

Understanding morality and ethics

2nd edition



Simon Perry 2026

Morality leads to peace,
peace leads to wisdom.

Slow down.

No good comes of no good.

This book aims to promote moral literacy.

It is not intended to tell you what you should do. Rather, it is intended to show you what people do, and why.

If you master this book, you will be able to answer succinctly any question in moral philosophy that is worth asking. The best way to master it is to read it from start to finish, which takes sustained effort.

Available online at: https://orangebud.co.uk/web_book_2.html

Front cover painting: "The Seafarer" by Elizabeth Ridgway

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Part 1

The structure of morality

The structure of the goals-methods model of morality comes in three parts:

- a) normative pressure,
- b) moral domains,
- c) moral principles.

Compare this model with the diagrams, “Theory of moral domains” on p. 42 and “Internal goals-methods structure of moral domains”, p. 58.

This framework is an extended version of “morality as cooperation” (Tomasello, 2016; Curry, 2016) – collaboration animated and made necessary by biological normativity. (We need to collaborate to achieve many of our goals.) As such, it incorporates elements of contractualism, as agreement supplies legitimacy of the regulation of collaboration. Joint goals of mutual benefit generate joint methods of achieving them (moral principles), and families of moral principles are called moral foundations (Haidt, 2013). Families of moral foundations are called moral domains. A moral domain is therefore a set of moral principles that share a common goal.

Normativity, the pressure to do the things that will allow us to thrive, survive, and/or reproduce, sets up a goal; a need; a problem that needs to be solved. This pressure is self-maximising and difficult to resist. In response to this pressure, I need to do certain things: to achieve goals of fitness, utility, and/or pleasure. Normativity is therefore the pressure to achieve goals.

Sometimes, this has to be done jointly with others. The problem of how to achieve goals jointly is solved in various ways (Curry, 2016) by the five naturally evolved moral domains, each composed of a particular type of joint fitness goal and overall collaborative method of achieving it; and all of these domains have similar internal structures and features. Within the overall collaborative method (the domain name) are sub-methods or moral principles (norms). A moral principle is, at its root, an ideal way to achieve mutual benefit – evolutionary fitness goals – and some are more distant than others from this originating definition. Hence, they are: 1) ideals; and therefore 2) goals. These ideas are key in understanding moral purity, moral normativity, and the Theory of Dyadic Morality (Schein and Gray, 2018).

If morality regulates collaboration, then ethics regulates its goal.

Morality thereby consists of the regulation of cooperation with respect to a particular moral domain, and of the ethics of goals. For example, women and men, in different ways, are regulated with respect to the domain of patriarchy. Patriarchy is both a goal and a method of achieving (male reproductive) fitness benefits, so that patriarchy itself can be evaluated ethically, and the quality of someone's behaviour with respect to patriarchy can be evaluated morally.

The internal features of the structure of moral domains are the features of collaboration itself, and its regulation, since a moral domain consists of collaboration, and its regulation according to ideal behavioural standards and methods, towards a joint goal (mutual benefit).

The logic of morality is thereby shaped by the logic of normativity (maximising benefits) together with the logic of interdependence (having to depend on others in order to obtain certain benefits, whether by sharing or collaboration).

This model is a causative model – a structure of cause and effect. Normativity “causes” or “requires” cooperation because normativity demands satisfaction and human beings want the best long-term outcome. The activity of collaboration requires regulation, and this regulation is morality. The regulation of the goals of collaboration is ethics.

If a goal is achieved at the expense of another person, it is unethical.

See also:

Instrumental normativity, p. 19

Commitment, norms, legitimacy, and responsibility, p. 33

Theory of moral domains, p. 42

Internal goals-methods structure of moral domains, p. 58

Purity in the Hindu religion, p. 74

“Harmless harms” and the Theory of Dyadic Morality, p. 75

Dark and light traits, p. 228

Desire and “original sin”, p. 265

How morality is derived from collaboration, p. 271

Why “morality as cooperation”?

Humans do almost everything cooperatively. We survive, in our risky foraging niche, by sharing and cooperating. Typically, everything that enables the individual to live in modern society has been made possible by the cooperative efforts of thousands of other people.

Cooperation needs internal regulation, and its goals need regulating, and this is the job of morality (Tomasello, 2019a) and ethics. The existence of biological normativity is trivially obvious to everyone: of course we all want to do well and to achieve our goals. To place morality within a collaborative context is less obvious – if it was obvious it would have been figured out a long time ago by moral philosophers.

The strongest evidence for the link between collaboration and morality comes from the experiments of Michael Tomasello and his team at the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig, Germany, comparing the behaviour of chimpanzees (the closest living relatives of *Homo sapiens* along with bonobos), and young human children, with respect to morality and collaboration.

Many social species of non-human animals possess elements of morality in their behaviour: empathy and perspective taking, helping in response to need, “buddy” reciprocity, sharing, and cooperative breeding (Bekoff and Pierce, 2009; Hrdy, 2009). Humans have all these, together with the only instance of a “fully fledged” cooperative morality of fairness, social norms, and joint self-regulation.

The crucial points are that: 1) young children perform this moral behaviour where chimpanzees do not, and then 2), they perform it mainly in a cooperative context and not outside it. Chimpanzees only very little put their heads together to cooperate, if at all. They have no need to cooperate to find their food of ripe fruit. Their social structure of dominance prevents the development of cooperation – a dominant will not share with a subordinate, and there is no reward for a collaborative partner. Humans, by contrast, have been egalitarian (we believe) from 4-6 million years ago, and so were always ready to share and cooperate.

If an ape has food resources in its possession, it very seldom gives up any of them to anyone else – and certainly not for no reason. Young children are a bit more generous, but not much; on average, in dictator games where they are free to share what they will, 3-year-olds across cultures offer peers about one in four items in their possession (Ibbotson 2014).

But when the resources to be divided are the fruits of a collaborative effort, we see a very different pattern. When chimpanzees pull in a board together with food clumped in the middle, typically the dominant individual simply takes it all, and collaboration breaks down over trials (Melis et al. 2006). In contrast, human 3-year-olds in the same situation divide the spoils more or less equally on more or less every trial, and they can continue to collaborate in this manner indefinitely (Warneken et al. 2011). Most dramatically, when 3-year-old peers collaborate to pull in resources and, by “luck,” one of them ends up with more than the other, the unlucky child often verbally notes the inequity (e.g., “I only have one”), and the lucky child often (about three quarters of the time) hands over the extras so as to equalize the rewards among partners (Hamann et al. 2011). They almost never do this in a control condition with no collaboration, suggesting that the sense of shared agency in producing the rewards is crucial. In contrast, chimpanzees, in a study designed to be as similar as possible to this one,

shared rewards (i.e., allowed the partner to take them) equally often inside and outside the context of a collaboration, presumably because they have no sense of shared agency in producing the spoils. In a related set of studies, children who received all of the rewards from pulling in a board with sweets on it shared those sweets more often with a collaborative partner than with a peer who was simply nearby (i.e., was a free rider to the spoils; Melis et al. 2015). Chimpanzees in the same experimental situation shared equally infrequently with partners and free riders alike (Melis et al. 2011).

Michael Tomasello (2019b:5) – “The moral psychology of obligation”

Instrumental normativity

The pressure to achieve goals

The purpose of the central nervous system is to make decisions so that we can thrive by interacting successfully with our environment.

Konrad Körding – “Decision Theory: What ‘Should’ the Nervous System Do?” (2007)

Each organism experiences an evolved pressure to do the things that will allow them to thrive, survive and reproduce. This instrumental normativity, shouldness, is the raw biological pressure to achieve goals.

This normative pressure to achieve goals has the same evolutionary origin as the pressure which pushes our bodies to heal after injury, or to maintain biological homeostasis. In fact, the entire organism is oriented in this direction. We may thrive biologically, psychologically, socially, and/or morally.

Thriving, surviving and reproducing are taken here as synonymous with evolutionary fitness, since thriving and surviving are eventually “cashed out” as increased (chances of) reproduction (Tomasello, 2016). Thriving can be defined in terms of “utility” (Gerbasi and Prentice, 2013), where thriving means to have what you find useful for living. Utility has been described as “a measure of goal achievement” (Moshagen, Hilbig, and Zettler, 2018).

The need to thrive, survive and reproduce generates goals as we seek and identify potential ways to flourish. If we do not achieve a goal, or we have our goals of well being or survival or reproduction thwarted, then we will ruminate upon it until we make good.

Research on goal pursuit in general has shown that two important signatures of goal fulfillment are positive affect and inhibition of goal-relevant concepts; in contrast, negative affect and increased accessibility of goal-relevant concepts are signals of goal frustration ...

Dill and Darwall (2014:12)

See also:

The goals-methods model of moral domains, p. 55

The metaphor of the flower in the garden

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”

Let us say you have a flower growing in your garden. If you give it the right conditions: good soil, fertiliser, water, sunshine, etc., then it will thrive and grow strong of its own accord, because natural selection and evolution have programmed it that way.

You are like that flower. If you put the right conditions in place, you will thrive and be healthy. When we benefit someone else, we are really putting the right conditions in place for them to thrive and be healthy, to grow like the flower, whether biologically, psychologically, or socially.

Hence, the flower is under an instrumental obligation to make the most of its circumstances, if it is to thrive and survive, and so, maximise its chances of reproduction.

Origin of normativity

Normativity originates in the pressure to reproduce.

The pressure to thrive depends on the pressure to survive, since we need to be strong and healthy in order to survive. The pressure to survive depends on the pressure to reproduce, since we need to survive if we are to reproduce.

The “Selfish Gene” theory popularised by Richard Dawkins (1976) states that those genes that build bodies that are good at reproducing will survive longer in the population, and will therefore become more prevalent, than those which do not. The reasoning here is that those species that experience a pressure to reproduce will out-reproduce those that do not, or that do so to a lesser degree.

We may imagine that reproductive competition between members of the same species (conspecifics) will produce a pressure to reproduce. This may be true, but it also results in the evolution of large size, horns, teeth, claws, fighting ability, etc.

Evolutionary self-selection for normativity

In addition to better reproducers simply becoming more prevalent in the population, we may hypothesise another process of natural selection and evolution at work: a self-selecting evolutionary feedback loop in favour of the evolution of normativity. It is adaptive to value fitness; it is adaptive to try to achieve fitness goals.

Organisms that try to achieve fitness goals, are naturally selected for the evolution of behaviour of trying to achieve fitness goals. Proximate normative behaviour gives rise to the evolution of proximate normative behaviour (and normative psychology, biology, etc.).

The proposal is that this may have been a runaway, compound, exponential, evolutionary feedback loop, which is why the instincts to thrive, survive, and reproduce are so immensely strong in most if not all organisms today.

... evolution selects for adaptive *actions*.

Michael Tomasello – “A Natural History of Human Thinking”

‘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”

See also:

Generalised care, p. 172

Utilitarian value and goodness

Something has utilitarian value to the extent to which it can promote my fitness, utility, or pleasure – the extent to which it can help me achieve my instrumental, utilitarian goals. Benefits (achievement of well being goals) can be biological, psychological, and/or social.

If *X* is irrelevant to my goals, then it has no value to me. If I need *X*, then it has value to me. If I don't need *X*, then it has no value to me.

A utilitarian good is something that has utilitarian value: i.e., it can promote my fitness, utility, or pleasure. In other words, for something to be instrumentally good, it has to be good *for* something. If it is not good for anything, it is either irrelevant, or bad (instrumentally).

See also:

Fitness and utility, p. 28

Moral principles and the normativity of norms, p. 54

Currency of morality, p. 134

Emotions, p. 248

Pleasure and Eros

Sigmund Freud's Pleasure Principle states that humans experience a pressure to seek pleasure. Achieving goals leads to pleasure (Nesse, 2004); there is a pressure to achieve goals; hence, there is a pressure to seek pleasure. Similarly, there is a pressure to reproduce and to go in that direction: hence, Freud's Eros principle, which states that the sexual impulse pervades much of adult life (Freud, 1920).

The proposal is that pleasure is an evolved reward for achieving fitness benefits and goals.

Our biology, psychology, and emotions all thereby share the same "game plan" of pressure towards reproduction and self-preservation.

See also:

Emotions, p. 248

The ego, p. 252

Properties of instrumental normativity

The pressure to thrive, survive and reproduce is

- maximising
- individual
- universal

That is, we wish to thrive, survive and reproduce (or to move in that direction) to the maximum extent; the pressure is generated within individuals; and it exists within every individual.

Short- and long-term pleasure

We know that many things that make us happy in the short term, e.g., recreational drugs, can make us very unhappy in the long term. It might feel good in the moment to take angry revenge on someone, but may result in negative consequences in the long term.

There are therefore two kinds of thriving or flourishing or pleasure: short term, and long term.

See also:

Short term and long term benefits, p. 267

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 and normativity). David Hume (1711-1776) stated that it is logically impossible to derive an "ought" from

an “is” – to derive normative prescriptions from facts alone – without considering desires, passions, goals, values, etc.

In other words, we cannot say that

fact *A* + fact *B* + fact *C* => you should *X* ;

unless one of the facts is “you have goal *G*”. Then, the statement becomes

you have goal *G* => you should *X*,

or, equivalently:

if you want to pursue goal *G* => then you should *X*.

We may call this a **conditional ought**. Evolutionary ethics supplies a conditional ought, through the goals-methods model of morality.

Evolutionary ethics also supplies a **descriptive ought**, of the kind

I feel I should *X*

and gives reasons why I feel I should *X*.

Evolutionary ethics cannot say

you should *X*

unless a goal, to which *X* is relevant, is specified. In other words, evolutionary ethics can supply a descriptive ought and a conditional ought, but not a **prescriptive ought**: it has no authority to tell you what to do, unless you want to achieve mutual benefit, in which case it has the authority of factual knowledge on the subject.

For example, say a group of people goes on holiday. The members of the group have as their common goals: thriving and surviving together; and making the holiday a good one. In other words, their joint goal is the mutual benefit of each individual. Each member is factually required to act in such a way as to promote this factual joint goal.

See also:

The metaphor of the flower in the garden, p. 20

Evolutionary ethics and moral realism, p. 65

Naturalistic fallacy

The naturalistic fallacy is the fallacy in thinking that what is natural is morally good. We can see with some counterexamples that this is false. It confuses the moral and approving senses of “natural” with “existing in the animal kingdom” or some such. Medicine and parachutes are produced “unnaturally”, exclusively by humans, and they are goods because they save lives.

Likewise, rape, sexual coercion, is widespread in the animal kingdom, but in humans is regarded as extremely morally wrong, as it is ethically very dark behaviour (thriving at the expense of another, instead of aiming for mutual benefit).

Normativity in non-human animals

Non-human animals, as well as humans, are required to fulfil instrumental normative standards if they are to thrive, survive and/or reproduce. For example (de Waal, 2014):

- a spider has to maintain a near-perfect web, of an optimum design, if it is to catch the maximum number of flying insects;
- a chimpanzee needs to maintain or repair the social relationships it depends on, if it is to thrive socially, psychologically, and biologically.

Normativity and intelligence

Evolution is blind and purposeless, yet normativity has evolved in biological organisms. Evolution is mindless, yet minds and intelligence have evolved in biological organisms. Evolutionarily, it may be that normativity gave rise to intelligence, since intelligence helps the organism to achieve its goals.

Intellectual rationality is an attribute of normativity: it is instrumentally rational to identify one's own interest.

See also:

Is morality rational?, p. 69

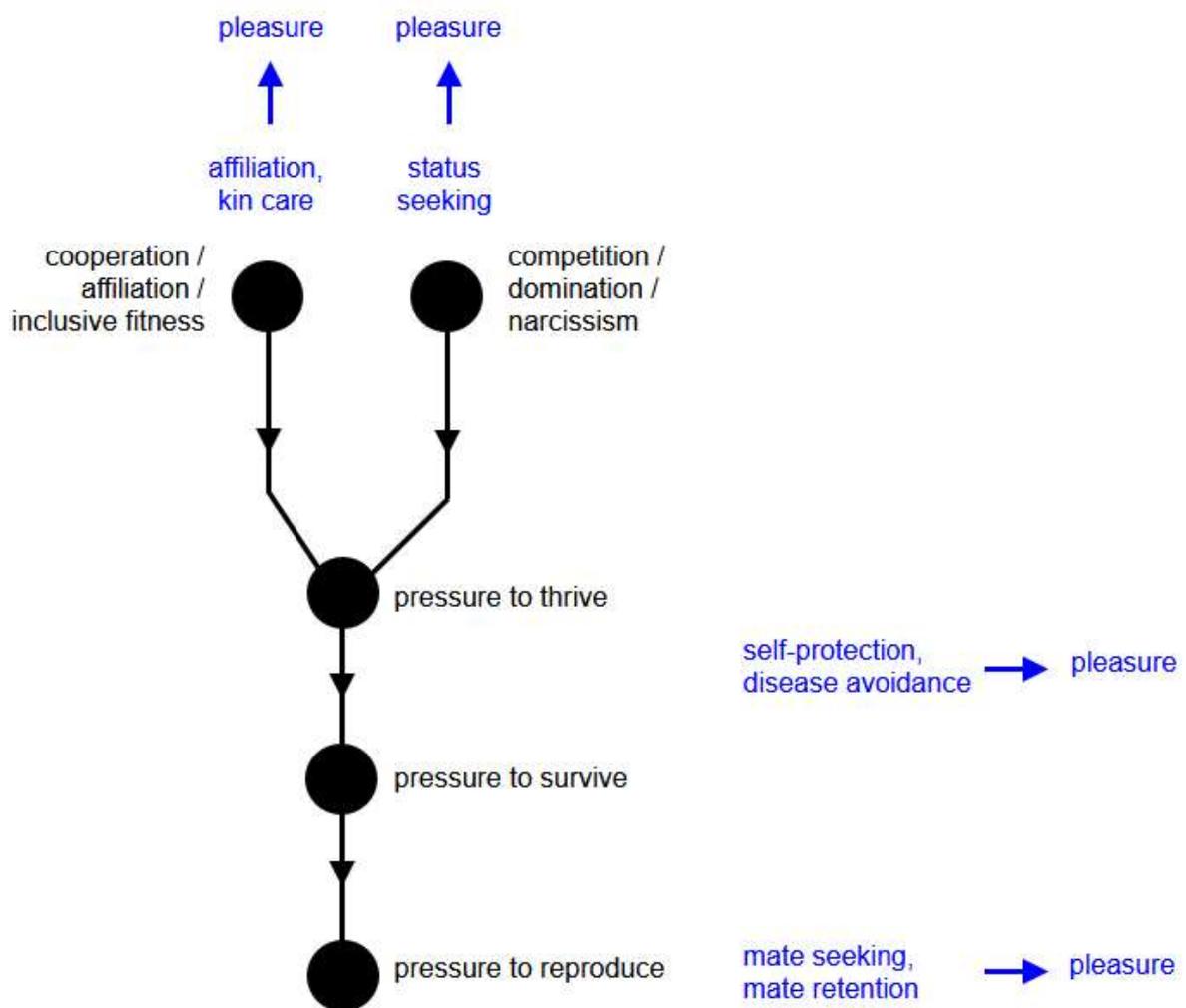
Map of normativity

The black down-arrows represent “depends on”.

The theory is that achieving fitness goals is pleasurable.

There are two ways to achieve goals socially with other people: competitively or cooperatively. Competition is at the expense of others: a zero-sum game. Cooperation is to mutual benefit and is a positive-sum game.

This diagram “plugs into” the diagram of how morality is derived from collaboration. We see therefore that all aspects of collaboration are channels or conduits for normativity: collaboration is an instrument of normativity used to achieve satisfaction in the form of joint utility, fitness, and/or pleasure.



See also:

Theory of moral domains, p. 42

Features of collaboration, p. 86

Desire and “original sin”, p. 265

How morality is derived from collaboration, p. 271

Why prefer the self? - 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

(P Lakshmi Narasu – “The Essence of Buddhism”)

The Selfish Gene theory implies that my genes work for the benefit of my organism, Hamilton's Rule implies that my organism works for the benefit of genetically related organisms, and the Stakeholder Principle implies that my organism works for the benefit of those upon whom I depend. All in all, whether directly or indirectly, my genes work for the benefit of my organism. Other people's genes do the same for them. This is why I prefer myself, altruistically and beneficially speaking.

Should I prefer myself? We all matter to ourselves more than we matter to any other people. Rebecca Newberger Goldstein (2016) refers to this “mattering instinct”.

My intuition, that I should help feed hungry people over the other side of the world, with my spare cash, likely evolved in the millions of years that the human family tree was living and surviving together in small groups, sharing resources and possessions communally.

If other people go hungry, it does not necessarily affect me. There is a legitimate moral demand for me to help them, a duty of care, so I feel I should help them, but I am not forced to – I am not obliged to because it does not affect me personally.

Why should I save a drowning child in a shallow pond whom I happen to walk past one day, when I might not feel like saving a similarly stricken, starving child in a foreign country (Singer, 1972)? Perhaps because the scope of responsibility is so much smaller with the drowning child, in which case

it falls to me or one of the people present – a small, finite number of people in whom responsibility is concentrated, making the duty to care into an obligation. In the case of the starving foreign child, responsibility is widely dispersed, so the duty is not experienced so keenly by individuals.

See also:

Instrumental and moral bindingness of obligation, p. 36

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 123

Generalised care, p. 172

Kant's "ends and means": treating every human with dignity and respect, p. 223

Self-interest, p. 238

Fitness and utility

All fitness benefits are utilitarian (useful), and all fitness and utilitarian benefits evoke pleasure. (Fitness goals) are subsets of (utilitarian goals), both of which are subsets of (pleasurable goals).

In other words, fitness benefits are a subset of benefits in general (biological, psychological, and social), the achievement of which produces pleasure in the individual.

Normative pressure means the pressure to achieve goals. The proposal is that instrumental goals fall into one or more of these four categories: fitness goals, maladaptive goals, utilitarian goals and pleasure goals.

A duck may enjoy sliding down a slippery slope repeatedly, just for fun; or a turtle may enjoy playing with a ball (Balcombe, 2006). These are clearly "pleasure" goals only.

I may be happy because I have found a source for this e-book. This is the achievement of a proximate utilitarian goal, which evokes pleasure, but does not affect my fitness unless very indirectly.

Maladaptive goals may achieve utility and/or pleasure, but by definition, they affect fitness negatively.

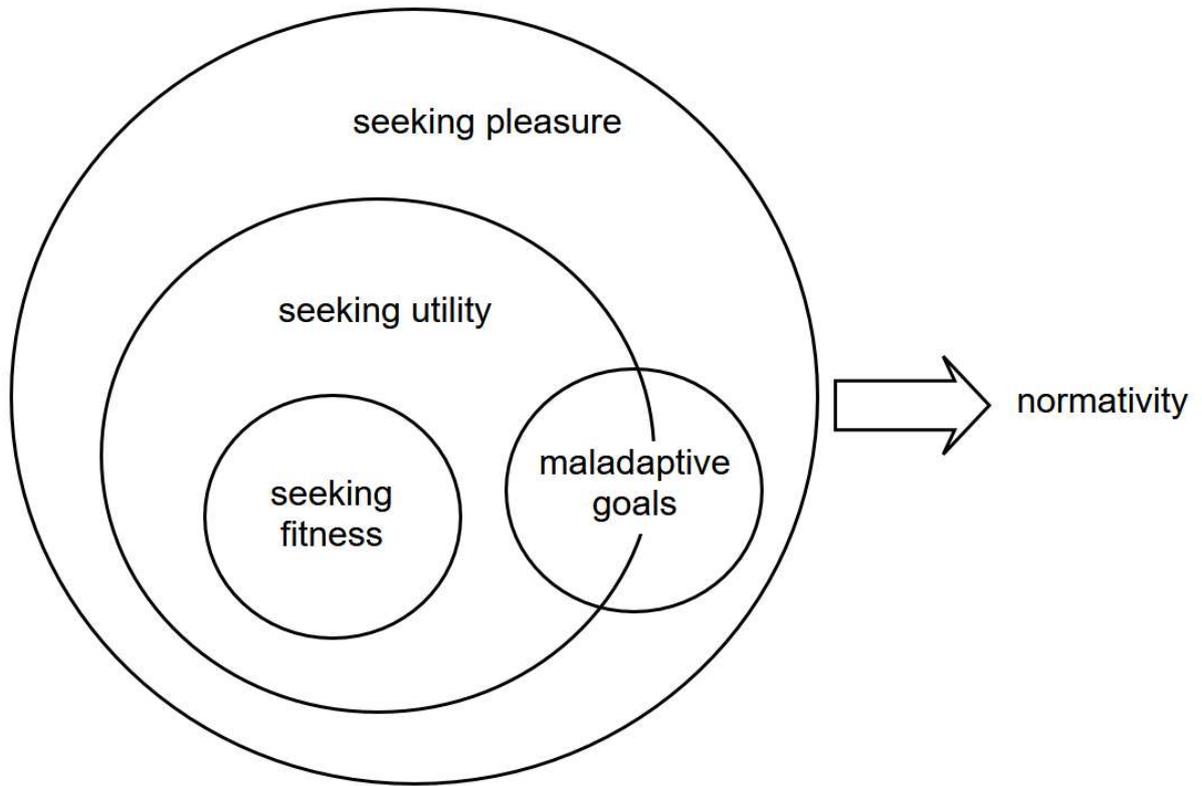
If I run away from a hungry lion, this affects my fitness directly.

The proposal is that this scenario of fitness-, utility-, pleasure-, or maladaptive-goal-seeking evolved in the context of the evolved biological need to promote personal evolutionary fitness – the ability to survive and reproduce. Organisms therefore evolved to achieve goals of certain kinds.

See also:

Moral and instrumental oughts, p. 30

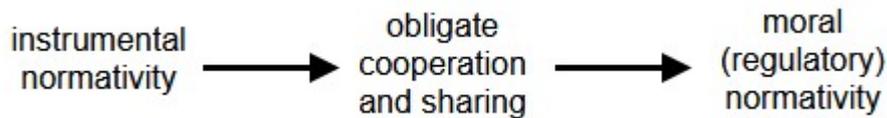
Emotions, p. 248



Pleasure, fitness and utility goals satisfy instrumental normative pressure

Moral normativity

Regulatory pressure.



Moral and instrumental oughts

If normative pressure is shouldness, the pressure to achieve goals, then normative pressure dictates that we should or ought to do something, even if we do not accept this as binding and/or legitimate.

Instrumental goals are of individual utility (“my” goal is utility), since the pressure to do the things that will allow us to thrive is generated within the self.

Moral goals are of ideal collaborative and sharing behaviour so that benefits are maximised all round.

There is normative pressure, a translation and re-channelling of instrumental pressure from all sides – from partners, reputation, conscience, instrumental success, etc. – to be an ideal collaborative partner. This too is therefore a moral goal. Being an ideal collaborative partner implies fulfilling moral principles.

A legitimate moral pressure or demand is felt as a moral responsibility or duty. I perceive that there is legitimate shouldness to carry it out.

An obligatory moral demand is not just a should but a must, with unacceptable consequences for my welfare if I fail to carry it out.

See also:

Instrumental and moral bindingness of obligation, p. 36

The ideal collaborative partner, p. 36

Moral principles and the normativity of norms, p. 54

The goals-methods model of moral domains, p. 55

Dual-level psychology of cooperation

Tomasello (2014, 2016) proposes a dual-level psychology of cooperation: 1) the joint agent “we”, and 2) the individual partners “you” and “I”. Each has a perspective upon the cooperative situation: the “bird’s eye view” of the joint agent “we”, and the individual perspectives of collaborative partners, which need to be coordinated through communication and common ground knowledge. The “bird’s eye view” of the “we” is the basis of, interpersonally, self-other equivalence and impartiality; and collectively, agent independence and objectivity. The bird’s eye view is of roles that can in principle be filled by any interchangeable partner and which have to be played according to instrumentally necessary “role ideals” or ideal standards, by anyone who would play that role.

We may note that dogs, and not cats, appear to feel guilt and shame. A dog is typically “governed” by a higher power (their owner or pack leader) while cats are not, in the same way. Similarly, the individual members of a human collaborative team are governed by and on behalf of the joint or collective agent “we”. Regulation is intrapersonal and interpersonal on behalf of the joint agent.

In a religion, the joint agent “we” is replaced with God or dharma or other guiding power or ideal in the religion. Hence, members of the religion govern themselves and each other on behalf of this guiding power or authority.

See also:

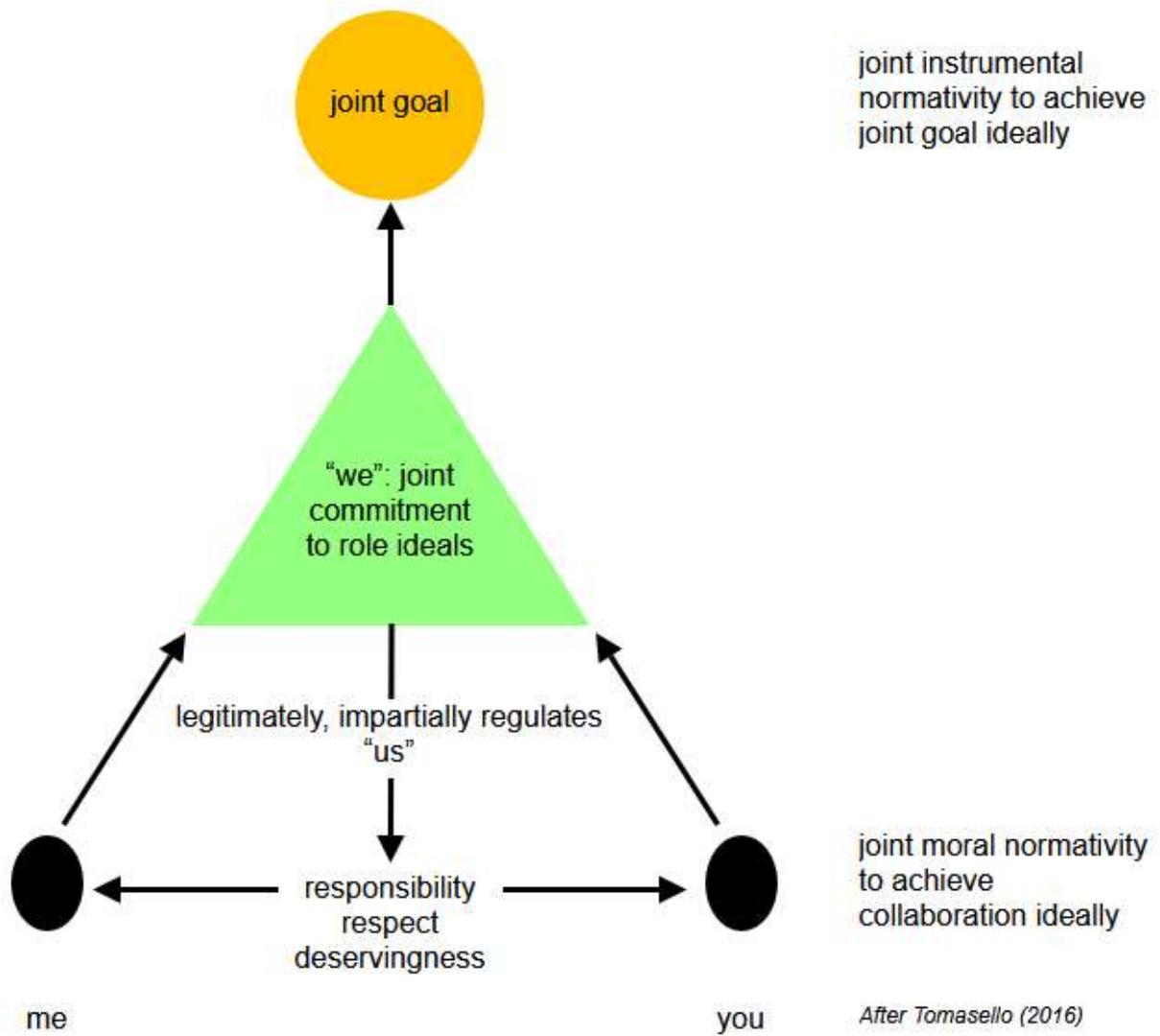
Conscience, p. 40

Organised religion, p. 50

Guilt and blame, p. 105

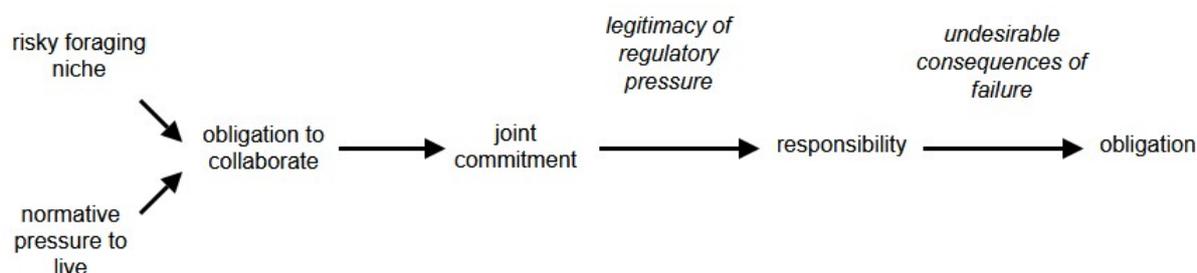
Agent-centred and agent-neutral moral reasoning, p. 135

Self-other equivalence, p. 149



Dual-level psychology of collaboration: we, you and I

Commitment, norms, legitimacy, and responsibility



Commitment: jointly, we have instrumental goals.

In order to guard against the mutual risks inherent in collaborating with others, you and I pledge a commitment to each other, effectively to collaborate ideally until we both have our reward. This commitment forms a joint agent “we”. You and I identify with “us”; our goals are aligned.

Regulation is impartial (because we are equivalent, and standards are impartial) and legitimate (because we both agreed to it). You and I each then expects and requires the other to be an ideal collaborative partner – for “us”. Because of self-other equivalence, I internalise this normative pressure and I feel a sense of responsibility that I should be an ideal collaborative partner towards you.

Legitimacy of commitment: commitment, agreement, confers legitimacy on the regulation of the subsequent collaboration. A responsibility is a legitimate moral demand - one that I, the moral agent, perceive to be legitimate. A collaborative moral demand is legitimate because it impartially comes from and on behalf of “us”, the “we” that we created when we both made a commitment to collaborate.

Legitimacy of norms: Norms are legitimate in themselves, and a norm is legitimate for me, the moral agent, as long as I endorse it. See: Moral principles and the normativity of norms, p. 54

Responsibility: I perceive legitimate moral pressure as a personal responsibility to behave morally. I am an ideal collaborative partner and I uphold moral norms for “us”, the governing joint agent, which is, on another level, “you” and “I”.

I have an instrumental duty to my work, to uphold instrumental role ideals so that what I do is as high-quality as possible, practically speaking. I have a moral duty to my collaboration, to collaborate ideally; a responsibility to “us” to uphold moral and instrumental ideals. I feel a moral responsibility to

uphold moral norms that I endorse because I see them as legitimate methods of achieving a legitimate goal.

Moral obligation and bindingness

Moral obligation comes in two parts:

1. legitimate normative pressure;
2. forceful bindingness.

In other words:

1. should;
2. must.

What can bind me to acting morally – to being an ideal collaborative partner, and upholding moral norms? We identify three sources of forceful moral bindingness:

1. because I have to (obligation) – for the sake of my welfare (ultimately);
2. because I want to (volition) – for the sake of my wishes;
3. because I care (compassion) – for the sake of my sympathetic, compassionate heart (“I feel your pain and I want to help”).

Obligation:

[Obligation] has at least two distinctive features.

1. **Special Force.** Obligation has a peremptory, demanding force, with a kind of coercive (negative) quality: I don’t want to, but I have to. Failure to live up to an obligation leads to a sense of guilt (also demanding and coercive). Unlike the most basic human motivations, which are carrots, obligation is a stick.
2. **Special Social Structure.** Obligation is prototypically bound up with agreements or promises between individuals, and so has an inherently social structure.

Michael Tomasello – “The moral psychology of obligation” (2019b)

An obligation always takes the form of a reaction against the threat of a loss of identity.

Christine Korsgaard – “The sources of normativity”

According to Tomasello (2019b), I become obliged to act morally when I make an agreement to collaborate with somebody. This obligation is backed up by my reputation, my cooperative identity – if I am known to break agreements, then people will not want to collaborate with me in the future, and my welfare will suffer (Tomasello, 2016).

The need for instrumental success can compel me to collaborate ideally. If I really need the benefit of the collaboration, then I am likely to work diligently to achieve it.

Because my welfare obliges me to act morally, I have an obligation to myself, and a duty to others: i.e., I must help myself, while I should help others, in general.

The reasons for compelled moral obligation apply both to sociopaths – amoral people – and typical moral people, alike. A sociopath acts only in their own interests and is not interested in moral norms and mutual benefit. We now look at reasons why people want to behave morally.

Volition:

I want to be an ideal collaborative partner for “us” (you and I), the joint agent. When “we” formed, I identified my goals with “us”.

I want to treat my partners with respect, and share fairly, because my partners are as equal and deserving as me.

I want to uphold moral norms in general because they promote mutual (fitness) benefit, I like the social effects of mutual benefit, benefit is normative, and in an environment of obligate collaboration and sharing, mutual benefit is required.

Compassion:

Humans have evolved altruism towards non-kin because we are so tightly interdependent: I need my cooperative partners, and those with whom I share, to be in good shape.

We only feel “sympathy” (sympathetic pain) with those we think are deserving.

A psychopath can be helpful where needed, which demonstrates an evolved behavioural component to helping behaviour as well as an emotional one.

See also:

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 123

Self-other equivalence, p. 149

Sympathetic distress within the brain leads to a wish to help, p. 169

Psychopathy, p. 236

Instrumental and moral bindingness of obligation

Crisp (2006) maintains that the ultimate reason for doing anything is to preserve or enhance our welfare. This is consistent with the idea that instrumental threats to our welfare turn a moral should into a must.

Also according to Crisp (2006), moral principles are like legal laws, in that they exist as “shoulds” but they are not binding in themselves. Instead, legal laws rely on some other reason to be binding: instrumental reasons, and moral principles. Similarly, moral principles do not bind or oblige themselves, but rely on instrumental, volitional, or compassionate bindingness of obligation.

See also:

Moral principles and the normativity of norms, p. 54

Agreements and their normative force

Agreements are normative in a number of ways.

- The agreement specifies goals that we wish to achieve. Normativity is the pressure to achieve goals.
- As a feature of morality, keeping agreements is a goal in itself, like upholding norms or being kind.
- If I break our agreement, then I will suffer in several ways: my reputation and my personal cooperative identity will be damaged: I want to be trusted so that people will collaborate with me in future, and I don't want to be the kind of person who breaks agreements.
- Empathic concern for my collaborative partner.

The ideal collaborative partner

The ideal collaborative partner:

- treats me as a deserving, respected, equal and valuable co-operator;
- is honest, reliable, straightforward, diligent, conscientious, and faithful;
- fulfils their instrumental duty;
- is open to accountability and blame;
- shares the rewards fairly.

Moral-structural components of morality

Tomasello (2016) sees moral commitment, responsibility, obligation, and legitimacy as “moral-structural” rather than “moral”; i.e., they are vehicles for regulation rather than being regulation itself; consistent with the formula “we > me”. To this list, we may add any feature of moral domains / collaboration – for example, partners, partner control, reputation, partner choice, etc.

Regulation itself takes the form of normative moral pressure. A feeling of responsibility, for example, is a vehicle for regulatory normative pressure that tells me I should do something. Partners are taking a risk by relying on me, so they legitimately (by and on behalf of “us”) attempt to control me to some extent using partner control.

See also:

List of features of collaboration / moral domains, p. 52

What is morality?

The primal scene of morality is not one in which I do something to you or you do something to me, but one in which we do something together.

Christine Korsgaard – “Creating the Kingdom of Ends” (1996:275)

Morality regulates cooperation and sharing.

Altruism and mutualism

Tomasello (2016) recognises two basic forms of morality: altruism and mutualism; or one-way and two-way helping. Altruism is sustainable for the individual within an environment of sharing and cooperation (Roberts, 2005): I can go on giving as long as I am repaid somehow.

Chimpanzees help each other one-way, in response to need, but do not share their food, and barely cooperate. They will strategically help those who can help them climb the social hierarchy.

Collaborative morality and its three moral formulae

Collaborative morality arises when we collaborate towards a joint goal. Not only do we collaborate towards the joint goal, we collaborate to regulate the collaboration. This collaborative self-regulation of the cooperative unit is the essence of morality (Tomasello, 2019a).

The function of morality is thereby to regulate the behaviour of collaborative partners, in accordance with instrumental and moral principles or values, towards a joint goal of mutual benefit.

This self-regulation takes the form of normative pressure, as:

- intrapersonal normativity – I govern myself on behalf of “us”.
- interpersonal normativity – I govern you, and you govern me, on behalf of “us”.

Tomasello (2016) recognises three basic, coexisting human moralities. In each case, the interests of the individual are subsumed to or equated with those of others.

- altruism; you > me,
- fairness; you = me,
- joint self-regulation; we > me.

Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, and Park (1997) identify a “big three” of interacting, coexisting elements of South Asian morality: the ethics of “autonomy, community, and divinity”.

1. **autonomy:** interpersonal values of helping, fairness, and rights;
2. **community:** group-determined duty, obligation, responsibility, and hierarchy; and
3. **divinity:** moral and spiritual purity.

The self-regulation of the cooperative unit may be expressed as

we > me,

where my interests are subsumed to those of the group, team, or partnership, and I regulate myself and my partners on behalf of “us” (Tomasello, 2016).

In the course of collaboratively foraging for mutual benefit (and communal sharing), we see two further, interpersonal moral psychological states arise:

you > me

This refers to putting the needs of another temporarily above one's own. It can arise as:

- “I will help you because I need and depend on you.”
- “I will help you because you are helping / have helped me to achieve my goal (i.e., the joint goal)”
- “I will share with you based on need.”

The next psychological state is

you = me.

This refers to self-other equivalence, impartiality, objectivity, etc.: as personnel are interchangeable within roles, each is equally a causative agent, and each is equally bound by impartial role ideals. It is fundamental to fairness, justice, and mutual respect and deservingness.

Together, the three moral formulae describe our personal moral concerns, that compete and coexist with me-concerns (Tomasello, 2016).

See also:

The Moral Compass, p. 121

How morality is derived from collaboration, p. 271

Morality and humility

The lesson of these three concerns is that morality requires humility, at least temporarily. In order to engage in moral behaviour (regulating myself and others in the direction of mutual benefit) I am required to put myself second, temporarily, in favour of 1) helping others; 2) fairness to others; 3) wanting to follow rules.

Conscience

These four concerns: we-concerns, you-concerns, equality-concerns, and me-concerns, make up the conscience. The conscience therefore consists of the internal motive to follow moral norms, which clearly requires self-regulation, and self-punishment and blame for not following norms.

The conscience regulates the self in several ways (Dill and Darwall, 2014):

1. by evaluating past behaviour, and blaming the self and feeling regret and guilt at wrong-doing;
2. by accepting legitimate accountability for the blame cast on the self by others, and feeling guilt, shame, and remorse at wrong-doing;
3. by evaluating potential future behaviour;
4. by maintaining a good personal moral identity (our moral self-image and standing with others).

It is adaptive to have a conscience: to try to follow moral rules, and to be emotionally attached to doing so (Boehm, 2012). It is in keeping with the purpose of the ego: “a machine for looking after you”, for taking care of your long term interests in an environment of cooperation and sharing.

Psychopaths are born without guilt, fear, empathic concern, emotional resonance, etc., and for an easy comfortable life, are required to work out the basic rules of morality (Walker, 2020a, 2020b), which serves the practical purposes of having a conscience, without the neurotypical moral motivations.

See also:

Instrumental normativity, p. 19

Dual-level psychology of cooperation, p. 31

Other structural analyses of morality, p. 84

Guilt and blame, p. 105

Psychopathy, p. 236

The ego, p. 252

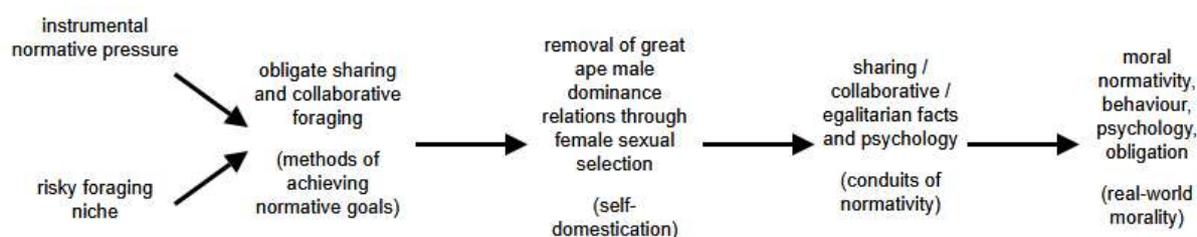
Where does morality “come from”?

