, if we can somehow recognise the humanity in another, we can identify with them and therefore feel compassion for their plight. Perhaps this identification is a sign of an evolved-psychological bond of warmth and compassion between people who have joint intentionality, thinking, and action: the sociologist Émile Durkheim's "mechanical solidarity" of people who share work, living, actions, experiences, customs, values, beliefs, etc.

See also:

Perspective taking and helping behaviour, p. 166

Human rights, p. 199

Fundamental attribution error, p. 202

**Negative Golden Rule**

We may observe a negative version of the Golden Rule, where if we encounter a stranger who is similar to a person whom we already know and dislike, then this can prejudice us against the stranger.

**Partner control and joint self-governance**

In collaboration, each partner is taking a risk by relying on the others. This risk needs to be minimised.

In partner control, we attempt to turn a failing or disrespectful partner into a good one, through "respectful protest", or punishment, or the threat of rejection, or helping and guidance, or some combination of these.

See also:

Unconditional love, p. 178

There is positive pressure to treat the other partners well – 1) the respect and deservingness we feel towards them as collaborative partners; and 2) because we internalise "commitment to the team" as "responsibility to other partners". There is also negative pressure in the forms of: 1) the threat of sanctioning; 2) partner choice (i.e., potential rejection of the current partner in favour of somebody more cooperative); 3) guilt; 4) potential damage to the person's cooperative identity.

Each partner relinquishes some of her personal control to the joint agent "we", and in doing so, grants authority to "us" in the form of the other partners to sanction her if she is wayward in carrying out her duties.

Through role reversal and self-other equivalence, she will also judge herself as deserving of their sanctioning if she falls short in her duty, and if she is cooperative, will attempt to correct her behaviour in response. The self-judgment is seen as legitimate because it comes from “us”, the joint agent formed by a joint commitment.

The legitimacy of "we" to regulate "you" and "me" in the direction of achieving its goals derives from: 1) the impartiality of role ideals; 2) the possibility of role reversal, because of self-other equivalence, whereby I can judge myself impartially as I judge others.

Each partner’s performance is therefore continually monitored and evaluated by the other partners, and by themselves, and each governs or regulates themselves in accordance with this evaluation. Effectively, individuals govern themselves and each other on behalf of the team.

It is in the common ground knowledge of all partners that each is expecting to be treated with respect and as equals.

**Respectful protest**

If partner *A* feels that he has been treated unfairly, unjustly or disrespectfully by partner *B*, he can make a "respectful protest" towards partner *B*, informing her of his resentment but respectfully assuming that she is a cooperative person who wants to maintain her cooperative identity. If partner *B* is still behaving poorly after this, then partner *A* always has the option to change partners (partner choice), and partner *B* will run the risk of damaging her own cooperative identity in the process.

See also:

Perfect Compassion, p. 33

Good manners, p. 210

**Mutual respect and deservingness**

Sharing fairly means to be treated as an equal, and, as an equal person, given an equal share (equality) or an equal return per unit of investment (proportionality), or

treated impartially according to the same procedure (procedural justice). It also means to have one's needs equally respected as those of any other partner within the collaboration (charity / Perfect Compassion / fairness as respect).

I respect my collaborative partners, and feel that they are equally deserving as myself, because:

- "we" have special status as collaborative partners;
- self-other equivalence implies equality of status, and therefore mutual respect; since: 1) each partner is equally a causative force in working towards the joint goal; 2) each partner is equally and impartially bound by the role ideals of the collaboration; 3) personnel are in principle interchangeable within fixed roles.
- mutual bargaining power, as prospective collaborative partners; and recognition of mutual value, lead to mutual respect and deservingness;
- they are helping me, and "us", towards our joint goal by fulfilling their role ideals;

The deservingness of praise, blame, and fair shares of each of us is impartially judged by "us", the governing joint agent, according to the quality of the ways in which each of us upholds general and specific role ideals. In other words, it is not I who decides a partner's deservingness – the perspective of justice is not personal and subjective – but "us", impartially, interchangeably, from the schematic "birds' eye view" of the collaboration.

> Partners to a joint commitment do not just prefer that we share equally; they feel that we owe it to one another to share equally.
>
> *Michael Tomasello – "A Natural History of Human Morality"*

Free riders have not done a share of the work towards our shared goal, are not part of our joint agent "we" and are therefore not regulated by "us" and our ideals, and are therefore irrelevant, uncoordinated with us, or competition: a threat. According to this rationale, they do not deserve any of our rewards. Out-group members may elicit our empathic concern, especially if we recognise that they are like us or someone we care about.

See also:

Self-other equivalence, p. 73

Free riders, p. 133

Fundamental attribution error, p. 202

**Responsibility and guilt in a cooperative relationship**

We decide to collaborate, and in order to mutually reduce our risks, each makes and receives a joint commitment, backed up by our cooperative identities. Alternatively, we fall into an implicit commitment, perhaps based on loyalty.

The commitment is to achieve the goals together, and to share the rewards fairly.

I identify with the joint agent "we" ("our goals are aligned") because it fits in with my cooperative identity ("I am a cooperative person collaborating with a cooperative entity"). (we = me)

In making the commitment, and because I care about my partner, since I am a human being, I relinquish some control to the joint agent. (we > me; you > me)

The commitment regulates the self-regulating "us".

The joint agent consists of the self and others. The commitment and subsequent relinquishing of personal control is internalised as: 1) regulation of the self (by the self and the other partners) on behalf of the "we"; therefore: 2) responsibility towards others for achieving one's sub-goals and helping to achieve the joint goal; i.e.: 3) doing one's duty for others. The benefits are thereby maximised all round (you > me; you = me).

If I fail in my responsibility towards others, then I will punish myself with feelings of guilt, and it may elicit protest from the others.

See also:

Responsibility, p. 208

**Normativity in small teams**

facts: pressure to thrive, survive and reproduce (normative) +

obligate collaboration (consequently normative)

→ joint intentionality

→ joint trust

→ joint goal

→ joint commitment

→ joint agent "we" is formed

→ individual partners identify with "us": "our goals are aligned"

→ individuals relinquish some personal control to "us" in favour of the joint goal

→ individuals feel this control by "us" as an obligation to and regulation by "us" (= self + others) to perform well instrumentally and socially.

See also:

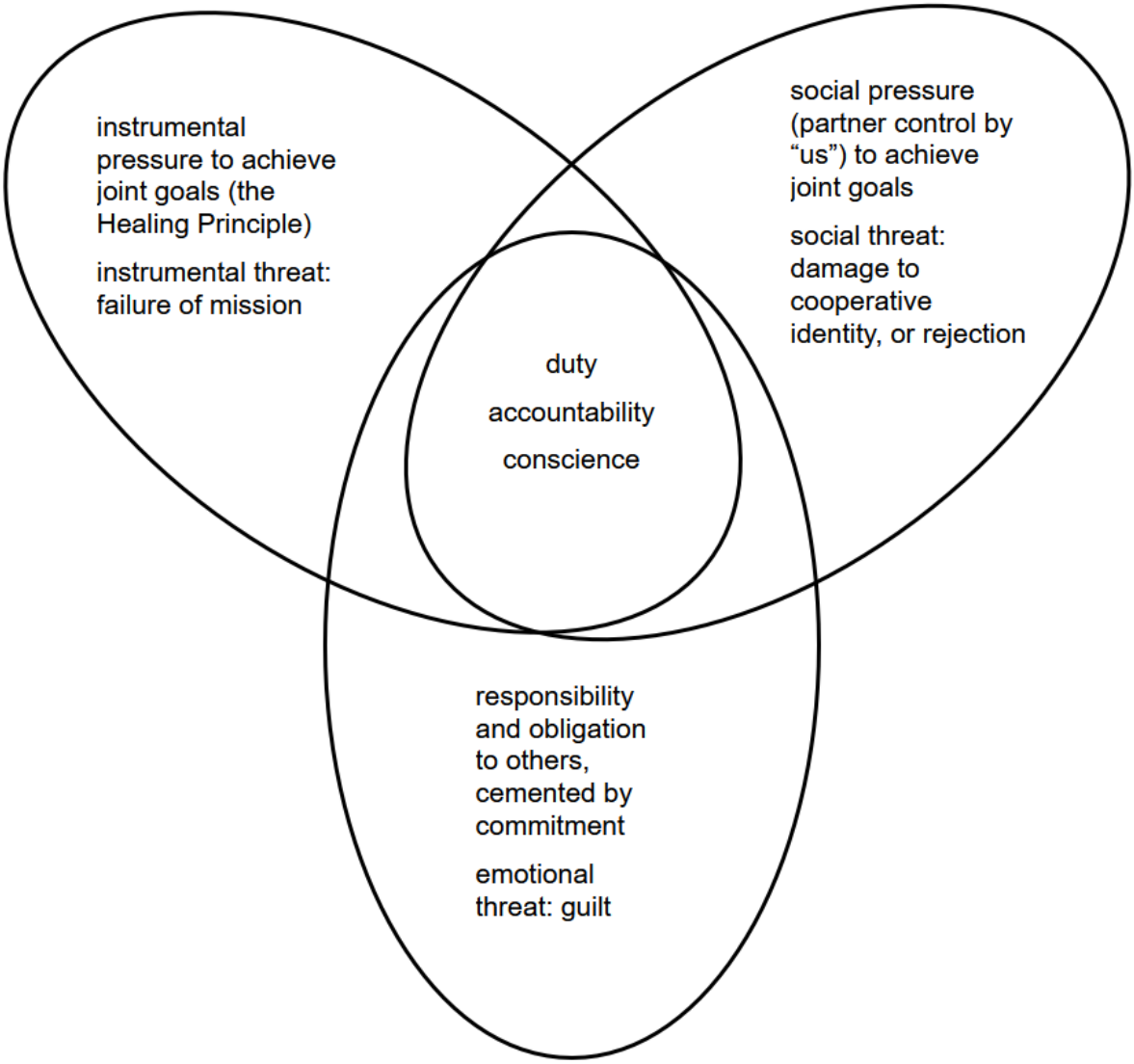
The Healing Principle, p. 13

**Chain of normativity**

In the above "logical flow" list, we see how normativity begins in the Healing Principle as individual, strategic normativity, and becomes joint, moral normativity when we are obliged to cooperate. In the end, there is normativity ("shouldness") attached to doing one's duty for the group, which consists of the self and other partners. Partners express this through partner control and self-governance.

**Cooperative normativity**

- we > me




Normativity means "should-ness", the pressure to achieve goals. Cooperative or moral normativity can be defined as the pressure to achieve joint goals: to do one's duty to uphold cooperative norms and role ideals.

When we work on our own, we self-regulate in the direction of achieving our own goals. When we work together with others, we regulate ourselves and each other, on behalf of "us", the team or group, in the direction of achieving our joint goals.

> ... we not only collaborate to pursue shared goals, but we also collaborate to self-regulate the collaboration.
>
> *Michael Tomasello – The Moral Psychology of Obligation*

Self-regulation of the collaboration is formed of mutual partner control and self-governance.

Cooperative normativity, fair sharing of rewards, and interdependence are all of a piece.

Collaboration begins with an agreement or commitment to collaborate. This is followed by an interrelated three-fold collaborative normativity, together with respect owed and demanded. Finally there is fair sharing of the rewards, owed and demanded.

**1. Instrumental normativity**

Achieving the joint goal.

**2. Mutual risk and partner control**

You, my partner, are taking a risk by relying on me to collaborate with you. Therefore you will exercise partner control over me to attempt to make sure that I perform my duty diligently and virtuously.

**3. Responsibility and obligation to partners**

In agreeing to collaborate, I identify with "us": the partnership, team or group; our goals are aligned. I relinquish some personal control in favour of the group: I am helping "us" to achieve our joint goals. "Us" means "me" and "you". I internalise the commitment and subsequent partial transfer of personal control as responsibility to "you", my partners.

**Guilt, justification or apology, forgiveness**

If I fail to uphold my responsibility to achieve role ideals, then I may feel guilty, and I may be required to justify my actions, or I may apologise and promise to change for the better, perhaps leading you to forgive me.

**Normativity and respect**

We feel respect for valuable partners who uphold role ideals. We demand respect as valuable partners who uphold role ideals.

See also:

Five kinds of normativity, p. 58

Partner control and joint self-governance, p. 76

Evolution of the normativity of fairness (as distributive justice), p. 139

**Additional references**

Tomasello, Michael – "A Natural History of Human Thinking": Harvard 2014

Tomasello, Michael – "A Natural History of Human Morality": Harvard 2016

> Each year 1.6 billion passengers fly to destinations around the world. Patiently we line up to be checked and patted down by someone we've never seen before. We file on board an aluminium cylinder and cram our bodies into narrow seats, elbow to elbow, accommodating one another for as long as the flight takes.
>
> With nods and resigned smiles, passengers make eye contact and then yield to latecomers pushing past. When a young man wearing a backpack hits me with it as he reaches up to cram his excess paraphernalia into an overhead compartment, instead of grimacing or baring my teeth, I smile (weakly), disguising my irritation. Most people on board ignore the crying baby, or pretend to. A few of us are even inclined to signal the mother with a sideways nod and a wry smile that says, "I know how you must feel." We want her to know that we understand, and that the disturbance she thinks her baby is causing is not nearly as annoying as she imagines, even though we also can intuit, and so can she, that the young man beside her, who avoids looking at her and keeps his eyes determinedly glued to the screen of his laptop, does indeed mind every bit as much as she fears.
>
> Thus does every frequent flier employ on a regular basis peculiarly empathic aptitudes for theorizing about the mental states and intentions of other people, our species' gift for mutual understanding. Cognitively oriented psychologists refer to the ability to think about what someone else knows as having a

"theory of mind." They design clever experiments to determine at what age human children acquire this ability and to learn how good at mind reading (or more precisely, attributing mental states to others) nonhuman animals are. Other psychologists prefer the related term "intersubjectivity," which emphasizes the capacity and eagerness to share in the emotional states and experiences of other individuals – and which, in humans at least, emerges at a very early stage of development, providing the foundation for more sophisticated mind reading later on.

Whatever we call it, this heightened interest in and ability to scan faces, and our perpetual quest to understand what others are thinking and intending, to empathize and care about their experiences and goals, help make humans much more adept at cooperating with the people around us than other apes are. Far oftener than any of us are aware, humans intuit the mental experiences of other people, and – the really interesting thing – care about having other people share theirs. Imagine two seat-mates on this plane, one of whom develops a severe migraine in the course of the flight. Even though they don't speak the same language, her new companion helps her, perhaps holding a wet cloth to her head, while the sick woman tries to reassure her that she is feeling better. Humans are often eager to understand others, to be understood, and to cooperate. Passengers crowded together on an aircraft are just one example of how empathy and intersubjectivity are routinely brought to play in human interactions. It happens so often that we take the resulting accommodations for granted. But just imagine if, instead of humans being crammed and annoyed aboard this airplane, it were some other species of ape.

At moments like this, it is probably just as well that mind reading in humans remains an imperfect art, given the oddity of my sociobiological musings. I cannot keep from wondering what would happen if my fellow human passengers suddenly morphed into another species of ape. What if I were travelling with a planeload of chimpanzees? Any one of us would be lucky to disembark with all ten fingers and toes still attached, with the baby still breathing and unmaimed. Bloody earlobes and other appendages would litter the aisles. Compressing so many highly impulsive strangers into a tight space would be a recipe for mayhem.

... Descriptions of missing digits, ripped ears, and the occasional castration are scattered throughout the field accounts of langur and red colobus monkeys, of Madagascar lemurs, and of our own close relatives among the Great Apes. Even among famously peaceful bonobos, a type of chimpanzee so rare and difficult to access in the wild that most observations come from zoos, veterinarians sometimes have to be called in following altercations to stitch back on a scrotum or penis. This is not to say that humans don't display

similar propensities toward jealousy, indignation, rage, xenophobia, or homicidal violence. But compared with our nearest ape relations, humans are more adept at forestalling outright mayhem. Our first impulse is usually to get along. We do not automatically attack a stranger, and face-to-face killings are a much harder sell for humans than for chimpanzees. With 1.6 billion airline passengers annually compressed and manhandled, no dismemberments have been reported yet.

*Sarah Blaffer Hrdy – "Mothers and Others – the evolutionary origins of mutual understanding"*

**Chimpanzees' and bonobos' reactions to strangers (18-certificate)**

Chimpanzees and bonobos are the closest relatives of humans, and the last common ancestor of all three species lived around 6-8 million years ago. Chimpanzees and bonobos diverged around 1-2 million years ago.

Adult male chimpanzees are often murderously hostile towards chimps in other groups, patrolling the borders of their territory and killing any strangers they find, but bonobos, whose natural food sources are thought to be more plentiful, behave much more peacefully in that situation.

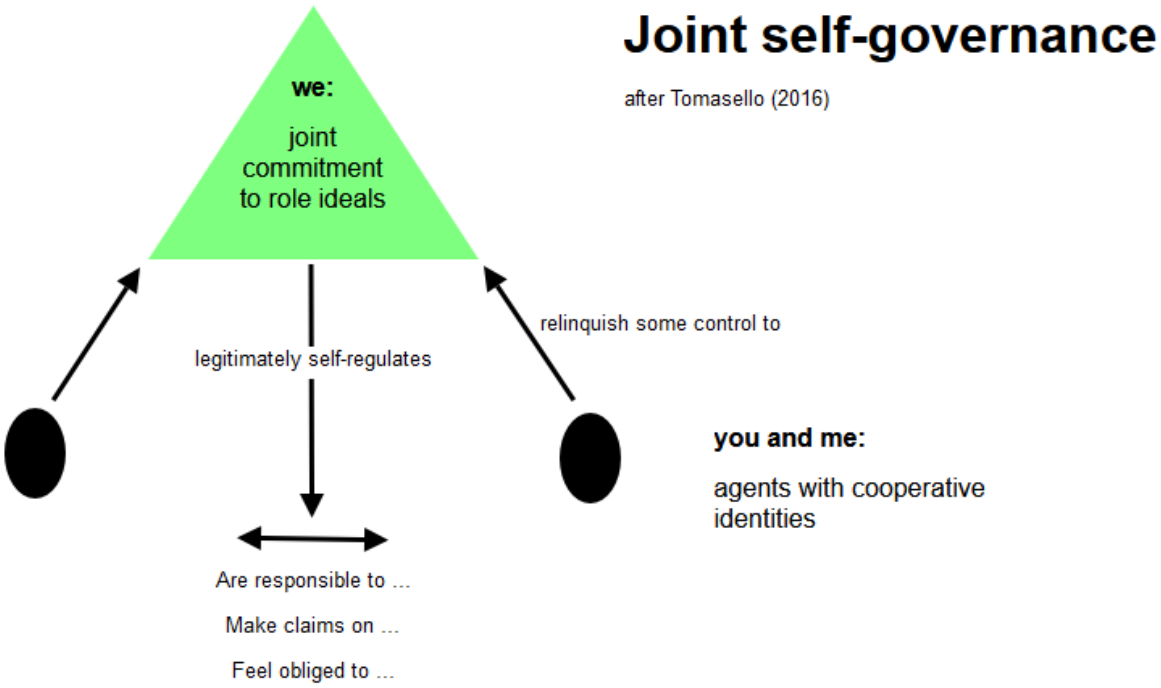
One highly problematic issue ... is why there is so little competition between groups of bonobos. Chimpanzee males are known to kill each other over territory, gorilla males occasionally fight to the death over females, and our own species has a long history of battlefields scattered with the bodies of thousands of men. Bonobos, in contrast, seem merely to "visit" their neighbors, with some hostility and tension, but no murderous intent.

The first peaceful intergroup mingling was observed in 1979 at Wamba, where two different communities came together and stayed together for a week. At a recent meeting, [Takayoshi] Kano played a video of such mingling. First one sees bonobos fiercely chasing each other, screaming and barking, but without physical fighting. Then, gradually, females of the different groups engage in sexual contact and even groom one another. In the meantime, their offspring play with those of the other group. Even a few males of different groups approach one another to engage in a brief scrotal rub. Those familiar with the brutal encounters between chimpanzee communities, described in gruesome detail by Jane Goodall, can only shake their heads in wonderment at bonobo intercommunity relations.

[Gen'ichi] Idani, who recorded 32 separate intergroup encounters at Wamba, characterizes the typical interaction between males and females of different groups as sexual and friendly, whereas males are hostile and standoffish towards males of another group. Copulations between males and females of different groups are common during the first fifteen minutes of an encounter. Provisioning may be partly responsible for these group mergers, since many occurred at the feeding site. ...

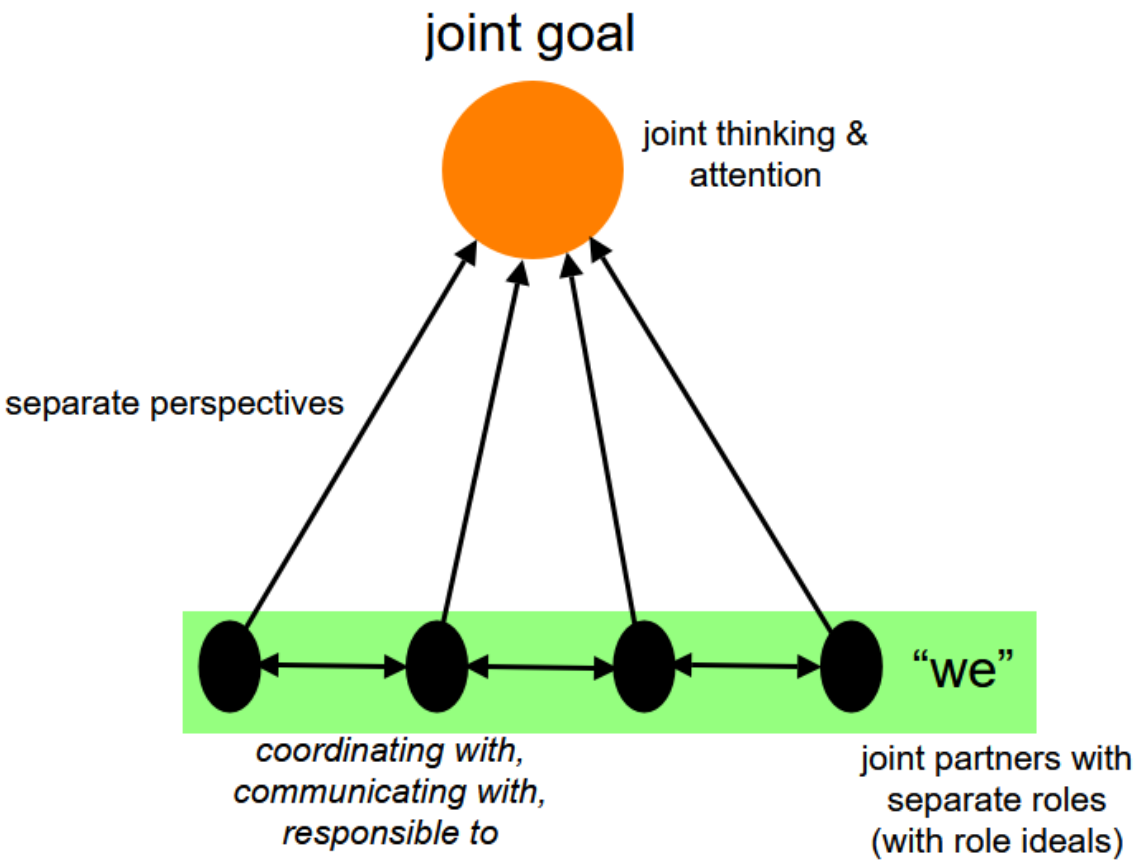
The extensively overlapping travel ranges of bonobo communities and direct observations of relatively peaceful mixing suggest that bonobo intercommunity relations are strikingly different from those of their closest relatives.

*Frans de Waal and Frans Lanting – "Bonobo – the forgotten ape"*




Role ideals are sub-goals of the overall goal of the cooperative unit.

## Jointness and separateness of "we"




This triadic structure – you and I relating to one another *about* some external object or action – is the defining organization of social activities structured by shared intentionality.

*Michael Tomasello – The moral psychology of obligation (2020)*

## LARGE-GROUP COOPERATION – group morality

### Features of large-group morality

- interdependence and group loyalty
- coordination through similarity and cultural knowledge in common ground
- conventions, norms and institutions
- the objective point of view
- objective right and wrong
- cultural differences in objective right and wrong
- commitment to conventions, norms and institutions as legitimate
- moral identity, moral self-governance, and conscience
- organised religion and large-scale cooperation
- sedentary agriculture, warfare, and hostility to out-group members

Frans de Waal (2014) posits two levels of morality: interpersonal, and group-level. We may describe these as 1) a local sense of responsibility to other collaborative partners, to fulfil one's duty; 2) an objective sense of obligation to other group members to fulfil moral principles (Tomasello, 2020).

We believe that by 150,000-100,000 years ago, modern *Homo sapiens* were living in large tribal groups separated into small bands of, at most, around 150 people (the "Dunbar number": the maximum number of people of which the human brain can keep track). Because of increased division of labour by this time, the individual would have been totally dependent on the (tribal) group, and facing two challenges: 1) how to recognise, and therefore be able to trust, other people as group members; 2) to help and protect, and be helped and protected by, other group members.

## Interdependence, group loyalty, and in-group favouritism

In-group members:

- collaborate together
- depend on each other and on the group
- help each other
- stick together in the face of danger
- identify with the group ("our goals are aligned"; "we are similar")
- trust, and feel solidarity with, each other
- make themselves look similar
- act in similar ways
- have knowledge, skills and beliefs in common (cultural common ground)

Because of increased division of labour, an individual was by now totally dependent on the group to provide all the necessaries of life. This dependence, analogous to the dependence of early humans upon their collaborative partners, meant that the individual now felt loyalty and commitment to the group as a whole, best characterised as the formula "you > me".

The interdependence of all in the group led individuals to identify with the group ("I am one of 'us', the big interdependent 'we'"; "our goals are aligned"). (we = me)

This interdependence also served to spread empathic concern and helping to all in the group, favouring those within the group over those outside it.

See also:

Warfare and out-group hostility, p. 102

## Similarity and coordination

In order for group members to coordinate with both friends and strangers within the group, they all needed to do things in standard ways that all in the group would know.

The knowledge of how to do things in these standard ways was therefore held in common ground by the whole group, and formed part of the group's culture.

- Conforming to these standard ways of the group led individuals to identify further with the group: "we" do things in "this" way.
- Conforming to standard ways also allowed trust and solidarity to develop between group members. Trust and solidarity are hard to maintain on a large scale, as people do not personally know the reputation of everyone in the group (their collaborative partners).
- Finally, conforming to the group's ways allowed group members to recognise each other. To this end, at some point, modern humans began to mark or decorate themselves in distinctive ways in order to show their group membership.

It was therefore necessary, for practical reasons, for group members to conform to the group's standard ways.

These standard cultural ways of doing things became part of the group members' shared cultural identity.

The standard ways of doing things fell into three overlapping categories: conventions, norms and institutions. Conventions are the traditional ways that things are done; norms are the way that things should be done, in order to ensure effective cooperation; and institutions are public bodies with ceremonies and rules that govern individuals and society.

According to the French social scientist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), there are two ways that people can feel solidarity with each other: 1) on the basis of collaborating together ("organic" solidarity); or 2) on the basis of similarity of some kind ("mechanical" solidarity).

**Cultural knowledge in common ground**

When people want to cooperate, it is necessary to establish a certain amount of knowledge in common ground. A large group will maintain a bank of conventional knowledge, skills and practices in common ground that all group members can use to coordinate with in-group strangers. This group-wide bank of knowledge, skills and practices forms the culture of the group.

## Conventions, norms, and institutions

Conventions are the group's standard ways of performing practical tasks, role ideals necessary for in-group coordination with strangers, held in group-wide cultural common ground. The group therefore has "correct" and "incorrect" ways of performing its roles.

In a large group, individuals do not have personal knowledge of the reputations of all members, so as human groups grew larger over time, other, large-scale ways to know how to trust and coordinate with in-group strangers had to be found. Norms are a publicly-known set of expectations of ideal cooperative behaviour.

Social and moral norms can be seen as partner control on a large scale: a group-wide system of social control that enables coordination and cooperation in otherwise potentially disruptive and competitive situations. By helping to maintain cooperation in individuals, norms generally facilitate the cohesiveness and smooth running of the whole group, to the benefit of all group members (see: Fiske, 1991). As such, they are shared by the whole group and form part of its cultural common ground, and so all group members enforce norms upon themselves and each other, and we look favourably on people who enforce norms on others, and unfavourably on those who fail to. People follow norms for at least three practical reasons: 1) to be recognised as part of the group; 2) for coordination with others; 3) from fear of punishment, including possible threats to their reputation.

The most universal norms, worldwide, are those around situations that have the strongest tendency to bring out people's selfish or aggressive sides, e.g., regarding sexual pair bonding, or the sharing of food. Norms specify an ideal way to behave so as to forestall competition and selfishness.

For example, in the UK, when a group of people are waiting for something on a first-come first-served basis, it is the norm to form an orderly queue, with later arrivals adding themselves to the back of the queue.

Since they promote cooperation, a subset of norms are moral norms, ultimately consisting of the small-group morality of helping, fairness, and generally being a good cooperator on a personal level. However, in principle, any norm can be moralised, made into a matter of right and wrong (Tomasello, 2016).

Norms may well be the modern-day equivalents of the role ideals of small-scale cooperation. As such, they are a form of ideal cooperative behaviour. As ideal behaviour, norms imply normativity: we "should" follow them.

We may imagine that a group's cultural, religious and moral norms, ideals, can interact over time with other factors to become a "twisting garden of rules". A culture is innately conservative, relatively unchanging, since tradition has authority (what

worked for our ancestors works for us) and is a part of culture, and culture is passed down through time socially.

Institutions are sets of norms or rules that are specially created to meet specific collective goals, often administered by special governing organisations. An institution is explicit and public.

> For example, modern humans were presumably pair bonding and mating in accordance with informal social norms before, at some point, some societies began institutionalizing marriage by drawing up explicit sets or rules for who can marry whom, what is an appropriate dowry or bride price, where the couple should live, what happens to the children if one person abandons the marriage, and so forth. And the marriage often was performed in a public ceremony with publicly expressed commitments (aka promises). Knight (1992), among others, argues that individuals are driven to institutionalize activities when the expected benefits are being unacceptably diminished by the costs of inefficiencies, disputes, and norm enforcement (e.g., by the "transaction costs" involved in settling disputes over bride price or compensation for abandonment). Individuals thus explicitly and publicly promise to bind themselves to certain institutional rules. The advantage to individuals is that they can now better predict what others will do, and in addition, punishments are delivered impersonally by the institution or group, so that no single individual has to bear the risks and costs. Ideally, the diminution of undesirable transaction costs through institutionalization means that many problems involving public goods are alleviated, and everyone benefits.
>
> *Michael Tomasello – "A Natural History of Human Morality"*
>
> Reference: Knight, J. 1992. Institutions and social conflict. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press

Institutions and institutionalised values may be made sacred, of infinite worth, by cultural members.

See also:

Sacredness and taboo, p. 224

**Four views of norms**

de Waal (2014a)

- norms specify ideal behaviour with respect to achieving maximum fitness

  (e.g., the spider builds its web in the correct way to catch the maximum amount of prey, and maintains this state of correctness; and many social mammals will attempt to repair damaged social relationships, which they depend on to survive, through reconciliation behaviour).

Tomasello (2016)

- social norms are ideal ways to be cooperative in otherwise competitive situations.

Pinker (2011:760)

- Each moralised social norm is a compartment containing:

- a moral foundation
- one or more social roles
- a context (e.g., "home, street, school, workplace")
- a resource to be divided, exchanged, given, etc. (e.g., "food, money, land, housing, time, advice, sex, labor").

Fiske (1991)

- Norms have a system-maintaining function. Therefore, presumably, cooperative norms maintain a system of cooperation.

