

THE EVOLUTIONARY BASIS OF MORALITY: COMPARING DEWEY'S AND RORTY'S DARWINIAN THEORIES WITH DAWKINS' PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: Using Richard Dawkins' evolutionary approach to the origins of morality, this paper examines the biological precondition of Dewey and Rorty's ethical theories. Dewey and Rorty disregard the universal, absolute, and necessary ethical theories and instead make morality's ontology contingent, flexible, and relational. They approach ethics in the context of the Darwinian theory of evolution that reduces the distinction between humans and other animals to merely the "complexity of human behavior"; the difference is not of quality or type but of degree or amount of set of propensities. Likewise, Dawkins argues that morality is not abiding by the dictate of the ultimate rational principle but rather a biological tendency to act morally in demanding circumstances. Although Dewey and Rorty characterize morality as an immediate social, practical, behavioral concern for fellow beings and place it beyond the ultimate authority of moral ideals, they leave us with assumptions about morality as a relational reality with biological preconditions. Thus, this paper will make a point, with the help of Dawkins, how morality has a natural or relational origin. Therefore, this paper concludes that considering Dawkins' biological justification of the genesis of morality generally substantiates pragmatism ethics and enables a resolution of a specific practical ethical problem. Nevertheless, it is not to suggest that moral principles are not significant in addressing practical ethical issues.

Keywords: environmental ethics, Dewey, Rorty, Pragmatism, Dawkins

Introduction

Dewey and Rorty discount the universal, absolute, and necessary ethical theories and instead make the ontology of morality contingent, relational, and subject to change. They approach pragmatism ethics in the context of the Darwinian theory of evolution that reduces the distinction between humans and other animals to merely the "complexity of human behaviour"; the difference is not of quality or type but of degree or amount of set of propensities. Non-human animals live by adjusting themselves to the changes in the environment. This adjustment, in human cases, according to Rorty, is

precise "in both physics and ethics - as the search for adjustment, and in particular for that sort of adjustment to our fellow humans which we call 'the search for acceptable justification and eventual agreement'"(Rorty, 1999, p. 72). Dewey and Rorty view morality as a practical and social concern grounded in our close relationships with others, and they reject the notion of fixed moral ideals. However, they acknowledge that morality is a relational reality influenced by biological factors. However, it does not mean these two pragmatists replace ethical absolutism with biological reductionism. They never argue that ethical judgments and moral behaviors are solely the results of our biological makeup and natural selection; instead, they insist that morality as a social phenomenon has biological preconditions. Dewey stresses that natural processes and instincts that animals inherit are not only the things that prompt moral behavior but also form the substance of moral conduct. To completely weaken these natural processes and instincts would decrease the effectiveness of moral behavior rather than simply redirecting them toward a particular goal (Dewey, 1898, p. 332). In line with this, Alexander Krémer contends, "Morals and morality are not identical with their biological basis, as the roof and the walls are not identical with the foundation of the house"(Krémer, 2018, p. 33). Dewey, Krémer, and Rorty admit the biological precondition of morality. However, they insist that biological impulse, desire, and inclination fall short of defining moral norms in advanced social reality and modern societies. Thus, this paper will make a point, with the help of Dawkins, how morality has a natural or biological origin. Dawkins argues that morality is not abiding by the dictate of the ultimate rational principle but rather a biological tendency to act morally in demanding circumstances. As a Darwinian biologist, Dawkins provides detailed illustrations about the biological origins of morality.

Associating the basis of ethics with Darwinian evolutionary theory that works by "natural selection seems ill-suited to explain feelings of morality, decency, empathy and pity" because natural selection consists of selfish and competitive urges that want to prevail at the

expense of others (Dawkins, 2006a, p. 215). Nevertheless, Dawkins spells out this common misunderstanding of *natural selection* to show that Darwinian evolutionary theory can accommodate moral sentiments. What is ignorant and indifferent to moral sentiment in the evolutionary process is the "selfish gene," not the individual organism or animal, because the latter "do not make exact copies of themselves, and do not compete in a pool of such self-replicating entities"(Dawkins, 2006a, p. 216). Through culture, language, and experience, humans form a web of relationships with others in specific surroundings, enabling them to distinguish between harmful and no harmful practices. Eventually, this experiential knowledge (which precedes the development of moral faculty) is used for self-awareness (Hauser, 2006). Marc Hauser emphasizes that self-awareness is the first step to being a moral agent. Developing a sense of self (Self-knowledge) concerning other fellow beings enables us to evaluate our actions and judgments. Self-knowledge concerning others motivates us to feel their pain and pleasure; "it allows us to build an autobiographical sketch, storing and recollecting memories to guide future behavior"(Hauser 2006,183). Rorty approaches this sociobiological understanding of the self from an ethical perspective. He contends that developing moral sentiment- including empathy, compassion, fairness, or a sense of right and wrong- is nothing but enlarging and varying the set of others in self-understanding. Because being responsible, compassionate, self-scarifying, kind, caring, and loving to immediate others (family members or relatives) is not a mere moral obligation but also a natural one(1999).