The theory is that morality historically arose in humans in response to waves of environmental stresses over a period of four million years or so (Roberts, 2011). The result was urgent instrumental obligation to first, share, and then, collaborate, to survive, and hence the requirement for general behavioural standards in the form of role ideals and moral principles and norms, the evolution of supporting moral emotions that push and pull us in the direction of being moral and ethical, and the evolution of socio-cognitive abilities that enable us to navigate our complex and tricky moral worlds.

Specifically:

1. risky foraging niche of humans
2. requires sharing and cooperation to survive in;
3. sharing and cooperation require egalitarianism, and cannot be achieved under dominance relations
4. sharing and cooperation require morality to regulate them;
5. ethics refers to the dark or light binary ethical value of the goal of the cooperation and of the sub-goals of the cooperation.

Moral psychology depends on the psychology of cooperation and sharing for mutual benefit, which in turn depends on the facts of the need to achieve fitness goals through collaboration and sharing in a risky foraging niche: normative pressure operating in a particular environment.



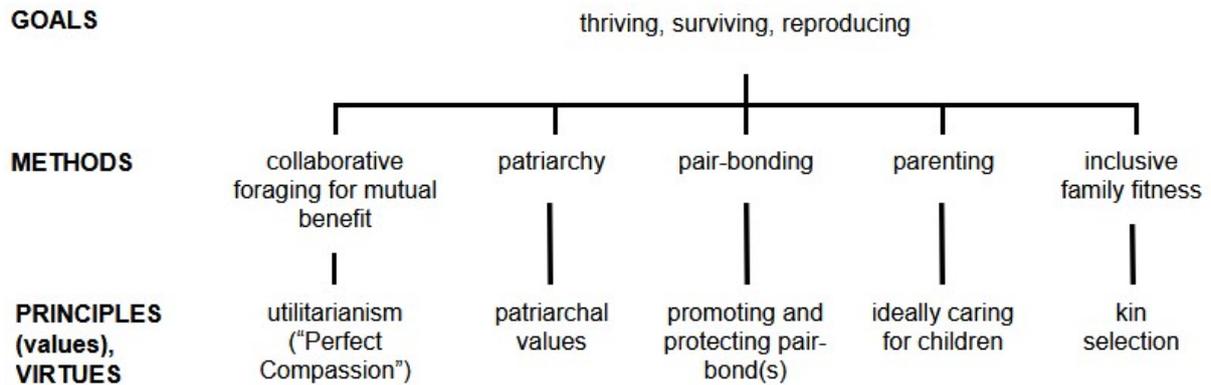
The factual basis of moral psychology

See also:

Equality and property rights, p. 120

Theory of moral domains

STRUCTURE OF EVOLVED MORALITY



What alternative is there, then, to an explanation of human morality in terms of a variegated history of biological adaptations and cultural creations that each work well in their “proper domains” but that collide with one another in novel situations that neither nature nor culture could foresee?

Tomasello (2016:161)

Goal

Domain name(s) / primary method(s)

- **proximate fitness / utility:** collaborative foraging for mutual benefit
- **reproductive fitness:** patriarchy, pair-bonding, parenting
- **genetic fitness:** kin selection

Each domain name refers to an overall method of achieving a particular kind of mutual fitness, and each is made up of families of specific sub-methods (moral principles) – ways to regulate behaviour in order to achieve that kind of mutual fitness.

In addition to the five evolved moral domains, each containing many principles, there is the stand-alone moral principle, the incest taboo: that one should not have sexual relations with one's close genetic relatives.

See also:

Moral dumbfounding, p. 77

The incest taboo, p. 81

List of evolved moral domains

Each domain is defined by an evolved goal (mutual evolutionary fitness; aka mutual surviving, thriving, reproduction) and an evolved overall method of achieving it (collaborative foraging, pair-bonding, patriarchy, parenting, kin-selection).

Each moral domain is a version of “the good” according to itself. For example, patriarchy is morally good according to patriarchy. Collaborative foraging for mutual benefit is morally good according to itself. Values in one domain can conflict with those in another, or even within the same domain. Hence, patriarchy conflicts with values associated with collaborative foraging for mutual benefit, because collaborative foraging for mutual benefit implies, well, mutual utilitarian benefit.

Schaller, Kenrick, Neel, and Neuberg (2017) propose that humans are driven by a number of fundamental evolved motivations that aim to increase chances of survival and reproduction. These are: self-protection (from attack by others); disease avoidance; affiliation; status seeking; mate seeking; mate retention; and kin care (concern for relatives / care for children). Some of these goals (mate retention, kin care, care for children), or their underlying ones, are socially shared with partners; and these joint motivations generate moral domains since they require methods to achieve them and collaboration to morally regulate the collaboration. The other goals are or can be solitary; instrumental; amoral (as opposed to immoral).

If we flesh out the bones of this abstract structure of goals and methods with real goals and methods, then real-world moral principles / values are generated (see list below).

See also:

Map of normativity, p. 26

Fairness as a moral (sub)domain, p. 143

Sharing in response to need, p. 145

Generalised care, p. 172

1) Collaborative foraging for mutual benefit

Joint goal: mutual proximate benefit

Method of achieving mutual fitness: collaborative foraging and breeding.

Unique features: all the principles in this moral domain are captured by the formula, Perfect Compassion.

Values, principles (sub-methods):

- **Altruism**

This “foundation” or family of values centres on helping in response to need, benefit and harm, promoting well being, causing least harm, etc.

Altruism may be thought of as a way to restore mutual well being between the altruist and the beneficiary. Human altruism is more indiscriminate and generalised than in other species, as humans share, cooperate, and depend on one another so intensively.

Some virtues that promote altruism are generosity, goodwill, compassion, empathic concern, and benevolence. Cognitive empathy can inform compassion. Many people argue that since human welfare is the highest good (e.g., Crisp, 2006), and altruism is directly connected to welfare, then compassion is the highest virtue, and altruism is the primary overriding moral value, because it aims to achieve this goal of welfare.

See also:

Virtue and the goals-methods theory of moral domains, p. 69

Why is harm the default explanation for immorality?, p. 81

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 123

Targeted helping, p. 169

Empathy, p. 174

- **Fairness**

Maximising benefits all round, constrained by equality in some sense; impartial sharing according to rules, in response to need or deservingness.

- **Reciprocity**

Maximising benefits in reciprocal exchange, proportionately, on some kind of equal basis.

- **The Golden Rule**

A form of guided altruism based on cognitive empathy, in turn based on recognition of similarity of and identification with a valued familiar person. I see you, a suffering person, and compare you with myself or a loved one who is similar, and feel compassion for you as a result.

- **Respecting property rights and prior possession**

See also:

Respecting ownership, p. 189

- **Conflict avoidance**

Conflict is costly for both sides. One way that social animals avoid it is to form a dominance hierarchy based on fighting ability, so that dominants take precedence over subordinates, and subordinates give way, instead of fighting (Tomasello, 2016). The alternative to a dominance hierarchy is egalitarianism: a lack of competition, especially between males or between females.

See also:

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 114

The Montagu Principle, p. 194

- **Deference to superiors**

Deference to superiors goes against the egalitarian nature of human instincts, but makes a virtue of necessity in that deference is necessary in order to navigate hierarchies.

It is also a form of conflict avoidance and therefore promotes mutual benefit in an interdependent social environment. The boss needs the subordinates, and the subordinates need the boss, and each has duties and obligations to the other (Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, and Park, 1997).

Curry (2016) finds that deference to superiors exists as a value worldwide. It may be that this is as much a result of “feudal values” (Shweder et al., 1997) as organisational benefit.

Deference to superiors is an example of showing due expected respect.

See also:

Competition and dominance, p. 107

- **The “authority” foundation**

Respect for authority and tradition is a moral value (Haidt, 2013; Graham, Haidt, and Nosek, 2009), a behavioural ideal aimed at regulating the group for mutual benefit. Respect for authority (including deference to superiors) represents the intrusion of competition and dominance into egalitarian group life; it also represents respect for the coordination necessary to organise a large group. Respect for tradition is implicitly justified as being good for the whole group: if something has worked for us all these long years, it must be a good thing. A radical break with tradition can be seen as a rip in the fabric of the moral order (Tomasello, 2016), and literally harmful to society (Schein and Gray, 2018).

See also:

Moral dumbfounding, p. 77

Competition and dominance, p. 107

- **Loyalty and group loyalty**

See:

Loyalty and unconditional love, p. 186

- **Heroism**

The proposal is that people love heroism in others for two reasons: 1) it is an extreme form of altruism; 2) it carries the risk of grave sacrifice, for the sake of others, by definition.

Somebody is voluntarily risking their essential personal well being for others, and onlookers typically feel a warm emotional regard towards the hero.

There is also the heroism required to complete a challenging personal goal, which can be inspiring to see in others.

- **Honesty**

Honesty is a cooperative sharing of information where both sides benefit from learning the facts. It is inimical to cheating or lying, where one side conceals their true intentions or knowledge.

See also:

The Moral Compass, p. 121

- **Autonomy**

See:

Liberty, autonomy, and egalitarianism, p. 110

- **Egalitarianism**

See:

Liberty, autonomy, and egalitarianism, p. 110

- **Cooperative breeding**

See:

Cooperative breeding, p. 198

- **etc.** (after Curry, 2016; Haidt, 2013).

See also:

Perfect Compassion, p. 131

Self-other equivalence, p. 149

Perspective taking and empathic accuracy, p. 178

Perspective taking and cooperation, p. 180

2) Patriarchy

Patriarchy is defined as the cultural and interpersonal domination and control of women for the benefit of men.

The present theory is that human patriarchy may be a biologically driven behavioural option for men in a way that it is not for women, because of the reproductive asymmetry between males (producing millions of cheap sperm) and females (producing a few costly eggs). The theory is that males (in great apes at least) can maximise their reproductive success by impregnating as many females as possible; and that females can maximise their reproductive success by maximally investing in a few offspring.

The classical model in nature of human patriarchy is the harem of the gorilla or baboon. Here, females are dominated and controlled, as well as protected, by a male for the purpose of reproduction.

The behavioural option available for men that is not available for great apes is egalitarianism, in which females are given freedom of choice and are bound only by an egalitarian pair-bond.

Goals and methods: the ultimate (evolutionary, biological) goal of patriarchy is reproduction on men's terms. This is achieved through mate retention. Mate retention and reproduction are achieved

through the domination and control of women; together with protection of women and children from other males.

Values, principles: assertion of the “superiority” and dominance of men; assertion of the “inferiority” and subordination of women, keeping women out of power; devaluing women and girls; female obedience to men; female chastity and modesty; women as property of men; sexual exclusivity in women but not necessarily in men; men providing resources for “their” women; men physically protecting women from other, predatory men; respecting another man’s “ownership” of his female “property”.

Ethical status of patriarchy

According to its light/dark valence, patriarchy is the unethical moral domain – its benefits for men are achieved at the expense of women.

See also:

The difference between morality and ethics, p. 61

Dark and light traits, p. 228

3) Sexual pair-bonding

Goals and methods: reproduction, achieved through mutual mate retention, which is achieved through sexual pair-bonding.

Values, principles: sexual fidelity; respecting the pair-bond of others

Pair bonding and patriarchy

Sexual pair bonding overlaps conceptually with patriarchy in that both are methods of mate retention. However, it is perfectly possible to have egalitarian pair bonds, relying on attractiveness, without domination and control, to achieve mate retention.

Patriarchy seeks power (Manne, 2018), and takes advantage of existing power structures in order to assert itself (Smuts, 1995), and accordingly, we observe that pair-bonding values can be used to legitimise patriarchal norms and practices.

In the multi-male, multi-female social groups that chimpanzees and bonobos live in, there is no pair-bonding, but there is friendship and “consortship” between the sexes, and alpha males will attempt to dominate all the available reproductive opportunities with females who are in oestrus (de Waal, 1982; de Waal and Lanting, 1998).

Gorillas live in family groups with a dominant, breeding male and several females polygynously pair-bonded with him. There may be other adult males in the group, who do not mate with the females.

Humans live in social groups made up of families with, usually, monogamously pair-bonded parents, and much less commonly, a number of wives polygynously pair-bonded to a husband (Chapais, 2008).

See also:

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 114

Female resistance to patriarchy in primates, p. 212

4) Parenting

Joint goal: thriving and surviving of child; reproduction of parent(s); via rearing and caring for one's own children.

Method of achieving mutual fitness (of parents and children): parenting, as both a method of achieving fitness, and a state whose achievement and maintenance are significant to fitness goals.

Values, principles: caring for, nurturing, and successfully raising one's children

Unique features: overlaps conceptually with cooperative breeding and foraging.

5) Kin selection

Joint goal: genetically inclusive, reproductive fitness

Method of achieving genetic fitness: preferentially helping kin (according to Hamilton's Rule)

Values, principles: preferentially helping family members; loyalty towards the family; solidarity with the family; maintaining the reputation of the family

Unique features: arguably, the mutuality of responsibility towards kin is different from the mutuality in other moral domains, since it features a different kind of fitness benefit, achieved through genetic relatedness rather than collaborative dependence. It follows the logic of Hamilton's Rule and a genetic imperative or obligation to help kin in proportion to their genetic relatedness to the self (Dawkins, 1976).

See also:

Hamilton's Rule, p. 126

Pluralism, universality, and non-WEIRD morality, p. 292

Other (non-evolved) moral domains

Non-evolved moral domains do not have "mutual fitness" as their joint goals. Instead, they have other joint goals, appropriate to the mission of the organisation or profession.

Organised religion

Joint goal: serving God

Method of achieving joint goal: being ideally religious

Values, principles: ideals and principles of religion

Monotheistic religion consists of a collaboration towards the joint goal of serving God. Like any moral domain, it has roles (lay person, pastor, vicar, priest, nun, monk, etc.), and ideal ways to behave (i.e., to be ideally religious). Importantly, it provides ways to promote good behaviour and punish bad behaviour. It involves partner choice – only the verifiably faithful may be trusted (Norenzayan, 2013). Partner control comes from the other faithful and from God. As a believer, I am held accountable by, and feel responsible to, God and the other faithful. Religion is practised on intra-personal, interpersonal, and cultural levels. Legitimacy of moral beliefs is "objectively real" and provided by God.

Unique features: organised religion subsumes an idealised non-religious morality into itself, so that it incorporates evolved moral domains.

See also:

Dual-level psychology of cooperation, p. 31

Commitment, norms, legitimacy, and responsibility, p. 33

Purity in the Hindu religion, p. 74

Origins of the Christian prohibition of homosexuality and extra-marital sex, p. 80

Religion, p. 101

Medical ethics

Joint goal: the welfare of patients

Methods of achieving joint goal: principles of medicine

Values, principles: medical ethics

The joint goal of medical practitioners is the welfare of patients. Medical practitioners are professionally obligated to treat sick people.

Medical ethics rests on four principles (Beauchamp and Childress, 2001), derived from a number of classical ethical theories: utilitarianism, Kantianism, liberal individualism, communitarianism, and the ethics of care.

The four principles are

- **autonomy:** freedom of choice and the ability to exercise informed consent
- **beneficence:** the obligation to help
- **non-maleficence:** the obligation to do no harm
- **justice:** treating all patients the same, and with regard to others' well being in the wider context of an environment of limited resources.

In the UK, doctors are regulated by the General Medical Council, that has the ability to “strike off” failing doctors from practicing. Each health care profession has its own regulatory body.

Financial industry regulatory body

Joint goal: regulating the financial industry

Methods of achieving joint goal: methods of collaboration to regulate financial industry

Values and principles: honesty, transparency, diligence, etc.

A financial regulatory body collaborates to regulate a collaboration towards mutual benefit: that is, the financial industry. It promotes good behaviour and discourages or punishes bad behaviour. It holds the industry accountable on behalf of the public. Partner choice is involved as some companies may prove to be untrustworthy and therefore known to be not worth employing. Financial regulation has both a societal aspect (the system of norms and the human and other apparatus sustaining them) and a personal one: the individual care given to individual members of the public.

Definition and functions of a moral domain

A moral domain is a single domain of moral action and policing. It is effectively a collection of moral principles – behavioural methods – all with the same kind of fitness goal.

The moral domain is used behaviourally and psychologically to enforce good behaviour and punish bad behaviour, according to that domain. If the moral domain is seen as legitimate by the moral agent and/or enforcer, then its principles are followed and are used as impartial references by which to judge the moral compliance of someone's behaviour.

To analyse something we think may be a moral domain, i.e., according to the goals-methods model, we look at its goals and methods and what features of collaboration shape its normativity: for example, interdependence, duty, responsibility, partner choice, etc. This illustrates the point that features of collaboration are all conduits or vehicles for normativity. Features of moral domains are also features of collaboration, since a moral domain is a collaborative enterprise.

See also:

Moral-structural components of morality, p. 37

List of features of collaboration / moral domains

- instrumental normativity = pressure to achieve instrumental goals
- legitimate moral normativity = legitimate pressure (feeling of responsibility) to follow moral principles ideally, to be an ideal collaborative partner, and to achieve ethical goals
- joint goal
- interdependence
- mutual risk and strategic trust: "I will trust you as long as you are trustworthy".
- accountability
- partner control
- guilt: condemning myself for my own bad behaviour
- shame: actual or potential condemnation by others for my bad behaviour
- partners
- partner choice by reputation and public cooperative identity
- joint agent "we"

The joint agent “we” is formed when we make a commitment to collaborate. It regulates you and I, impartially and legitimately, in the direction of ideal cooperation, and is a source of legitimate moral normativity: responsibility, and obligation.

- intrapersonal, interpersonal and collective regulation in the direction of the joint goal and of being ideal collaborative partners
- joint commitment, agreement, contract to collaborate ideally until all concerned have received their reward
- promoting, enforcing, rewarding good behaviour according to values or principles
- discouraging, preventing, punishing bad behaviour according to values or principles
- joint self-governance on behalf of the group, team, or partnership (we > me)
- roles ideals: instrumentally normative standards or ideals of the task
- duty: the instrumental requirement to uphold role ideals
- a set of moral values (behavioural principles; methods of collaborating to achieve joint goals / mutual benefit)
- a set of domain-specific moral virtues (ideal performance of roles and moral values; behavioural policies aimed at achieving the domain’s goals)
- general moral virtues that apply to all collaborations and moral domains: e.g., honesty, integrity, faithfulness
- a set of moral vices (sub-standard performance of roles and moral values: to be avoided)
- intrapersonal, interpersonal and cultural levels

Every feature of morality is either a source of normativity, a conduit for normativity, or both. As such, features of morality are goals in themselves. We value upholding norms; we value keeping agreements; we value good partner control; etc.

Ethical responsibility

Why is win-win the definition of “ethically preferable”? The reason is that humans live in a risky foraging niche, and so we are obliged to share and collaborate to survive. Sharing and cooperation are instrumental necessities for the individual. Without rewards, there would be no reason for anybody to cooperate or share. As your partner, I need you to achieve your goals in this endeavour so that you will want to cooperate with me, this time, and I hope also in the future.

Humans are generally concerned for others because in ancient, evolutionary time, an individual depended personally on everyone in the group, and so, felt indiscriminate empathic concern for them. This instinct was taken into modern times, so that now, we feel concern for anyone we see who is in

need. However, sympathetic concern is sensitive to perceived deservingness of the target: compassion can be cut off like a switch.

It can be argued that welfare trumps deservingness, in the sense that welfare is much more closely connected with survival and therefore reproduction, and as such, with evolutionary fitness of the individual, the agent's ultimate goal (Crisp, 2006).

See also:

Why prefer the self? – the promotion of me, mine, and ours, p. 27

Altruism and mutualism, p. 38

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 123

Self-other equivalence, p. 149

Sympathetic distress within the brain leads to a wish to help, p. 169

Moral principles and the normativity of norms

Moral principles are also called moral values or moral norms, not to be confused with utilitarian, instrumental value, goodness or goods.

An example of a moral principle is reciprocity. Reciprocity is a method of achieving mutual benefit, and comes from the moral domain whose main method is “collaborative foraging for mutual proximate benefit”. Collaborative foraging is the method; mutual proximate benefit is the goal.

A moral principle is a “general” role ideal that applies to the role of being a good collaborator, whatever the collaboration; a behavioural formula for ideal collaborative behaviour (Tomasello, 2016). A “specific” role ideal is an ideal standard of instrumental behaviour associated with a particular role, necessary for success in that role. To uphold cooperative/sharing role ideals is to be a good person; to uphold instrumental role ideals is to do excellent work in one's task.

I have a responsibility and a duty to my partners and myself to be a good person (“I feel a legitimate normative pressure to do so, for ‘us’”); I have a responsibility and duty to my practical task, to do excellent work (for “us”).

Within the goals-methods model of morality, a moral principle is a method of collaborating to achieve a type of joint goal. It represents ideal behaviour. As an ideal, it can be a goal in itself, and so each principle also forms a goal within the goals-methods structure of the moral. For example, reciprocity is both a method of achieving mutual benefit, and an ideal or goal in itself to be realised. Hence, reciprocity is a method of achieving mutual benefit, and so, there exist behavioural methods that support and promote reciprocity.

Gächter, Molleman, and Nosenzo (2025) have found in their experiments that people mainly follow rules for intrinsic reasons, because they respect them, with smaller motivations coming from extrinsic incentives or social expectations. This is true even when the rule is strange and arbitrary.

A moral principle acts like a measuring stick or ruler, because both of these:

- incorporate a sliding scale of how well something “measures up”;
- are impartial.

A moral norm possesses an intrinsic “shouldness” as it is a true and proven method of achieving mutual benefit, and benefit is normative. If mutual benefit is normative, then a method of achieving it is also normative. This shouldness is activated if I endorse the behavioural method or norm, but otherwise it is as if dormant from my perspective: if I do not endorse it then its normative pressure has no effect on me as a moral agent.

Hence, each moral principle is legitimate according to itself: it is a true, proven, bona fide method of achieving a legitimate goal.

See also:

Utilitarian value and goodness, p. 22

Instrumental and moral bindingness of obligation, p. 36

Internal goals-methods structure of moral domains, p. 58

Evolutionary ethics and moral realism, p. 65

Role ideals, p. 87

The goals-methods model of moral domains

Morality that has evolved in humans by natural selection is divided into at least five domains:

- collaborative foraging for mutual proximate benefit
- patriarchy (mate retention for reproduction at males’ convenience)
- pair-bonding (reproduction)
- parenting (reproduction)
- kin selection (reproductive benefits).

There is also a stand-alone incest taboo that does not form a moral domain.

Each domain is formed of a joint goal and the collaborative methods that are required to reach it.

This is the “goals-methods” model of moral domains.

The joint goal is a utilitarian one of mutual thriving, surviving and/or reproducing; i.e., it is supplied by instrumental biological normativity.

See “Instrumental normativity”, p. 19; “Mutual benefit in moral domains”, p. 64.

Every domain is divided into sub-domains formed by moral norms: methods of achieving mutual benefit. For example, in collaborative foraging for mutual benefit, the goal of the domain, and therefore of each moral value, is achieving, maintaining or restoring mutual proximate benefit. These high-level values that form sub-domains include altruism, fairness, reciprocity, etc.

Sub-domains are divided into sub-sub-domains, and so on. The joint goal of the sub-sub-domain is the value in the sub-domain as a way to achieve the joint goal of the domain. For example, reciprocity is promoted and supported by laws and regulations around trade, and norms of debt and reciprocal obligation.

Virtues support the moral principles (Beauchamp and Childress, 2001).

Hence, a moral domain consists of:

- a joint goal
- a general method of achieving the joint goal
- sub-methods or moral principles generated by the need to achieve the joint goal using the general method
- sub-sub-methods or rules of behaviour that support the primary principles
- sub-domains formed with sub-methods as goals and sub-sub-methods as a family of supporting moral principles
- virtues that support the principles and help to achieve the joint instrumental goal / individual instrumental utility.

Moral principles are good according to the domain to which they belong. If you agree with patriarchy, then patriarchal values are good. If you feel that patriarchy is not legitimate, then patriarchal values are bad.

A joint goal requires collaboration to achieve it. When we collaborate towards a joint goal, we collaborate to regulate the collaboration, and this generates (the need for) certain well-known features of morality. For example, every domain has methods of achieving the joint goal; means of enforcement of the moral values; means of punishment for infringing moral values; and partners, who are a source and conduit of normative pressure in themselves. Most features are common to all moral domains. Some moral domains have unique features of their own. The familiarity of moral features from independent sources (e.g., philosophical, empirical, academic) lends strong support to the goals-methods model of morality and moral normativity. It all fits together as a plausible and realistic picture (e.g., Raihani, 2021; Tomasello, 2016; Boehm, 2012; Korsgaard, 1992).

All features of moral domains are conduits of normativity; i.e., they supply a pressure to achieve goals, since they are all in the service of achieving the joint goal.

Moral domains generate moral values, since particular methods are required to achieve the joint goal. We observe these methods, values, principles, “in the wild” and find that mutual benefit is their purpose (e.g., Haidt, 2013).

See also:

Moral and instrumental oughts, p. 30

Collaborative foraging for mutual benefit, p. 44

Rightness of action and rightness of goal, p. 60

Mutual benefit in moral domains, p. 64

Role ideals, p. 87

Currency of morality, p. 134

Fairness as a moral (sub)domain, p. 143

INTERNAL GOALS-METHODS STRUCTURE OF MORAL DOMAINS

Example domain: collaborative foraging for mutual proximate benefit



The goals-methods structure thereby repeats:

- across domains – each domain consists of an overall goal and method of achieving it;
- within domains – the pattern repeats hierarchically as sub-domains, sub-sub domains, etc.

Hence, the overall evolved, biological goal of “collaborative foraging for mutual proximate benefit” is mutual utility, and the goals of its moral principles (reciprocity, fairness, etc.) are also mutual utility. The evolved, biological overall goal of patriarchy is mate retention through control and domination of females, and the goal of its moral principles is also the domination and control of females. The overall goal of the moral domain is thereby the same as the goal of its moral principles: the goals-methods structure repeats hierarchically.

This model unifies existing ethical systems

As a comprehensive and practical system of ethics (see also medical ethics: Beauchamp and Childress, 2001) based on facts and empiricism, the goals-methods model of morality unifies some existing ethical systems, since each one has some truth in it, each one containing a valid description of one aspect of the whole picture of moral action and decision making.

The reason each one is deficient is that it needs all the others in order to form a complete system. It is artificial to split up morality into competing partial paradigms of how it works.

In the goals-methods model, as in medical ethics, a number of ethical systems work together as a pack.

- Deontology – the goals-methods model is based around regulative normativity and the pressure to achieve goals (jointly). The right action is ideal collaborative action towards an ethical goal.
- Utilitarianism – maximising proximate well being or utility for all concerned, including the self, is the method and goal of collaborative foraging for mutual benefit. Other kinds of utility are reproductive (patriarchy, parenting, pair-bonding) and genetic/reproductive (kin selection).
- Consequentialism – before we act, we do not know exactly what the consequences will be. But we have to make some judgements of how we think our actions are likely to turn out, before we take them, and evaluate those potential actions accordingly. In the goals-methods model, we act with a goal in mind rather than consequences. Can a wrong/selfish action produce right consequences – to the benefit of all concerned? Can wholesome consequences arise from unwholesome actions? We say not, following the principle “no good comes of no good”. But not every morally pure action leads to favourable real-world consequences.
- Kantianism – Kant’s idea of personhood and never using people as a means to an end is relevant to evolutionary ethics, as each person’s well being matters to themselves, since they experience an internal pressure to do the things that will allow them to flourish; and since people depend on each other in particular and in general, people are preciously valuable in themselves.

- Ethics of care – the goals-methods model recognises compassion as a behavioural goal and method of restoring, achieving or maintaining mutual benefit.
- Virtue ethics – the goals-methods model recognises virtues as behavioural methods with wholesome and moral goals.

See also:

Mutual benefit in moral domains, p. 64

Rightness of action and rightness of goal

A value is

- a moral principle;
- something that has value; i.e., a kind of goal, since value (benefit) possesses normative pressure.

Traditional moral philosophy recognises the “right” – morally desirable actions, intentions, and attitudes – and the “good” – a desirable end result or commodity.

We distinguish two kinds of moral rightness: rightness of action, and rightness of goal. They are different. We define ethics as “rightness or wrongness of goal”. As both goals and methods, moral values can themselves be subject to moral and ethical evaluation.

Rightness of action is with respect to a joint goal – any joint goal, whether ethically good or bad.

Rightness of action is the extent to which I am collaborating ideally. Clearly, just “jointly getting something done” is ethically neutral until we consider the use to which it is put. We may consider an analogy with intelligence and wisdom. Intelligence is the efficient processing of information (ethically neutral); wisdom is the ethical version of intelligence, comprised of truth and compassion.

Rightness of goal is with respect to the ethical binary dark/light value of the goal. A goal is defined as an ethically good or right goal when it is to the mutual benefit of all concerned: i.e., it is ethically “light”: the intention is for a positive sum of gains overall. A goal is defined as an ethically bad or morally wrong goal when it is achieved at the expense of someone else: i.e., it is ethically “dark”; a competitive, zero-sum result overall, where my gain is your loss.

Internally, collaboration is regulated by morality (internal rightness; rightness of action). Externally – in the way it affects others – collaboration is ethically neutral until we consider its use. Then, the collaboration can gain the ethical dark/light status of its goal, or, under some views, remain ethically neutral. Actions, goals, intentions, and attitudes can all have ethical status.

See also:

Instrumental normativity, p. 19

Just war theory and the independence thesis, p. 62

The difference between morality and ethics

There are a great many different descriptions of the distinction between morality and ethics. Here is another.

When we collaborate towards joint goals, the collaboration requires regulation. This regulation is morality. The goal of the collaboration is either ethically dark (at someone's expense) or light (to mutual benefit). The light/dark valence of a goal is the domain of ethics.

Hence, morality represents "how well I am collaborating", and ethics refers to the light/dark valence of goals in general, whether achieved cooperatively or alone.

Moral principles are ideal methods of collaboration. Moral principles are also behavioural goals whose further goal is mutual benefit. If I refuse to reciprocate, therefore, I am being unethical as well as immoral: I am cooperating poorly and I am achieving my goal at someone else's expense.

See also:

Rightness of action and rightness of goal, p. 60

Dark and light traits, p. 228

The Pirate Code of Conduct

The "Pirate Code of Conduct" was a set of rules for 18th century pirates to follow in dealing with each other (Alchin, 2017). The Pirate Code was an example of a system of rules and principles of right action, with an ethically dark goal of exploiting out-group members for material gain. In fact, we could call it the "piracy" moral domain: the policing of a domain of collaboration.

The Pirate Code of Conduct – Bartholomew Roberts Shipboard Articles 1721

A specific Pirate Code of Conduct was agreed by Bartholomew Roberts in the Shipboard Articles of 1721.

Bartholomew Roberts, also known as “Black Bart” or “Black Barty”, was one of the most successful pirates, The following Code of Conduct was agreed by Bartholomew Roberts and his Pirate Crew – an important element of the success of this particular Pirate

ARTICLE I – Every man shall have an equal vote in affairs of moment. He shall have an equal title to the fresh provisions or strong liquors at any time seized, and shall use them at pleasure unless a scarcity may make it necessary for the common good that a retrenchment may be voted.

ARTICLE II – Every man shall be called fairly in turn by the list on board of prizes, because over and above their proper share, they are allowed a shift of clothes. But if they defraud the company to the value of even one dollar in plate, jewels or money, they shall be marooned. If any man rob another he shall have his nose and ears slit, and be put ashore where he shall be sure to encounter hardships.

ARTICLE III – None shall game for money either with dice or cards.

ARTICLE IV – The lights and candles should be put out at eight at night, and if any of the crew desire to drink after that hour they shall sit upon the open deck without lights.

ARTICLE V – Each man shall keep his piece, cutlass and pistols at all times clean and ready for action.

ARTICLE VI – No boy or woman to be allowed amongst them. If any man shall be found seducing any of the latter sex and carrying her to sea in disguise he shall suffer death.

ARTICLE VII – He that shall desert the ship or his quarters in time of battle shall be punished by death or marooning.

ARTICLE VIII – None shall strike another on board the ship, but every man's quarrel shall be ended on shore by sword or pistol in this manner. At the word of command from the quartermaster, each man being previously placed back to back, shall turn and fire immediately. If any man do not, the quartermaster shall knock the piece out of his hand. If both miss their aim they shall take to their cutlasses, and he that draweth first blood shall be declared the victor.

Just war theory and the independence thesis

A study by Watkins and Goodwin (2020) found that people tend to judge the rightness or wrongness of soldiers' actions, fighting a war, based on the justness of their cause.

A cornerstone of just war theory is the distinction Obama invoked between the justification for a country's going to war in the first place (known as *jus ad bellum*), and the rules of conduct that guide how the war is actually carried out (known as *jus in bello*). The idea that these aspects of war should be evaluated separately is referred to as the *independence thesis* (Walzer, 2006). The independence thesis, in turn, implies the related principle of *combatant equality*, which is the focus of this article. According to this principle, soldiers fight permissibly as long as they abide by the prescribed rules of conduct in war, regardless of the cause for which they fight (Lazar, 2017). ... Consequently, as long as soldiers on either side of a war follow the prescribed rules of conduct their actions are morally equivalent and should be judged symmetrically. ... This means that, regardless of whether you believe the United States was justified in going to war in the 1991 Gulf War, for instance, you should judge U.S. soldiers fighting in that war only according to whether they abide by the rules of conduct prescribed by just war theory. (Watkins and Goodwin, 2020:419-420)

According to the present theory in evolutionary ethics, the process of fighting a war is internally governed by morality, and externally ethically neutral until put to a use, and the intention (intended outcome) and actual outcome are the generators of ethical content.

The intention or outcome can be ethically light or dark. The justness of the war is evaluated on this basis: the ethical status of the goal affects the ethical judgement of the collaboration to achieve that goal.

[Just war] theory makes an important distinction between judgments about *going to war* (resort to war), and about the *conduct* of war; a distinction referred to as the *independence thesis*. As a corollary, it maintains that soldiers on either side of a war, even a morally asymmetric war, are moral equals (the principle of combatant equality) and should be judged only by their conduct in war; not by the cause for which they fight.

(Watkins and Goodwin, 2020:438)

According to the present hypothesis, the soldiers' cause, and their conduct, are not necessarily independent. Are pirates engaged in ethically good conduct when they plunder ships? – the Pirate Code notwithstanding.

The principle of combatant equality seems to neglect the ethical connection between an action and its consequences. Two sets of soldiers can collaborate equally ideally among themselves, but towards ethically opposite goals.

The study by Watkins and Goodwin (2020) found that lay people (participants in the MTurk crowd-sourcing platform) do not agree with the principle of combatant equality in practice (although around 60% endorse it in the abstract). Instead, they tend to judge soldiers on the unjust side to be less morally good than soldiers on the just side, whatever their conduct, unless they commit atrocities. Two factors were found that partly explain this effect: 1) people tend to assume that soldiers identify with their cause, no matter how unjust; and 2) people tend to align themselves with the just side, and so they see the unjust side as an out-group, and this drives their moral condemnation of them.

Soldiers (who are part of our moral community and not beyond the pale) are following the military moral code of the professional, compassionate and disciplined soldier and the good comrade – the ideal military collaborative partner. Military ethics make up a moral domain that consists of joint goals and ideal methods of achieving them that form a code of ideal military behaviour.

See also:

Map of normativity, p. 26

What is morality?, p. 38

Theory of moral domains, p. 42

The Pirate Code of Conduct , p. 61

Dark and light traits, p. 228

Mutual benefit in moral domains

| <i>Moral domain / method</i> | <i>Mutual benefit</i> |
|---|--|
| Collaborative foraging for mutual benefit | Mutual proximate fitness (flourishing) |
| Patriarchy | Reproduction |
| Pair-bonding | Reproduction |
| Parenting | Reproduction of parent; flourishing of child |
| Kin selection | Mutual genetic-reproductive fitness |

Relativism and universalism

Different kinds of cooperation give rise to distinct domains of morality (Curry, 2016, 2019). In the Theory of Moral Domains, there are five kinds of evolved collaboration, and therefore five evolved moral domains together with the single-norm incest taboo. It is assumed that these domains are universal. What varies in different cultures is the ways in which these domains are carried out: the cultural and behavioural methods and the emphases on different aspects of collaboration.

The content of a group's norms depends partly on the history of that group and the pressures it faces (Tomasello, 2016). For example, one group may be chronically short of water, so its norms emphasise saving water. Another group may face warlike competition with other groups, so its norms emphasise militarism.

In the West, regarding fairness, liberals are said to favour equal shares, while conservatives to favour proportionality (Haidt, 2013). In general, Western liberals and conservatives tend to emphasise and interpret values slightly differently from each other.

See also:

Theory of moral domains, p. 42

Rightness of action and rightness of goal, p. 60

Mutual benefit in moral domains, p. 64

Evolutionary ethics and moral realism, p. 65

Sharing proportionately, p. 147

Dark and light traits, p. 228

Pluralism, universality, and non-WEIRD morality, p. 292

Evolutionary ethics and moral realism

Moral realism is the philosophical position that a moral assertion (e.g., “murder is wrong”) has some kind of objective factual status, is an empirical fact, rather than being a subjective opinion or perception or something otherwise non-objective.

Moral realism, in its insistence on identifying “the” correct moral judgment, seems to imply a single factually morally right answer or course of action. There can only be one objective version of reality.

In the present version of evolutionary ethics, a moral judgement *X* can give a factually morally right or wrong answer according to any of multiple moral principles that *X* invokes, giving one judgement of moral correctness according to each relevant value.

A moral principle is a factual method of factually collaborating ideally to factually achieve factual mutual benefit; there are many methods of achieving various types of mutual fitness, and hence, many moral values. Methods to achieve goals can factually be more or less well carried out according to ideals. Moral ideals are abstractions, simple behavioural formulae of what we need to do to achieve mutual benefit. This is the sense in which evolutionary ethics supports moral realism.

These abstractions are just like mathematical abstractions, in that:

- they ultimately represent logical relations between a set of essential factors of reality;
- they are descriptive, and not normative, even if they describe normativity.

That is, they are facts, and according to Hume and the fact/value distinction, we cannot get a prescriptive ought from an is. The logic of morality (maximising mutual benefit) is not mathematical (following the laws of mathematical logic), but instrumentally and cooperatively rational: I need to increase my wellbeing, we need to increase our wellbeing.

Evolutionary ethics denies the existence of “single-answer” moral realism, but supports “multiple-answer” moral realism – the idea that there are multiple moral values by which to judge the rightness or wrongness of an action, intention or attitude. After all, no item is likely to be significant to only one moral principle.

If moral realism were true, then it would have to accommodate a whole set of moral value-measurements by which an action, intention, or attitude is judged. There would have to be a single pattern of value-measurements that was the “correct”, “real” one, because there is only one version of reality. But what form would this correctness take? Correct according to what? Moral correctness? .

Moral values can conflict with each other, especially those from different domains. Even the fitness goal of reproduction can conflict with thriving and surviving (Fitzpatrick, 2020).

Some have speculated that moral cognition – that is, a form of cognition that sees certain norms as mind-independent, factual, inescapable, and nonnegotiable – was an evolutionary adaptation of our species to spur us to prosociality (Joyce 2006). Joyce (2006), for example, speculated that even though mind-independent moral facts are entirely fictional, it would have been beneficial for our species to have evolved a tendency to think they exist. A tendency to see the world as filled with such mind-independent moral facts would be a much stronger motivator to act prosocially. Thus, humans project objective moral facts into the world through our emotional reactions to morally relevant events. Goodness and badness, virtue and vice – these are not properties that exist in the world to be perceived by the mind. Instead, the mind projects these values into the world, which then motivates individuals to act according to moral norms. Thus, evolution selects for a capacity to objectify morality even while moral facts do not exist. This account, while speculative, merits further research.

Colebrook and Sarkissian (2018) – “Objectivity” (p.4)

What motivates people to follow moral norms, if not the illusion of moral realism? In the present account, it is not moral realism that motivates us to be moral for moral reasons. It is the inherently normative nature of moral principles that makes them into goals, moral values (goods); we value them for their own sake as shared, recognised methods of achieving mutual benefit, and achieving benefit is itself normative.

Even moral realism or objectivity does not really stop people knowingly doing wrong. In fact, here we regard moral norms as not morally binding – as being morally demanding, but only instrumentally binding.

See also:

Fact/value distinction, p. 23

Moral principles and the normativity of norms, p. 54

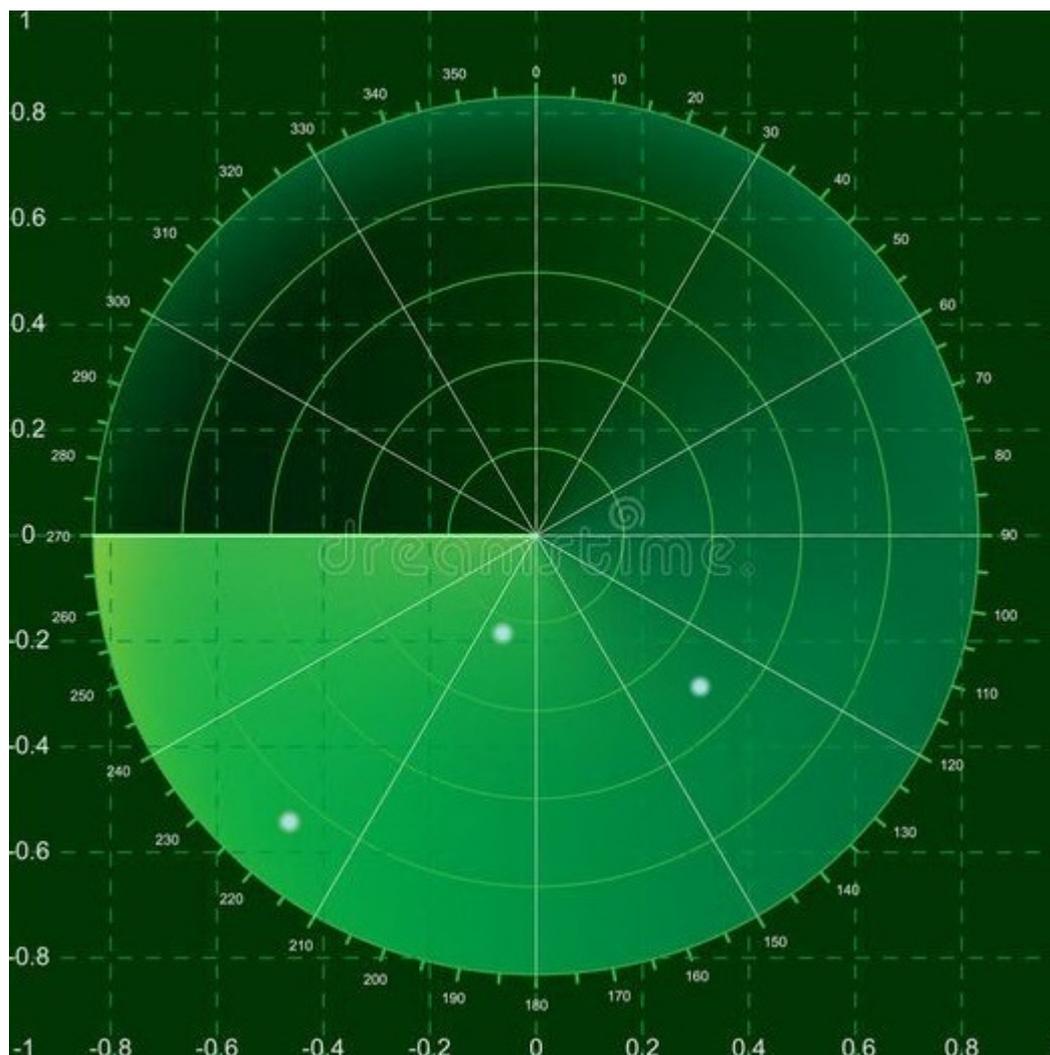
Objective right and wrong, p. 99

Provoking moral domains: the metaphor of the radar screen

Objects (facts) show up on a moral domain’s radar screen when they are significant to that moral domain’s joint fitness goal and its supporting features and values, which all have that joint fitness goal as their normative goals. We attend to what is relevant to our goals (Tomasello, 2014); we will invoke a moral principle or domain by attending to something that “provokes” that principle or domain by threatening or promoting its goals and methods.