See also:

The Healing Principle, p. 13

Five kinds of normativity, p. 58

Conventions, norms, and institutions, p. 91

Patriarchal norms, p. 104

Moral foundations theory, p. 219

**Objectivity: the view from everywhere**

Early humans felt themselves to be interchangeable with their collaborative partners, since a role and its role ideals were standard and must be fulfilled by anyone playing that role. Therefore, and as they could swap roles, they could swap perspectives with their collaborative partners, and in fact they needed to monitor the perspectives of others as part of the collaborative process. The result was that each person now had a view from "there" as well as "here".

In a large interdependent group, with division of labour, each person has her role to play and must submit to role ideals (conventions, norms). Each role is now fully "agent independent" in that it could in theory be played by anyone in the group with the right skills. Each person can now swap perspectives with anyone and everyone in the group. The result is that as well as his own perspective, each person now has a view from "anywhere" (or "nowhere") – the "objective" point of view.

Each person could now judge others, or be judged themselves, from an impartial point of view: that of the cultural group in general, with its norms as ideal standards. This is necessary for justice to operate, as judgements of what someone deserves require an impartial external arbiter.

Importantly, role ideals are mind-independent within a collaborative group, depending on the collective rather than the individual mind.

See also:

Role ideals, p. 71

Self-other equivalence, p. 73

## Objective right and wrong

The "local" standards or ideals of early human collaborative partnerships thereby became group-wide norms and therefore "objective" standards of the ways things should be done – objectively correct or incorrect; objectively right or wrong.

Children were taught by adults that "this is the way things are done" meaning the right way, by all rational people, i.e., by all those in our group. The voices of the educators represented the authoritative voice of the culture at large and its venerated history.

Right and wrong means upholding or violating moral norms. Norms are seen as impartial and objective. They apply to anybody in the group, are enforced by anybody in the group (as a representative of the group), upon others and upon ourselves on behalf of the group; and are seen as belonging to an objectively correct world of timeless values. Challenging a norm threatens to rupture the moral order of the group, and with it, the fabric of the group's cooperation.

## Cultural differences in right and wrong

Cultural groups are a bit like species of animals, in that each group does the same things (internal cooperation, aimed at collective thriving, surviving and reproducing), and each is adapted to its own natural niche, so that each one, in its own way, is built and looks and acts differently. The set of norms in each group is created to deal with recurrent competitive problems that may arise within that particular group based on its natural circumstances. A virtue is made of necessity. One group may face water shortages, so it has norms concerned with saving water. Another may face competition from other groups, so it contains a strong warrior culture. In another group, some people are able to accumulate capital and resources, so there are strong norms designed to maintain a social hierarchy.

## Normativity in large groups

The argument for this is dense and involved, so it is presented in outline, together with some explanatory notes.

"→" means "leads to"

**COMMITMENT TO CONVENTIONS, NORMS AND INSTITUTIONS AS LEGITIMATE**
**→ MORAL SELF-GOVERNANCE**

A) identification with the group by being born into it and conforming to its ways of doing things

→ assumed coauthorship of conventions, norms and institutions

B) objective point of view and objective morality

→ 3rd party norm enforcement

→ judgement of 3rd party comes from "us" as legitimately correct

→ judgement is deserved

A) + B) → commitment to conventions, norms and institutions as legitimate

→ internalised as

C) moral obligation to other group members, since some norms specify this.

A) + B) → commitment to conventions, norms and institutions as legitimate

→ normative judgements of deservingness on self

→ creation of personal moral identity

→

D) moral judgements and evaluations of myself for how I am taking care of "me", "you", fairness, and "we" concerns.

C) + D) ⟶ moral self-governance in an ethical direction

## The social contract; social obligation; moral self-governance

Because we identify with our cultural group and commit to its norms and values as objectively true, and because some of those norms and values are to do with a natural evolved morality of normative helping and fairness (inherited from ancestors who lived in small groups), we feel an obligation to our other group members to govern ourselves, each other, and third parties, in that direction.

To identify as a member of a cultural group has to be earned, as it is based on the recognition of the others in the group. If they say I am not one of them, then I am not. We earn it by proving that we are competent to follow the group's norms and practices.

Children are born into the group and accept its cultural values and institutions as objectively correct. They identify with the group by learning to follow its values, norms and practices. Since they are born into and identify with the group, they assume a "coauthorship" of the norms and values, and this legitimises those norms and values for the individual.

Since all in the group are seen as equals in some fundamental way (all have to submit to role ideals in the service of the group), and deservingness is judged impartially according to group norms, and in an interdependent group, all are helping all, then all are seen as equally deserving of helping and fairness, and this rewards individuals for their loyalty and motivates further the legitimacy of the group's cultural values. What is more, if everyone in the group is equally deserving of helping and respect, then it follows that I must uphold the social contract in order to help and respect them.

Finally, since the rules and norms have traditionally been good for the group, they must be correct, which provides another motivation to accept them as legitimate.

Since the conventions, norms and institutions of the group are seen by individuals as objectively correct and legitimate, those individuals make a collective commitment to them. This commitment is internalised as a sense of obligation to follow those

conventions and norms, including evolved moral norms of helping and fairness, and a desire to govern oneself (and others) in this direction on behalf of the collective group. This commitment is also an affirmation of one's cultural identity.

This governing by and on behalf of the group "we" and its "objective" values is done via the moral identity, both personal and public (reputation). This moral identity can be seen as the large-group version of the cooperative identity. In this modern world, with spoken language, reputation could spread through gossip. In accordance with moral norms, the individual judges themselves and others for the way they balance concerns for "me", "you", "we" (observance of group norms and conventions; observance of individual commitments), and equality or fairness.

Since the group's social contract is seen as legitimate and its values objective, then its judgements are seen as deserved by the self and others. The moral identity is created by the role reversal of judgements by third parties upon the self, in that the self learns to make judgements upon the self as if it were a third party.

If the individual later judges her own previous judgements as morally mistaken, then she is likely to feel guilty and to wish to put right the resulting action, in order to demonstrate to the world her own knowledge of her own mistake. This may be to avoid punishment, but also to show solidarity with those who judge her harshly, as a coauthor of the values and norms involved, which helps to maintain her public and personal moral identity, which in turn maintains her position as a functioning group member (where the ultimate alternative is expulsion from the group).

The moral identity thereby facilitates moral deliberation and judgement in the individual about the self and others. Through a moral identity, one governs oneself on behalf of the group.

**Moral identity and conscience**

A cooperative identity relates to one's immediate partners. A public moral identity is one's wider identity within a body of people who are not one's immediate partners: in other words, a reputation. A moral identity includes large-group cultural concerns, while a cooperative identity is strictly interpersonal.

We will attempt to create a picture of the human conscience by drawing together information from within this book.

There exists:

- evaluation and monitoring of the self by the self and others, to produce my personal and public moral identities;
- maintaining and living up to the moral identity;
- self-governance through guilt (regret and sorrow, self-reproach and self-punishment, a desire to correct or undo the wrong, etc.).

**Evaluating, monitoring, and the cooperative/moral identity**

Partner choice and partner control result in people judging others as potential or actual collaborative partners. As I judge others, others judge me, and others judge others; through self-other equivalence, I internalise this process as myself judging myself. As far as the shared norms and the judgements based on them are seen as legitimate, it is because they come from "us" and not from one person in particular. Thus, the individual governs him or herself on behalf of "us", the group or team. Interpersonal norms of helping and fairness are, we claim, innate at a young age in humans (Tomasello, 2016).

The conscience may be defined as self-governance in the direction of an ideal. I evaluate my own behaviour, and this evaluation forms my personal cooperative/moral identity. When others evaluate my behaviour morally, this forms my public cooperative/moral identity. There is social and psychological pressure to maximise the moral rectitude of these identities, to show solidarity with the moral community, ultimately because of the need to remain in the group or team (partner choice again).

Depending on the group, if we unquestioningly follow the norms of the group, we may be leading ourselves into trouble morally.

**Concerns of the moral identity**

These are concerns that must be balanced in order to build a healthy personal moral identity.

The best way to be seen as a good cooperator/moral agent (by oneself), is actually to be one.

The concerns of the cooperative identity are as follows:

- **me-concerns**: self-interested concerns; inclusive fitness

- **you-concerns** (you > me): benefit and harm towards others; the Stakeholder Principle of helping; empathic concern and charitable helping

- **we-concerns** (we > me): self-governing on behalf of the group, team, or partnership, in the direction of a moral compass; concern for reputation; fulfilling duties, obligations and responsibilities

- **equality-concerns** (you = me): self-other equivalence, equality, respect, fairness

**Self-governance on behalf of the group or team**

Normative pressure from the group and those around us: social normativity, and the pressure to achieve goals: instrumental normativity, are internalised as self-governance: responsibility towards the self and others. Social normativity takes the form of partner monitoring, control, and evaluation. I internalise this as self-monitoring, self-control and self-evaluation with respect to ideals (norms).

My partner experiences a pressure to monitor, control and evaluate my behaviour in the direction of being a good cooperator and of fulfilling my duties by upholding role ideals, because he or she is taking a risk by relying on me.

Internalising partner normativity means that when we deliberate upon a course of action, we may imagine how our partner would feel about it, and remember the commitment we have made to them. We may also remember our duties and responsibilities, and how we might potentially damage or uphold our cooperative identity with these particular partners. Would you be praised? Would you be punished? Would you be rejected?

See also:

Commitment to conventions, norms and institutions as legitimate → moral self-governance, p. 96

**Moral injury**

A moral injury is an injury to one's personal moral identity caused by a grievous violation of one's personal moral code. It is perhaps best known among the armed services, who may be forced to do traumatic things to others in the course of duty. People who undergo a moral injury may suffer from guilt, self-condemnation, lethargy, anomie (lack of interest in life), depression, withdrawal, self-harm, suicidal ideation, self-sabotaging behaviour, under- or unemployment, and the failure or lack of relationships, along with feelings of being unforgiveable, and a deep desire to right the wrong (Maguen and Litz, 2018).

> 173 He who overcomes the evil he has done with the good he afterwards does, he sheds a light over the world like that of the moon when free from clouds.
>
> *The Dhammapada*

## Collective moral identity

The concept of moral identity can operate on the group level as well as the personal level. We say things like, "it's simply not British (to behave like that)." We may feel guilt and shame, and wish to apologise, on behalf of our cultural group (Tomasello, 2020).

## Organised religion and large-scale cooperation

Organised religion seems to have arisen in the past 10,000 years, since humans began developing agriculture and living in culturally mixed city states (Norenzayan, 2013). In large anonymous groups, there is potentially a free-rider problem, where others are strangers to us and we do not know their track records or reputations, and so, tricksters are able to exploit this to act under a cloak of anonymity and then disappear again.

In these new "mega-societies", people were now sedentary and could not just move away from troublesome others; and a dominance hierarchy would have been reintroduced into social relations as some people were able to accumulate power over others. In other words, massive settled groups present new social problems compared with small face-to-face groups.

Organised religion helps to achieve large scale cooperation in several ways (Norenzayan, 2013), including:

- God promotes ethical behaviour and punishes offenders;
- authoritarian reputation-monitoring and corresponding self-governance through God’s "eye in the sky";

- partner choice, through "costly signals of faithful observance" that in theory proved that someone was likely to be trustworthy as a member of the faithful;
- partner control provided by God's governance of the populace, and exercised by people on each other in God's name;
- standardised ritual behaviours that can increase coordination and group solidarity.

Recent research (Whitehouse et al., 2019) suggests that:

- standardised rituals precede organised religion by a few hundred years;
- organised moralising religion does not develop in a large society until it reaches a population of around 1 million.

The Batek people of Malaysia live in a "simple" hunter gatherer society. They too have moralising gods and broad supernatural punishment. For the Batek, "superhuman beings" govern human affairs in an ethical direction (Endicott and Endicott, 2008)

When religious people aim to follow moral norms, they are aspiring to something "higher" than mere earthly concerns: they are attempting to please God by thriving cooperatively rather than selfishly.

Interestingly, Jesus' morality was mainly that of the small group (helping, fairness and unconditional love) and he explicitly questioned or rejected social norms.

If religion is like the moon – it has a light side and a dark side – then this is the same as morality itself.

See also:

Moral anger, p. 224

**Warfare and out-group hostility**

There is almost no archaeological evidence of warfare until 12,000 years ago and the discovery of agriculture. The evidence from before that time is rather of peaceful trade and some inter-breeding of human species. Human beings were relatively rare

on the Earth and so strangers were probably more valuable as collaborative partners than threatening (Spikins, 2015).

We conjecture therefore that out-group hostility evolved a long time after in-group favouritism, when city states were competing to accumulate resources. Other groups and their members would then have been seen as a threat: i.e., either free riders or competitors, with strange and unnatural norms that do not coordinate with ours. Out-group members are also not bound by our laws.

The limits of my group represent the limits of my inclusive fitness. Therefore, I am invested in my group. People from other groups are generally not invested in my group, but in their own (Teehan, 2016, 2017).

Archaeological evidence has been found of a small battle, apparently between two nomadic hunter-gatherer groups, from around 10,000 years ago at Nataruk, west of Lake Turkana in Kenya. Twelve skeletons were found, ten of which showed signs of a violent death. Although we believe that the people were partly nomadic, they also seemed to have had possessions (at least, pots) which may have contained a valuable prize for raiders (Lahr et al., 2016).

See also:

Inclusive fitness and kin selection – the promotion of "me", "mine", and "ours", p. 15

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 47

Chimpanzees' and bonobos' reactions to strangers (18-certificate), p. 85

Targeted helping, p. 155

Fundamental attribution error, p. 202

Sacredness and taboo, p. 224

**Additional references:**

Tomasello, Michael – “A Natural History of Human Thinking”: Harvard 2014

Tomasello, Michael – “A Natural History of Human Morality”: Harvard 2016

# Patriarchal norms

> We feel targeted from the day we're born, pretty much.
>
> *Patricia, British Columbia*

This model of the evolutionary origins of patriarchy is adapted from that of Barbara Smuts (1995).

Patriarchy, in the sense used here, is the system of social and moral norms promoting male dominance of society and the subjugation and control of females. Arguably, these exist together with norms promoting male chivalry towards females. These are for the ultimate (evolutionary) purposes of the control of female reproduction and of the offspring women produce.

[Personal] dominance is defined as "control over others' labour, decision-making, social contacts, access to food and resources and sexuality" (Endicott, 1981:1).

Sexism is defined as the rationalisation and justification of patriarchy. This may include, for example, ideology that females are inherently inferior or "belong in the kitchen". Misogyny is defined as the policing of patriarchy: using punishments in the form of hostility and aggression meted out to females who break the laws of patriarchy and assert their own independence (Manne, 2018).

In most non-human primates, if a female is unwilling to mate with a male, he is likely to try to coerce her into it through violence or intimidation. In those species that form polygynous pair-bonds, e.g., gorillas and hamadryas baboons, one male will dominate several females (as many as possible). He will exhibit behaviour known as mate-guarding: using force, he will keep the members of his harem close to himself, and defend them from the attentions of rival males, and defend his family of infants from being killed by rival males. In many species of monkeys and apes, when a female is in oestrus, i.e., when she is fertile and sexually receptive, she will generally receive much greater aggression from males wishing to mate with her, and sometimes more wounds, than normal.

The urge for males to control and coerce females, and the corresponding pressure for females to resist it, have their biological roots in the fundamental differences between male and female reproductive strategies. For a female to reproduce, at least in mammals, she has to make a substantial investment, the time and physical

resources needed to gestate and rear offspring. For a male to reproduce, he has only to impregnate a female. It is therefore in the reproductive interests of males to seek the greatest possible quantity of mates, while it is in the reproductive interests of females to seek the greatest possible quality of mates: males with good genes, resources, willingness to invest these in rearing infants, and the ability to protect the mother and infants.

The problem for both females and males is the conflict of interests between male and female reproductive strategies. It is in the interests of females to resist being impregnated by low-quality mates: e.g., by those who are not willing to invest in child rearing and the protection of the family. For males, as for females, it is self-interestedly rational to reproduce to the maximum possible level at the lowest possible cost to themselves: the strategy to achieve this being, in this case, control and coercion. In primates, if males want to maximise reproductive success, it is easier for them to use force and control than it is to offer females the resources they need; i.e., to invest in protecting a mate and rearing young.

If norms represent ideal ways to be cooperative in otherwise competitive situations (Tomasello, 2016), then presumably, patriarchal norms represent ways for humans to cooperativise the competition between individual males, to subjugate and control individual females for reproductive purposes. Humans are a pair-bonded species: sometimes polygynous, but usually monogamous (Chapais, 2008). In effect, using patriarchal norms, society does the job for males of the mate-guarding of females, so that each male does not have to compete with violence against others to achieve it.

Cooperative norms help to maintain the cooperation of the entire group (see Fiske, 1991). These sexual norms have been made sacred, and it can elicit moral disgust and anger if they are violated.

See also:

Conventions, norms, and institutions, p. 91

Four views of norms, p. 93

Monogamous pair-bonding strengthened family bonds and kin recognition, p. 116

Sacredness and taboo, p. 224

While patriarchy is almost universal in human societies, we have evolved the capacity for wide flexibility and variation in our behaviour, and not all societies are patriarchal: some have egalitarian relations between the sexes. These would generally seem to be "simple" nomadic forager societies where possessions are not hoarded, there is an ethos of "cooperative autonomy" (Endicott and Endicott, 2008)

where people cooperate but no person has the power to command another, sexual relationships are monogamous, and divorce is easy. Examples include the Aka pygmies of Central Africa (Smuts, 1995) and the Batek of Malaysia (Endicott and Endicott, 2008).

See also:

U-shaped history of human patriarchy, p. 110

The amount of power that males are able to exercise over females, in a species, or human group, determines the extent of the control. As a product of a power-seeking male reproductive strategy, patriarchy is a self-maximising system (Manne, 2018), as the pressure to reproduce in general is self-maximising. Left unchallenged, therefore, it will assert itself to the maximum available extent.

See also:

The Healing Principle, p. 13

**Patriarchy is more powerful in humans than other species**

Where there are power structures in a society, males will take advantage of them to dominate females, preventing them from joining powerful positions, potentially through brute force if necessary (Endicott, 1981).

Chimpanzees are "social but not very cooperative" (Tomasello, 2016). In humans, the potential power of males to control females socially far exceeds that in the rest of the primate world. Hence, patriarchy in humans is much more powerful than in other species of primates. We hypothesise a number of reasons why.

1. Female social networks are less strong in humans and (most) great apes than in the "female-bonded" species of primates, which include bonobos and many old world monkeys. This means that in humans, gorillas, chimpanzees and orang utans, the ability of females to resist male coercion and control is relatively lower.

   In the female-bonded species, females resist the aggression of males who want to coerce them into mating by banding together with female friends and relatives, to fight them off. While these monkeys are generally species where the adult females stay with the groups in which they were born, female bonobos disperse to other family groups on reaching adulthood, like humans and other great apes.

It is unknown why bonobos have such strong female-female alliances, together with extremely low levels of male aggression towards females, and an absence of male coercion of females – uniquely among great apes. Other species with an almost complete absence of male coercion of females include most of the monogamous primates (e.g., titi monkeys, gibbons, and siamangs), where the males and females are the same size; and some species which live in multi-male, multi-female groups such as woolly spider monkeys. As always with the adaptation and design of a species, the behaviour and psychology of individuals reflect the ecological conditions of its niche.

2. Male-male alliances are stronger in humans and chimpanzees than in other primates. At the same time, male-male competition in humans is lower than in other primates. This means that in humans, males cooperate more, and compete less, together, whether to gain internal power in a group as part of a coalition, or to fight a common "enemy" in another group. This male solidarity, in turn, gives males power that can be marshalled in favour of patriarchy: whether at an individual or societal level.

   We next look at some ways in which males can exercise power over females exclusively in humans.

3. Human males are able to control the resources that females need to survive and reproduce. The fact that humans are an interdependent species – that we depend on each other to cooperate to survive – brings with it potential advantages and disadvantages for individuals. On the one hand, we can achieve more together than alone. On the other, it leaves individuals who depend on others open to exploitation by those others.

   In the "simple", nomadic hunter-gatherer societies, we see that the territorial range that people work in in order to find food is wide, males and females are highly mobile, and food tends to be widely shared. In these societies, group members live closely mixed together in camps (e.g., Endicott and Endicott, 2008).

   When humans settled down to practice intensive agriculture and animal husbandry, family groups would have been separately confined to homesteads, giving males more opportunity to control the movements and activities of females and the resource base of the household, and thereby making females more dependent on them.

   Thus, it became costly for females to resist male control if they were not able to procure their own resources.

The more resources that males invest in their mates and the children of their mates, the more concerned they will be that the children are their own, leading to another motivation to control female sexuality.

Cross-cultural studies have found a statistically significant positive association between the degree of male control over the fruits of the family labour, and the rate of wife beating (Smuts, 1995).

4. Since the advent of sedentary agriculture, the increased inequality between males has lead to an increased ability of some males to control females at the expense of other males. In a settled agricultural society, some people are able to hoard resources that others need, and some are required to work for others, resulting in asymmetrical dependence and power imbalances.

   If all males are equal in status, then if one tries to control or coerce a female, another male is able to stop him. This will simultaneously disadvantage the first male and give an advantage to the second, since his chances of gaining sexual access to the female are increased. In a situation of strict male-male egalitarianism, the reproductive strategy of coercive control is therefore unstable, and the most reproductively successful males are those who seek to attract females by offering them what they need.

   When there are extreme power differences between males, those at the very top are able to use their power to dominate many females and exclude other males, leading to polygyny for a powerful elite of males and a shortage of mates for those at the bottom of the hierarchy.

   In addition, these low-status males have less access to resources than the elite, so they are less able to use the alternative reproductive strategy of providing resources to females.

5. Sometimes it pays women to behave in ways that support the male control of resources and of female sexuality, in order to further their own reproductive and material interests.

   All over the world, women show a preference for marrying men with more resources, consistent with the need to invest in rearing children. This can reinforce the competition between males to acquire resources and the desire of males to control resources.

   In polygynous, stratified societies, rich men can have more offspring than poorer men, and are likely to invest more resources in them. This means that in theory, they have more incentive to ensure that the children of their wives are theirs too. Therefore, if women want to marry rich men, it is in their interests to conform to behaviour that promotes increased male control of their movements and sexuality, including: cloistering; purdah (where females

are hidden from the male gaze, often with a screen or curtain); and female genital mutilation.

Sons of rich polygynous men are more likely to be rich and polygynous themselves. This benefits the whole family from the point of view of inclusive fitness, which may help to explain why women in such societies support customs that promote the control of female sexuality, and mothers insist on the compliance of their daughters.

In stratified polygynous societies, since rich sons are more likely to be polygynous and therefore can have more children than daughters, it benefits parents reproductively to invest more material resources in sons than in daughters.

6. Human cooperation and language are developed to an extraordinary degree compared with in other great apes.

   Human cooperation led to the evolution of group-wide social norms (see Cooperation above), and human language is a vehicle by which norms and ideologies can be propagated. An ideology may be seen as a view of society that supports the interests of a sector of that society. Consistent with most of the rest of the primate world, patriarchal men will naturally take advantage of any opportunity at their disposal to control and repress women. As we see in 5) above, sometimes women support ideologies that favour males.

> If male chimpanzees could talk, they would probably develop rudimentary myths and rituals that increased male political solidarity and control over females and that decreased female tendencies toward autonomy and rebellion.
>
> *Barbara Smuts – "The Evolutionary Origins of Patriarchy"*

Language probably helped males to develop greater male-male alliances, to control resources, and to develop dominance hierarchies, all of which, we hypothesise, are factors that can facilitate patriarchy.

## U-shaped history of human patriarchy

> ... we accept the premise that in societies in which there is competition for control, males are at an advantage because of their greater physical strength and their freedom from childbearing and nursing.
>
> *Kirk M Endicott and Karen L Endicott – "The Headman was a Woman"*

Egalitarianism implies autonomy. In a society of equal power relations, no person is higher than another in a dominance hierarchy, implying that no person has the power to command another. In a strictly egalitarian society, women are not controlled by men or culturally evaluated as inferior.

Today we see a few societies that have a strong ethos of egalitarianism and personal autonomy. These are usually "simple", "immediate-return" nomadic hunting and gathering societies (Woodburn, 1982). In some of these, egalitarianism extends to relations between the sexes. They include: the Agta of the Philippines, the Batek of Malaysia, the Hadza of Tanzania, the !Kung of southern Africa, the Malapantaram and Paliyan of South India, and the Mbuti pygmies of the Congo (Endicott, 1981; Endicott and Endicott, 2008).

Kirk and Karen Endicott have lived with and studied the Batek for several extended periods beginning in 1975. The Batek live by hunting, gathering, fishing, and trading forest produce with neighbouring sedentary societies. In their book "The Headman was a Woman" (2008), the Endicotts identify general factors in Batek society that may promote personal autonomy and, therefore, egalitarian relations between men and women:

- independent economic security and access to sharing network

  Both women and men are able to procure their own food directly, without necessarily having to rely on others; and are freely provisioned by the sharing network of the group.

- non-dependence on specific people

  An individual may depend on the group as a whole, but does not have to depend on specific people.

- free movement of people

  If two people are in conflict, one may easily move to live away from the other.

- dispersed authority

  There is no institutionalised authority: each person is recognised as an authority in a particular sphere by virtue of their skills and experience, but nobody is in overall charge. The head man or woman is simply a kind of wise guide for the group who can persuade others through tact, intelligence and experience.

> Where there are institutionalized statuses of authority, men can use the threat of physical coercion to pave the way to exclusive male access to these positions. It is where these positions are not institutionalized that being male does not provide an advantage over being female.
>
> *Karen Lampell Endicott – "The Conditions of Egalitarian Male-Female Relationships in Foraging Societies"*

- culture of non-violence.

  In Batek society, the culture of non-violence means that women cannot be coerced by force.

  In some "simple" societies, such as the Hadza as reported by Woodburn (1982), there is no culture of non-violence. However, in this situation this also works against patriarchy, as it tends to reduce male-male competition, since any male has the opportunity and means to inflict lethal violence on any other, usually without punishment.

Since we believe that these "simple" societies are similar in economic conditions to those which must have prevailed throughout much of the history of the human family tree (nomadic hunting and gathering), we assume that egalitarianism and a lack of patriarchal control of women accompanied these conditions. While non-human great apes with the exception of bonobos, and nearly all contemporary humans, are patriarchal: patriarchy may well have been absent for most of human history.

An ancient lack of patriarchal control is consistent with the hypothesis that women have been an evolutionary force in socially selecting for extravagantly generous males as reproductive partners. In other words, instead of controlling women's movements and sexuality, the reproductive strategy of males could have been to give them the investment they needed in raising children, throughout a long period in human history without patriarchy. This would help to explain the apparent mystery of why humans are so "extravagantly" generous and altruistic compared with other great apes.

See also:

**Patriarchy and feminism**

Human patriarchy is not inevitable, as we see in societies where there is strict egalitarianism.

It may be argued that males are "hard-wired" to want to dominate, control and coerce females for the purposes of reproduction, in competition with other males, this being cooperativised in human society through shared norms. It may equally be argued that human females are hard-wired to want to resist being dominated, coerced and controlled. On the basis of hard-wiring alone, to argue for the rightness of either position is to commit the naturalistic fallacy: i.e., the fallacy that what is natural is right.

Patriarchal norms of domination, control and coercion of females can, at times, violate cooperative moral norms of kindness, fairness, and egalitarianism, as well as liberty. Therefore, while the ultimate motivation of patriarchy is males' reproduction at the expense of females, the primary motivation of feminism is achieving kindness, equality and liberty for females.

Feminism aims to make women and girls less vulnerable to male domination and coercion, in a number of ways, for example:

- in humans, female-female alliances are relatively weak compared with other species of primates, and male-male alliances are strong. This points to a need for strong institutionalised protection for females in the form of laws against, among other things, rape and domestic violence.
- The fact that human males control the majority of resources means that women need to have increased economic opportunities and legal protection of their property rights.

- The strongly hierarchical social arrangement among men contributes to patriarchy. Therefore, females need to support economic and political changes that tend to reduce inequality among men.
- Patriarchy is sometimes supported by females for self-interested reasons. There is a need to identify and change behaviours by females that contribute to patriarchy.
- In humans, gender inequality is propagated and sustained through language, culture and ideology. Feminism can counteract this through having access to society's organs of language, culture and ideology: specifically, the media, the classroom, and government.

**Reproductive skew in ancient populations of humans**

Genetic analysis of present-day populations suggests a human reproduction ratio of 3:1 in favour of females, between 140-30,000 years ago – three women reproduced for every man who reproduced. After around 12,000 years ago, this rose to approximately 16:1 (Hagen and Garfield, 2019).

On the face of it, this suggests polygyny in ancient human nomadic hunter-gatherers. However, it may also indicate serial monogamy, selected by women. This may have been a selection pressure in favour of certain kinds of intelligence in men, and for their slight advantage in upper body strength over women, as these attributes may have been useful in the hunting environment.

The ancestors of humans, australopithecines, were highly sexually dimorphic (males tended to be much larger than females) (Hagen and Garfield, 2019). This suggests male-male competition, and male-male competition leads to dominance hierarchies, which, in hominids, we assume, leads to polygyny. Modern humans are only slightly sexually dimorphic, perhaps reflecting physical egalitarianism among males.

See also:

Monogamous pair-bonding strengthened family bonds and kin recognition, p. 116

# Competition

Morality operates along two dimensions: competition ("me first") and cooperation ("you first", "we first"). Fairness could be described as a cooperative trade-off or balance between the individual interests of all concerned, a way of maximising the benefit and minimising the harm for each person, resulting from an interaction.

Competition is a "zero-sum game", where I win at your expense: I win and you lose, and the total number of wins equals zero. Cooperation, on the other hand, tends to produce a win-win, positive-sum situation, where all parties benefit.

Competition is always going to be a feature of social life, in some way. Natural selection operates on the relative advantage of individuals compared with conspecifics – other members of the same species – around them. Natural selection selects genes for their ability to make a carrier organism that will maximally thrive, survive and reproduce. Therefore, there is ultimate and proximate pressure for an individual organism to do better than its fellows (Brosnan and de Waal, 2012); i.e., to compete with them.

Hence, for humans, there is always going to be a tug-of-war between cooperation and competition (Raihani, 2021); between dominance and egalitarianism; and between patriarchy and egalitarianism. Where a positive-sum situation is possible, for humans, peace is likely to emerge (Glowacki, Wilson, and Wrangham, 2017).

See also:

The Healing Principle, p. 13

Fairness, p. 121

Why do good?, p. 215

Respecting authority and order, p. 223

In most social animals, this competition leads to dominance hierarchies as a way to decide how resources are shared out: those with a greater fighting ability are able to take what they want at the expense of those with lesser fighting ability. A dominant position within the hierarchy becomes a proxy for the ability to secure food, mates, or coalitionary partners (friends and allies) (Tomasello, 2016).

In this situation of dominance hierarchies, cooperation does not work in the long term because being able to take what one wants from subordinate partners is not fairsharing, and those partners lose motivation over time through lack of appropriate reward (Tomasello, 2012).

Cooperation is an alternative strategy for thriving, surviving and reproducing, used by humans, where in the short term at least, we usually suppress some of our own needs for the sake of joining forces with others.

See also:

The moral compass, p. 55

**U-shaped history of human competition**

Great apes societies are based around male dominance hierarchies, with the partial exception of bonobos, whose females are also powerful (de Waal and Lanting, 1998). We see today that "simple" hunter-gatherer societies are fiercely egalitarian, with food being shared widely and social levelling mechanisms employed to keep dominance and inequality of all kinds at bay. A simple society is characterised by a nomadic existence and a lack of delay between work and reward.

By contrast, a "complex" or pre-agricultural hunter-gatherer society is sedentary and stores resources, and has a male dominance hierarchy and male-to-male competition for status, and inter-group warfare. These societies began to appear by around 12,000 BCE. From this evidence, we believe that for most of the 2 million-year history of the genus *Homo*, people lived without male dominance hierarchies (Knauft, 1991).

See also:

U-shaped history of human patriarchy, p. 110

Egalitarianism, p. 134

## Self-domestication of the human race

How did it come about that the human family tree lost its great ape-like dominance hierarchies? There must have been some kind of process of "self-domestication". Human cooperation would not have been possible without this, since fairness motivates cooperation, and fairness cannot operate if an aggressor is simply able to take what they want.