From a philosophical perspective, the role of *others* in self-understanding is noticed in Hegel. Here by others, we are refereeing people who differed from us by their accidental identities, who are out-groups for our linguistic, cultural, religious, and tribal or ethnic identities. If we regard the other-self as an alien and a distant being, eventually, we may be morally indifferent toward them. In contrast, if we treat the other-self as a being with sim-

ilar ontology and destiny, we realize that the others and their contingent manifestations complement our mode of being. Recognizing others (as Hegel reminds us) as a mirror image of ourselves and the sources of self-realization justifies the reason for living in one state as a political community and dispensing with conflicts. One cannot get self-knowledge by examining her feeling, culture, preference, and capacity, for all these can be done relationally. Because one does not live in a vacuum from other selves, she cannot analyze the solitary self and draw meaningful conclusions. Instead, her introspection must be founded on assessing relationships with others (Berenson, 1982, p. 77).

Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic shows that consciousness needs other selves to achieve self-consciousness. He argues that "Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come out of itself. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an other being; secondly, in doing so, it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self" (Hegel, 2009, p. 111). Before confronting the two selves (the master and the slave), each was conscious/aware of itself but unconscious of the other. "Each is confident of itself, but not of the other, and hence its own assurance has no truth" (2009, 111-13). Then, each was frantic to gain acceptance from the other; each tried to assure the objectivity of its existence by compelling the other to accept it. After the two independent consciousnesses engage in an all-out fight for recognition, the Master-Slave connection is eventually preserved. Each tries to control and define everything to its liking and standards. The confrontation "climaxes in a "life and death struggle" and one's victory over the other"; the victor becomes the autonomous master, and the loser the dependent slave(Solomon, 1983, p. 446). Even though one is fighting to destroy the other, the master allows the slave to survive because he needs objective recognition from the slave. However, the bondage is not functioning as intended by the master.

Because although the slave grows conscious of himself via his work, the master is left dependent on the slave for his necessities; and the master does not acquire "unforced acknowledgment." As a result, the only method for the master to gain recognition from a free individual is to liberate the slave; after that, both parties engage in "mutual recognition" or become relational.

Rorty quantifies the other selves (out-group) as those with whom we have certain relationships. Being moral toward these people is the beginning of the development of moral behavior. "The term moral obligation becomes increasingly less appropriate to the degree to which we identify with those whom we help: the degree to which we mention them when telling ourselves stories about who we are, the degree to which their story is also our story" (Rorty, 1999, p. 79). This implies that one cannot define or identify himself /herself without referring to sociohistorical relations with others. Thus, morality, as Rorty underlines, is a sentiment or concern for people in our circle rather than embracing ethical standards and applying them to our choices and judgments. Rorty explicitly discards the metaphysical appropriation of morality (noticeably Kantian and Platonic ethics), for it treats the self "non-rationally, as capable of existing independently of any concern for others, as a cold psychopath needing to be constrained to take account of other people's needs" (Ibid, YEAR, 77). According to Rorty, the Platonic, Cartesian, and Kantian self is encouraged to detach from nature and fellow beings, motivated to rely entirely on reason in her appraisal and understanding. Traditional moral philosophy distinguishes between genuine and false selves.

The one hears the "call of conscience," while the latter is only self-interested. For Rorty, the self is not just pure reason or senseless but rather a bundle of desire and inconsistent personality, i.e., selfhood is being formed. Any self can contain several contradictory selves of discordant dispositions (ibid). In this sense, the human self is beyond any fixed principle and escapes any theoretical definition of itself; it is always in the process

of confronting new frontiers of reality. The personality, inclination, values, and desire change as the new frontier of reality present itself. Dewey and Rorty accept humans' incremental, evolutionary moves in biology, ethics, and culture. For them, morality is human behavior that has biological material. Dewey further relates moral sentiments with rudimentary biological impulses; and contends, "These impulses and tendencies need to be modified. They need to be curbed and restrained". What matter is how alteration and restraint affect our self-assertion impulses and whether they are compatible with our animal nature. We should not hide our animal origins or attempt to suppress them altogether. Dewey concludes that our animal nature is not a foe of morality because it is an essential part of our existence. "Whatever is necessary to life, we may fairly assume to have some relevancy to moral living"(1898, p. 330). In what follows, we present Dawkins' justification for the biological origin of morality to substantiate the biological precondition of morality as entertained by Dewey and Rorty.