We take the example of financial cheating. Financial cheating benefits the agent at the expense of the exploited victim. As such, it is significant to the moral domain of collaborative foraging for mutual (proximate) benefit. The proximate benefit is not mutual, but one-sided and unbalanced. The goal of the domain has failed to be achieved, because financial cheating has threatened the goals/methods of reciprocity and fairness and the overall goal of mutual benefit.

Another example is adults harming children. This invokes the parenting domain, which overlaps with cooperative breeding from the domain of collaborative foraging for mutual benefit. It also invokes the norm that one should not hurt the vulnerable. Hence, it is wrong to hurt one’s own children, or those of others, according to straightforward compassion, and the parenting domain and by extension cooperative breeding. The goal of caring for children has been threatened or lost, thereby provoking three moral principles/domains.



Accountability is a feature of any moral domain. Hence, if someone avoids accountability for an offense, it is immoral, in the sense of being uncooperative: the person is not fulfilling his or her allotted role as an ideal collaborative partner in a satisfactory way. Consistent with the goals-methods model of morality, accountability is both a method of (facilitating) cooperation and a goal in itself: a vehicle for normative pressure.

See also:

Conscience, p. 40

Guilt and blame, p. 105

Emotions, p. 248

Is morality rational?

Will I act for “us” or only for “me”? Cooperatively or instrumentally rationally?

There is intense debate over whether morality can be instrumentally rational: whether it benefits the individual, and if so, how (e.g., Fehige and Wessels, 2021).

According to Tomasello (2016), the first human morality of helping and fairness was instrumental and strategic, and our moral emotions and moral norms developed later to support them. We note that, if morality evolved, it can only have done so if it gave fitness benefits to the individual. In the present account, the first step in human morality was communal sharing.

It would have been personally beneficial to share with others, because being part of a sharing network pools and mitigates personal risk. It would have been personally beneficial to help others to thrive, because the individual depended on them to survive. It would have been personally beneficial to cooperate with others, since in a risky foraging niche, the individual needs others to cooperate with to find food.

Hence, we may say that morality is cooperatively rational. It is rational if your goal is to be an ideal collaborative partner rather than self-interest. Cooperation itself is rational with respect to the goal of achieving mutual benefit, i.e., it is a satisfactory method of achieving mutual fitness and/or utility.

It is cooperatively rational to risk one’s life to attempt to save a drowning stranger: it achieves the goal of being a good cooperative partner. The same action is not rational with respect to the goal of self-interest. I do it for “us” rather than “me”.

See also:

Normativity and intelligence, p. 25

Dual-level psychology of cooperation, p. 31

Where does morality “come from”?, p. 41

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 114

Interdependence and morality, p. 128

Virtue and the goals-methods theory of moral domains

Moral virtue can take two forms: a virtuous character trait, or virtuous performance of a role. Both forms can be situated within a moral context of collaboration and sharing.

Like principles, a virtue is both a goal in itself, and a means to some other good.

Moral principles are behavioural rules that any sociopath could follow, for self-serving reasons. Cultivating a virtuous self means that the individual wants to be a moral person.

One does not need moral emotions in order to reciprocate, help others, etc., as a psychopath, with markedly muted emotions, can be intrinsically motivated to do these things (Walker, 2021a). However, moral emotions help a lot.

Beauchamp and Childress (2001) maintain that only a moral action that is performed willingly for its own sake – rather than for personal advancement – counts as virtuous. In this case, a psychopath can be virtuous.

We care morally about people's motives, and we care especially about their *characteristic* motives, that is, the motives deeply embedded in their character. Persons who are motivated in this manner by sympathy and personal affection, for example, meet our approval, whereas others who act the same way, but from motives of personal ambition, might not.

Beauchamp and Childress (2001:27)

One reason why we care about someone's character is that it gives an indication of how they might act in other circumstances: can they be trusted and relied upon, in relevant contexts? A morally weak or habitually unethical person may be swayed away from mutual benefit by personal interest.

Character consists of a set of stable traits (virtues) that affect a person's judgment and action. Although we each have a different set of character traits, all persons with normal capacities can cultivate the traits that are centrally important in morality. Most such traits incorporate a complex structure of beliefs, motives, and emotions.

Beauchamp and Childress (2001:30)

Moral virtues support moral goals and moral principles. Some moral virtues map directly onto moral principles (e.g., the virtue of fidelity maps onto principles of truthfulness and transparency). Benefit or benevolence belongs to every evolved moral domain in one way or another (e.g., a man may be patriarchal in as benevolent a way as possible; or he may withhold benefits strategically, also for patriarchal reasons; or parents are motivated to be benevolent towards their children).

The Scottish philosopher Douglas Hume (1711-1776) believed that there were only two moral virtues: benevolence and justice. He believed that all the virtues flow from benevolence, but that since benevolence can be subjective and partial (i.e., we tend to be more benevolent towards our own

friends and family), justice is needed in order to “impartialise” benevolence and the distribution of goods and burdens (Pfeffer Merrill, 2011).

... [some of] the virtues need to be accompanied by an understanding of what is right and good, and of what deserves our kindness, generosity, and the like. Virtues warranting caution, for example, include loyalty, courage, respectfulness, tenderness, generosity, and patriotism. All of these virtues can be misdirected by obedience, zeal, or excessive devotion.

Beauchamp and Childress (2001:32)

See also:

Psychopathy, p. 236

Intention

We don't have a special court for motives.

Judge Judith Scheindlin

We do judge people for the malice or innocent good-heartedness of their intention.

Your intention indicates what you would do if you had the chance. Intention is thereby closely tied to character and character traits.

See also:

Virtue and the goals-methods theory of moral domains, p. 69

Dark and light traits, p. 228

Moral purity and sacredness

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

In the Western moral scheme, moral purity is not a moral principle in itself – a method of achieving mutual benefit. Rather, it is “about” the other moral principles: an attribute or quality of moral observance.

We say that something is morally impure when it has gone against one of the moral domains or principles, and pure when it upholds a moral domain or principle. A moral principle is a goal in itself, and the more successfully this goal is achieved, the more morally pure we perceive the action to be. Moral purity is thereby proportional to moral observance, or to the level of achievement of moral goals, in the intention or performance of an action.

Religious purity is a measure of how well someone is achieving a religious goal: serving God or conforming with the Dharma, for example.

These are consistent with the goals-methods model of moral domains. Just like gold or silver, an action or attitude can be “50% pure”, “90% pure”, etc.

A morally impure act evokes moral disgust and moral anger. The higher the value we place on a moral principle, the more we value and care about its observance, and the more we are concerned to maximise its purity of fulfilment, and the greater the anger and disgust evoked when it is violated. When something has infinite value, it is sacred, and to violate it is not just disgusting but taboo – forbidden. Sacredness can lead to evil as people may value other goods or principles above human welfare. Put another way, extremists are callous.

Moral purification is essentially a process of

- magnification of a particular principle or value in importance compared with other considerations; and
- restriction and avoidance of unwanted attitudes and actions (“impurities”) and the single-minded promotion of the desired value.

See also:

Theory of moral domains, p. 42

Purity in the Hindu religion, p. 74

D and political extremism, p. 241

The link between physical and moral disgust

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

Living in close quarters with other people, it is a moral matter to keep oneself clean and hygienic. Not to do so is both dirty and uncooperative; it is dirty in a way that matters to the well being of other people. Hence, "immoral" and "dirty" can be one and the same thing, and humans reflect and extend this concept in their emotion of general moral disgust at a violation of moral purity. Cleanliness is next to godliness after all.

Trading the sacred for the profane

Something that is sacred has infinite value (Pinker, 2011). Tetlock et al. (2000:853) 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. Even if we only 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. We may over-compensate in our moral reparation.

For most people, sacred values include honour, justice, love, life, friendship, generosity, 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: they are no longer a fit and proper person to hold an office or to collaborate with.

Purity in the Hindu religion

The Hindu religion may be thought of as a moral domain whose (joint) goal is (individual) enlightenment or existential liberation – *moksha*; a state of truth, consciousness and bliss – and whose methods of achieving this are the observance of obligations, actions etc. with respect to God's nature (Kanitkar and Cole, 2010).

In this case, purity is: 1) an attribute of morally significant things, of morally significant behaviour, etc.; 2) an ideal or goal in itself; 3) a method of promoting or upholding the divine nature, of coming closer to God, who is pure (Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, and Park, 1997). It is similar, but not the same as, a moral principle, as its goal is not mutual benefit, but individual spiritual enlightenment. The methods of the Hindu religious moral domain are its precepts and rules.

In Hinduism, sacredness pervades everyday life, and so do ideas of purity.

The basic idea is that matter (organic and inorganic) and all other forms – social hierarchies (parent, child, husband, wife), the tonal scales of music (*raga*), words (*mantra*) – are infused with spirit or divinity. This discourse is associated with the notion of a sacred tradition, the idea that a way of life – the Hindu *dharma* – is an earthly manifestation of divine design. ... All things are encompassed within the sacred order, or one could say, divinity is immanent in all things. A view of this kind denies a radical separation between the secular and the sacred. Thus, even family life is a sacramental event, which is why the breach of a seemingly mundane domestic procedure can be rationally regarded as a kind of desecration. (p. 147)

A particular feature of the Hindu worldview is the disposition to make connections between all aspects of secular, domestic, and psychological life and a sacred order that is the ultimate reference point for all sources of obligation. One might speak of a Hindu sense of "sacred world" (p. 149)

(Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, and Park, 1997)

See also:

Conventional and moral norms, p. 96

“Harmless harms” and the Theory of Dyadic Morality

TDM suggest that the intuitive perception of harm is ultimately what drives moral judgment.

Schein and Gray, 2018

People often view change as violence against the status quo.

John Amaechi, BBC Radio 4, The Moral Maze, 26 March 2025

The Theory of Dyadic Morality (TDM) (Schein and Gray, 2018) is a theory of moral psychology / judgement / cognition. It states that intentional harm is seen as immoral, and crucially, that immorality of any kind is perceived by people as literally harmful, even when, apparently, nobody is physically harmed, or it is difficult to say what is being harmed. This assertion is grounded in factual evidence (Schein and Gray, 2018).

Moral foundations theorists argue that discussions of harm in harmless wrongs are mere after-the-fact rationalizations of intuitive non harm-based judgments (Haidt et al. 1993), but another study finds that people perceive more harm in consensual incest when they are put under time pressure, showing that perceptions of harm are automatic and intuitive rather than post hoc rationalizations (Gray et al. 2014). Other studies find that people perceive victims in harmless acts like suicide, cannibalism, drug use, grave desecration, homosexuality, abortion, flag burning, and eating dog meat (Descioli et al. 2012). Harmless wrongs do not seem harmless to those who condemn them.

Gray and Pratt (2025:19)

Figure 3 (Schein and Gray, 2018, below) shows that perceptions of harm and perceptions of immorality of a particular action match up closely.

The Theory of Dyadic Morality (TDM) is named after a proposed “dyadic” causal relationship between harm and immorality. It predicts that: 1) perceived harm (and therefore perceived immorality) are on a continuum of severity, instead of being “all or nothing”, so that the more harmful something is, the more immoral it is perceived to be, and vice versa; and 2) harm and immorality form a self-reinforcing spiral, so that a perception of immorality leads to a perception of harm, leading to a higher perception of immorality, leading to a higher perception of harm, etc., etc.

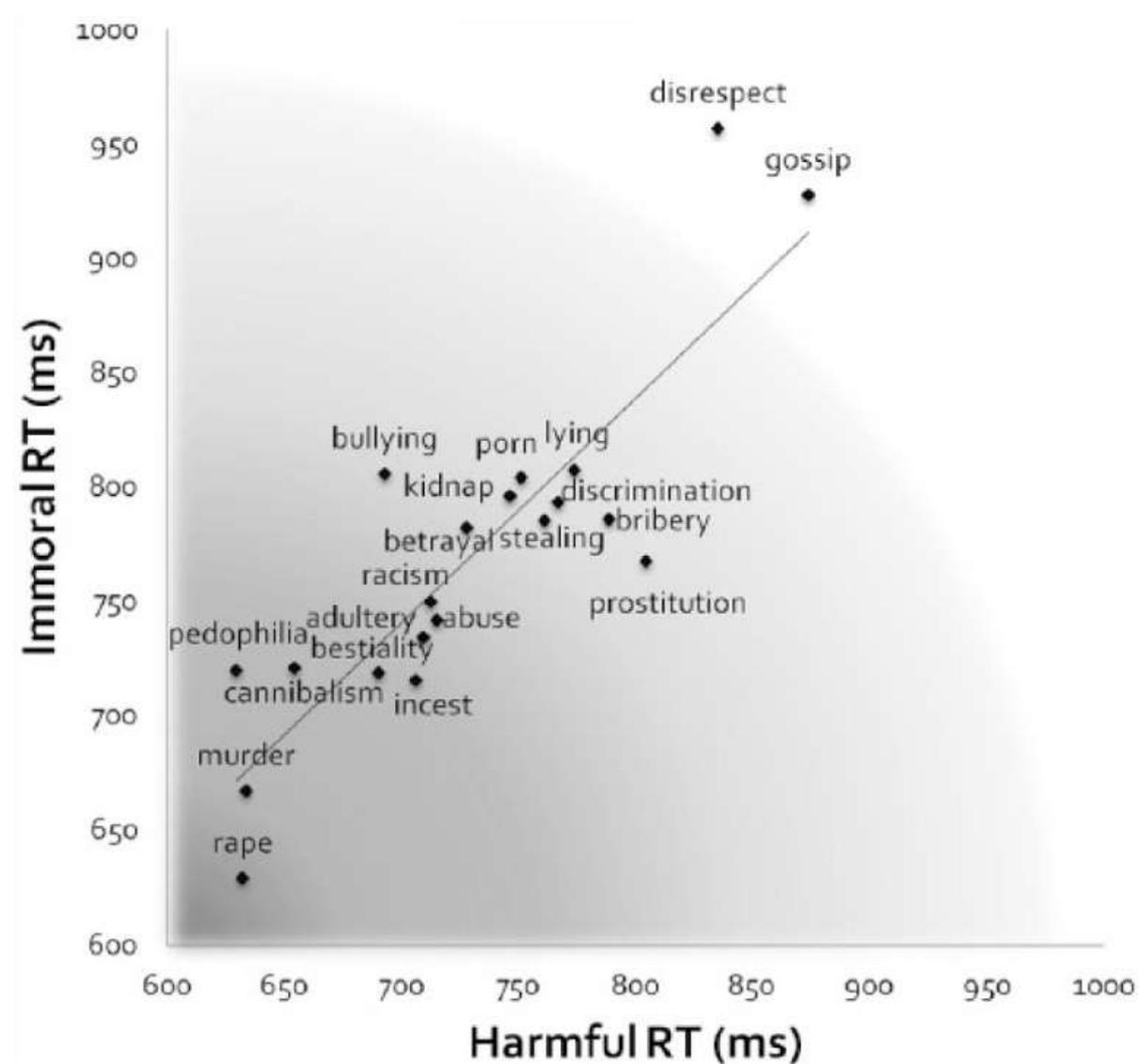


Figure 3. Response times for categorizing an act as immoral and harmful. They reveal an intuitive continuum of harm that corresponds to an intuitive continuum of immorality (Study 4; Schein & Gray, 2015) (Schein and Gray, 2018)

Moral dumbfounding

Often, people feel that something is immoral, but are unable to say exactly why. This is at bottom a failure of moral philosophy to describe morality. Jonathan Haidt has called this not knowing, “moral dumbfounding” (Haidt, 2013). We may note a related phenomenon of “moral irrationality”, where people imagine irrational consequences of a norm violation. Clearly, “harmless harms” are a form of moral dumbfounding: people do not know why something is or is perceived to be harmful, and perceiving harm where there is none would appear to be illogical.

In what is likely the best known moral psychology demonstration, Haidt asked participants why it is wrong for two siblings to have consensual, loving, safe sex. This vignette was seen as a purity violation rather than a harm violation because it was “carefully written to be harmless” (Haidt et al., 2000, p. 5). Each time participants appealed to the potential rationalist, harm-based reasons (e.g., the siblings might have deformed children), the experimenter argued that those reasons were invalid (e.g., potential children are not an issue because contraceptives were used). Eventually, once all the reasons offered by participants had been dismissed, participants stopped offering additional reasons, a phenomenon labeled “moral dumbfounding” (Haidt et al., 2000).

Gray, DiMaggio, Schein, and Kachanoff – “The Problem of Purity in Moral Psychology” (2023)

This phenomenon--the stubborn and puzzled maintenance of a judgment without supporting reasons--was dubbed “moral dumbfounding.” The existence of moral dumbfounding calls into question models in which moral judgment is produced by moral reasoning.

Haidt J., Bjorklund F., Murphy S. (2000). Moral dumbfounding: When intuition finds no reason [Unpublished manuscript]. University of Virginia

Knowledge of what (some, sexual) norms are for, evolutionarily, has been scrambled and lost in the historical sacralisation processes of religion, if it was ever explicitly known. Patriarchy and pair-bonding have most notably been sacralised and had their roots lost. Patriarchal norms are aimed at 1) reproduction; 2) through mate retention; 3) through the domination and control of women. Pair-bonding is aimed at 1) reproduction; through 2) mate retention. If any of these goals are compromised, then reproductive fitness is at risk of harm, which is *the* fundamental form of fitness-harm.

What has made it through the religious sacralisation process is knowledge and promotion of: 1) mate retention, 2) the domination and control of women, and 3) unspecified harm that is caused if either is thwarted.

Likewise, the reason for the incest taboo is known only to humans, who infer it using the sciences of breeding and genetics. Even unrelated children who have been raised together typically do not want to have sexual relations with each other when they are older (the Westermarck effect, observed in primates) (Chapais, 2008). Non-human primates do not know why only the males or females leave the group they were born in.

Homosexuality is seen as a violation of: 1) pair-bonding (“no sex outside marriage”) and 2) patriarchy (strict gender roles, “men should not act like the hated and despised women”). Masturbation is a violation of pair-bonding and a “criminal” waste of procreative opportunities.

When women breach patriarchal norms of domination and control, they are labelled impure, and the harm caused is all borne by them as they are held accountable and blamed for breaking the norm. Their character is maligned and their reputation will suffer among those who endorse patriarchal norms.

... [in non-human primates,] all males leave their natal group in species where females are resident and ... all females leave their natal groups when males are resident.

Chapais (2008:66)

A UKIP councillor has blamed the recent storms and heavy floods across Britain on the Government's decision to legalise gay marriage.

David Silvester said the prime minister had acted “arrogantly against the Gospel”. ...

In the letter to the Henley Standard he wrote: “The scriptures make it abundantly clear that a Christian nation that abandons its faith and acts contrary to the Gospel (and in naked breach of a coronation oath) will be beset by natural disasters such as storms, disease, pestilence and war.”

BBC News, 18 January 2014

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-25793358>

Immanuel Kant on the dumbfounded wrongness of masturbation:

Just as love of life is destined by nature to preserve the person, so sexual love is destined by it to preserve the species; ...

Lust is called *unnatural* if the human being is aroused to it not by a real object but by his imagining it, so that he himself creates one, contrary to [natural] purpose; for in this way imagination brings forth a desire contrary to nature's end, and indeed to an end even more important than that of love of life itself, since it aims at the preservation of the whole species and not only of the individual.

That so unnatural a use (and so misuse) of one's sexual attribute is a violation of duty *to oneself*, and indeed one contrary to morality in its highest degree, occurs to everyone immediately, with the thought of it, and stirs up an aversion to this thought to such an extent that it is considered indecent even to call this vice by its proper name. This does not occur with regard to murdering oneself, which one does not hesitate in the least to lay before the world's eyes in all its horror (in a *species facti*). In the case of unnatural vice it is as if the human being in general felt ashamed of being capable of treating his own person in such a way, which debases him beneath the beasts, so that when even the permitted bodily union of the sexes in marriage (a union which is in itself merely an animal union) is to be mentioned in polite society, this occasions and requires much delicacy to throw a veil over it.

But it is not so easy to produce a rational proof that unnatural, and even merely unpurposive, use of one's sexual attribute is inadmissible as being a violation of duty to oneself (and indeed, as far as its unnatural use is concerned, a violation in the highest degree). – The *ground of proof* is, indeed, that by it the human being surrenders his personality (throwing it away), since he uses himself merely as a means to satisfy an animal impulse. But this does not explain the high degree of violation of the humanity in one's own person by such a vice in its unnaturalness, which seems in terms of its form (the disposition it involves) to exceed even murdering oneself. It consists then, in this: that someone who defiantly casts off life as a burden is at least not making a feeble surrender to animal impulse in throwing himself away; murdering oneself requires courage, and in this disposition there is still always room for respect for the humanity in one's own person. But unnatural lust, which is complete abandonment of oneself to animal inclination, makes the human being not only an object of enjoyment but, still further, a thing that is contrary to nature, that is, a *loathsome* object, and so deprives him of all respect for himself.

Immanuel Kant – "The Metaphysics of Morals" (1797/2017:424-425)

See also:

Origins of the Christian prohibition of homosexuality and extra-marital sex, p. 80

The incest taboo, p. 81

The moralisation of women's bodily autonomy, p. 215

Origins of the Christian prohibition of homosexuality and extra-marital sex

Why are the Abrahamic religions so restrictive about sex? The origins of this lie in early Judaism and the formation of Christianity during the first few centuries AD.

What happened was a moral purification of the existing situation in ancient Roman and Greek society (Harper, 2013). The sexual ethics of these societies were patriarchal. As such, the gender roles were strictly defined. Men were supposed to be "manly", and effeminacy in men was vilified. Sexual continence was valued. In women, this meant they had to be chaste outside marriage. Men were merely required to be moderate, which meant they were free to visit prostitutes. Ancient Roman society depended on slavery and the sexual exploitation of slaves. It was acceptable for men and teenage boys to have sexual relations as long as the man was not "passive"; the recipient must be "smooth" (a boy or a woman). In general, eroticism was frankly and openly celebrated, within the accepted rules.

Christianity developed as an offshoot of Judaism, and Islam was a new streamlining and simplification of Christianity (Armstrong, 2004). Both Jews and Christians, as groups, were at odds with and persecuted by the outside world. Both viewed polytheism as a kind of religious promiscuity, as bad as sexual promiscuity (lack of continence).

The newly forming Christian religion, in the first two centuries AD, took the acknowledged virtue in Roman society – sexual continence – and magnified its importance and purified it, placing more and more restrictions on continence until almost nothing was permissible sexually. One strand of thinking promoted virginity as the only acceptable way of life; another saw marriage as acceptable for the purpose of procreation, as long as sex was not actually enjoyed. Sex was to be confined entirely to marriage for both sexes. St. Paul, in his letters to the Corinthians, was forced to find a middle way that would satisfy all sides. These letters were then treated as canonical by the Christian Church. The Roman practice of pederasty, the consortship of adult men with young boys, became especially condemned as were all same-sex relations and the use of prostitutes, as belonging to a deeply corrupt and worldly dominant culture to be escaped and avoided.

Given the convoluted history and obscure biological origins of, say, the norm prohibiting homosexuality, it is not surprising that moral dumbfounding exists.

The incest taboo

A meta-analysis of 139 studies, by de Boer, Vega-Trejo, Kotrschal, and Fitzpatrick (2021) found that:

- actual incest avoidance in both humans and non-human animals is weak;
- the actual effects of incest on resulting offspring are weakly harmful;
- there is a publication bias in favour of results that agree with the taboo.

These findings contrast with the human taboo on incest, which is very strong. Why should there be a mismatch? Perhaps the answer is that the taboo has to be strong in order to prevent what is otherwise quite likely to arise – the (albeit weak) risk of damaging children through incest. This is similar to the “fierce” egalitarian levelling mechanisms in egalitarian hunter-gatherer groups – there is strong pressure to do otherwise, so a strong taboo is needed.

According to this meta-study, therefore, researchers may have been seeing only what they expected to see – a strong and widespread incest avoidance taboo in nature.

In non-human primates, at least, only the males or only the females leave the group they were born into when they reach sexual maturity (Chapais, 2008). Hence, adult brothers and sisters are unlikely to meet. This could achieve the same end (incest avoidance) as actual incest-avoidance behaviour.

Nathan Cofnas (2020) questions why a personal preference (not to have sex with siblings) should generalise to a norm that applies to everyone: “I think nobody should have sex with their siblings”. He concludes that it is because incest “weakens the stock” of a social group, making it a less effective group, and this affects all group members. This conclusion is backed up by research findings that incest norms are stronger in large, widely-dispersed groups of distantly-related people, where deleterious genes are less concentrated in individual offspring, who are therefore less likely to die early, than in small, tightly-related groups where offspring with many deleterious genes are more likely to die early.

See also:

Moral dumbfounding, p. 77

Modern egalitarian societies, p. 111

The Smoke Detector Principle, p. 249

Why is harm the default explanation for immorality?

Why would perceptions of immorality lead to perceptions of harm, even when, apparently, nobody is physically harmed?

Perhaps, the answer exists on two levels: proximate and ultimate; i.e., “nearby”, and “evolutionary”. On both levels, it is all about goals.

At a proximate level, perception of harm is caused by norm violation. Different people value different norms and goods. Norms are ideals or goals, and they represent “how things *should* be”. This is valued, and therefore vulnerable to attack or compromise (Schein and Gray, 2018). The norm is protecting us from “how things *should not* be”.

Hence, if a norm is broken, the perception is that “how things *should* be” will be harmed, and replaced with “how things *should not* be”. How things shouldn’t be includes valued things or people being harmed.

Anita Bryant believed that the “purity” violation of gay rights would convince kids to be gay, which would not only destroy their vulnerable immortal souls but also undermine procreation and hence the American family, which would bankrupt the nation and eventually lead to anarchy (Bryant, 1977).

Schein and Gray (2018)

Moral purity is a measure of moral goal achievement, moral goal achievement is at bottom a way of achieving mutual benefit and evolutionary well being, and harm is what happens when moral goals are not achieved.

Things that are valued, and therefore perceived as vulnerable to harm, include my country, my society, honour, a woman’s moral purity, the sexual pair-bond, etc.

- welfare is the highest good
- physical harm is the worst badness, the thing that we ultimately all try to prevent.

Preventing harm to oneself and one’s kin—that is, one’s genes—was likely a key motivating factor for the evolution of morality (Haidt & Joseph, 2007; Hauser, 2006). There is nothing that impedes your genes propagating more than you or an offspring being murdered, having your livelihood stolen, having someone impregnate your spouse, getting a sexually transmitted disease, or being enslaved by a neighboring civilization. Without prohibitions against harm—whether direct or indirect—not only would genetic propagation be impaired, but cultures would likely collapse into chaos. Given its evolutionary importance, it follows that

harm should be the most developmentally basic and universal psychological cause of moral judgment.

Schein and Gray (2018)

As Crisp (2006) points out, the ultimate reason for doing anything, including following moral principles, is welfare. That is, in the broader language of evolutionary ethics: fitness, utility, and/or pleasure.

As Schein and Gray (2018) point out, benefit and harm to welfare/fitness constitutes the most obvious and basic, prototypical form of interpersonal moral interaction. Benefit and harm are the “currency of morality” (Bekoff and Pierce, 2009).

When someone breaks a moral principle but they do not know why it is wrong, because it does not involve physical or emotional harm, they typically resort to looking for harm that they think must have been caused.

In this situation, the agent’s confused moral thinking cuts straight to the most obvious form of immorality – physical or emotional harm. They will find it even where none exists. In other words, the most urgent and important thing on the list of things that shouldn’t be, is harm. This empirical finding, in itself, demonstrates the truth of the idea (e.g., Crisp, 2006) that welfare is the most important good.

See also:

Moral purity and sacredness, p. 72

Moral anger

Moral anger is the anger we feel when someone commits a moral violation by breaking a moral norm we care about or by failing in their responsibility to be an ideal collaborative partner. 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 “righteous” moral anger.

A study by Rozin, Lowery, Imada, and Haidt (1999) produced evidence that moral anger is elicited by violations of the ethics of interpersonal benefit/harm, reciprocity and fairness; contempt by violations of the “community” ethics of duty, responsibility, hierarchy etc.; and disgust by contravention of the “purity” ethic of sacredness.

Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, and Lerner (2000:855) 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.”

A study found that most of the murders it looked at were committed in moral anger, in revenge for perceived wrongs, in everyday disputes that escalated 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.

See also:

Trading the sacred for the profane, p. 73

Other structural analyses of morality

The goals-methods model of moral domains is not the only way to analyse the structure of morality.

It is also true that, as the regulation of collaboration and its goals, morality is there to promote good behaviour and discourage bad behaviour. According to Dill and Darwall (2014), this reflects the structure of the fundamental moral motives.

The motives that accompany blame and guilt are, we claim, the fundamental motives driving moral behavior. Following DeScioli and Kurzban (2009), we distinguish two primary moral motives: conscience, the motive to regulate one’s own behavior by moral norms, and condemnation, the motive to respond to others’ moral wrongdoing with behaviors such as reproach and punishment. Our claim is that the motivational components of blame and guilt,

as described above, are also the motives of moral condemnation and conscience, respectively.

Dill and Darwall (2014:5)

We may observe that morality is like the moon – it has a light side and a dark side – promoting good behaviour and punishing the bad. The same is true of religion, since religion is also a moral domain: it promotes good behaviour and punishes the bad. God is both merciful and vengeful.

We may note that this is similar to the distinction between charity and justice.

See also:

Conscience, p. 40

Organised religion, p. 50

Moral anger, p. 83

Guilt and blame, p. 105

Features of collaboration

Cooperation consists of collaboration, coordination, and communication (Tomasello, 2014).

A moral domain is a system of intra-personal, inter-personal, and collective social control with respect to collaborating towards a particular class of joint goal. It is a collaboration to control and regulate a collaboration.

Morality and ethics are aimed at collaborating to promote mutual benefit of some kind. Hence, general features of collaboration, and of controlling collaboration, are also general features of moral domains.

The following features of collaboration are proposed for the domain, collaborative foraging for mutual benefit. Other moral domains have their own particular structures and versions of these features of collaboration.

Features of collaboration are vehicles of normative pressure; they carry it to where it is needed (the actions, attitudes and intentions of partners). Even the joint goal of the collaboration is a vehicle for achieving instrumental normativity.

See also:

Moral and instrumental oughts, p. 30

Moral-structural components of morality, p. 37

Definition and functions of a moral domain, p. 52

Joint goal

The joint goal of collaboration is mutual instrumental benefit.

One partner's goal may differ from the other. For example, a parent wants to reproduce, while both parent and child want the child to thrive and survive. The child is not reproducing.

See also:

Dual-level psychology of cooperation, p. 31

Parenting, p. 49

Role ideals, p. 87

Joint agent “we”

If you and I are collaborating, then there are effectively three characters in the picture: “I”, “you”, and the joint agent “we”.

“We” are a joint agent, and therefore my own success or failure affect “you” and “me” equally, and they also can affect the future of “us” since if I fail to cooperate optimally, for whatever reason, you may not choose me as a partner in the future.

Within the joint agent, I can see your role and perspective, by cognitive perspective taking. I can see that if I were to uphold your role ideals, I could perform your role with equal success.

Within the joint agent, partners are functionally equivalent in that the roles could in principle be filled by anyone with the necessary skills.

See also:

Dual-level psychology of cooperation, p. 31

Partner choice, p. 90

Partner control, p. 90

Self-other equivalence, p. 149

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”

Role ideals are defined as the instrumental, ideal standards associated with a particular role. As sub-goals of the overall goal, they are normative, and as they are associated with a physical role and not particular people, they are impartial. As impartial standards, they form external arbiters of behaviour with respect to performing a particular role. The fact that personnel could be exchanged within roles, and success still be achieved if role ideals are upheld – forms a basis for self-other equivalence, and hence, impartiality among partners.

Role ideals could have been the first shared normative standards (Tomasello, 2016), and the forerunners of later collective cultural norms.

A moral principle is a role ideal associated with any role: with collaboration itself. It is an ideal way of collaborating. Just as role ideals are sub-goals of the overall goal of the task in hand, moral principles form sub-domains of their overall domain with the same joint goal as the domain.

A social norm is cultural, part of a large-group-wide system of social control: an ideal way to be cooperative in otherwise competitive situations (Tomasello, 2016).

See also:

Moral principles and the normativity of norms, p. 54

Conventions, moral norms, and social norms, p. 96

Self-other equivalence, p. 149

Joint commitment to collaborate

- you and I make a commitment to collaborate to do X;
- “we” are then committed to collaborate to do X;
- you and I identify with the goal X;
- X becomes our joint goal;
- this commitment to do X then structures our collaboration;
- “we” collaborate to regulate the collaboration to do X.

The reason to make the commitment is the mutual risk inherent in relying on another human being to help me. I extract a firm commitment from my partner, backed up by their reputation / conscience / cooperative identity / my threat of partner choice.

The primal scenario of collaboration for mutual benefit is best described as a Stag Hunt (Tomasello, 2016). In this type of situation, I might be hunting for some small, low-value, low-risk game such as tortoises. You might have spotted a large, high-value, high-risk animal like a stag. Before I abandon the safe tortoises, and come with you to hunt the risky stag, I need some way of mitigating the risk of losing all my options. The risk is much reduced if we make an explicit commitment to each other, out in the open, to collaborate. In making a commitment with you, I am assuming that you are trustworthy and competent and that you care about your moral standing.

Other commitments are created implicitly when we simply “fall into” a collaboration by joining in.

A joint commitment or agreement can only be terminated by another joint agreement: we both have to agree that you can be excused from further duties.

The claim is that humans have evolved an instinct to make and follow joint commitments to collaborate. Presumably, if true, it is because collaboration enhances (mutual) fitness, and people who can make and follow joint commitments are able to collaborate more successfully.

Thus, in a recent experiment three-year-old children committed to a joint task, but then, unexpectedly, one child got access to his reward early. For the partner to benefit as well, this child had to continue to collaborate even though there was no further reward available to him. Nevertheless, most children eagerly assisted their unlucky partner so that both ended up with a reward – and more often than if the partner just asked for help in a similar situation but outside of any collaboration or commitment (Hamann et al., 2012). ...

In a follow-up study, Gräfenhain et al. (2013) found that pairs of three-year-olds who committed to work on a puzzle together did such things as wait for their partner when she was delayed, repair damage done by their partner, refrain from tattling on their partner, and perform their partner's role for her when she was unable (i.e., more than did pairs of children who simply played in parallel for the same amount of time). When young children make a joint commitment with a peer, they help and support her much more strongly than when they are just playing together.

Michael Tomasello – “A Natural History of Human Morality” (2016)

See also:

Commitment, norms, legitimacy, and responsibility, p. 33

Mutual benefit in moral domains, p. 64

Role ideals, p. 87

Partner choice, p. 90

Partner control, p. 90

Mutual respect and deservingness

I respect people who are just like me, because they are just like me.

In a collaborative partnership, partners are mutually valuable and equivalent. This value and equivalence lead to a mutual respect and deservingness among partners. This mutual respect, deservingness and equivalence form the basis for fairness.

See also:

Self-other equivalence, p. 149

How morality is derived from collaboration, p. 271

Partner choice

The proposal is that people who collaborate do better than loners.

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 as a collaborative partner.

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.

This track record is someone's reputation or cooperative identity.

In the marketplace of potential collaborators, "you" should have respect for "me", because "I" could help "you". I expect and demand this respect, and likewise, extend it to you.

Partner control

In collaboration, each partner is taking a risk by relying on the others. This risk is minimised through joint commitment and then partner control.

In partner control, we attempt to turn a failing partner into a good one, through "respectful protest", or punishment, or the threat of rejection, or helping and guidance, or some combination of these. If these fail, then my last resort is to exercise partner choice and find a new partner.

Because of the commitment we agreed to in order to collaborate, it is legitimate to regulate each other in the direction of being ideal collaborative partners. Through self-other equivalence, just as I may legitimately regulate you, you may legitimately regulate me.

I internalise this process of monitoring and evaluation as a personal cooperative identity: my opinion of myself as a co-operator.

See also:

Partner choice, p. 90

Cooperative identity and reputation, p. 91

Respectful protest

Respectful protest is a method of partner control. It is to press a moral demand – for me to hold you to account for not being a good partner (to blame you), and for you to hold yourself to account (to accept responsibility and feel guilty) (Dill and Darwall, 2014; Tomasello, 2016).

If partner *A* feels that he has been treated unfairly, unjustly or disrespectfully by partner *B*, or if partner *B* is not fulfilling her role ideals, 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.

This protest is legitimate, and therefore deserved, because it comes from “us”.

Cooperative identity and reputation

My public cooperative identity is defined as the opinion of me as a co-operator among specific current or past partners.

My public moral identity or reputation is defined as the opinion of the world at large of me as a co-operator, and of how ethical I am, how trustworthy, how likely to tell the truth, etc.

My personal cooperative or moral identity is my opinion of myself as a cooperative or moral agent. As I monitor and evaluate the performance of others, so I also know that they are monitoring and evaluating me, and, internalising this process via self-other equivalence, I monitor and evaluate my own performance of cooperative and moral duties and obligations and goodwill.

This identity is a source of moral normativity in that I wish to maintain my standing and respect in my own eyes and the eyes of the world as a good co-operator. It is a source of utility to have a good self-image, since we all have a psychological need to see ourselves in a good light, and a source of utility

to have a good reputation and cooperative identity, since we all need to be chosen as collaborative partners.

The best way to appear to be a good co-operator is actually to be one; we also engage in “reputation management” whereby we attempt to repair a damaged reputation through various means.

This self-opinion is part of the conscience. In response to a poor self-opinion, I will feel guilt at past wrongdoing, attempt to make amends and undo the regretted action, and resolve to do better in the future.

In most religions, “backbiting” is a great sin – talking badly about someone behind their back.

See also:

The ideal collaborative partner, p. 36

Conscience, p. 40

Partner choice, p. 90

Indirect reciprocity, p. 160

A quiet ego, p. 245

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, 2019a).

See also:

Pluralism, universality, and non-WEIRD morality, p. 292

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; or the medical profession, when practitioners are unable to do a good job because of circumstances. 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 (Norman and Maguen, 2024).

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

Regulation in large groups

The challenge for modern human individuals was to scale up from a life based on interdependent collaboration with well-known partners to a life lived in a cultural group with all kinds of interdependent groupmates. Cognitively, what was needed were skills and motivations not just of joint intentionality but of collective intentionality. These skills, along with newly powerful skills of cultural transmission, enabled individuals to create among themselves various types of conventional cultural practices, shared in the cultural common ground of the group. ...

The modern human cultural group consequently became, in effect, a single, self-sustaining collaborative enterprise, a collaborative foraging party writ large, aimed at the collective goal of group survival, with each individual playing his or her division-of-labor role, including the role of being a competent and loyal group member.

Tomasello (2016:85,88)

In joint face-to-face collaboration, regulation is carried out between individuals, and in small groups, individuals maintain cooperative identities with each other and reputation is presumably well known. In large groups, regulation is done differently – collectively – and potentially, between strangers who do not know each other's track records.

Morality is the collaboration to regulate collaboration and its goals, and collaboration requires a group, team, or partnership. Tomasello et al. (2012) and Tomasello (2016) propose two stages to human prehistory: living in small social groups, for millions of years (during which sharing, collaboration and joint thinking evolved) and then as humans grew more reproductively successful, in large tribal cultural groups split into small related bands, from around 150,000 years ago (consistent with the evolution of group-minded moral self-governance, culture, and social norms). There was also a third stage, an extension of the second: people from many tribes crammed together in city states, from around 12,000 years ago (during which time distributive justice arose, according to the present model).

There are a number of challenges for morality in the self-regulation of large, anonymous, impersonal groups:

- coordination of individuals with unfamiliar group-members
- trust for and reliance on unfamiliar group-members (group solidarity)

- group loyalty
- cooperation within the group
- controlling cheating and free riding within the group
- legitimacy of regulation within the group

At the same time, since loners would not do so well, those individuals who did best in large tribal groups were those who had cultural rationality, as:

- conformity and self- and other-regulation according to the group's norms and conventions
- loyalty to the group and its members.

Interdependence and group loyalty

Collaboration requires a group of people to do it, all of whom will benefit from collaboration by increased chances of mutual thriving and surviving. These people are therefore interdependent with one another: they are forced to trust and rely on each other. Interdependence gives rise to mutual empathic concern, loyalty, gratitude, etc.

As ancient human groups grew larger, increasing division of labour meant that individuals grew ever more dependent on the group, and this served to spread empathic concern to everyone inside the group, even strangers; but not to those outside it. This was the beginning of in-group out-group psychology – i.e., in-group bias. “... everyone in the group needed everyone else ...” (Tomasello, 2016:90). Bias against out-group members may have evolved much later as other groups came to be seen as threatening.

It is important for the functioning of the group that its members are loyal. It is also important for individuals to display their group loyalty to other partners, in order to confirm their identity as good group-members in the eyes of those others.

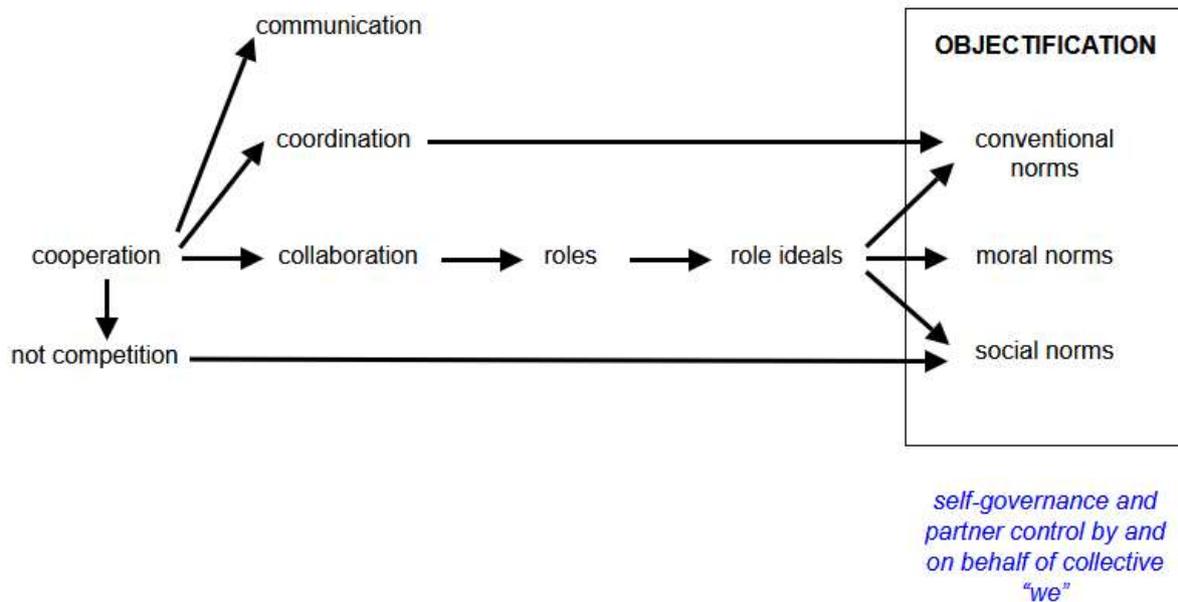
See also:

Pluralism, universality, and non-WEIRD morality, p. 292

Coordination in large groups

Coordination in large groups is facilitated by group-wide similarity, using cultural common ground knowledge – all group members know the way we do things – and group-wide norms.

Conventions, moral norms, and social norms



In the diagram above:

The role ideals of conventional norms are those of particular occupations within the group or tribe; or applying to particular social situations, activities, products, etc. According to conventional norms, my goal is to do excellent work in my roles in my life in general.

The role ideal of moral norms is of being a good co-operator with ethical goals. My goal is to be cooperative and morally praiseworthy.

The role ideal of social norms is of being a good cultural group-member. My goal is to be a good cultural group member.

All of them indicate that if you follow them then you are “one of us”: a loyal and committed member of our cultural group; or at least, compatible with it.

- **Conventional and moral norms**

There is a lot of controversy in moral philosophy over the difference between conventional and moral norms (e.g., Machery and Stich, 2022). In the present account, conventions are “rules of the game” for the purposes of coordination of collaborative activities, while moral

norms evoke the concerns of moral domains and norms – e.g., benefit and harm, fairness, respect, parenting, pair-bonding, the restriction of women’s agency, family concerns, etc.