Self-domestication may have arisen because of three intertwined processes (Tomasello, 2016):

1. The evolution of monogamous pair-bonding after the invention of stone tools (Chapais, 2008), leading to stronger kin favouritism.

2. The necessity for early humans to share peacefully while scavenging together at a carcass.

3. Cooperative breeding.

### 1. monogamous pair-bonding strengthened family bonds and kin recognition

The fossil record shows that early hominids (australopithecines) were anatomically similar to chimpanzees and bonobos in terms of absolute body size and relative brain size (Chapais, 2008), rather than to gorillas. From this information we infer that the diet of early hominids was similar to that of chimpanzees and bonobos, rather than the low-quality diet of gorillas. In turn we infer from this that their group size, group composition, and ranging pattern resembled those of modern chimps and bonobos. Within these relatively dense populations, both mate freely ("multi-male, multi-female" mating, or polygynandry), but alpha male chimpanzees aim to maintain exclusive access to the fertile females, which we assume leads to sexual selection for bigger stronger males. However, since the alpha male is never completely successful in securing exclusive mating rights over the group, male chimpanzees in general do not know which young they have fathered, so they tend to treat all youngsters with great care (de Waal, 1982). Gorillas, on the other hand, are polygynous, with one male more or less exclusively dominating a number of females and defending them and their young from competing single males.

As well as monogamously, the pair-bonded family structure can exist polygynously, or, presumably, polyandrously (Chapais, 2008). Therefore, since we believe that polygyny as an early human norm predated monogamy, we must conclude that any pacifying effect of family bondedness began with ancestors or early species of the genus *Homo*.

In the primate world, harsh environmental conditions lead to a sparser population density which means that a single male can dominate multiple females in a unit area (polygyny) (Chapais 2008). In human evolutionary history, around 2 million years ago the environment in Africa began to undergo a cooling and drying period, leading to a dying back of the forests and an expansion of open grassland (Tomasello, Melis, Tennie, Wyman, and Herrmann, 2012). This could have produced a situation of polygyny in pre-humans. *Paranthus bosei* lived from around 2.3-1.4 million years ago, and was highly sexually dimorphic, suggesting male-male competition and, potentially, gorilla- and baboon-like polygyny. *Australopithecus afarensis*, proposed as an ancestor of *Homo*, living from around 3.7-3 million years ago, showed extreme sexual dimorphism, and evidence that they lived both in trees and on the ground. *Australopithecus africanus*, living 3.3-2.1 million years ago, may have been highly sexually dimorphic. *Ardipethicus ramidus*, which lived 4.5-4.3 million years ago, showed little dimorphism, and probably had a diet of fruit, nuts and leaves; male-male egalitarianism; and possibly cooperative breeding (Roberts, 2011).

The first indirect evidence for stone tool use in pre-humans comes from 3.39 million years ago, with fossils of *Australopithecus afarensis* in Ethiopia. The first direct evidence of stone tool use appears in East Africa from around 2.5 million years ago. The first *Homo* species arose around this time (Roberts, 2011).

Stone tools can be used as weapons, whether hand-to-hand, or thrown as projectiles, and this could have had a levelling effect on male dominance hierarchies. Consequently, assuming a gender ratio of 1:1, each male may only have been able to mate with a single female at a time (Chapais, 2008), leading to monogamy. We may regard monogamy as polygyny maximally constrained by egalitarianism between males and between males and females.

To this day, in "simple" hunter-gatherer societies, being killed in one's sleep because of a dispute remains a worry (Woodburn, 1982). In simple societies, there is a high degree of egalitarianism between the sexes as well as between males (Knauft, 1999; Endicott, 1981).

Because of pair-bonding, family bonds would have been strengthened. A father could now recognise all of his offspring and family (because he recognised their mother), and they would recognise him as their mother's partner. Offspring would also recognise each other as siblings, through their mother and father. This is likely to have had a pacifying effect on males, as they would be much less likely to attack their own known relatives (Tomasello, 2016).

Human intermarrying between families from different groups would have strengthened the bonds between groups (Chapais, 2008).

See also:

Patriarchal norms, p. 104

Reproductive skew in ancient populations of humans, p. 113

**2. scavenging and enforced sharing**

Chimpanzees do not share their food, except very unwillingly (Tomasello et al, 2012), and bonobos also do not share as a rule, although they are more likely to do so (de Waal and Lanting, 1998). By contrast, humans will share their best consumables with complete strangers, and hospitality is seen as a virtue.

It is likely that before humans began hunting large game, there was an intermediate stage of scavenging, including on large carcasses that other creatures also wanted to eat.

> Individuals would have been forced to work together in a coalition to chase away the lions or hyenas feasting on a carcass before they themselves could scavenge. Any individual who then hogged all the meat would have been the target of another coalition aimed at stopping him. ... in general, almost all contemporary hunter-gatherer groups are highly egalitarian, and overly dominant individuals are quickly brought down to size by coalitions of others. Evolutionarily this would have meant that there was social selection against bullies, food hogs, and other dominants, and thus social selection for individuals who had a greater tolerance for others in cofeeding situations. Indeed, in modern-day chimpanzees, collaboration in an experimentally created foraging task goes best when the pair is made up of individuals who are tolerant of one another around food.
>
> *Michael Tomasello – "A Natural History of Human Morality"*

Early humans were forced to share their food with anyone who could help them to keep the other creatures, and human hogs and bullies, away from carcasses. This was a major innovation in sharing and general prosociality over other great apes.

**3. cooperative breeding and self-domestication**

We do not know how cooperative breeding evolved, but it may partly have been a result of generalised food-sharing in the context of cooperative coalitions of early humans being forced to share in large scavenged carcasses. Living in a risky foraging niche is a known factor in the development of cooperative breeding (Hrdy, 2009).

If most or all members of a small group were taking part in cooperative child care, and now the fathers knew their children, and extended families could identify each other: this must naturally have had a pacifying effect on the whole group. Fathers were now provisioning their own children, something that other great ape fathers do not do.

See also:

Cooperative breeding, p. 173

**Strategic cooperation in chimpanzees and bonobos**

The strategic cooperation, within a competitive social environment, that we see in chimpanzees and bonobos may reflect the evolutionary "raw material" of human cooperation.

These two species are the closest relatives of the human family line, sharing a last common ancestor around 6 million years ago, and we assume that this common ancestor shared some traits with all three lineages.

Notwithstanding the famously prosocial habits of bonobos, the social environment of a chimpanzee or bonobo group is largely competitive with a strong dominance hierarchy. There is almost no need for cooperation in the way that these species obtain food: picking fruit off a tree can be done side by side with little interaction apart from competition. The reason that bonobos are more peaceful than chimps may be that they live in areas where food is more plentiful.

Within the overall competitive group, chimps and bonobos form long-lasting, mutually beneficial friendships and coalitions. These mini-groups then compete for dominance against other coalitions or individuals within the larger group as a whole. Friends therefore tend to be chosen for their fighting ability. Friendship is cultivated through acts of helping or sharing, such as grooming, or defending in a fight. As in other mammals, helping also exists within family units.

It has been found in formal experiments that a chimp will help another (unfamiliar) chimp in need, as long as the cost is not too great and there is no competition involved over food or other resources. They therefore have the ability to help, generally, in a targeted way.

Great apes have a sophisticated ability to use their knowledge, experience and observations to make plans and solve problems in order to achieve their goals in the

most efficient way available. (They have individual intentionality.) They also understand that others have intentions, goals, and perspectives (i.e., that others have individual intentionality). They are adept at keeping track of the shifting politics, alliances and power struggles within the rest of the group, as these may affect their own position. Their social intelligence, therefore, is mainly Machiavellian, for the purposes of power seeking rather than cooperation and morality.

Their communication is competitive and dominant: consisting of imperative commands like "give me this" or "do that". They do not readily share information cooperatively, for each other's benefit, like humans do.

Chimpanzee males are known to cooperate in a loosely organised way in order to hunt for monkeys.

Self-regulation, inhibiting one's immediate gratification, is a necessary ability for cooperation. Chimpanzees have presumably learned this in the context of the dominance hierarchy, to avoid angering a more dominant individual.

> In systematic experimental tests, chimpanzees have shown that they can (1) delay taking a smaller reward so as to get a larger reward later, (2) inhibit a previously successful response in favor of a new one demanded by a changed situation, (3) make themselves do something unpleasant for a highly desirable reward at the end, (4) persist through failures, and (5) concentrate through distractions. They do all of these things at roughly the level of three-year-old human children, and at a lower level than six-year-old children. Chimpanzees' skills of impulse control, self-control, emotion regulation, and executive function – as these skills are variously called – are thus clearly sufficient for inhibiting selfish impulses in deference to others when it is prudent to do so.
>
> *Michael Tomasello – "A Natural History of Human Morality"*

They experience social emotions, such as social anger when one individual, especially a friend, harms another, and can recognise them in another.

This preferential helping of family and friends is a major part of human morality, but humans have gone on to extend their helping behaviour and respect to the wider population in general. This reflects the almost total reliance of human beings upon interdependence and cooperation (Tomasello, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016; de Waal, 1982).

# Fairness

> The evolution of cooperation requires that its benefits reach all contributing parties in roughly similar amounts. Natural selection works on every individual's relative advantage compared with others; hence, gaining an absolute benefit is insufficient. If individuals were satisfied with any absolute benefit, they might still face negative fitness consequences if they were doing less well than competing others. It makes sense, therefore, to compare one's gains with those of others.
>
> *Sarah F Brosnan and Frans B M de Waal – "Evolution of responses to (un)fairness"*

While helping in response to need is a simple one-way transaction, fairness, the distribution of benefit and harm on some kind of equal basis, is collectively agreed upon and jointly regulated by collaborative partners whose motives are both self-seeking and moral (we- and you-oriented).

> the morality of fairness is neither ... basic nor ... straightforward – and it may very well be confined to the human species. The fundamental problem is that in situations requiring fairness there is typically a complex interaction of the cooperative and competitive motives of multiple individuals. Attempting to be fair means trying to achieve some kind of balance among all of these, and there are typically many possible ways of doing this based on many different criteria. Humans thus enter into such complex situations prepared to invoke moral judgments about the "deservingness" of the individuals involved, including the self, but they are at the same time armed with more punitive moral attitudes such as resentment or indignation against unfair others. In addition, they have still other moral attitudes that are not exactly punitive but nevertheless stern, in which they seek to hold interactive partners accountable for their actions by invoking interpersonal judgments of responsibility, obligation, commitment, trust, respect, duty, blame and guilt. The morality of fairness is thus much more complicated than the morality of sympathy [helping in response to need]. Moreover, and perhaps not unrelated, its judgments typically carry with them some sense of responsibility or obligation: it is not just that I want to be fair to all concerned, but that one ought to be fair to all concerned. In general, we may say that whereas

> sympathy is pure cooperation, fairness is a kind of cooperativization of competition in which individuals seek balanced solutions to the many and conflicting demands of multiple participants' various motives.
>
> *Michael Tomasello – "The Natural History of Human Morality"*

## DEFINITIONS

The domain of fairness includes ideas of

- equal treatment
- impartiality
- egalitarianism
- mutual respect and deservingness
- treating people as they deserve
- reciprocity (proportionality in exchanges; like for like)
- distributive justice (sharing equally, proportionally, charitably, or procedurally, etc.)
- fairness as respect (distributive social justice) (respecting the need to thrive)
- procedural justice (conforming to the rules of a reasonable and impartial process)
- retributive and restorative justice (including the legal system)
- normativity: a moral obligation to be fair to all concerned
- resentment or indignation if fairness is not carried out, i.e., if the norm or obligation of fairness is breached.

Fairness generally operates in two distinct but related arenas:

- how we (should) treat people (social distributive justice; procedural justice)

- how we (should) share out goods or burdens (material distributive justice)

See also:

Perfect Compassion, p. 33

**Fairness and interdependence**

Humans are the only hyper-cooperative and hyper-interdependent species other than the social insects. We depend on each other intensely to thrive, survive and reproduce, cooperatively. Psychologically, this evolutionary life-way translates into a desire for fairness all round, at least between ourselves and our cooperative partners. We are fair to our collaborative partners because: 1) they are of special status, as valued collaborative partners; 2) they are of equal status, as one of "we" collaborative partners; 3) fairness motivates further cooperation.

See also:

Self-other equivalence, p. 73

Normativity in small teams, p. 81

**Universal social norm**

Along with concerns about benefit and harm, a sense of fairness is universal among the human race. As we would expect of a complex moral emotion, the way it plays out varies greatly according to context and culture (Niemi, Wasserman, and Young, 2017; Schäfer, Haun, and Tomasello, 2015).

It has been found that in the West, those on the political right wing tend to favour proportionality (i.e., distribution according to merit) and those on the left tend to favour equal distribution of goods (Niemi, Wasserman, and Young, 2017; Haidt, 2013). In addition, it is found that males tend to favour proportionality and females tend to favour equality (Wilson, 1993).

## Sharing and distributive justice

Social distributive justice is social distribution of benefit and harm: Perfect Compassion; fairness as respect.

Material distributive justice is social distribution of goods or burdens among collaborative partners, including partners in a reciprocal agreement.

Goods or burdens may be distributed in a number of different ways, i.e., according to a number of different principles of equity or fairness; for example:

- equally
- proportionally
- reciprocally
- charitably; in response to need
- in response to deservingness
- according to an impartial procedure
- some other criterion.

1. sharing equally

An equal portion for each person: equality of opportunity or outcome.

2. sharing proportionally

including proportionality to each person's contributions of effort or resources; or to other merit.

Proportional distribution is a "merit-based distribution that reflects the productivity of recipients in an attempt to distribute an equal reward for each unit of work." (Schäfer, Haun, and Tomasello, 2015)

Proportional distribution arises in the contexts of collaboration, reciprocity, and reciprocity within collaboration. When a number of people are working together, each wishes to obtain a reward proportional to the work, skill or other resources they have put into the collaboration. Often, however, sharing after collaboration will be done equally. Reciprocity is fairness in exchanges, in the form of proportionality.

Merit can reflect deservingness (Baiasu, 2020). If a partner has performed their role well or is otherwise virtuous, then we see them as deserving. If someone has

performed badly or has breached norms, then we blame them and do not see them as deserving.

A study by Schäfer, Haun, and Tomasello (2015) found that:

- 4-11 year-old children in a Western industrialised society (suburban Germany) preferred proportional distribution of goods obtained through collaboration;
- 4-11 year-old children in the ≠Akhoe Hai||om society of egalitarian foragers in a remote part of northern Namibia preferred equal distribution of goods obtained through collaboration;
- 4-11 year-old children in the pastoralist (livestock-keeping) gerontocratic (age-based hierarchical) society of the Samburu in remote north-central Kenya distributed rewards obtained through collaboration randomly, perhaps reflecting the fact that in this society, older people tend to make the important decisions about how resources are distributed, leaving young children relatively inexperienced in this regard.

3. sharing reciprocally

Reciprocity is an example of proportionality – I give the same as I get.

Sharing reciprocally can be seen by others as somewhat self-serving (Niemi, Wasserman, and Young, 2017), but that does not necessarily make it "wrong": sometimes we need a closed network in order to thrive.

Reciprocal favours may be used unfairly to foster alliances within an elite in-group, making the overall system less impartial (i.e., less open to all with the right qualities) (Niemi, Wasserman, and Young, 2017). In other words, someone with the right resources may be able to unfairly buy their way to favour with the powerful and influential, thereby reducing equality of opportunity for others.

A study of Hadza hunter-gatherers in Tanzania found experimentally that people in the same camp shared approximately the same as each other, while there was fairly wide variation between camps. It was also found that overall, Hadza share approximately half of everything they have. (Smith, Larroucau, Mabulla, and Apicella, 2018)

4. sharing charitably: in response to need

> Homo sapiens ... [are] the only primate species to have evolved widespread sharing among adults accompanied by a high degree of economic interdependence, which is characteristic of the risky human foraging niche.
>
> *Adrian Jaeggi and Michael Gurven – "Natural Cooperators"*

Needs-based allocation of resources can be seen as impartial – granting equality of opportunity, and helping any and every person who needs it. On the other hand, it may be seen as favouring the needy, and therefore not impartial. But it can also have the effect of allowing disadvantaged people to take advantage of an impartial system, and so, can be fair. (Niemi, Wasserman, and Young, 2017) Giving in response to need may also conflict with ideas of a lack of deservingness of the needy.

> [Our findings in the laboratory suggest] that, at some level, people intuit that charity is not a simple solution to a resource allocation problem and is liable to be perceived as unfair. People may be most likely to endorse allocation systems in which needy individuals will be helped while systematic favoritism (i.e., partiality-based unfairness) will be counteracted.
>
> *Laura Niemi, Emily Wasserman and Liane Young – "The behavioral and neural signatures of distinct conceptions of fairness": Social Neuroscience 2017*

Results from mathematical game theory show that in small isolated societies, helping the needy provides a social insurance that allows everyone to survive very well in the long term, compared with people who do not share with or receive help from others (Lewis, Vinicius, Strods, Mace, and Migliano, 2014). In computer simulations of cattle-keeping societies, based on the African Maasai, it is found that sharing in response to need, compared with reciprocal exchange, produces a longer-lasting herd and more wealth equality (Shaffer, 2019).

This pattern of community-based social insurance is found in isolated communities around the world. (See: Shaffer, 2019.) In this case, giving based on need is like a

form of reciprocity extended over time that we may or may not need to redeem in the future. It is a way of pooling risks and rewards within a risky survival niche.

Anecdotally, modern hunter-gatherer societies routinely share large game on demand (so that those more in need receive more), but lazy or stingy people are disapproved of and heavily criticised, and may be ostracised (Gurven, 2004).

A study of Agta hunter-gatherers in the Philippines found experimentally that a quarter of sharing in this group is done in response to need. (Smith et al., 2019 - see figure below.)

**Sharing on demand: "no-one goes hungry"**

In many present-day small-scale, "simple", nomadic hunter gatherer societies, there is an ethos whereby everyone in the camp receives at least some food, whether or not they have contributed work.

> Much has been written about the emphasis placed on generosity, and the "moral obligation" to help others in need among traditional societies, exemplified by the Chácobo proverb, "If you are a human being, then you will share what you have with those who are in need". Marshall writes that among the Nyae Nyae !Kung "if there is hunger, it is commonly shared. There are no distinct haves and have-nots". Although populations tend to vary over the extent of explicit praise of generosity, there is often mention of a direct condemnation of stinginess. "The most serious accusations one !Kung can level against another are the charge of stinginess and the charge of arrogance." Similarly, one of the most serious Ache insults is to call somebody mella (a nongiver). The Yanomamo are "so preoccupied with the possessions (including food) of others ... anyone who has more than a day's supply of anything is a potential target of an accusation of stinginess if he does not share". Lengua who insist on keeping food for themselves are similarly "hated and terrorized by others". These descriptions support the view that social dynamics in small-scale societies are organized by an ethic of "assertive" or "fierce" egalitarianism and that "demand sharing" equalizes differences resulting from production ability.

However:

> There are also hints of contingency [reciprocal giving] among several of the more assertively egalitarian groups. The "giving of food does involve an obligation on the part of the recipient to return food to the donor at some future date" among the Siriono and "something must be given in return for what is received" among the G/wi. Conversely, the ethnographic literature

> also contains references to contingency that are consistent with generalized reciprocity, but may not be consistent with RA [reciprocal altruism]. The Batek, for example, explain that giving and receiving "balance out over the long run" (i.e., lifespan), whereas giving and receiving among the Kaingang is "not a matter of checks and balances ... their understanding of reciprocity is in terms of lifelong symbiosis, not in terms of balanced exchanges".

and:

> Many groups, however, do not engage in bandwide sharing of meat items, and instead restrict initial sharing to the task group or extended family, with only subsequent sharing with other group members, although as mentioned earlier, primary sharing can be extensive when very large quantities are produced. In many groups this pattern is viewed as "fair." Future research should focus on understanding the conditions that favor different norms of sharing and perceived fairness. Interdependent subsistence, small group size, high average relatedness to group members, coordination in residential structure, and outside threats, may all favor increased within-group sharing.
>
> ...
>
> Despite the compulsory nature of giving in many smallscale societies, patterns of giving and receiving are sensitive to costs and benefits affected by the types and sizes of foods being shared, others' labor contributions to resource production, and other bargaining arrangements.
>
> *Michael Gurven – "To give and to give not: The behavioral ecology of human food transfers": Behavioral and Brain Sciences (2004) 27, 543-583 (original references removed)*

See also:

Generalised reciprocity, p. 150

Targeted helping: social group members, p. 159

Personhood, p. 197

**A study of Agta hunter-gatherers in the Philippines found experimentally that a quarter of sharing in this group is done in response to need.**



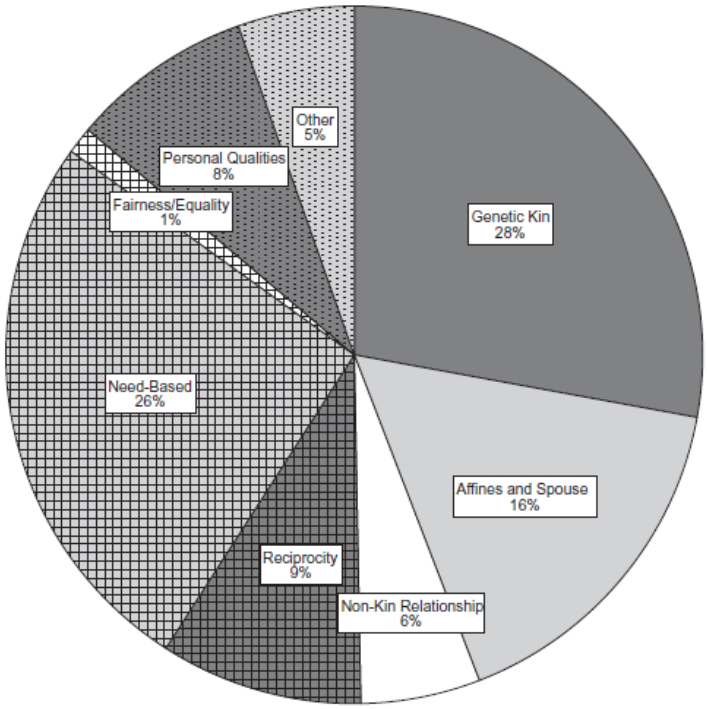



**Fig. 2.** Pie chart displaying the proportion of reasons, split by category, for giving to others (total reasons = 1001: for additional details see Table S4).

*Daniel Smith; Mark Dyble; Katie Major; Abigail E Page; Nikhil Chaudhary; Gul Deniz Salali; James Thompson; Lucio Vinicius; Andrea Bamberg Migliano; Ruth Mace – "A friend in need is a friend indeed: Need-based sharing, rather than cooperative assortment, predicts experimental resource transfers among Agta hunter-gatherers": Evolution and Human Behavior 40 (2019) 82-89*

5. other criteria for sharing

We may also share according to seniority, authority (place in a hierarchy), or some agreed-upon rule, or favour in-group over out-group members (Fiske, 1991; Schäfer, Haun, and Tomasello, 2015; Schmidt, Svetlovab, Joheb, and Tomasello, 2016).

**Food sharing in primates:** *from Adrian V Jaeggi and Michael Gurven – "Natural Cooperators: Food Sharing in Humans and Other Primates": Evolutionary Anthropology 22: 186-195 (2013)*

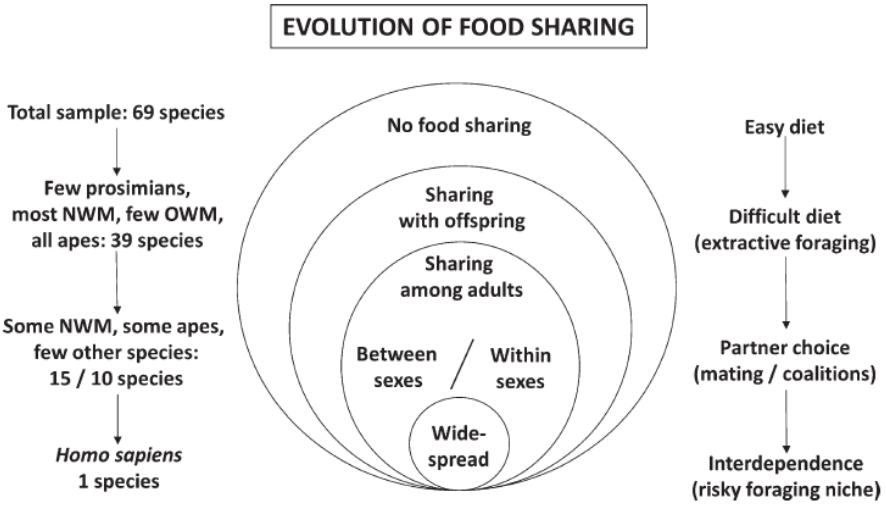



Figure 1. The layered distribution of sharing in primates. The left-hand arrows indicate ever smaller subsamples matching the relational contexts in the layers. The right-hand arrows show evolutionary transitions in other traits that co-evolved with transitions between the layers. Redrawn after Jaeggi and van Schaik.[4] NWM = New World monkeys, OWM = Old World monkeys.

## Inequity aversion

To behave with equity means to abide by the principles of fairness. Inequity aversion is a dislike of unfair treatment. Inequity aversion comes in two forms: self-directed, and other-directed.

- self-directed inequity aversion =

  I feel bad because I think I have received less than I deserve.

- other-directed inequity aversion =

  I feel bad because I think someone else has received less than they deserve.

People will go to some lengths to redress the balance of fairness if they feel that they themselves, or another person, have been treated unfairly, and will often reject an offer they think is unfair, even though it may be "rational" to accept an offer of

something rather than nothing (Brosnan, Talbot, Ahlgren, Lambeth, and Schapiro, 2010).

The risk of inequity aversion, the feeling of treating others unfairly or of being treated unfairly, occurs particularly when resources have been acquired jointly, i.e., after collaboration (Schäfer, Haun, and Tomasello, 2015).

If people feel that they have been short-changed after a collaboration, then they are less likely to want to collaborate with the same individuals in the future. In other words, fair sharing and respect motivate further cooperation. Because of our need to cooperate together in order to survive, we are sensitive to other-directed inequity aversion: standing in mutual respect and deservingness, we wish for our cooperative partners to be satisfied with their proceeds, partly because we feel we owe it to them (Tomasello, 2020) and partly so that they will want to cooperate with us again, and not discourage others from doing so (Brosnan and de Waal, 2014).

It requires self control to voluntarily give up an advantage to the self in order to benefit another, fairly. Humans have large well developed brains that are capable of regulating our immediate behaviour in favour of long term advantages (Ainsworth and Baumeister in Baumard, André, and Sperber [2013]).

Humans are almost unique in showing other-directed inequity aversion: we may become upset if someone else receives an unfair outcome compared with ourselves. In experiments, bonobos have been found to share food that is prized, when they are eating it under the watchful gaze of other bonobos. This may well serve a peace-keeping function. Other animals that have been tested show only self-directed inequity aversion: for example, capuchin monkeys, chimpanzees, parrots, and domestic dogs (de Waal, 2010).

See also:

Five kinds of normativity, p. 58

**Impartiality**

Impartiality of justice, and impartiality of judgements of deservingness, guilt or blame requires adhering to standard judicial procedures and acting without favour or bias towards any particular side. In an impartial system, each person's human rights are given equal weight, in that each person's need to thrive ethically is respected equally, since after all, each is equally a person. In other words, each individual’s personhood is respected equally.

See also:

Self-other equivalence, p. 73

Personhood, p. 197

Experimentally, it has been found that we see impartiality as the most basic and important aspect of fairness (Niemi, Wasserman, and Young, 2017).

Recent experimental work has found that impartial behaviour may be motivated by a desire to be, and to be seen to be, unbiased. When evaluating someone's "impartial" behaviour, we can be drawn to evaluate just how biased or impartial they really were. Since impartiality represents a specific attempt to sidestep personal bias by using a standardised procedure, our psychological demands for fairness are more easily satisfied if impartiality is seen to be done: impartiality is an effective way to achieve a feeling of fairness (Niemi, Wasserman, and Young, 2017).

> The hallmark of the human sense of fairness is the idea of impartiality; that is, human fairness or justice is based on the idea of appropriate outcomes applied to everyone within the community, not just a few individuals, and, in particular, not just oneself. Thus, outcomes are judged against a standard, or an ideal. There is variation in this ideal across cultures or situations, but there is consistency within a given context.
>
> *Sarah F Brosnan and Frans B M de Waal – "Evolution of responses to (un)fairness"*

**Sharing in early humans**

Many modern hunter gatherer societies practice a high degree of sharing "on demand" – sharing in response to need, or charity (Endicott and Endicott, 2008; Gurven, 2004; Smith, Larroucau, Mabulla, and Apicella, 2018; Smith et al., 2019). We are certain that the earliest humans, from around 2 million to half a million years ago, were cooperatively breeding scavengers (Tomasello, 2016). Scavenging requires sharing peacefully between all those present at the carcase, because a coalition of individuals is needed to scare off scavengers of other species, and plausibly, any dominants and food hogs among the people would have been rejected or forcibly brought down to size.

We also believe that self-domestication had taken place by 2 million years ago, following the invention of stone tools, the removal of the great ape dominance hierarchy and the introduction of monogamous sexual pair-bonding. Self-domestication, the removal of bullying from the social order, would have made fair sharing possible. Cooperative breeding also would have required a high degree of sharing, and caring, on demand. In a risky foraging niche, sharing evens out individual risk and scarcity.

With archaeological evidence of the human hunting of large game, from around 5 hundred thousand years ago, there is also evidence of bringing large game back to a central location for on-demand sharing: for example, at Qesem Cave in Israel, on the 4-2 hundred thousand year-old bones found there, many of the cut-marks are haphazard and amateurish, suggesting something of a free-for-all (Stiner, Barkai, and Gopher, 2009).

See also:

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 115

Monogamous pair-bonding strengthened family bonds and kin recognition, p. 116

Cooperative breeding, p. 173

**Free riders**

Small children make sure to share equally more of the time when the resources were obtained through their joint collaboration (Tomasello, 2016). Chimpanzees, on the other hand, hog as much as they can whether after collaborating or not (Melis, Schneider, and Tomasello, 2011). Small children also share less with free riders or people outside the joint agent "we" of the collaboration (Melis, Altrichter, and Tomasello, 2013).

Free rider control has been observed by modern anthropologists in some modern hunter-gatherer societies (Kaplan and Hill, 1985). In the study of Hadza camps in Tanzania (see above), people within a camp will share approximately the same as their camp-mates, which is a form of free rider control. Explicit free rider control is much more apparent in large anonymous societies where there may be fewer opportunities for repeated reciprocity over time, and where ties of personal moral obligation may be looser.

See also:

Warfare and out-group hostility, p. 102

**Egalitarianism**

> Batek regarded each other as basically equal in their intrinsic value and therefore worthy of respect. Although some people, particularly shamans, were held in especially high regard, they neither expected nor received special treatment from others. All Batek felt that they deserved the same consideration as everyone else, and they were not shy in saying so.
>
> *Kirk M Endicott and Karen L Endicott – "The Headman was a Woman – The Gender Egalitarian Batek of Malaysia"*

Fairness can be seen as an egalitarian principle – a way to restore or maintain equality of some kind.

Egalitarianism is the ethos of treating one's fellows as equals. Many modern hunter-gatherer groups are known to have a fiercely egalitarian ethos, with food, and the few portable possessions, being shared on demand (Gurven, 2004; Woodburn, 1982), and social "status levelling mechanisms" employed to cut dominant, aggressive, assertive or competitive people down to size, including public ridicule, desertion, or even assassination (Boehm et al., 1993). Inequalities of wealth, power and status are not tolerated.

James Woodburn (1982) identifies two categories of economic structure in a society: those with an immediate return on labour, and those with a delayed return on labour.