Biological Root of Mortality

Richard Dawkins, in his famous book, *the God Delusion*, detaches the root of morality from divine and absolute principles and provides it a Darwinian origin. As a Darwinian biologist, he challenges the claim of theologians that human beings have derived moral principles from God or religious scripture. Being good or ethical to gain "God's approval and reward or to avoid his disapproval and punishment is not morality; that is just sucking up, apple-polishing, looking over your shoulder at the great surveillance camera in the sky, or the still small wiretap inside your head, monitoring your every move, even your every base thought"(Dawkins, 2006a, p. 226). Acting morally to gain praise or escape censure from a higher power is not authentic morality. Instead, it only strives to gain favors or avoid punishment by remaining aware that it is constantly being watched and observed. The real

sense of morality is discovered without external pressure or imaginary fear.

Dawkins also stands with Dewey and Rorty against ethical absolutism. Morality based on absolute principles derived from scripture or pure reason (a direct attack on Kantian ethics) cannot solve practical moral problems. For instance, "it is not always wrong to put a terminally ill patient out of her misery at her own request; or it not always wrong to kill an embryo"(Dawkins, 2006a, p. 232). The justification for the rightness or wrongness of an action should not merely come from its theoretical or theological validity. However, the evaluation must also consider the practical aspect of the action. A Moral theory should not be "more philosophical and less committed than moral deliberation; it needs to consider the people's custom, traditions, styles of justification, criticism, protest, revolt, conversion, and resolution"(Baier 1985,236). In light of Baier's view, because morality is determined by our mode of being and our reactions to specific actions and behavior, it is always in flux of change. We cannot have fixed social law that serves indefinitely. What we need to do in terms of its (social law's) impermanence is justify it. In this regard, Rorty makes an analogy between science and moral ethics to show that scientific inquiry and moral judgment aims not to arrive at absolute truth but to provide a better justification. He continues to say that the problem with aiming for truth is that we would have yet to learn when we got there, even if we did. However, we might strive for more significant rationale and reassurance.

Similarly, we cannot aim for 'doing what is right' because we would never know if we have succeeded. Long after we are gone, better knowledgeable and more sophisticated people may judge our actions as catastrophic mistakes, just as they may deem our scientific convictions to be intelligible only through the lens of an outdated paradigm (Rorty, 1999, p. 82). Thus, Rorty reminds us that the justification we would give to our moral evaluation need not refer to the fixed or essential principles; the

development of morality cannot be judged according to these ideals but in light of its ability to incorporate various moral patients. "Moral progress is a matter of wider and wider sympathy. It is not a matter of rising above the sentimental to the rational" (ibid).

Now let us see Dawkins' biological approaches to morality's root to validate morality's progressive nature. Once Dawkins disregards absolutism and divine claims in ethical principles, he examines morality in the Darwinian framework. At first glance, especially for some of us who are professionally far from evolutionary biology, the Darwinian evolutionary theory appears to be devoid of moral sentiment; we rather immediately believe that his theory only favors selfish and exploitative disposition for the strongest(in his theory) is allowed to live and preserve its own species at the expense of the unfit. Dawkins presumes our misperception of Darwinian natural selection as though it can only explain hunger, fear, and sexual desire, which directly impact our ability to survive or maintain our genetic makeup. However, where do we get the feeling of pity we have when we see an orphaned child crying or an animal whimpering in agony? To address such a question, Dawkins evaluates the theory of natural selection by examining how it operates on organisms and genes during the evolutionary process. The natural selection theory appears amoral at the genetic level, for genes are selfish to survive and intolerant of rival genes. However, if we approach the theory at the level of the organism, it has a seed for moral feelings. Selfishness is typically a trait of the gene that survives and makes it via natural selection in the hierarchy of life. Dawkins continues to argue,

It is the gene that, in the form of information, either survives for many generations or does not. Unlike the gene, the organism, the group, and the species are not the right kind of entity to serve as a unit in this sense because they do not make exact copies of themselves and do not compete in a pool of such self-replicating entities. That is precisely what genes do, and that is the - essentially logical - justification for singling the gene out as the unit of 'selfishness' in the unique Darwinian sense of selfish(2006a, pp. 215–216)