A convention can be moralised if breaking it evokes a moral norm. For example, if it shows disrespect to break a convention, then breaking that convention becomes morally wrong. An example might be wearing beach clothes to a funeral.

Conventions can also be moralised if they demonstrate group identity and solidarity: “if you don’t do things *this* way, you’re not one of us” = “if you don’t do things *this* way, you’re doing the wrong thing.” To break a group norm is to threaten the fabric of society, and so, it is wrong.

Haidt, Koller, and Dias (1993) propose that Western definitions of morality and convention do not transfer very well to non-Western countries, citing Indian Hinduism as an example, where many more aspects of life are moralised than in the West. In the present account, this is because Hinduism is a religious moral domain whose (joint) goal is not (only) human flourishing, surviving and reproducing, but overall is individual enlightenment and spiritual liberation. People try, together, to achieve individual enlightenment, and regulate themselves and each other in this direction. Hence, many aspects of life become methods of achieving this goal, and so they have moral significance.

See also:

Theory of moral domains, p. 42

Provoking moral domains: the metaphor of the radar screen, p. 67

Purity in the Hindu religion, p. 74

Objective right and wrong, p. 99

- **Social norms**

Tomasello (2016) defines social norms as a group-wide system of control that includes conventional norms (for within-group coordination), cooperative norms that forestall competition, and group-wide, “objective” moral norms by which group-members evaluate right and wrong behaviour, intentions and attitudes.

In small interpersonal groups, partners govern one another face-to-face, with personal responsibility, accountability and partner control. In large collective groups, partners govern themselves and each other according to collectively-recognised social norms.

Group-members enforce social norms upon themselves, upon people they interact with, and upon third parties whom they might have nothing to do with, representing and on behalf of the collective group agent “we”.

Tomasello (2016) also defines social norms as group-wide conventions that promote peace and cooperation in otherwise competitive situations. These tend to be around the things that people compete about the most: food and sex. Examples of common social norms include property rights, including, patriarchally, respecting the female “property rights” of other men; and procedural rules of who gets to eat first (e.g., pregnant women, older people). In the UK it is the norm to queue when a number of people want the same service simultaneously, this impartial procedure thereby forestalling competition.

- **Conventions, similarity, and mutual trust**

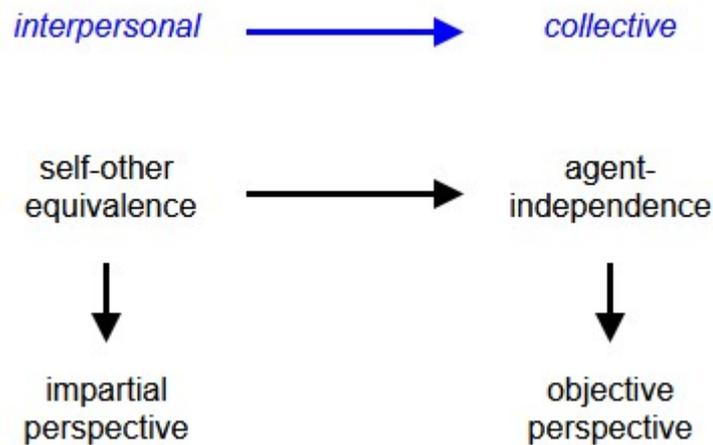
The group-wide conventions of how to do things form part of the group’s cultural common ground that all group members share, and all know that they all share. This knowledge of sharedness allows flexible coordination throughout the group.

Group-wide conventions produce group-wide similarity, which leads to mutual trust, since we both know that we both know that if we follow the known convention, this will lead to instrumental success, even if we are unfamiliar to each other. Following the convention means that we benefit each other by working together successfully.

Hence, conformity for the sake of it became an instrumental necessity for group members. At the same time, conformity signalled loyal membership of the group, to other group members; so that it was also socially necessary.

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).

Objective right and wrong



In a joint collaborative team, each partner takes the perspective of every other in order to coordinate the collaboration (Tomasello, 2014). Role ideals apply locally (and impartially) to our collaboration. Together with self-other equivalence, this allows impartiality of regulation of partners.

In a large collective group, the perspective becomes maximally general, as I may take the perspective of any group member, and role ideals become maximally general, in the sense that the maximum number of people are following them in maximally standard ways. Self-other equivalence applies to every member of the group, as any member could, in principle, carry out any role. This large-group-wide self-other equivalence is known as agent independence (Tomasello, 2016).

The result is that everyone in our social universe uses the “correct” standards when playing roles, including the ideal standards of the second-personal moralities of helping, sharing, egalitarianism, parenting, and monogamous pair-bonding: i.e., moral standards inherited from ancient small-group morality; and the ideal standards of the roles of good co-operator and good group member. This is a form of objective morality.

The proposal is that the group’s morality feels, or appears, or is presented to group members as, objective. This perceived objectivity is a key source of legitimacy.

Conventional cultural practices as the correct way (not incorrect way) to do things go beyond early humans’ ad hoc ideals that two partners created for themselves and that they could just as easily dissolve. The correct and incorrect ways to do things emanate from something much more objective and authoritative than us, and so individuals cannot really change them. The collective intentionality point of view thus transformed early humans’ highly local sense of

role-specific ideals into modern humans' "objective" standards of the right (correct) and wrong (incorrect) way to perform conventional roles.

Tomasello (2016:96)

In a cultural group of people, thriving, surviving, and reproducing together, children are taught the ways of the group by adults in a voice that represents the authoritative voice of the group and the objective "way things are".

Historically, since our group has always done things this way, successfully, this is another reason to accept it as objective fact.

It may be the case that our tribal religion promotes our values, giving them a supernatural dimension that further fortifies their objectivity (e.g., Endicott and Endicott, 2008).

Social norms and their enforcement are "three-way general" (Tomasello, 2016). 1) an enforcer assumes "representative authority" of the group and can in principle be any member of the group. 2) a target of enforcement can in principle be any member of the group. Finally, 3) the standards or norms themselves apply to any member of the group.

Interestingly:

... the usual assumption within the philosophical literature is that people subscribe to some form of moral objectivism. For example, Michael Smith writes that ordinary folk

seem to think moral questions have correct answers; that the correct answers are made correct by objective moral facts; that moral facts are wholly determined by circumstances and that, by engaging in moral conversation and argument, we can discover what these objective moral facts determined by the circumstances are. (Smith, 1994, 6).

Sarkissian, Hagop; John Park; David Tien; Jen Wright; and Joshua Knobe – "Folk Moral Relativism"; Mind & Language 26; 2011

Moral relativism is defined as the philosophical idea that moral judgements are correct with respect to a given framework of values, rather than universally correct. The present account supports moral relativism with real components (real goals and methods etc.). After all, given a multiplicity of values

existing within any one framework, and applying in any given situation – which is the “correct” one to abide by?

The study of Sarkissian et al. (2011) found that when people were asked to judge the same action within different cultural frameworks, their decisions were more relativistic. Conversely, judging an action within their own framework made them more objectivist.

The more people engage with radically different perspectives, the more they are drawn to moral relativism. ...

Specifically, it appears that the relativists were precisely the people who were *most open to alternative perspectives*. [their italics]

Sarkissian et al. (2011:22)

See also:

Evolutionary ethics and moral realism, p. 65

Commitment to, and legitimacy of, the social contract, p. 103

How morality is derived from collaboration, p. 271

Objective justice

If we have objective right and wrong, then we have an impartial external standard and arbiter of questions of justice: a disinterested, impartial, general “view from nowhere”. This objective point of view is necessary but not sufficient for judgements of justice or fairness.

It is also necessary that subjects of justice are treated as equal in status; that the need of each to be treated as an equal, in some relevant way, is respected.

Religion

Religion serves a number of useful functions in large groups (Norenzayan, 2013):

- supernatural “moralising high gods” monitor the morality of individuals’ behaviour, and punish infringements of that morality;

- “costly signals” of faithfulness demonstrate an individual’s trustworthiness, without having to know their reputation, thereby facilitating partner choice and promoting cooperation between strangers;
- standardised rituals and practices facilitate within-group coordination and solidarity.

Organised religion seems to have grown up since the advent of agriculture, beginning around 12,000 years ago, but tribal religions (e.g., in the Batek hunter-gatherers of Malaysia) also exist with moralising spiritual entities, without organisation (Endicott and Endicott, 2008).

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.

See also:

Organised religion [as a moral domain], p. 50

Cultural rationality and identity

If I conform to my group’s cultural and social norms, this shows that I respect them and that I wish to remain affiliated with the group. Humans need to be a part of a group for optimal personal thriving, surviving and reproducing. One of the most effective threats against a human being is to exclude them from their group (Boehm, 2012). If my group expels me, then it has exercised partner choice against me, and does not want me for a partner any more.

Modern humans, living in large tribal organisations, conformed to their social norms for at least three instrumentally rational reasons: for identification as part of their own group; for coordination in everyday activities; and to avoid punishment and threats to reputation. In circumstances of living in and relying on a large group of people, all of whom may be informed of your behaviour, it is prudential to maintain a good reputation or public moral identity.

... young children punish in-group members when they violate conventions more often and more severely than they do outgroup members (the so-called black sheep effect; see Schmidt et al., 2012). This is presumably because in-group members should know better, and they should care about the group’s smooth functioning more than outsiders. In contrast, in the case of moral norms involving issues of sympathy and fairness, as grounded in second-

personal morality, already by three years of age young children see them as applying not just to in-group members but to all humans (see Turiel, 2006, for a review). ...

... even preschool children prefer to interact with individuals who enforce social norms (even though they are acting somewhat aggressively) over those who do not (Vaish et al., submitted), presumably because such enforcement signals their cultural identity with the group and its ways.

Tomasello (2016:102)

As well as prudential reasons of their own reputational welfare, people also conformed to a group's cultural and moral norms for regulatory, moral reasons: the enforcement of morally correct behaviour by "you" and "I" on behalf of "us". Because the group's norms were created by the group for its smooth and successful functioning, this made them legitimate, and it was therefore a good and group-minded thing to enforce them on themselves and one another.

Commitment to, and legitimacy of, the social contract

In order for individual group members to agree to follow group norms, they have to see them as legitimate. The legitimacy of group norms for an individual is based on an implicit commitment she makes when she is "born into" the existing cultural matrix and identifies with the group and its goals, and thereby assumes co-authorship of its norms.

Secondly, through interdependence and group-wide self-other equivalence, the individual feels that everyone in his group deserves empathic concern, respect, and cooperation, which provides another reason for following group norms.

This part of the scaling up from collaboration to culture was relatively straightforward: everything went from dyadic and local to universal and "objective". What was not so straightforward was the scaling up of joint commitments. The issue was that, unlike the socially self-regulating structure created by a joint commitment, for modern humans the largest and most important collective commitments of their culture – its conventional practices, norms, and institutions – were things that individuals did not create for themselves – they were born into them. The individual therefore faced, in theory, the problem of the social contract and its legitimacy. In practice, however, individuals naturally saw the self-regulating collective commitments into which they were born as legitimate because they identified with their cultural group; they assumed a kind of coauthorship such that the

commitments were made by “us” for “us”. In the case of moral norms, this legitimacy was fortified by its connection to second-personal morality.

Tomasello (2016:86)

See also:

Objective right and wrong, p. 99

Monitoring, evaluation, self-governance, and moral identity

The moral identity is formed out of on-going monitoring and evaluation of the individual’s moral “performance”. Others monitor and evaluate my behaviour (public moral identity), and I internalise this process, and monitor and evaluate my own behaviour (personal moral identity).

The claim is that as they grow up from childhood, individuals are motivated to maintain their moral identity in good standing, and that ultimately the motivation for this is to remain a viable partner within one’s group.

Tomasello (2016) proposes that day-to-day moral decision-making is a creative synthesis of four concerns:

- me-concerns: about myself and my interests
- you-concerns: about others and their interests
- equality concerns: about fairness, impartiality and equality
- we-concerns: about the governance of “us” (me and you) by and on behalf of “us”.

In addition, we may be forced to justify our decisions and behaviour to others and ourselves, in terms of acceptable shared norms. For example, I may justify stealing a loaf of bread in order to feed my family.

See also:

Collaborative morality and its three moral formulae, p. 38

Conscience, p. 40

Partner choice, p. 90

Cooperative identity and reputation, p. 91

Guilt and blame

In the narrative of Dill and Darwall (2014), I may be held accountable, and blamed, if I fail to fulfil a legitimate moral demand. I feel guilty when I hold myself to account and find my own behaviour lacking in moral calibre. To feel guilty is to place myself under blame.

To hold someone accountable to an obligation just is to make a (putatively legitimate) moral demand of that person. When a moral wrong has already been committed, one can hold a perpetrator accountable by pressing the demand that was flouted via expressions of blame and reproach. The implicit goal of these condemnatory actions is to get the perpetrator to hold himself accountable.

How can a perpetrator hold himself accountable? By regarding his actions as condemnable in the same way that an outside party would, and responding appropriately to this fact. He can take responsibility by acknowledging and internalizing the wrongness of his action. This process of holding oneself accountable always requires (i) accepting that one did wrong and is blameworthy, (ii) not merely believing that, but also having the attitude of self-blame or guilt, and (iii) internalizing the standard that one's wrongful action violated, and thus being motivated to comply with this standard in the future. Since this internalization will also motivate one to counteract the wrong that was done, holding oneself accountable will also often involve (iv) acknowledging one's guilt to others; (v) taking steps to ensure one's own future compliance with the violated standard; (vi) taking steps to demonstrate one's intention to comply with said standard to others; (vii) accepting punishment or sanction for one's wrongdoing; and (viii) compensating and making amends with the victims of one's wrongdoing, if there are any. By performing some or all of these actions, the perpetrator holds himself to the very demand that he had previously shirked. [4]

[4] Note that holding oneself accountable sometimes involves actions that require others' participation: e.g. (iv), (vi), (vii), and (viii) on this list. This means that holding oneself accountable is not necessarily something one can do all by oneself.

We can now formulate our claims about the motivational components of guilt and blame more precisely. Guilt motivates its subject to hold herself accountable by making the very demand of herself that she flouted in doing wrong; adequately holding oneself accountable will involve performing some or all of the actions listed in the previous paragraph. Blame motivates its subject to get the wrongdoer to hold himself accountable. People pursue this motive by holding the perpetrator accountable themselves, pressing the violated demand with verbal reproach, expressions of outrage, and punishment.

The motives that accompany blame and guilt are, we claim, the fundamental motives driving moral behavior. Following DeScioli and Kurzban (2009), we distinguish two primary moral

motives: conscience, the motive to regulate one's own behavior by moral norms, and condemnation, the motive to respond to others' moral wrongdoing with behaviors such as reproach and punishment. Our claim is that the motivational components of blame and guilt, as described above, are also the motives of moral condemnation and conscience, respectively.

Dill and Darwall (2014:5) – "Moral Psychology as Accountability"

Furthermore, both the conscience and condemnation have a backward-looking and a forward-looking component. Guilt is when my conscience looks backwards in time and disapproves of my own action. Condemnation by others looks backwards in time. My conscience can motivate me to do the right thing in the future, to hold myself to legitimate demands; and a potential course of action may be condemned as blameworthy for not complying with a legitimate demand.

See also:

Conscience, p. 40

Moral principles and the normativity of norms, p. 54

Other structural analyses of morality, p. 84

Origin of the social contract

The social contract refers to the theory of an implicit agreement between individual citizens and the state (Bërdufi and Dushi, 2015), whereby the individual agrees to give up some of their freedoms in return for "protection of their lives, rights and properties" by the state (p. 393).

In the present evolutionary account, in the most basic terms, this represents the relationship between the individual and the group. For humans, living in small groups, this began with self-domestication, 4-6 million years ago, when the scarcity of resources led females to sexually select for males who would share and not compete. The result that the group formed a sharing network that individuals had access to, as long as they were not dominants or hogs (Tomasello, Melis, Tennie, Wyman, and Herrmann, 2012). This was the first relationship between the individual and the general group.

The social contract is therefore systemic and part of the structure of human cultural evolution.

See also:

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 114

Competition and dominance

Survival of the fittest – as opposed to survival of the equal

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"

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"

An articulate Bushman named Gaugo tells Lee, "Say that a man has been hunting. He must not come home and announce like a braggart, 'I have killed a good one in the bush!' He must first sit down in silence until someone else comes up to his fire and asks, 'What did you see today?' He replies quietly, 'Ah, I'm no good for hunting. I saw nothing at all ... maybe just a tiny one.' Then I smile to myself because I know he has killed something big."

Or as a renowned healer named Tomazho says, "When a young man kills much meat, he comes to think of himself as a chief or a big man, and he thinks of the rest of us as his servants or inferiors. We can't accept this. We refuse one who boasts, for someday his pride will make him kill somebody. So we always speak of his meat as worthless. In this way we cool his heart and make him gentle."

Christopher Boehm – “Moral Origins – the evolution of virtue, altruism, and shame” (2012:43-44)

Morality is how we work things out with others by means *other* than power and authority ...

Michael Tomasello – “A Natural History of Human Morality” (2016:157)

Human social life may be said to operate along two dimensions: cooperation and competition. For example, fairness (as distributive justice) is a trade-off between maximising individual benefits, and maximising benefits for all concerned parties (Tomasello, 2016).

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, is meant to produce a win-win, positive-sum situation, where all parties benefit.

The pressure to compete is ever-present, driven by the same thing as the pressure to cooperate: the pressure to thrive and survive (and reproduce). Both represent an option. For humans, there is always going to be a tug-of-war between cooperation and competition (Raihani, 2021); between hierarchy and egalitarianism; and between patriarchy and egalitarianism. Where a positive-sum situation is possible, peace is likely to emerge (Glowacki, Wilson, and Wrangham, 2017).

Chernyak-Hai and Davidai (2022) found that people with a zero-sum outlook tend to be more greedy, less trusting, and less willing to help under-served populations, than general; and that a zero-sum outlook inhibits other-directed, prosocial behaviour. Their studies of 2324 people found that people with a zero-sum outlook tend not to be willing to help others to help themselves (autonomy-oriented helping), fearing a loss of status, but tend to be willing to help others to solve a problem entirely (dependency-oriented helping).

See also:

The Moral Compass, p. 121

Desire and “original sin”, p. 265

Authority ranking

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).

There are at least two forms of competitive hierarchy: based on dominance (ranking according to coercive force) or prestige (ranking according to skills and abilities) (Ketterman and Maner, 2021). Status is a measure of someone’s position in a dominance or prestige hierarchy.

In a dominance hierarchy, dominants do well at the expense of subordinates: for example, in exploitation or slavery. In leadership based on prestige, the benefit of the prestigious and subordinates is mutual. Even groups of people with a fiercely egalitarian culture can be persuaded to follow prestigious “leaders” if the benefits outweigh the costs and the “leader” can offer the people real survival benefits. Over time, and combined with environmental conditions and the unequal introduction of ownership of property and the means of production, prestigious hierarchies could have become established as dominant, coercive, “persistent institutionalised inequality” (Mattison, Smith, Shenk, and Cochrane, 2016).

Humans are competitive, like any social species, but in our harsh foraging niche, we also have to live by cooperation. In most social animals, a competitive lifestyle leads to dominance hierarchies: 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, cooperation would quickly fall apart, because when dominants are able to take what they want from subordinates, those subordinate partners lose motivation over time through lack of appropriate reward (Tomasello et al., 2012). Other-directed fairness on the part of the dominant is not possible, because they won’t share.

While we believe that the members of the human family tree lived a strictly egalitarian lifestyle for much of its history (Knauff et al., 1991; Woodburn, 1982), 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 and respect 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 (Haidt, 2013).

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 through social 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 (Haidt, 2013).

See also:

The Moral Compass, p. 121

The “authority” foundation, p. 46

Dark and light traits, p. 228

Liberty, autonomy, and egalitarianism

Egalitarianism, a flat power structure, implies that no person may command another (Endicott and Endicott, 2008). Hence, egalitarianism implies personal autonomy, the power of individuals to govern themselves as free as possible from outside interference. Dominance is inimical to autonomy: it directly prevents it.

Accordingly, liberty forms a distinct moral foundation or family of moral values (Haidt, 2013). The desire for liberty is a reaction to illegitimate authority: that which achieves its aims through bullying, domination and intimidation. Interestingly, liberty is a “trans-domain” value: it is relevant in any of the evolved moral domains, including patriarchy, where women’s freedom is curtailed.

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 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 (not to be a “wanton”). 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 may be restricted by a number of factors, internal and external, including:

1. hierarchical authority.
2. social norms.
3. a professional code of conduct.
4. coercive control.
5. obligation to others.
6. addictions or other compulsive behaviours.

Modern egalitarian societies

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, or competitive people down to size, including public ridicule, desertion, or even assassination (Boehm et al., 1993; Boehm, 2012). Inequalities of wealth, power and status are not tolerated. If a person has more than a few days' supply of something, they will be forced by others to give it up for the common good.

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, with varying degrees of egalitarianism: 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 agricultural and horticultural technology began, that ancient humans would have used immediate return systems for at least 1.5 million years (Singh and Glowacki, 2022). Therefore we conclude that ancient humans were, probably, fiercely egalitarian in their outlook, including being non-patriarchal (Endicott, 1981).

... 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.* I think it is probable that this specialised development can only be realised without impoverishment in societies with a simple hunting and gathering economy because elsewhere this degree of disengagement from property would damage the operation of the economy. Indeed the indications are that this development is intrinsic, a necessary component of immediate-return economies which occurs only in such economies.

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
- a lack of sexual equality (Endicott, 1981; Smuts, 1995).

U-shaped history of human hierarchy?

The history of human dominance hierarchies could be U-shaped, based on several lines of evidence. In other words, the historical timeline of apes-to-humans may have been one of hierarchy → egalitarianism → hierarchy.

1) Great ape sociality, even that of bonobos, is structured mainly by dominance relations, leading to hierarchies based on fighting ability (Tomasello, 2014; de Waal and Lanting, 1998). The ancestors of humans were great apes, as are humans ourselves.

2) Hyper-cooperation has clearly evolved in human beings, yet it could not have evolved in the presence of the competitive force that characterises great ape sociality. The human race must have gone through a process of “self-domestication”, a necessary step that removed great ape dominance and replaced it with human egalitarianism. This self-domestication must, we assume, have reached the entire human race for it to be possible for cooperation to evolve in the entire genus *Homo*. Hence, competitive force (social dominance) must have almost completely died out in the human family tree for some period of time, beginning, we imagine, with the human ancestor *Ardipithecus ramidus*, 4-6 million years ago (see below).

3) Early humans, we assume, must have lived in technologically basic, “immediate-return” economic systems for a long period of time: an inherently egalitarian way of life, potentially for both men and women (Endicott, 1981; Woodburn, 1982). We see this lifestyle today in some hunter-gatherers living in relatively harsh environments (Singh and Glowacki, 2022).

4) Hierarchies based on dominance or prestige are typical of modern human society, alongside hyper-cooperation.

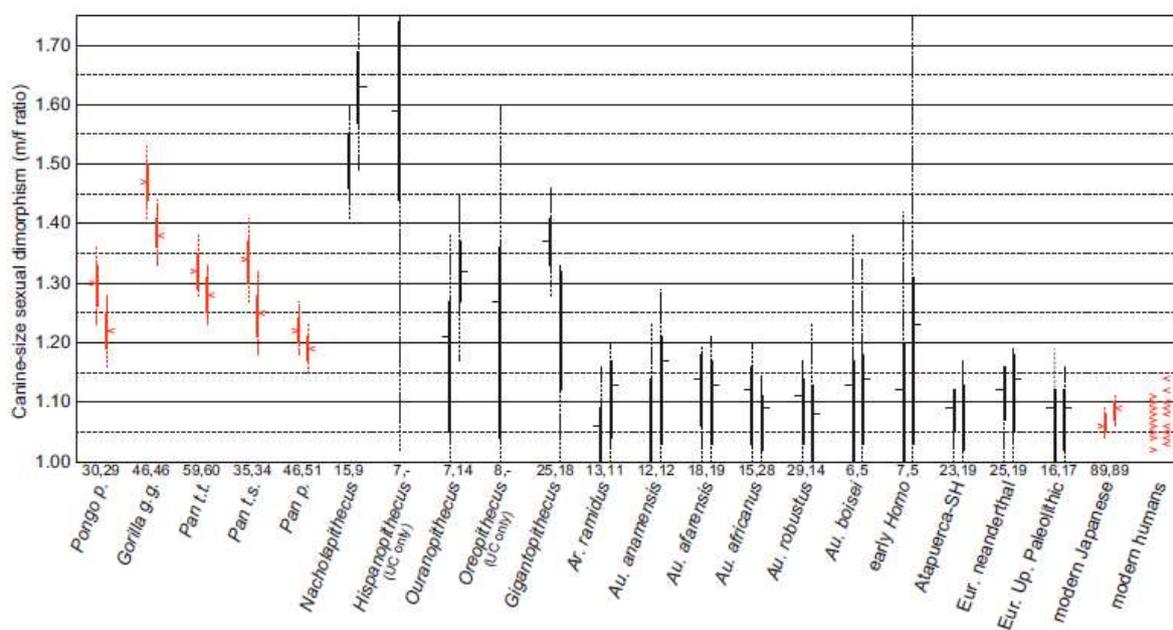
Small children seem to come into the world instinctively recognising and able to navigate dominance and competition (Thomsen, 2020). Therefore we assume this ability must have evolved over a period of time in the past. When and how did hierarchical rank reappear in the human race?

Humans are flexible in their use and navigation of hierarchy and egalitarianism (Singh, 2022). We may flexibly mix and match them according to context. By contrast, chimpanzees are inflexible in their dominance behaviour.

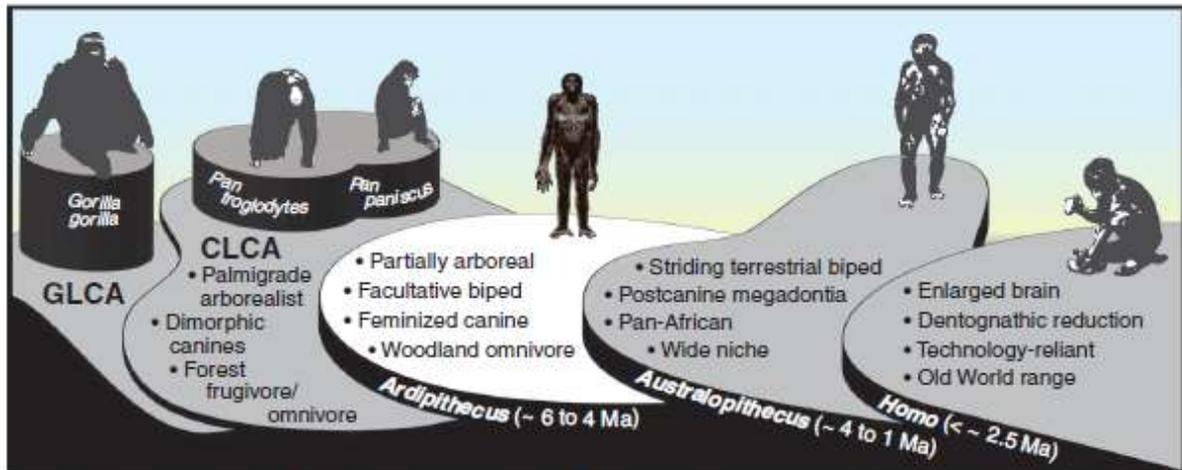
See also:

Young children are instinctively prepared for social situations of hierarchy and dominance, p. 119
 U-shaped history of human patriarchy, p. 210

Self-domestication of the human race



Suwa et al. (2021): fig 4. Male-female canine-size dimorphism in extant apes and fossil human ancestors including *Ardipithecus ramidus* and *Australopithecenes*. Numbers on x-axis show sample sizes. Left hand bars show upper canines, right-hand bars show lower canines. Except for *Gigantopithecus*, pithicenes to the left of *Ar. Ramidus* preceded it in time.



Evolution of hominids and African apes since the gorilla/chimp+human (GLCA) and chimp/human (CLCA) last common ancestors. Pedestals on the left show separate lineages leading to the extant apes (gorilla, and chimp and bonobo); text indicates key differences among adaptive plateaus occupied by the three hominid genera.

“*Ardipithecus ramidus* and the Paleobiology of Early Hominids” (White et al., 2009)

Humans are the friendly, cooperative species.

Ella Al-Shamahi – “Human” (BBC TV, 2025)

Before cooperation could evolve in humans, it was necessary to remove the great-ape social dominance relations from the human line. This may have occurred through female sexual selection for males who would share and not compete. The claim is that this appears to have happened in *Ardipithecus ramidus*, 4-6 million years ago.

In primates, mate competition – competing with others of the same sex, for mating opportunities – is largely associated with males, while mate choice – choosing mates for their quality – is largely associated with females (Plavcan, 2001). The limiting factor on a male primate’s reproductive success is the number of females that he can inseminate. Hence, there is pressure for primate males to control a group of females for reproductive access, and to exclude other males – to compete with them – from mating with any of them. Conversely, because the reproductive success of female primates is limited by the number and quality of young they can give birth to in a lifetime, it makes sense for females to choose males based on their genetic fitness and/or the amount of effort they will put into parental care.

Sexual dimorphism is a size difference between typical males and females of a species. One indicator of sexual dimorphism is the relative sizes of male and female canine teeth, which partly depends on the difference between male-male and female-female competition. The reasoning is that

canine teeth can be used as weapons in fights. Winning fights gives males priority in mating and therefore in reproducing and leaving behind their genes.

In general, in primates, the greater the potential for males to monopolise females, the greater tends to be the male-male competition, and hence, sexual dimorphism. Non-human great apes all show higher male-male competition and dimorphism than humans. Gorillas, with the males competing to win themselves a polygynously pair-bonded harem of females, show the highest dimorphism, while alpha male chimps and bonobos are able to dominate far fewer females in their multi-male, multi-female social groups, with other males able to mate too.

Given all this information we have about primates, we may still never be able to reconstruct the exact social ecology of early humans. We believe sexual dimorphism arose early in the evolution of monkeys and apes. Since the arrival of *Ardipithecus ramidus*, 4-6 million years ago, thought to be an ancestor of *Homo*, canine size dimorphism in the human line has been minimal, which suggests minimal male-male competition; but conversely, body size dimorphism was quite large in some species, pointing to intense male-male competition. However, there may have been other reasons for large body size dimorphism, than male-male competition (Plavcan, 2001).

From the beginning of the Pliocene period, 5.3 million years ago, until around 1 million years ago, in the Pleistocene, the Earth underwent a number of climate disruptions whereby there was rapid switching from wet to dry periods, overall cooling and drying, so that the African forests began to die back, to be replaced with a “mosaic” environment of mixed savannah, woodland and forest (Roberts, 2011).

One hypothesis is that a domestication or reduction of male-male competition from *Ardipithecus ramidus* onwards was driven by female choice for males who would share rather than compete (Suwa et al., 2021). This hypothesis is consistent with Bateman’s Principle (Petersdorf and Higham, 2017), which states that female reproductive success is limited by access to resources, while male reproductive success is limited by access to fertile females. Bateman’s methodology has since been discredited; however, this theory seems sensible, and it is compatible with maximising reproductive success in females and, under female selection, in males.

In modern primates, sexual monomorphism is associated with sexual monogamy, where one female mates with one male. In non-human primates, this in turn is associated with 1) a low population density of fertile females, such that the number of females available for a male to monopolise within a given area is low, as we might find in a low-quality environment; and/or 2) the need for the father to invest effort and resources into safeguarding and providing for his young (Petersdorf and Higham, 2017). Hence, serial sexual monogamy, which is the prevalent norm among modern humans (Chapais, 2008), may have begun in *Ardipithecus ramidus* as a response to a harsh environment, driven again by female choice, as each breeding female may have needed her own male partner who would invest in parental care. Females therefore required that males stop competing and start

sharing, and female sexual selection may have resulted in a reduction in male-male competition and sexual dimorphism.

Some species in the pithecene line, from 6 million years ago, were exhibiting extreme sexual dimorphism, suggesting extreme polygyny (Plavcan, 2001). Australopithecenes in the human family line, after *Ardipithecus ramidus*, showed approximately human levels of sexual dimorphism (see graph of canine sizes above).

Chimpanzees and bonobos are thought to be similar in habitat (forest) and habits to the last common ancestor between humans and their line. Both chimps and bonobos live in dense multi-male, multi-female groups as an indirect result of their environment of plentiful food. These species do not feature sexual pair-bonding, but an alpha male will attempt to dominate the mating rights. Polygyny in primates can arise out of multi-male multi-female systems when the environment becomes more harsh, since the density of females is lower and one male can therefore monopolise all the females in a particular area (Chapais, 2008). However, as the environment grew harsher still, this could have given way to monogamy as described above, through female choice for male egalitarianism. In this scenario, (polygynous) pair bonds evolved first, and monogamy afterwards, as “maximally constrained polygyny” (Chapais, 2008).

In the modern human world we see pockets of polygynous pair-bonding: one man with several wives. A hypothesis is that this arose again after a long period of exclusively monogamous pair-bonding, with a re-establishment of patriarchy when power structures and social isolation that men could take advantage of were reintroduced, relatively late on in human evolution (see below). Modern human males do not rely on large canines to compete; they have access to other kinds of reproductively useful competitive advantage, such as political and economic power and social status. As well as (largely) non-violent male-male competition, human males also compete for females by trying to be good quality mates and providers.

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

On the face of it, the 3:1 ratio suggests polygyny in ancient human nomadic hunter-gatherers. However, it may also reflect serial monogamy. In the Batek of Malaysia, hunter-gatherers living small mobile egalitarian bands, mainly in the forest, with no patriarchy: sexual relationships are not for life, although they are monogamous (Endicott and Endicott, 2008).

In white-handed gibbons, in Thailand, females will sometimes become polyandrous, mating with multiple males, when the environment becomes harsh. In this case, the population density becomes low, so that a home range is too large for a single male to defend, and he will cooperate with one or two other males to help him. There is one primary mate for the female and a number of secondary helper mates (Savini, Boesch, and Reichard, 2009). White-handed gibbons are sexually monomorphic and male-male aggression is low.

See also:

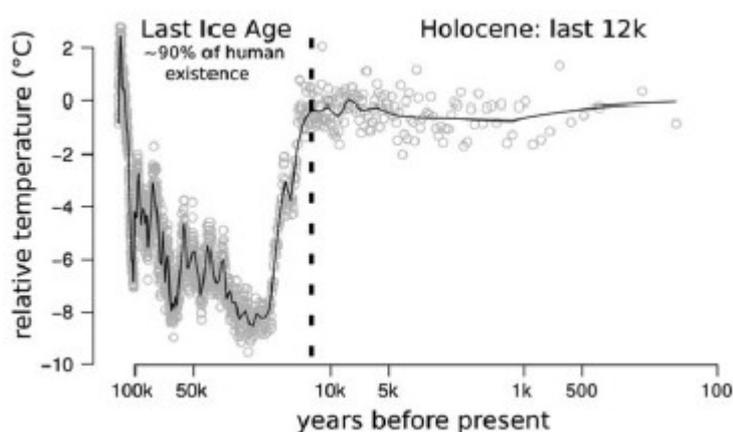
Evolution of sharing, p. 143

Generalised care, p. 172

U-shaped history of human patriarchy, p. 210

Transition from egalitarianism to inequality

There is little or no evidence of inequality in the archaeological record from before around 12,000 years ago, but a great deal of evidence of inequality since that time (Mattison, Smith, Shenk, and Cochrane, 2016). Around 12,000 years ago the Earth's climate changed from variable to stable.



Mattison, Smith, Shenk, and Cochrane (2016: figure 1)

The Economic Defensibility hypothesis proposes that people will defend resources from exploitation by others when the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs. When the Earth's temperature became more stable in the Holocene period, we may imagine that dense, reliable, predictable patches of resources began to appear that a family or other group could defend. Others may not have had any option but to become subordinate to those who controlled these resources in return for access to them. Control of these resources could be passed down through generations, supported by institutions and norms, leading to the emergence of Persistent Institutionalised Inequality (PII).

Under these conditions, people would no longer have been mobile, would no longer have been part of an egalitarian sharing network, nor equally interdependent, so egalitarianism could have died out.

Young children are instinctively prepared for social situations of hierarchy and dominance

... although infants, toddlers, and preschoolers understand and strategically respond to hierarchical rank, in fact the default expectations and preferences of most of them appear egalitarian, as is the case for adults cross-nationally.

Lotte Thomsen – “The developmental origins of social hierarchy: how infants and young children mentally represent and respond to power and status” (2020)

Singh (2022) points out that young children are born seemingly prepared to navigate a world of dominance and status hierarchies. Where did this apparently evolved knowledge come from? Did human hierarchy die out completely for a period of ~4-6 million years, or was it present somewhere all along?

Singh and Glowacki (2022) point to evidence of large populations subsisting on areas rich in resources, from long before the Holocene. But richness and density are not enough to generate PII; to do that, resources also have to be patchy (and long-lasting), otherwise there is enough for everyone, and nobody can “lord it” over anyone else.

We may observe that the tendency for competition is ever-present in all beings, including humans living in egalitarian societies. Hence, the existence of strong levelling mechanisms in small groups. This may mean that the workings of hierarchy, status and dominance are familiar, even in the midst of long-lasting, persistent egalitarianism.

Prehistory of warfare

There is no evidence in the archaeological record of prehistoric warfare (Spikins, 2015; Fry, 2013). The evidence from 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 peaceful, friendly, sociable collaborative partners than threatening (Spikins, 2015).

The earliest evidence of warfare is from around 12-18,000 years ago, “between what appears to be culturally distinct Nile Valley semisedentary hunter-fisher-gatherer groups.” (Crevecoeur et al., 2021:9).

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).

Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence: there may have been warfare before that time.

One theory is that humans only engage in warfare when there is something worth fighting over: e.g., land or resources.

See also:

Regulation in large groups, p. 94

Equality and property rights

Adams and Ybarra (2026) studied how people evaluate others with respect to various moral “domains”. They looked at moral domains of: family, reciprocity, bravery, hierarchy, equality, property, and unity and communal sharing. It was found that equality and property concerns produced by far the strongest impression on others, with these qualities, or lack of them, attributed to someone’s character and disposition. “Hierarchy” scored the lowest.

In particular, moral actions relating to Equality and Property led to more positive judgments of social targets’ moral character following behaviors in line with these domains, and more negative judgments of targets’ moral character following behaviors violating these domains. Actions within these domains also appeared more likely to be attributed to targets’ disposition rather than to situational circumstances or environment.

Savannah Adams and Oscar Ybarra (2026) – “Separate and unequal: Moral domains differ in corresponding social judgments of others”

The reason for this may be the common factor of “not bullying others”. Dominants take what they want from subordinates, and don’t share. Cooperation and sharing are therefore impossible in the presence of dominance relations.

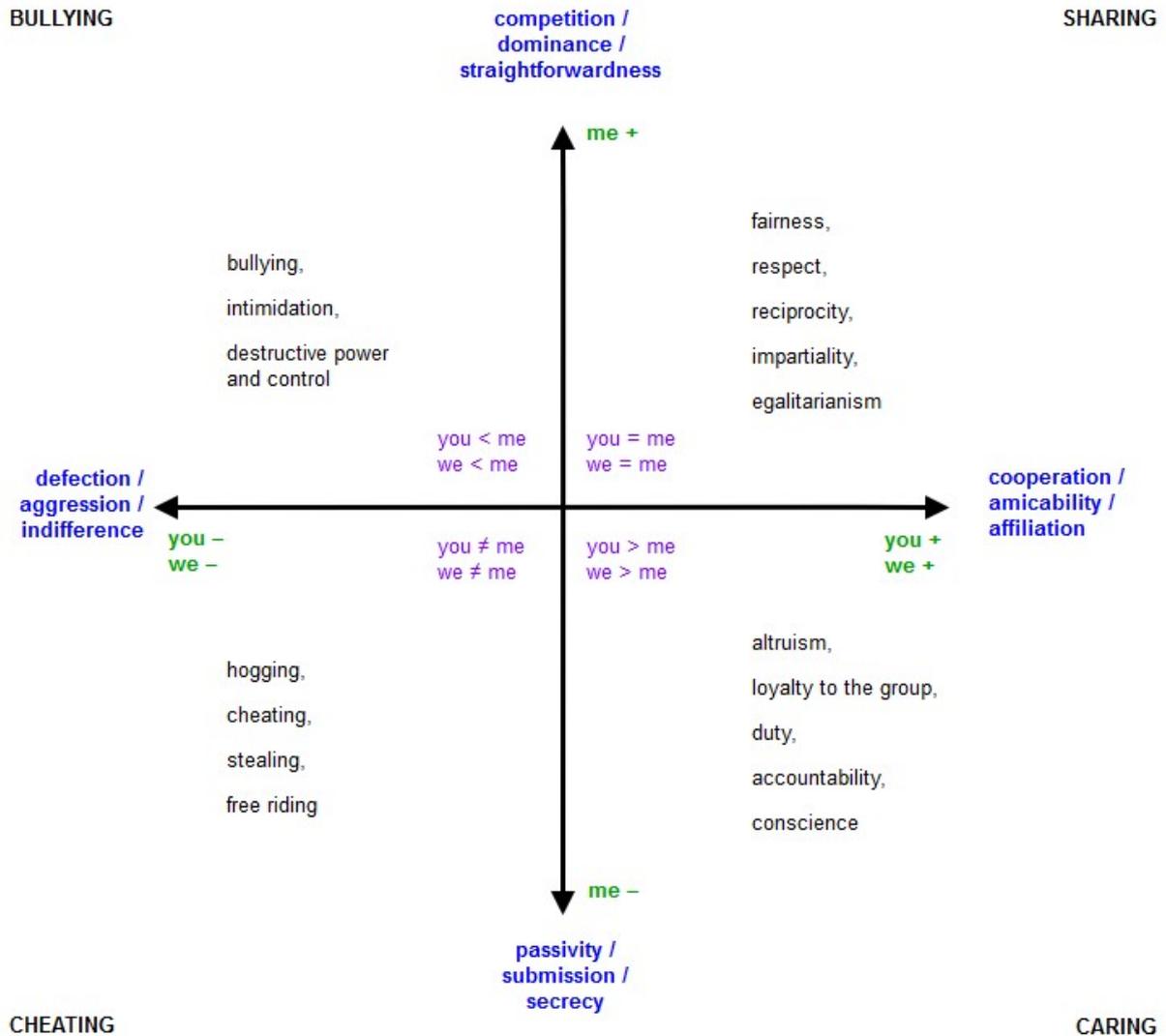
See also;

Where does morality “come from”?, p. 41

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 114

Respecting ownership, p. 189

The Moral Compass



Bullying is the opposite of caring, and the mirror image of sharing/exchanging.

Cheating is the opposite of sharing/exchanging, and the mirror image of caring.

To say that A is a mirror image of B is to say that A is antithetical to B: i.e., A makes B impossible.

To say that A is the opposite of B is to say that A is the ethically dark version of B, and B is the ethically light version of A.

Morally speaking, ethically dark means that I thrive at your expense: I win, therefore you lose. (Left hand side.)

Morally speaking, ethically light means that we both thrive together: I win, you win. (Right hand side.)

The top half (bullying, sharing) exists as a left → right spectrum from dark (me+,you-,we-) to light (me+,you+,we+) .

The bottom half (cheating, caring, regulation) exists as a left → right spectrum from dark (me-,you-,we-) to light (me-,you+,we+). In cheating, the true self of the perpetrator is hidden from the victim. In altruism, the self is temporarily put below the beneficiary in importance. In regulation, I subsume my needs to those of “us”.

The right hand side represents the morality of cooperation: there is a joint goal of win-win mutualism.

The left hand side represents the immorality of violating the rights of others for my own benefit: and our goals are separate.

Duty, accountability, and conscience are represented as aspects of self-governance on behalf of the group, team, or partnership, via “we > me”.

Dominance is antithetical to egalitarianism. Cheating is inimical to accountability: if I own up and tell the truth, I am no longer cheating. It is also inimical to duty and conscience.

Personal gain through intimidation is the polar opposite to personal altruism to benefit others without thought of reward. Despotism and tyranny are the polar opposites of loyalty to the group and accountability by others.

The Stakeholder Principle

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” (2005)

If I depend on you, it means that I need something that you do or have – that you benefit me just by existing, by doing what you would do anyway – that my fitness increases in proportion to your fitness – that if you thrive, I thrive as a by-product.