When we refer to "simple" nomadic hunter gatherer societies, these are immediate return systems. Some hunter gatherer societies have delayed return economies and social organisation. Both kinds are common in hunter gatherers.

All modern egalitarian societies known to Western science are immediate return systems. These include: the Batek of Malaysia, the Hadza of Tanzania, !Kung Bushmen of southern Africa, Mbuti pygmies of the Congo, and the Malapantaram and Paliyan of South India.

While it would be a mistake to equate any and all modern hunter gatherer societies with ancient humans, it seems reasonable to assume, given the historical evidence of when sedentary agriculture began, that ancient humans would have used immediate return systems. Therefore we conclude that ancient humans were, probably, fiercely egalitarian in their outlook, including being non-patriarchal.

> ... in these societies the ability of individuals to attach and to detach themselves at will from groupings and from relationships, to resist the imposition of authority by force, to use resources freely without reference to other people, to share as equals in game meat brought into camp, to obtain personal possessions without entering into dependent relationships – all these bring about one central aspect of this specific form of egalitarianism. What it above all does is to disengage people from property, from the potentiality in property rights for creating dependency.
>
> *James Woodburn – Egalitarian Societies (1982: 445)*

We may find the following characteristics that promote egalitarianism and personal autonomy, in immediate return societies:

- non-dependence on specific other people, but dependence on the group
- direct access to food and other resources
- direct access to means of coercion
- mobility and flexibility
- access to sharing network
- sanctions on the accumulation of personal possessions
- constant transmission of possessions between people
- dispersed leadership and decision making

In these societies, egalitarianism is explicitly enforced as an ideology as well as being an implicit consequence of the way society is structured. If each man has direct access to the means of coercion (e.g., poisoned arrows that may be used on another while he is asleep) then this a significant levelling mechanism between men. Anyone may choose where they go and where they live, throughout the tribe's territory, without losing economic or other vital interests, allowing them to move away from anyone with whom they are in conflict or who might wish to control them. This physical mobility, and lack of boundaries, also prevents differences in wealth from building up between neighbouring areas. Dependency on others for resources, and therefore, power relations, are largely absent. Anyone may provision themselves by their own efforts and by pooling with the group as a whole. Personal autonomy is

high, and no one may command another. Instead, persuasion by eloquence, intelligence and tact may be used. There is no "chief", but a head man or woman is a kind of wise guiding figurehead. The attitude to personal property is casual and people are put under pressure to share any personal surplus with others. Anything that cannot be used straight away tends to be given or gambled or thrown away. Saving and accumulating are actively discouraged (Woodburn, 1982).

Delayed return societies include "pastoralists [sheep or cattle farmers] as well as part-time hunters, sedentary hunters, foragers dependent on fishing, trappers, bee-keepers and mounted hunters" (Endicott, 1981: 2).

In these more sedentary, delayed return societies, we find the following characteristics:

- unavoidable delay between productive labour and the yield from that labour
- economic system involves ownership and control of property, assets, technology, and production process
- more rigid division of labour and social organisation
- inequality
- power structures and dependency on specific others
- lack of sexual equality (Endicott, 1981)

**Egalitarianism and fairness**

> Were there a species of creatures, intermingled with men, which, though rational, were possessed of such inferior strength, both of body and mind, that they were incapable of all resistance, and could never, upon the highest provocation, make us feel the effects of their resentment; the necessary consequence ... is that we ... should not, properly speaking, lie under any restraint of justice with regard to them. ... Our intercourse with them could not be called society, which supposes a degree of equality; but absolute command on the one side, and servile obedience on the other.
>
> *David Hume – "An enquiry concerning the principles of morals"*

For a human sense of fairness to evolve, it was necessary for the great ape dominance hierarchy based on fighting ability to be removed, in a process of self-domestication (Tomasello, 2016).

"Might is right" is the opposite of fairness. Fairness requires a lack of force, bullying or coercion. Instead, each person concerned has to be treated equally in some way, i.e., with equal respect and consideration.

Fairness is possible within the dominance hierarchies we see in society today (Baumard, André, and Sperber, 2013). People do not have to lose their human rights, no matter where they are in the hierarchy.

See also:

Self-other equivalence, p. 73

U-shaped history of human patriarchy, p. 110

U-shaped history of human competition, p. 115

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 115

Liberty and oppression, p. 221

**Forms of justice**

Justice exists in a number of forms:

- *restorative* (the victim of an offence is made good in some way)
- *retributive* (an offender is punished in some proportionate way)
- *distributive* (goods or burdens are distributed in some fair way)
- *procedural* (impartially sticking to the rules of a fair procedure that is worked out ahead of time without knowing how it will affect any one person, i.e., under a "veil of ignorance". Whether or not procedural justice has been seen to be done affects how legitimately the legal decision is regarded by those subject to it, and how subjects respect the rules and authority [gov.uk, 2021]. For Her Majesty's Prisons and Probations Service, in the UK, there are four principles of procedural justice: 1) to treat subjects with respect; 2) to be impartial; 3) to ensure that subjects are listened to and have a chance to tell their story; 4) showing and encouraging trust through prosocial interactions by staff with subjects.)
- *justice as fairness*

## John Rawls, justice as fairness, and the veil of ignorance

Distributive justice in this case refers to a nation state dividing resources among its subjects.

Rawls defined primary goods as: 1) liberties; 2) opportunities; 3) income and wealth.

John Rawls' theory takes the form of a thought experiment, and proposes that the fairest way to divide resources in an ideal state would be from behind an impartial "veil of ignorance" whereby each of us does not know anything about what we would be like in the hypothetical society, or what position we may occupy – rich or poor, high or low, fortunate or unfortunate. So he imagines that it is rational for each of us to want the worst off to be taken care of, and consequently, that rational people would design a "floor constraint" – a restriction on how little people would receive, so that nobody has to be too poor. The point of view is therefore that of the worst off (Shapiro, 2010)

Here we see a (hypothetical) implementation of the Golden Rule – "I will treat others as I would wish to be treated".

## Experimental results

There is evidence that in situations where different types of fairness conflict, people trade off between them on a case-by-case basis. In experimental games simulating distributive justice and the veil of ignorance, it has been found that people prefer to maximise the average income while maintaining a good level for the worst off (Frohlich, Oppenheimer, and Eavey, 1986).

## Fairness as respect

> Definition of "respect" (Google Dictionary):
>
> noun
>
> 1. a feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities, or achievements.
>
> 2. due regard for the feelings, wishes, or rights of others.

verb

1. [to] admire (someone or something) deeply, as a result of their abilities, qualities, or achievements.

2. [to] have due regard for (someone's feelings, wishes, or rights).

Fairness as respect means helping in response to the need to thrive; or respecting someone's need to thrive. This means applying Perfect Compassion.

It is respectful to treat people ethically.

See also:

The Healing Principle, p. 13

Perfect Compassion, p. 33

Role ideals and respect, p. 72

Mutual respect and deservingness, p. 77

Personhood, p. 197

**Evolution of the normativity of fairness (as distributive justice)**

Why do self-interested agents (humans) insist on being fair to others?

The present hypothesis is that other-directed fairness, like helping in response to need, is an evolved motivation (ancient, self-interested) related to the personal pressure to thrive. Evidence for this comes from behavioural experiments involving pre-school age children who are too young to be affected by society's moral norms, which find that they share much more readily with collaborative partners than with outsiders; and make sure to share equally with collaborative partners.

Why is other-directed fairness normative? It must have evolved in the context of an interdependent social environment, where what is good for you is good for me, and fairness ultimately benefitted the individual.

We imagine that the archetypal ancient environment of early humans was of living in small groups where some members were cooperating together to hunt large game, and all members were cooperating, to the extent of their ability, to participate in the business of thriving, surviving and reproducing in a risky ecological niche.

In this context, we believe that meat from large kills was distributed throughout the camp according to need. It would have made good evolutionary sense for each hunter to share their surplus, for at least two reasons: 1) pooling risk; 2) gaining a good reputation as generous, in these ancient times, which motivated people to cooperate with them again. Here, we see some essential features of distributive justice: 1) self-other equivalence / equality of status, where each person is treated as an equal (their needs are respected equally); 2) normative sharing with others; 3) free rider control in the form of ridiculing and harassing hogs, cheats and free riders. It may even be that hogs, cheats, free riders and the lazy received less meat or no meat, which would be an evolutionary selection pressure against these traits.

At the same time, in the same way that we feel a warm positive regard towards those who help us, we feel a warm positive regard towards those who help us to achieve our goals, i.e., our diligent and faithful collaborative partners. We assume that this was also the case in ancient times. This gratitude and loyalty reinforced the evolutionary reasons, presumably making us want to share, constrained by self-other equivalence which makes the sharing equal and both self- and other-directed.

It may be that a less generous, proportional, tit-for-tat form of fairness evolved later on, on top of the more ancient communal sharing with well-meaning camp-mates, within a less personal and less communal environment: i.e., large groups.

The present hypothesis is therefore that other-directed fairness is normative because evolutionarily, it allowed the individual to flourish within an interdependent social environment.

See also:

Self-other equivalence, p. 73

Mutual respect and deservingness, p. 77

Free riders, p. 133

# Reciprocity

Tit for tat

Fairness (proportionality) in exchanges

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth

You get what you give

What goes around comes around

One good turn deserves another

You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours

People usually treat you the way you treat them

Trading favours

> Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.
>
> *Luke 6:37-38*

> "The norm of reciprocity is universal." If we do a favor, we expect one in return. If we receive a favor we cannot return, we are distressed.
>
> *Donald W Pfaff, PhD – "The Neuroscience of Fair Play"*

> Abdullah ibn Umar reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Pay the worker his wages before his sweat has dried."
>
> *Sunan Ibn Mājah 2443*

> He who loves others, must also be loved by others. He who benefits others, must also be benefited by others. He who hates others, must also be hated by others. He who injures others, must also be injured by others.
>
> *Mo Tzu, 479-381 BC*

Reciprocity, in its various forms, is a fundamental principle of human nature and is the basis for mutually beneficial relationships. It serves to proportionately reward helpful behaviour and punish harmful behaviour; to trade with others in business transactions; to reward effort; and to show people how we feel about their actions towards us.

Reciprocity is an ethical norm: an obligation, an expected standard of behaviour. When we do wrong, we are expected to try and put it right. If someone does us a favour, we feel an obligation to repay them. If we do someone a favour, we expect that we have a right to have it repaid somehow in the future. Sometimes the norm of reciprocity conflicts with other norms: for example, in blood feuds, where reciprocity conflicts with helping in response to need and benefitting all concerned in the long term.

It feels good for both parties if we do someone else a favour. In this situation we subconsciously expect to receive a benefit in return. This is the case even when we anonymously benefit a stranger whom we can never meet or communicate with.

Reciprocity is most successful as a strategy in repeated encounters – i.e., in long-lasting relationships, because then, there is an incentive to keep on reciprocating rather than to defect or break the series of exchanges. Long-lasting relationships were the conditions that prevailed when our ancient ancestors lived and survived together in small groups on the African savannah. For these people, as ourselves, "buddy" reciprocity was a way to survive (see 4. below). At some point, long-range reciprocity (see below) and trade began to come into play.

### Fairness in exchanges

Proportionality is a form of fairness. In reciprocal exchanges, we expect proportionality, where a response is judged to be in proportion to the action that triggered it. The exchanges are of the same proportions or size or thing.

## VARIETIES OF RECIPROCITY

### 1. tit-for-tat reciprocity

Tit-for-tat is the simplest form of reciprocity: what you do to me I do in return; a strict exchange of favours or offences. This behaviour is sometimes called "transactional".

Tit-for-tat is the form of reciprocity used in trade and business. It is the normal mode of reciprocity between people who are not personally interdependent, although they may be professionally interdependent. Therefore it is more dominant within large groups, where many people are strangers, than in small groups.

### Contingent cooperation

> I'll love you if you'll love me.
>
> *The Incredible String Band – "Three is a Green Crown"*

"I will cooperate if you cooperate ". The corollary (inevitable consequence) of this attitude is that if I want you to cooperate, I must cooperate.

### Forgiveness: sometimes, let it go

We may see tit-for-tat reciprocity as a primitive and self-centred form of personal morality, since it can lead to maladaptive outcomes. Unconditional love is more advanced, in the sense that it is more likely to lead to long term thriving for all concerned: using partner control as a way to maintain a cooperative relationship. Try to get yourself the objective "bird's eye view" of a collaborative situation in order

to see the goals, perceptions, and motivations of others and who, if anyone, is right and wrong.

In conflict situations, tit-for-tat is a dangerous way to proceed, because anger can lead to escalation: a disproportionately harsh response (Pinker, 2011). At some point, it is necessary to stop the merry-go-round of back-and-forth recrimination, for the sake of long-term prosperity for both sides. In a runaway cycle of tit-for-tat, we run the risk of ending up with a big mess that didn't need to happen. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth leads to a land of people with no eyes and no teeth. Try to meet anger and drama with peace, strength, humility, educating, and solutions. Find out why the person is angry, and try to do something about the problem, rather than being tempted to "blow up" in kind. After you have finished being angry, the problem still remains.

See also:

Partner control and joint self-governance, p. 76

The Montagu Principle, p. 210

Moral anger, p. 224

> For every ripple you push away, you'll create a thousand more
> and the ripples will turn to waves
> that will swell and break and overwhelm you.
>
> *Steve Taylor – from "The Harmony of Things"*

> Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you;
>
> *Matthew 5:44*

> Hatreds do not ever cease in this world by hating, but by love. This is an eternal truth. Overcome anger by love. Overcome evil by good. Overcome the miser by giving, overcome the liar by truth.
>
> *Buddha*

Two wrongs don't make a right.

*Proverb*

All pious deeds, all gifts, are nothing compared to a loving heart.

*P. Lakshmi Narasu – "The Essence of Buddhism"*

We typically forgive someone if they recognise what they have done wrong and take credible steps to change their behaviour.

If we forgive under the appropriate circumstances then we can move on past the difficulty and resume a mutually beneficial working relationship. If we refuse to forgive then we may lose the chance to rehabilitate and educate the wrongdoer.

There is no need to keep account of every little grievance. This is a pointless waste of life that makes people unhappy and corrodes relationships.

You can tell the size of a man by the size of the thing that makes him mad.

*Adlai Stevenson II*

... when others provoke you, perhaps for no reason or unjustly, instead of reacting in a negative way, as a true practitioner of altruism you should be able to be tolerant towards them. You should remain unperturbed by such treatment. ... not only should we be tolerant of such people, but in fact we should view them as our spiritual teachers.

When someone whom I have helped,
Or in whom I have placed great hopes,
Mistreats me in extremely hurtful ways,
May I regard him still as my precious teacher.

*His Holiness the Dalai Lama – "Transforming the Mind – Eight verses on generating compassion and transforming your life"*

> 3 'He insulted me, he hurt me, he defeated me, he robbed me.' Those who think such thoughts will not be free from hate.
>
> 4 'He insulted me, he hurt me, he defeated me, he robbed me.' Those who think not such thoughts will be free from hate.
>
> *The Dhammapada*

> Every bitterness is heavy bag. Why carry? You are hot-air balloon. Tell me, you want to go up or down? Let go of anger, hurt. Drop the sacks.
>
> *Elif Shafak – "Honour"*

We should attempt to protect our enemies, or adversaries, from negative consequences of their actions towards us. However, you owe it to yourself and your dependents not to allow, for example, an abusive partner to ruin your life. Some people need to be controlled and brought to justice.

"Immature" or "maladaptive" ego defenses are designed to get under your skin: don't do the offender's job for them by continually dwelling and ruminating on the wrong you have been done. Do you want the offender to live rent-free in your head? Because that is what they intend.

See also:

Ego defenses, p. 238

**Game theory and forgiveness**

Reciprocity can be studied using computer simulations. Two computer-simulated agents play a game together over many rounds, where in each round, each agent can either "cooperate" with the other, or "defect" (refuse to cooperate), based on what the other did in the previous round (i.e., using tit-for-tat reciprocity). The aim is to see, for various strategies, how long it takes for mutual cooperation to fall apart.

The winning strategy has been found to be "hopeful, generous and forgiving". "Hopeful" means that you need to start the interaction by being cooperative, and hope that this will encourage the other party to cooperate in return. "Forgiving" means that if the other person defects, you will work hard to rebuild a working relationship of cooperation. "Generous" means not to be too worried about getting

exact returns for what you have put in, but instead be pleased to be engaged in a cooperative relationship where everybody benefits.

On the computer it is found that if you forgive 100% of the time, cooperation quite quickly falls apart and this is not a successful strategy. If you always forgive bad behaviour, there is no incentive for the badly behaved person to behave well, and since they are not interested in mutual cooperation, the working relationship cannot continue.

**Punishment**

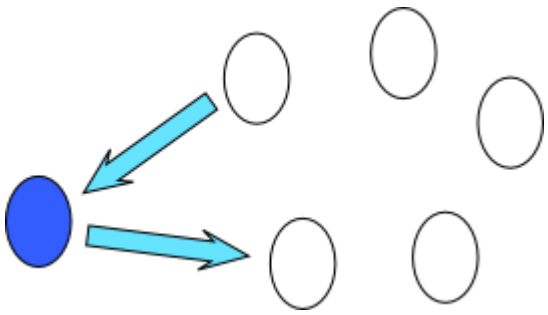
Punishment helps to sustain cooperation in normal healthy individuals. This punishment could take the form of a respectful protest, threats to reputation via gossip, the threat of rejection from the group or team, etc (Haidt, 2013). In a group, it pays for the punishment to be coordinated among a number of group members, in order to spread and reduce the overall cost of punishment (Boyd, Gintis, and Bowles, 2010).

**Islands of cooperation**

In hostile, dog-eat-dog environments where people are fighting rather than cooperating, those who want to cooperate need to stick together to form "islands of cooperation".

## 2. indirect (reputational) reciprocity

How I treat you depends on how you treat others. It requires communication, i.e., gossip, for one's actions to become well known. You may have to wait a while before the benefits of your good actions come back to you.



### 3. attitudinal reciprocity

> So you're looking for trouble, so trouble you'll find
>
> *"Dust be diamonds" – The Incredible String Band*

"Your attitude affects my attitude". We instinctively, and instantly, mirror the attitude of the person who is addressing us. Our attitude is written all over us for others to see plainly, via our body language and emotional affect.

We often use attitudinal reciprocity in dealing with strangers.

Attitudinal reciprocity may be thought of as a variety of emotional resonance or contagion, in that I am responding emotionally to your emotions.

> In humans, emotional suggestion is a powerful shaper of social behavior. We're exquisitely tuned in to the body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice of those around us, and will unconsciously mimic and synchronize these outward expressions of emotion.
>
> *Marc Bekoff and Jessica Pierce: "Wild Justice – the moral lives of animals"*

### 4. long term, interdependent, "buddy" reciprocity

This kind of reciprocity occurs between long term dependent friends or partners: those in close relationships, including collaborative relationships. There is no strict account kept of exchanges between friends.

What is good for me, is good for those who depend on me. Although it seems costly for the giver at first, the giver is repaid by increased fitness of the person they depend on.

It is described by the Stakeholder model, and is probably the most common form of reciprocity among intelligent social animals and birds, since it is cognitively demanding to keep account of tit-for-tat exchanges.

See also:

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 47

Unconditional love, p. 178

**5. service, unconditional helping, generosity**

Sometimes we help others with no thought of return. The instinct to do this probably evolved within the context of small interdependent groups where individuals would most likely want to help those around them without counting the cost, because those others were valuable potential collaborative partners.

It is a wise policy to be generous towards those who help us, because it shows that they are appreciated, and then they are more likely to want to help us again.

**6. gratitude**

If someone helps me, then I feel a warm positive regard for them and wish to help them in return. These feelings are called gratitude. This helping in response to helping motivates further helping in return.

**7. downstream reciprocity**

How you treat someone influences how they go on to treat others.

> ... in late 2007 the science media widely reported a study by zoologists Claudia Rutte and Michael Taborsky suggesting that rats display what they call "reciprocity", providing help to an unrelated and unfamiliar individual, based on the rat's own previous experience of having been helped by an unfamiliar rat. Rutte and Taborsky trained rats in a cooperative task of pulling a stick to obtain food for a partner. Rats who had been helped previously by an unknown partner were more likely to help others.
>
> *Marc Bekoff and Jessica Pierce – "Wild Justice – the moral lives of animals"*

Kindness spreads. If we treat someone with kindness, they are more likely to go on to treat others with kindness and gratitude. The result is a kinder environment for everyone.

Likewise, spite and unkindness can spread in the same way.

Modern humans are built to imitate each other: we will imitate the majority in the group or what is seen to be successful (Tomasello, Melis, Tennie, Wyman, and Herrmann, 2012).

> Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.
>
> Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
>
> *Matthew 5: 13-16*

**8. generalised reciprocity**

In generalised reciprocity, we share communally with a sharing network that is more or less closed (Endicott and Endicott, 2008; Fiske, 1991). This network may consist of one other person, or a small group; or in a more limited, tit-for-tat form of reciprocity, with a larger group.

**Public or private reciprocity**

If we believe that by making a big public show of getting back at somebody, we are justifiably demonstrating the size of their crime to others, we are probably mistaken that this is a good move, since these others may neither know nor care about the "crime", and we just look like a "bad guy". Some people exploit this tendency by

hurting others in secret, intending for the victim to make a public retribution that makes themselves look bad. Therefore it is usually wise to avoid being provoked.

**Reciprocity and unwanted obligation**

People sometimes resent being put under the obligation to reciprocate. For example, if we give someone an extravagant present, they may feel aggrieved because they cannot pay us back. Reciprocal obligation can sometimes be used as a form of control of others.

**Reciprocity is a survival skill in hunter-gatherer societies**

> During the voyage of the Beagle when the young Charles Darwin first encountered the "savages" living in Tierra Del Fuego, he was amazed to realize that "some of the Fuegians plainly showed that they had a fair notion of barter ... I gave one man a large nail (a most valuable present) without making any signs for a return; but he immediately picked out two fish, and handed them up on the point of his spear." ...

In hunter-gatherer societies, reciprocity is used to create and maintain social networks, some of them very wide.

> When [Ju/'hoansi, African Bushmen] still roamed across the semi-arid Kalahari, with no way to store food, these people understood that their most important resources were their reputations and the stored goodwill of others. ...
>
> For those who store social obligations rather than food, unspoken contracts – beginning with the most fundamental one between the group's gatherers and its hunters, and extending to kin and as-if kin in other groups – tide them over from shortfall to shortfall. Time-honored relationships enable people to forage

over wider areas and to reconnect with trusted exchange partners without fear of being killed by local inhabitants who have the advantage of being more familiar with the terrain. When a waterhole dries up in one place, when the game moves away, or, perhaps most dreaded of all, when a conflict erupts and the group must split up, people can cash in on old debts and generous reputations built up over time through participation in well-greased networks of exchange.

The particular exchange networks that [Polly] Wiessner studied among the Ju/'hoansi are called hxaro. Some 69 percent of the items every Bushman used – knives, arrows, and other utensils; beads and clothes – were transitory possessions, fleetingly treasured before being passed on in a chronically circulating traffic of objects. A gift received one year was passed on the next. In contrast to our own society where regifting is regarded as gauche, among the Ju/'hoansi it was not passing things on – valuing an object more than a relationship, or hoarding a treasure – that was socially unacceptable. As Wiessner put it, "The circulation of gifts in the Kalahari gives partners information that they 'hold each other in their hearts' and can be called on in times of need." A distinctive feature of human social relations was this "release from proximity." It meant that even people who had moved far away and been out of contact for many years could meet as fondly remembered friends years later. Anticipation of goodwill helps explain the 2008 finding by psychologists at the University of British Columbia and Harvard Business School that spending money on other people had a more positive impact on the happiness of their study subjects than spending the same amount of money on themselves.

In her detailed study of nearly a thousand hxaro partnerships over thirty years, Wiessner learned that the typical adult had anywhere from 2 to 42 exchange relationships, with an average of 16. Like any prudently diversified stock portfolio, partnerships were balanced so as to include individuals of both sexes and all ages, people skilled in different domains and distributed across space. Approximately 18 percent resided in the partner's own camp, 24 percent in nearby camps, 21 percent in a camp at least 16 kilometres away, and 33 percent in more distant camps, between 51 and 200 kilometres away.

Just under half of the partnerships were maintained with people as closely related as first cousins, but almost as many were with more distant kin. Partnerships could be acquired at birth, when parents named a new baby after a future gift-giver (much as Christians designate god-parents), or they could be passed on as a heritable legacy when one of the partners died. Since meat of large animals was always shared, people often sought to be connected with skilled hunters. This is why the best hunters tended to have very far-flung assortments of hxaro contacts, as did their wives.

Contacts were built up over the course of a life well-lived by individuals perpetually alert to new opportunities. When a parent died, his or her children or stepchildren inherited the deceased person's exchange partners as well as kinship networks, and gifts were often given at that time to reinforce the continuity, since to give, share, and reciprocate was to survive. Multiple systems for identifying kin linked people in different ways, increasing the number of people to whom an individual was related. One kinship system was based on marriage and blood ties, while another involved the name one was given, which automatically forged a tie to others with the same name. These manufactured or fictive kin were also referred to as mother, father, brother, or sister.

Such dual systems function to spread the web of kinship widely, and since the second system can be revised over the course of an individual's lifetime, it becomes feasible for a namesake to bring even distant kin into a closer relationship when useful. Every human society depends on some system of exchange and mutual aid, but foragers have elevated exchange to a core value and an elaborate art form. People construct vast and intricate terminologies to identify kin and as-if kin, in order to expand the potential for relationships based on trust. Depending on the situation, these can be activated and kept going by reciprocal exchange or left dormant until needed.

*Sarah Blaffer Hrdy – "Mothers and Others – the evolutionary origins of mutual understanding"*

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# Targeted helping

Helping in response to need.

Empathic concern and helping behaviour.

"I see that you are in distress, therefore I want to help you."

The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism can be expressed as:

- Understand that someone is suffering.
- Understand the cause of their suffering.
- Believe that a way out of their suffering can exist.
- Find a solution, a way out of their suffering.

**Sympathetic distress within the brain leads to a wish to help**

If we experience pain in our body, there is activation in the brain regions of the anterior insula and the anterior cingulate cortex. The same areas become activated when we witness another person in pain. This is a form of empathic resonance.

The strength of the empathic signal is affected by how much we approve of the other person, and in turn it determines how much we wish to help them (Decety, 2011; Singer and Klimecki, 2014). This approval rating may be based on any of a number of factors, for example:

- whether someone is a stranger or a loved one;
- whether they are similar to someone we already care about;

See also:

The Golden Rule, p. 74

- whether they have behaved unfairly or unethically in the past;
- whether they are from the same or a different group as ourselves;
- whether we approve of their reason for being in distress: for example, whether an AIDS patient has contracted the disease through sharing needles or through a contaminated blood transfusion;
- how good a cooperator someone is.

See also:

Moral anger, p. 224

**Empathic concern and taking action**

Human empathy encompasses compassionate concern, emotional contagion and resonance, and perspective taking. The neurological capacity for empathic concern is thought to have evolved in the context of parental care, especially maternal care, in mammals and birds. This biological capacity is then available for use in other social contexts where it is useful.

When a function that evolves for one purpose is then evolutionarily co-opted for use in other contexts, it is known as motivational autonomy.

> The animal data on maternal care and nurturance suggest that primitive empathic ability might be organized by basic biological systems subserving a complex of attachment-related processes. The neural systems supporting attachment include multisensory processing and complex motor responses as well as cognitive processes that link sensory inputs to motor output, including attention, memory, social recognition, and motivation.
>
> *Jean Decety – "The neuroevolution of empathy"*

In other words, the capacity for empathic concern, based on fundamental capacities for attachment and care, is linked to social recognition, paying attention, and physically taking action. Because of its evolutionary link with infant care in mammals

and birds, when we recognise need or vulnerability in others, this recognition can lead to a desire to help or care for them.

See also:

Empathy, p. 163

## Empathic distress and compassion

We may become overwhelmed with sympathetic distress, the distress we feel at another's distress. This may lead us to wish to withdraw from the situation, and eventually to ill health. Empathic distress is a self-directed negative emotion: we feel distress at our own pain.

Compassion, defined as the desire to help, and actual helping behaviour, is associated with other-directed feelings of approach, perspective taking and prosociality, and is likely to lead to a positive psychological outcome for ourselves and others (Singer and Klimecki, 2014). Compassion is classed as a "mature ego defense" because it is an "adaptive" or beneficial coping mechanism.

Taken together, this suggests that (self-directed) empathic distress may be relieved by (other-directed) compassion and helping behaviour. It also suggests that when we are unable to help a suffering person, we may feel distressed.

See also:

Ego defenses, p. 238

## Evolutionary motivations for targeted helping, in circles of concern

See also:

Circles of concern, p. 201

### 1. offspring / relatives

The ultimate (evolutionary) motivation for helping relatives and offspring is known as kin selection, which operates at the level of the gene.

In kin selection, helping behaviour is selectively directed towards family members. This is because genetic relatives possess a proportion of our own genes, so in helping them, we help our own genes (to some extent) to survive and therefore pass themselves on to future generations.

This principle was proposed by R A Fisher, J S Haldane and W Hamilton.

See also: Hamilton's Rule, p. 50

The young of mammals and birds are usually "altricial": i.e., they require care while they are very young. Consequently, and implementing kin selection, mammals and birds generally care for their young, and feel empathic concern towards them and help them in response to need. Through the motivational autonomy of this ability – its transference into other social contexts – it is the basis of all empathic concern and helping behaviour in mammals and birds.

Those individuals that cared for their altricial offspring were more likely to pass on their genes to the future, while those that did not, were much less likely to pass on their genes. Hence, over evolutionary time, the behaviour became normal in mammals and birds.

**2. mutualism, reciprocity, dependence, friends**

In mutual cooperation and reciprocity, the evolutionary motivation for helping is that the helper will somehow be paid back in the future. The proximate or present-day psychological reasons range from strategic calculation, to a simple desire to help without thought of return, to gratitude and loyalty (a commitment to help based on previous receipt of helping).

The most common form of reciprocity in nature is long term dependent reciprocity between friends and strategic partners. If you help me then I am likely to feel a warm positive regard towards you. Individuals form positive emotional attachments to those who benefit them, and this provides their psychological motivation to help ("I help you because I like you").

Sometimes we wish to cultivate favourable terms with another person or people, and we will strategically help them for this purpose. This is a form of tit-for-tat reciprocity.

If we are dependent on another person, then in terms of our own evolutionary fitness, helping them is not a sacrifice but an investment. Psychologically, we want to help a person who benefits us just by existing – who benefits us by doing what they always do anyway.

Mutualism involves helping each other to reach a common goal, and here, the dependencies are symmetrical: two-way interdependence rather than one-way dependence.

See also:

Inclusive fitness and kin selection – the promotion of "me", "mine", and "ours", p. 15

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 47

Reciprocity, p. 141

### 3. social group members

Within a social group of animals, each group member may be valuable to others for a number of reasons, the primary one being "safety in numbers", providing protection against predators by swelling the ranks of the group: a predator can only catch one prey animal at a time (imascientist.org.uk, 2012). Further, a group member may be a lookout and alarm caller, a good coalitionary partner, and a good hunter. Thereby, each individual has at least a small stake in all the other group members' well being and so it makes good evolutionary sense to invest in them by helping.

Similar to the stakeholder formula, there can be a "sum" of stakes that other group members have in the individual, one stake for each job that she does, that has to be (instinctively) weighed against the cost of helping them (Tomasello, 2016).

See also:

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 47

### 3a. interdependence and cooperative breeding in small groups

Because of interdependence, all able-bodied people in the group "matter" since they are valuable as potential collaborative partners and therefore need to be kept in good shape, by helping them. At the same time, where there is cooperative breeding, helpless individuals (i.e., the children) are cared for. Older people also help to care for children, and are therefore valuable.

Anecdotally, there are not many species of mammals that feed or care for their sick, but most of those are cooperative breeders (Hrdy, 2009). These species include African wild dogs (Angier, 2014), elephants (Bekoff and Pierce, 2009), lions, mongooses, and foxes (Kessler, 2020).