The concept that is made clear is that the "unit" (gene) displays selfishness or self-centeredness rather than the individual organism, the living communities, or the species. The gene prioritizes its desire for survival and is indifferent to moral considerations. Dawkins contends that genes do not necessarily exhibit selfish behavior and can ensure survival by promoting altruistic behavior in organisms. Caring for one's children is the most obvious example of kin selection, but it is not the only one. Many insects and some vertebrates, such as naked mole rats, meerkats, and woodpeckers, have developed species in which older siblings care for younger siblings, as they share similar genetic traits (Ibid).

Dewey, in his examination of Professor Huxley's lecture on "evolution and ethics," elaborates on the doctrine of "survival of the fittest" at the cosmic (biological) and ethical (social) levels. The cosmic process involves "struggle and conflict," whereas the ethical process is centered on empathy and collaboration. While the cosmic process leads to the survival of the strongest, the ethical process aims to ensure that as many individuals as possible can survive and thrive. Dewey ethnicizes or socializes the term "fit"; and argues that if we consider fit to mean the ability to conform to the current social structure, including all of its customs, requirements, and values, then we can argue that the "most fitting" individual under these circumstances is also the most excellent one (Dewey 1898, 323). Dewey cautions against strictly adhering to the principle of survival of the fittest, as it would lead to the annihilation of individuals who are weak, sickly, defective, or insane. Dewey's analysis of the concept of fitness is a manifestation of his pragmatic approach to ethics. He appraises fitness based on an individual's ability to adapt to changes, including anticipated variations. Because our world is constantly evolving, it is important to assess one's suitability for the future rather than just based on current circumstances, which may not last. If someone is only suited to the present situation, they may not be able to adapt and thrive in the future. "A part of his fitness will consist in that very flexibility

which enables him to adjust himself without too much loss to sudden and unexpected changes in his surroundings. Therefore, we have no reason to oppose the ethical and natural processes" (Dewey, 1898, p. 327). The essence of such an argument is that in an ever-changing environment, modifying and adjusting the existing potential, skill, value, knowledge, and perspective is the rule of reality with biological justification at the rudimentary level. That is why Dewey applies the Darwinian selection theory to explain the progressive nature of ethics. He sees no difference between social selection and natural selection. He contends that it is impossible to discern any fundamental difference between how society regulates individual actions through public opinion and education and how natural selection operates. Both processes involve the promotion of certain behaviors and the suppression of others. Though the "struggle for existence" has been resolved in advanced human society, a form of selection is still moving. In other words, public opinion and education significantly promote and encourage certain behaviors while discouraging and punishing others consistently (Ibid, YEAR, 336). Updating the evaluation matrix and adjusting the manner of living in response to current and future demand is still working at both natural and social progress. Dewey assumes that the latter is in charge of checking and regulating the former (which tends to protect its existence and species solely at the expense of the other) in such a way that it contributes to the overall good. The following statement from Dewey shows the necessity of ethical or social correction of the biological force that sets animals in a struggle for existence.

Like the gardener's activity, the ethical process is a constant struggle. We can never allow things to go on of themselves. If we do, the result is retrogression. Therefore, oversight, vigilance, and constant interference with conditions, as they are, are necessary to maintain the moral order, as they are to keep up the garden (Dewey, 1898, p. 324).

Dewey's perspective on ethics and moral development is based on an evolutionary view that rejects the traditional claims of moral philosophy that aim for moral absolutism and "immunity to change." Traditional philosophical eth-

ics was characterized by its rigidity and lack of self-reflection, making it unable to adapt to new challenges. It relied on dogmatic methods to uncover and justify fixed moral goals and principles, which limited its ability to respond to changing circumstances. It prioritized the pursuit of certainty, stability, and simplicity over practical service to ordinary people by attempting to reduce the multitude of moral insights to a single, inflexible principle (Anderson, 2023). Instead, Dewey prefers to adopt a Darwinian way of thinking on ethics, morality, and philosophy. In his analysis of "the influence of Darwin on philosophy," he confirms that "Darwinian logic" enables traditional philosophy to shift its methods and motives from abstract concepts to concrete, practical concerns. Rather than simply creating something for its own sake, it focuses on how that creation serves a specific purpose. This shift also recognizes that things are constantly changing and evolving, shaped by the circumstances and intelligence involved. Rather than striving for some ultimate goal of perfection or good, the focus is on the incremental improvements that can be made in the present to promote justice and happiness. Neglecting these practical concerns will lead to destruction and missed opportunities (Dewey, 2016, p. 5). He saw philosophy as a means of solving actual issues and improving people's lives rather than an academic endeavor apart from everyday concerns. He stated that philosophy should be concerned with assisting people in adapting to their surroundings and making the most of their experiences, similar to how creatures adapt to their surroundings through natural selection. In general, Dewey's Darwinian approach to philosophy emphasized the need to understand human cognition and behavior in a practical, adaptable, and evolutionary context.