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

Social species live in groups, and group members benefit and depend on each other in a number of ways: for example, to make up numbers in protection from predators; or through specific helpful roles such as alarm calling.

In non-human animals such as chimpanzees, as in humans, individuals preferentially help their genetic relatives and the friends they depend on, and will help strangers if it is not too costly. Humans simply depend on each other more deeply and widely than in most other species, and are cognitively and psychologically more adapted towards helping.

In the early history of humans, living in small groups, 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. This is proposed as the evolutionary origin of helping non-kin (Tomasello, et al., 2012). (For helping kin, see the special case “Hamilton’s Rule” below.)

A formula to describe this “stakeholder” model of altruism has been suggested (Roberts, 2005):

I will help you when

$$s \times b > c$$

where

A = altruist (me)

B = beneficiary (you)

b = benefit given by A to B

c = cost to A of helping B

s = the ratio, (change in my fitness) / (change in your fitness):

What exactly is s ? We can derive this by noting that when an individual B benefits from an act of altruism, its fitness increases from w_B to w'_B , and that as a secondary consequence of this, the altruist A 's fitness increases in proportion, the proportionality being given by s .

Roberts (2005:2) – "Cooperation through interdependence"

That is,

The variable s simply represents how important it is to the actor that the recipient be alive and in good shape for future interactions.

Tomasello (2016:15) – "A natural history of human morality"

Put another way: when you benefit, I benefit. If I depend on you a lot, then I benefit a lot when you benefit a lot.

- If $s = 0$ then A has no stake in B and altruism is not favoured.
- If $0 < s < 1$ then altruism of A towards B is favoured.
- If $s = 1$ then A behaves towards B as if for self.
- If $s > 1$ then A preferentially helps B over self.

This formula does not describe a one-shot interaction. It takes place over an extended period of time, perhaps months, years, decades, or a lifetime. Therefore, the stake, costs and benefits also play out over a long period.

When person A depends on person B , person A usually develops an emotional bond and warm positive regard towards person B . We could go so far as to say, interdependence + mutual emotional bond = friendship.

Hamilton's Rule

Hamilton's Rule is a special case of the Stakeholder Principle (Roberts, 2005). It describes the situation of interdependence from the point of view of shared genes and ultimate, reproductive fitness rather than of shared everyday proximate fitness (Dawkins, 1976). When we preferentially help those to whom we are genetically related, it is called kin selection (Rafferty, 2020).

I will help you when

$$r \times b > c$$

where

A = altruist (me)

B = beneficiary (you)

b = benefit given by A to B

c = cost to A of helping B

r = the proportion of genes we share, where $0 < r \leq 1$

See also:

Mutual benefit in moral domains, p. 64

Interdependence and moral domains

Every moral domain has a joint goal, by definition, and at least for that reason, individuals trying to achieve that joint goal depend on each other as collaborative partners. For example, partners in a sexual pair-bond depend on each other to be faithful. Every moral domain therefore features interdependence; but the kind of interdependence, how symmetrical it is, etc., varies between domains. For example, a parent-child dependence is asymmetrical between the parties, either way; different from the egalitarian, symmetrical interdependence of collaborative partners foraging for mutual benefit, and different again from asymmetric patriarchal domination and control and the sexual power that women have over men.

We may be interdependent through collaboration, and/or sharing, and/or genetic relatedness. Genetic kin may preferentially collaborate, share with, and help each other. The logic of kin-selected altruism is described by Hamilton's Rule (see below).

Tomasello (2016) recognises two forms of cooperation in nature: one-way, and two-way; or helping and mutualism.

See also:

Altruism and mutualism, p. 38

Benevolent / hostile sexism and the Madonna / whore dichotomy, p. 217

Pluralism, universality, and non-WEIRD morality, p. 292

Interdependence and empathic concern

The claim is that if I depend on you, I am concerned for every aspect of your well being: I want you to have anything that you need. The Stakeholder principle is a dry abstract principle that produces warm emotional feelings in those affected by it.

We assume that the first form of human interdependence was small-scale sharing networks based on need, from around 4-6 million years ago (we believe) in the proto-human species *Ardipithecus ramidus*. Relatively suddenly, in evolutionary history, "everybody needed everybody" in proto-human groups and so, empathic concern became generalised so that still, today, there is general moral (regulatory) pressure to make sure that all the poor and needy are taken care of.

After this, we assume that as obligate cooperation and division of labour became more sophisticated, people depended on each other more and more to collaborate with. For example, many paleo-anthropologists believe that humans went through an early stage of scavenging large game before they historically learned to hunt in a coordinated fashion (Tomasello et al., 2012), when small groups of people may have come together to protect large carcasses from carnivores of other species.

See also:

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 114

Evolution of sharing, p. 143

Generalised care, p. 172

Ultimate and proximate motivations for helping

- Evolutionary level: “I need you for survival”
- Proximate psychological level: “I care about you”.

We see that although helping is one-way, it has mutualistic evolutionary roots. The ultimate (evolutionary) reason for helping is dependence on others for cooperation or sharing. The proximate (present-day, psychological) reason for helping is empathic concern and a wish to see the person helped because they need it.

What began evolutionary life as strategic necessity (cooperation, sharing, and their regulation) lives today as moral emotions and instincts (Tomasello, 2016).

A psychopath can be motivated to help a person just because it is needed, without feeling empathic concern. This shows that human helping behaviour has at least two evolved components: behaviour, and its supporting psychology of empathic concern (which is missing in psychopaths).

Young children are intrinsically motivated to help those in need, and it does not matter to them whether they do it themselves, or another person does the helping. This demonstrates that a psychological motivation for helping is simply to see the beneficiary in good shape, rather than for the helper to receive any reciprocal benefits of helping (Hepach, Vaish, and Tomasello, 2012).

See also:

Loyalty and unconditional love, p. 186

Psychopathy, p. 236

Interdependence and morality

Obviously, humans also have the capacity to act out of self-interest and quite often do. But we have argued and presented evidence that quite often, as well, even young children are genuinely concerned about the welfare of others without strategic calculation: they help others reach their goals, they share resources with them fairly, they make joint commitments and ask permission to break them, they act toward a “we” or group interest, they enforce social norms on third parties on the basis of presumably group-minded motives, and they have genuinely moral emotions – from sympathy to resentment to loyalty to guilt – that do not spring from any self-interested calculations at all. These empirical findings – and many others in other disciplines (see Bowles and Gintis, 2012) – suggest that human beings have evolved biologically to value others and to invest in their well-being. We have argued here that the

explanation for this fact is that human individuals recognize their interdependence with others and the implications this has for their social decision making. They have become *cooperatively* rational in that they factor into their decision making (1) that helping partners and compatriots whenever possible is the right thing to do, (2) that others are equally as real and deserving as themselves (and this same recognition may be expected in return), and (3) that a “we” created by a social commitment makes legitimate decisions for the self and valued others, which creates legitimate obligations among persons with moral identities in moral communities.

Tomasello (2016:159-160) – “A natural history of morality”

See also:

Is morality rational?, p. 69

Part 2

Moral values

Perfect Compassion

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

John 4:11

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”

... 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”

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*

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

The moral principle we can call “Perfect Compassion” is derived from instrumental normativity. If instrumental normativity is the pressure to do the things that will allow me to thrive and survive, then Perfect Compassion is the prosocial application of instrumental normativity: I put the conditions in place for others to thrive and survive. What my ego does for me, it can also do for others.

Instrumental normativity – the pressure to achieve goals – has the following characteristics. It is

- individual: it originates and resides within each organism;
- universal: it originates and resides within every organism;
- maximising: it asserts itself to the maximum available degree.

The reason that humans like to benefit each other is that we, in our risky foraging niche, depend on each other to survive: if I depend on you for my survival, then I need you to be in good shape.

The principle of Perfect Compassion is that:

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

It is the encapsulation of every moral principle in the domain, “collaborative foraging for mutual benefit”. It also matches the definition of ethical goodness, since its aim is the benefit of all concerned in the effects of my action. Thus, it is also a definition of classical utilitarianism: maximising utility and minimising disutility for all concerned.

See also:

Why prefer the self? – the promotion of me, mine, and ours, p. 27

Collaborative foraging for mutual benefit, p. 44

The difference between morality and ethics, p. 61

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 123

Dark traits

The D-factor or dark factor of personality is the polar opposite of Perfect Compassion. D 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)

In other words, D is the tendency to thrive at the expense of others, rather than benefiting others mutually as we thrive. Hence, dark behaviour is zero-sum: I win, you lose – while Perfect Compassion is positive-sum: we all win, since there is a joint goal of mutual benefit.

See also:

Dark and light traits, p. 228

Currency of morality

The currency of utilitarianism is benefit and harm (Bekoff and Pierce, 2009), i.e., utilitarian value. This currency or value is passed between people using actions, guided by attitude and intention. If I benefit you, I put the right conditions in place for you to flourish. Conversely, if I harm you, I act to make your flourishing decrease.

Utilitarian value and goodness, p. 22

Charity and deservingness

Charity means to help others based on need. In this case, “the maximum benefit available” of Perfect Compassion is determined by need: if someone is suffering then we are required to help them to the extent that they need it in order to return to a healthy state.

We may also distribute benefit and harm in response to deservingness.

Perceptions of deservingness tend to positively affect how much charity we are prepared to extend. If we feel someone is not deserving, we are less likely to want to help them.

See also:

Sympathetic distress within the brain leads to a wish to help, p. 169

Types of sharing, p. 142

Moral authority

The knowledge that you have acted with the goal of achieving the maximum benefit and minimum harm available, whether from charity (i.e., responding to the need to thrive), or deservingness, in itself bestows moral authority. If you set out to achieve maximum benefit, you could not have done any more. If you were stupid or negligent in your attempt, then this is a fault.

The degree to which you have acted with the goal of achieving the maximum benefit and minimum harm available, to all concerned, including yourself, indicates the degree of rightness of the action and its moral authority.

Other moral values are available by which to judge moral authority: for example, ideal parenting or pair-bonding. Perfect Compassion, whether from charity or deservingness, encapsulates the set of families of moral values from the domain, collaborative foraging for mutual benefit.

See also:

Rightness of action and rightness of goal, p. 60

Doing one's best

If I have done my best to promote fitness in myself and others, in a given interaction; if I could not have done any more – then this is in keeping with Perfect Compassion, aiming to achieve the maximum benefit and minimum harm available to myself and the others affected by my action.

See also:

Moral authority, p. 134

Agent-centred and agent-neutral moral reasoning

The agent is me, I, the individual, the ego, the one who acts. Moral reasoning can take two basic forms: agent-centred and agent-neutral (Hales, 2009); partial and impartial; or subjective and objective. According to Hales, these two categories are difficult to reconcile philosophically; i.e., they are unlikely both to be true. Perfect Compassion accommodates both positions, as both depend on the “available” clause.

Perfect Compassion operates on two criteria: charity (e.g., human rights, dignity, respect), or deservingness (e.g., fairness, justice, distributive justice, reciprocity). Deservingness takes two further forms: objective and subjective; or agent-neutral and agent-centred. In practice, we generally use all three at the same time: impartial charity and partial and impartial deservingness.

Charity requires me to take an agent-neutral view, by giving each recipient an equal value per unit of need. Impartial deservingness requires me to take an agent-neutral view, because the deservingness is impartially and not subjectively determined – it is not based purely on how it affects me personally. Subjective, agent-centred deservingness is based on personal reciprocity: I treat you based on how you have affected myself and my interests personally.

In this case, “what is available” depends on some criterion of deservingness: “how you have treated me” or “how much I need you” or “how closely related we are” or some such. In the case of charity, what is available is “how much I can afford”.

Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller (1990) describe three major levels of moral development, each divided into two stages, as set forth by Kohlberg (1969, 1971, 1981) and Piaget ([1932] 1965):

In the lowest, “preconventional” level of understanding (stages one and two) young children define the meaning of “rightness” and “wrongness” in terms of the subjective feelings of the self. What is right is what avoids punishment or brings one rewards. If the self likes it, it is right; if the self doesn’t like it, it is wrong. There are no “higher” obligations. Egoism reigns.

In the intermediate, “conventional” level of understanding (stages three and four), older children and adults continue to define the meaning of “rightness” and “wrongness” by reference to subjective feelings, but now it is the collective feelings of others that matter. What is correct and virtuous is whatever agrees with the will and dictates of authority figures (the commands of parents; the role expectations of society; the laws of legislatures). If one’s reference group likes it, it is right. If one’s reference group does not like it, it is wrong. The idea of obligation is equated with the rules and regulations of society or the state. Conformity and consensus reign.

In the third and highest “postconventional” level of understanding (stages five and six in Kohlberg’s earlier formulations; stage five in more recent formulations) (Kohlberg, Levine and Hower, 1983); “rightness” and “wrongness” are defined by reference to objective principles detached from the subjective feelings and perspective of either the self or the group. What is correct and virtuous is defined in terms of universalizable standards, reflectively constructed by the individual, of justice, natural rights, and humanistic respect for all persons, regardless of sex, age, ethnicity, race, or religion. For the post-conventional thinker, there are objective obligations that any rational person can come to discover and is bound to respect, that stand above the feelings of the self or the demands of others. In Kohlberg’s theory, the source of the idea of being obliged to do something is related to the hypothetical act of entering into a contract to form a society. Postconventional thinkers recognize that among the terms of any voluntary and rationally based contract to form a society, justice, fairness, and natural rights must reign.

Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller (1990:5-6)

Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller (1990) define “natural law” as the “objective” code of behaviour that anyone should follow without complaint: a set of “objective responsibilities” or universal legitimate normative pressures. This corresponds to the postconventional level in Kohlberg’s formulation. Because welfare is the highest good (Crisp, 2006), Perfect Compassion fits this description of natural law.

The normative pressure to carry it out is seen as legitimate by any right-thinking person – right, that is, according to the moral domain, collaborative foraging for mutual benefit.

Kohlberg's scheme is criticised by Shweder et al. (1990) on the grounds that people do not "progress" in a nice neat stage-like way, and that most of us use a mixture of stages. Also, it is not clear that higher stages are superior to lower ones. According to Kohlberg's studies, very few people think postconventionally, and moreover, in order to qualify for that label, the studies require the respondent to "talk like a moral philosopher" and use profound analytical reasoning which very few people really do as part of their everyday life. When questioned in a more illuminating way, children are found to be capable of understanding objective obligations or responsibilities that conform to Perfect Compassion.

See also:

Dual-level psychology of cooperation, p. 31

Role ideals, p. 87

Objective right and wrong, p. 99

Objective justice, p. 101

Contingent morality and ethics

Two wrongs don't make a right.

Proverb

If someone behaves immorally towards you, disregarding morality, it is not morally advanced for you, in return, to disregard morality in your dealings with them. Rather, it is morally advanced to maintain a moral compass that can enable you to navigate this rocky sea.

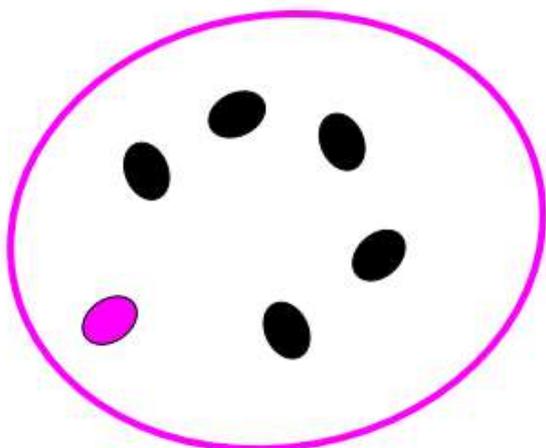
See also:

Contingent cooperation, p. 156

The Montagu Principle, p. 194

Moral disengagement, p. 233

Distribution of benefit and harm from the perspective of the ego

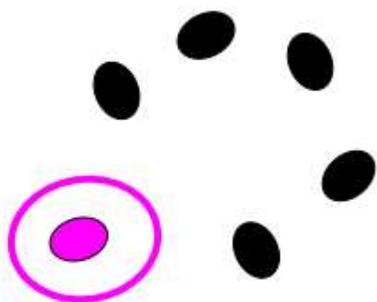


Perfect Compassion: thinking of all concerned

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

KEY

-  you
-  your ego's benevolence
-  other people to be affected by your action

270 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

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”

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)”

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 Buddhist Metta Sutta

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 (2014) – “Evolution of responses to (un)fairness”

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 (2016) – “The Natural History of Human Morality”

Being fair is not the same as being nice. If I am extra nice to one person by giving her more resources, that nevertheless might be unfair to others. But if the recipient needs the resources more, or is somehow responsible for more of the resources being available (for

example, she did more work), then perhaps it might be fair after all. The judgment of fairness is thus always grounded in some judgment of equality – equal resources per person, or per unit of need, or per unit of work effort, or whatever – with the self being treated, impartially, as equivalent to others (in terms of deservingness). A sense of fairness naturally comes with a sense of obligation: everyone including oneself should get what they deserve. A sense of fairness thus competes, in some circumstances, with both selfish and generous motives.

Michael Tomasello (2019a) – “Becoming Human”

The domain of fairness includes ideas of

- sharing
- equal treatment
- impartiality
- egalitarianism
- deservingness
- mutual respect and mutual deservingness
- obligation to be fair to others
- resentment or indignation if fairness is not achieved
- reciprocity
- distributive justice (social, psychological, or material)
- procedural justice
- retributive and restorative justice

Types of sharing

- equal
- proportional
- reciprocal exchanges
- charitable; in response to need
- others (by age, status, in-group, etc.)

Two-step evolution of fairness

We propose that fairness evolved in two stages:

1. sharing freely in response to need (free distribution based on charity)
2. sharing proportionately and impartially (distributive justice based on deservingness).

More precisely:

1. sharing in response to need, in small interpersonal groups, in a network among friends, with free riding discouraged;
2. sharing proportionately to deservingness, according to impartial rules, among collaborators, with free riders excluded, within larger more anonymous groups, with relative strangers.

See also:

Charity and deservingness, p. 134

History of human possession and ownership, p. 190

Fairness as a moral (sub)domain

The overall joint goal of the domain, collaborative foraging for mutual benefit, is to maximise mutual benefit. In the sub-domain of fairness, this is done equitably (on some kind of equal basis).

If fairness can be described as a moral domain in itself, then its collaborative joint goal is to maximise benefits all round, between partners, on some kind of equal basis, whether according to charity (equal recognition of needs) or deservingness (equal exchange of some kind). Its behavioural ideals – its methods of achieving the joint goal of the domain – are things like treating partners equally including the self; and the impartial application of procedural justice.

Evolution of sharing

Our great ape cousins are very reluctant to share their food (Tomasello et al, 2012; de Waal and Lanting, 1998), even with their own young, and a chimpanzee mother will only grudgingly give shells and husks to her weaned infant in response to begging. 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.

Chimpanzees and other great apes are largely competitive and self-centred, while humans are, relatively, highly cooperative with a strong sense of impartiality.

It seems that the human family tree has separately evolved a capacity for sharing, away from the other great apes. This would have been impossible in the presence of a competitive, hierarchical lifestyle, since dominants will not share with subordinates, so a universal process of self-domestication must have taken place throughout the human family tree, leading to the near removal of male-male competition, and the installation of egalitarian sharing networks. We argue that the evolution of human sharing was sexually selected for by females in response to harsher environmental conditions, so that they could feed their children.

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 (2016) – “A Natural History of Human Morality”

See also:

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 114

Sharing in response to need

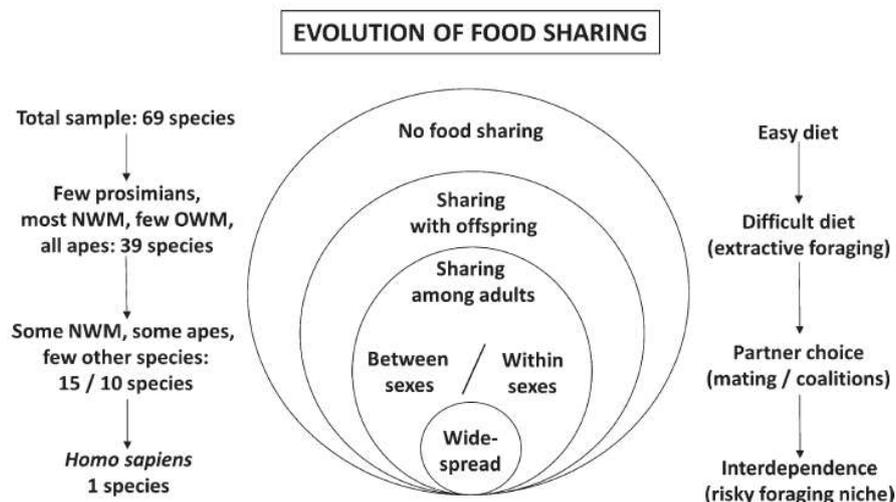


Figure 1. The layered distribution of sharing in primates. The left-hand arrows indicate ever smaller subsamples matching the relational contexts in the layers. The right-hand arrows show evolutionary transitions in other traits that co-evolved with transitions between the layers. Redrawn after Jaeggi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

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)

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”

Humans live in a risky foraging niche. In such a risky niche, the individual can mitigate their own risk by pooling resources with fellow group members in a sharing network. In such an arrangement, individual surpluses are typically shared; laziness and stinginess are discouraged; and in many societies, everyone gets fed regardless of their net productivity or input.

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 small scale 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)*

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).

[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 all partners 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 a form of reciprocity extended over time that could be redeemed in the future.

Sharing proportionately

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.

The natural home of proportionate sharing – sharing in response to merit – is in collaboration within larger more anonymous groups, where repeated interactions might not happen, and partners therefore run the risk of not being paid for their efforts. Accordingly, partners impose rules to prevent themselves and other partners from being exploited, and expect that the others will do the same.

See also:

Pluralism, universality, and non-WEIRD morality, p. 292

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 someone else, have been treated unfairly, and will often reject an offer they think is unfair to themselves or others, even though it may be “rational” to accept an offer of something rather than nothing.

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).

Great apes have self-directed inequity aversion – they care how much they personally have received compared with what they may have been expecting. Great apes do not have other-directed inequity aversion – they do not care how much their friends have received compared with themselves

(Tomasello, 2016). The first appearance of human other-directed inequity aversion may have been at the dawn of (obligate) sharing, when conditions became too harsh to support a competitive way of life, and human ancestors were domesticated (became egalitarian rather than dominant/competitive), possibly around 4 million years ago with the evolution of *Ardipithecus ramidus*. In this situation, interdependence dictates that my friends are in as good shape as myself.

See also:

The Self-domestication of the human race, p. 114

Evolution of sharing, p. 143

Self-other equivalence

Partner *A* is collaborating with partner *B*.

A and *B* are equivalent in a number of ways:

- equivalence of status
- equivalence of obligation
- equivalence of personnel
- equivalence of value
- equivalence of respect
- equivalence of deservingness

If we as collaborative partners are equally necessary for our joint success, and if we could switch roles and still be successful, and if we both adhere to the same criteria in playing a role, then we must be somehow equivalent or equal as partners. This recognition of self-other equivalence generates a mutual respect and sense of equality among (potential) collaborative partners.

Michael Tomasello – “Becoming Human” (2019)

The claim is that partners within a collaborative joint agent are equivalent in a number of ways including value, status, and, often, functionality (Tomasello, 2016, 2019a). This is called self-other equivalence. Tomasello (2019a) proposes that children realise this as they learn to cooperate at a young age, which implies that it is cognitive, learned through experience, and not evolved or genetically encoded. However, we may be hard-wired to learn it.

This in turn implies that fairness evolved in the continued presence of cognitive self-other equivalence in tandem with developing forms of collaboration.

For fairness to evolve, a number of conditions are necessary:

- lack of dominance (coercive) relations
- self-other equivalence (precursor to impartiality)
- ethos of sharing
- collaborative “we” who will share in the rewards.

The proposal is that self-other equivalence arises for these reasons:

1. each partner is necessary for success

Each partner is equally a causative force in the outcome, leading to an equality of value, respect and status.

2. each partner is instrumentally bound to submit to impartial role ideals

Each partner’s ego is equally constrained by the impartial standards and requirements of having to fulfil their role in the collaboration, leading to an equality of status.

3. in principle, each partner is functionally interchangeable with others and success could still be achieved

The proposal is that each partner holds in their mind the “bird’s eye view” of “us”, of the roles being played within the collaboration, within which personnel are in principle interchangeable. As well as their own, each partner has an understanding of the other partners’ roles and perspectives relative to the joint goal. These are all coordinated via cognitive perspective taking.

4. equivalence of obligation

If we are collaborating as a team, then I owe to you on behalf of “us” (legitimately because of our commitment to collaborate) to be an ideal collaborative partner; and you owe me the same, for the same reasons.

Great apes live in a self-centred universe (Tomasello, 2016). Humans feel interchangeable to some extent. Examples of self-other equivalence in human thinking include:

- “how would you like it if I did that to you?”;
- “if I were in your position, I would have done the same thing”;
- “that could be me”;
- “I am one among many.”

See also:

Why morality-as-cooperation?, p. 16

Mutual respect and deservingness, p. 89

How morality is derived from collaboration, p. 271

Fairness to others

Evolutionarily, we can easily understand why I want people to be fair to me – because I benefit. What is harder to account for is why I would want to be fair to others, since it proximately benefits them, potentially at my expense.

I wish to be fair to my collaborative partners because:

- benefit is normative in itself;
- self-other equivalence is in operation: my partners are equally deserving and valued as myself, within the collaboration.
- being fair to them maximises my own rewards under the circumstances: they will be fair to me, on an equal basis.

See also:

Objective right and wrong, p. 99

Self-other equivalence, p. 149

How morality is derived from collaboration, p. 271

Resentment and indignation

If someone is not fair to me, I am likely to feel resentment, indignation and possibly anger in response. This negative emotion is a result of not being respected as an equal: my needs not being respected, myself not being valued, as much as the next person (Tomasello, 2016).

Free riders

In distributive justice, free riders are excluded from a share of the proceeds except out of charity. In free sharing, free riding is strongly discouraged.

In small-scale hunter gatherer societies with free communal sharing networks, how are free riders managed, apart from ridicule, criticism, and shaming of lazy and stingy people?

People are mobile. Productive foragers are not bound to stay in a low-producing camp, but can take off for a more productive camp. Simulations show that this system can sustain a population, together with a significant fraction of non-productive free riders (including those too young, too old, pregnant, or otherwise unable to contribute food):

Simulations show that when demand-sharing agents are sedentary (meaning that they are not allowed to move to new locations), free riders increase in number within populations, active hunters decrease in number and populations go extinct due to overall low productivity However, an important result is that when both active hunters and free riders are allowed to move from camps where net energy income is low (either due to low environmental quality or to the presence of a number of non-productive free riders), populations do not collapse, active hunters remain a significant fraction of the demand-sharing populations and free riders make up a small but persistent fraction of groups (time average of 10% ...) in the absence of any form of direct punishment to free riders ...

Our proposal is therefore compatible with low levels of warfare among African hunter-gatherers and derives cooperative behaviour, egalitarianism and non-kin extended social networks from selective pressures at the individual level.

Lewis, Vinicius, Strods, Mace, and Migliano – “High mobility explains demand sharing and enforced cooperation in egalitarian hunter-gatherers” (2014)

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).

Types of justice

Justice exists in a number of forms, for example:

- *restorative* (the victim of an offence is made whole – restored – in some way)
- *retributive* (an offender is punished in some proportionate way)
- *distributive* (goods and burdens are distributed in some fair way, excluding free riders)

- *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 and judgement

See:

Objective justice, p. 101

John Rawls 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)

Experimental results

There is evidence that in actual situations where different types of fairness conflict, people trade off between the different types of fairness 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).

Reciprocity

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.”

Sarah Blaffer Hrdy – “Mothers and Others – the evolutionary origins of mutual understanding”

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.

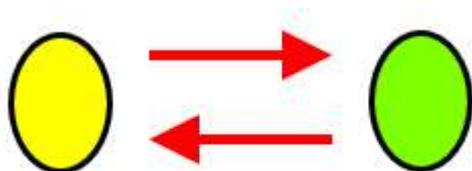
Mo Tzu, 479-381 BC

Types of reciprocity

1. tit-for-tat
2. indirect
3. downstream
4. attitudinal
5. long-term (“buddy” reciprocity)
6. generalised

Reciprocal exchanges are most reliable – it is most likely that you will be paid back – in repeated encounters. Then, there is incentive for your partner not to “defect” on you (fail to cooperate), because they need to keep you on their side for future exchanges.

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.

“Transactional” behaviour is what we call tit-for-tat reciprocity devoid of generosity and friendship; trading favours, debts and obligations out of a sense of self-interest; introducing conditionality upon your generosity. This is accepted and required in an impersonal business setting; but may be seen as callous and offensive in the context of a friendship or other warm relationship, as generosity is bought and sold rather than being freely given.

Strict 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. It is dominant within large anonymous groups, where many people are strangers, and interactions may be “one-shot” affairs, giving no further opportunity for reciprocity or redress with this partner. In long term personal relationships, partners do not keep strict account as the benefits tend to even out in the end.

On the other hand:

Male-female partners [rhesus macaques] demonstrated near-perfect reciprocity in grooming, a key behavioural mechanism supporting friendships and alliances, and neural activity maintained a running account of these social investments.

Testard et al. (2024:1) – “Neural signatures of natural behaviour in socializing macaques”

It may be that for macaques, grooming is a business arrangement: if I groom someone then they are more likely to help me in a fight or other coalitional conflict.

Macaques form strong and stable bonds with specific individuals selected based on attributes such as kinship and social status (Maistripieri and Hoffman, 2012). These friendships and alliances, in part built and maintained through reciprocal grooming, enable mutual support to gain access to limited resources or fend off threats (Schino, 2007).

Testard et al. (2024:2)

See also:

Trading the sacred for the profane, p. 73

Sharing in response to need, p. 145

Sharing proportionately, p. 147

Long-term “buddy” reciprocity, p. 163

Generalised care, p. 172

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, according to practical necessity, if you share this attitude.

Forgiveness

In conflict situations, tit-for-tat is a dangerous way to proceed, because anger can lead to a disproportionately harsh response, and escalation (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.

When someone commits an offence against you, you do not have to react. To do so can sometimes make the situation worse, as it can generate negative consequences for you.

See also:

Conflict avoidance, p. 45

The Montagu Principle, p. 194

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”

A certain amount of forgiveness in a reciprocal relationship can allow cooperation to continue after one side has committed an offence against the other. One proposal is that we forgive those who are valuable to us (reference unknown).

If the offender agrees to hold him- or herself accountable, by admitting fault, expressing remorse, apologising, and offering to make amends – then, and only then, do we feel we can forgive them (Dill and Darwall, 2014). A shortcut for the perpetrator, that expresses all this, and enables forgiveness, is for them to say that they understand and deserve the blame and punishment they are being given.

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 defences 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:

Guilt and blame, p. 105

Ego defences, p. 260

Reciprocity, forgiveness, and game theory

Tit-for-tat reciprocity can be studied using computer simulations (Thomas, 2012a,b). Two computer-simulated agents play a game together over many rounds, where in each round, each agent can either “cooperate” (agree to be nice) with the other, or “defect” (react negatively), based on what the other did in the previous round. 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 engage in a cooperative relationship where everybody benefits, for its own sake.

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 most 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).

See also:

Partner control, p. 90

Islands of cooperation

In hostile, dog-eat-dog environments where people are fighting rather than cooperating, those who want to cooperate can profitably stick together to form “islands of cooperation” (Nowak, 2011).

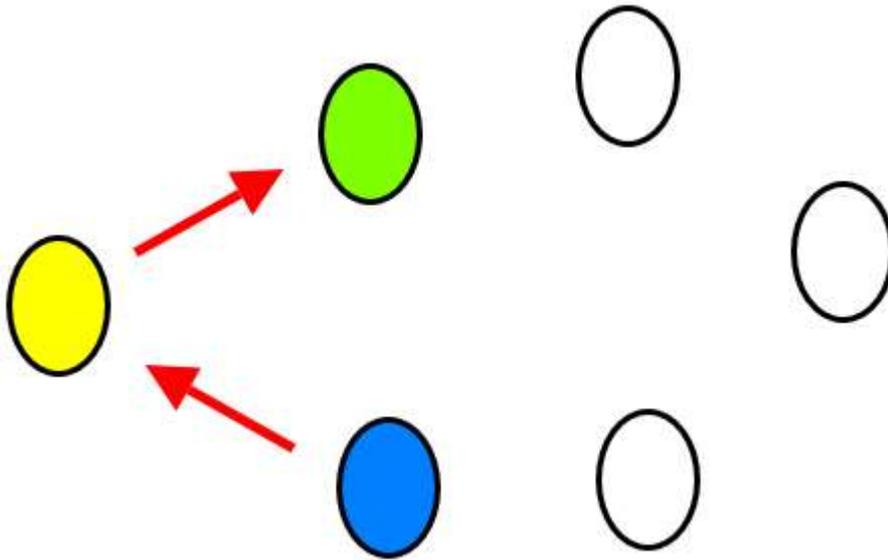
2. indirect reciprocity

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.

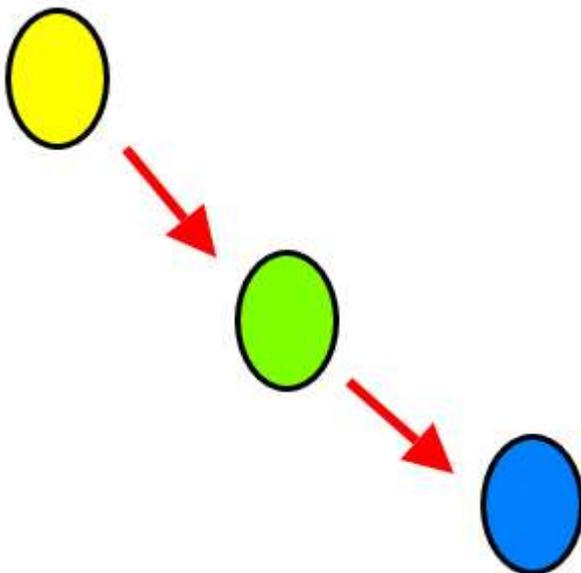
See also:

Cooperative identity and reputation, p. 91

Indirect reciprocity



3. downstream reciprocity



32 “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ 34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

Matthew 18:21-35: “The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant”

In downstream reciprocity, the way that you treat someone influences how they go on to treat others, to the point that this is an expected human norm. *A* does *X* to *B*, so *B* does *X* to *C*, and may be morally expected to do so.

... 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 socially.

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).

Downstream reciprocity is more usually called “upstream reciprocity”.

4. attitudinal reciprocity

So you're looking for trouble, so trouble you'll find

"Dust be diamonds" – The Incredible String Band

In attitudinal reciprocity, "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 kind of attitudinal resonance or contagion, in that I am responding attitudinally to your attitude.

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"

See also:

Emotional resonance, p. 175

The Montagu Principle, p. 194

5. long-term "buddy" reciprocity

This kind of reciprocity is typical of that between friends. Partners do each other favours on a long-term basis without keeping strict account. It is common in the animal kingdom and amongst great apes.

See also:

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 123

What makes reciprocity tick, p. 164

6. generalised reciprocity

In generalised reciprocity, we share communally within a sharing network that is more or less closed to outsiders (Endicott and Endicott, 2008; Fiske, 1991). This network is probably a small group.

See also:

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 114

Sharing in response to need, p. 145

What makes reciprocity tick

What Makes Reciprocity Tick

Humans and other animals exchange benefits in several ways, known technically as reciprocity mechanisms. No matter what the mechanism, the common thread is that benefits find their way back to the original giver.

| RECIPROCITY MECHANISM | KEY FEATURES |
|--|---|
| Symmetry-based "We're buddies" | Mutual affection between two parties prompts similar behavior in both directions without need to keep track of daily give-and-take, so long as the overall relationship remains satisfactory. Possibly the most common mechanism of reciprocity in nature, this kind is typical of humans and chimpanzees in close relationships. Example: Chimpanzee friends associate, groom together and support each other in fights. |
| Attitudinal "If you're nice, I'll be nice" | Parties mirror one another's attitudes, exchanging favors on the spot. Instant attitudinal reciprocity occurs among monkeys, and people often rely on it with strangers. Example: Capuchins share food with those who help them pull a treat-laden tray. |
| Calculated "What have you done for me lately?" | Individuals keep track of the benefits they exchange with particular partners, which helps them decide to whom to return favors. This mechanism is typical of chimpanzees and common among people in distant and professional relationships. Example: Chimpanzees can expect food in the afternoon from those they groomed in the morning. |

Frans de Waal – "How Animals Do Business" – *Scientific American*, April 2005

Evolution of reciprocity

There is, of course, some prehuman basis for sharing and cooperation ... Once symbolic thought and communication became possible new determinants of behavior can be invented on the basis of evidence or knowledge which is already present. ... Thus sharing can be changed from mere situational expediency to a norm and a good “thing”. ... All that was necessary, then, was the symbolic ability to make some rules and values which would extend, intensify, and regularize tendencies which already existed Thus ... social reciprocity (as an action or practice) and an appreciation of its positive results appeared first, the rules and values afterward (Service, 1962:41-42).

From Bernard Chapais (2008:73) – “Primeval Kinship”: “From behavioural regularities to institutionalized rules”

In non-human social animals, reciprocity has been observed, at least, in primates and in mongooses. Primates groom each other in return for more grooming, for favourable treatment from dominants, for mating opportunities, for affiliation, and other social and biological benefits (Xia, Li, Garber, Matheson, Sun, and Zhu, 2013; Testard, Tremblay, Parodi, DiTullio, Acevedo-Ithier, Gardiner, Kording, and Platt, 2024).

Mongooses, at the end of a foraging session, will groom those individuals more who performed more sentinel duties: standing up and looking for predators in order to warn the group, instead of foraging (Kern and Radford, 2018). Subordinates will groom dominant individuals less, the more they were heard to bully others out of their food by growling and hip-slamming them out of the way (Morris-Drake, Kern, and Radford, 2021).

The present theory is that human reciprocity has deeper roots than mere convention.

In rewarding sentinels and punishing bullies, the mongooses are promoting prosocial behaviour, both individual- and group-oriented. The whole group benefits: each individual. The mongooses exchange benefit for benefit, harm for harm, specifically tit-for-tat. In rhesus macaques:

Male–female partners demonstrated near-perfect reciprocity in grooming, a key behavioural mechanism supporting friendships and alliances ... , and neural activity maintained a running account of these social investments.

Testard et al. (2024:1) – “Neural signatures of natural behaviour in socializing macaques”

The entire social phenomenon of making tit-for-tat exchanges could have begun life as a way of promoting and rewarding: 1) prosocial behaviour towards the individual; 2) prosocial behaviour towards the social group in general.

Reciprocity is a survival skill in hunter-gatherer societies

In hunter-gatherer societies, tit-for-tat 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 causes 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 sympathetic pain signal is affected by how much we approve of the other person: how deserving we perceive them to be, and in turn it determines how much we wish to help them (Decety, 2011; Singer and Klimecki, 2014). This approval / deservingness 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;
- 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 sexual promiscuity, sharing needles or through a contaminated blood transfusion;

- how good a cooperator someone is.

In other words, to say “I don’t have sympathy for you” means “I don’t feel your pain”.

See also:

Moral anger, p. 83

Charity and deservingness, p. 134

The Golden Rule, p. 183

Empathic concern and taking action

Human empathy encompasses empathic 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”

Because of the evolutionary link between human social compassion and infant care in mammals and birds, when we recognise need in others, we wish to take action to help them, and when we recognise vulnerability in others, we wish to take action to care for them.

See also:

Empathy, p. 174

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 defence" 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:

Perspective taking and empathic accuracy, p. 178

Ego defences, p. 260

Helping in social groups

We see helping behaviour in human groups and partnerships in various contexts:

- collaborative
- sharing
- inclusive family fitness
- parental care
- sexual pair bonds
- friendships
- generalised care
- patriarchal protection of females by males

Generalised care

... 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”

The great ape ancestors of the human family tree were, we believe, not very altruistic or cooperative (Tomasello, 2016). Modern humans aim to help any other human who is in need, far outside the scope of inclusive family fitness or interdependence. This presents an evolutionary puzzle.

There appears to be archaeological evidence of individuals of a number of human species being looked after by group members when they might have lost all their teeth, been crippled congenitally or through injury, had a head injury etc. The apparent instances of care increase in frequency as we get nearer to the present (Spikins, 2015; Spikins, Needham, Tilley, and Hitchens, 2018).

... 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” (2018)

There may have been two factors driving the evolution of this generalised care in humans.

The first hypothesis is the “runaway feedback loop” for the evolution of conspicuous generosity of care and provisioning: the selective advantage would be provided through “benefit by reputation”. The selection could have been both social and, in males, sexual.

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. We know that one motive for generosity is signalling to others that I am 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 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).

If conspicuously 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.

The second factor, which is entirely compatible with the “runaway feedback” theory of conspicuous generosity, could have been the adoption of universal sharing in *Ardipithecus ramidus*, 4-6 million years ago, driven by female sexual selection for males who would share and not compete, in a newly-harsh environment.

Woodburn (1982) reports a situation in a Hadza hunter-gatherer group when a grandmother was neglected when she became senile, and doubts that this would have happened in the neighbouring agricultural societies – where people are less independent and autonomous, but live in a web of obligations and dependencies.

See also:

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 114

Interdependence and empathic concern, p. 127

Empathy

Empathy is a broad term that refers to the numerous ways in which we recognise and respond to the internal states of others, including other-directed concern and helping behaviours.

It falls into three categories, that can work together:

1. emotional resonance and emotional contagion
2. cognitive perspective taking
3. empathic concern and helping behaviour.

In addition, people with dark traits may have a “reverse-valence” reaction: instead of using empathy for caring and nurturing, they may seek to understand the mind of a victim in order to harm or exploit them.

The definition of empathy 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).
- empathic concern in response to another’s pain, or tenderness in response to another person’s vulnerability. “Feeling for”.
- helping behaviour in response to need (targeted helping); caring behaviour in response to vulnerability; compassion.

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 in imagination we place our own self in their position. Each has its strengths and weaknesses: when we see how similar we are, we may be motivated to help somebody; but this approach may be limited in scope, as people vary in important ways that may be unknown to the empathic agent.

Cognitive empathy, in both forms, is an element of The Golden Rule.

See also:

The Golden Rule, p. 183

Dark and light traits, p. 228

Emotional resonance

1. body mimicry and neural mimicry

This means unconsciously to 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 else laugh will often set us off laughing ourselves.

2. 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.

See also:

Attitudinal reciprocity, p. 163

3. 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 one individual is alarmed; 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 attentionally linked, and 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.

4. sympathy

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”

Emotional sympathy means “feeling with”. “In sympathy with” means “together with”. Emotional sympathy is the empathic 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 sad 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.

Empathic concern and helping behaviour

Empathic concern towards non-kin, 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 camp and tribe is observed (Gurven, 2004).

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.

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. In a social group living and surviving together, people are highly interdependent.

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 caring for young is the evolutionary 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. Like instrumental normativity, therefore, and in fact all adaptive behaviour – empathic psychology and behaviour are evolutionarily self-selecting.

As is often the case in nature, over the course of evolutionary time, this behaviour/psychology (empathic perspective taking, 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 a “bonding chemical” that is released in the body in

situations of social attachment. People who are more caring 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, Yaden, Hyde, and Tsukayama, 2019).

All in all, humans are interdependent, and interdependence is the reason for the evolution of mutual empathic concern in humans. It helps my genes to help you, and empathic perspective-taking and concern for you helps me to help you.

See also:

Evolutionary self-selection for normativity, p. 21

Targeted helping, p. 169

Generalised care, p. 172

Cooperative breeding, p. 198

Perspective taking and empathic accuracy

Perspective taking refers to the ability to see a situation from the perspective of another, including their perceptions, goals, and circumstances. Arguably, a person's "world" consists of these things. Perspective taking is also known as cognitive empathy: using knowledge to discern the inner state of another.

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, for some reason. 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), which may easily lead to inaccuracy.

To maximise empathic accuracy, we need to know something of the person's circumstances and history. It is 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 cognitive perspective taking:

1. imagine self in position of other

“how would I feel if I were you?”

2. imagine other

“what does it feel like to be you?”