> Capt. Stansbury found on a salt lake in Utah an old and completely blind pelican, which was very fat, and must have been long and well fed by his companions. Mr. Blyth, as he informs me, saw Indian crows feeding two or three of their companions which were blind; and I have heard of an analogous case with the domestic cock.
>
> *Charles Darwin – The Ascent of Man*

Pelicans are not cooperative breeders, but (at least) American White Pelicans are known to feed cooperatively.

The combination of these two factors, interdependence and cooperative breeding, may be the origin of the modern human instinct to view all human beings as important and worthy of respect and targeted helping.

See also:

Personhood, p. 197

**3b. the Golden Rule**

Humans instinctively use the Golden Rule: in our imagination we put ourselves or a loved one in the position of a similar suffering other, thereby swapping perspectives with them.

See also:

The Golden Rule, p. 74

**3c. partner choice and social selection for altruism in small groups**

The great ape ancestors of the human family tree were, we believe, not very altruistic or cooperative (Tomasello, 2016). From a self-interested point of view, it is an evolutionary puzzle why humans might choose to look after unproductive group members. There appears to be archaeological evidence of individuals of various human species being looked after by group members when they might have lost all their teeth, been crippled, had a head injury etc., increasing as we get nearer to the present (Spikins, 2015; Spikins, Needham, Tilley, and Hitchens, 2018). After all, even otherwise healthy and productive people can fall ill at any time, and need care from others. Health care must have been a necessary part of a functioning hunter gatherer group, of any human species.

> ... evidence for recovery from injury and survival despite impairment should be accepted as evidence of care for the injured [in Neanderthals].
>
> *Penny Spikins, Andy Needham, Lorna Tilley, and Gail Hitchens – "Calculated or caring? Neanderthal healthcare in social context"*

If I am a human cooperating with others in a group, the people around me can affect my fitness by choosing or not choosing me as a collaborative partner. It makes sense to choose partners who are generous, and to compete for partners by displaying generosity. Generous people are signalling to others that they are ready and willing to cooperate (Jordan, Hoffman, Nowak, and Rand, 2016). This situation may have provided a "runaway" positive evolutionary feedback loop: I need partners who are generous; and potential partners compete to have me as a partner by displaying generosity. The loop reaches an equilibrium – a stable point – before the partners' generosity becomes detrimental to their overall fitness, and the usefulness of generosity as an advertisement of being a good partner has reached its limit (Nesse, 2007).

Women may have provided social evolutionary selection for sexual partners who would willingly provide what mothers needed for child-rearing, i.e., altruistic investment. If generous males were selected more often as reproductive partners, it follows that they must have reproduced more and left more offspring than asocial males, contributing to a trait in the human race of extravagant generosity.

Thus, extravagant generosity could have conferred an evolutionary advantage on the actor, throughout much of human history.

Generosity, being "more than fair", also promotes cooperation, as people feel handsomely rewarded for playing their part in a collaboration, and therefore motivated to do it again.

> ... generosity ... is at the heart of give and take in human attachments.
>
> *Penny Spikins – "How Compassion Made Us Human – the evolutionary origins of tenderness, trust & morality"*

See also:

Competition, p. 114

Patriarchal norms, p. 104

Cooperative breeding, p. 173

Unconditional love, p. 178

Personhood, p. 197

**4. out-group members**

People who are not in our group are seen as outsiders, and either: 1) a welcome potential helpmate; 2) irrelevant; or 3) a threat (free-rider or competitor). The history of the world has seen progress in widening the "circle of concern": who is within our moral group. If we help out-group members, it is arguably because we see them as honorary in-group members.

See also:

Historical progress and the maximising ethic, p. 26

Personal interdependence and helping, p. 64

Mutual respect and deservingness, p. 77

Interdependence, group loyalty, and in-group favouritism, p. 89

Fundamental attribution error, p. 202

# Empathy

Empathy is a broad term that refers to the ways in which we recognise and respond to the internal states of others, especially with regard to other-directed concern and helping behaviours.

It falls into three categories: emotional resonance and contagion, cognitive empathy, and empathic concern and helping behaviour.

The definition includes:

- feeling the same emotion as another person (vicarious arousal, emotional contagion, emotional resonance). "Feeling with".
- feeling an emotion on behalf of another (sympathetic pain, sympathetic joy, sympathetic anger, sympathetic grief etc.). "Feeling with".
- knowing the desires, beliefs, and circumstances of another (cognitive empathy, cognitive perspective-taking, Theory of Mind).
- concern in response to another's pain, or tenderness in response to the vulnerability of another. "Feeling for".
- helping in response to need (targeted helping, helping behaviour); caring behaviour in response to vulnerability.

Further definitions:

**Cognitive empathy**

Recognising the goals, perceptions and circumstances of another may be achieved through perspective-taking: either 1) "imagine other" where we try to imagine the perspective of another, or 2) "imagine self in position of other" where we imagine ourselves or another loved one in the position of a suffering other.

The information gained may then be used to help the person prosocially, or, anti-socially, for cruelty.

Cognitive empathy is one of the elements of The Golden Rule.

See also:

The Golden Rule, p. 74

**Body mimicry, neural mimicry**

This means to unconsciously adopt the bodily posture or facial expression of a person whom we are observing. If we see someone yawn, we are likely to yawn in response, and seeing someone laugh will often set us off laughing ourselves.

**Emotional contagion, mirroring**

Unconsciously adopting the emotions or attitude of another. For example, if someone is being negative and complaining, we may pick up their negative attitude. By contrast, a cheerful positive person will tend to infect their fellows with their upbeat attitude. This is a form of emotional resonance.

See also:

Attitudinal reciprocity, p. 148

**Vicarious arousal and alarm**

This is the most primitive form of empathy, found throughout much of the animal kingdom. We may often have seen a whole flock of birds take off because of one alarmed individual; that dogs start barking because another dog sets them off; and that babies will cry at nothing, just because another baby is crying. This makes good evolutionary sense: if one individual thinks they have seen danger then it is safer to err on the side of caution and flee oneself.

In the natural world, individual animals within an environment are linked, and need to monitor each other's behaviour, in all kinds of ways: for example, in predators and prey; competitors; social group members; collaborators; and parents and offspring.

**Sympathy**

Feeling good along with another who is feeling good; feeling bad along with another who is feeling bad. Sympathetic joy, sympathetic suffering. Emotional resonance. Sympathy is an other-oriented or other-focused feeling. "Feeling with."

**Empathic concern, compassion**

Feelings of wanting to help, or at least to be lenient, in response to distress, need, or vulnerability in another. Compassion is an other-oriented or other-focused feeling. "Feeling for."

**Empathic distress**

Feeling distressed by witnessing the suffering of another: a self-oriented or self-focused feeling. This may overwhelm us to the point where we are unable to help

the person.  The term can also refer to feeling distressed because we cannot help someone in need.

See also:

Empathic distress and compassion, p. 157

## Sympathy and emotional resonance

> Oh the laughter, the laughter so good and free
> Oh the laughter, the laughter so nice to see.
>
> *The Incredible String Band – "My Father was a Lighthouse Keeper"*

Sympathy means "feeling with": it is the sympathetic reaction to witnessing the emotional state of another; a form of emotional resonance.  For example, we may feel joy at someone else's joy or distress at their distress.  We may say "I feel happy for you" or "I feel sorry for you".  Imagine how you would feel to see someone you really love feeling happy, or sad.

The more basic or primitive form of sympathy, where the distinction between self and other is blurred, is straightforward emotional contagion.

When we witness someone else's feelings, then depending on our attitude towards them, we do not necessarily react with those same feelings.

If we witness someone else we care about in pain, then we tend to become more sensitive to our own pain.

## Empathic concern and helping behaviour

Empathic concern, or at least, the associated helping behaviour, has been widely observed in social birds and mammals, although it tends to be sporadic.  In human hunter-gatherer societies, consisting of interlinked small groups, a culture of "generalized altruism" towards all members of the group is observed (Gurven, 2004), (although see Woodburn, 1982 for an exception, where an old lady with dementia was abandoned by her fellow tribespeople).

Empathy seems to have evolved for the purpose of understanding the inner state of others, where this benefits the individual or the individual's genes.

Reading cues of need, and helping in response to need, are features of the lives of creatures who care for their young, and it is thought that this is the origin of the link between empathy and helping. The young of most birds, and all mammals, need to be looked after for a long time after they are born, until they can look after themselves (they are altricial). When the infant gives its distinctive, plaintive, urgent cries for help, the parent will drop what it is doing and rush to supply that help. Parents who do this are more likely to have offspring which survive and are therefore more likely to pass on their genes, leading to the prevalence of this trait in the population.

As is often the case in nature, over the course of evolutionary time, this behaviour (empathic concern and helping) has become detached from its original cause (the distress of infants) and is now used in other relevant social situations between humans: in order to facilitate the coordination of activities, cooperation towards common goals, caring for group members, and other everyday social interactions. This detaching of a trait from its original function is called motivational autonomy, exaptation, or co-opting (Kelly, 2011).

Some people are known to be extraordinarily altruistic compared with the majority of the population (Marsh, 2017). Some people have been found to possess a genetic variation in their receptor for oxytocin, that is associated with greater bodily arousal when witnessing distress or apparent pain in another, and greater empathic concern, than those without the variation (Smith, Porges, Norman, Connelly, and Decety, 2014). Oxytocin is known as the "bonding chemical" that is released in the body in situations of social attachment. People who care more than the average, also feel more guilty when they are unable to help somebody in distress or need, something that may be manipulated and exploited by selfish others (Kaufman, 2019).

See also:

Targeted helping, p. 155

Light traits, p. 191

**Perspective taking and helping behaviour**

Perspective taking, also known as cognitive empathy, refers to the ability to see a situation from the perspective of another person, including their perceptions, goals, and circumstances. Arguably, a person's "world" consists of these things.

Emotion is generated in a person when they perceive a fact to be relevant to their goal(s). Opportunities generate positive emotions, and threats generate negative ones. Therefore, if we know a person's goals and perceptions, we can have an idea of their emotions.

See also:

Emotions, p. 243

It seems, from experimental work (McAuliffe, Carter, Berhane, Snihur, and McCullough, 2019; Israelashvili, Sauter, and Fischer, 2020), that our conscious attempts at cognitive perspective-taking are largely useless for discerning the emotions of others; but also that if we gather more information about what triggered the emotion, it can lead to a greater understanding of the other person's internal world and external situation.

Particularly, similarity between our own experiences and those of the other person actually reduces our own recognition of the other's negative emotions. We are probably mistaken if we believe we understand them because we have "been there too". However, similarity of experience can lead to feelings of empathic concern for the other; and empathic concern for another can lead to greater accuracy in recognising their emotions (Israelashvili, Sauter, and Fischer, 2020).

In other words, we tend to project our own state of mind, or the way we would feel under their circumstances, onto others (Greenberg, 2021).

In taking someone's perspective, in order to achieve the maximum empathic accuracy, or all-round knowledge of their emotions, attitudes, and world-view, we need to know something of their external circumstances and history. It is also helpful if the object of the empathy – the one being empathised with – is expressive of their feelings and situation (Stinson and Ickes, 1992). The personality trait of agreeableness on either side helps the achievement of empathic accuracy (Kraus, Côté, and Keltner, 2010).

We may define two kinds of perspective taking, called "imagine self in position of other" and "imagine other". "Imagine self in position of other" refers to imagining how we ourselves would feel in the shoes of another. "Imagine other" means to focus on the other and how we think it feels to be them. In laboratory tests, scanning the brains of humans, it is found that when we project ourselves into the position of a suffering other, it leads to higher personal anxiety and distress, while if we focus on the emotions and behaviour of the person in distress then this results in higher empathic concern, lower personal distress and higher activity in the executive decision-making areas of the brain (Decety, 2011). This is consistent with the

findings that being focused on another reduces personal distress and increases compassion and helping behaviour (Singer and Klimecki, 2014).

Perspective taking is a necessary part of helping behaviour, since to help somebody well, we have to find out as much as we can about their needs and vulnerabilities.

"Imagine other" has been found to be a powerful way to reduce stereotyping of an out-group member. This attitude then extends to other members the same group, and there is consequently a more positive evaluation of the group as a whole (Decety and Cowell, 2015). It may be that the Golden Rule swings into action when we realise that out-group members are just like ourselves in many important ways.

Perspective taking and empathic concern are associated with sensitivity to justice in others, and endorsing moral rules (Decety and Cowell, 2015). Perhaps very altruistic people are concerned that defendants suffer the least available harm, and that (largely) prosocial standards of behaviour are kept up.

Contrary to this conclusion, perspective taking can reduce perceptions of impartiality (a component of justice and fairness) if a defendant is seen to be in need (McAuliffe, Carter, Berhane, Snihur, and McCullough, 2019). This seeming contradiction reflects the plurality of factors that make up the concept of fairness.

See also:

The Golden Rule, p. 74

**Perspective taking and cooperation**

Organisms attend to what is relevant to their goals (Tomasello, 2014), and in a collaborative activity, with a joint goal, humans attend jointly to the joint goal. At the same time, each person has their own role in, and perspective on, achieving the joint goal. It is in the common ground knowledge of the collaborative team that each person has their own role and perspective, and what those roles and perspectives are (Tomasello, 2016).

As a part of the collaboration, each member monitors what the others are doing, to help coordinate the overall activity. Therefore, each person needs to be able to see the joint collaborative activity from the perspective of the others (Tomasello, 2014). The willingness and capacity to take the perspective of others for prosocial purposes may have evolved in the context of cooperative breeding (Hrdy, 2009).

See also:

Jointness and separateness of "we", p. 87

Cooperative breeding, p. 173

It is possible that ants have Theory of Mind – that they can take the perspective of other ants. Ants are, of course, hyper-cooperative like humans are. The possible evidence we have for this comes from the fact that they pass the "white mark mirror test" (Reville, 2019), whereby an animal has a visible mark painted on its body where it cannot see it, and is then shown itself in a mirror. Individuals in some species will attempt to remove the mark when they see it in the mirror. The hypothesis is that only creatures that recognise themselves, that see themselves as a separate self, can recognise conspecifics (others of the same species) as separate selves, and are therefore capable of taking their perspective. An ant's brain takes up 15% of its body mass.

**Perspective taking and exploitation**

Magpies and jays, both members of the crow family, are notorious thieves. Magpies have been found to pass the mirror self-recognition test (de Waal, 2010). They steal shiny objects left around by humans, and they steal the eggs of other birds. Jays bury items of food for consumption later, but, preferably, only if other creatures are not looking. If they have been seen burying their food, they are likely to re-bury it later when they are not observed. The hypothesis is that jays and magpies take the perspective of other creatures, in order successfully to steal or secrete food and other objects.

The same perspective-taking behaviour may be used by humans to exploit others for material or emotional gain.

See also:

Anti-social personality disorder, p. 184

Narcissism, p. 186

**Empathy and socio-economic class**

People of lower socio-economic class, relative to their higher class counterparts, experience greater levels of threat and negative emotion, and deficiency of resources and sense of personal control (Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng, and Keltner, 2010). They depend more on their environment and on other people in order to achieve their interests, and therefore they focus more of their attention on others (Kraus, Côté, and Keltner, 2010).

Since lower class people are more interdependent than higher class people, the hypothesis is that this leads to greater prosocial behaviour. If I have limited power and resources, it makes sense that I will invest in the people around me, and my relationships with them.

A study in 2010 (Kraus, Côté, and Keltner) found that lower class people, relative to higher class people, scored higher in tests of empathic accuracy and were better able to discern the emotions of strangers, because they tend to focus more on their social context.

A study by Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng, and Keltner (2010) found that relative to higher class people, lower class people are more helpful, generous, trusting, and altruistic towards strangers, and show more other-directed fairness towards them. This is caused by lower class people having more concern for the welfare of others.

Findings suggest that while higher class individuals are equally capable of behaving prosocially, lower class individuals do so more consistently. Higher class people tend to hold individualistic social values that prioritise the self over others, while lower class people tend to hold more altruistic and egalitarian social values that emphasise more concern for the welfare of others. When higher class people are specifically oriented to the needs of others, they show prosocial behaviour in the same way as lower class people.

Socio-economic class is defined objectively as a measure of a person's physical wealth and resources, and, subjectively, as a person's own measure of their position within a social rank. There is evidence that being lower in either type independently predicts greater prosocial behaviour.

It may be that the prosocial behaviour of lower class people is relational in nature: aimed at specific others and relationships. Higher class people are more likely than lower class people to engage in environmental activism and volunteering, both of which are prosocial.

These studies are consistent with the idea that lower class people tend towards a lifestyle of communal sharing, while higher class people tend to live more independently. If this is true, then we would expect lower class people to give more without thought of immediate return.

See also:

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 47

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# Cooperative breeding

It takes a village to raise a child.

*African proverb*

Humans reproduce, survive and flourish by cooperating with each other. We are sometimes called the "hypercooperative" species. Along with some ants and other highly successful eusocial (hyper-social) insects, our runaway success in colonising almost every niche on the planet is due mainly to our intense prosociality and cooperation.

Almost unique among primates, and unique among the great apes, human beings are a cooperatively breeding species. This means that, while the babies of great apes spend almost 100% of their life before weaning (moving on from mother's milk) attached to the mother, and interacting only with the mother, human babies are typically looked after by many other helpers as well. These are known as allomothers ("other mothers") and may include grandparents, fathers, brothers, sisters, cousins, unrelated mothers and other group members.

Other cooperatively breeding species include elephants, wolves, African wild dogs, bottlenose dolphins, killer whales, crows, and some tamarins and marmosets.

**Enhanced empathy in humans**

We believe that cooperative breeding led to one of the crucial, basic, necessary abilities for human cooperation: unlike the other great apes, humans seek out and enjoy sharing in the mental states of others for prosocial purposes. Put simply, people who are cooperating in a sophisticated way need to have a sophisticated understanding of each other's mental states, and a willingness to share in these mental states.

The capacity to enter into the inner worlds of others, one of the aspects of empathy, is thought to be formed when the baby bonds with its caregiver and is rewarded with maternal care and affection for sharing in her mental state. In apes, this caregiver is the mother exclusively.

Human babies are typically cared for by allomothers much of the time. The hypothesis is that, since the baby relies on many other people to care for it, it needs to monitor and assess the intentions of those people towards it. It needs to know what many people think, at least towards itself. A human baby will try and elicit care from people around it by seeking out faces and vocalising.

Therefore it is in the interests of a human baby to want to enter into the inner worlds of others for prosocial purposes, in a way that is not necessary for great apes.

**Existing cognitive skills of great apes**

Great apes are some of the most advanced species in making and using tools. They are flexible in this regard, able to create novel solutions to new problems, and to plan ahead by saving particular tools for future tasks. They have a simple understanding of the physical logic of cause and effect.

Like many animals, when getting ready to act, great apes can play out various courses of action and possible outcomes in their minds before choosing what seems like the best one. But they are especially sophisticated in that they can monitor and evaluate their own thinking and decision-making: for example, taking into account what they know and don't know about a situation.

The socio-cognitive skills of great apes are advanced compared with other species. They can read the mental states, intentions, goals, and perceptions of others, and understand how these generate actions. They understand that others see things, know things and work things out. They know that others have a different perspective from their own. These constitute a "theory of mind", an understanding of others' inner worlds. They enter into these inner worlds mainly for their own ends rather than cooperatively like humans do.

Their communication is imperative: i.e., is made up of commands, telling each other to do things: "do this", "give me that". In contrast, humans share information for its own sake (Tomasello, 2014). Humans, unlike apes, understand the pointing gesture, and unlike apes, all humans have white eyeballs, allowing them to communicate by moving their eyes.

**Competitive social life**

In forming intentions and goals, using tools, eating food, and living their lives in general, great apes act alone, individually, for their own benefit almost entirely, even though they are in a group. However, they form friendships and alliances for collectively competitive purposes and keep track of who in the group is affiliated to whom. Males will get together to defend the group against threats from outside,

usually marauding males from other groups. Great apes are unique among primates in showing consoling behaviour to others: soothing one another after a fight or other misfortune.

## Cooperation in humans: thinking and acting together

The present hypothesis is that the eagerness of humans to engage in the mental states of others for prosocial purposes made possible the "(pro)socialisation" of the existing cognitive skills of our great ape ancestors, and so these became available to be used for cooperative purposes (thriving and surviving together) as well as competitive. In other words, it made it possible for humans to think, and therefore act, jointly as well as individually.

## Sharing and tolerance

Tolerance of others achieving their own needs, and sharing, are fundamental parts of cooperation. The alternative is competition, where each individual seeks to maximise their own utility, potentially at the expense of others.

Our great ape cousins are very reluctant to share their food, even with their own young, and a chimpanzee mother will only grudgingly give shells and husks to its infant in response to begging. Young, weaned great apes are capable of foraging fruit, insects etc. for themselves.

Humans, on the other hand, very readily share their most preferred food with their children and with friends and strangers alike. Human children are not capable of obtaining and processing the food they eat once they are weaned, and they require adults to do this for them.

When early humans first started living on the African savannah, around 2 million years ago, their previous diet of largely fruit and other vegetation would have been harder to find because of the grassland environment and because of competition from ground-dwelling monkeys such as baboons. The remaining available food, possibly things like animal carcases and underground tubers, would have required adults to obtain and process it. In scavenging large carcases, adults would have had to band together into coalitions to scare away other carnivore species competing for the meat; and underground tubers need to be dug up and cooked. Those individuals who were tolerant of others feeding around them would have done best. Hogs and dominants would likely have been chased away.

In experiments by Michael Tomasello and his team at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, it has been found that pairs of chimpanzees who are more tolerant with each other around food are also more willing to collaborate together and then share the spoils of the collaboration.

**Hypothesis for the evolutionary history of cooperative breeding**

Unlike great apes, who don't share, humans share food because we live in a risky foraging niche, where individuals face difficulties finding enough food on their own. We presume that by 2 million years ago, human species were surviving by scavenging and already sharing scavenged food with each other.

Pregnant women and those with children are likely to find it harder to hunt and procure food from difficult sources in a risky foraging niche. It is required, therefore, for others to share food with expectant and actual mothers.

There is circumstantial evidence that cooperative breeding first arose in our ancestor species, *Homo erectus* or *Homo ergaster*, in Africa around 1.8 million years ago.

*Homo erectus* was the first hominin species to migrate from Africa, and it is thought that cooperative breeding makes it much easier to colonise new habitats because it greatly increases the chances of survival of a species in unfamiliar environments, by providing a lot of extra help to mothers and children, and because it is thought to allow a greater brain size, and therefore greater intelligence. We believe also that education and teaching would have been a major feature of this cooperative, collective child-rearing culture, allowing knowledge to spread and accumulate.

Female *Homo erectus* were larger overall and with bigger brains than in previous species, indicating that they probably had more children.

The brain size of *Homo erectus* was the first to exceed the normal range in great apes in primate evolutionary history, and cooperative breeding is thought to allow for bigger brain size because it provides greater energy inputs (food and physical helping) to the mother and growing child, and this allows the mother to have more than one infant at a time, each infant being allowed a longer growth time before adulthood. Otherwise, in serial child-rearing, the species is constrained by the "grey ceiling" where a mother only has the chance to grow a limited number of infants in one lifetime, below which the species will die out.

The result of an expensive big brain is a longer bodily growth time, leading to a longer life span. Fossil teeth of *Homo erectus* in East Africa are found to have grown more slowly than in comparable great ape species.

While cooperative breeding allows for a greater brain size, it is not, in itself, an evolutionary pressure that creates a requirement for a greater brain size. Therefore the explosion in human brain size must have been driven by other factors, still unknown.

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# Unconditional love

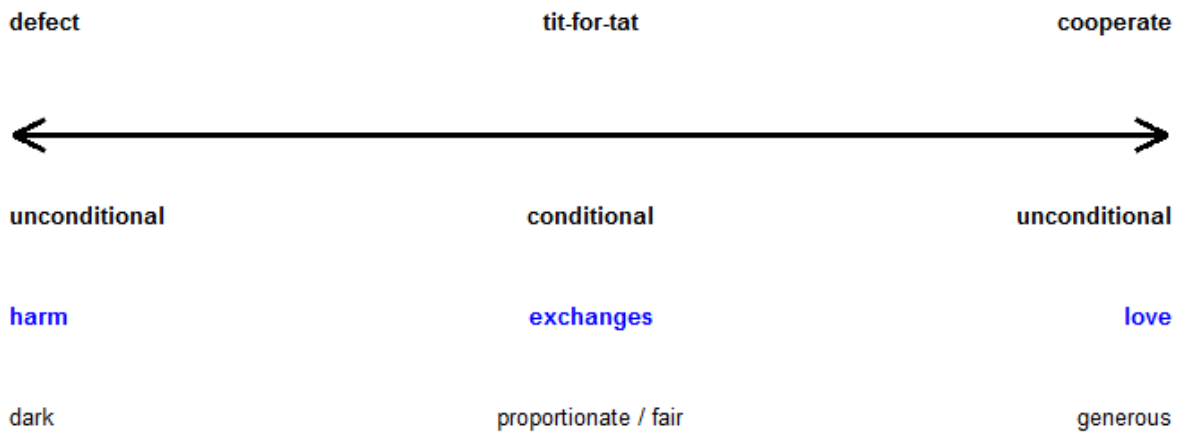
> Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.
>
> *1 Corinthians 13 4-8*

If I say I love you unconditionally, it means that I will never reject you.

Socially, this presumably means for life. In a cooperative situation, it means for the duration of the project.

Unconditional love may be seen as a form of tit-for-tat reciprocity, where a valuable "tit" of action is met with a reactive "tat" of unconditional cooperation. This means that within a relationship of unconditional love, there is more "communal sharing" than "conditional reciprocity" (Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng, and Keltner, 2010).

We can see that there can be "degrees" of conditionality of cooperation – a spectrum. For each relationship, there may or may not be a point past which we cannot be pushed and still remain unconditional in our acceptance (Tomasello, 2016).



See also:

Perfect Compassion, p. 33

Dark and light traits, p. 182

**Loyalty and the Stakeholder Principle**

If person *Q* helps person *P*, then person *P* may feel towards person *Q*:

- a warm positive regard;
- a sense of debt (through the instinct of reciprocity);
- loyalty, a commitment to help *Q* resulting in a sense of obligation towards *Q*.

We may imagine a situation where person *Q* is essential to person *P*. Therefore:

- the stake that *P* has in *Q* is 100%
- *P* loves *Q* unconditionally.

If *Q* is less than essential to *P*, then the stake that *P* has in *Q* is less than 100%, and there may come a point where *Q*'s behaviour becomes unacceptable to *P*, who then rejects *Q*.

See also:

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 47

**Contexts of unconditional love**

Forms of unconditional love are mainly found in these contexts:

1. personal relationships
2. collaborative relationships
3. interdependence
4. families
5. human rights.

If we are collaborating with others, then our commitment to collaborate comes with a commitment to help our partners freely and generously towards the joint goal. It is in each partner's interests not to defect (break the cooperation) because all are working towards a common goal.

If a partner fails in their duty then we may use partner control to correct their behaviour; and if the problem persists, we may exercise partner choice and find a new partner.

In interdependent relationships, "what's good for you is good for me" and again, there is little temptation to defect, because the potential defector needs the other person to stick around and keep doing what they are doing.

In human rights, we treat others' well being with unconditional concern, in the sense that we give them the maximum benefit and minimum harm available to them, and respect their dignity and rights to bodily integrity and self-determination as a human being.

See also:

Inclusive fitness and kin selection – the promotion of "me", "mine", and "ours", p. 15

Partner control and joint self-governance, p. 76

Human rights, p. 199

**Characteristic behaviour in unconditional love**

Tit-for-tat is an impersonal, businesslike, "fair" form of reciprocity that can be seen as heartless or "transactional" in some circumstances.

Behaviour in tit-for-tat reciprocity includes an attitude of "you have to earn it", questions of deservingness, and punishing, condemning, and rejecting others for perceived wrongs. We see this justified distressingly often by religious people, which probably stems from the impersonal environment (large anonymous groups) in which we believe that organised religion began.

Aspects of "true" unconditional love are useful in other social contexts, i.e., where we may not actually love the other person unconditionally in a personal or collaborative relationship, but we behave temporarily as if we do.

Behaviour in unconditional love includes: self-sacrifice, patience, understanding, empathy (concern and perspective taking), educating, helping to succeed, and forgiveness.

Unconditional love means to exercise partner control in preference to partner choice. As such, partner control can be a mark of affection.

See also:

Organised religion and large-scale cooperation, p. 101

> Overall, individuals with high unconditional concern for others were thus more likely to behave in a prosocial manner than those with low unconditional concern for others, even – and specifically – when the costs of prosocial behavior were high and the temptation to defect large. Conversely, individuals with low unconditional concern for others were more likely to behave in a selfish manner than those with high unconditional concern for others, even – and specifically – when the costs of prosocial behavior were low and the temptation to defect small. This implies that individuals with high unconditional concern for others may want to create peace in hostile environments, whereas individuals with low unconditional concern for others may want to create discord in peaceful environments.
>
> *Isabel Thielmann, Giuliana Spadaro, and Daniel Balliet – "Personality and Prosocial Behavior: A Theoretical Framework and Meta-Analysis": Psychological Bulletin, American Psychological Association 2020, Vol. 146, No. 1, 30–90*

# Dark and light traits

> The more you give, the less I get.
>
> *Anonymous*

D, the Dark factor of personality, is defined as

> the general tendency to maximize one's individual utility – disregarding, accepting, or malevolently provoking disutility for others –, accompanied by beliefs that serve as justifications (Moshagen, Hilbig, and Zettler, 2018).

Perfect Compassion is defined as

> maximising personal thriving as I go about my business – while having proper concern for the consequent well being of others.
>
> Each person affected by my actions, including myself, is to receive the maximum benefit and minimum harm available to them.

Morally, these two may be seen as polar opposites.  D corresponds to the second diagram in Perfect Compassion: "selfishness", where the person's benevolence is extended to themselves alone.  It can also correspond to an anti-social version of Perfect Compassion where the ego is extended with anti-social motivations rather than prosocial: to cause harm rather than benefits.

See also:

Distributing benefit and harm from the perspective of the ego, p. 42

The moral compass, p. 55

**Dark traits**

D has been found to be the common core or definition of darkness in all dark traits (Moshagen, Hilbig, and Zettler, 2018). Indeed, when somebody possesses one dark trait, they usually possess others, because possession of a dark trait shows that someone is high in the dispositional tendency D.

"Utility" refers broadly to "goal achievement" or "thriving". In D, maximising personal utility means potentially causing harm to others in the process, whether not knowing and not caring, knowing but not caring, or knowing about it and enjoying it (as in sadism). This harm to others may take the form of refraining from helping when it would be necessary. When people high in D behave cooperatively, it is more likely to be for strategic than moral reasons, than in someone low in D.

Put more simply, D means thriving at the expense of others, while potentially justifying this with beliefs.

See also:

Why do good? p. 215

People high in D are not very motivated to increase others' utility at a cost to themselves (altruism) and not very likely to derive utility from the increased utility of others (sympathetic joy).

See also:

Sympathy, p. 164

People high in D often justify their utility maximisation at the cost of others by certain beliefs, such as that they are superior and others are inferior; that everyone is just out for themselves anyway; or belief in a political ideology favouring dominance or supremacism. Like all of us, people high in D feel a need to maintain a positive self-image – to believe that their cooperative identity is healthy – and a positive self-image is a utility, the achievement of a naturally evolved human goal.

Someone high in D is likely to have a less active conscience than other people, simply because they are less likely to see value in putting their own interests second in favour of concern for others and following norms.

People with even moderate levels of dark traits can wreak havoc in the lives of others, whether intentionally or unintentionally (Neumann and Kaufman, 2020).

See also:

Moral identity and conscience, p. 98

## Personality disorders

A personality disorder is a pervasive, inflexible and stereotypical pattern of behaviour that is present from late childhood or adolescence onwards, that causes harm to the self, or others, or both, and is not attributable to a mental or physical illness. The maladaptive behaviour is triggered in a wide range of circumstances and not just by one specific situation, and persists over time (Cooper, 1994).