The new paradigm opened by Darwin in human inquiries makes philosophy "responsible" and forces it to acknowledge its limitedness and fallibility. Dewey claims that, against the intellectual tendency before Darwin (which strives for perfection and infallibility), when we attempt to create an idealized and logical understand-

ing of the vast universe, it is an admission of our limitations in comprehending the specific issues that pertain to us. Throughout history, humanity has struggled with this limitation and has consequently shifted the weight of responsibility to a higher power they deemed more capable than they are. Dewey suggests that adopting a Darwinian approach to philosophy can revitalize it and make it a valuable tool for identifying and understanding the significant conflicts that arise in life. Doing so can provide insight into effectively addressing these conflicts and serve as a method for ethical and political analysis and prediction. He concludes that the scientific revolution that culminated in the publication of "Origin of Species" has been the most influential force in contemporary thought, dismantling old questions and paving the way for new methods, goals, and challenges. It has been a powerful agent of change that has catalyzed the emergence of new problems and sparked new intellectual pursuits (Dewey, 2016, pp. 6-7).

Dewey's rejection of meta-ethics shows his commitment to situational, specific, practical, and context-dependent ethics. The latter embraces the "natural selection" principles that adjust its appraisal and objectives according to the new environmental and situational challenge. Ethics deals with real-life situations and moral behavior is influenced by various factors, such as the actions taken, the intended outcomes, the motives of the individuals involved, their environment, and cultural and religious beliefs. As a result, more than simply establishing logical validity is required to address ethical issues. Thus, it is more reasonable to establish a biological basis for moral sentiment as ethical ideas and principles are not static but rather undergo continuous transformation and adaptation under changing societal circumstances and experiences.

Now let us turn back to Dawkins to justify the influence of evolution on the development of morality. How does evolutionary biology explain the moral origin of animals? Dawkins identifies three biological traits of animals as the

foundation of morality. The first is kin-altruism behavior, the second is reciprocal altruism, and the third is reputation or advertisement of superiority. Kin-altruism refers to a gene's tendency to "reduce its own fitness but boosts the fitness of its relatives" who are supposed to have a similar gene. As a result, the behavior may ultimately increase the number of copies of the altruistic gene present in the next generation and hence the occurrence of the altruistic behavior itself (Jane & Eberhard, 2011). As Jane and Eberhard tell us, Kin-altruism works on the likelihood that other organisms are similar in bearing identical genes. Dawkins also has a similar perception of *kin-altruism* and argues that animals often exhibit altruistic behavior towards their close relatives due to the high probability of sharing similar genetic traits. This can include caring for one another, defending them, sharing resources, and warning of potential dangers (2006, 217). Kin-altruism involves one group of individuals willingly reducing their fitness to benefit another group within the same group. It means kin-altruism considers the ratio of the increase in fitness for the recipient compared to the decrease in fitness for the donor, using the degree of relatedness between the two individuals (Uyenoyama & Feldman, 1980, p. 381). This helping behavior has evolutionary bases, and the gene that facilitates this behavior calculates if it gets more fitness and copy of itself than in the altruist individual. Richard Joyce gives an example of the calculative tendency of genes. He says that from the gene's perspective, sacrificing one's own life to save several descendants, siblings, or cousins who also have a similar gene is a worthwhile trade-off (2007, p. 19). Though it is not large enough to accommodate non-kin cooperation, kin-altruism can explain the biological origins of moral behavior.

Broader than kin-altruism, reciprocal altruism (a kind of agreement that 'you aid me, and I will reciprocate the favor') incorporates the social behavior and the moral sentiments of moral agents. It is more border, for it works among non-kin selves; it is applied to mutually beneficial exchanges between individuals who are not

necessarily related. These individuals, Dawkins emphasizes, are into the trade "because of asymmetries in needs and in capacities to meet them" (2006a, p. 217). It is true between different species, where these differences are more pronounced. Asymmetries in physical and brain power, skill, capacity, and natural tendency are a base for forming both human and non-human communities. Here is a typical biology class example of reciprocal altruism recalled by Dawkins: The hunter and the smith have a mutually beneficial relationship, where the hunter provides the smith with meat in exchange for a spear.