In laboratory tests, scanning the brains of humans, it is found that when we project ourselves into the position of a suffering other (“imagine self in position of other”), it leads to higher personal anxiety and distress, while if we focus on the emotions and behaviour of the person in distress (“imagine other”) 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 findings that being other-focused reduces personal distress, and increases compassion and helping behaviour (Singer and Klimecki, 2014) – within boundaries of necessary self-protection.

“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 out-group, and there is consequently a more positive evaluation of that group as a whole (Decety and Cowell, 2015).

Perspective taking and empathic concern are associated with sensitivity to justice in others, and endorsing moral rules (Decety and Cowell, 2015). This may be because a primary function of morality is to maximise benefit and minimise harm.

Perspective taking can reduce perceptions of impartiality if a defendant is seen to be in need (McAuliffe, Carter, Berhane, Snihur, and McCullough, 2019), it makes charity appear “unfair”. This seeming contradiction reflects the plurality of factors that make up the concept of fairness.

See also:

Why is harm the default explanation for immorality?, p. 81

Types of sharing, p. 142

The Golden Rule, p. 183

Self-interest, p. 238

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 partner has their own role and perspective, and all partners know 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).

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, and must surely need to coordinate with others. The possible evidence we have for perspective-taking in ants 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 others as separate selves, and are therefore capable of taking their perspective. An ant’s brain takes up 15% of its body mass.

See also:

Self-other equivalence, p. 149

Cooperative breeding, p. 198

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.

People also take the perspective of others in order to exploit them emotionally or emotionally: i.e., to be cruel or to cheat or steal.

See also:

Anti-social personality disorder, p. 230

Narcissism, p. 233

Sadism, p. 237

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The Golden Rule

... people are much more likely to experience [the] altruistic motive when another person's welfare is made emotionally salient to them by empathic perspective-taking ... or identifiability ...

Dill and Darwall (2014:13) – “Moral Psychology as Accountability”

Direct care staff described the Golden Rule as helping them to see the resident as a person (i.e., this could be my grandfather or some other family member) and this appeared particularly important when a resident was difficult to work with due to cognitive impairment or behavioral symptoms. ...

However, findings show that the Golden Rule can obscure critical resident needs or preferences, despite good intentions. ...

The use of the Golden Rule as a simplifying tool is particularly problematic in the diverse world of long-term care. The diversity in culture, ethnicity, religion and age is vast among managers, health professionals, direct care workers and residents. As our findings suggest, while trying to put yourself in another person's shoes facilitates empathy and connection with staff or residents, it is unrealistic to assume that you could truly understand an individual's wishes, needs, interests or preferences Fundamental differences arise from multiple factors such as ethnic background, education, professional discipline, age cohort, and disease state.

Corazzini et al (2005) – “The Golden Rule: Only a starting point for quality care” describing nursing homes in North Carolina

Samaritans let me say it my way.

Advertisement for suicide helpline in the UK

You don't see what I see.

“Try” – Delta 5

The Golden Rule has been expressed as

- do as you would be done by
- treat others as *you* would like to be treated

And the Platinum Rule as

- treat others as *they* would like to be treated.

These “folk” formulations reflect three underlying interpersonal processes:

- attitudinal reciprocity
- “imagine self in position of other” perspective taking
- “imagine other” perspective taking

See also:

Attitudinal reciprocity, p. 163

“Imagine self in position of other” perspective taking

In this kind of perspective taking, I put myself in your position, and imagine what I would want if I were in your position. It is based on the human cooperative ability to switch perspectives with others; and on the human tendency towards empathic concern for other humans; and on recognition of the self or another loved one in the suffering other. If you remind me of myself, or of someone else I value, I am more likely to feel empathic concern for you.

However, this process is the weakness of the Golden Rule, since if the suffering other is, unknown to me, markedly different from me or anyone I care about, I will miss aspects of their world view. The empathic accuracy of the Golden Rule can be low.

See also:

Perspective taking and empathic accuracy, p. 178

“Imagine other” perspective taking

Chimpanzees will adopt the perspective of a competitor, seeing the world through their eyes, in order to find out what they are “up to” (Tomasello, 2019b). In other words, their motive for perspective taking is largely Machiavellian and competitive. The human motives for perspective taking are compassionate and cooperative as well as competitive. Humans can easily switch their mental perspectives from one role to another within a collaboration, in order to coordinate the collaboration, in keeping with “self-other equivalence”.

“Imagine other”, plus helping, is known as the Platinum Rule. When using this method of perspective taking, we need to listen to and observe the suffering other in order to understand their perspective: to find out their circumstances, goals, and perceptions (their world-view). In this process it is important not to impose our own perspective, our own idea of the world, onto our perception of theirs.

See also:

Self-other equivalence, p. 149

Perspective taking and empathic accuracy, p. 178

Loyalty and 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. I may exercise partner control over you, but never partner choice (i.e., I may try to modify your behaviour, but I will never choose another partner in your place).

Unconditional love can be a form of tit-for-tat reciprocity, where an infinitely valuable “tit” of action is met with a reactive “tat” of unconditional cooperation and loyalty. 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. Conditional cooperation says, “you have to earn it”, while unconditional love says, “you have already earned it” (for whatever reason). 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).

Unconditional love may be found in any social context where one person has a 100% stake in another: where that person is essential to them.

See also:

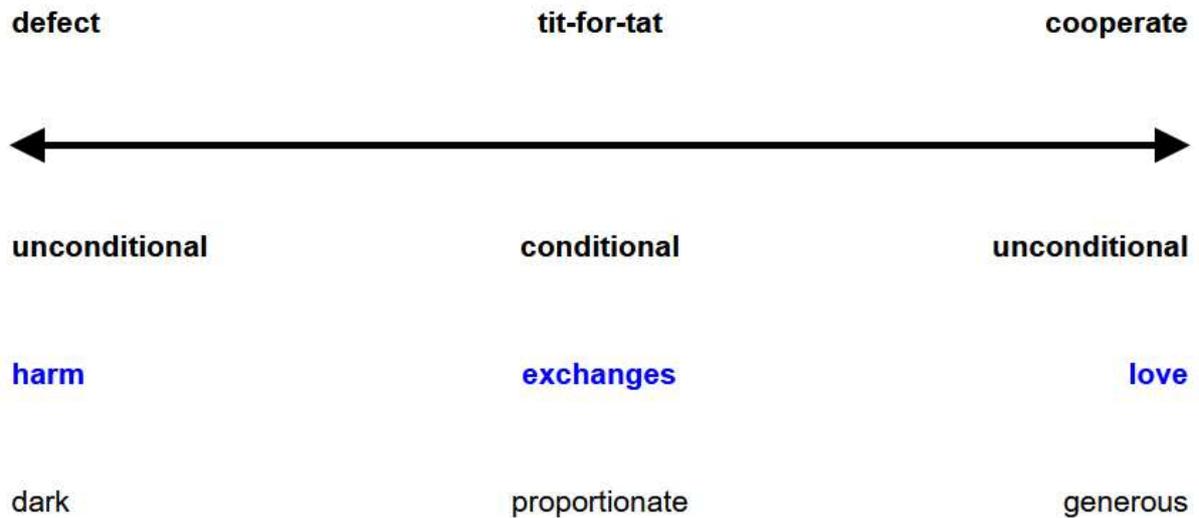
Partner control, p. 90

Partner choice, p. 90

The Stakeholder Principle, p. 123

Contingent cooperation, p. 156

Spectrum of conditional benefit and harm



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 norm of reciprocity);
- loyalty, a commitment to help *Q* resulting in a sense of unconditional obligation towards *Q*.

We may imagine a situation where person *Q* is essential to person *P*, in some way. Therefore:

- the stake that *P* has in *Q* is 100%
- *P* loves *Q* unconditionally
- *P* needs *Q* to be in the best shape possible.

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. 123

Loyalty to an ideology

If I believe in an ideology, it is because it aligns with my goals. This ideology therefore helps me to achieve my goals, and so I am loyal to it – I make a commitment to prioritise helping the cause. It seems hard to feel a warm positive regard or a sense of debt for an ideology in itself; however, ideologies are often attached to social groups and people tend to be loyal and affectionate towards their in-group.

Trait unconditional empathic concern

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” (2020)

See also:

Dark and light traits, p. 228

Respecting ownership

Property is a key feature of modern human society; however, identifying the origin of this multifaceted behavior poses a formidable challenge.

*Lucy Tibble and Susana Carvalho (2018) – “Rethinking the evolution of property and possession: A review and methodological proposition”; *Evol Anthropol.* Nov 27(6):285-296*

Possession and ownership

There is a distinction to be made between possession, where an individual has physical hold of an object, and property or ownership, where it is recognised by the self and others that this thing belongs to this person, even when it is not physically in their possession.

Recognising and respecting possession is widespread in the animal kingdom in various species-specific forms: e.g., possession of territory, mates, food, etc. (Brosnan, 2011; Tibble and Carvalho, 2018).

Existing analyses

In humans, ownership conforms to the logic of cooperation to mutual benefit (André, Fitouchi, and Baumard, 2023). We cooperate to enforce ownership rules, and through that, we all benefit because other people will leave our stuff alone.

Many existing analyses of the evolution of ownership attempt to explain it using game theory, since possession rules (at least) can emerge as an evolutionarily stable strategy within a population of competitive agents. The idea is that if I already possess an object, I will defend it because I need it for my evolutionary fitness, and you will respect my possession so that we can avoid a costly dispute (Tibble and Carvalho, 2018); although conditions may change such that this is no longer a viable strategy, such as in the cost of competition, the abundance of the resource, the dispersal or density of the resource, its utility for individuals, etc.

This analysis seems logical on paper, but not ecologically valid for humans, as it appears not to capture human intuition on the subject, whereby we respect somebody's ownership rights as

legitimate, without force having to be involved (André, Fitouchi, and Baumard, 2023). In other words, the human situation appears to be cooperative rather than competitive in origin.

History of human possession and ownership

The proposal is that the history of human possession and ownership seems to have come in two stages: 1) communal sharing, with little-to-no private property, when humans lived in small nomadic bands (Woodburn, 1982), from about 4 million years ago until about 12,000 years ago; followed by 2) restrictive ownership, when the climate stabilised and humans moved to large sedentary mixed city states.

If true, this history would fit with the history of fairness (distributive justice) (if true), which is also proposed to have arrived in two stages: free sharing (which great apes do not do) from around 4 million years ago, and then “restrictive sharing”, in large city states, from around 12,000 years ago.

In both situations, the explanation would be similar: sharing pools risk and makes it easier for the individual to survive, if they have access to a sharing network as a small band of people; and then, in large anonymous communities, it makes sense for me to restrict whom I share with, since I can only rely on a select set of people to pay me back in the future.

The formative process in both human ownership and fairness would seem to be one of fairly sudden restriction from “wide” to “narrow” possession.

We presume that, after the introduction of large sedentary mixed city states, around 12,000 years ago:

- people still needed access to resources
- people no longer wanted to share resources with everyone around them
- people had been cooperating to follow tribal social norms since ~ 150,000 years ago (Tomasello, 2016)
- most resources now required extended time, work and investment to procure them (Woodburn, 1982)
- in a cooperative human world, ways to be cooperative in the face of potential competition and conflict would have been sought first and foremost, and could have been propagated through the social contract for individuals to abide by the group’s system of social norms (Tomasello, 2016)

Social norms and ownership

Michael Tomasello (2016) defines a human social norm as an ideal way to cooperate in otherwise competitive situations. An example is queuing to receive a resource on a first-come-first-served basis.

In ravens, physical possession of an object is respected by other ravens, such that if a dominant tries to steal the object, the dominant is attacked by third-party ravens. In long-tailed macaques, the situation is similar. A thief-macaque is more likely to steal from an older individual who is less likely to scream and attract the attention of third parties. In both species, the enforcement by third parties indicates the presence of social norms related to possession (Brosnan, 2011).

Why would an individual raven, or long-tailed macaque, go to the trouble of enforcing a possession norm on third parties? What's in it for the individual? The logic seems simple: if I enforce this norm on others, and assuming that enough of us do the same, then I am less likely to have my stuff stolen by force. This is not necessarily a stable social strategy, since individuals may be tempted to free ride by not punishing offenders. However, there must be something about the ravens' ecological niche that makes it necessary that individuals are not subject to theft by force. The same applies to long-tailed macaques.

The social contract and ownership

André, Fitouchi, and Baumard (2023) ground the origin of ownership and ownership rules in reciprocal contracts between owning parties. It is not clear what form these take, but we will assume a generalised "as-if", implicit contract. The benefit for the individual is that I prefer not being able to plunder other people's things while being able to hold onto my own, to having free rights to exploit others.

In the account of Michael Tomasello (2016), the social contract consists in the individual willingly agreeing to abide by the group's set of norms, conventions and moral principles. I buy into this when I am born into it, and assume a "co-authorship" of this successful way of living that has always supported me and my group, which makes it legitimate for me. Now, ravens and long-tailed macaques have demonstrated that species do not need a social contract in order to enforce possession norms on each other. They (presumably) only need a motivation towards respecting possession, together with a coherent social group.

Humans have social norms, ownership rules, and third-party intervention to enforce them, and motivation to keep ownership of our possessions. We also have a social contract. It is proposed that this is where ownership rules "live". Their function is to reduce competition (in the form of theft) and

thereby, implicitly, promote cooperation, and so the smooth internal functioning, solidarity, and coordination of the group.

Legitimacy of ownership

André, Fitouchi, and Baumard (2023) point out that, like fairness, the legitimacy of an individual claim of ownership rests on its deservingness, whether through prior possession, prior investment, or some other criterion of deservingness.

The legitimacy of ownership norms themselves is derived from the legitimacy of the social contract to which all group members are implicitly committed.

See also:

Commitment to, and legitimacy of, the social contract, p. 103

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 114

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 (2012) – "Two Key Steps in the Evolution of Human Cooperation – The Interdependence Hypothesis" – Current Anthropology, vol. 53, no. 6, Dec 2012

... the virtue of integrity represents two aspects of a person's character. The first is a coherent integration of aspects of the self – emotions, aspirations, knowledge, and so on – so that each complements and does not frustrate the others. The second is the character trait of being faithful to moral values and standing up in their defense when necessary. ...

Persons can lack moral integrity in several respects (e.g., through hypocrisy, insincerity, bad faith, and self-deception). These vices represent a break in the connections among a person's moral convictions, emotions, and actions. Perhaps the most common deficiency is the lack of sincerely held, fundamental moral convictions, but no less important is the failure to act on professed moral beliefs.

Tom L Beauchamp and James F Childress (2001) – "Principles of Biomedical Ethics" (fifth edition)

Integrity refers to wholeness or unity. If your moral self has a fault or flaw, you do not have moral integrity: it is fractured by illegal self-interest, it is not the same in all parts; not coherent.

See also:

Conscience, p. 40

Virtue and the goals-methods theory of moral domains, p. 69

Good manners

Civility

... 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.

Courtesy is 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 (Curry, 2016), and we 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).

See also:

Contingent morality and ethics, p. 137

Reciprocity, p. 154

Contingent cooperation, p. 156

Attitudinal reciprocity, p. 163

Self-discipline

If you exercise self-control in the present moment, your future self will thank your present self.

Self control sets you free of your compulsions. 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).

Impulse control is handled in the brain by the frontal lobes: the rational 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 duties. This self-control can consist, positively, of conscientiousness and diligence as well as negatively of, for example, not getting drunk at work.

Self control and meditation

Meditation can increase self-control, as during meditation we continually force the mind to concentrate on one point or focus.

See also: Short term and long term benefits, p. 267

Cooperative breeding

Sharing the care and provisioning of children

It takes a village to raise a child.

African proverb

Humans thrive, survive, *and reproduce* 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 mainly due to our intense 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 prosocial perspective taking 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 and coordinating 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, especially prosocially.

The capacity to enter into the inner worlds of others, one of the aspects of empathy, is thought to be formed in infant mammals and birds 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

Humans are great apes, and we believe that the human family line separated from those of the other great apes around 6 million years ago. 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) – for the education and enlightenment of others. Humans, unlike apes, understand the (cooperative) pointing gesture.

Competitive social life of other great apes

In forming intentions and goals, using tools, eating food, and living their lives in general, great apes act alone, instrumentally, 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 “prosocialisation” of the existing cognitive skills of our great ape ancestors, and so these became available to be used for cooperative purposes as well as competitive. In other words, it made it possible for humans to think cleverly like great apes, and therefore to act cleverly like great apes, jointly as well as individually.

Sharing and tolerance

Tolerance and sharing are fundamental to cooperation.

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 and open woodland, around 2-4 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 carcasses and underground tubers, would have required adults to obtain and process it. In scavenging large carcasses, 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 processed. 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

In great apes: great ape babies spend their time attached to the mother exclusively, before weaning, presumably because they are under threat from male infanticide and female reproductive competition (in the form of female infanticide) (Hrdy, 2009). We assume that this was the habit in our great ape ancestors.

Before 4-6 million years ago: in Australopithecines, there were ever-intensifying levels of male-male competition, according to data we have on relative male-female canine sizes. The theory is that canines can be used as weapons. This was a time of increasing resource scarcity as the climate was variable. Competition and dominance are inimical to sharing and cooperation.

4-6 million years ago: self-domestication and the genesis of sharing among adults. With the advent of the species *Ardipithecus ramidus*, male-female relative canine sizes became, abruptly, almost even. The theory is that resource scarcity led to sexual choice by females, who needed to feed their children, for males who would share and not compete. Hence, the sudden end of male-male competition. Realistically, we would expect that a strong selection pressure was at play, in order for males to actually change size and shape.

Between 4 and 2 million years ago: the evolution of grandmothers. It is widely assumed in the literature that a present-day pattern of women leaving their family group when they get married to live with the husband's family, was always universal in the human race. However, this may be an artefact of patriarchy which treats women as possessions to be traded for favours. If self-domestication had already occurred, then women were free to live where they liked, and the actual present-day pattern we see of where women live after marriage is flexible (Kramer, 2022).

Grandmothers have a reproductive interest in their grandchildren, who share about a quarter of the same genes (Dawkins, 1976). Therefore it is reasonable to assume they would be motivated to share in their care. We assume that ancient human mothers initially followed the great ape model of childcare by default, and would not want to give up their babies to anyone except, perhaps, a close female relative (the mother's own older, experienced mother).

In most species, females die when they are no longer reproductive; but in humans, women evolved a long lifespan past reproductive age. The theory is that the longer grandmothers lived, the more care they could impart to their grandchildren, who therefore became, on average, more numerous, thereby increasing the reproductive success of the grandmothers' genes, in a gradual, self-reinforcing evolutionary process towards longer life for grandmothers. Now, this may have had a gradual upward

“drag” effect on the lifespan of grandfathers, as another quarter of the same children’s genes would be his.

Once mothers were comfortable giving up their babies to their own mothers, for shared care, the next step, in a peaceful egalitarian non-competitive social environment of sharing resources among adults, was to allow other adults to share in their care.

By 2 million years ago: the “grey ceiling” was broken (see below) as *Homo erectus* women were able to have more than one child at a time, and we assume that cooperative breeding was fully under way by this time.

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”, a maximum brain size, 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 sudden expansion in human brain size must have been driven by other factors, still unknown.

See also:

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 114

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Patriarchy

The control and domination of women, by society and individuals, for the benefit of men.

Patriarchy:

- is biological in origin;
- requires social power structures within which to operate.

We feel targeted from the day we're born, pretty much.

Patricia, British Columbia

... male sexual jealousy is the most common trigger for wife beating ... male aggression against women may often represent species-specific manifestations of widespread male reproductive strategies aimed at control of female sexuality. ... When we look closely we find that, in many primates, hardly an aspect of female existence is not constrained in some way by the presence of aggressive males. ...

When a female chimpanzee undergoes sexual cycles (which happens for only a few months once every 5 years or so), the males in her group compete over opportunities to mate with her, especially as she nears ovulation, when her sexual swelling reaches its maximum size (Hasegawa and Hiraiwa-Hasegawa 1983; Tutin 1979). When many males are present, the most dominant, or alpha male, usually prevents any other males from mating with her. Low-ranking males therefore try to lure estrous females into the forest, away from other chimps, where they can mate in peace. These consorts may last for several weeks and, at Gombe, are responsible for roughly one-third of all conceptions. If the female is willing to go, as she sometimes is, then the pair simply sneaks away. But if the female is unwilling, the male will employ what Goodall (1986:453) terms "a fair amount of brutality" to try to force her to accompany him. He will repeatedly perform aggressive displays around her to induce her to follow him, and if she still does not follow, he will attack her. It is impossible to tell how many consorts involve reluctant females forced to accompany males, because, in cases in which the female apparently willingly follows the male, she may do so because of aggression received from him in the past. Indeed, Goodall reports a high frequency of "unprovoked"

attacks on females in the early phases of sexual swelling, which she interprets as a male tactic to intimidate the female so she will be less likely to resist future efforts to mate with her. Goodall (1986) concludes that, unless a male chimpanzee is very old or ill, he can usually force an unwilling female to consort with him through these efforts. ...

Barbara Smuts (1992) – “Male aggression against women – an evolutionary perspective”

Among primates, males tend to compete with each other to dominate and control as many females as possible, for reproductive purposes (Smuts, 1995). This is a reproductive strategy of males. An alternative, egalitarian strategy would be for the male to make himself into as attractive a mate as possible, and let the female have her autonomy.

The idea is that this reproductive strategy of domination and control plays out in human society as patriarchy: a system of social control, norms, enforcement, punishment, etc.; a moral domain, aimed at the domination and control of females. We assert that its ultimate joint goal is reproduction as we assume that women as well as men wish to reproduce, even under persuasion to do it a certain way that is not in their favour.

The puzzle is, if human patriarchy died out for most of the past 2 million years, because humans were fully egalitarian, how did it reappear? The puzzle is not so confounding if we realise that: 1) domination and control are, proximately, always going to be less risky than attractiveness as a mate-retention strategy, and so, readily pursued; 2) a group-wide system of domination and control is likely to reappear when power structures appeared in society, beginning around 12,000 years ago, because patriarchy requires social power in order to operate; 3) domestic patriarchy became possible in the home as women were now confined to family units in farmsteads, instead of being free to roam at will.

Sexism is defined as the rationalisation, justification and means of enforcement 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 in order to assert their own independence (Manne, 2018).

See also:

Patriarchy [moral domain], p. 47

U-shaped history of human patriarchy, p. 210

System of social norms

... hamadryas baboon males show respect for the females in each other's harems (Kummer, Götz, & Angst, 1974), not attempting to mate with them or claim them even though these harem units interact with each other on a daily basis.

Sarah F Brosnan (2011) – "Property in non-human primates";

A social norm is an ideal way to be cooperative in otherwise competitive situations (Tomasello, 2016). Great ape males compete with each other for access to fertile females. The hypothesis is that in humans, this competition between males is cooperativised as a system of social norms: "we" all collaborate to dominate and control women. This potentially benefits all men as it keeps women "in the kitchen" and metaphorically tied down for men's convenience.

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 intimidation or threats of or actual violence. 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 (Smuts, 1992).

The urge for males to control and coerce females, and the corresponding welfare-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.

The amount of power that males are able to exercise over females, in a species, or human group, determines the extent of the control. Since reproduction is a maximising pressure, patriarchy is self-maximising, and as a system of domination and control, it seeks power (Manne, 2018). Left unchallenged, therefore, it will assert itself to the maximum available extent.

Patriarchy is more powerful in humans than other species

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

Chimpanzees are “social but not very cooperative” (Tomasello, 2016) – therefore, among other things, they lack social norms. 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. Barbara Smuts (1995) hypothesises 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. Men are able to control the resources that women 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 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 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 men has led to an increased ability of some men to control women at the expense of other men. 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 in 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, 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 (1995) – “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.

See also:

Conventions, moral norms, and social norms, p. 96

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 (2008) – “The Headman was a Woman”

Egalitarianism implies autonomy. In a society of flat power structures, 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. We believe that these conditions prevailed for most of the past 4-6 million years of human history.

Today we see a few societies that have a strong ethos of egalitarianism and personal autonomy. These are usually “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 some

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 persons.

- 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 (1981) – “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 immediate-return 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 societies are similar in economic conditions to those which must have prevailed throughout much of the history of the human family tree (freely sharing and potentially mobile, as a result of their niche and foraging style), we assume that egalitarianism and a lack of patriarchal control of women accompanied these conditions. While most non-human great apes, and contemporary humans, are patriarchal, patriarchy may well have been absent for most of the history of the human family tree, including in Neanderthals and *Homo erectus*.

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:

U-shaped history of human hierarchy?, p. 113

Self-domestication of the human race, p. 114

Generalised care, p. 172

Female resistance to patriarchy in primates

In primates in general, female resistance to male violence and coercion draws heavily on social relationships. Human feminism is a resistive reaction to human patriarchy: an example of female solidarity against male oppression.

Female primates employ a number of strategies to resist male violence and intimidation:

- female solidarity and bonding;
- king making – influencing the choice of alpha male, making males unwilling to attack high-ranking females;
- male allies who protect individual females, in return (sometimes) for preferential mating opportunities.

Humans can employ a similar set of strategies (Smuts, 1992).

Does patriarchy have a biological origin?

Kate Manne (2018) says that patriarchy is hegemonic, which we take to mean it seeks power and supremacy. Barbara Smuts (1994) says that patriarchy takes advantage of existing power structures to assert itself, and to keep women out of the power structure.

An example of this would appear to be the Catholic Church in Ireland, which has historically been highly patriarchal, to the extent of punishing unmarried mothers by holding them in “mother and baby” homes, enslaving and abusing them and taking away their babies for adoption (O’Reilly, 2023).

We propose that these are consistent with a biological explanation of patriarchy. If patriarchy really is ultimately a way for males to achieve reproduction through forcible mate retention, and reproduction is one of the, if not the, strongest biological drives – it makes sense that this method would push everything else out of the way so that it can gain power.

Compared with women, men are much more:

- violent
- sexually predatory
- dominating and controlling.

The current proposal is that these share a common cause.

According to Smuts (1994), patriarchy is a straightforward consequence of the vast reproductive asymmetry between males and females: their respective aims are maximising reproduction via millions of cheap sperm vs. a few expensive eggs. As well as patriarchal psychology and behaviour, it would also account for: 1) elevated male-male aggression compared with females; 2) slightly larger size of males compared with females (as a residue of previous large disparity in pre-*Ardipithecus ramidus* human ancestors); 3) elevated sexual predation in males compared with females; 4) the vast social asymmetry we see in human society between males and females.

A biological explanation predicts that patriarchy targets women’s autonomy, freedom, and sexuality. Keeping women powerless helps to achieve this. Another method of restriction of women’s freedom is through social norms of patriarchal rules and regulations. Another way, as Smuts says, is through brute force in the domestic sphere.

Why would this method of male reproduction be hegemonic, while the alternative method of male mate retention (egalitarian attractiveness) does not seem to be, in the same way? Perhaps it is because patriarchy is essentially a way for males to dominate females, to take power over them, and to keep them powerless, for the ultimate individual purpose of pair-bonding and reproduction. Patriarchy therefore needs those power structures, within which to dominate women for its own ends. Reproduction is self-maximising, and accordingly, patriarchy as a reproductive method, via mate retention, is also self-maximising – it finds a way where it can.

Not only do males want to take the risk out of maximising their reproduction: they also need to ensure their paternity of “their” women’s children. This provides another, compatible motivation for patriarchal enforcement.

The proximate nature of patriarchal instincts, and their exceptional force, suggest a proximate, very powerful cause. Something is operating inside of men all the time to make them want to say things like “women shouldn’t do that – it’s only for men!”, or to make them habitually more grabby, predatory, and unduly optimistic towards women (Buss, 2023), or, vastly disproportionately, to commit the dominating, controlling, humiliating crime of rape. Even “low-status” men have these tendencies; so there does not seem to have been a selection pressure for high-status men (who are able to dominate other men) to want to dominate women more than low-status men also want to: it is not the reserve of especially “dominant” males.

Women do not possess these tendencies in anything like the same degree, so if patriarchal behaviour and motivations are innate, they are likely to be biological rather than evolved.

Because of the inescapable nature of biology, patriarchal behaviour will always remain a behavioural option for men, in not the same way as it could be for women, who are (mainly) unwilling targets of patriarchal psychology, behaviour, norms, etc. In an egalitarian social environment, this behaviour is not viable, as dominance will not be tolerated by either sex.

Hence, men need to fight against their own biology on ethical grounds – their patriarchal tendencies to attempt to dominate, control, and devalue women.

Patriarchy in the domestic and public spheres

Patriarchy is prevalent both in the home and in society. Why might this be? The present proposal is that it starts with individuals, and society is made up of individuals, including men, for whom patriarchy is biologically proximate, and so patriarchy is propagated throughout the fabric and structure of society.

Patriarchy and narcissism

Narcissism and patriarchy fit each other like gloves. Each seeks to dominate and control; and each requires a power structure in order to operate. The proposal is that each hijacks the other, where they occur in the same person, so that they are mutually reinforcing and the result is a very nasty and abusive man towards those women and children he is able to destructively dominate and control.

Toxic masculinity

The proposal is that the term, toxic masculinity, refers to the narcissistic side of patriarchy: not protecting and providing, but only dominating, controlling, belittling, and devaluing females and femaleness; having to be right and in charge all the time. It remains an open question, why some men are more destructively patriarchal than others.

Toxic feminism

As well as toxic masculinity, there is also “toxic feminism”: the abuse and denigration of men just for being men, on supposed feminist grounds. This is narcissistic, dominant, and sometimes malicious in nature, as is toxic masculinity. Real feminism requires egalitarianism between the sexes.

The moralisation of women’s bodily autonomy

A study by Morgenroth, Ryan, Arnold, and Faber (2024) found that a number of body-autonomy-related behaviours are seen as moral issues for women more than men, and that this effect was absent for non-body-autonomy-related behaviours.

Study 1 looked at: being topless in public, undergoing voluntary permanent sterilization, getting a tattoo, getting a rhinoplasty (a surgery that changes the shape of one’s nose), having a high number of sexual partners, getting drunk, taking recreational drugs, working as a stripper, ending her life because she is terminally ill, overeating at an all-you-can-eat buffet, and being a bodybuilder. The control, non-body-related behaviours were: littering in a park, spending a whole day watching TV, listening to jazz music, buying a lottery ticket, being thirty minutes late for work, cursing in front of a child, jaywalking, ignoring a homeless person who is asking for money, working as a car salesperson, lying about her qualifications during a job interview, and playing chess.

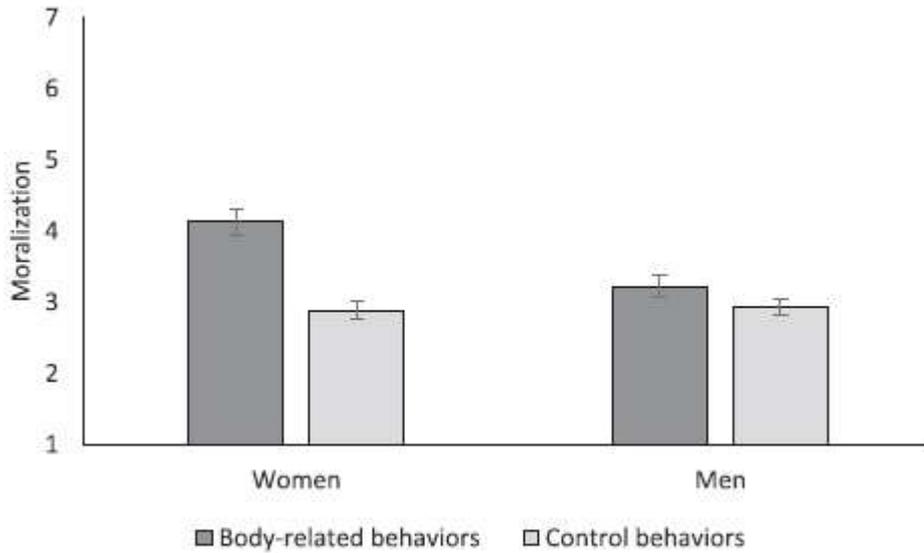


FIGURE 1 | Moralization across conditions (Study 1).

Morgenroth, Ryan, Arnold, and Faber (2024:230) – “The Moralization of Women’s Bodies”

The results of Study 1 are consistent with women’s bodies being regulated more than men’s.

Study 2 looked at the reactions to public female toplessness with respect to which of the “moral foundations” it triggered (Haidt, 2013). It found that it most strongly provokes the “foundations” of purity and harm when compared with men’s public toplessness.

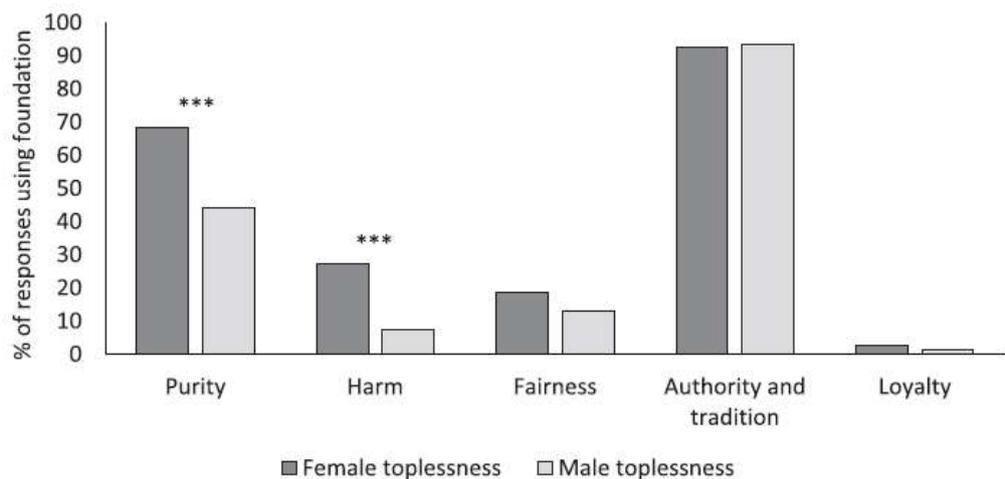


FIGURE 3 | Percentage of participants using moral foundations when opposing women’s and men’s toplessness. *** $p < .001$

Morgenroth, Ryan, Arnold, and Faber (2024:235) – “The Moralization of Women’s Bodies”

The findings in Study 2 are consistent with the idea of purity as moral observance; and with the Theory of Dyadic Morality, which claims that immoral things are perceived as harmful. They are also consistent with the existence of authority and tradition as a set of moral values, that in this case is gender-neutral in whom it applies to.

See also:

“Harmless harms” and the Theory of Dyadic Morality, p. 75

Benevolent / hostile sexism and the Madonna / whore dichotomy

In apes, the closest model of human patriarchy is in baboons and gorillas, as in both species, a dominant male is polygynously bonded with several females as a harem. Humans are usually monogamously bonded, and chimpanzees and bonobos live in multi-male, multi-female groups with no pair bonding, although at least in chimpanzees, “consortships” or long-lasting friendships between members of the opposite sex are common (de Waal, 1982 / 2007), where the female benefits from male protection in return for preferential mating rights.

In great apes, patriarchy has two methods of mate retention for the purpose of reproduction:

- domination and control of females
- protection of females from danger including from other males.

Sexism is defined as the enforcement of patriarchal rules (Manne, 2018). “Bad girls” who break the rules by demonstrating agency are punished by “hostile sexism” while “good girls” who do as they are told are seen in a positive light, with “benevolent sexism” (Glick and Fiske, 1996).

Similar and related to this is the Madonna-Whore Complex, that targets women’s sexual agency specifically, rather than female agency in general (Bareket, Kahalon, Shnabel, and Glick, 2018).

Benevolent sexism dictates that women are pure and good, and should be cherished and protected by men. Hostile sexism views women as inherently inferior, malicious creatures who are always seeking to dominate and control men through underhand means. These attitudes, although seemingly contradictory, often exist in the same man towards the two separate “classes” of women, who are rewarded or punished accordingly. We see from the definition of patriarchy above that they are in fact complementary .

The benevolent/hostile sexist ambivalence is thought to rest on three intertwined attitudes, each generating positive and negative stereotypes of women.

... sexual reproduction lends women “dyadic power” (power that stems from dependencies in 2-person relationships) in that it compels men to rely on women as bearers of children and, generally, for the satisfaction of sexual needs.

... within patriarchal societies, women’s dyadic power is reflected in a particular form of social ideology: protective attitudes toward women, a reverence for the role of women as wives and mothers, and an idealization of women as romantic love objects.

... even though benevolent sexism suggests a subjectively positive view of women, it shares common assumptions with hostile sexist beliefs: that women inhabit restricted domestic roles and are the “weaker” sex. Indeed, both hostile and benevolent sexism serve to justify men’s structural power. Hostile sexist beliefs in women’s incompetence at agentic tasks characterize women as unfit to wield power over economic, legal, and political institutions, whereas benevolent sexism provides a comfortable rationalization for confining women to domestic roles.

Glick and Fiske (1996:492)

Paternalism is the idea that men should act like fathers relating to their children, towards women. Paternalism takes two forms: dominative and protective.

Advocates of dominative paternalism justify patriarchy by viewing women as not being fully competent adults, legitimizing the need for a superordinate male figure. Yet protective paternalism may coexist with its dominative counterpart because men are dyadically dependent on women (because of heterosexual reproduction) as wives, mothers, and romantic objects; thus, women are to be loved, cherished, and protected (their “weaknesses” require that men fulfill the protector-and-provider role). Research on power in heterosexual romantic relationships confirms that dominative paternalism is the norm ...

Glick and Fiske (1996:493)

Gender differentiation is a way of maintaining gender roles based on the supposed differences in abilities between the sexes.

Like dominative paternalism, *competitive gender differentiation* presents a social justification for male structural power. Only men are perceived as having the traits necessary to govern important social institutions. ... Alongside the competitive drive to differentiate, however, the

dyadic dependency of men on women (as romantic objects, as wives and mothers) fosters notions that women have many positive traits ... that complement those of men (*complementary gender differentiation*). Just as the traditional division of labor between the sexes creates complementary roles (men working outside the home, women within), the traits associated with these roles (and hence with each sex) are viewed as complementary.

Glick and Fiske (1996:493)

Because of heterosexuality, women are both venerated by men as sources of sexual and emotional satisfaction and intimacy (*heterosexual intimacy*); and reviled as cruel for withholding these (*heterosexual hostility*).

Men's dyadic dependency on women creates an unusual situation in which members of a more powerful group are dependent on members of a subordinate group. Sex is popularly viewed as a resource for which women act as the gatekeepers This creates a vulnerability that men may resent, which is reflected in the frequency with which women are portrayed in literature as manipulative "temptresses," such as Delilah, who can "emasculate" men. The belief that women use their sexual allure to gain dominance over men (who would, in vulgar parlance, be called 'pussy-whipped') is a belief that is associated with hostility toward women ... for some men sexual attraction toward women may be inseparable from a desire to dominate them (*heterosexual hostility*).

Glick and Fiske (1996:493)

The Madonna-whore complex (Bareket, Kahalon, Shnabel, and Glick, 2018) divides women into two groups according to their sexual status: pure, chaste, and nurturing "Madonnas" (judged positively); or promiscuous, seductive "whores" (judged negatively); and does not recognise that a particular woman can be both sexual and "respectable". This complex is very old. In ancient Roman society, there were "respectable" women (high-born, chaste outside marriage) and "not respectable", low-born women (Harper, 2013). Enslaved women, and economically poor women, were regarded to have no honour in the first place and could be sexually exploited in good conscience. "Respectable" married women were to be left alone by men they were not married to.

Like ambivalent sexism, the Madonna-Whore Dichotomy (MWD) represents an enforcement of patriarchy, and men who endorse the MWD also endorse other ideologies that enforce patriarchy, i.e., sexist attitudes that "reinforce gender inequality, objectify women, and restrict their sexuality." It is also negatively associated with sexual and relationship satisfaction in men who endorse it: the MWD harms relationships.

Specifically, Bareket, Kahalon, Shnabel, and Glick (2018) found that the MWD coincides with Social Dominance Orientation (a desire to maintain hierarchies between groups – that one group should win out over another); Gender-Specific System Justification (a desire to maintain existing gender roles); Benevolent and Hostile Sexism (belief that women are either all good or all bad, based on their obedience of patriarchal rules); the Sexual Objectification of Women (belief that women are interchangeable sexual instruments, and moreover, that “bad” women deserve no better); and Sexual Double Standards, the belief that men are allowed to be sexually promiscuous but not women, which is correlated with Hostile Sexism.

Bareket et al. (2018) propose that the MWD mitigates a threat to men’s power by demonising attractive women: under this theory, men are afraid of being “unmanned” and having their agency taken away to please an attractive woman, and so, they are hostile to them. It may also be that women who show agency represent a threat to patriarchal authority and domination. Men who are high in Social Dominance Orientation are especially likely to be hostile to women who show sexual agency. Men who score highly in Sexual Objectification of Women also engage more in sexual harassment; are more permissive of domestic violence; and more highly endorse men’s social superiority over women.

See also:

Origins of the Christian prohibition of homosexuality and extra-marital sex, p. 80

How benevolent sexism and the Madonna Complex harm women

Men who are benevolently sexist, or view some women as Madonnas, are experiencing a subjectively positive view of women. How do these stereotypes harm women?

A stereotype is an inflexible distortion of reality. As such, it is a delusion, and therefore, harmful or unskilful.

Benevolent sexism views women as inherently weak, inferior, and incompetent, and therefore in need of protection. It may be that a biological patriarchal pressure requires men to “guard” women – to restrict their agency and their access to other men – which has elements of both domination and protection. In order to justify this protective drive rationally, perceptions of weakness and incompetence are deployed.

The Madonna-Whore Dichotomy represents a tight double-bind lose-lose dilemma for women (as does patriarchy in general). Either they are unattainable Madonnas, in which case they are “frigid”, which is “bad”, or they are easy “sluts”, who are criticised for being so. There is no middle ground, and no admission that a woman can be a real three-dimensional person, both sensual and intelligent.

Benevolent/hostile sexism and the MWD are used to undermine women's rights when the same would not happen with men.

- A woman who is sexually assaulted can be blamed for it, or not taken seriously, if she is promiscuous or otherwise breaks the rules confining female agency, especially sexual agency.
- Benevolent sexism justifies keeping women out of influential roles.
- Benevolent sexism may be justified by biological essentialism – the idea that men and women have traits and roles fixed by nature, so that “women belong in the kitchen” and “men belong in the workplace”, etc.
- Benevolent sexism justifies hostile sexism – if a woman does not “deserve” the benevolence then she must deserve hostile sexism (Ask Feminists, 2025).

How the Madonna-Whore Dichotomy harms men's relationships with women

A man who endorses the Madonna-Whore Dichotomy is thereby denied a meaningful connection with a woman as equals. Instead, the romantic relationship is distorted by his absolute power over her to withdraw “princess” privileges at any time for any perceived imperfection (Ask Feminists, 2025).

The reasonable man and the reasonable woman

The “reasonable woman” has much more to fear from men, than the “reasonable man” does from women. David Buss (2023) details many ways in which men are much more dangerous to women than the other way round, informed by evolutionary psychology.

According to Buss, this partly comes down to the reproductive asymmetry between males and females.

An evolutionary perspective illuminates why these psychological sex differences exist. Sexual harassment, for example, sometimes reflects an attempt to bypass female choice – a cardinal feature of women's evolved mating strategy (Buss, 2021; Perilloux, Duntley, & Buss, 2012). Having unwanted sex with an unwanted partner is typically more costly for women than for men in the evolutionary currency of fitness due in large part to large sex differences in obligatory parental investment. Sexual harassment can have more damaging effects on a woman's social reputation compared to a man's (Perilloux et al., 2012). Sexual harassment

can also create another sex-differentiated problem that puts women in an especially difficult dilemma – rejecting a man’s advances without incurring his wrath or retaliation for being spurned, especially if the man is in a position of power.

Buss (2023:3) – “Sexual violence laws: Policy implications of psychological sex differences”

On the asymmetric levels of sexual harassment, and the distress it causes:

Victims of sexual harassment are not random. A study of 10,000 sexual harassment complaints in the USA in 2017, for example, found that 83% were filed by women, in contrast to only 16.5% filed by men (Jones, 2018). Often the male victims were harassed by other men. ...

Men who harass women sometimes erroneously infer that their attraction is reciprocated by the woman – a hypothesized male sexual over-perception bias based on error management theory logic (Haselton & Buss, 2000). From the woman’s perspective, however, she may act friendly and deferential simply because people in positions of power (who are often men) can inflict large costs or confer large benefits on their careers. ...