People with personality disorders, although they may be challenging and difficult to deal with, are nevertheless living breathing human beings just like you and me, and deserve similar human rights and respect.

If someone is challenging or difficult towards you, then it is often because

- they cannot help the way they are; or
- they are ignorant of the right way to behave; or
- they have been misinformed; or
- you are at fault in some way.

Somebody does not need to have a personality disorder in order to exhibit dark traits. The rest of us are perfectly capable of it too.

See also:

Unconditional love, p. 178

Personhood, p. 197

## Some common traits high in D

Anti-social personality disorder

> People with anti-social personality disorder take what they want from others without regard to norms; using others for what they can get out of them. Like all personality disorders, ASPD exists on a spectrum from mild to severe (NHS), with a number of specific traits that can vary between individuals.
>
> As a condition it describes "those who consistently exploit others and infringe society's rules for personal gain as a consequence of their personality traits" "as indicated by three (or more) of seven criteria, namely: a failure to conform to social norms; irresponsibility; deceitfulness; indifference to the welfare of others; recklessness; a failure to plan ahead; and irritability and aggressiveness" (National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health, 2010).

It is commonly confused with psychopathy. Around 50% of prisoners have ASPD, but only 47% of people with ASPD have significant arrest records (National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health, 2010). It is possible that it can be comorbid (co-occurring) with psychopathy, so that someone with ASPD may experience a remarkable lack of fear.

ASPD and narcissistic personality disorder are around 25% comorbid. Narcissists tend to be grandiose and superior in their self-image, while people with ASPD typically do not. It is possible that while people with ASPD exploit others for material gain, narcissists exploit others in order to enhance their self-image and feelings of superiority (Gunderson and Ronningstam, 2001). Unlike people with ASPD, narcissists prefer not to break the law, although they commonly disregard private ethics.

See also:

Narcissism, p. 186

Proposed spectrum of personality / developmental disorders, p. 190

Controlling behaviour

Bending others to our will, enjoyed for its own sake. This has the effect of making us more powerful than the other person. The control can be in the direction of suffering, pain or humiliation for the victim ("destructive power and control").

Controlling behaviour may be for the purpose of the material exploitation of another person.

See also:

Pleasure, p. 16

Competition, p. 114

Anti-social personality disorder, p. 184

Narcissism, p. 186

Sadism, p. 189

Puppet strings and the Grey Rock, p. 239

Egotism

We may define egotism as putting the needs of the self before those of others, or before the demands of one's role; and a psychological attachment to self-advancement, especially in status and greatness in the eyes of others. It can mean being carried away with self-importance; and identifying your own

self-interest with that of your ideas, actions, achievements, and external trappings, perhaps (in your own mind, at least) using these outposts of your self-interest as another way to advance yourself.

Sometimes, self-interest is inappropriate with respect to the demands of one's cooperative role.

The opposite of egotism is humility.

See also:

The ego, p. 230

Attachments, p. 249

Enduring personality change after a catastrophic experience

A person's personality may change, potentially in a markedly hostile, angry and controlling direction, after they undergo a catastrophically traumatic experience of some kind (Cooper, 1994).

Entitlement (psychological)

A belief that one deserves more than others. Since this belief is often violated in life, people with an elevated sense of personal entitlement tend to experience less satisfaction in life, work, and relationships than the average, and an increased level of anger in many situations. They expect to receive better luck than others, and feel angry and distressed when they experience bad luck, perceiving it to be an injustice (Zitek and Jordan, 2021).

Grandiosity

A belief that one is superior to most people.

Machiavellianism

Using devious, callous or manipulative behaviour to get what one wants; using people as a means to an end, without fully taking their needs into account. It is a strategic (self-interested) rather than a moral motivation.

Moral disengagement

Ignoring morality.

Narcissism

ALL people with NPD have unstable self-esteem, lack whole object relations and object constancy [are unable to see a person as having

> both good and bad qualities at the same time], have little or no emotional empathy, and are hierarchical in their thinking
>
> *Elinor Greenberg, 25 September 2018, quora.com*

Narcissism is a personality type, tendency or disorder characterised by competitive, dominant, selfish, self-centred, controlling, exploitative, entitled, arrogant behaviour; a need for admiration from others; and a grandiose belief in one's own superiority. Typical narcissistic behaviour includes "railroading", or forcing a person into a course of action by effectively giving them no other choice; "triangulating", provoking two or more other people to fight over the narcissist's affection; and devaluing others and dismissing their needs or achievements. A competitive outlook implies paranoid, "us and them" thinking. "If you're not with me, you're against me."

Narcissism has been found to be 71% heritable, with zero contribution from the family environment (Torgersen, Myers, Reichborn-Kjennerud, Røysamb, Kubarych, and Kendler, 2012). (See * below.) In other words, we believe that narcissists are born and not made, although environmental factors can influence other aspects of personality, and can interplay with narcissism (Kandler and Papendick, 2017).

Greenberg (2016, 2020 a, b, c) distinguishes three types of Narcissistic Personality Disorder: 1) exhibitionist; 2) malignant or toxic; and 3) covert or closet narcissism. These three differ in the ways that they achieve their narcissistic supply of self-esteem.

Exhibitionist narcissists believe that they are superior and special, and need to be the centre of admiring attention and at the top of any status hierarchies that they value. Their outlook is competitive and me-centred.

Malignant or toxic narcissists are not content with being number one: additionally, they feel they must crush others: dominate and humiliate them, in order to "win" at life. They are likely to treat others cruelly, sadistically and ruthlessly. A malignant narcissist enjoys destroying the pleasure and happiness of others.

A covert or closet narcissist is quietly malicious. Closet narcissists doubt their own self-worth (Greenberg, 2016, 2019a), but achieve self-esteem through attaching themselves to a person or organisation that they can admire and worship, and whose reflected glory they can bask in*. Their anti-social behaviour is likely to take the form of passive aggression or gossiping and spreading nasty rumours to harm someone's reputation; they are unlikely to confront someone directly.

Closet narcissism is much easier than the exhibitionist or malignant types to treat clinically.

Exhibitionist and closet narcissists can have elements of malignant narcissism in their make-up.

Not all narcissists are unpleasant, and those who are, are not unpleasant all the time. Malignant narcissists may use charm to attract partners whom they go on to abuse. Exhibitionist narcissists sometimes have a "film-star" charisma.

It is not necessarily easy being a narcissist, having to constantly achieve or maintain a dominant position, and to be permanently at odds with the world can be stressful and lead to a bleak and unhappy outlook. There is evidence that the grandiosity, or feelings of superiority, of narcissists can protect them from stress and depression (Cohut and Field, 2019).

* In my view, it may be that closet narcissists are not born, but made, perhaps as a result of devaluing and smothering treatment from genetically narcissistic parents, lacking in a moral compass.

See also:

Anti-social personality disorder, p. 184

Psychopathy, p. 188

## Psychopathy

> There is always a way around people for a psychopath. There is always a path to take. We are like an electric circuit. We seek the easiest path to complete said circuit.
>
> *Athena Walker, August 2017*

Along with people with ASPD, borderline personality disorder, and NPD, people with psychopathy follow "self-centered, goal-focused behaviors" (Baskin-Sommers, Krusemark, and Ronningstam, 2014), primarily. Psychopathy is a developmental disorder. Psychopaths are lacking in both the experience and recognition in others of negative emotions such as sadness, depression, fear, or anxiety; other emotions are more shallow than is typical; and they are lacking in the brain regions dealing with morality and impulse control, and in guilt and conscience (Walker, 2017).

Psychopaths are thus ungoverned by normal moral emotions or fear. From this, it does not follow that they will be anti-social, although it may be the reason for the reported behavioral problems in children who show psychopathic traits (Marsh, 2017). A mature psychopath, by definition, has learned how to behave ethically and will do so because it is rational from the point of view of long term self interest, and socially required (Walker, 2019a). Psychopathic traits include calm self-control in any situation, and the ability to play a socially required role.

Psychopaths are not necessarily competitive or dominant by nature (Walker, 2018). Psychopathic traits, such as resilience, calmness under pressure, and lack of fear, can be useful in certain situations and may be present in many people who do not qualify for a diagnosis of psychopathy.

See also:

Psychopathic ethical compass, p. 56

Sadism

Taking pleasure in the suffering of others. Significantly, a sadist must recognise the negative emotions of others, in order to enjoy them: both of which are impaired or absent in a "pure" psychopath.

See also:

Pleasure, p. 16

Competition, p. 114

Psychopathy, p. 188

Self-interest

I pursue goals that benefit my personal well being above all else. This trait may actually result in utility for others if they depend on me (Gerbasi and Prentice, 2013).

See also:

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 47

Spite

A desire to hurt others even at a cost to the self.

See also:

Political extremism, p. 229

**Proposed spectrum of personality / developmental disorders**

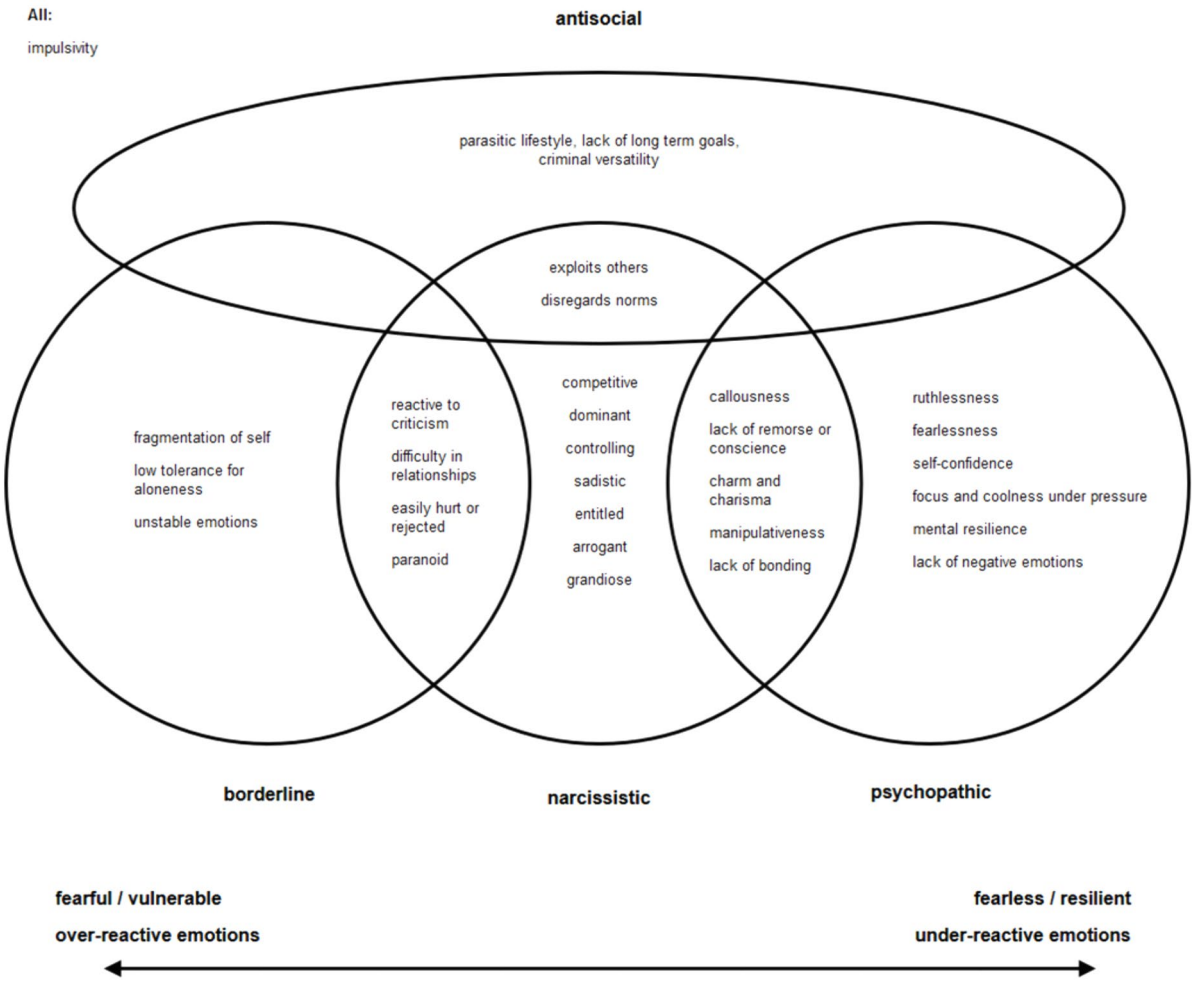
> Two pathologies that have been linked to narcissism are psychopathy and borderline personality disorder (BPD). Each of these syndromes appears on a continuum with NPD that highlights patterns of impulsivity, emotion dysregulation, and self-centered, goal-focused behaviors. The phenotypic overlap in these pathologies contributes to their moderate levels of comorbidity, with NPD and psychopathy co-occurring at rates of approximately 21% and NPD and BPD comorbidity estimated at 37%-39% ...
>
> *Arielle Baskin-Sommers; Elizabeth Krusemark; Elsa Ronningstam –"Empathy in Narcissistic Personality Disorder: From Clinical and Empirical Perspectives"; Personality Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment; 2014, Vol. 5, No. 3, 323-333*

Borderline personality disorder is not considered a dark trait. It is also known as Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder, and is characterised by a tendency to act impulsively, and without caution for the consequences; and by quarrelsome behaviour, especially when the impulsivity is challenged. It has been classified as two types: the impulsive type, and borderline. Someone with the borderline type may feel chronically empty and alone, and experience intense and unstable relationships, while always seeking unconditional love and nurturing. They may engage in self-destructive behaviour and suicide attempts (Cooper, 1994; Greenberg, 2017). There is evidence that people with emotionally unstable personality disorder tend to be more altruistic than the average (Baskin-Sommers, Krusemark, and Ronningstam, 2014).

Borderline personality disorder can be comorbid with antisocial personality disorder (Howard, Khalifa, and Duggan, 2014; Robitaille et al., 2017).

The diagram below shows some of the traits and overlapping traits of various personality / developmental disorders. This does not in itself imply physical comorbidity.

Narcissism can mimic features traditionally ascribed to psychopaths: for example, a complete lack of empathic concern for others; and sadism: oppositely-valenced emotional resonance (if I feel happy, the sadist feels sad; etc.). It does not make sense for an emotionless person (psychopath) to enjoy hurting others. It makes sense for a fundamentally competitive person (narcissist) to do so.




## Light traits

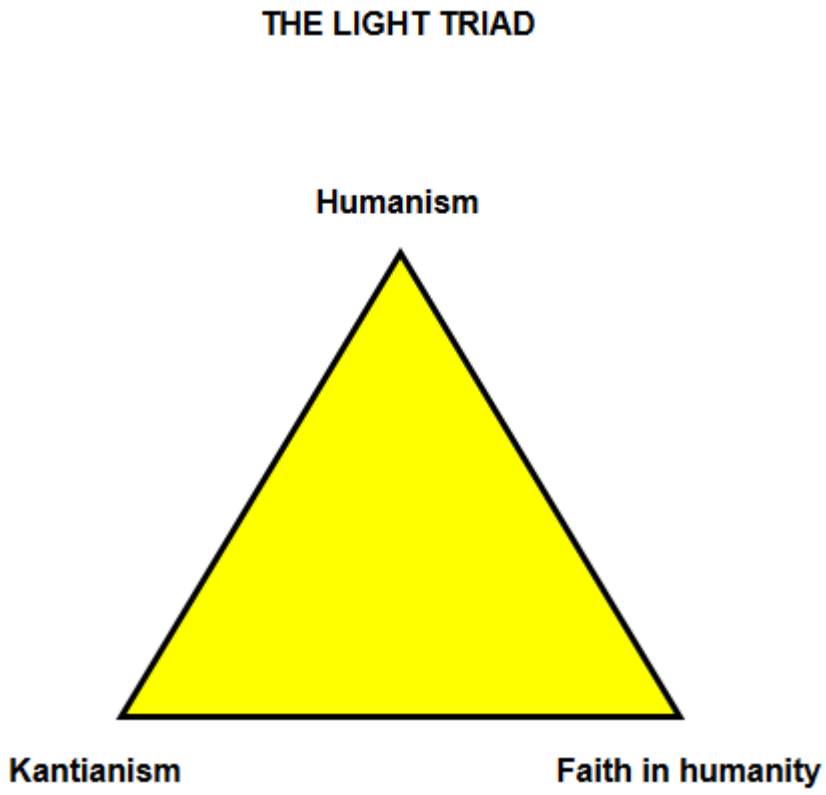
Scott Barry Kaufman, David Bryce Yaden, and Elizabeth Hyde, of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania, and Eli Tsukayama, of the University of Hawaii, have produced a study of so-called light traits (2019).

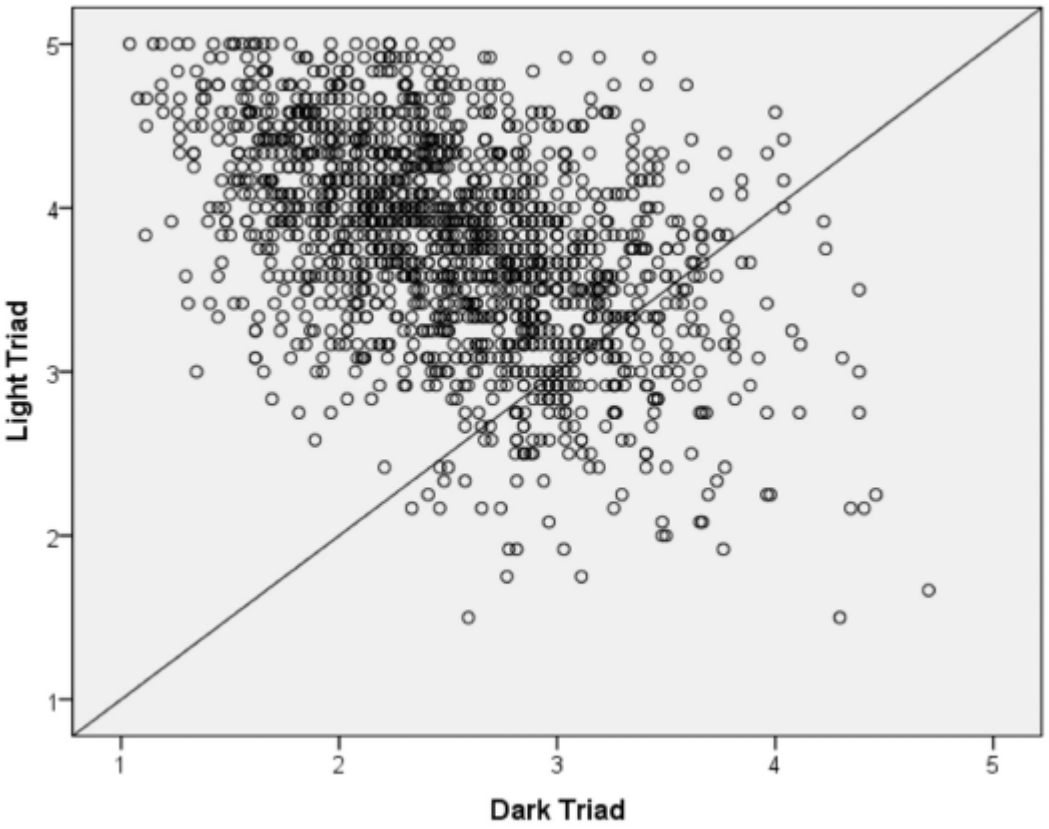
They have found that these boil down to three main factors, that they call Kantianism (named after the German philosopher Immanuel Kant: seeing others as an end in themselves and not as a means to an end); Humanism (valuing the worth and dignity of each individual); and Faith in Humanity (beliefs in the goodness of humans in general, that justify one's prosocial attitude). Together, these form a "loving and beneficent orientation toward others" (Kaufman, Yaden, Hyde, and Tsukayama, 2019: 20).

Some people are "extraordinary altruists" (Marsh, 2017), in that they show a higher than average level of empathic concern and helping behaviour, even potentially at great personal cost.

See also:

Kant’s "ends and means": treating every human with dignity and respect, p. 197






*Scatter plot of the (dark, light) scores of 1518 people (Kaufman, Yaden, Hyde, and Tsukayama, 2019).*

These data suggest that people are mostly "good" (i.e., most data points are in the top left of the diagram) and that extreme malevolence is rare (bottom right of diagram).

"Dark triad" refers to the traits of narcissism (defined as competitive dominance), psychopathy (defined as callousness, impulsivity, and cynicism), and Machiavellianism (treating a person as an instrumental means to an end).

In the study, the three factors were represented by the following statements:

**Faith in humanity** (i.e., justifying beliefs)

- I tend to see the best in people
- I tend to trust that other people will deal fairly with me
- I think people are mostly good
- I'm quick to forgive people who have hurt me

**Humanism**

- I tend to admire others

- I tend to applaud the successes of other people
- I tend to treat others as valuable
- I enjoy listening to people from all walks of life

**Kantianism**

- I prefer honesty over charm
- I don't feel comfortable overtly manipulating people to do something I want
- I would like to be authentic even if it may damage my reputation
- When I talk to people, I am rarely thinking about what I want from them

According to the study, we all possess a mixture of dark and light traits.

The light triad was positively associated with unbiased thinking; authenticity (including in relationships); romantic love; friendship; and love for all; with the reverse situation for the dark triad. The dark triad was found to be positively associated with instrumental sex (using sex to get what you want) and game playing in relationships (with the reverse situation for the light triad).

The light triad was positively associated with survivor guilt and omnipotent guilt (feeling guilty about not being able to help the world), and negatively associated with self-hating guilt, with the situation reversed for the dark triad. This guilt, together with their elevated compassion, allows the possibility that people higher in light traits are open to emotional manipulation, for purposes of exploitation, by people high in dark traits.

The light triad was positively associated with empathy (emotional resonance and cognitive perspective-taking), and compassion, with the reverse being true for the dark triad, except for a small correlation between the dark triad and cognitive empathy.

**A quiet ego**

> Angels fly because they take themselves lightly.
>
> *G K Chesterton*

The light triad was positively associated with having a quiet ego and all its facets: detached awareness, inclusive identity (identifying with others as well as oneself), perspective taking, and personal growth. The dark triad was negatively associated with a quiet ego, although uncorrelated with (unrelated to) inclusive identity and

personal growth. To quiet the ego is here defined as to quiet "that aspect of the self that has the incessant need to see itself in a positive light" (Kaufman, 2018).

The four facets of a quiet ego are interrelated, and are relevant to the moral requirement to balance the needs of the self and the needs of others, compassionately. For humans, it could be argued, this is essential for happiness, a state of satisfaction with one's life. This illustrates well the fact that survival and happiness are two distinct things, and that without our being aware of it, the unawakened ego can behave in blind, reflexive ways that can damage our own long-term prospects of happiness in life, and those of others. What is required for success, happiness, may be different from what is required to protect our comfort and to see ourselves in a good light in the present moment.

Healthy, long-term personal growth is achieved through "mastery, authenticity, and positive social relationships" (Kaufman, 2018). The "growth mindset" is something we can take into any situation, so that any situation is viewed as an opportunity for us to grow and learn. This implies a lack of attention on whether we perceive ourselves in a positive light, which clears the way for us to take the perspectives of others into account. Detached awareness is defined as "an engaged, nondefensive form of attention to the present moment", an "attempt to see reality as clearly as possible" (Kaufman, 2018).

As with any aspect of the ego, an unquiet ego may operate and be known either, or both, consciously or/and unconsciously.

See also:

Definitions of thriving, p. 18

Perfect Compassion, p. 33

The ego, p. 230

Meditation, p. 234

The light triad was positively associated with mature ego defenses, while the dark triad was positively associated with immature ego defenses. The dark triad was negatively associated with belief that people are good, and that one's self is good.

See also:

Ego defenses, p. 238

The light triad was negatively associated with conspicuous consumption, selfishness, and with both proactive and reactive aggression, with the situation reversed for the dark triad. People high in light traits are primarily (socially) motivated towards intimacy and self-transcendence (going beyond the self). They are not motivated towards achievement and self-enhancement, while they do score higher than those

high in dark traits for competence and productivity. The light triad was positively associated with life satisfaction, and satisfaction in relationships, with the situation reversed for the dark triad.

Dark traits were positively associated with creativity, bravery, leadership and assertiveness, while the light triad was uncorrelated with bravery and assertiveness.

The average profile of people high in dark traits is younger and male, with greater childhood unpredictability. The average profile of people high in light traits is older and female, with less childhood unpredictability.

It is found that having light traits is positively associated with a satisfying, rewarding, successful life, and the key factor in this seems to be the ability to empathise with others (emotional resonance, perspective taking, and compassion). These traits tend to develop in the individual over a lifetime in a process of moral maturation, learned through many interactions with others, although the person has to be "light" enough to want to change. Research has found that morally advantageous traits, like conscientiousness and self control, may be more common in older people (Cohen, Panter, Turan, Morse, and Kim, 2014). Around 40% of people have both a "light" and a "dark" profile – they possess both – and those dark traits damage their relationships and hold them back in life (Neumann and Kaufman, 2020).

> Morality ... is not simply a matter of following rules ... . It involves personal effort of discrimination and judgment. This is something that must be cultivated. It is a personal responsibility to cultivate this kind of knowledge and intelligence.
>
> *Richard A Shweder, Nancy C Much, Manamohan Mahapatra, and Lawrence Park – "The 'Big Three' of Morality (Autonomy, Community, Divinity) and the 'Big Three' Explanations of Suffering" in Allan M Brandt and Paul Rozin (eds.) – "Morality and Health"*

**Online surveys**

How "dark" is your personality? https://www.darkfactor.org/

Your "light" vs. "dark" balance: https://scottbarrykaufman.com/lighttriadscale/

# Personhood

Life is worth much more than gold.

*Bob Marley – "Jamming"*

Every man and every woman is a star.

*Aleister Crowley*

A world is in there.

*Renegade Soundwave – "The Phantom"*

... who counts as a person?  The short answer is that, within a given culture, a person is someone whom others recognize as a person within the public arena.

*Michael Tomasello – "A Natural History of Human Morality"*

**Kant's "ends and means": treating every human with dignity and respect**

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) said that human beings have intrinsic value and should be treated as an end in themselves, not as a means to something else.  We all wish to follow our own goals, and not be made use of as an object to achieve the goals of another, without our consent.

A human being is irreplaceable and priceless.

> In the kingdom of ends everything has either a price or a dignity. What has a price can be replaced with something else as its equivalent; what ... is raised above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent has a dignity ...
>
> That which constitutes the condition under which something can be an end in itself has not merely a relative value, that is, a price, but an inner value, that is dignity.
>
> *Immanuel Kant – "Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals"*

> To treat someone with dignity is ... to respect their dignity. ... To respect someone's dignity by treating them with dignity requires that one shows them respect, either positively, by acting towards them in a way that gives expression to one's respect, or at least, negatively, by refraining from behavior that would show disrespect.
>
> *Michael Rosen – "Dignity: Its history and meaning"*

> We can't pursue our lives without thinking that our lives matter – though one has to be careful here to distinguish the relevant sense of "matter." Simply to take actions on the basis of desires is to act as if your life matters. It's inconceivable to pursue a human life without these kinds of presumptions – that your own life matters to some extent. Clinical depression is when you are convinced that you don't and will never matter. That's a pathological attitude, and it highlights, by its pathology, the way in which the mattering instinct normally functions. To be a fully functioning, non-depressed person is to live and to act, to take it for granted that you can act on your own behalf, pursue your goals and projects. And that we have a right to be treated in accord with our own commitment to our lives mattering. We quite naturally flare up into outrage and indignation when others act in violation of the presumption grounding the pursuance of our lives. So this is what I mean by the mattering instinct, that commitment to one's own life that is inseparable from pursuing a coherent human life.
>
> *Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, edge.org, 2016*

Each person is a self-generating source of flourishing.

Our own flourishing or thriving matters to ourselves. The pressure to value our own thriving may be related to the biological pressure to thrive and survive.

We all value the means that we use to thrive and to navigate successfully through life.

Personhood means one or both of these things:

1. external recognition by others as a person, a fellow human being.
2. the internal capacity to govern oneself intelligently – to override one's blind instincts towards immediate pleasure for oneself, in favour of long term gains and the ability to take the interests of others into account.

See also:

Fairness as respect, p. 138

Liberty and oppression, p. 221

**Human rights**

Rights are asserted by the self and given by others.

Human rights may be defined as, without hurting others:

- the right to my own bodily autonomy as far as possible – my right to decide what I do with my own body;
- the right to my own bodily integrity as far as possible – my right to receive the maximum benefit and minimum harm available to me.

The following outline of reasoning demonstrates why we feel we should respect human dignity and human rights (see Andorno and Baffone, 2014).

facts: 1) the Healing Principle exists (origin of normativity); and 2) all persons' thriving matters to themselves; +

facts: 3) cooperation with interdependence, 4) makes compassion normative in humans

fact: 5) that makes the Golden Rule (compassionate perspective taking) normative; leads to

normative ideal: we should respect human dignity (fairness as respect); +

fact: 6) humans are vulnerable; leads to

normative ideal: we should respect human rights.

In other words: we should treat people with the maximum benefit and minimum harm available to them, because they are vulnerable, and their own thriving matters to them; and the Golden Rule, compassionate perspective swapping, is a cooperative human norm.

In human small hunter gatherer groups, the feeling that "we should feed everyone in the group" seems to be near-universal. Archaeological evidence contains many examples of humans who appeared to survive many years with crippling disabilities – it is very possible that non-productive group members were kept alive by the caring and compassion of others, in multiple species throughout the human family tree, this apparently growing more frequent over time (Spikins, 2015). Cooperative breeding may have been one factor causing this, and may have been one of the earliest forms of human sharing (great apes do not share their food as a rule) (Tomasello, 2016).

See also:

The Healing Principle, p. 13

Perfect Compassion, p. 33

The Golden Rule, p. 74

Sharing on demand: "no-one goes hungry", p. 127

Egalitarianism, p. 134

Targeted helping in social group members, p. 159

Cooperative breeding, p. 173

## Circles of concern

A circle of concern includes those to whom we extend empathy and compassion; those whom we are prepared to see as people, on the same footing of equality as ourselves. We feel the pain of, and help, people of whom we approve (Decety, 2011), and therefore, those who cooperate with us.

We are all at the centre of concentric circles of concern, growing larger outwards from a central point:

- myself
- my family
- my friends
- those with whom I collaborate
- my group
- ...
- the world

We tend to feel the most loyalty and obligation towards those in the circles closest to us. As the circles grow outwards from ourselves, the fitness to be maximised gets less and less inclusive.

Our inner circle mainly operates using an ethic of communal sharing (Fiske, 1991) and unconditional love, while we tend to use the businesslike tit-for-tat reciprocity and fairness between ourselves and those outside our inner circle. Our inner circle or cooperative unit ("we") has a closed boundary that can nevertheless be expanded in certain circumstances.

Reason can tell us that people in more distant circles are human beings like ourselves. We can imagine their goals and motivations, and see that they are like our own. Reason can thereby furnish the moral sense, in the form of empathic concern and perspective taking, with material to work on (Pinker, 2011).

See also:

Inclusive fitness and kin selection – the promotion of "me", "mine", and "ours", p. 15

Evolutionary motivations for targeted helping, in Circles of concern, p. 201

## Meg De Amasi: interview by her daughter Ena Miller

*BBC World Service – "Focus on Africa", 17 April 2017*

Meg De Amasi is originally from Ghana. In 1976, after studying in the USA, she arrived in Glasgow to finish her degree in midwifery. Although she loves Scotland,

Meg says that she has felt alienated and homesick.  She wrote this poem to describe her experience:

**At least I'm trying**

I'm trying to understand
even though we don't speak the same language.
I spent time listening,
trying to interpret your words,
make sense of your beliefs,
encompass my own.
Our eyes meet,
and I know you are questioning my intelligence.
Just to let you know,
I'm trying to understand.
What are you doing to understand me?
Even though we don't speak the same language.

– *Meg De Amasi*

Meg says, "that in a nutshell was my struggles."