Similarly, the bee and the flower are in a deal where the bee obtains nectar from the flower, and the flower gets pollinated. Dawkins (2006) and Joyce (2007) suggest that the norm or social behavior, responsibility, and accountability we exhibit in the community result from genetic dictation. Natural selection favors genes that lead to giving behavior in situations where there is a need and opportunity for giving, as well as the ability to solicit help when in need. It also favors individuals who can remember obligations, hold grudges, monitor exchange relationships, and punish those who take without giving in return (Dawkins, 2006, p. 217) (Joyce, 2007, p. 30). However, reciprocal altruism is pure mutualism that counts only the benefits each party gets. How does mutualism develop into morality? Atran (2013) and Baumard et al. (2013) relate mutualism with morality and argue that the mutualistic model of morality proposes that morality stems from an environmental adaptation that promotes equal sharing of costs and benefits of cooperation among individuals. This leads to developing a distinct sense of fairness as a moral principle. This model offers a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of morality, including unselfish behavior in economic games, cooperation with strangers, and cultural prohibitions against actions that go against short-term utilitarian interests. Thus, in light of Atran's view, mutualism highlights the role of cooperation and fairness in developing moral principles (Atran, 2013, p. 4; Baumard et al., 2013, p. 59).

However, the aforementioned biological behaviors (kin-altruism, reciprocal altruism, and mutualism) are materials for morality (Kr mer, 2018), which is not powerful enough to define morality considerably. That is why Dewey and Kr mer call for social, cultural, and practical intervention to biological behaviors or "animal promptings" (to use Dewey's phrase) to direct them towards full-fledged morality. Unless these natural impulses are checked and controlled by rational moral agents who can learn from experience and direct those instincts to genuine morality, they become involved with immoral acts and behaviors, for behaviors at the genetic level (as Dawkins justifies) or impulses and interests at animal level (as Dewey sort outs) are selfish. In *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins explains why our biological "nature" needs to be nurtured. Building a society where individuals work together towards a shared goal through generous and selfless collaboration is less facilitated by biological factors. This is because the prevailing characteristic of a successful gene is typically focused on uncompromising self-interest, which tends to manifest in self-centered behavior among individuals (Dawkins, 2006b, p. 2). Kr mer captures this fact when he argues that the "biological moral foundation" is not similar to morality at an advanced (societal) level, as the house's basis is not similar to its roof and wall. Fortunately, human beings can alter the pattern and behaviors of the gene by reflective culture. It is inaccurate to assume that genetically inherited traits are always unchangeable and permanent. Although our genes may predispose us to certain behaviors or tendencies, we are not necessarily bound to follow them throughout our lives. For instance, while our genes may direct us to act in a self-centered way, we still can choose to behave differently (Dawkins, 2006b, p. 3). Peter Corning, an evolution scientist, strengthens the biological origin of ethics and argues that there is a positive aspect to our moral impulses in that they have a "biological foundation." However, the negative aspect is that these impulses are not well aligned with the "good of the species" and tend to

be "highly selective," "inconsistent," and self-interested. Luckily, we have formal and informal rewards and punishments systems to uphold and strengthen our ethical standards. While some individuals may act spontaneously per ethical norms, others may require persuasion for the "general welfare" (Corning, 1997, p. 325).

The third rationale that prompts Dawkins to drive morality from evolutionary biology is the reputation-craving propensity of humans and non-human animals. Reputation is a social reward for bravery, loyalty, generosity, perseverance, success, and other praised social actions. Reputation in human society plays a significant role by motivating members to conform to the community's norms, rules, and beliefs. Both Dawkins and Joyce acknowledge this truth and contend that the drive to be praised and the motivation to achieve glory, as well as the fear of being criticized and facing disgrace, collectively provide a significant impetus for the growth of moral and ethical values in society (Dawkins 2006, 218 & Richard Joyce 2007,32). These researchers are reminiscent of Amotz Zahavi's bird experiment, which found that animals, like people, show behavior that earns them a reputation. Zahavi and his team study the babblers and observe that babblers alarm the dangers and feed others to earn a reputation. Two factors lead Zahavi to conclude that what babblers do is not an act of altruism but rather an appeal to reputation. (1) The birds "actively compete for the dangerous role of sentinel"; (2) when a subordinate bird offers food to a dominant one, the apparent charity is viciously rejected (Amotz Zahavi et al., 2011, PAGE).