Women experience greater distress than do men in response to acts of sexual aggressiveness such as unwanted touching (Buss, 1989). Consequently, women are more likely than men to file harassment complaints: not only are women harassed more often, they experience it as more upsetting. ...

... college women rated acts by coworkers such as a man putting his hand on a woman’s genital area or trying to corner a woman when no one else was around as “extremely harassing.” In contrast, those same women viewed acts such as telling a woman that he sincerely liked her and would like to have coffee with her after work as signifying little or no harassment.

Men consistently underestimate the emotional distress women experience from various forms of sexual harassment (e.g., Buss, 1989, 2021).

Buss (2023:3-4) – “Sexual violence laws: Policy implications of psychological sex differences”

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 only 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 unique, 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

Human rights

Each person is a self-generating source of flourishing.

Our own flourishing matters to ourselves. The pressure to value our own thriving is caused by the biological pressure to thrive and survive: if we did not value it, we might lose it, after all.

We all value the means that we use to thrive and to navigate successfully through life.

Each person is vulnerable to injury, sickness or death.

Because each person is vulnerable, and their well being matters to them, they are required to be treated with human rights (see Andorno and Baffone, 2014). Human rights amount to, at least, to have one's autonomy respected, and to be treated with the maximum benefit and minimum harm available to them.

See also:

Liberty, autonomy, and egalitarianism, p. 110

Perfect Compassion, p. 131

Circles of concern

Circles of concern are concentric social circles centred on ourselves and decreasing in intensity as they extend outwards. They are, simultaneously, circles of:

- empathic concern
- dependence
- collaboration
- inclusive fitness (genetic or collaborative).

The social circles are something like

1. me
2. my family
3. my friends
4. my group
5. my country
6. the world.

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 proportional fairness with those outside our inner circle. Our inner circle or cooperative unit (“we”) has a closed boundary of concern 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 these 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).

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, 2017). 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, which is why they do things I like. Bad people do bad things because they are bad, and good people do good things because they are good.

If an "essentially bad" person does anything, I am likely to see it in a bad light. Anything an "essentially good" person does is likely to be seen by me in a good light.

If an "essentially bad" person does something "good", then I attribute this to their situation rather than the bad "essence" I think they have. It was their situation that made them do it, not their bad essence. Likewise, I excuse bad behaviour on the part of my friends by blaming their situation, rather than contradicting the good essence I think they have. In reality, however, people act mostly according to their situation, rather than according to some "essence" which does not really exist. The misattribution of behaviour to essences, downplaying the more reasonable idea of the role of situations, is called in psychology the Fundamental Attribution Error.

On the other hand, we note the existence of long-term traits in personality along a light-dark continuum. It seems that some people really do act according to an essence. However, this essence has nothing to do with whether they belong to the in- or out-group.

It is unlikely that all out-group members are demons. In fact, objectively, they are no more likely to be demons than the people in my in-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:

Collective moral identity, p. 92

Dark and light traits, p. 228

Dark and light traits

The more you give, the less I get.

Anonymous

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" (2014)

- achieving fitness benefit => pleasure
- fitness benefits can be absolute or relative
- achieving relative fitness benefit over others => pleasure

D, the dark factor of personality

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)

or, achieving my goals at the expense of others.

D and Perfect Compassion

Perfect Compassion and D are polar opposites ethically. In Perfect Compassion, the ego is prosocial, other-regarding, and compassionate. D represents an ego that is selfish or malevolent in its social interactions.

See also:

The Moral Compass, p. 121

Distribution of benefit and harm from the perspective of The ego, p. 252

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 any 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 (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.

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. 176

People high in D often justify their utility maximisation at a cost to others by certain beliefs, such as that they are superior and others are inferior; that everyone is just out for themselves anyway; or a 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 – including a belief that their moral identity is healthy.

Someone high in D is likely to have a less active conscience than other people, possibly because they are less likely to see value in putting their own interests second in favour of concern for others, fairness to others, and self-regulation according to external 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:

What is morality?, p. 38

Monitoring, evaluation, self-governance, and moral identity, p. 104

List of traits high in D (after Moshagen, Hilbig, and Zettler, 2018)

Personality traits are persisting underlying tendencies to behave in particular ways in particular situations.

Farrington and Jolliffe (2001)

Anti-social personality disorder

People with anti-social personality disorder take what they want from others without regard to norms; exploiting others for what they can get. Like all personality disorders, ASPD exists on a spectrum from mild to severe, with a number of specific traits that can vary between individuals (NHS, 2025).

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). Many people with ASPD are not typically irritable and aggressive (although impulsivity is a trait shared by people on the cluster B spectrum); and may have the morals and manners of a prince, except when they are exploiting others.

It is commonly confused with psychopathy (Walker, 2018). Around 50% of prisoners have ASPD, but only 47% of people with ASPD have significant arrest records (National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health, 2010).

ASPD and narcissistic personality disorder are around 25% comorbid (Gunderson and Ronningstam, 2001). 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. Unlike people with ASPD, narcissists prefer not to break the law, although they commonly disregard personal ethics.

See also:

Narcissism, p. 233

Psychopathy, p. 236

Confusion between antisocial and narcissistic personality disorders and psychopathy, p. 239

Controlling behaviour

Bending others to our will can be enjoyed for its own sake, since it has the effect of making us more powerful than the one who is controlled. This control can lead to suffering, pain or humiliation for the victim (“destructive power and control”).

Controlling behaviour may be used to exploit others.

Egotism

We may define egotism as

- putting the needs of the self before those of others;
- putting the needs of the self before the demands of one’s role;
- a psychological attachment to identifying with one’s self-advancement, especially in status and greatness in the eyes of others.
- getting carried away with self-importance.

The opposite of egotism is humility.

See also:

Attachments, p. 268

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, deserves better treatment, etc.

Machiavellianism

Elinor Greenberg has written a superb and brief account of Machiavellianism on Quora.com (Greenberg, 2024):

Machiavellianism is the name of a strategy that prioritizes gaining and staying in power over other moral considerations. It can be a rather complicated strategy to use successfully because it involves:

1. **Clarity:** You have to identify a longterm goal.
2. **Planning:** You have to give a great deal of thought about how to bring about that goal in the most efficient way.
3. **Emotional Detachment:** You have to be able to emotionally detach from the negative effects your strategy will have on other people.
4. **Understanding:** You need to be good at understanding what motivates other people so that you can design an effective strategy to maneuver them to react the way you want.
5. **Manipulation:** In order to implement your strategy, you will need to have some actual skill at manipulating people.

Where did the term Machiavellian come from?

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) was an Italian author, statesman, and philosopher. His book *The Prince* addresses the question of: "What is the most effective way for a ruler to maintain power?"

- He advises that it is better to focus on being feared rather than focusing on being loved.
- He supports the ruler's use of harsh punishments, such as torture, if that is necessary to maintain power.
- He prioritizes the maintenance of the State (in effect, the Ruler) over the wellbeing of the people being ruled.

This type of complicated ruthless strategizing that negatively impacts other people has come to be known as Machiavellianism.

What is the relationship of Machiavellianism to personality disorders?

This level of ruthlessness and lack of empathy is sometimes found in people with narcissistic personality disorder, particularly the malignant narcissist subtype. Malignant narcissists not only lack emotional empathy like all narcissists, but are

sadistic as well.* It is also characteristic of how some psychopaths operate because they generally lack a moral conscience to get in their way.

However, please keep in mind that not every person with or without a personality disorder is smart enough and capable enough to successfully design and implement a Machiavellian strategy.

Punchline: Machiavellianism is the name given to a highly manipulative, ruthless, and self-serving strategy that involves prioritizing maintaining power over other people regardless of who you have to hurt to do so. Fortunately for the rest of us, not everyone who would like to be Machiavellian has what it takes to pull it off.

Elinor Greenberg, PhD

Author of the book: *Borderline, Narcissistic, and Schizoid Adaptations: The Pursuit of Love, Admiration and Safety*.

* *Dr Greenberg has clarified that sadism has nothing to do with Machiavellianism in itself.*

Moral disengagement

Ignoring morality. The person lives instrumentally and self-interestedly rather than morally, using manipulation to achieve social ends, and instead of earning a good reputation and letting authenticity speak for itself, using strategic reputation management to give the show of being a pious and good person.

To be morally disengaged is one definition of a sociopath (Tomasello, 2016).

Someone may subvert morality by using moral rules: for example, protest may be called “disrespectful”, and reciprocity may be used uncharitably.

Narcissism

I am a god! And even kings bow to gods!

Albert Wesker, character in “Resident Evil 5” computer game

Everything that is not me is dirt!

Anonymous narcissist – (Greenberg, 2016:89)

ALL people with NPD [Narcissistic Personality Disorder] 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 a, quora.com

Narcissists have a fundamentally competitive/dominant social orientation rather than cooperative. Narcissism represents an exaggeration of normal human traits of competition, dominance, selfishness, malice, moral disengagement, etc.

Narcissism is a personality type, tendency or disorder characterised by competitive, dominant, selfish, self-centred, controlling, exploitative, entitled, arrogant, often deeply malicious behaviour; a need for admiration from others; and a grandiose belief in one's own superiority. Their exploitation of others tends to be both material and emotional. Typical narcissistic behaviour includes "railroading", or forcing a person into a course of action by effectively giving them no other choice; "triangulating", playing off two or more people against each other; and habitually attempting to belittle and humiliate others. A competitive outlook implies paranoid, zero-sum, "us and them" thinking: "if you're not with me, you're against me." Hence, for a narcissist to face a situation where they are not number one, in any way, can feel like a humiliating defeat, especially if required to apologise. After all, imagine if you had to apologise to a deadly foe or competitor.

If their self-esteem is unstable, this may stem from being fundamentally at odds with the world: it must be tough to have to live like that. The rest of us can rely on cooperating with friendly trustworthy allies. People with Cluster B personality disorders tend to have unstable emotions.

Narcissism has been found to be 71% heritable, with zero contribution from the family environment (Torgersen, Myers, Reichborn-Kjennerud, Røysamb, Kubarych, and Kendler, 2012). This point is controversial, and many therapists believe that narcissism is the result of adverse childhood experiences – i.e., having narcissistic parents (Greenberg, 2018b). However, we may observe that many narcissists did not have abusive family environments, and that it tends to run in families in one form or another, appearing in one sibling but not another.

It seems that narcissists have, at best, highly selective empathic concern for others, or almost complete callousness; and normal access to emotional resonance and perspective taking. Human empathic concern is fragile and easily destroyed (Decety, 2011). If everyone else in life is a competitor, they are not perceived as deserving of empathic concern. We may hypothesise that people with NPD tend to be more interested in deservingness than charity

when dealing with others, since in a competitive outlook, everyone is accountable for how much they are “for me” or “against me”.

Greenberg (2016, 2020a,b,c) distinguishes three types of Narcissistic Personality Disorder: 1) exhibitionist; 2) malignant or toxic; and 3) covert or closet narcissism. These categories are defined by the ways in which the people achieve their competitive advantage over others.

Exhibitionist narcissists are obsessed with status and derive their well being from being high up in, or if possible at the top of, any available hierarchy. They feel superior to others and must be admired for them to feel OK.

Malignant or toxic narcissists habitually achieve their utilitarian advantage emotionally, by hurting others: they are sadistic. A sub-set of malignant narcissists may be serial rapists and serial killers, who also enjoy causing pain and belittling and humiliating their victims, and have no empathic concern for them.

Covert or closet narcissists are secretly malignant, gratifying this need covertly and unconsciously, sometimes unknown to themselves. It can take a long time of knowing a person before we realise they are a covert narcissist, especially as many have a significant and genuine ethically light side as well as an equally significant and damaging dark side. This light side may explain why they are relatively amenable to therapy compared with the other types: they are light enough to want to change. Covert malignancy can take the form of passive aggression; telling malicious lies behind people’s backs; provocation; trying to make someone feel uncomfortable; etc; their dark ways are many and endlessly inventive.

A characteristic of all narcissists is that they do not care whom else they hurt, in their mission to harm a particular victim. They may be quite prepared to bring the roof down on everyone’s heads and to harm their favourite people in the process.

Not all narcissists are unpleasant, and those who are, are not unpleasant all the time (Greenberg, 2016). Malignant narcissists may use charm to attract partners whom they go on to abuse. Exhibitionist narcissists (and people with ASPD) sometimes have a “film-star” charisma. We have to remember that although challenging and destructive, and usually best avoided, narcissists are flesh-and-blood people too, with feelings, like you and me, and should be treated as such.

See also:

Anti-social personality disorder, p. 230

Psychopathy, p. 236

Sadism, p. 237

Confusion between antisocial and narcissistic personality disorders and psychopathy, p. 239

Passive aggression

Behind the smile, a knife.

Chinese proverb

The reason for passive aggression is unconscious malice, usually 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 is corrosive of relationships.

The best way to tackle it is to bring it out into the open: to let the perpetrator know they are being passive-aggressive.

Passive aggressive people may protest their innocence using "plausible deniability", since their behaviour is subtle enough to be plausibly denied. They may be secretly non-cooperative when cooperation is necessary.

See also:

Competition and dominance, p. 107

Controlling behaviour, p. 231

Sadism, p. 237

Psychopathy

Psychopathy is a developmental disorder that leads people to be unemotional, self-centred, and goal-focused, instead of emotional and other- and people-oriented. Perhaps surprisingly to most people, psychopathy and sadism are antithetical to each other since the emotions of psychopaths are so heavily blunted: they have trouble feeling anything, including taking pleasure in the suffering of another (Walker, 2019a; 2022). There is simply no reason for them to be cruel, unless instrumental threats, violence or cruelty will get something they want.

As their emotions are so muted, psychopaths are ungoverned by moral emotions such as empathic concern and guilt, which may be why the behaviour of children who go on to become psychopathic adults is so notoriously troublesome (Marsh, 2017). Adult psychopaths, if they are wise, develop a socially acceptable moral code intellectually, in order to maintain a comfortable and easy life (Walker, 2019b). Psychopaths respond to reward but

not to punishment (Marsh, 2017). However, since they are ungoverned by emotions, psychopaths may engage in recklessly anti-social behaviour.

A psychopath, even without the emotion of empathic concern, is capable of spontaneously helping others when necessary (e.g., Walker, 2019c, 2021a,b,c,d). Athena Walker, a self-identifying psychopath who writes on quora.com, describes this as “action without feeling”. This supports the idea that human helping behaviour has two separate evolved components: emotion, and behaviour. Empathy has four aspects: cognitive empathy, emotional resonance, empathic concern, and helping behaviour. Psychopaths only have access to cognitive empathy (perspective taking) and helping behaviour.

Psychopathic traits include ruthlessness, resilience, calm self-control in any situation, the ability to play a socially required role (e.g., a neurotypical “mask” worn in order to be socially palatable to most people), and an absence of fear and other negative emotions. These traits are useful in some professions such as surgery and bomb-disposal.

See also:

Confusion between antisocial and narcissistic personality disorders and Psychopathy, p. 236

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 capacities are impaired or absent in a psychopath. Some sadists may look like psychopaths because of their glib charm; complete lack of empathic concern; disregard of social norms; etc., but they are actually a variety of narcissist.

In cooperative mode, we feel empathic distress at the distress of another, but out of a desire for dominance and and humiliation, a person who is being sadistic has the emotional valence of this response reversed. Instead of distress and concern at another’s pain, the sadist experiences pleasure, arousal, and attentiveness: excitedly “tuning in” to the other’s pain (Walker, 2022). The sadist uses perspective-taking and reverse-valence emotional resonance to inflict and enjoy pain.

See also:

Narcissism, p. 233

Confusion between antisocial and narcissistic personality disorders and psychopathy, p. 239

Self-interest

I pursue goals that benefit my personal well being.

This trait may actually result in utility for others if they depend on me (Gerbasi and Prentice, 2013).

Kaufman and Jauk (2020) distinguish between healthy and unhealthy selfishness. Healthy selfishness is a form of self-love that is the same as love for others; and is associated with “higher levels of psychological wellbeing and adaptive psychological functioning as well as a genuine prosocial orientation.” In other words, it is psychologically healthy to care for oneself while maintaining healthy boundaries. Unhealthy selfishness (self-interest at the expense of others) is a form of greed – insatiable, exhausting, and unstable.

... communally motivated people who care for the welfare of others and their close relationship partners experience greater relationship wellbeing. However, personal well-being [is] maximized only to the extent that people [are] not self-neglecting in their communal care.

Kaufman and Jauk (2020:2)

Sociopathy

See: Moral disengagement, p. 233

Spite

A desire to hurt others even at a cost to the self.

See also:

Narcissism, p. 233

Psychopathy, p. 236

Sadism, p. 237

Toxicity (social)

Toxic people habitually try to make you feel that you are not good enough, in some way.

Confusion between antisocial and narcissistic personality disorders and psychopathy

By definition, a personality disorder is the name for:

[a] repetitive and relatively inflexible maladaptive pattern of thinking and behavior that starts in childhood and continues into adulthood. It is stable across most situations and is expressed in most relationships. It limits people's ability to react in a flexible and spontaneous way to new people and new situations.

"Narcissistic Personality Disorder" is the name of one of those patterns.

Elinor Greenberg (2018a)

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; Vol. 5, No. 3, 323-333, 2014

The Cluster B personality disorders are narcissistic, anti-social, borderline, and histrionic (Shulman, 2015). Cluster B is a spectrum, and one disorder may blend into another.

Psychopathy is normally confused with anti-social personality disorder (ASPD) (Walker, 2018) and narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), as it is short-hand for "unspeakably bad person", and some people with psychopathy, ASPD, or NPD do unspeakably bad things.

Borderline Personality Disorder has no reason to be considered a dark trait, since there is no systematic, deliberate exploitation of others. 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).

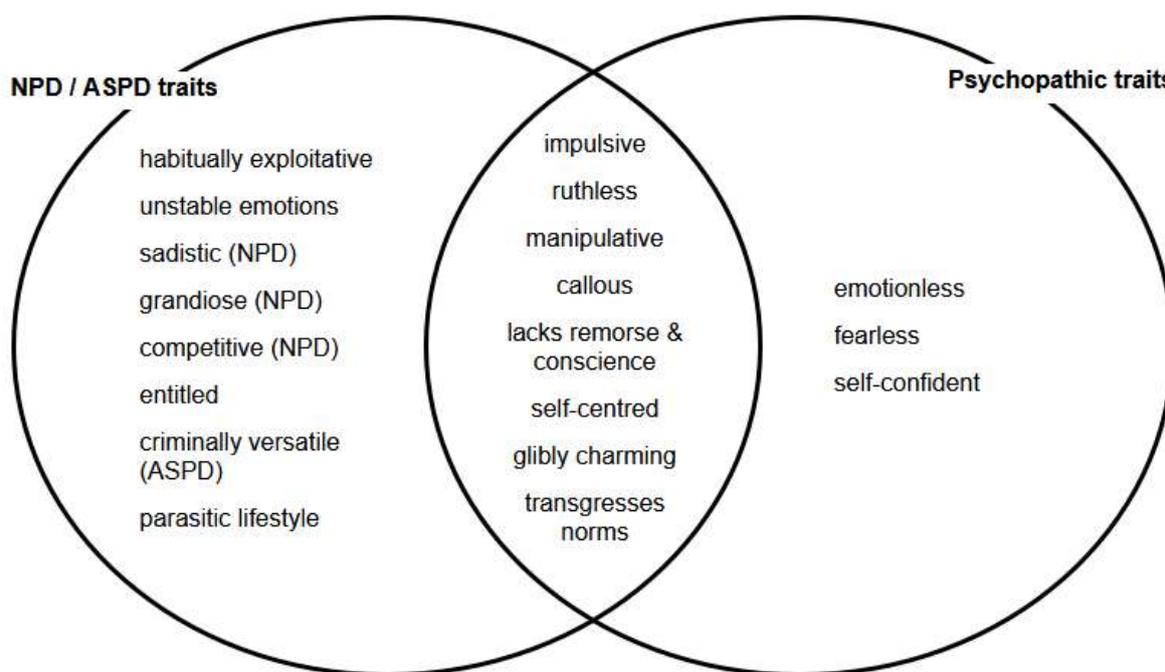
There is evidence that people with emotionally unstable personality disorder tend to be more altruistic than the average (Baskin-Sommers, Krusemark, and Ronningstam, 2014).

Borderline personality disorder can be comorbid with antisocial personality disorder (Howard, Khalifa, and Duggan, 2014; Robitaille et al., 2017).

A psychopath or someone with ASPD may use violence to get something they want. All three (ASPD, NPD, psychopathy) share a lack of empathic concern for others, and self-centredness. More precisely, empathic concern is selective in ASPD and NPD – it applies in some situations, but not others.

People with NPD tend to exploit others emotionally through sadism and bullying. People with ASPD habitually exploit others materially through cheating and stealing. ASPD and NPD are around 25% comorbid: one occurs with the other in the same person in around 25% of the total number of people with either one or the other (Gunderson and Ronningstam, 2001). Interestingly: “both groups are hypersensitive and have intense reactions to criticism, defeats, or disappointments, and both have feelings of emptiness, boredom, meaninglessness, and futility.” (p.106).

The assertion here is simply that while ASPD, NPD and psychopathy share a number of traits, the reasons for those traits are different (Walker, 2018). ASPD and NPD are represented as disorders of morality and cooperation, while psychopathy is a disorder of the emotions (i.e., a lack of emotions, especially negative ones).



Overlap between NPD / ASPD traits and psychopathic traits

Overlap between NPD / ASPD traits and psychopathic traits

D and political extremism

Research has found a “small to medium” association between authoritarian and extreme politics, and traits high in D (Duspara and Greitemeyer, 2017; Moss and O’Connor, 2020). Particularly, it found that:

There is an association between right-wing orientation and Machiavellianism (associated with “misanthropy, anti-social tendencies, cold-heartedness, and immoral beliefs” [Duspara and Greitemeyer, 2017:6]).

There is an association between narcissism and psychopathy (defined as impulsivity, reckless disregard for norms, and sociopathy) and political extremism in general (Duspara and Greitemeyer, 2017).

The study by Moss and O’Connor (2020) looked at possible correlations between dark personality traits (and entitlement) and authoritarian political extremism on both left and right of the political spectrum (“politically correct authoritarians” [PCA] and “white identitarians” [WI]). It also looked at

correlations of D with “politically correct liberals” (PCL). It found that people high in D and entitlement gravitate towards authoritarian politics and a belief in the use of force and intimidation to achieve ideological goals, whether on the left or right. PCL was negatively predicted by psychopathy, which fits with the PCL belief that people’s emotional welfare should be protected.

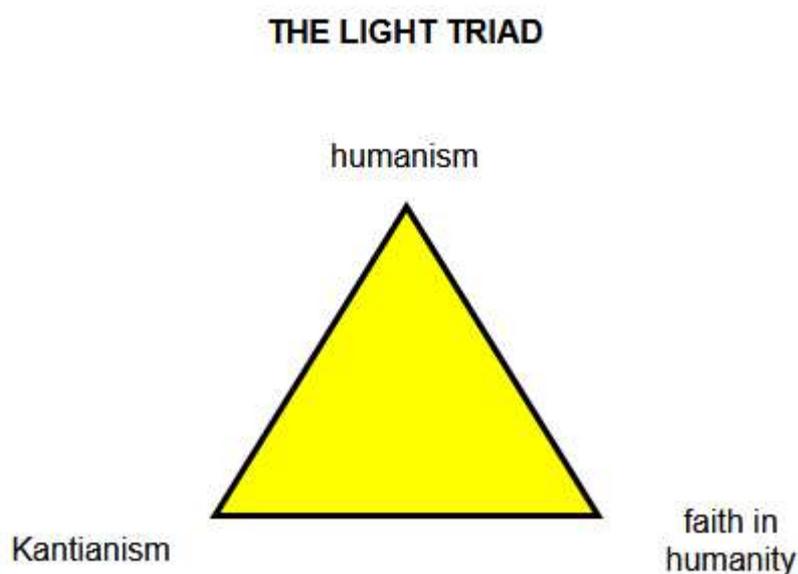
Light traits

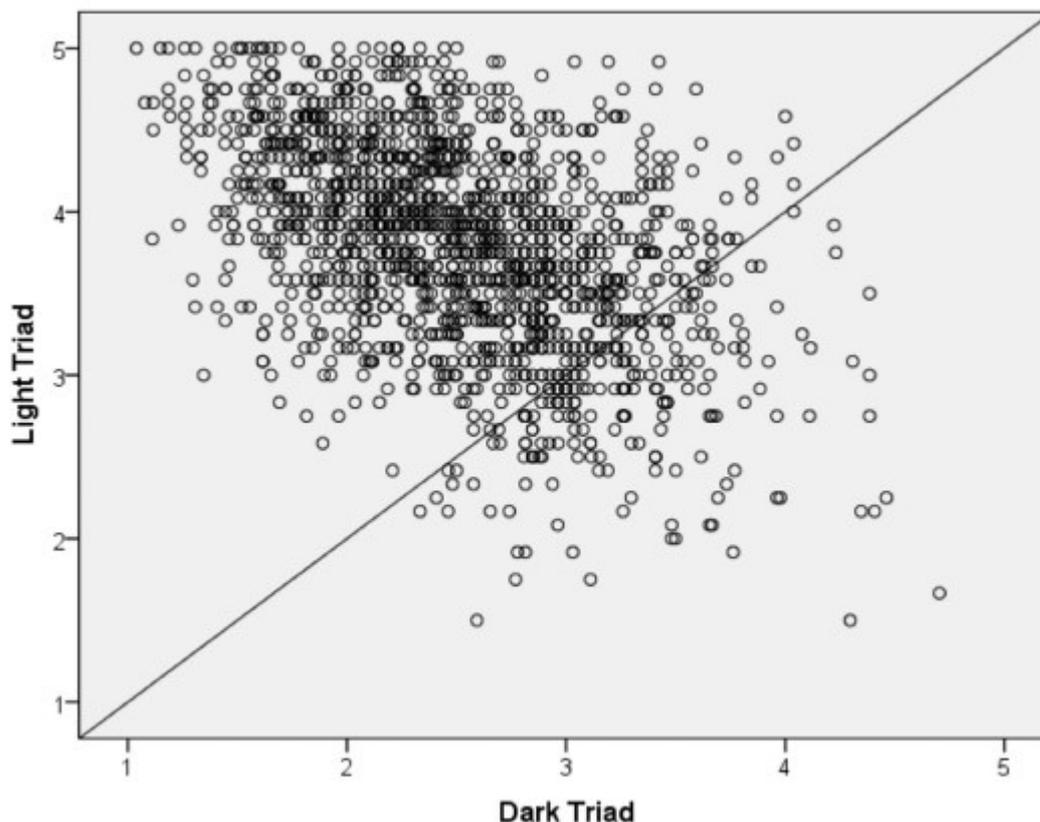
Scott Barry Kaufman, David Bryce Yaden, and Elizabeth Hyde, of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania, and Eli Tsukayama, of the University of Hawaii, have produced a study of so-called light traits (2019).

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.

The light triad





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.

See also:

Perspective taking and exploitation, p. 180

Kant's "ends and means": treating every human with dignity and respect, p. 223

Sadism, p. 237

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 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 demand 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, for the sake of some kind of gratification. What is required for long term success and happiness may be different from that which 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 learn and grow. This implies a lack of attention on how we perceive ourselves, and whether this is 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 consciously and/or unconsciously.

The light triad was positively associated with mature ego defenses, while the dark triad was positively associated with immature, maladaptive ego defenses. The dark triad was negatively associated with belief that people are good, and that one’s self is good.

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 dispositionally, ethically 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 a significant dark profile, and their 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/>

Part 3

Psychology and spirituality

Emotions

Emotions are psychological reactions to things that can or do affect our goals.

Moving towards a goal prompts positive emotion, and moving away from a goal prompts negative emotion.

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, and the stronger the effect of the thing upon the goal, the stronger the emotion that is provoked in response.

The positive or negative valence of an emotion is called its 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, where the “higher” one builds on the previous one:

1. bodily sensations
2. affect
3. emotions
4. thoughts

Emotions, therefore, detect the subjective meanings of things: the ways that things are relevant to our goals or anti-goals. The present hypothesis is that emotion detects fitness benefits, or their opposite. The corollary of this is that achieving fitness and/or utility causes pleasure in the individual.

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" (2004)

See also:

Instrumental normativity, p. 19

Pleasure and eros, p. 22

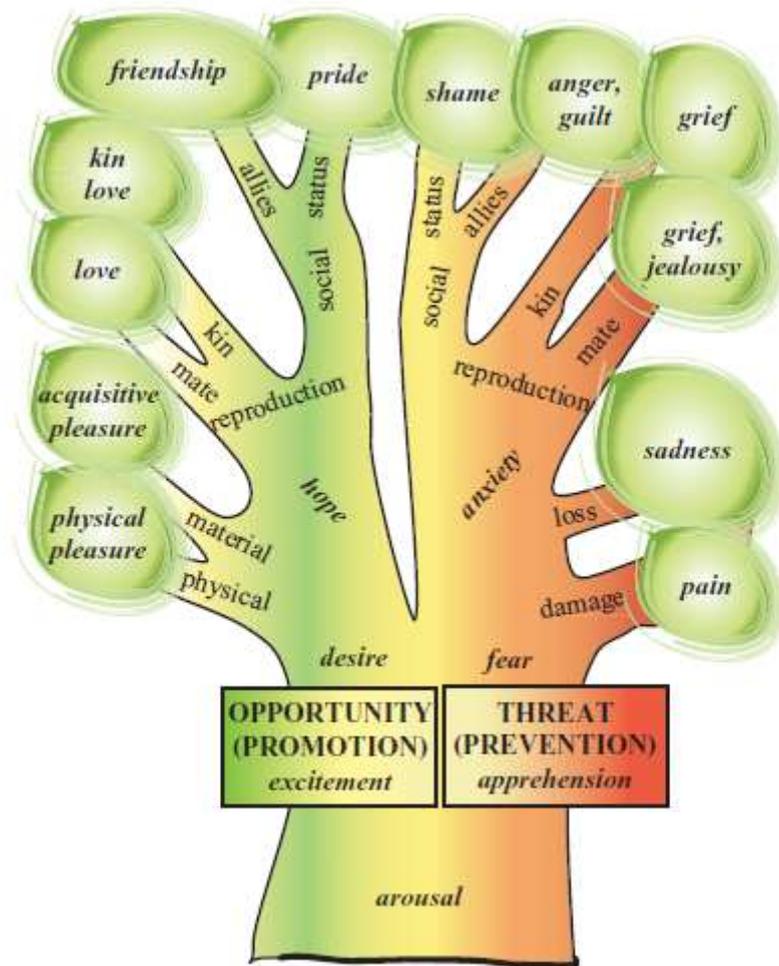
The Smoke Detector Principle

The organism pays special attention to negatively valued information: to bad news. It makes sense from the point of view of survival and reproduction to be especially concerned with threats to one's thriving or survival: it is better to be wrong and alive, than wrong and dead, so that one can live to reproduce another day.

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. 256



Families of emotions (Nesse, 2004)

Naming emotions for conscious processing

By naming our emotions, we can bring them into the conscious thinking mind for processing, i.e., further reflection and analysis. This is a slower, more considered, more measured, and more skilful response to the emotional stimulus than fast, raw emotional “hot cognition”.

When we consciously acknowledge the emotion and name it using words, we are loading it into the part of the brain that uses words, i.e., the executive functioning and decision-making section, its working memory.

In effect, the emotional message has now been delivered to the conscious mind for further processing and executive action, and consequently 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, trying to deliver its message about X thing that has the potential to affect your goals.

Equanimity

Equanimity is the quality of not being shaken by strong emotions. We experience them, but are not shaken by them. If we cultivate equanimity, it contributes to our peace of mind.

See also:

Mature ego defences, p. 262

The ego

The ego is defined as those parts of your psyche that form a “machine for looking after you”: partly conscious, partly unconscious. This is in keeping with the instrumental normativity, the individual pressure to do the things that will allow you 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 can be 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 a hostile world on the other side of a competitive fence.

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

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. 228

- 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 a wrong person.” 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. 265

- 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

See also:

A quiet ego, p. 245

- 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 defences, p. 260

- Having expectations that things must be a certain way.
- Not realising that the mind's picture is not reality.

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.

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:

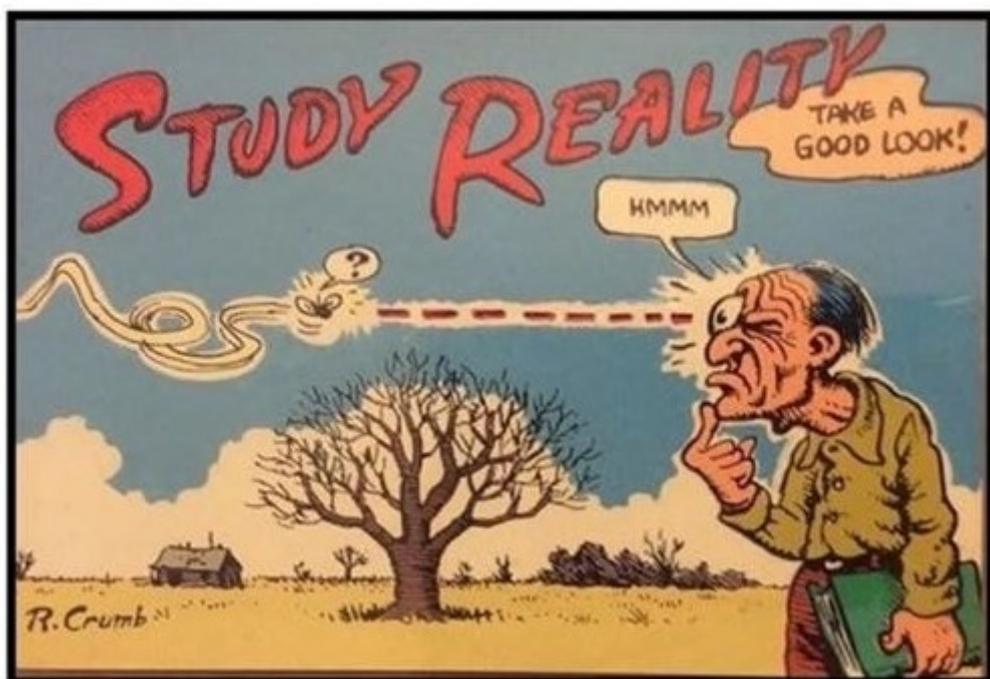
The Smoke Detector Principle, p. 249

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 one point, one aspect of 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 achieve a few minutes of one-point concentration 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 defence: 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, doing nothing, since there is a constant pressure to do the things that will allow you to thrive. After the conscious acknowledgement of reality, the question is, "what do we do about it (if anything)?"

See also:

Instrumental normativity, p. 19

A quiet ego, p. 245

Emotions, p. 248

Ego defences, p. 260

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 defences

Coping mechanisms: some harmful, some beneficial

An ego defence is a behavioural strategy employed by the ego in order to help you to cope with an upsetting situation. An ego defence can allow you to play for time until your ego adapts and you learn to cope.

Some ego defences are considered maladaptive or “immature”, these being mainly unconscious or unknown to the conscious mind. By definition, these are harmful to the self and/or others. If a subconscious ego defence is brought into the light of day and made consciously known, it ceases to be unconscious, it loses its power, and the way it plays out can change for the better.

Some ego defences are considered adaptive or “mature”, when we are consciously aware that we are displaying the behaviour, and why. By definition, these are harmless or beneficial ways of coping.

In an ego defence, 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.

Ego defences are many and various: there are probably more than there are people.

Immature ego defences are intended to get under your skin (Vaillant, 1993).

See also:

A quiet ego, p. 245

The ego, p. 252

Puppet strings and the Grey Rock

One of the ways that people subconsciously use maladaptive ego defences 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 negative emotions including anger; 3) make you look bad when you react.

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:

Competition and dominance, p. 107

Dark and light traits, p. 228

Emotions, p. 248

Classical ego defences

The classical set of ego defences 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 to mentally 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 (2013) – “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:

Light traits, p. 242

- 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 defence where we take steps to attempt to reverse an action we regret.

Mature ego defences (turning straw into gold)

Conscious ego defences that result in a skilful, beneficial outcome are called mature. These include:

- altruism or compassion; helping others.

See also:

Empathic distress and compassion, p. 171

- analysis and acknowledgement: uncovering the facts of the situation and consciously 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.

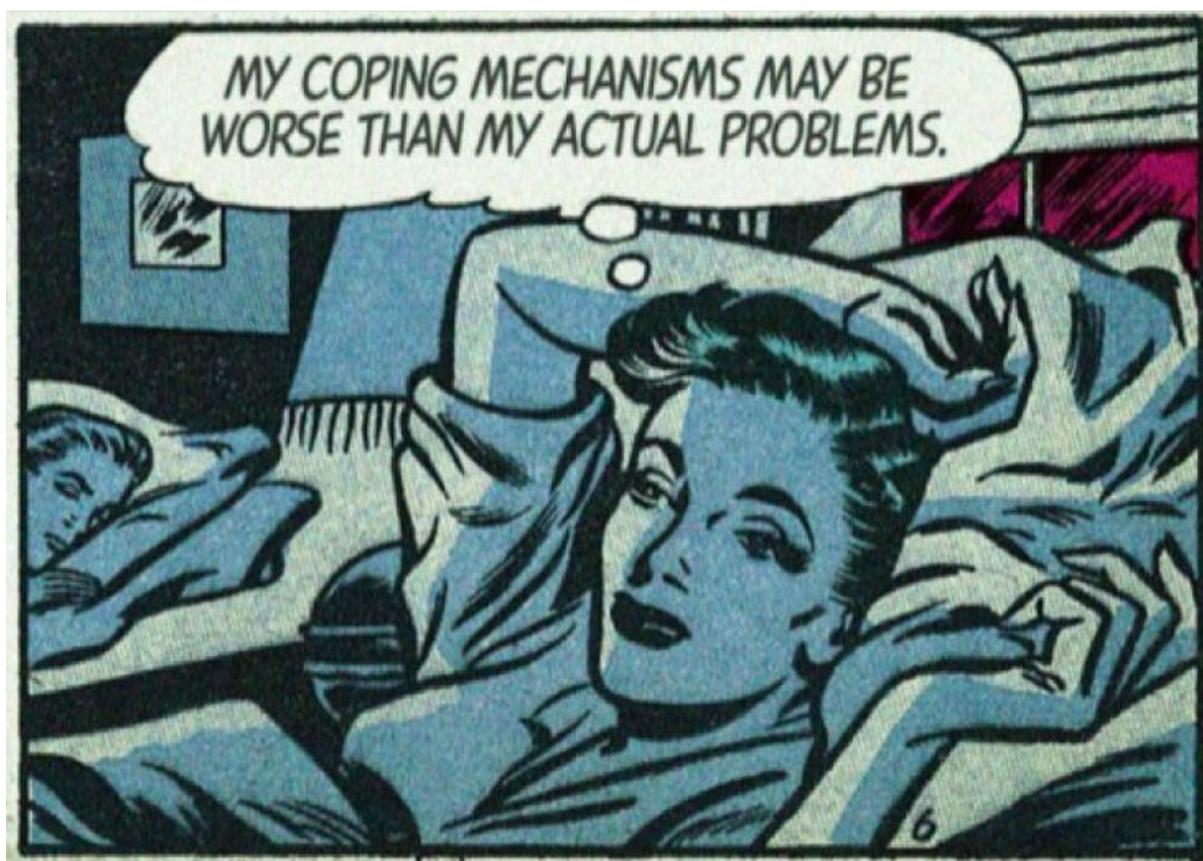
“Younger than Springtime” – South Pacific (Rogers and Hammerstein)

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



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Desire and “original sin”

When desire goes “wrong”

Adaptively managing the normative pressure to achieve personal benefits

A Cherokee legend tells of an old brave talking with his grandson about the battle and unrest that takes place inside us. Speaking the wisdom that comes from advanced age the Native American told the impressionable youngster that two wolves are present in each of us.

One wolf is evil and is exemplified by anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, lies, false pride and superiority. The other wolf is good and demonstrates joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.

The young boy thought about this for a moment and asked his grandfather which wolf wins? The old Cherokee quietly and wisely responded “The one that you feed.”

The legend of the two wolves (version)

Salisbury Post online, retrieved 24 January 2025

<https://www.salisburypost.com/2015/12/14/which-wolf-are-you-feeding/>

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 [of instrumental normativity], 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. Instead, 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 unskillful actions, unwise, lacking in wisdom, causing suffering to the self or others in the short or long term, to which all of us is prone, 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.

Short term and long term benefits

Smile now, cry later.

Eaztpakk

Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

The short term is short, while the long term lasts for a long time. Often, actions will lead to short term benefit but long term negative consequences.

See also:

Short- and long-term pleasure, p. 23

Self-discipline, p. 196

Seeking to thrive through crime or unethical means

See also:

Dark and light traits, p. 228

Maladaptive, unconscious, immature ego defences

See also:

Ego defences, p. 260

The effect on others

Whether you thrive to mutual benefit with others, or at the expense of others – in a sense, to you, the result is the same – you thrive. However, the effect on others is a choice of opposites: of prosocial or antisocial behaviour. Each feels dramatically different to the recipient: positive or negative.

See also:

Perfect Compassion, p. 131

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 exists 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 (Taylor, 2017).

... 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 (2017) – "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, in the hope of achieving opportunities or avoiding 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.

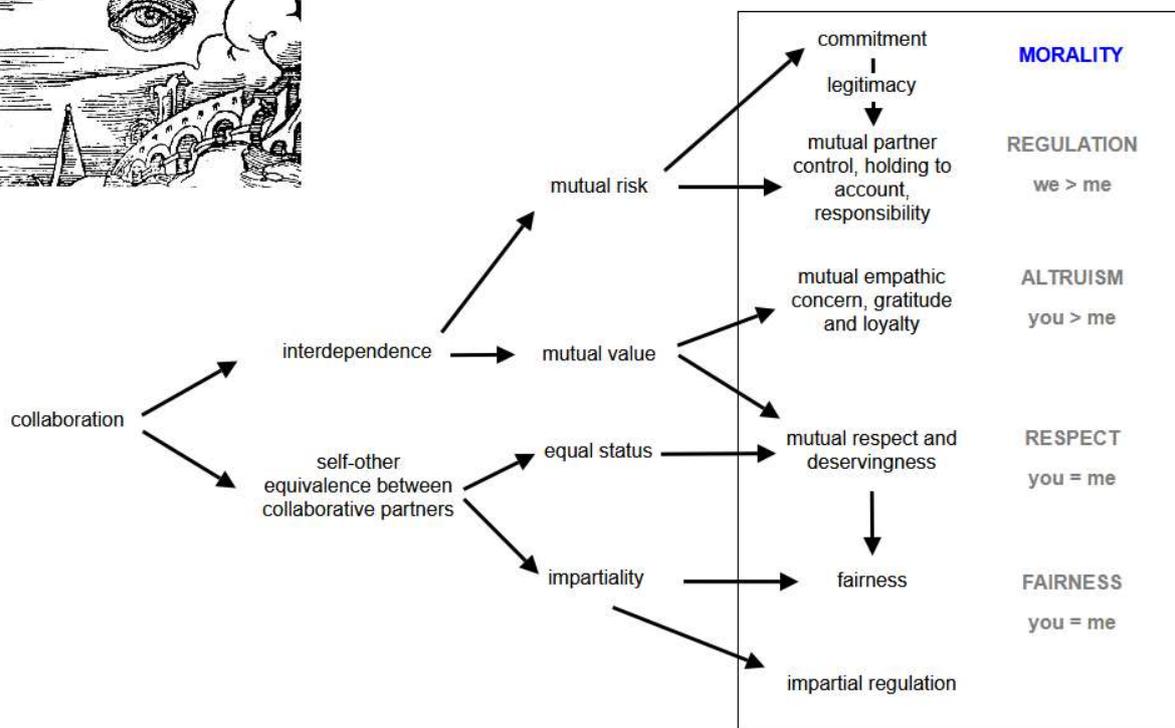
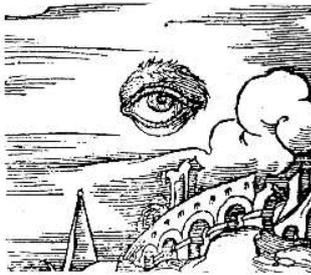
He did not call.

I was there. She was not.

Eckhart Tolle – “Stillness Speaks”

Appendix 1 – how morality is derived from collaboration

The eye of reputation observes and evaluates cooperative and uncooperative behaviour.