**Fundamental attribution error**

We tend to demonise and dehumanise members of other groups.

Humans judge the moral worth of others at first glance, very quickly, using perhaps just one or two pieces of information (Wright, 2018).  All we know about people from other groups is: they are out-group members, and therefore either competitors, threats, or irrelevant; different from us and therefore strange and uncoordinated with us.  That's all we know about them.  On the basis of this limited data, which is negative from our point of view, we consequently judge them as bad people.  Once someone is put into the "enemy box", then it is hard to get them out again.  Political leaders may exploit this tendency, with the aim of mobilising the cooperation of their own group and harnessing it for their own benefit: forming an in-group coalition against scapegoated others, with themselves at the head of the charge.

If I do not like or approve of a person or group of people, I tend to attribute this to their being essentially bad: they are bad in essence, and that's why they do things I don't like.  Conversely, I will attribute friends and others I approve of with an essence

of goodness. If an "essentially bad" person does something "good", then I attribute this to their situation rather than allowing it to contradict the bad "essence" I think they have. Likewise, I excuse bad behaviour on the part of my friends by blaming their situation. However, in reality, people mostly act one way or another according to their situation, rather than some "essence" which does not really exist. This misattribution of behaviour to essences, downplaying the more reasonable idea of the role of situations, is called in psychology the Fundamental Attribution Error.

And yet, it is really unlikely that all the people in other groups are demons. In fact, objectively, they are no more likely to be demons than the people in my group. If demonising other groups is a problem, is there a solution? Perhaps it would help if we knew more about people in other groups, than merely the single fact that they are outsiders. If we knew more than that single piece of information about them, if we could see that they are people just like ourselves – perhaps we would not be so quick to demonise them and misattribute an essence of badness to them.

See also:

Accessing the biological "magic power" – working hand in hand with nature, p. 23

Mutual respect and deservingness, p. 77

Interdependence, group loyalty, and in-group favouritism, p. 89

The Smoke Detector Principle, p. 245

People come in all shapes, sizes, and shades of brown.

If we imagine how it feels to be someone from a different group, we may realise that we are not so different, and be moved to feel empathic concern for them.

At the same time, every human being, and every human relationship, is unique.

See also:

The Golden Rule, p. 74

Inter-group warfare, p. 102

Perspective taking and helping behaviour, p. 166

Sacredness and taboo, p. 224

# Virtue and sin

**Virtue**

Practicing virtue means overcoming our negative qualities and perfecting our positive ones.  A virtue is a good habit that we learn through practice.

| | |
|---|---|
| Virtue: | a policy for achieving your goals. |
| Goal: | achievement of something you value. |
| Value: | part of your code for living. |

(After Ayn Rand, 1964.)

If we are aligned with Perfect Compassion, then we require virtues such as courage, honesty, straightforwardness, good manners, respect, moderation, self-control, watchfulness, uprightness, and compassion.  In any serious attempt at living, we also need truth and self-honesty, otherwise we are "groping in the dark" in our efforts to thrive.  Watchfulness in this context means to keep guard over our own behaviour.

In Buddhism, the "wholesome roots" are: generosity, loving-kindness, and wisdom (truth and compassion).

> 7  He who lives only for pleasures, and whose soul is not in harmony, who considers not the food he eats, is idle and has not the power of virtue – such a man is moved by MARA, is moved by selfish temptations, even as a weak tree is shaken by the wind.
>
> 397  He who has cut all fetters and whose mind trembles not, who in infinite freedom is free from all bonds – him I call a Brahmin.
>
> 398  Who has cut off the strap, the thong and the rope, with all their fastenings, who has raised the bar that closes the door, who is awake – him I call a Brahmin.
>
> *The Dhammapada*

In Christianity, the Nine Gifts of the Holy Spirit are: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

In Islam, some prominent virtues are: charity, forgiveness, tolerance, honesty, kindness and leniency, kind treatment of animals, justice, fulfilment of promises, modesty and humility, decent speech, trustworthiness, patience, truthfulness, controlling one's anger, sincerity, and respecting the elders (Wikipedia: "Morality in Islam").

**Sin or "mental defilement"**

> No good comes of no good.
>
> *Anonymous*

> All contaminated phenomena are unsatisfactory.
>
> *Seal Two of the Four Seals of Buddhism*

> 119 A man may find pleasure in evil as long as his evil has not given fruit; but when the fruit of evil comes then that man finds evil indeed.
>
> 120 A man may find pain in doing good as long as his good has not given fruit; but when the fruit of the good comes then that man finds good indeed.
>
> 239 Let a wise man remove impurities from himself even as a silversmith removes impurities from the silver: one after one, little by little, again and again.
>
> *The Dhammapada*

> The implication is that those things that do not arise from such contaminated causes can be satisfying and fulfilling. When we talk about contaminated phenomena in this context, we are referring to events and experiences that arise under the power of negative impulses, or afflictive thoughts and emotions; they are called "contaminated" because they are tainted by the pollutants of the mind. That is why they are fundamentally unsatisfying, and why their nature is said to be *dukkha*, or suffering.
>
> ... the causes and conditions that give rise to the origination of a thing are the very causes and conditions that also plant the seed for its cessation.

*His Holiness the Dalai Lama – "Transforming the Mind – Eight verses on generating compassion and transforming your life"*

In Buddhism, the Unwholesome Roots are: greed; hatred or anger; and ignorance or delusion. Actions tainted by greed, hatred or ignorance are called karmic actions, and lead to unsatisfactory consequences.

In Islam, the Inciting Nafs – those aspects of the self that encourage evil – are: stinginess, greed, envy, ignorance, arrogance, lust, anger, heedlessness, coveting, bad manners, involvement in useless things, making fun of others, having malice for others, and harming others by speech or hand.

The Seven Deadly Sins in Christianity are: lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride.

Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as "an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law."

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.

*Church of England confession*

See also:

Dark and light traits, p. 182

Desire and "original sin", p. 247

# Responsibility

Responsibility means the obligation to discharge one's duties to the standards required by one's role.

Accountability means to accept, or to have placed upon one, authorship of an action and, partially, of its consequences together with associated praise or blame for the action and its consequences.

**"What about?"**

Responding to a request to take responsibility for one's actions with "what about some other thing, that someone else did?" makes an appeal to our norm of fairness, but it is also a way of evading responsibility.

See also:

Five kinds of normativity, p. 58

Role ideals, p. 71

Normativity in small teams, p. 81

# Integrity

If you talk the talk you have to walk the walk.

*Popular saying*

In order to be chosen, one needs to appear to others to be a good partner, and the best way to do that is to actually be a good partner ...

*Michael Tomasello; Alicia P Melis; Claudio Tennie; Emily Wyman; Esther Herrmann – "Two Key Steps in the Evolution of Human Cooperation – The Interdependence Hypothesis" – Current Anthropology, vol. 53, no. 6, Dec 2012*

Integrity refers to wholeness or unity of character.  Somebody who tries to be a certain kind of person (e.g., a good person) will need to do so in all circumstances in order to be able to say they have integrity.

Fidelity, transparency, honesty and self-honesty are virtues related to integrity.

Someone who claims in the world to be a saint, but is a tyrant in the home, does not have integrity.

The opposite of integrity is hypocrisy: saying one thing and doing another.

# Good manners

> ... be courteous and cheerful ...
>
> Whoever will thrive, must be courteous, and begin in his youth.
>
> *Frederick James Furnivall – "The Young Children's Book" in "Early English Meals and Manners"*

Good manners are of foremost importance in any social situation.

They are an act of compassion towards others, that demonstrates safeness through self-control (Wilson, 1993); willingness to abide by established norms; acting with least harm; and affiliation with people.

**The Montagu Principle**

> Civility costs nothing and buys everything.
>
> *Lady Mary Montagu, letter to her daughter Mary, Countess of Bute, 30 May 1756*

> ... even in the worst of times, even when someone's attacking you, responding with kindness and respect is better than fighting fire with fire.
>
> *Dr Jeremy Frimer – "All in the Mind", BBC Radio 4, 6 November 2018*

The notion that civility is usually beneficial and rarely costly has been called The Montagu Principle.  We tend to like people who are polite and civil, and dislike those whom we perceive of as rude.  This may be because the social arena operates along two dimensions: competition/dominance and cooperation/morality, with cooperative/moral people seen as more likeable than the competitive/dominant.

Politeness is an example of "dove-ish" and submissive behaviour, and we also tend to dislike people whom we see as submissive.  But the perceived warmth of the polite person more than makes up for their submissiveness in our approval rating of them.

If we use politeness when talking with someone, it may serve to preserve or enhance their reputation in the public sphere: a prosocial, face-saving function that saves the other from embarrassment, and demonstrates that we respect them, hold them in high esteem, and that we are friendly and affiliated with them emotionally.

A lack of politeness is typically felt as a lack of respect and can lead to resentment in the target, and an impoverishment in their abilities to carry out tasks, even in medical teams (Frimer and Skitka, 2018).

# Self discipline

Self control sets you free.  It is key to success in life.

Self control is like a muscle: if we exercise it in one area of our life, it is available to be used in other areas (Baumeister and Tierney, 2012).

Self control – now – ensures that your future self is in the best possible shape.  It means to value your future self as much as you currently value your present self.

Impulse control is handled in the brain by the frontal lobes: the thinking mind.  The slow consideration available here liberates us from the tyranny of our impulses (Pinker, 2011).

> 'Would you rather have five dollars now or forty dollars in two weeks?' Studies by [David] Laibson, Christopher Chabris, Kris Kirby, Angela Duckworth, Martin Seligman, and others have found that people who opt for the later and larger sums get higher grades, weigh less, smoke less, exercise, more, and are more likely to pay off their credit card balance every month. ...
>
> [Roy F Baumeister and his colleagues] found that students with higher scores [in a self control questionnaire] got better grades, had fewer eating disorders, drank less, had fewer psychosomatic aches and pains, were less depressed, anxious, phobic, and paranoid, had higher self-esteem, were more conscientious, had better relationships with their families, had more stable friendships, were less likely to have sex they regretted, were less likely to imagine themselves cheating in a monogamous relationship, felt less of a need to 'vent' or 'let off steam,' and felt more guilt but less shame.  Self-controllers are better at perspective-taking and are less distressed when responding to others' troubles, though they are neither more nor less sympathetic in their concern for them.  And contrary to the conventional wisdom that says that people with too much self-control are uptight, repressed, neurotic, bottled up, wound up, obsessive-compulsive, or fixated at the anal stage of psychosexual development, the team found that the more self-control people have, the better their lives are.  The people at the top of the scale are the healthiest.
>
> *Steven Pinker – "The Better Angels of Our Nature"*

Note their joy.  Their peace.  Their strength.  Their love.

The ability to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done is the true freedom in life.

*Richard Foster – "Life with God – a life-transforming new approach to Bible reading"*

Knowing others is intelligence;
knowing yourself is true wisdom.
Mastering others is strength;
mastering yourself is true power.

*Lao Tzu – "Tao Te Ching"*

163  It is easy to do what is wrong, to do what is bad for oneself; but very difficult to do what is right, to do what is good for oneself.

*The Dhammapada*

It is only by the putting forth of effort and by persistence that one acquires self-control.

Without strenuous effort there can be no *bodhi*; without strenuous effort there can be no merit.

*P. Lakshmi Narasu – "The Essence of Buddhism"*

**Self-control and duty**

Other people, who rely on me, require me to have self-control so that I can carry out my duty.  This self-control can consist of conscientiousness and diligence as well as not getting drunk at work.

### Self-control and meditation

It is said that meditation can help to build self-control, by continually forcing the conscious awareness back to the object of concentration (the breath, the slow footsteps, etc.).

See also:

Normativity in small teams, p. 81

Meditation, p. 234

# Why do good?

### Strategic and moral reasons

There are two categories of reasons for acting in order to thrive more: strategic (instrumental, prudential), and moral reasons. Strategic reasons are the "rational" reasons of self-interest, doing what is convenient for "you"; and moral reasons involve considerations of what is right and wrong. In practice, our reasons are mostly a mixture of the two.

Over the course of the evolution of human morality, what started in the earliest humans as strategic social activities and motivations aimed at strategic cooperation became embodied in the psychology of the species as "moral" activities with corresponding moral motivations. In other words, the earliest humans cooperated because it was expedient; later humans, including *Homo sapiens*, behave fairly, helpfully and cooperatively because we feel it is the right thing to do, as well as for reasons of expediency.

> genuinely moral beings ... are genuinely concerned about the well-being of others and ... genuinely feel that the interests of others are in some sense equal to their own
>
> When I donate money to a beggar on the street, [some people] would argue, what I am really doing is attempting to enhance my reputation in the eyes of others. But why the really? Why can I not be doing both? Nothing makes for a better behavioral decision than something that achieves two goals at once: I help the poor person for whom I feel genuine concern, and I enhance my reputation at the same time – win-win. The fact that I have strategic motives is undoubted, but I also have generous and egalitarian motives, and whenever possible I do things to fulfil them all simultaneously. And when they conflict, many considerations determine which one wins out, but in any given situation my generous or egalitarian motives can in principle win out, as people demonstrate every day as they sacrifice themselves for others.
>
> *Michael Tomasello – "A Natural History of Human Morality"*

## Ultimate and proximate reasons

"Ultimate" refers to evolutionary reasons for doing things: the motivations for behaviour that the members of the human family tree had when facing everyday pressures in ancient times: ultimately, the pressure to thrive, survive and reproduce cooperatively within a risky ecological niche. For example, humans cooperate because we thrive, survive and reproduce better together than apart.

Proximate reasons are the modern translation of these ancient biological, social, and cultural pressures into the psychological tendencies, instincts and emotions of modern humans.

## Genetic [non-]determinism

We do not have to do what our evolved genetic legacy orders us to do, which may be counter-productive in the long run, in our modern world.

> Yes certain aspects of our behavior may be genetically guided, instilled by natural selection in our savanna-dwelling ancestors. But genes aren't destiny. Genetic does not mean unchangeable. All sorts of environmental factors can affect the expression of genes. Likewise, we can use reason to curtail our inclination to categorize ourselves and others in terms of social group membership, whether this is based on race, tribe, SES [socio-economic status], or nationality.
>
> *Jean Decety and Jason M Cowell – "Empathy, justice, and moral behavior": AJOB Neuroscience 2015; 6(3): 3-14*

## Skilful and unskilful actions

In Buddhism, a skilful action is one that helps the self, or others, or both, and does not harm others. An unskilful action unnecessarily harms the self, or others, or both.

### Adaptive and maladaptive actions

These are terms borrowed from evolutionary biology. An adaptive action increases the individual's inclusive fitness, which includes that of his or her social environment. A maladaptive action harms the individual's inclusive fitness.

### Evolution, natural selection, and social selection

Natural selection means that those organisms that are better adapted to their environment, including being fitter than neighbouring members of the same species, are more likely to live and reproduce than those which die off at an earlier age. Therefore, their genes become more prevalent in the general population's gene pool.

Evolution means that as the environment changes, the structure or behaviour of the species has to change quickly enough over time to accommodate it and survive.

In social selection, the evolutionary selection pressures come from other living creatures, especially of the same species. In the evolution of human morality, we have faced a number of social selection pressures, for example:

- towards peaceful tolerance and sharing, and against dominants and hogs, when co-feeding on scavenged carcases, in small groups of early humans;
- towards being a good cooperator;
- towards being a good cultural group member, in large groups of modern humans.

It would be wrong to draw simplistic parallels between modern hunter gatherers and ancient humans, since all modern humans are affected by the wider modern world.

> ... hunters and gatherers recorded in the "ethnographic present," that is, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries "were intimately tied into continent-wide cultural matrices, be it through the world market or through other direct and indirect contacts with more complex societies" (Wobst, 1978).
>
> *Martin Wobst (1978), The archaeo-ethnology of hunter-gatherers or the tyranny of the ethnographic record in archaeology, American Antiquity 43(2), 303-309*

*in Jonathan Haas and Matthew Piscitelli: The Prehistory of Warfare – Misled by Ethnography; in (Fry, 2013)*

# Moral foundations theory

In his book "The Righteous Mind – why good people are divided by politics and religion", Jonathan Haidt (2013) distinguishes six foundational families of values that go beyond care/harm and fairness to describe cooperative moral values much more completely.

The theory states that these six foundations are the moral "taste receptors" of the human race, and each culture mixes its own moral cuisine according to its individual needs and history (Ekins and Haidt, 2016). The theory states that each foundation is a solution to adaptive challenges faced by our ancestors, whether human or generally mammalian.

The fact that human species thrive, survive and reproduce within a risky foraging niche leads to the necessity for us to collaborate and to live interdependently within small and large groups. In turn, this leads to the necessity for families of values related to:

1. benefit and harm, empathic concern, helping, compassion
2. fairness, reciprocity, and discouraging cheating and free riding
3. liberty and oppression
4. loyalty to, or betrayal of, the group or team; group solidarity
5. deference to authority and order, and subversion of authority and order
6. sacredness (purity) and taboo.

See also:

Inclusive fitness and kin selection – the promotion of "me", "mine", and "ours", p. 15

Patriarchal norms, p. 104.

## The "big three" of morality

Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, and Park (1997) distinguish three foundational moral domains: 1) the ethic of autonomy; 2) the ethic of community; and 3) the ethic of divinity.

Each relates to a different way of representing a person: 1) as a free agent; 2) as part of a group or partnership; 3) as a vessel of the divine.

Each aims to maximise a particular good: 1) personal rights, benefits and fairness ("rights"); 2) the good of the group and the people around us ("responsibilities"); 3) sacredness and sacred values.

The ethic of autonomy relates to the families of values around compassion and fairness, represented by Michael Tomasello's moral formulae "you > me" and "you = me", respectively. In this ethic, people are individuals negotiating with other individuals with respect to issues like benefit and harm, fairness, reciprocity, justice, and rights. This is referred to by Graham, Haidt and Nosek (2009) as an "individualising" ethic.

The ethic of community relates to the ways in which a person is part of an interdependent group, and is referred to by Graham et al. (2009) as a "binding" ethic, since the individual is normatively bound by the people and the group matrix around them. It is represented by Tomasello's formula, "we > me". Therefore, it covers moral concerns of duty, obligation, responsibility, commitment, reputation, obedience to authority, respect for tradition, etc.

In a religious setting, the ethic of divinity is related to respecting the essence of the divine that is said to be within every person, if not every living thing. In a non-religious context, it relates to respecting wholesomeness and moral purity and cleanliness. The body or soul can be "polluted" by moral vice or selfishness, including the violation of any sacred norm.

See also:

The moral compass, p. 55

Normativity in small teams, p. 81

## Benefit and harm, empathic concern, helping, compassion

See also:

The Healing Principle, p. 13

Perfect Compassion, p. 33

Targeted helping, p. 155

Empathy, p. 163

**Fairness and reciprocity**

See also:

Fairness, p. 121

Evolution of the normativity of fairness (as distributive justice), p. 139

Reciprocity, p. 141

**Liberty and oppression**

The "liberty" moral foundation is a reaction to illegitimate authority: that which achieves its aims through bullying, domination and intimidation (Haidt, 2013).

Autonomy requires, minimally:

1. Liberty: freedom from controlling influences.
2. Agency: the capacity to pursue one's own intentions in one's own way. This further implies that one has the freedom of knowledge or understanding.

(Beauchamp and Childress, 2001; Berlin, 1969)

Agency includes the freedom to choose, for oneself, long term over short term thriving; or the ability to forego an immediate gratification in favour of intelligent long term options. We are not free when we are slaves to our passions and desires. This idea is favoured by organised religion. It also includes moral agency: the capacity to choose right behaviour from wrong; the freedom to "restrain [yourself] from preferring your own immediate advantage over the rightful and more distant interests of others" (Wilson, 1993).

Total autonomy is physically impossible. It is also morally undesirable because of the potential negative effects on others. Arguably, in every area where we have autonomy, we have substantive or partial autonomy.

Autonomy and egalitarianism are all of a piece. In an egalitarian group, no person has the right to command another (Endicott and Endicott, 2008). The only alternative is to try and persuade others, through intelligent reasoned argument, and/or eloquence and charisma, and/or psychological manipulation. The last of these would be dishonest and unethical, since it violates norms of transparency as well as of personal autonomy and agency.

Autonomy may be restricted by a number of factors, internal and external, including:

1. Hierarchical authority. (See also: Respecting authority and order, p. 223)
2. Social norms. (See also: Conventions, norms, and institutions, p. 91)
3. A professional code of conduct.
4. Coercive control. (See also: Controlling behaviour, p. 185)
5. Obligation to others. (See also: Initiating collaboration: making a commitment, p. 68; Normativity in small teams, p. 81; Responsibility, p. 208)
6. Addictions or other compulsive behaviours.

**Autonomy, personhood, and human dignity**

Agency is the capacity to seek one's own goals in one's own way (i.e., to thrive in one's own chosen way). This is related to personhood: by treating someone as a person, with the maximum benefit and minimum harm available to them, we are respecting their need to thrive in their own way.

Through self-other equivalence, reciprocity, and the norm of Perfect Compassion, if we wish agency and personhood for ourselves, we cannot do exactly what we like: we must respect the agency, liberty and rights of others.

As a way to help somebody flourish, we may attempt to promote their autonomy (Beauchamp and Childress, 2001).

See also:

Perfect Compassion, p. 33

Egalitarianism, p. 134

Personhood, p. 197

Self discipline, p. 212

Respecting authority and order, p. 223

### Loyalty to the group or team

See also:

Interdependence, group loyalty, and in-group favouritism, p. 89

### Respecting authority and order

Authority ranking means to respect and act in accordance with some kind of hierarchy, whether of "age, gender, descent, ethnicity, religious observance, knowledge, physical prowess, some form of accomplishment, personality or charisma, appointment to office, or any of a myriad of other criteria" (Fiske, 1991).

Accordingly, there may be a number of different kinds of hierarchy: dominance hierarchy based on fighting ability; status hierarchy; or prestige hierarchy, based on talents or skills, for example (Hagen and Garfield, 2019).

While we believe that the members of the human family tree lived a strictly egalitarian lifestyle for much of its history (Knauft, 1991), authority ranking is a feature of modern life. In the "classical" model of this moral foundation (Fiske, 1991), the political hierarchy is governed by consent rather than coercion or force or the threat of harm. A hierarchy that is perceived by subordinates to be legitimate, such as a state and police force that are perceived to be legitimate, may use "reasonable" force and coercion in its governance. To this end, those illegitimately in power may seek to artificially legitimise themselves in the minds of subordinates.

If I bully or coerce someone into something, then I am using them as an object for my own ends, rather than leaving them free to pursue their own ends. This goes against the egalitarian instincts of human beings, since one person is seizing power. People dislike being dominated (Boehm, 1993); it invokes the "liberty/oppression" moral foundation.

In a legitimate hierarchy, subordinates have a duty of respect and obedience to those higher up, while those higher up have a duty towards subordinates to care for them and to maintain peace and social order.

In other primates, such as chimpanzees, macaques, and baboons, the male dominance hierarchy operates both through consent and the threat of violence and harm (de Waal, 1982/2007). However, humans prefer to achieve social control ethically, through norms, rather than the threat of violence.

A hierarchy keeps order among its members. This moral foundation of respecting hierarchy and authority also includes respect for the traditional social and moral order (Ekins and Haidt, 2016).

See also:

Competition, p. 114

**Sacredness and taboo**

> Oh, that dirty, double-crossin' rat. I'd like to get my own hooks on him. I'd tear him to pieces.
>
> *James Cagney – "Blonde Crazy" (1931)*

> Cleanness of body was ever esteemed to proceed from a due reverence to God, to society, and to ourselves.
>
> *Sir Francis Bacon – "Advancement of Learning" (1605)*

> Cleanliness is next to godliness.
>
> *Proverb*

**Moral anger**

Moral anger is the anger we feel when someone commits a moral violation by breaking a moral norm. The violation of something considered sacred is likely to produce the greatest moral anger. Along with inter-group conflict, moral anger is the dark side of morality, responsible for some of the worst atrocities of the human race, such as witch-burning, and for everyday cruelty in the name of right (Pinker, 2011). The concept of justice, if someone is judged for their moral deservingness, can be an instrument of moral anger.

A study by Rozin, Lowery, Imada, and Haidt (1999) produced evidence that moral anger is elicited by violations of the "autonomy" ethic of interpersonal harm, reciprocity and fairness; contempt by violations of the "community" ethic of duty, responsibility, hierarchy etc.; and "disgust" (see below) by contravention of the "purity" ethic of sacredness.

Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, and Lerner (2000: p 855) mention the "ferocity-forgiveness spectrum" of religious moralists, "a continuum that could be personified at one end by Torquemada of the Spanish Inquisition and at the other end by open-

minded and compassionate 20th century Judaeo-Christian thinkers such as Archbishop Tutu."

Most murders are committed in moral anger, in revenge for perceived wrongs, in everyday disputes that escalate out of control (Black, 1983; Shermer, 2015).

> Homicide is often a response to adultery or other matters relating to sex, love, or loyalty, to disputes about domestic matters (financial affairs, drinking, housekeeping) or affronts to honor, to conflicts relating to debts, property, and child custody, and to other questions of right and wrong. ...
>
> Many crimes involving the confiscation or destruction of property also prove to have a normative character when the facts come fully to light. There are, for example, moralistic burglaries, thefts, and robberies.
>
> *Donald Black – "Crime as Social Control"*

Since empathic concern depends on the amount of approval we feel for someone (Decety, 2011), moral anger can easily destroy empathic concern, opening the way for normally-unthinkable cruelty.

**Sacredness and moral pollution**

Something that is sacred has infinite value (Pinker, 2011). Tetlock et al. (2000: p 853) define sacred values as "any value that a moral community explicitly or implicitly treats as possessing infinite or transcendental significance that precludes comparisons, trade-offs, or indeed any other mingling with bounded or secular values."

We find it shameful and self-polluting to even contemplate trading off something we find sacred for money or convenience (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek, 2009; Tetlock, 2003). The longer we contemplate it, the more irreparably we damage our moral identity (Tetlock et al., 2000). People who tolerate this kind of thinking or action in others are typically viewed with anger and contempt.

When someone breaks a sacred norm or violates a sacred value, we are likely to experience moral outrage. If we even contemplate doing it ourselves, we then attempt moral cleansing, a way to mend our personal and public moral identities by reaffirming the value or norm, perhaps going above and beyond this, thereby to mend our identity, reaffirm our solidarity with our moral community and rid ourselves of the sense of pollution.

For most people, sacred values include honour, justice, love, life, friendship, and loyalty to one's country or group. Someone who is prepared to sell one of these for personal gain is considered disqualified from the accompanying social roles.

**Moral and physical disgust**

In humans, moral and physical dirt and disgust are somehow psychologically entangled. If someone commits a morally reprehensible act, we say it is dirty, or disgusting, or leaves a bad taste in the mouth, and the person themselves may feel polluted and wish to cleanse their personal and public moral identities.

In what way are moral and physical dirt entangled? It used to be thought that moral and physical disgust are handled by the same brain regions, particularly the insula, possibly because the questions being asked in the studies were about a combination of physical and moral disgust. Another study (Oaten, Stevenson, Williams, Rich, Butko, and Case, 2018) found that moral and physical disgust are handled by different parts of the brain, and that brain scans reveal that moral disgust looks more like moral anger in the brain. There is evidence that when we say that something is dirty or disgusting, this is a colloquial way of expressing anger or irritation as much as physical disgust (Nabi, 2010).

The entanglement may be due to moral purity and the cooperative nature of the values that people find sacred. The present hypothesis is that cooperative thriving is sacred to human beings, and that our most sacred values are to do with either thriving or cooperative thriving (e.g., life, loyalty etc.); or kin selection; or sexual norms. What we call moral disgust is really a certain kind of moral anger about the pollution of sacred values (i.e., a pollution of infinity/purity) by trading them off for things of finite value such as money or other personal gain: selfishness.

**Moral disgust and cooperation**

It may be that the entanglement of moral and physical disgust began with cooperation at close quarters with others in small groups, millions of years back in the human family tree. In a small group, it is necessary for people to have physically clean habits: for example, not to defecate in the middle of the camp. A violation of the rules of personal hygiene, since it is a social matter, and a breach of cooperation, is a moral matter, and would be met with both moral anger and physical disgust on the part of one's camp-mates. It is as if cooperative flourishing was one of the original sacred values of the human race, that could be polluted by dirty habits. This may be why personal selfishness and intemperance (i.e., letting the side down in order to pursue personal pleasure) breach the ethic of purity/divinity (Steiger and Reyna, 2017; Haidt and Joseph, 2008).

A study by Chapman, Kim, Susskind, and Anderson (2009) found that when encountering both physically disgusting things (foul-tasting drinks, photographs of faeces and injuries) and morally disgusting things (being made an unfair offer in a version of the Ultimatum game), the face reacts with the same expression: we wrinkle the nose and draw up the upper lip. The face is a social communicator, so this may be a way to communicate social aversion. We may note that fairness is a cooperative value.

(In the Ultimatum game, there is an amount of money to be split: say, £10; a proposer makes an offer to share an amount with the responder, who can accept the offer; or reject it, in which case each person receives zero.)

In modern society, we find that some sexual practices are thought disgusting by many. This may be because the male-female pair bond, for the purpose of bearing children, has been sacralised (i.e., "no sex outside marriage"). Bestiality is physically disgusting, and primates, and animals in general, are known to avoid incest (Chapais, 2008). In primates, depending on the species, either the males or the females disperse to other groups on reaching adulthood.

If people from other groups are disgusting to us, this may be because their cooperative norms seem funny and strange, and therefore they do not coordinate with ours; rather than a fear of foreign germs to which we may not be immune. What is more, foreigners are not bound by our cooperative norms.

See also:

Fundamental attribution error, p. 202

**Conservatives and liberals**

According to the research of Haidt et al. (2013) and Graham et al. (2009), the moral concerns of Western liberals or political left-wingers consist primarily of benefit and harm, fairness as equality, and liberty as protecting the weak from the strong, with less prominence given to in-group loyalty, deference to authority, and purity/sanctity. We imagine that these are like the morality of small prehistoric groups or people living in so-called "simple" societies.

