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Altruism is a successful meme in many human cultures, i.e. self-sacrifice in various forms is held in high regard. In moral philosophy, being moral is often seen as equivalent to being altruistic; selfishness is often pitted against altruism, usually without altruism being specified. In spite of the fact that social behaviour can be divided into more categories than these two, the duality between selfishness and altruism is often retained in normative statements also by evolutionary biologists.

Many biologists since Darwin (1871) have discussed ethics in an evolutionary framework, and there are several lines of reasoning. First, in some of the literature the main purpose has been to try to explain the occurrence of various moral phenomena, from actions to sensibilities to rules and moral systems (e.g. Darwin 1871, Fisher 1930, Trivers 1971, Wilson 1975, Dawkins 1976, Alexander 1987) There are also authors who, like Huxley (1894) regards ethics, the "moral process", as separate and antagonistic to evolution, the "cosmic process".

The purpose of the present article is to investigate the evaluation of altruism made by some influential thinkers in evolutionary biology, and to compare this evaluation with their factual conclusions. Our aim is not to criticize these authors, which we admire for their contribution to the understanding of evolutionary processes, but to scrutinize some normative statements in order to shed light on the influence of conventional altruistic ethics.

Our main point in the article is that altruism works contrary to reciprocity/cooperation, and that by promoting altruism, the opportunity for reciprocity to work is impaired. This reasoning is based on the following premises: 1) humans have a built in capacity to act in a reciprocal manner, but also a built in capacity to cheat and to manipulate others (e.g. Trivers 1971, 1985), 2) direct and indirect learning will affect the degree to which individuals cooperate or cheat, and normative values and rules for behaviour are part of that learning. If normative values and rules have no effect on behaviour, normative ethics is truly empty: statements without influence.

During the last decades theoretical and empirical work in evolutionary biology has produced a coherent explanation of social behaviour (Hamilton 1963; Trivers 1971, 1985; Williams 1966; Wilson 1975), the main conclusion being that the evolution of apparent altruism is due to the effect, on either kin or potential reciprocators, of selfish genes (Dawkins 1976). Thus, in the following we define altruism as an act that is costly for an actor, that does not benefit kin, and where there is no reasonable expectation of reciprocation. Thus, we exclude "reciprocal altruism" and "kin altruism" from altruism.

Several writers have noted the confusion around the term altruism, caused by a use of the term in both a broad and a specific sense, as well as the need to make a clear distinction. For instance, Ruse (198x) use altruism with and without quotation mark to denote altruism in a broad and strict sense, respectively. Less confusing is the use of terms like "ascetic altruism" (Lopreato, 1981) and "promiscuous altruism" (Hardin, 1993) suggested for altruism in the specific sense. As mentioned we have preferred to just call it altruism (cf Bronstein, 1994) and let other subgroups like "kin altruism" and "reciprocal altruism" do without the term altruism. Reciprocal altruism is a selfcontradiction. That way we avoid the problem pointed out by Trivers: "Models that attempt to explain altruistic behavior in terms of natural selection are models designed to take altruism out of altruism" (1971 p. 35).

Some workers have questioned the existence of strict altruism. Wilson (1978), for instance, questions the altruism of Mother Teresa - this because of her belief in the possibility of saving the soul to eternal life through good deeds (pp. 164-165). If human behaviour is viewed from the perspective of natural selection, the effect that counts is survival and reproduction. Reward in heaven and brotherhood of class, race or creed are not real reciprocity or kin selection, but just illusions; illusions that make people commit altruistic acts. The agitation for altruistic deeds is seldom confined to pure altruistic propaganda, but often mixed with other types of arguments; the soldier is tempted by the possibility of

respect from men and attraction from women, as well as the virtue of dying for king and country. Alexander (1987) ascribes much apparent altruism to indirect reciprocity, i.e. the eliciting of beneficent acts from observers of an altruistic act. The concept of indirect reciprocity sheds light on the fact that a dominant ethic system often is rewarding towards its followers, that it may pay to be conventional. However, there is always a possibility to cheat and this possibility increases with a system that promotes unselfishness; in a system with a duty to serve others, there is no moral basis to expect or claim a reward. Like the overwhelming majority we think that human altruism exists, but we belong to the small minority who think altruism is a negative component in human cultures.

There is a general consensus that a gene for altruistic behavior - in this strict sense - cannot spread in a population, and theoretical analyses point at the importance of conditional behaviour for reciprocity to evolve (e.g. Axelrod, 1984; Dawkins, 1989). Thus, a necessary condition for reciprocity is that individuals help reciprocators and avoid defectors. Dawkins (1989) describes a game with three strategies, Sucker, Cheat and Grudger that correspond to altruistic, egoistic and reciprocal strategies, respectively. One outcome of this game is that the presence of suckers promotes the cheats: "Paradoxically, the presence of the suckers actually endangered the grudgers early on in the story because they were responsible for the temporary prosperity of the cheats" (p. 186). Similarly, when describing the tournaments between Tit for Tat and other strategies, arranged by Axelrod (1984), Dawkins concludes that Tit for Tat is not an ESS in the strict sense, since other nice strategies, "like the saintly Always Cooperate... can drift into the population without being noticed". Further on, "...look what happens next. Unlike Tit for Tat, Always Cooperate is not stable against invasion by nasty strategies such as Always Defect (which) does well against strategies such as Always Cooperate" (p.216). In conclusion, altruistic strategies promote defector strategies and threaten reciprocal strategies.