The genealogy of morality

How morality is derived from collaboration

Collaborating towards a joint goal gives rise to an understanding of 1) mutual dependence and 2) self-other equivalence between partners (Tomasello, 2016). These give rise in turn, respectively, to 1)

joint self-regulation and mutual altruism, and to 2) equality, respect, fairness, and impartiality. These form the basis of evolved morality.

There are other kinds of evolved morality than foraging for mutual benefit, namely: parenting, pair-bonding, patriarchy, kin selection, and sharing.

The proposal is that collaborating towards joint goals, with its accompanying evolved psychology, gives rise to the regulative behaviour called morality, and its accompanying evolved psychology.

Dual-level psychology of collaboration

Each partner, “you” and “I” is an agent with his or her own will and purpose. When they act and think intentionally together, they form a joint agent “we”, with joint thinking and joint goals, from which benefits are to be maximised all round in a fair distribution.

The joint agent “we” consists of its individual partners “I” and “you”. The perspective of the joint agent “we” is a “bird’s eye view” where it sees fixed roles with interchangeable people filling them. Each partner has their own role, and perspective on the joint goal, and their own goals: sub-goals of the overall goal, role ideals. These role ideals provide the basic pattern for norms and moral standards: a moral standard is a role ideal that belongs to any collaboration alike, such as, hard work, honesty, faithfulness, etc.; generally to be an ideal collaborative partner.

To coordinate our thinking and intentionality, I may take your perspective, as you may take mine, on the collaboration.

The joint agent “we” governs you and I, so that I govern myself, I govern you, and you govern me, on behalf of “us”.

We can break down the “road map” of how collaboration produces morality into its elements, and the links between them, and define the terms and concepts.

(1) collaboration

Engaging in joint or collective activity with others for mutual benefit.

(2) interdependence

Depending on one another: I need you, and you need me; I depend on you, and you depend on me. Symbiosis.

(3) self-other equivalence between collaborative partners

Partners are equivalent in several ways:

- each is equally a causative force in the collaboration: each is equally necessary and responsible for what is done.

- partners are interchangeable within roles, in that each role could in principle be played by any competent partner.
- role ideals are impartial and apply equally to anyone who would play a particular role. Hence, each person's ego is equally constrained, and so, each is equal in status in this sense. None of us is free to do what we like, within the collaboration. Each of us has to do our duty: our work.

(4) mutual risk and strategic trust

I depend on you (2). What if you let me down, and fail to collaborate ideally, and we do not achieve our goal? There is mutual risk, because each depends on the other, and each may be weak and fallible. In order to get moving, in the face of risk, it is necessary for each partner to trust the other “strategically”: as long as they don’t let me down.

(5) mutual value

Because each partner needs (2) and benefits (1) the other, each partner values the other.

(6) equal status

Self-other equivalence (3), and a sense that partners are alike, leads to a sense of equal status between partners.

(7) impartiality

The joint agent “we” governs every partner equally and impartially, since each partner is equivalent and equal (3). Role ideals apply impartially to every partner.

(8) commitment

To reduce mutual risk (4), partners make a commitment to each other: they respectfully invite one another to collaborate, state their intentions, and make an agreement to achieve X goals together. This commitment may be implicit – we simply “fall into” it – or explicitly stated. The commitment is backed up by our cooperative identities, which we do not wish to damage by failing to keep the commitment.

(9) legitimacy of regulation

Because we agreed to collaborate (8), we agreed to regulate ourselves in the direction of achieving the joint goal. The agreement gives the partners a feeling that the regulation is legitimate: proper and acceptable.

(10) mutual partner control, holding to account, responsibility

Mutual risk (4) and legitimacy of regulation (9) lead to partners governing each other and themselves in the direction of achieving the joint goal. This regulation takes the practical forms of:

- partner control – partners govern each other through correction, education, “respectful protest”, punishment, or the threat of exercising partner choice – finding a new partner.
- holding to account – I accept that I may be held to account for my behaviour, and you accept that I may hold you to account for your behaviour.
- responsibility – there is a legitimate regulatory demand that tells me that I “should” be an ideal collaborative partner to you. Hence, I feel a sense of responsibility to you not to let you down in any way, and to see the collaboration through, faithfully, to the end.

(11) mutual empathic concern, gratitude and loyalty

If I need you and depend on you (2), I therefore value you (5) and feel empathic concern for your welfare. I am likely also to feel gratitude and loyalty towards you.

(12) mutual respect and deservingness

If I value you (5) as essential to the collaboration, and consider you an equal (6), and we are working together towards joint goals (1), then to me, you are equally deserving as myself. I am likely to feel that you deserve equal respect and rewards.

(13) fairness

Because you are equally respected and deserving as myself (12), and we are making impartial judgements of behaviour and deservingness (everyone is treated the same regardless of who they are) (7), and benefits are to be maximised all round (instrumental normativity, Perfect Compassion), the only legitimate result is one of fairness where each partner is rewarded on some kind of equal basis.

(14) impartial regulation

The regulation of “us” (8, 9, 10), by you and I, and the regulation of you and I by “us”, is impartial because we are all equivalent (3), because the instrumental demands of our task are impartial, and because moral values are impartial.

BASIC MORALITY

Regulation (we > me)

This formula, “we is greater than me”, indicates that the joint agent “we” or “us” is ruling over “you” and “I”. I govern myself, and I govern you, and you govern me, in the direction of the joint goal, on behalf of “us”, legitimately and impartially.

Altruism (you > me)

This formula is about temporarily putting the interests of others above my own, in order to help them, out of charity, gratitude, loyalty, obligation, their need, etc.

Fairness, respect (you = me)

Equality is the basis of fairness, in two ways: 1) egalitarianism is necessary for fairness in that bullies cannot share fairly: dominants simply take what they want from subordinates, who are unable to stop them; 2) deservingness is decided on some kind of equal basis, whether in equal shares, equal return per unit of investment, equal help per unit of need, etc.

“The eye of reputation” observes and evaluates cooperative and uncooperative behaviour

“Reputation” is shorthand for a number of related concepts:

- my opinion of myself as a cooperator and moral person (personal cooperative or moral identity)
- the opinion of my past or present collaborative partners of myself as a cooperator and moral person (public cooperative identity)
- my public reputation, the opinion of the world at large of myself as a cooperator and moral person (public moral identity, reputation)

The world, and my collaborative partners, are always monitoring me and evaluating my performance as a cooperator and moral person. In turn, through self-other equivalence (3), I do the same to myself, as I would any other person.

According to our reputation or cooperative identity, we may be chosen or not chosen as collaborative partners (partner choice). This can have important consequences, as we all need collaborative partners in life. Hence, reputation and partner choice form the “big stick” that ultimately turns my sense of responsibility to be an ideal partner (10), into an obligation, if I know what is good for me.

See also:

Map of normativity, p. 26

Collaborative foraging for mutual benefit, p. 44

Sharing / ethics of care

Along with cooperation, the other foundation of human morality is sharing and the ethics of care and free altruism. A cooperative environment is also one of sharing. This is all about the moral formula, you > me. Sharing arises from self-interest: “I need to pool my risk with others”. Sharing resources may be thought of as a more fundamental form of cooperation than sharing work.

See also:

Altruism, p. 44

Appendix 2 – contractualism, norms, and the justification of moral beliefs

This is an essay exploring the question: what justifies moral beliefs, according to evolutionary ethics? The answers we give are agreements, norms, our instrumental success, my welfare, and compassion. What does “justify” mean? That any one of these things can be sufficient for moral motivation.

What is the connection between contractualism and fairness (distributive justice)? When you and I agree to collaborate, we agree that the subsequent regulation of our collaborative behaviour – by and on behalf of “us” – is legitimate. So, if you protest to me that I have not fulfilled my role properly, I accept it as legitimate because it comes from the “us” that I willingly agreed to join.

The contract or agreement we make is separately enforced, and our ideal collaborative behaviour is obliged, by threats of damage to our reputations, if we are not ideal collaborative partners.

Being an ideal collaborative partner includes being fair when it comes to sharing the rewards of our collaboration. Fair distribution will usually be explicitly negotiated before collaboration starts, as part of an explicit agreement. The proposal is, you and I will only do that which we already endorse, including the ideals of fairness. Hence, you or I will never agree to something that is too unfair, according to the ideals of fairness. Contracts confer legitimacy on the regulation of our collaborative behaviour, but not necessarily on the content of the behaviour itself.

The agreement to collaborate shapes and constrains the collaboration, and legitimises the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and collective regulation of our collaborative behaviour.

As a family of moral theories, contractualism holds that morality is primarily about acting according to what would be agreed by rational agents. Common to the main contractualist approaches ... is the idea that acting morally is about acting in mutually advantageous ways ..., and that the morality of an action depends on whether relevantly affected parties could reasonably agree to it, or not reasonably reject it

Arthur Le Pargneux, Nick Chater, and Hossam Zeitoun – “Contractualist tendencies and reasoning in moral judgment and decision making” (2024)

Rational agents

There are at least two kinds of rationality – instrumental rationality and cooperative rationality (Tomasello, 2016).

Instrumental rationality recognises that “I need to thrive” and also allows “f*** anyone who gets in my way, if I can get away with it”; i.e., it’s not moral in any way. Essentially it is acting for the good of “me”, which is instrumentally good, and morally neither good nor bad in itself.

Cooperative rationality recognises that “we need to thrive”, and is essentially acting for the good of “us”, and this is what morality is primarily about, if it is a regulation of the ways in which “we” collaborate to achieve “our” joint goals of mutual benefit. Morality is cooperatively rational; it is cooperatively rational to be altruistic and fair and uphold moral norms.

Mutual benefit

The goals-methods model of morality, and theories of morality-as-cooperation in general (e.g., Tomasello, 2016; Curry, 2016) recognise that morality is “about” achieving mutual benefit as a joint goal. This is, of course, consistent with making a contract.

What is moral?

I act morally when I do the right thing. Sometimes I do the right thing from free choice, because I want to uphold moral principles for their own sake; and sometimes I do the right thing because I have to: I am obliged to for instrumental reasons. For example, considerations of my reputation, or my standing with my partners, may oblige me to behave morally.

In the goals-methods model of morality, the morality of an action depends on how well it complies with a moral norm or multiple moral norms. Simultaneously, it might conflict with other moral norms and be wrong according to them.

We may note that morality contains more principles and domains than just fairness and altruism. It also includes things like patriarchy, parenting, pair-bonding, family fitness, and the incest taboo. Women do not agree to patriarchy: it is forced on them, so the definition of morality as consisting of what someone would reasonably agree to fails on that point. However, patriarchy aims to achieve a joint goal of mutual benefit (reproduction), albeit on men’s terms, so it fits the definition of a moral (regulatory) domain of action as consisting of a joint goal and methods of achieving it.

Even though, as we have demonstrated, morality does not always consist of “what I would reasonably agree to”, in most cases it does. Fairness would seem to be one of those. It is reasonable, after all, to expect to be treated on some kind of equal basis with my partners, to receive no more and no less than my due as an equal.

Agreement confers psychological legitimacy on what we agree to do, but it does not necessarily confer morality; i.e., something can be legitimate without being moral. Say there are two employees A and B doing the same work at the same company for the same hours, but A earns more than B because A negotiated a higher wage when they started the job. The wages of A and B are presumably legitimate in their minds, because each separately agreed to their wage, but still it seems a little unfair if you know what they both earn.

What would be agreed by rational agents

A recent proposal is that such joint reasoning involves a process of “virtual bargaining” Each person figures out what would happen if both parties were able to reach an agreement through discussion and negotiation. They then follow their part in the hypothetical virtual bargain. Suppose that B is pushing a drinks trolley. If A and B were to discuss explicitly, they might conclude that A should move aside. If the conclusion of this hypothetical bargaining process is “obvious”, then A may immediately do this — and the interaction is managed successfully. Crucially, the hypothetical agreement to follow this plan has normative force. If A violates the “obvious” agreement and barges ahead, B may complain, likely backed up by bystanders. Notice that the bargain is created “in the moment” to best meet the needs of the immediate circumstances, and its normative force comes from its status as the natural tacit agreement ... between rational or reasonable people. Following the virtual bargain is, in a sense, the “appropriate” or “right” course of action; violating it is reprehensible.

Arthur Le Pargneux, Nick Chater, and Hossam Zeitoun (2024) – “Contractualist tendencies and reasoning in moral judgment and decision making”

This may well be true. Yet, “what is considered reasonable” is not random or arbitrary, but instead, follows well-worn rules of behaviour: moral norms. It is a moral norm to help those in need; to make way for someone pushing a bulky drinks trolley in a narrow space. It carries normative force because it is a method of achieving a biological goal – safeguarding the well being of the most at-risk person in the scenario. In other words, the “positive” normative force of this agreement is instrumental in origin.

It requires a real agreement – you go first, thank you, you're welcome – to get the drinks trolley past A.

It is likely that people will only agree to what they already endorse, and pull out these endorsed rules to use at the appropriate times.

See also:

Agreements and their normative force, p. 36

Contractualism, moral legitimacy, and deontology

A contractualist theory hold that the moral legitimacy of a regulatory action comes from having made an agreement to collaborate (Tomasello, 2016). This is probably true. Yet, the fact that moral norms are legitimate in themselves if you endorse them points to another, deeper source of legitimacy of moral action. Hence, “legitimacy” links contractualism (following agreements) and deontology (the pressure to follow norms and to be an ideal collaborative partner).

According to the goals-methods model of morality, a moral norm is correct and legitimate according to itself, as it is a proven and successful method of achieving mutual well being, survival, and/or reproduction. For individuals, it is normative to achieve these things, for biologically evolved reasons. This suggests an overall biological framework for morality. After all, evolutionary ethics has been called a branch of biology.

Perfect Compassion

Fairness is an aspect of a larger category of ideal behaviour that I call Perfect Compassion. The formula is:

each person affected by my action is to receive the maximum benefit and minimum harm available to them.

It is called “perfect” because each person achieves the maximum benefit available.

This is inspired by the self-maximising pressure to achieve personal benefit, and by real life. Each individual experiences an evolved biological pressure (normativity) to achieve personal benefit.

Ideally, each person is satisfied to accept what they are given, either because no more is available, or because they have received everything they wanted or needed, or because they feel the distribution is fair.

Resources may be distributed:

- equally: equal awards for all partners
- proportionately to deservingness: equal unit of award per unit of input of effort, resources, age, status, bargaining power, etc.
- proportionately to need: equal unit of award per unit of need

Two-step evolution of fairness

According to the present account, human morality developed in three major stages:

- small nomadic groups, from 4-6 million years ago until ~150 thousand years ago;
- large tribal groups split into small nomadic groups, from then until 12-18 thousand years ago; and
- large settled culturally mixed groups, from 12-18 thousand years ago as the climate levelled out, and humans began to settle in large groups and farm the land.

Fairness had to evolve in two stages:

1. sharing communally, with free riders discouraged; (small nomadic groups)
2. restriction of sharing to collaborative partners, with free riders excluded. (large settled groups)

In other words, the first distinctively moral thing that humans learned to do was to share: to give away resources voluntarily. Great ape sociality is based on dominance relations. A dominant will take what they want from a subordinate, and a subordinate has to give up what they have to a dominant.

Resources may be given up grudgingly in response to begging and harassment. Great apes do not otherwise share, or very little, as they live in the deep forest where food is plentiful.

Without sharing, there can be no cooperation, as partners require a share of the rewards if they are to be motivated to take part.

Without the self-domestication of humans, the removal of dominance relations, and the substitution of male-male egalitarianism, there could be no sharing. Self-domestication could have occurred in the

human ancestor, the pithicene, *Ardipithecus ramidus*, 4-6 million years ago, as environmental conditions were growing harsh, sharing became necessary to prevent starvation, and females sexually selected for males who would share and not compete (Perry, 2025). Self-domestication simultaneously gave birth to sharing, egalitarianism, and monogamous pair-bonding (from polygynous pair-bonding).

The second stage of the history of fairness, restricted sharing, had to have occurred within large impersonal culturally mixed settlements, rather than in small nomadic groups.

Self-other equivalence and equal treatment

As egalitarians, humans wish to be recognised equally as human beings, albeit allowing for differences in power or status. Natural selection works on relative differences between individuals as well as on individual behaviour, and so, it is psychologically necessary for individuals to receive benefits equally with each other in some respect.

Collaborative partners have a sense of self-other equivalence with each other (Tomasello, 2016), as they are equal and equivalent in their collaboration in several ways. As a result of this, and of mutual value as collaborators, partners see each other as equal, deserving and respected, and this motivates other-directed fairness: I wish to be fair to my partners because they deserve it, and I respect them as equal collaborators.

Nicolas Baumard, Jean-Baptiste André, and Dan Sperber's (2013) account of the evolution of fairness by partner choice

Baumard, André, and Sperber (2013) propose that fairness evolved as a result of the proximate trade-off between “maximising my benefit” and “maximising my reputation”; i.e., between “my benefits” and “how likely I am to be chosen as a partner in the future”. This motivates me to ensure that my partners are satisfied with what they have received. What satisfies them is to be rewarded on some kind of equal basis, without my cheating or dominating them.

There are two drawbacks to this model:

1. it is only a partial story of the evolution of fairness; and
2. as a result, the proposed model of fairness, and by extension, morality, looks terribly cold, calculating, transactional, and cynical. It misses the warmth, humanity and compassion of human morality entirely, and gives no basis for those things.

However, it is true (i.e., plausible) as far as it goes. We locate it within stage 2 of the history of fairness, in large impersonal culturally mixed settlements, in open marketplaces of potential collaborative partners. In a free marketplace of partners, my reputation is my livelihood, and other-directed fairness is compelled by this source of obligation.

In stage 1, in small nomadic groups, sharing is not restricted to collaborative partners only, so performance of my role has less effect how well I eat, and reputation is not important in the same way. Benefits are unconditional. A good reputation is one for sharing and contributing.

A likely scenario is that when sharing was first restricted to collaborative partners only, it was found that partners would only accept equal and not unequal treatment. Proportionality represents equal treatment as there is an equal unit of output per unit of input.

Jean-Baptiste André, Stéphane Debove, Léo Fitouchi, and Nicolas Baumard's (2022) account of the evolution of morality by partner choice

We use an evolutionary approach to explain the existence and design features of human moral cognition. Because humans are under selection to appear as good cooperative investments, they face a trade-off between maximizing the immediate gains of each social interaction and maximizing its long-term reputational benefits. In a simplified game, we show that this trade-off leads individuals to behave according to the generalized Nash bargaining solution at evolutionary equilibrium. From this result, we derive the psychological proposition that moral cognition is a calculator of this bargaining solution.

André, Debove, Fitouchi, and Baumard (2022) – “Moral cognition as a Nash product maximizer – An evolutionary contractualist account of morality”

This account proposes that moral cognition itself, and not just the psychology of distributive justice, evolved as a result of the trade-off between “maximising my gains” and “maximising my reputation”. We recognise, again, that this is true as far as it goes, but it lacks some important elements of real human morality. It accounts for moral obligation – acting morally “because I have to”, but not moral volition – “because I want to”, or compassion – “because I care”. All of these are consistent with each other.

Moral regulation has three sources:

- collective (reputation and partner choice);
- interpersonal (partner control); and
- intrapersonal (conscience).

The conscience is the internal motive to follow moral principles, values or norms. The question is, why do we value moral principles or norms? We propose that it is because “I” value the results of upholding them: i.e., mutual benefit. Mutual benefit has several advantages for “me”: 1) I benefit in the process; 2) peace reigns in my social world; 3) my partners, upon whom I may depend, benefit too.

The Stakeholder Principle (Roberts, 2005; Tomasello, 2016) describes and accounts for the human instincts to care for others, both in kin (a special case) and non-kin who depend on each other. The theory is that “I care about you because I depend on you”. Since humans are so tightly and widely interdependent, it makes sense that human compassion is also strong, and wide in scope.

Roger Crisp (2006) proposes that only instrumental considerations of personal welfare can compel us to act morally: are the only source of moral obligation. Threats to my reputation, protests from my partners, and a troubled conscience, are all examples of instrumental disutility. Moral reasons for doing moral things are voluntary: “because I want to” and “because I care”.

Another source of regulatory pressure is instrumental success: the pressure to successfully achieve our benefit that we are seeking through our cooperative behaviour, whether that is justice (as a social norm, a goal in itself), material reward, or whatever.

Le Pargneux and Cushman’s (2025) study of moral judgment and bargaining power

Arthur le Pargneux and Fiery Cushman’s (2025) study “Moral Judgment Is Sensitive to Bargaining Power” seeks to find out whether moral judgment of participants by third parties is sensitive to the bargaining power of the participants, in terms of a) their stake in a successful outcome; b) outside options. That is, to see whether the same action will be judged more or less harshly depending on the bargaining power of the participants. This is taken as a test of contractualist theories of morality: if the result of the vignette is as if negotiated by rational agents, then it should be considered morally correct, consistent with contractualism.

[Studies 1-4](#) mainly looked at vignettes where partners had differing stakes in the outcome.

Participants were presented with seven vignettes (an additional vignette was also used to check attention) constructed according to the following structure: Two characters can perform

a mutually beneficial but unpleasant action, one of them has higher bargaining power, the other has worse bargaining power. The bargaining power asymmetry is mainly manipulated via the value attributed to the outcome at stake by each party (well, deal, paintings, canoe, boss, stadium), and, for one vignette, via the parties' available alternatives (cab). Participants were asked: How morally appropriate would it be for X to ask Y to do Z?

Le Pargneux and Cushman (2025)

Study 5 looked at another set of vignettes where partners had differing levels of outside options.

In most or all of these vignettes, “my bargaining power” is inversely proportional to “what I have to lose”.

“Bargaining power” is less relevant to rationality than “what am I about to lose right now?”.

Instrumental rationality is defined as the achievement of personal benefit and welfare. In the moment, “who will save my camera?” is more urgently relevant to my interests and welfare than “how can I get out of doing this unpleasant action?” Can I rely on the person who only has their lunch box to lose, to do it for me? Should I? It's my camera, and I'm the one who needs to keep it. Importantly, no real negotiation of this point is required – and not only because of time constraints. Need is non-negotiable; it either exists or it doesn't, and it's outside the scope of negotiation. What is being tested, therefore, is straightforward, urgent need, rather than negotiation. Negotiation will always back up this result, in this context.

If neither side could afford to lose their stake in a successful outcome, then perhaps the asymmetry of the situation would be removed.

Arthur Le Pargneux, Xavier Roberts-Gaal, and Fiery Cushman's (2025) study of fairness, negotiation and bargaining power

Humans constantly negotiate about how to best allocate money, food, effort, rewards, and punishments. When dividing resources between two agents that differ from each other, some differences (like one's initials) are morally irrelevant. Others, such as desert, need, effort, ability, and luck, can be. Intuitively, we sometimes favor the disadvantaged, donating more to the needy. Other times we favor the deserving, rewarding performance, effort, or ability. What is the fair way to divide a sum of money between two people in asymmetric positions?

Drawing on contractualist models of moral cognition, we suggest that a key driver of our moral intuitions in such contexts is the logic of bargaining. When the situation is one of negotiation and asymmetries between the recipients translate into bargaining power differences, we favor those in better bargaining positions. When the logic of bargaining does not apply, our intuitions are reversed, instead reflecting egalitarian or redistributive concerns.

Le Pargneux, Arthur; Xavier Roberts-Gaal; and Fiery Cushman (2025) – “How the logic of bargaining shapes moral intuitions about resource divisions”

This study appears to find that when negotiation is involved, people expect and require the rewards to be proportional to bargaining power (it is “appropriate”), but when there is no negotiation, people expect equal or charitable awards. This is not surprising, as proportionality, conditionality, and negotiation are associated with each other.

On the other hand, we would not negotiate with a starving child whether they have earned the right to eat – their benefit is unconditional, in response to need, and proportional to their need, which may be attributed to bad luck and misfortune. If we do not approve of their reason for need (e.g., laziness), then we will literally feel their pain less (Decety, 2011), and consequently, wish to help them less.

| <i>IN RESPONSE TO</i> | <i>BENEFIT</i> | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------|
| deservingness | proportional | conditional | negotiated |
| need | proportional | unconditional | donated |

Necessity plays a role in judgments of fairness. We judge it fair if people do what they have to do. If I was expecting 20 apples from our apple picking expedition, but half of the apples were lost on the way home, and I only get 10 apples, I would not be dissatisfied.

Appendix 3 – evolutionary metaethics

Metaethics is defined as the study of the nature and structure of morality, its form as opposed to its content. This article is informed by The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy – “Metaethics”; and The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy – “Metaethics”.

- Metaethics seeks answers to questions such as (SEP):
- Is morality more a matter of taste than truth?
- Are moral standards culturally relative?
- Are there moral facts?
- If there are moral facts, what are their origin and nature?
- How is it that they set an appropriate standard for our behavior?
- How might moral facts be related to other facts (about psychology, happiness, human conventions...)?
- And how do we learn about moral facts, if there are any?
- These questions lead naturally to puzzles about the meaning of moral claims as well as about moral truth and the justification of our moral commitments.
- Metaethics explores as well the connection between values, reasons for action, and human motivation,
- asking how it is that moral standards might provide us with reasons to do or refrain from doing as they demand,
- and it addresses many of the issues commonly bound up with the nature of freedom and its significance (or not) for moral responsibility.

In this article we will attempt to answer these questions from the perspective of evolutionary theory and anthropological science. The main difference with this approach is that it is both top-down (theory) and bottom-up (data), while traditional metaethics seems to be top-down only, with moral content hardly mentioned. In evolutionary metaethics, the content dictates the form and causative structure of morality, as we would expect if evolutionary ethics is a branch of biology. As with biology, morality has an everyday level that we all experience, a “meta” level of human understanding (philosophy or science), and a genetic or evolutionary level.

Evolutionary model of morality

Life begins when molecules start making copies of themselves. These “replicators” are “selfish” in the technical sense that they promote their own replication (Dawkins ... [1976]).

Curry, Mullins, and Whitehouse (2019:2) – “Is It Good to Cooperate? – Testing the Theory of Morality-as-Cooperation in 60 Societies”

Living systems actively sustain and renew themselves despite the natural tendency toward decay, a process sometimes termed autopoiesis in the literature Recent research has investigated this concept within broader frameworks of cognition and adaptive behavior Central to this research is the idea that living systems are agents that possess intrinsic goals ... , such as viability (maintenance of the living state), growth, and replication. In fact, the presence of goals that are intrinsic, rather than externally assigned, distinguish organisms from most nonliving systems considered in the natural sciences

Bartlett et al. (2025:1) – “Physics of Life: Exploring Information as a Distinctive Feature of Living Systems” (references in original)

The fundamental premises in this version of evolutionary ethics are that:

- benefit is normative;
- moral norms are methods of achieving, restoring, or maintaining mutual benefit;
- within a social environment of obligate collaboration and sharing.

Normativity is the pressure to achieve goals. The reason that benefit is normative – that there is normative pressure to achieve benefits – is that natural selection selects for organisms that “try” to achieve their own evolutionary fitness goals, as behaviour that promotes my proximate well being, survival, and reproduction can be eventually “cashed out” as reproductive success. Evolutionary fitness means being able to thrive, survive and/or reproduce. Fitness benefits can be proximate (jointly: utilitarian morality), reproductive (jointly: reproductive morality), or genetic (family morality). Benefit, or an increase in well being, can also be categorised as biological, psychological, social, and moral.

Moving towards the achievement of a goal produces pleasure. Utilitarian goals are a subset of pleasure goals. Fitness goals are a subset of utilitarian goals. Some utilitarian goals are maladaptive

anti-fitness goals (e.g., recreational drugs), instead of adaptive fitness goals (e.g., working for a living).

Humans are required to share and cooperate with each other, since we live in a harsh and risky foraging niche to which we are physically not well adapted – we are not very strong, and don't have horns, claws, or big canines, for example. Our adaptations are all towards surviving on the savannah – upright walking, endurance running, cooperation and sharing, etc.

If you and I are working together, and we both benefit from this, then I don't mind helping you, as it helps me. This is in the nature of collaboration for mutual benefit. Morality is the collaboration to regulate collaboration (Tomasello, 2019a); moral norms are formulaic ideals of sharing and collaborative behaviour, squarely aimed at mutual benefit. One-way helping, altruism, counts as “restoring or maintaining” mutual benefit. According to Curry, Mullins, and Whitehouse (2019), moral norms are solutions to recurrent problems in collaboration for mutual benefit, such as how to exchange like for like (reciprocity), how to divide the rewards of a collaboration on an equal basis (fairness, distributive justice), and avoiding conflict (for mutual benefit).

Moral norms, moral facts, legitimacy, and is/ought

In this account, moral norms exist as ideals, like morally perfect Platonic formulae of behaviour, aimed at mutual benefit. Mutual benefit is the goal; moral norms are the methods of achieving it.

Their factual status is abstract schema of real behaviour. They are impartial, mind-independent ideal standards by which to (factually) measure morally relevant behaviour.

Because the goal of moral norms (mutual benefit) is psychologically legitimate, and a moral norm is a proven, successful method of achieving this goal, then each norm is correct according to itself, in that it really is a method of achieving mutual benefit. Fairness is correct according to fairness; real behaviour is measured against this impartial, mind-independent ideal, to see how fair it is. Patriarchy is correct according to patriarchy, but wrong according to utilitarian mutual benefit (including fairness and compassion), since its joint goal of reproduction is achieved to the benefit of men at women's expense.

A norm justifies itself, but I will not uphold a norm that I do not endorse. If I endorse it, then subjectively, to me, the moral agent, it is legitimate. Hence, a moral norm requires my endorsement for its shouldness to be “activated”, and made legitimate in my mind.

Michael Tomasello (2016) proposes that when you and I agree to collaborate, this forms a united “we”, with united goals, a joint agent that then legitimately regulates you and I in the direction of our joint goals. He calls this the dual-level psychology of collaboration: level 1) you and I; and level 2)

“us”. Thus, regulation is on behalf of “us”, and is intrapersonal (I govern myself), interpersonal (you and I govern each other), and collective (the group governs you and I), and legitimate.

Being moral entails more than just upholding moral norms. It requires a whole orientation of the person, in the direction of being an ideal collaborative partner, which itself requires upholding moral and instrumental standards. This entails things like my supporting my partner when he is having difficulty; or my staying faithful to the collaboration in the face of more interesting temptations; or my not telling tales on my partner out of loyalty.

Moral norms are thereby descriptive facts that give rise to shouldness, normative pressure, for human beings. We are saying, descriptive fact A exists (“N is a norm”), therefore you should X (“uphold N”). Does this violate the is/ought divide?

Norm N is the method of achieving mutual benefit goal G, and if I want to achieve goal G, then I should conform to N.

1. norm N is the method of achieving mutual benefit goal G;
2. I want to achieve G (because benefit is normative);
 - therefore (descriptive-factually) I should conform to N.

This is therefore a conditional ought whose conclusion does not violate the is/ought divide, since there is a goal (“value”) in the premises.

Value and goodness

Something is instrumentally good if it has instrumental value: i.e., if it promotes my own thriving, surviving and/or reproduction.

Something is morally good if it has moral value: i.e., if it promotes “our” mutual thriving, surviving, and/or reproduction. A moral value is a moral norm. So, for example, it is morally good to uphold a moral value such as fairness, because this promotes mutual well being.

According to Crisp (2006), welfare is the highest good, presumably because, for the individual, nothing is possible without this.

Rightness of action and rightness of goal

It is morally right (according to the definition of morality as the regulation of collaboration) to be an ideal collaborative partner and to uphold moral norms. But to what end? The goal has to be ethical too in order to count as being an ethical action. In other words, the goal also has to be mutual benefit, and not at someone's expense. An example is the Nazis, who were great cooperators, but had unethical ends.

Why morality-as-cooperation?

Evolution has equipped humans with a range of biological—including psychological—adaptations for cooperation. These adaptations can be seen as natural selection's attempts to solve the problems of cooperation. ...

Which problems of cooperation do humans face? And how are they solved? Evolutionary biology and game theory tell us that there is not just one problem of cooperation but many, with many different solutions Hence morality-as-cooperation predicts that there will be many different types of morality. Below we review seven well-established types of cooperation: (1) the allocation of resources to kin; (2) coordination to mutual advantage; (3) social exchange; and conflict resolution through contests featuring (4) hawkish displays of dominance and (5) dovish displays of submission; (6) division of disputed resources; and (7) recognition of possession.

... we show how each type of cooperation explains a corresponding type of morality: (1) family values, (2) group loyalty, (3) reciprocity, (4) bravery, (5) respect, (6) fairness, and (7) property rights.

Oliver Scott Curry, Daniel Austin Mullins, and Harvey Whitehouse (2019) – “Is It Good to Cooperate? – Testing the Theory of Morality-as-Cooperation in 60 Societies” (references in original)

It is not intuitively obvious that morality exists within a human social framework of collaboration and sharing. If it was, philosophers would have worked it out a long time ago. However, we may note that almost everyone lives embedded within multiple communities, groups, teams, partnerships, etc., and these are collaborative “foraging parties writ large” (Tomasello, 2016).

Moral theory only makes sense within a framework of collaboration and sharing. The present moral theory matches reality closely, and it is based on these things.

Altruism outside the family is unsustainable without communal cooperation and sharing, yet we see non-kin altruism all the time. It is unsustainable for me to keep giving without something being given back to me in return. Altruism within the family is sustainable because family relatives carry copies of my own genes, so that helping them is helping my own genes (Dawkins, 1976).

The strongest evidence for the link between collaboration and morality comes from the experiments of Michael Tomasello and his team at the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig, Germany, comparing the behaviour of chimpanzees (the closest living relatives of *Homo sapiens* along with bonobos), and young human children, with respect to morality and collaboration.

Many social species of non-human animals possess elements of morality in their behaviour: empathy and perspective taking, helping in response to need, long-term “buddy” reciprocity, sharing, and cooperative breeding (Bekoff and Pierce, 2009; Hrdy, 2009). Humans have all these, together with the only (known) instance among species of a “fully fledged” cooperative morality of fairness, social norms, and joint self-regulation.

The crucial points are that: 1) young children perform this moral behaviour where chimpanzees do not, and then 2), they perform it mainly in a cooperative context and not outside it. Chimpanzees only very little put their heads together to cooperate, if at all. They have no need to cooperate to find their food of ripe fruit. Their social structure of dominance prevents the development of cooperation – a dominant will not share with a subordinate, so there is no reward for a collaborative partner. Humans, by contrast, have been egalitarian (we believe) from 4-6 million years ago, and so were always ready to cooperate and share the benefits freely with a band of fellows.

If an ape has food resources in its possession, it very seldom gives up any of them to anyone else – and certainly not for no reason. Young children are a bit more generous, but not much; on average, in dictator games where they are free to share what they will, 3-year-olds across cultures offer peers about one in four items in their possession But when the resources to be divided are the fruits of a collaborative effort, we see a very different pattern. When chimpanzees pull in a board together with food clumped in the middle, typically the dominant individual simply takes it all, and collaboration breaks down over trials In contrast, human 3-year-olds in the same situation divide the spoils more or less equally on more or less every trial, and they can continue to collaborate in this manner indefinitely Most dramatically, when 3-year-old peers collaborate to pull in resources and, by “luck,” one of them ends up with more than the other, the unlucky child often verbally notes the inequity (e.g., “I only have one”), and the lucky child often (about three quarters of the time) hands over the extras so as

to equalize the rewards among partners They almost never do this in a control condition with no collaboration, suggesting that the sense of shared agency in producing the rewards is crucial. In contrast, chimpanzees, in a study designed to be as similar as possible to this one, shared rewards (i.e., allowed the partner to take them) equally often inside and outside the context of a collaboration, presumably because they have no sense of shared agency in producing the spoils. In a related set of studies, children who received all of the rewards from pulling in a board with sweets on it shared those sweets more often with a collaborative partner than with a peer who was simply nearby (i.e., was a free rider to the spoils; ...). Chimpanzees in the same experimental situation shared equally infrequently with partners and free riders alike

Michael Tomasello (2019b:5) – “The moral psychology of obligation” (references in original)

Finally, we demonstrate pathways by which a collaborative life can give rise to a regulatory morality of altruism, respect and fairness. The morality of sharing interacts with and complements this.

See also:

Appendix 1 – How morality is derived from collaboration, p. 271

Pluralism, universality, and non-WEIRD morality

A moral judgement of action A is made according to a particular norm N. This judgement is factual: A has factually performed better or worse according to impartial standard N. This means that there is one factual judgement for each norm N_1, N_2, N_3, \dots to which A is relevant. This is moral pluralism: a plurality of norms and potential judgements come into play at any one time.

Collections of moral norms, all with the same joint mutual-fitness goal, are called moral domains.

There are five evolved moral domains and a stand-alone incest taboo:

1. collaborative foraging for proximate mutual benefit;
2. parenting;
3. pair-bonding;
4. patriarchy;
5. family genetic fitness.

Moral behaviours are solutions to recurring problems in cooperation (Curry, Mullins, and Whitehouse, 2019). It is assumed that in every culture, people want proximate mutual benefit; they parent; they

pair-bond; they are patriarchal (in almost every culture); and they have families. Hence, we propose that moral domains, at least, are universal to the human race.

There are some variations:

- how the goals of mutual fitness are achieved, and general norms are enacted: i.e., through culturally-specific practices;
- intensity of partner control in the form of moral harshness and punishment for those who infringe the local norms;
- how intensely patriarchy is endorsed;
- WEIRD vs. non-WEIRD individualism vs. family-group-orientation;
- fairness, as distributive justice, varies around the world in the way it is carried out. Some cultures favour equal shares; others favour proportionality based on some criterion of personal deservingness; others emphasise charity towards everyone; individuals in some cultures don't have a policy because distributive decisions are mostly made by elders (Schäfer, Haun, and Tomasello, 2015).

According to this version of evolutionary ethics, the main differences in morality between Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic cultures, and non-WEIRD ones, all stem from the size and complexity of the family/tribal group to which the individual belongs (Henrich, 2020). In WEIRD countries, the unit of society is the nuclear family, and individuals are, socially, relatively atomistic and disconnected from others. In non-WEIRD cultures, the individual is embedded within a large family/tribal group, and their identity consists of many different selves, one for each social role with its particular obligations. In WEIRD cultures, the governing joint agent can be ad-hoc and flexible in form, created as and when required. In non-WEIRD cultures, the governing joint agent is always the individual's extended family/tribal group, and her loyalty is to this joint agent only. WEIRD and non-WEIRD exist on a spectrum, and both may exist within the same country. In WEIRD cultures, partner choice is relatively free and unfettered, while in non-WEIRD cultures, collaborative partners are chosen from and retained within the family/tribal group, and partner control is relatively intense. WEIRD cultures emphasise (individual) accountability and guilt, while non-WEIRD cultures emphasise (collective) accountability and shame.

How do humans develop morality as they grow up?

The Cooperation Theory of moral development starts from the premise that morality is a special form of cooperation. Before 3 years of age, children help and share with others prosocially, and they collaborate with others in ways that foster a sense of equally deserving

partners. But then, at around the age of 3, their social interactions are transformed by an emerging understanding of, and respect for, normative standards. Three year-olds become capable of making and respecting joint commitments, treating collaborative partners fairly, enforcing social norms, and feeling guilty when they violate any of these. The almost simultaneous emergence of a normative attitude in all of these interactional contexts demands explanation. We suggest a transactional causal model: the maturation of capacities for shared intentionality (adaptations for cultural life) makes possible new forms of cooperative social interaction, and these new forms of cooperative social interaction foster and guide moral development. ...

Following Tomasello and Vaish [2013], I assume two ontogenetic steps in children's early moral development (modeled on Tomasello, Melis, Tennie, & Herrmann [2012], two steps in the evolution of human cooperation): second-personal and norm-based. The focus here is on the transition between these steps at around 3 years of age. Arguably, this is the key transition in early moral development, because it is the point at which children's prosocial behavior and cooperative interactions take a normative turn, from what the child wants to do and wants others to do to what she and others ought, should, or must do.

Michael Tomasello (2018:248...249) – "The Normative Turn in Early Moral Development"

Based on empirical science, Tomasello's (2018, 2019a, 2019b) proposal is that, like the (proposed) history of human morality itself, and consistent with a framework of helping, sharing, and cooperation, young children's moral development first consists of a simple interpersonal morality of helping and sharing. Around the age of three, children begin to learn the skills of joint thinking and intentionality that will allow them to cooperate with others in an organised and normative way, and this is when they first become susceptible to their society's social norms. After they have learned to cooperate, then the requirements of cooperation itself teach children the need to be normatively moral: to be an ideal collaborative partner, to uphold and enforce norms, to be fair, to feel guilty, etc.

Is moral development a matter of nature or nurture? Both. According to Tomasello (2018), socially interacting with other people informs the maturation of the growing child's innate, ontologically developing moral capacities.

The evidence we have presented suggests that, in ontogeny, the adaptation for objective and normative thinking emerges at around 3 years of age. This does not mean that [moral] normativity is "innate" as some developmentalists might have it. What we have previously called simplistic nativism – where the goal is simply to claim "it's innate" and be done with it – is antithetical to an evolutionary approach. Biological adaptations always come into being in

an individual through ontogenetic processes. A given ontogenetic pathway may be more plastic and open, or more fixed and closed, to individual experience. For example, all songbirds are biologically adapted for singing their species-typical song. But some species learn it from their parents (chicks raised in isolation do not sing as adults), whereas others clearly do not (chicks raised in isolation sing away as adults). The fact that something is a biological adaptation tells us precisely nothing about the relative plasticity and openness to experience of the ontogenetic pathway by which it comes into being.

And so developmental pathways with a strong maturational component can at the same time involve much individual learning and experience. Of special importance in the current context, many of children's most complex competencies come into being as they interact with other people, and indeed such interactions are necessary for normal development. We thus advocate a transactional model of causality [Sameroff, 2009]. Maturational factors within the individual organism determine the kind of experiences it can have.

Michael Tomasello (2018:259) – “The Normative Turn in Early Moral Development”

Shouldness, obligation, motivation, regulation

Every norm possesses a “should”: mutual benefit is normative, so the methods of achieving it are also normative. The question is whether I endorse those methods. So, patriarchy is aimed at reproduction, but in a way that only benefits men, so I (for one) do not endorse it.

To be an ideal collaborative partner is also normative, because mutual benefit is normative, and collaboration is a method of achieving it. If you and I have made an agreement to collaborate, then we have also agreed to be ideal collaborative partners. This applies whether the agreement is explicit, or implicit such as with the social contract.

Motivation to uphold moral norms therefore comes in two parts:

1. the normative pressure of mutual benefit;
2. obligation, or endorsement of the methods used to achieve it.

Obligation is a “must”: I must uphold this norm and I must be an ideal collaborative partner. We are forced to do things for instrumental reasons; for considerations of welfare (Crisp, 2006). Some common sources of obligation are:

- maintaining or achieving a good reputation with prospective partners, or a good standing with current partners, either of which can affect my chances of being chosen as a future collaborative partner;

- maintaining or achieving a good conscience;
- the instrumental success of our mission;
- some other kind of pressuring circumstance that threatens my welfare if I do not fulfil a particular moral demand.

The moral reason for being moral is that I uphold moral norms or behave as an ideal collaborative partner because I endorse these for their own sakes. This could be because I like the results of mutual benefit and/or that I endorse a method of achieving it. I am an ideal collaborative partner for “us” (i.e., you and I), the joint agent.

There is a third reason for being moral – compassion – an evolved compulsion to help (or care) when we see someone in need (or vulnerable). Even a psychopath, who is unemotional, can possess this compulsion (Walker, 2021a), which shows that, for helping behaviour, there is an evolved emotional component of empathic concern based on sympathetically feeling someone’s pain, and an independent behavioural component based on appreciation of need.

The reason for altruism itself is dependence: if I depend on you, then I need you to be in good shape, so I have concern for and help you when in need (Tomasello, 2016). Humans became tightly interdependent, first, historically, because of sharing, then later, collaboration. Humans also preferentially help their family relatives, because I depend on my family relatives to help me propagate copies of my own genes (Dawkins, 1976). Thus, it makes sense for there to be an evolved behavioural and an evolved emotional component to altruism.

We identify three kinds of moral motivation:

- because I have to (obligation);
- because I want to (volition);
- because I care (compassion).

Regulation of our collaboration emanates from “us”, the joint agent (Tomasello, 2016), on behalf of our joint goals, and is expressed as normative pressure, intrapersonally (I govern myself) and interpersonally (you and I govern each other).

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