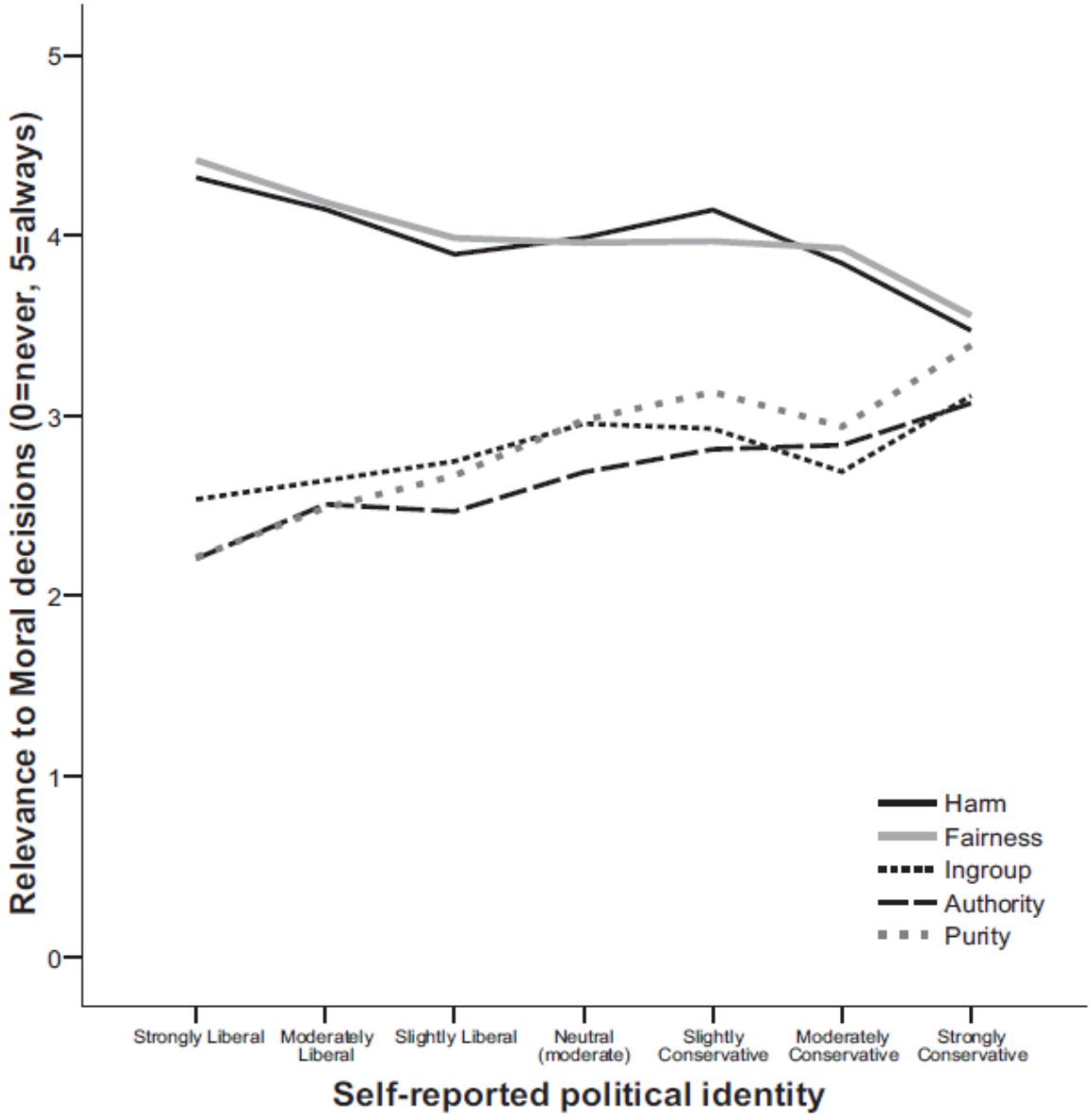
The moral concerns of political conservatives or right-wingers feature all six cooperative-moral foundations at approximately equal levels, with fairness as proportionality, and liberty as protecting citizens from oppressive government regulation. These concerns all belong to large groups: including the "binding" ethics

of community and divinity/purity. Concerns about benefit and harm and fairness decrease somewhat as people become more conservative.

The research did not recognise patriarchy and kin-selection as moral foundations.

Liberals tend to hold an optimistic view of human nature, that people are inherently "good" and need to be free in order to pursue their legitimate goals. Conservatives tend to believe that humans are inherently selfish and imperfectible, and that their base instincts need to be reined in (Graham et al., 2009).

Conservatives tend to be more parochial – to have a smaller "circle of concern" than liberals: i.e., conservatives tend to care mainly about their own group, while liberals profess universal concern for humanity.



*from Jesse Graham; Jonathan Haidt; and Brian A Nosek – "Liberals and Conservatives Rely on Different Sets of Moral Foundations": Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2009, Vol 96, No. 5, 1029-1046*

**Political extremism**

Research in Austria by Duspara and Greitemeyer (2017) indicates that political extremism is somewhat associated with dark personality traits: specifically, narcissism and psychopathy.

A US study by Moss and O'Connor (2020) found that political authoritarianism, on both the left and right of the political spectrum, is moderately associated with the personality traits of entitlement and psychopathy, and dark traits in general.

In both cases, psychopathy is defined as ruthlessness and anti-social behaviour.

See also:

Dark and light traits, p. 182

# The ego

The ego is defined as those parts of your conscious and unconscious mind that form a psychological "machine for looking after you". This is in keeping with the Healing Principle, the individual pressure to thrive, survive and reproduce. The ego includes the executive functions of your thinking mind, and conscious awareness. It takes care of your self-preservation. What your ego does for you, it can also do for others. Because it is concerned with your self-preservation, and because natural selection is comparative: operating on relative advantage to those around you, the ego can become competitive and separatist in its outlook, comparing ourselves with others and keeping us separate from them, leading to a feeling of being cut off from the world in a bubble of our own mind's creation.

> The concept of the ego conveys the mind's capacity to integrate inner and outer reality, to blend past and present, and to synthesize ideas with feelings. ... Nor is the ego just for adaptation and mental synthesis. Its wisdom also encompasses defense and adult development and creativity.
>
> *George E Vaillant – "The Wisdom of the Ego"*

There are four influences on the ego, that need to be balanced successfully by the individual for the long term well being of the overall self and to fulfil the needs of morality.

The four influences on the ego are:

- [internal] the "id" or emotions and subconscious drives
- [internal] the conscience and moral compass or "super-ego" (moral sense)
- [external] reality
- [external] people

See also:

Moral identity and conscience, p. 98

Emotions, p. 243

The ego is necessary, helpful, and useful. It is there to make sense of experience for you; to regulate you; to look after you; and to guide you successfully through life.

Like any conscientious employee, however, it can sometimes become over-zealous in carrying out its duties, to the point where this can interfere with the happy functioning of the overall person. Left to itself, the ego can let us down in a number of ways; for example:

- the "dark side" of the ego is selfish, controlling, dominant or needlessly aggressive behaviour, where the self only cares about the self, potentially at the expense of others.

  See also:

  Dark and light traits, p. 182

- The ego's decision-making process may cave in too easily to the emotions, including greed, selfishness or the need for immediate gratification.

- Truth is stranger than fiction: the mind might like to invent a nice solution for a problem, but when dealing with humans and the natural world, the reality can be more complex than the mind can realise, and so, the solution might fail. This "clever plan" will likely be partly conscious and partly unconscious, like the ego itself (Freud, 1923/2010).

- Identifying our self-preservation with our opinions, actions, status, possessions, etc. "If my opinion is wrong then I am wrong." This ego-identification is at the heart of attachments: identifying one's self-preservation with external entities to make oneself feel bigger and more important. To identify with something means that "our goals are aligned".

  See also:

  Desire and "Original Sin", p. 247

- Investing everything we do with the need for immediate self-preservation and an immediate need to feel good psychologically. If we cannot rise above this, we are in chains.

> Be willing to be uncomfortable. Be comfortable being uncomfortable. It may get tough, but it's a small price to pay for living a dream.
>
> *Peter McWilliams*

- Fixed ideas and opinions, based on an unacknowledged emotional need of some kind: for example, identification with one's ideas (see above).
- Maladaptive or "immature" coping mechanisms.

  See also:

  Ego defenses, p. 238
- Having expectations that things must be a certain way.
- Not realising that the mind's products are not reality.

See also:

A quiet ego, p. 195

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was one of the first practitioners of psychoanalysis. He stated that the overall aim of the ego is to follow the Reality Principle: to balance the pure pleasure-seeking of the unconscious id against the moral conscience of the super-ego in order to achieve the best or most skilful results, for the individual, in long-term reality. This could be called an essence of morality. A mature ego can follow the Reality Principle and defer gratification until a more suitable time and place are obtained, that gives the best long-term outcome.

> In the theory of psychoanalysis, we have no hesitation in assuming that the course taken by mental events is automatically regulated by the pleasure principle. We believe, that is to say, that the course of those events is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension; and that it takes a direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension – that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure. ...
>
> Under the influence of the ego's instincts of self-preservation, the pleasure principle is replaced by the reality principle. This latter principle does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction, and the temporary toleration of unpleasure, as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure.
>
> The pleasure principle long persists, however, as the method of working, employed by the sexual instincts, which are so hard to educate, and, starting

> out from those instincts, or in the ego itself, it often succeeds in overcoming the reality principle, to the detriment of the organism as a whole.
>
> *Sigmund Freud – "Beyond the Pleasure Principle"*

**Monitoring and the "default state"**

When your mind is not occupied with some specific task, your ego constantly scans and monitors your past, present and future looking for opportunities and threats, keeping up the incessant "mind chatter" that we are all familiar with. This is the mind's resting or "default" state. Since negatively-valued information is more salient, the ego may constantly supply the mind with "bad news" that can be distressing.

See also:

The Smoke Detector Principle, p. 245

**Your Restless Mind**

All is well
until your restless mind
wakes up and starts to wonder
whether all is well.

Nothing is wrong
until your restless mind
stirs to life and starts to suspect
that something might be wrong.

Like an overpaid manager trying to justify his role
your mind finds problems that didn't exist before
and persuades you to make changes
even though your life is running smoothly.

Like a detective who always suspects foul play
your mind keeps questioning reality
going over the evidence and the sequence of events
until situations turn into crimes.

Like a soldier patrolling the streets at night

your mind is always vigilant
scanning the darkness and silence
for signs of unrest and danger.

But you can reassure your restless mind
that life is only hard if you struggle against it
that the world is only an enemy if you fight against it
and that the natural state of life is peace.

*Steve Taylor (unpublished)*

**Meditation**

Welcome to life.

In meditation, we use simple techniques to extend conscious awareness beyond the ordinary thinking mind to pure experience. The mind needs an object – we cannot think about "nothing", and we can only concentrate on one thing at a time – and in meditation we force our conscious awareness into the body and its senses, as these exist in the present moment. This intervention has the effect of interrupting and taking control of the machinations and monitoring activities of the ego, which range over the past and future; and of training the mind to exist in the present moment, thereby, potentially, reducing the stress caused by negatively valued thoughts. As such, meditation can be a comfortable and restful experience. Meditation is difficult, and if you only manage a few minutes of genuine meditation in a twenty-minute session, this is valuable.

Meditation can "uncreate" the mind (Taylor, 2021) – temporarily sweep away mental constructions and tensions.

It has been suggested that meditation loosens the association between facts and emotions: that meditation habituates the mind to reality in a safe environment, thereby making it more likely that we react to events with slow intellectual cognition rather than fast emotional reaction.

There are a number of different methods of "concentration" meditation, most notably mindfulness of breathing or of walking. You can be taught these by an experienced practitioner such as can be found in a Buddhist temple. A small charge is normally made. Many good books on the subject are also available.

**Taming the wild buffalo**

The Buddha reputedly told a story comparing mindfulness training to taming a wild buffalo. Suppose there is a wild buffalo running free through the forest: it may do

what it likes, rest or run when it likes. You can take a rope and tie the buffalo to a strong stake driven into the ground. You restrict the buffalo's food so that it does not have too much energy. Gradually the buffalo becomes used to being restricted to a small area and a limited diet, and becomes quiet. The buffalo is like your wandering ego-mind, the stake and rope represent mindfulness, and the ground is the present moment, the here and now.


**Clear sight and self-honesty**

Part of mindfulness meditation, as a way of life, is clear sight. This means to observe, acknowledge and examine our sensations, thoughts, feelings, motives, intentions, etc., for what they are. The world is conveyed via the senses to the brain, where it is constructed into the reality we are familiar with. The mind and emotions are also senses, detecting their own pictures of reality.

Truth is a component of wisdom, the other being compassion. Self-honesty is a moral virtue. Self-deception is a maladaptive ego defense: an illusion. We have to accept and acknowledge even things we do not like about ourselves.

**Acceptance and moral action**

Part of mindfulness meditation is acceptance, or mindful acknowledgement of the present moment, our thoughts, emotions, etc. But this does not imply complacency, since there is a constant pressure to thrive. After the conscious acknowledgement of reality, the question is, "what do we do about it (if anything)?"

See also:

The Healing Principle, p. 13

**Be Soft**

Don’t build a hard, solid self
full of fixed ideas and firm beliefs.

Be soft
so that you don’t create friction, or clash with the world
but accept and absorb your experience with ease.

Be soft
so that disappointments and insults don’t bruise you
but bounce harmlessly away after your softness has absorbed their force.

Be soft
so that thoughts and emotions can’t attach themselves to you
and ideas don’t turn to rigid theories which can’t be contradicted
and animosity never lingers long enough to form a grudge
and pain passes away before turning to trauma.

Be soft
so that you can bend with the wind, without breaking
and become moist with the rain, without flooding.

Be soft
so that you can pass through the world without leaving damage
only the lightest of trails which will dissolve like a cloud
and become part of the air which everyone breathes.

*Steve Taylor (from:* The Calm Center*)*

We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us – and if we do not agree, seems to put its hands in its breeches pocket.  Poetry should be great & unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself but with its subject.  –  How beautiful are the retired flowers! how they would lose their beauty were they to throng into the highway crying out ‘admire me I am a violet! dote on me I am a primrose!’

*John Keats*

# Ego defenses

**Coping mechanisms: some harmful, some beneficial**

An ego defense is a behavioral strategy employed by the ego in order to help you to cope with an upsetting situation.  An ego defense can allow you to play for time until your ego adapts and you learn to cope.

Some ego defenses are considered maladaptive or "immature", these being mainly unconscious or unknown to the conscious mind.  By definition, these are generally harmful to the self and/or others.  If a subconscious ego defense is brought into the light of day and made consciously known, it ceases to be unconscious and the way it plays out can change for the better.

Some ego defenses are considered adaptive or "mature", when we are consciously aware that we are displaying the behaviour, and why.  By definition, these are generally a harmless or beneficial way of coping.

In an ego defense, the ego will deny, distort or repress one or more of its four influences: the id (emotions and drives); the super-ego or moral sense; other people; or reality.

There are probably more ego defenses than there are people.

Immature ego defenses are usually, subconsciously, intended to get under your skin (Vaillant, 1993).

See also:

A quiet ego, p. 195

Why do good?, p. 215

The ego, p. 230

## Passive aggression

> Behind the smile, a knife.
>
> *Chinese proverb*

From a moral point of view, the most relevant ego defense is probably passive aggression or unconscious hostility. Passive aggression is corrosive of relationships. It is unconscious, and therefore consciously unknown to the perpetrator. The reason that the knowledge is forced into the perpetrator's unconscious is that it is unacceptable to their conscious mind, for whatever reason.

Passive aggression may be 1) a defense against uncomfortable feelings, the (subconscious) rationale being "attack is the best form of defense"; or 2) a result of dark traits: the person just enjoys causing pain; or 3) some combination of 1) and 2).

The best way to tackle it is to bring it out into the open: to let the perpetrator know they are being passive-aggressive.

See also:

Pleasure, p. 16

Competition, p. 114

Controlling behaviour, p. 185

Sadism, p. 189

## Puppet strings and the Grey Rock

One of the ways that people subconsciously use maladaptive ego defenses to get under your skin, is to provoke you into negative emotional reactions. The aim is to: 1) control you using these emotional reactions to jerk you around like a puppet on a string; 2) malevolently take up your mental space and energy so that they can "live rent-free in your head" and continue to cause harm, even in their absence, through making you feel a negative emotion.

One way to avoid being controlled in this way is to use the "Grey Rock" technique: be aware of the subconscious provocation, be like a grey rock, and refuse to be provoked. Instead, while acknowledging the hurt, exercise equanimity, refusing to

be shaken emotionally, and allow the provocations to wash over you with minimum effect.

See also:

Pleasure, p. 16

Competition, p. 114

Dark and light traits, p. 182

Emotions, p. 243

**Classical ego defenses**

The classical set of ego defenses was laid out by Anna Freud (1895-1982), the daughter of Sigmund Freud and a notable psychologist in her own right.

They include:

- acting out, which means to do something else instead of feeling our negative feelings.
- anticipation is mentally to prepare in advance for an undesirable event.
- displacement, where we transfer our negative feelings away from their rightful recipient (someone who has harmed us) onto someone less powerful whom we are able to push around, or onto some other blamed target.

> Roughly half of baboon aggression is displacement aggression, where an individual who is frustrated for some reason attacks a lower-ranking innocent bystander. Thus, over the course of a minute, a relatively high-ranking male who has lost a fight will chase a subordinate who will then bite a female, and who will then lunge at a nearby infant.
>
> *Robert Sapolsky – "Rousseau with a Tail – Maintaining a Tradition of Peace Among Baboons" in "War, Peace and Human Nature" edited by Douglas P Fry*

- projection is where we take a quality in ourselves that we do not like, unconsciously transfer it to someone else, and "dislike" it in them instead of in ourselves.

- reaction formation means to overcompensate for feelings in ourselves we do not like, with a more extreme example of their opposite. A good example is in people high in light traits, who are found to forgive and feel compassion for their aggressors more than may be reasonably warranted (Kaufman, Yaden, Hyde, and Tsukayama, 2019).

  See also:

  Dark and light traits, p. 182

- rationalisation is where we try to "explain away" things we do not like using intellectual arguments to weaken their perceived impact on us.
- sublimation means to express our negativity in ways that may be skilful. For example, a man who has seen his mother suffer domestic violence may thereafter be very protective of women.
- undoing is a defense where we take steps to attempt to reverse an action we regret.

**Mature ego defenses** (turning straw into gold)

Conscious ego defenses that result in a skilful outcome are called mature. These include:

- altruism or compassion: helping others.

  See also:

  Empathic distress and compassion, p. 157

- analysis and acknowledgement: uncovering the facts of the situation and acknowledging them.
- connectedness: spending time with sympathetic others. The presence of loved ones may reduce our perception of pain (Decety, 2011).

> I touch your hands
> And my heart grows strong,
> Like a pair of birds
> That burst with song.
>
> *"Younger than Springtime" – South Pacific (Rogers and Hammerstein)*

To be heard and understood can be considered one of the greatest forms of human connection.

- creativity: using suffering as a basis for artwork or other creative activity of some kind.
- humour: laughing or joking our way through the stress.
- stoicism: patiently, consciously, waiting out the time of suffering.

The sun don't shine every day.

*Anonymous*

Make sure that your coping mechanisms are not worse than your actual problems.

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# Emotions

If something brings us closer to our goals, then it is called an opportunity, and we feel a positive emotion in response. If something hinders our goals, it is called a threat, and we feel a negative emotion in response.

There are also "anti-goals" or things we want to avoid. If we move in the direction of one of these, then we experience negative emotion. If we move away from an anti-goal, we experience positive emotion.

The more important the goal, the stronger the emotion that is provoked in response to the event that affects it.

Likewise, a more significant event may affect a goal more, and will therefore provoke a stronger emotion, than a less significant event.

The positive or negative valence of an emotion is called the affect. Something that gives us a positive affect can also make us feel positively about other things. Similarly, something that gives us a negative affect (for example, hunger) can make us feel negatively about other things or experiences.

We may classify consciousness into four levels of detail:

1. bodily sensations
2. affect
3. emotions
4. thoughts

Emotions, therefore, detect the subjective meanings of things: the ways that things are relevant to your goals or anti-goals. The present hypothesis is that emotion detects fitness benefit, or its opposite.

Our emotions fall into families of related emotions.

From the primal capacity of one-celled organisms to move away from excess heat, dryness, acidity or salinity, natural selection has gradually differentiated a host of responses to cope with different kinds of threats.

Anxiety motivates escape and future avoidance, and it can serve as a warning to others. Disgust also motivates escape, prepares the body to make escape more likely, and motivates future avoidance.

... the threat that involves the possible loss of a mate's fidelity arouses emotions that are aspects of jealousy... . If the threat involves a risk of loss of social position, the specific emotions are humiliation, pride, etc.

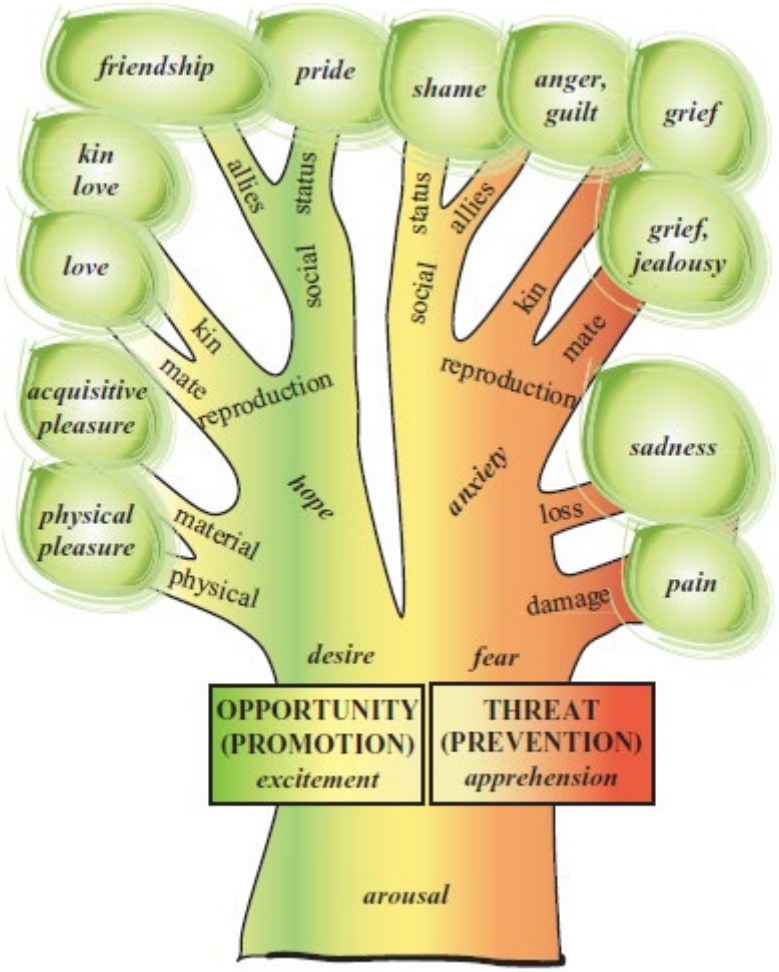
Our brains could have been wired so that good food, sex, being the object of admiration, and observing the success of one's children were all aversive experiences. However, any ancestor whose brain was so wired would probably not have contributed much to the gene pool that makes human nature what it is now. Similarly, if there were someone who experienced no upset at failure, no anxiety in the face of danger and no grief at the death of a child, his or her life might be free of suffering but also would probably be without much accomplishment, including having offspring. These evolved preferences for pursuing certain resources and avoiding their loss are at the very centre of human experience. It is not surprising that bad feelings are reliably aroused by losses, threats of losses, and inability to reach important goals ...

*Randolph M Nesse – "Natural selection and the elusiveness of happiness"*

See also:

Pleasure, p. 16

Psychopathic ethical compass, p. 56




(*Randolph M Nesse*)

**The Smoke Detector Principle**

The organism pays special attention to negatively valued information: to bad news. It makes sense from the point of view of survival to be especially concerned with threats to one's thriving or survival: it is better to be wrong and alive, than wrong and dead.

This negativity bias, or greater sensitivity to threats, relative to that to opportunities, is called the Smoke Detector Principle (Nesse, 2004).

See also:

Meditation, p. 234

## Processing emotions

We can bring our emotions into the conscious thinking mind for processing, further reflection and analysis. This can lead to a slower, more considered, measured and skilful response to the emotional stimulus.

If we consciously acknowledge the emotion and then name it using words, we load it into the part of the brain that uses words, i.e., the executive functioning and decision-making section.

In effect, the emotional message has now been delivered to the conscious mind for further processing and executive action, and consequently the feeling of the emotion may now lessen in intensity.

If we fail to acknowledge an emotion, then it will hammer at the doors of our consciousness until we do.

## Equanimity

Equanimity is the quality of not being shaken by strong emotions. If we cultivate equanimity, it contributes to our peace of mind.

# Desire and "original sin"

When desire goes "wrong".

Managing the pressure to thrive.

> The Buddha teaches that the root of all our suffering is craving or misplaced desire.
>
> *lifeofmindfulness.com/4-noble-truths/*

> Crime is only a left-handed form of human endeavour.
>
> *Alonzo D. Emmerich (Louis Calhern) in the film, The Asphalt Jungle*

> Sometimes *taṇhā* is translated as "desire," but that gives rise to some crucial misinterpretations with reference to the way of Liberation. As we shall see, some form of desire is essential in order to aspire to, and persist in, cultivating the path out of *dukkha* ["unsatisfactoriness"]. Desire as an eagerness to offer, to commit, to apply oneself to meditation, is called *chanda*. It's a psychological "yes," a choice, not a pathology. In fact, you could summarize *Dhamma* training as the transformation of *taṇhā* into *chanda*. It's a process whereby we guide volition, grab and hold on to the steering wheel, and travel with clarity toward our deeper well-being. So we're not trying to get rid of desire (which would take another kind of desire, wouldn't it). Instead, we are trying to transmute it, take it out of the shadow of gratification and need, and use its aspiration and vigor to bring us into light and clarity.
>
> *Ajahn Sucitto – "Turning the Wheel of Truth – commentary on the Buddha's first teaching"*

> Don't chase the light so hard that you lose your footing and uproot yourself. Wait for the sun to come round to you.
>
> *Steve Taylor*

"Desire" can be defined as "seeking opportunities". One definition of "craving" is "hungrily seeking opportunities". In some circumstances, hungrily seeking opportunities can make us feel bored and futile. Sometimes we can switch off the questing and just be in the moment.

Delusion, or a lack of wisdom, is a cause of suffering.

Sometimes the results of desire can be unskilful actions, unwise, lacking in wisdom, causing suffering to the self or others in the short or long term, hence the term "original sin".

It is necessary for all of us to manage our immediate pressure to thrive and seek pleasure, so that it does not cause us problems in the short or long term.

See also:

The Healing Principle: spiritual considerations, p. 22

Why do good?, p. 215

**Short term and long term benefits**

> Smile now, cry later.
>
> *Eaztpakk*

> Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.
>
> *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*

Often, the short term option, available now, will lead to short term gain but long term pain, while the long term option, further away, may be worth waiting for in the long term.

The short term is short, while the long term lasts for a long time.

See also:

Self discipline, p. 212

**Seeking to thrive through "crime" or unethical means**

See also:

Dark and light traits, p. 182

**Maladaptive, unconscious, immature ego defenses**

See also:

Ego defenses, p. 238

**Relying on sensual pleasure to make us happy**

Sensual, visceral, in-the-moment pleasure is necessary for our quality of life. A life without pleasure, or the prospect of pleasure, is just a cruel soul-destroying burden. But pleasure is the "icing on the cake" of life, and nobody can grow strong and well-nourished if they only eat the icing on the cake. We need solid foundations in order to sustain us properly.

## Attachments

> Detachment is not that you should own nothing
> But that nothing should own you.
>
> *Ali ibn abi Talib*

We like to surround ourselves with an "empire of awesomeness", external trappings that make us feel bigger, better, fitter, and of higher status as a person. We identify with these external trappings: "our goals are aligned". These trappings commonly take the form of success, achievements, possessions, people as possessions, or hopes for the future.

None of these things exist in the present time and place, where your energy and attention are required. If we let go of our attachments then we can experience more vitality and energy, and we find a deeper and more authentic identity.

> ... the urge to accumulate is a response to our sense of incompleteness and fragility. We try to bolster our sense of self by adding possessions, achievements, and power, in the same way that an insecure king continually builds up a castle and reinforces its walls. Alternatively, we become overly attached to preexisting aspects of our identity, such as our appearance or our intellect. We derive a sense of specialness from them, which also serves to reinforce our fragile sense of self. But these efforts are no longer necessary when we wake up because that sense of incompleteness and vulnerability no longer exists. ...
>
> Awakening brings a shift away from accumulation to contribution. The energy that people invested to try to alleviate their own psychological suffering is now redirected to try to alleviate the sufferings of others.
>
> *Steve Taylor – "The Leap: the psychology of spiritual awakening"*

## Striving

We are striving when we focus only on our goal rather than the journey towards it.

If we slow down, and focus on the process, we can enjoy the small achievements that take us closer to the goal. Then, if we fail to reach it, we have not failed overall.

Instead, we may have spent our time engaged in and learning from something we love (Vallerand, 2012).

**Clinging to experience**

In its monitoring of your situation, your ego, through the thinking mind, will cling to phenomena and experiences, examining opportunities or threats, continually asking "what's in it for me?". This clinging to phenomena and experiences can be a waste of your energy and attention.

> Surrender becomes so much easier when you realize the fleeting nature of all experiences ... You then continue to meet people, to be involved in experiences and activities, but without the wants and fears of the egoic self. That is to say, you no longer demand that a situation, person, place or event should satisfy you or make you happy. Its passing and imperfect nature is allowed to be.
>
> And the miracle is that when you are no longer placing an impossible demand on it, every situation, person, place or event becomes not only satisfying but also more harmonious, more peaceful.
>
> *Eckhart Tolle – "Stillness Speaks"*

> What a miserable day.
> He didn't have the decency to return my call.
> She let me down.
> Little stories we tell ourselves and others ...
> How simple life would be without those stories.
> It is raining.
> He did not call.
> I was there. She was not.
>
> *Eckhart Tolle – "Stillness Speaks"*

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# Recommended reading

**on evolutionary ethics**

**Nichola Raihani – "The Social Instinct – How Cooperation Shaped the World"**

As a readable and entertaining account of the evolutionary logic of cooperation throughout the natural world, Dr Raihani's book situates human evolutionary ethics within a wider biological context.  It is recommended as a companion volume to this one.

**Marc Bekoff and Jessica Pierce – "Wild Justice – The Moral Lives of Animals"**

Morality among the animal kingdom.

**Sarah Blaffer Hrdy – "Mothers and Others – the evolutionary origins of mutual understanding"**

Cooperative breeding.

**Penny Spikins – "How Compassion Made Us Human – the evolutionary origins of tenderness, trust and morality"**

Archaeological evidence for compassion throughout the prehistory of the human family tree.

**Michael Tomasello – "A Natural History of Human Thinking" and "A Natural History of Human Morality"**

In-depth, ecologically plausible accounts of the evolution of joint thinking, cooperation and morality in humans.

**Jonathan Haidt – "The Righteous Mind – how good people are divided by politics and religion"**

An introduction to Moral Foundations Theory.

**Alan Fiske – "Structures of Social Life"**

Four possible modes of relating to others in any social transaction.

**Martin A Nowak – "Super Cooperators – altruism, evolution, and why we need each other to succeed"**

Reciprocity and cooperation, social networks, and computer simulations.

**R A Shweder, N C Much, M Mahapatra, and L Park – "The 'big three' of morality (autonomy, community, and divinity), and the 'big three' explanations of suffering" in A Brandt and P Rozin (Eds.), "Morality and health" (pp. 119-169)**

The Big Three categories of morality (individual, group, sacredness and purity).

**M E Thomas – "Confessions of a sociopath"**

A frank and candid account of living with dark personality traits.

**Elinor Greenberg – "Borderline, Narcissistic, and Schizoid Adaptations – the pursuit of love, admiration, and safety"**

Behaviour and thinking associated with narcissistic and borderline personality disorders.

**Kirk M and Karen L Endicott – "The Headman was a Woman – The Gender Egalitarian Batek of Malaysia"**

An account of a gender egalitarian society.

**Bernard Chapais – "Primeval Kinship – how pair-bonding gave birth to human society"**

The evolution of the human family group, and how this affects human society.

**Barbara Smuts – "The Evolutionary Origins of Patriarchy": Human Nature, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 1-32, 1995**

Patriarchal control, and female resistance to it, among primates and humans.

**Ara Norenzayan – "Big Gods – how religion transformed cooperation and conflict"**

The rise of organised religion.

Most, if not all of these book authors have also written worthwhile and informative scientific papers.

**Understanding morality and ethics; 2nd edition (2022)**

This is an attempt to describe, in as complete a fashion as possible, the evolutionary basics of the everyday moral and ethical landscape. I describe morality by its parts, from which we can derive the following structure of evolutionary ethics including some meta-ethics. We may continue to derive further moral philosophy from this highly fruitful and empirically consistent paradigm.

I introduce the idea of "the Healing Principle": the near-universal, biological pressure to thrive, survive and reproduce. This pressure – instrumental normativity – unifies morality and makes it intelligible in an elegant and parsimonious way, as it supplies the normative pressure for cooperative, fair, competitive, kin-selected/inclusive, and patriarchal/sexual normativities. Emotionally it translates into a pressure to seek pleasure. In fact, it is normative in all the three domains of psychological, biological, and social/moral well being.

Normativity is should-ness or the pressure to achieve goals. Morality, and the need for moral values, principles, and virtues, are generated when we achieve our instrumental goals (thriving, surviving and/or reproducing) jointly or collectively. Goodness is defined as maximising the well being of all concerned individuals including the self, by putting the right conditions in place; or maximising the well being of the group in general; or maximising the achievement of sacred values.

Cover painting: "The Seafarer" by Liz Ridgway