Dawkins concludes that animals' three biological propensities (kin-altruism, reciprocal altruism or mutualism, and craving for reputation) are the foundation of advanced moral sentiments and social norms. His treatment of ethics, in line with pragmatism, embraces relational ethics that are more sentimental than rational. There is less doubt that the behaviors mentioned above can fit with ancient homogenous communities. Genetic tendencies toward altruism or morality would have favored early

humans via all three routes. However, how evolutionary biology explains morality in modern society? Given the urban nature of modern society, where many of us live in crowded cities, surrounded by strangers rather than family and encountering people we may never see again, why do we maintain our morality towards one another, including those from different social groups? Dawkins gives a Darwinian answer to this question. The most effective way for natural selection to incorporate certain behaviors in ancestral times was to “install rules of thumb in the brain.” These heuristics continue to affect us today, even when they no longer align with their original purposes. As Dawkins highlights, natural selection inherently favors rules of thumb that promote the survival and replication of the genes that created them (Dawkins, 2006, p. 222).

Dewey (1898), Dawkins (2006b), Corning (1997) Kremer (2018) agree on the importance of social institutions for influencing natural inclination and the development of morality. Both these pragmatists and biologists stress that a functioning “ethical science” should aim to reconcile biological traits or activities required to preserve the individual and its species and social welfare. This would ensure that individual self-interests align with the interests of others. “While this goal is challenging, it is based on biological fundamentals consistent with Darwinian principles. It could also serve as a general framework for addressing specific ethical issues” (Corning, 1997, PAGE).

Relational Ethics Against Moral absolutism

So far, we have tried to argue (with the help of evolutionary biologists and pragmatist thinkers) against the claims of meta-ethics that strive to rationalize the existence of absolute and universal ethical principles, applicable, regardless of socio-cultural and conditional differences. For brevity, moral absolutism holds that specific moral standards are objectively right or wrong and cannot be altered or compromised based on personal beliefs or situational circumstances. One example of such a rule is the belief

that killing an innocent human is always wrong (Rawls, 2022). In what follows, we present pragmatists' reasons (mainly Rorty's relational ethics) for discarding moral absolutism. Such absolute guidance of morality is not accepted by pragmatic ethical theory, for it is impracticable and makes humans a slave of ideals. Dewey dispenses with the idea of determining the moral status of an action based solely on one principle in teleological, deontological, and virtue ethics, for all these fail to assume the growth, change, and practicality of actions. He insists that conduct makes up all of our actions. As a result, we should reject theories that see morality as only concerned with refining our intentions, building a virtuous character, striving for an unattainable ideal, or following supernatural directives, and instead recognize the authority of moral obligations (Hildebrand, 2021). Because ethics, he suggests, should involve examining real-life, complex situations, this examination may draw upon theoretical principles to form testable suggestions based on practical experience. Dewey's rejection of moral absolutism extends his critiques of the traditional metaphysics that strive to answer multiple practical questions with single and fixed ideals. According to William James, the idea that reality is permanent is inaccurate, and it is not necessary or possible to completely understand it. James and Dewey emphasize that our understanding of the world is limited and can be expanded upon as it evolves and changes. At some point in the future, it may be more plausible that there is a single source of knowledge and understanding. However, for now, we must also consider the possibility that this is not the case (James, 2020).

Rorty accepts all of this and applies it to his relational ethics. He finds a similar pattern between scientific progress and moral progress. He says that scientific advancement is integrating more and more data into a cohesive web of belief: data from microscopes and telescopes with data gathered by the naked eye, data-driven into the open by experiments with data that has always been sitting about. Similarly, moral growth is a function of in-

creasing sympathy. It is not a matter of progressing from the emotive to the rational (Rorty, 1999, p. 77).

Moral progress, according to Rorty, is measured not by its compatibility with meta-ethical principles but by its tendency to broaden moral standings. As Darwinian biologists suggest, morality evolved when our ancestors were still in a relatively small clan or tribal circle. However, because of its evolutionary nature, it could transcend kinship relationships. Dawkins calls this cross-kinship cooperation or morality a “misfire” of natural selection or “precious mistakes.” Let us follow his logic to understand how cross-kinship morality (the morality in the modern world) results from the misfiring of natural selection. Here is his justification, natural selection built altruistic desires into our brains alongside sexual, hunger, and xenophobia urges in evolutionary times when humans lived in tiny and stable bands like baboons. Couples who understand that “the ultimate reason for their sexual urges is procreation,” for example, do not eliminate sexual urges even when the woman is on a pill. Sexual desire is an independent force, an urge that exists independently of its ultimate rationale. The same is true of the urge to be kind—to altruism, generosity, empathy, and pity toward those in another group (2006a, p. 222). This precious mistake (Dawkins warns to take the word *mistake* only in a Darwinian sense) has evolved into complex modern moral systems.