We now turn to some of the few normative passages in *The Selfish gene*: "I am not advocating a morality based on evolution ... Be warned that if you wish, as I do, to build a society in which individuals cooperate generously and unselfishly towards a common good, you can expect little help from biological nature. Let us try to *teach* generosity and altruism, because we are born selfish" (p. 2-3). Further on, "It is possible that yet another unique quality of man is a capacity for genuine, disinterested, true altruism.....We can even discuss ways of deliberately cultivating and nurturing pure, disinterested altruism" (p. 200-201).

First, one might question the sudden appearance of motives when dealing with human altruism; after a purely behavioral definition of altruism (p. 4), words like genuine, disinterested, and true are being used. But the more serious criticism is that, suddenly, when dealing with morality, altruism is pitted against selfishness in the same vein as in moral philosophy in general. For instance, to cooperate unselfishly is a self-contradiction, since cooperation builds on mutual gain. We wonder what happened to reciprocity and what the reasons are for believing that sucker strategies should not be exploited by cheater strategies in a human context. As we see it, the principles for effective cooperation should be valid for humans as well, that is, reciprocal strategies balance the self-interest of participating individuals and keep cheating in check. If this is so, a better advice than to teach altruism is to teach reciprocity.

Dawkins is by no means alone in his normative conclusions being inconsistent with factual ones. Thus, Axelrod, albeit quite clear and explicit when transferring conclusions from his computer competition to the human condition, nevertheless makes the following comment: "Yet, basing a strategy on reciprocity does not seem to be the height of morality either - at least not according to our everyday intuitions. Reciprocity is certainly not a good morality of aspirations" (p. 137). We believe that the most probable explanation to these "our everyday intuitions" is that they are a result of successful human manipulation.

An author that favors manipulation as an explanation for altruism is George C. Williams (1989). He makes the following rather explicit statement: "Anyone who makes an anonymous donation of money or blood or other resources as a result of some public appeal is biologically just as much a victim of manipulation as the snapper in the jaws of the anglerfish" (p.193). Concerning reciprocity, he makes the comment that, "in nature (it) is strictly limited by the necessity of safe-guards against cheating" (p.193).

However, on a normative level also Williams follows Huxley (1894) in that nature, "the cosmic process", is an enemy that has to be combated. He writes: "I take a similar but more extreme position (than Huxley), based both on the more extreme contemporary view of natural selection as a process of

maximizing selfishness, and on the longer list of vices now assignable to the enemy” (p.208). Williams has hopes that this combat can be successful, because the evolutionary process is ”abysmally stupid” whereas humans have foresight, and because people do indeed both advocate and sometimes practice charity towards strangers and even animals. After stating that ”reasoned analysis prompted by suspicion (against being manipulated) is a fortunate human tendency”, he contradicts that judgement by advocating altruism in various forms: ”People can now espouse remote and inclusive ideals far removed from the selfishness that gave rise to the power to do so. It was inevitable that people in the novel civic environments of the last few millenia would develop aspirations for such things as the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the triumph of the master race, or the savings of souls. Because such strivings are beyond the direct action of natural selection, I have some hope that some such cause can provide the humane artifice that can save humanity from human nature” (p.212-213).

As much as we admire Williams’ contributions to the understanding of evolutionary processes, it is difficult for us not to criticize his normative conclusions. First, he pits morality against selfishness, as if morality were equivalent to altruism. We do not agree with this, but hold that moral rules and systems have the potential to serve my interests as an individual. Secondly, altruism is advocated in spite of the fact that it allegedly arises through manipulation. The question then becomes, by whom should I as an individual be manipulated? Should I let myself be manipulated by a leader, who under group serving pretences serves his own interests through advocating high and remote ideals? Maybe to the degree that I am prepared to die for the ideals as a martyr, a phenomenon sometimes labelled ”blind faith”, but which technically nevertheless is a form of altruism, whether one finds the phenomenon disagreeable or not.

In the above citations concerning normative ethics, there is a lack of consideration to reciprocity. Many moral rules and laws are actually based on reciprocal principles, and many psychological mechanisms seem to have evolved in a reciprocal context (e.g. Trivers 1971,1985; Barkow et al. 1992). Theoretically, reciprocity has built in safe-guards against cheating, and therefore we question the advocacy of altruism, which does not have such safe-guards. To advocate altruism is to advocate a unilateral cost for one party, and simultaneously, the logical extension, a unilateral benefit for another party.

It is our firm belief that normative ethics has to be intellectualized to a higher degree than at present, and that evolutionary biology can be of great help in this effort. It is easy to understand why the propaganda for altruism exists - it may lead to a positive image for the philosopher making such recommendations and a negative one for breaking the altruistic convention (Alexander, 1987). However, in order to be able to analyze ethics it is necessary to see that there is an antagonism between reciprocity and altruism, just as in the theoretical work cited above. Moreover, in accordance with evolutionary theory, if one goal is to reduce the opportunity for cheating, normative ethics would be better off to have reciprocity, not altruism, as the prime normative rule.

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