

SIX HARD PROBLEMS IN MORALITY

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Morality is feasible because:

“Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god. ”

(Aristotle)

The Idea of Sociobiology

“Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin” (Darwin)

Cooperation is part of human nature, genetically imprinted, but which part?

The Neuroscience of Cooperation

Mirror neurons and sympathy (insula)

Maternal pathways (e.g. oxytocin)

Guilt Aversion (insula, SMA, DLPFC)

Altruism and Reward Processing

Theory of mind

Language

Evolution of Cooperation (Nowak, 2006):

Kin Selection

Direct Reciprocity: Tit-for-Tat

Indirect Reciprocity: Reputation, Altruistic Punishment

Network Reciprocity: Self-selection,

Group Selection: Two-level selection

Eusociality and species evolution: kin or group selection?

Kin Selection:

$rB > C$ (Hamilton Equation), where r is genetic relatedness

Direct Reciprocity:

$wB > C$, where w is the probability of a follow-up encounter

Tit-for-Tat; Generous TFT; Win/Stay -Lose/Shift

Indirect Reciprocity:

$qB > C$, where q is the probability of knowing someone's reputation

Network Reciprocity:

$kB > C$, where k is the number of neighbors of a member of the network

Group Selection:

$B/C > 1 + (n/m)$ where n is the maximum size per group and m is the number of groups

Six Hard Problems of Morality:

Individual deviance: addiction, personality disorders

Morality and long-term change: property rights,
sexual norms, environment

Morality and Power: Lord Acton, Testosterone

Self-Fulfilling Trust: Reputation cuts two ways

Gender Inequality: Patriarchy (Wrangam)

Inter-Group Violence: Two-Level Evolution

Individual Deviance:

Psychopathy disorders

Addiction disorders

Development disorders (ECD, cortisol systems)

Grand challenge of *psychopathy and power*

Morality and Long-Term Social Change

“The real problem of humanity is the following: we have stone-age emotions; medieval institutions; and god-like technology.” (E. O. Wilson)

Externalities (pollution, biodiversity); war; gender roles; sexual mores and taboos (e.g. relating to reproduction), vendettas and honor killings; diet behavior.

Morality and Power

“Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority; still more when you superadd the tendency of the certainty of corruption by authority.”

“Despotic power is always accompanied by corruption of morality.” (Lord Acton)

Power and Morality

Pitirim Sorokin and Walter Lunden (1959)

The moral behaviour of ruling groups tends to be more criminal and sub-moral than that of the ruled strata of the same society.

The greater, more absolute, and coercive the power of rulers, political leaders, and big executives of business, labour and other organizations, and the less freely this power is approved by the ruled population, the more corrupt and criminal such ruling groups and executives tend to be.

With a progressive limitation of their power, criminality of rulers and executives tends to decrease qualitatively (by becoming less grave and murderous) and quantitatively (by decreasing the rate of criminal actions).

Studies comparing aggressive and non-aggressive groups (e.g., violent prisoners) show **higher testosterone** levels in the former... Other studies indicate that testosterone levels are responsive to influences from the social environment, particularly those related to status and anger. Influences between testosterone and aggression may therefore operate in both directions. There is limited evidence that aggressiveness changes when testosterone levels are manipulated. (Testosterone and Aggression, 2010)

“The profligacy of a man of fashion is looked upon with much less contempt and aversion, than that of a man of meaner condition.”

“The great mob of mankind are the admirers and worshippers, and, what may seem more extraordinary, most frequently the disinterested admirers and worshippers, of wealth and greatness.”

Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

“Business culture and dishonesty in the banking Industry,” Alain Cohn, Ernst Fehr & Michel Andre, *Nature*, December 2014

Flipping coins for fortune ...

“Higher social class predicts increased unethical Behavior”

Piff, Stancato, Cote, Mendoza-Denton, and Keltner
PNAS

(1) 4-Way Stop; (2) Pedestrian Stop;
(3) Self-report of behavior; (4) Candy;
(5) Hiring Game; (6) Dice; (7) Greed priming

Gender Inequality

The Demonic Male, Wrangham and Peterson

Chimpanzee and human societies groups ***male*** hierarchical violence, male violence against females, and murder raids on out-groups.

Males are not subordinated in rank to females

Gratuitous male violence for dominance, war, rape, murder.

Self-Fulfilling Trust

Cooperation depends on reputation;

Reputation depends on the proportion of cooperators

Good equilibrium: High cooperation, reputation depends on being cooperative.

Bad equilibrium: Low cooperation, reputation does not depend on being cooperative (or perhaps reputation depends on non-cooperation)

Inter-Group Violence: Two-Level Evolution

The dark reality that our altruism and cooperation may extend only to the group, and may indeed have its origin in conflict.

The Wrangham “Chimpanzee Model”

The Wilson “Campsite Model”

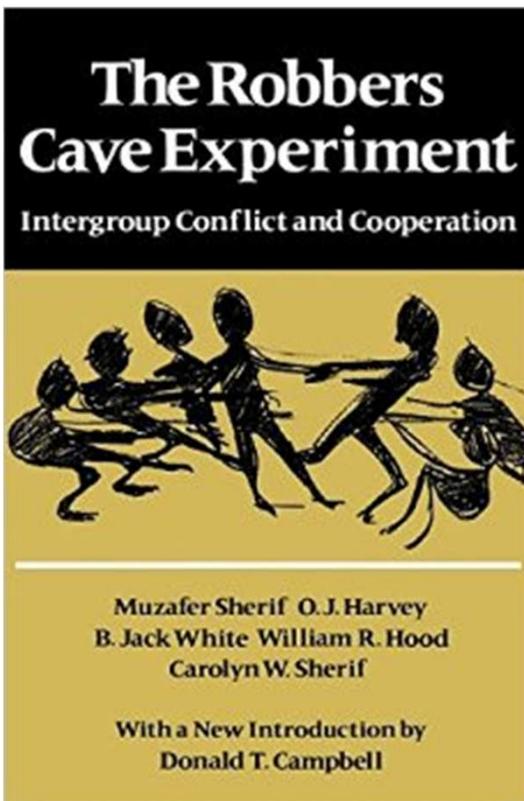
Causes of Violence: Between GROUPS

Inter-Ethnic (Language, Religion)

Inter-State (Hegemony, Resources, Power, Territory)

Inter-Gang (Criminality, Warlords)

DEMAGOGY + POLITICS + ETHNIC HATRED



The “Rattlers” and
The “Eagles”

Three stages:
In-group formation
Friction Stage
Integration (through
superordinate goals)

Social Psychology of Migration

“One of the most prominent themes from the middle class Euro focus group was the symbolic importance of language as a means of defining membership in the community. English language proficiency was perceived, not as a skill, but as the reflection of core American values by the middle class Euro-Americans. The implication is that immigrants voluntarily chose whether or not to speak English, and that this choice indicates acceptance of American morays and the desire to be integrated into U.S. society.”

Fennelly, “Correlates of Prejudice,” 2005

Göring: Why, of course, the people don't want war. Why would some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when the best that he can get out of it is to come back to his farm in one piece? Naturally, the common people don't want war; neither in Russia nor in England nor in America, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood. But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a Parliament or a Communist dictatorship.

Gilbert: There is one difference. In a democracy, the people have some say in the matter through their elected representatives, and in the United States only Congress can declare wars.

Göring: Oh, that is all well and good, but, voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.

Interview in cell, Nuremburg Trials, April 18, 1946