According to Rorty's relational ethics, in-group cooperation or kin-altruism does not constitute morality. For him, morality begins to emerge when one develops feelings of sympathy and compassion for the out-group. He identifies morality as a “new and controversial custom.” The notion that “prudence” is unheroic and morality is heroic is simply the realization that trying something new and untested is riskier than doing what feels natural. That means applying the word “moral” to family members (children, wife, and siblings) appears to be meaningless, for “responding to the needs of family members is the most natural thing in the world” (Rorty, 1999, p. 77). Rorty and Dawkins have a slightly different accounts of our nat-

ural prudence, goodness, and responsibility for our family members. For the former, prudence emerges from our relational self-awareness. It is common for individuals to identify themselves based on their connections with family members. Our needs and those of our family are often interconnected, and our happiness is often tied to their happiness. Therefore, Rorty concludes, we naturally respond in a manner that reflects this interdependence. “Moral development in the individual, and moral progress in the human species as a whole, is a matter of re-marking human selves to enlarge the variety of the relationships that constitute those selves” (Rorty, 1999, p. 79). Dawkins approaches this relational self-awareness from an evolutionary perspective or genetic influences. Both writers believe that our kin-relational sense of self and genetically engineered prudence transcend the tribal circle and expand its borders by integrating all other creatures as moral patients. However, it is worth noticing that though Rorty accepts morality's progressive or evolving nature, he treats it at the societal or community level.

In a nutshell, the evolution of human behavior begins with altruistic acts towards family members in small groups, which influence their interactions with other groups. As understood by Dawkins and Rorty, this progression extends to encompass socio-cultural and racial boundaries. When such behaviors as care, love, responsibility, and collaboration are directed towards individuals outside of one's group, then only the notion of morality rises. If this progress were to be fully realized, the term 'morality' would cease to exist in our language, as there would be no requirement or means to differentiate between actions that align with our instincts and those deemed moral (Rorty, 1999).

Conclusion

Dewey and Rorty challenge universal, absolute, and necessary ethical theories and consider morality as contingent and evolving. They approach ethics pragmatically

through the prism of Darwin's theory of evolution, arguing that ethics or moral sensibility arises from feelings of love, sympathy, and compassion towards close relatives whom one perceives as one defines herself. In contrast to moral absolutism, Rorty's relational ethics concedes the progressive nature of morality, for fixed ideals do not knot it. Morality is about solving issues and offering acceptable justification, not serving authoritative beliefs. Relational ethics, which focuses on addressing ethical problems in practical situations, challenges the idea of absolute moral principles because these principles are rigid and cannot adapt to new and changing circumstances. Evolving among kin groups, relational ethics could transcend tribal, ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences. In modern times, its progress also contemplates the interests, rights, and well-being of non-human beings.

Dawkins explains the biological basis of morality to demonstrate its evolutionary growth. His reasoning is consistent with Rorty and Dewey's ethics that presume biological behaviors as a substrate of morality. However, they openly emphasize the power of social value, culture, and the situation on the development of moral sentiment. By rejecting the ultimate moral principle (whether from deontological, teleological, or virtue ethics), Dawkins examines the origin of morality using Darwinian evolutionary theory. He focuses on three interrelated human behaviors that form the basis of morality in modern societies. First, kin-altruism is a genetic force to be good and beneficent to similar genes at the expense of one's fitness. The second is reciprocal altruism or mutualism, which refers to social behavior in which an individual performs an action that benefits another individual, expecting the other individual to return the favor later. Third, it is a form of cooperation that is based on the idea of mutual benefit rather than solely benefiting the self. The last behavior refers to an urge for reputation, i.e., being cooperative and beneficent to the other to advertise superiority. Thus, it is possible to argue that Dawkins gives a biological justification for Dewey's and Rorty's assertion

that humans' moral behavior has a biological basis.

To conclude, the pragmatists mentioned above and Dawkins as an evolutionary biologist apply the Darwinian way of thinking on morality. In doing so, all discard moral absolutism that denies the evolving tendency of morality. Instead, their moral judgment is derived not from fixed ideals but from a real, practical, and situational necessity.

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